

Migrants trafficking and individual strategies: the formation of dynamic channels in international migration¹

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Abstract

In this paper, a discussion of the current modalities of migrants trafficking will be made, taking into account the vast expression that it acquires and its extremely dynamic character. The main empirical base is a recent research project carried out in Portugal, which considered both labour and sexual exploitation related flