

Eastern European migration to Portugal: from an unexpected migration to an uncertain future

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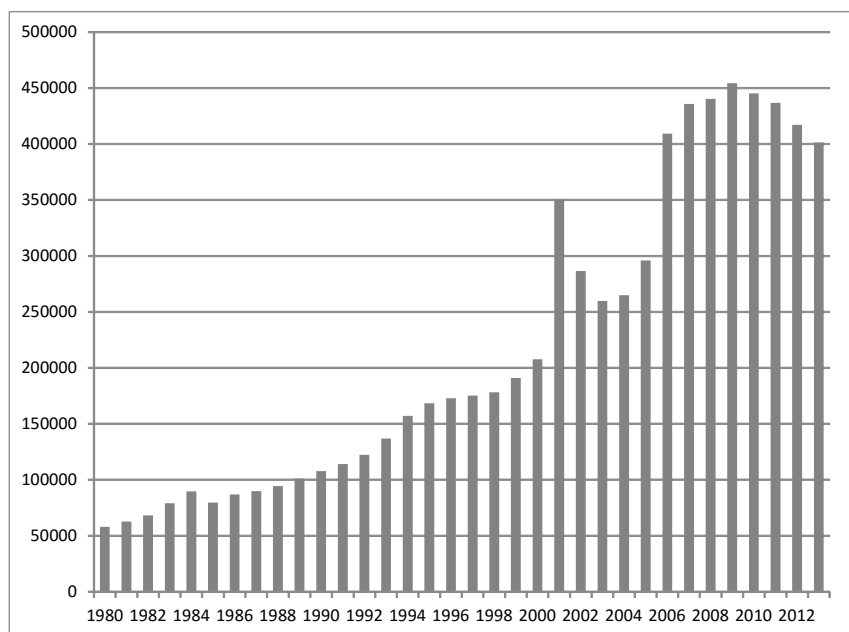
In Portugal, Eastern European immigrants only become numerically significant at the end of the 1990s. Until that time, the Portuguese immigration landscape was mainly characterized by the presence of citizens from former Portuguese colonies in Africa and from Brazil. The study of this phenomenon is particularly interesting because it allows to analyse the constitution and development of a new immigration flow and of new immigrant communities in the country and, since the 2008 crisis, to investigate the strategies that immigrants use to face an economic situation that seems to hinder the fulfilment of their initial motivations for migration. Considering the importance of economic motives, it should be expected that, if the reason that justified migration can no longer be satisfied in Portugal, migrants would adopt strategies to attain their economic wellbeing elsewhere. By focusing on the possibilities that migrants consider when planning their future trajectories in a context marked by an economic downturn, this analysis intends to shed light on some of the factors that could impact on these possibilities. It will be shown that these are not limited by the dichotomy of staying or returning, but are spread over a continuum of mobility options in-between the two extreme options (staying or returning). The objective of this article is twofold. First, it presents the evolution of immigration in Portugal giving special attention to the inflow of Eastern European immigrants at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Second, it intends to analyse the effects of the 2008 economic crisis on this immigration flow and the various options that immigrants could follow in their response to a downturn in the economic situation.

Keywords: Portuguese immigration, Eastern European immigrants, Immigration Policies, Labour market, crisis

Immigration in Portugal

During large parts of his history, Portugal has been a nation of emigration. Since the mid-1980s, the country witnessed the development and consolidation of immigration flows, and the formation of immigrant communities numerically important, as well as characterized by varied socio-demographic composition (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Immigrants in Portugal, 1990 – 2013.



Source: SEF, several years.

If we overlook the migratory process that occurred inside the Portuguese colonial empire, namely the Cape Verdean migrants who came to mainland Portugal in the 1960s and early 1970s, then we can say that immigration towards Portugal *de facto* only began in the second half of the seventies with the massive arrival of people from the former colonies after their independence. During the 1980s, there was a significant increase in the foreign population living in Portugal (on average 6.4% a year), and a diversification of the origins of the immigrants, visible in the substantial growth of Asians (mainly Chinese) and South Ameri-

cans (mainly from Brazil). Out of the 58,000 foreigners legally living in Portugal in 1980, 48% were of African origin, 31% were from Europe and 11% from South America (mainly Brazil). From the second half of the 1980s onwards, labour immigration to Portugal became increasingly dominant. Moreover, the adherence to the European Economic Community in January 1986 accelerated the internationalisation of the Portuguese economy and attracted labour migration from the traditional sources. In 1990, the total number of foreigners legally living in Portugal was 107,767 individuals, 42% of them were of African origin, 29% were from Europe and 16% from South America (mainly Brazil). The 1990s were marked by a new immigration cycle characterised by an increasing diversification of the nationalities that entered Portugal. The positive development of the foreign population was intense during the 1990s, reaching an annual growth rate of approximately 7%¹. This evolution was especially noticed in the foreign population from the African and European continents. These two continents accounted, in 1998, for 75.7% of the total foreign population (29.3% were of European origin and 46.4% of African origin). In spite of this continuous increase in the foreign population living in Portugal, by the year 2000 the number of legal resident foreigners was only 207,607, that is, approximately 2% of the country's total population (SEF, 1999 and 2000; Baganha et al., 2000).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, migration to Portugal from third countries was overwhelmingly (76% in 1999 and 77% in 2000) made up of immigrants from the former Portuguese colonies in Africa² and from Brazil. The remaining immigrants were spread among more than one hundred different nationalities, none of which was numerically significant (SEF 1999 and 2000). To sum up, until the end of the twentieth century immigrants living in Portugal remained still relatively low and were mainly rooted in the country's colonial past, its historical and cultural links, as well as its main economic connections (Baganha and Góis, 1999; Baganha, et al., 2000; Peixoto et al. 2002).

From 2000 onwards, there was a sudden and intense change in the Portuguese migratory landscape. After the consolidation of immigration from European and/or Portuguese-speaking countries, Portugal

¹ It must be said that the growth registered during this decade was more the result of the two special legalization processes that took place in 1992 and 1996 than to a continuous flow of new arrivals. These two legalization processes targeted specifically illegal immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP and Brazil), both including positive discriminatory articles that specifically favored these immigrants. During these two legalization processes, approximately 39,000 (1992) and 35,000 (1996) immigrants acquired a legal status.

² Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe.

also began to attract economic or labour immigrants from multiple origins, even from countries with which Portugal had no privileged relationship until that date. It occurred a sudden and intense process of transformation of the geographical origins of immigrants who started to come mostly from Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine, and Brazil. The number of immigrants residing legally in Portugal rose from 208,198 in 2000 to 434,636 in 2003, which means that the volume of the foreign population with legal residence increased by about 109% in only 3 years. As important as the quantitative evolution of the immigrant population was the transformation of the ranking of the main national origins of the immigrants living in Portugal. In 2003, the main immigrant group was no longer from a former Portuguese colony in Africa: Ukraine, representing an unknown origin in the nineties, became one of the leading countries in 2003; also Moldova became a familiar country of origin of migrants towards Portugal. Romania became one of the major sources of immigrants, and Brazil, the most important destination of Portuguese emigrants during the 20th century, turned out to be the origin of the most important group of immigrants in Portugal in the new millennium. How can we explain the sudden and intense inflow from Eastern Europe and, at the same time, the sustained increase in the number of migrants from the traditional sources? How can we explain the rise of 100% in the total number of foreigners legally residing in Portugal in less than five years? There are, of course, no simple explanations, but this study offers some potential answers, focusing its explanations on the evolution of immigration policies and showing how they functioned to supply the necessary labour force to a growing labour market.

The political framework

Before analysing more thoroughly the political measures that had the greater impact on the growth of Eastern European immigrants in Portugal, as well as affecting their legal and labour market integration, we would like to briefly outline the development of immigration policies in Portugal. It is possible to characterize Portuguese immigration policies of the late 1980s and early 1990s as mainly “a reaction” (Marques and Góis, 2005), that is, their main objective was to respond to an increasing immigrant population at the time when a substantial part of the migrants entered the country legally but overstayed their permission to be on Portuguese territory. The laws that implemented this policy aimed, therefore, to regularize the situation of foreigners staying irregularly in Portugal. It also targeted preferably immigrants from Por-

tuguese-speaking countries, which comprised more than 80% of the total number of foreigners regularized during the two regularization processes of the 1990's (1992 and 1996). Positive discrimination provisions towards citizens from former Portuguese colonies were also present in other legal instruments (e.g. nationality law), thus reflecting the intense political, economic, and socio-cultural relations that continued to exist between these countries and the former colonial power (Marques and Góis, 2005).

Policies adopted at the beginning of the new millennium gradually moved away from the preferred treatment of immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries and adopted a more universal approach to immigrant groups present on the Portuguese territory. The development of a massive migratory flow originating from countries without previous historical, cultural and economic links with Portugal and the political will to modify the framework on immigration led to the enactment of a new legislative framework on entry, residence, and expulsion from the Portuguese territory.³

The change in the Immigration Law and, more specifically, the creation of a new legal framework for foreigners who worked in Portugal, the so-called Stay Permits (*Autorizações de Permanência* or APs for short),⁴ made it possible to regularise a substantial number of immigrant workers. The APs corresponded, in practice and in essence, to a work visa, exceptionally granted in the national territory, revealing the emergence of immigrant communities in Portugal that had not been very significant in the past: for the first time, Ukrainian, Romanian, Moldavian and Russian immigrants appeared at the top of immigration statistics in Portugal (Baganha et al., 2004). This process also demonstrated that immigration in Portugal was no longer confined just to traditional host regions, particularly the main cities in Portugal, but rather was dispersed throughout the national territory, causing a shift that had a real impact on the forms of social integration for immigrants (Fonseca et al., 2004).

In recent years however, and especially since 2009, a reduction in the number of immigrants in Portugal is visible, resulting, to a large extent, from the substantial rise in immigrant unemployment rates. The economic crisis was particularly intense in the main economic sectors where immigrants worked (e.g. the construction and building industry), being thus the main reason for the departure of thousand

³ For a more detailed description of Portuguese immigration policies see: Baganha and Góis (1999); Baganha, et al. (2000).

⁴ Decree-Law No. 4/2001, of January 10th.

immigrants. This decrease could have been more pronounced if not partially compensated by the family members of the immigrants who stayed in the country (Fonseca et al., 2005).

Eastern European immigrants in Portugal

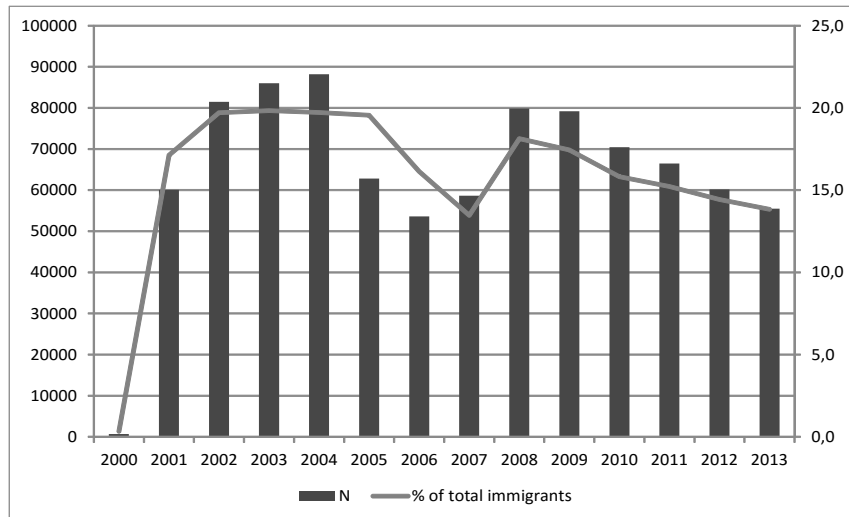
Between 2001 and 2003, under the terms of Art. 55 of the Decree-Law No. 4/2001, 183,655 APs were granted to immigrant workers who were in Portugal in an irregular situation, but possessing a work contract. More than half these APs were issued to citizens from Eastern Europe (55%), the vast majority of them from Ukraine (35%). Between 2000 and 2003, the number of immigrants legally residing in Portugal rose from 208,198 to 434,636 individuals, i.e., there was a 109% growth in the volume of the legally resident foreign population in the country. As a result of the granting of these APs, the ranking of the main nationalities of immigrants from third countries underwent a profound change and immigrants from Ukraine now constituted one of the most numerous group (Baganha et al., 2010; Fonseca et al., 2014; Pena Pires, 2003).

In practical terms, this extraordinary regularisation regime introduced a strategy in Portuguese migration policies that was based on the temporary nature of migration, as a response to the different junctures and phases of the labour market in Portugal, making it possible to open borders during periods when labour was abundant and close them when jobs were scarce. This strategy entails issuing visas with a limited duration, initially for one year and renewable up to a maximum of five years, which only allowed engaging in subordinate professional activities. In practice, it followed a model of individual regularisation of immigrant workers present in the national territory, based on the presupposition that if they were already inserted into the labour market, hence they were already part of the real labour demand. Over the course of time, it became evident that many of the newly arrived workers who had been granted stay permits did not intend to return to their countries of origin. It is important to note that this legal regime ended up playing a relevant role in satisfying a demand for labour in the Portuguese economy at certain junctures. In fact, a good number of these immigrant workers reacted very quickly to economic changes and/or changes in the Portuguese labour market, leaving the country either temporarily or permanently, even while they still held valid APs or after these APs had been converted into residence permits. Unfortunately, statistics on migratory stocks only provide an approximate idea of the dimensions of this phenomenon

since they only record the number of immigrants legally resident and not the exits from the national territory.

Between 2001 and 2004 Portugal endorsed 100,282 authorizations of permanence or residence to immigrants from Eastern Europe (Moldavia, Ukraine, Russia and Romania). The number of authorizations of permanence allowed confirming the development of immigrant communities that previously were quantitatively of small significance. For the first time, Ukrainian, Romanian, Moldavian, and Russian immigrants appeared among the main immigrant groups in Portugal. This new migratory flow allowed taking conscience that immigration in Portugal was no longer confined to the traditional regions of destiny, but was increasingly spreading to the overall Portuguese territory. More surprising than the post-colonial migration to Portugal however, has been the emergence of Eastern European migration where previous cultural links and existing migratory networks had been absent. Available empirical evidence obtained since this period confirmed that this population is highly distinct from previous migratory waves to Portugal.

Figure 2. Eastern European Immigrants in Portugal, 2000 – 2013 (absolute numbers and % of total immigrants, main nationalities).



Note: main nationalities are: Ukraine, Moldovia, and Russia.

Source: SEF, several years.

Two major surveys conducted by the research team of the Centre for Social Studies in 2002 and 2004 characterized the migration from Eastern Europe to Portugal as a labour movement, rooted in the economic disparities existent between the two regions (Baganha et al., 2010; Baganha et al., 2004). In accordance with the results obtained, this movement occurred because: a) profit seeking organisations, particularly in the Ukraine, promoted migration to Portugal; b) the ongoing regularisation process of immigrant workers; c) an increase in demand for foreign workers in economic sectors, such as construction and tourism verified during the second half of the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium. This sudden and unexpected migratory wave has drastically and substantially changed the composition of the immigrant population in Portugal and consolidates the position of Portugal in the European migratory system as a receiving country.

Table 1. Characteristics of surveyed immigrants.

| Characteristics | n | % (valid answers only) |
|---------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| Citizenship | | |
| Ukraine | 536 | 57,3 |
| Moldova | 167 | 17,9 |
| Russia | 206 | 22,0 |
| Other | 21 | 2,8 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 507 | 62,5 |
| Female | 215 | 37,5 |
| Age Groups | | |
| 15-19 | 13 | 1,5 |
| 20-29 | 217 | 24,4 |
| 31-39 | 342 | 38,4 |
| 40-49 | 255 | 28,7 |
| 50 and + | 63 | 7,1 |
| NA | 87 | |
| Civil Status | | |
| Single | 202 | 21,9 |
| Married | 612 | 66,5 |
| Divorced/ widow | 107 | 11,6 |
| NA | 16 | |

Source: Survey applied to a sample of immigrants from Eastern Europe, CES, Coimbra, 2004

A closure look at the 2004 survey allows us to present some of the characteristics of this migration (Table 1). Of the 913 surveyed immigrants in 2004, 57% were Ukrainians, 22% Russians and 18% Moldavians. The gender composition of the immigrant population is biased, in fact 63% of the respondents were male and 37% were females. As it could be expected from an economic migration flow, the majority of the migrants were in the active age groups: 91% were between 20 and 49 old. Regarding the civil status 67% are married, 22% are single, and 12% are divorced or a widow.

A substantial part of the immigrants from Eastern Europe present a high level of qualifications (Table 2). However, independently of this academic qualification, they were economically incorporated into the 3D (dirty, dangerous and difficult) jobs on the labour market and registered therefore a deskilling process (Marques and Góis, 2011).

Table 2. Immigrants' occupation in country of origin and in Portugal (%).

| Major occupational groups | Occupation in country of origin (n=785) | First occupation in Portugal (n=778) | Occupation at the moment of survey (n=668) |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Professional and scientific occupations | 44,8 | 1,8 | 7,3 |
| Technicians and associate occupations | 8,7 | 2,8 | 1,9 |
| Service workers and sales workers | 12,6 | 10,8 | 17,2 |
| Craft and related workers | 19,6 | 14,8 | 25,7 |
| Plant, machine operators and assemblers | 9,3 | 3,9 | 10,0 |
| Elementary occupations | 1,1 | 65,9 | 37,7 |
| Other occupational groups | 4,0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Not working (n) | 117 | - | 91 |
| No answer (n) | 110 | 130 | 14 |

Source: Survey applied to a sample of immigrants from Eastern Europe, CES, Coimbra, 2004.

The professions of the immigrants in their home country show a relatively homogeneous occupational structure characterized by the existence of two large occupational groups. The first one, consist of individuals that exercised qualified professions (above all of an intellectual or scientific nature). The second is made of individuals who occupied intermediate level or specialized professions. It is important to note that work in elementary occupations assumes an almost irrelevant expression among all inquired (11%). As will be shown this changed with their integration in the Portuguese labour market.

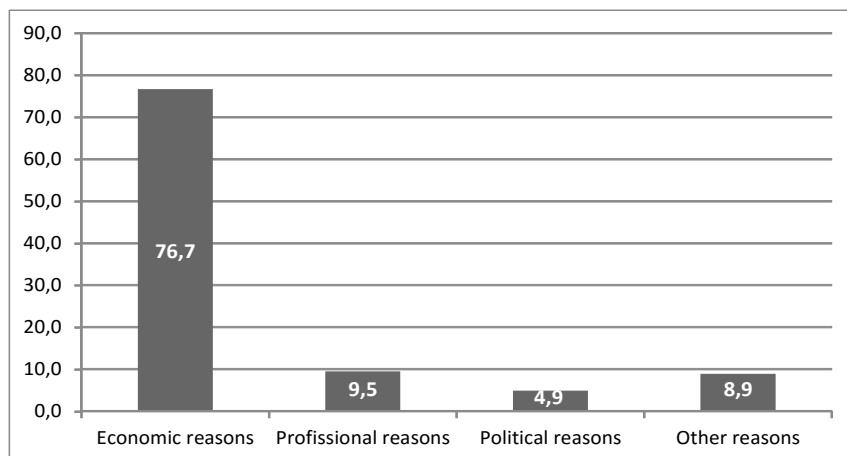
Comparing the immigrant's profession in the country of origin with their first profession in Portugal it is possible to note a process of professional disqualification that is clearly visible in the reduction of employment in Professional and scientific occupations and as technicians and related occupations, and in the increase of persons active in elementary occupations.

This disqualification process is however not irreversible. The analysis of immigrants' occupation at the moment of the survey (main professional groups) show that, even though a difference between the profession in the country of origin and the profession in Portugal remain, immigrants register a small approximation to the profession held before emigration. To this approximation of the two professional structures contributed decisively both the strong reduction of immigrants active in elementary occupations, and the increase of immigrants working in professional and scientific occupations, as plant and machine operators and assemblers, and craft and related workers.

As said, this immigration flow was sudden and unexpected. To the determinant already mentioned (the existence of an on-going regularization program, active from January to November of 2001) we have to add the promotion of Portugal as a migratory destiny made in the country of origin by informal recruiters (mainly through travel agencies)⁵, and the income differentials between origin and destiny countries. The differences between salaries earned in the country of origin and the expected income in Portugal justified that the majority of surveyed Eastern European immigrants stated economic reasons (77%) or professional opportunities (10%) for their decision to migrate. Other motives are only marginal in the migration decision-making process.

⁵ This promotion was made through the offer of a complete 'migration package' that included travel, documents, accommodation and the promise of a job.

Figure 3. Reasons for migration, 2004 (%).



Source: Survey applied to a sample of immigrants from Eastern Europe, CES, Coimbra, 2004.

Since economic motives predominate, it should be expected that if the reason that justified the migration could not be satisfied in Portugal migrants would adopt strategies to attain their economic wellbeing elsewhere. As we will see below (section 4), this straightforward reasoning is not entirely appropriate to describe the migration process of Eastern European immigrants (and other immigrant groups).

In fact, when questioned about their future plans, albeit showing a high grade of indecision, the majority of immigrants (47%) stated that they have the intention to stay temporarily in Portugal, and only 29% manifested the intention to stay definitively in the country. Migrant's future migration plans are influenced by the resident status of the immigrant (regular, or irregular), by the possibilities to access welfare benefits (through contributing to the social security and fiscal system), and by the existence of a social support network (measure by the existence of family members living in Portugal)⁶ (Table 3).

⁶ There are naturally other factors (like socio-cultural integration, homeland engagement, expectations on the development of home country economy, etc.) that also impact on migrants' future intentions. They haven't however been considered in the survey applied to Eastern European immigrants.

Table 3. Migrants' future plans by influencing factors (%).

| | | Return | Stay | Remi- gration | Other/ undefined | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|------|------------------|---------------------|-------|
| <i>Legal status</i> | | | | | | |
| Legal resident | | 45.5 | 31.1 | 7.5 | 15.9 | 653 |
| Irregular resident | | 50.8 | 24.9 | 3.7 | 20.6 | 189 |
| <i>Access to the welfare system</i> | | | | | | |
| Contribute do social security | Yes | 42.6 | 33.3 | 7.6 | 16.5 | 589 |
| | No | 53.8 | 19.3 | 5.5 | 21.4 | 145 |
| Contribute to fiscal system | Yes | 40.4 | 35.1 | 8.1 | 16.4 | 507 |
| | No | 55.4 | 20.3 | 5.0 | 19.4 | 222 |
| <i>Social support mechanism</i> | | | | | | |
| Family members in Portugal | Yes | 49.1 | 29.0 | 5.3 | 16.5 | 544 |
| | No | 43.4 | 27.9 | 9.0 | 19.7 | 290 |

Source: Survey applied to a sample of immigrants from Eastern Europe, CES, Coimbra, 2004.

From the table it seems clear that immigrants with an insecure legal status, not covered by the welfare system, and that couldn't resort to social support mechanisms present a higher intention to return to their homeland. They present also a greater percentage of other or undefined future migration projects and lower intentions to stay in the country or to migrate to another country (except for the immigrants with family members in Portugal).

As is widely known, and other migratory flows show, immigrants' initial intention to stay temporarily and to return to their home country frequently turns out to be transformed in a more permanent stay and in a successive postponement of their return intentions. Since the survey we have been using was conducted before the outset of the 2008 economic and financial crisis it could not grasp the real impact of the economic downturn on the Eastern European immigration flow. We have thus to turn to available data on unemployment and on the evolution of the stock and flows of Eastern European immigrants to shed some light on the options that migrants could take into consideration in planning their future.

The end of a migratory cycle?

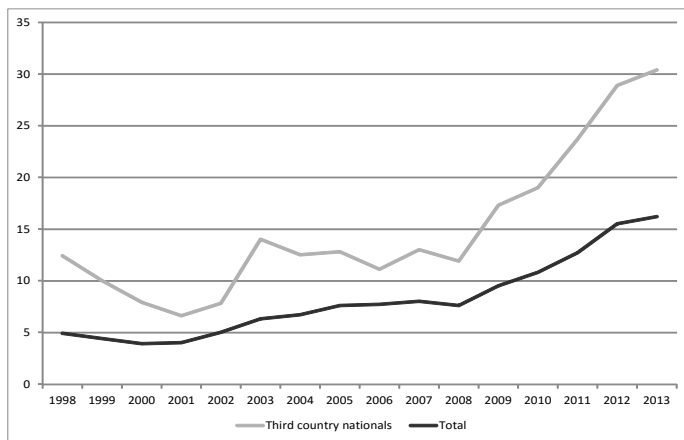
The study of international migration flows has mostly focused on the patterns, processes and outcomes of the entrance of immigrants in host countries. A specific interest has been on immigrants' integration in different social systems and on the different models of integration developed by the countries of accommodation. The study of migrants' future intentions has deserved lesser attention and has generally been framed by the analysis of migrants return intentions or of the factors that impact on these. Economic determinants and impacts of return have earned most of the academic and political attention, like, for example, development of the labour market in the host or origin country, the migrants' integration in the host labour market, or the relation between return and origin context development⁷. Other aspects, like legal status, formal or informal integration in the labour market, existence of social network, and the different options that immigrants could consider when planning their migration future are generally lesser considered in the analysis of migrants' future intention. Before turning to the possibilities that immigrants consider when faced with a unfavourable economic condition (like, for example, unemployment or reduction in salaries) let us briefly present the effects of the current economic crisis on the labour market situation of Eastern European immigrants.

Unemployment of Eastern European immigrants

In the last years the on-going economic crisis in Portugal was particularly intense in the main economic sectors where Eastern European immigrants worked. Immigrants that work in activity sectors particularly exposed to the downturn of the economic cycle (for example, building and construction) and those immigrants employed on short-term and precarious labour contracts become especially vulnerable to unemployment (Peixoto and Iorio, 2011). Data from the Labour Force Survey confirm that immigrants (and mainly third country nationals) are among the most affected groups by unemployment (together with young age adults and women) (Figure 4). In 2013, the unemployment rate of the foreign population from third-countries was 30.6%, while for the total population it was 16.2%.

⁷ For an overview see, for example, Cassarino (2004), and de Haas and Fokkema (2011). For an exception see Agadjanian et al. (2014).

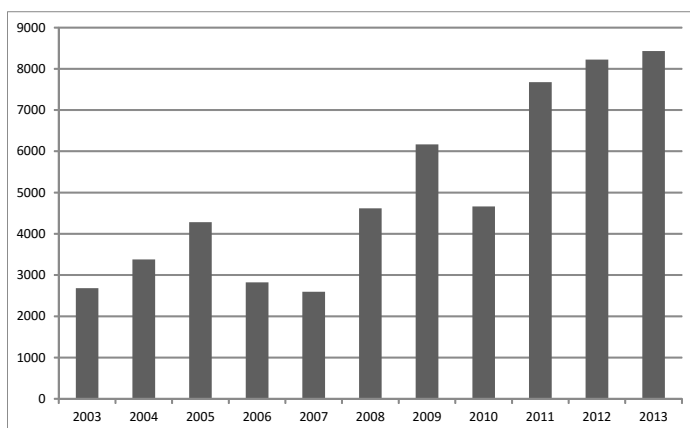
Figure 4. Unemployment rate of total population and of third country nationals, 1998-2013 (annual average).



Source: Statistics Portugal (INE), Labour Force Survey (several years).

Data on the number of foreigners enrolled at the National Employment Institute (IEFP) confirm the increase in the unemployment of Eastern European migrants (which since 2008 represent around 20% of the total unemployed immigrants enrolled at the IEFP).

Figure 5. Registered unemployed immigrants from a Eastern European country, 2003-2013 (selected nationalities).



Source: IEFP, Estatísticas mensais (available at <https://www.iefp.pt/estatisticas>, several years).

Portuguese media has regularly showcased the existence of a phenomenon whereby immigrants were leaving the national territory. The outflow of these immigrants is attributed essentially due to higher levels of unemployment as compared to unemployment rates recorded for Portuguese workers and as compared to previous years. Albeit the return (or remigration) is one of the possible outcomes of the current economic situation, it is not the only one (or even the one followed by the majority of immigrants).

As seen in figures 1 and 2, since 2008 the foreign population regularly living in Portugal registered a decrease of 8,8%, while immigrants from an Eastern European country declined 29,9%. This statistical data on the decline of the stock of foreign population didn't however tell the whole story. To these numbers we have to add an unknown number of Eastern European immigrants that in fact abandoned the country in recent years, but which didn't give up their residence permits. Some of these immigrants returned (albeit temporarily) to their home country, and others migrated to another EU-country. This migration strategy makes use of the possibilities of intra-EU free movement of people to include, in the planning of their migration careers, the possibility to keep an authorization of residence in one country of the EU and re-migrate to another EU country, or return to their home country, while awaiting future economic developments. Since they don't gave up their residence permit they continue to count has being present in the Portuguese territory contributing thus to conceal the real evolution of the stock of immigrants in the country.

The evolution of the acquisition of Portuguese citizenship by Eastern European immigrants also contributes to the uncertainty on the effects of the economic crisis on immigrants return. Thus the reduction of 24,341 Eastern European immigrants between 2008 and 2013 could be either a result of returns (or remigrations), or the outcome of their disappearance from statistics on immigrants due to the acquisition of the Portuguese nationality by some of these immigrants (between 2008 and 2012, 23,116 eastern European immigrants become Portuguese citizens).

Another important aspect regarding the development of Eastern European immigrants in Portugal is the relevance of family reunification practices. During the last years (between 2008 and 2013) 13,997 Eastern European immigrants entered in Portugal through a family reunification visa, indicating that at the same time many migrant workers exit the country due to the lack of employment and the rise in unemployment, other migrants proceed to establish more permanent relations with Portugal (through family reunification)⁸.

⁸ Fonseca et al. (2005); Marques et al. (2014); Oliveira et al. (2001).

Future migration paths of Eastern European immigrants

The aforementioned numbers testify an ambiguous evolution of Eastern European immigrants in Portugal. On the one hand, they point to a clear reduction of citizens from an Eastern European country. On the other, they denote signs of maintenance of this immigration flow (albeit of a different type). In any case, existing data don't allow making a clear assertion on the potential evolution of this group of immigrants in Portugal.

This uncertainty with regard to the future – clearly admitted by immigrants, in relation to a greater length of stay in Portugal, re-emigration or return to countries of origin – is further reinforced when we consider the structural and economic factors that govern modern migration. In a nutshell these factors are:

- a) The opportunity of free movement inside the European Union for immigrants with a resident permit in one of the member countries;
- b) The possibilities of acquiring nationality in some countries of the European Union;
- c) Transport capability and communication on an international level;
- d) Oscillations in international migratory policies that currently seem to tilt toward more restrictive principles;
- e) The growth in the Eastern Europe economy and the evolution of the international economic environment;
- f) The evolution of the geo-political situation of some of the Eastern European countries.

All these factors contribute to the volatility of the migratory paths of Eastern European immigrants in Portugal. They are largely structural factors that frame the opportunities available to immigrants and that are felt subjectively by every immigrant. The evaluation of these structural factors together with immigrants' form and level of integration in different systems of the Portuguese society (mainly in the economic and social system)⁹ could lead to the development of different future migration intentions. Thus immigrants could follow multiple strategies and combine these differently producing consequently unexpected migratory paths. Since available statistics are insufficient to inform on the diversity of these paths, we could only point to some of the possible strategies:

- a) 'going in order to stay in another foreign country': that is re-emigrate to another EU country, continuing consequently the migration process;

⁹ As said behind this integration is influenced, among other factors, by their legal status, access to social welfare, and/or to social support network.

- b 'going, leaving open the possibility to re-stay in the future': that is returning temporarily to their country of origin;
- c) 'going without ceasing to stay': circulate between Portugal and their country of origin or another host country thus;
- d) 'staying': continuing to reside in Portugal, developing different strategies to cope with current economic uncertainties, and above all if they become unemployed (these strategies are, evidently, not unique to immigrant populations)¹⁰;
- e) 'leaving': returning permanently to their country of origin.

The data on future migration intentions gathered through the survey mentioned behind indicate that the activation of each one of these strategies is influenced by the degree and configuration of immigrants' access to formal and informal support mechanisms that exist in the Portuguese society. Access to formal support mechanisms result mainly from a prior inclusion of immigrants in the formal labour market, and access to informal support mechanisms are dependent on the availability of a social network of support to which immigrants could resort.

Concluding remarks

Migration of Eastern European citizens to Portugal was an intense movement that essentially took place during the year 2001. This immigration flow was largely unexpected particularly because it represented a change in the Portuguese migratory patterns of the 1980's and 1990's, and because the country hadn't adopted any pro-active policy to recruit Eastern European workers nor had any privileged economic, historical or cultural links with that region that could explain the sudden and massive inflow of immigrant workers. This migration was routed in existing economic disparities between the two regions and was actively promoted by organizations with lucrative objectives, and organized networks of migration assistance, that used as a main attraction the fact that an extraordinary regularization of immigrant workers was taking place and the labour force scarcity feel by some of the Portuguese economic sectors (mainly, civil construction and public works and tourism industry).

Since 2004 the movement diminished significantly and given the economic recession currently experienced by the country it is realistic to suppose that it will remain at low levels during the next years. It is

¹⁰ These strategies may consist of the development of professional skills, internal migration in order to search for job opportunities in other regions of the country, self-employment, or the insertion in the informal labor market.

however premature to foresee the evolution of this last migratory wave and it is unclear what future migration paths Eastern European immigrants will follow. Their future migration biographies are framed by a continuum of possibilities that oscillate between two extreme situations: staying or returning. Independently of migrant's future decision on their migration project, what today is already a recognized fact is that, even without new inflows and with some departures, this sudden and unexpected migratory wave changed drastically and substantially the composition of the immigrant population in Portugal and consolidates the presence of the country in the European migratory system as a receiving country.

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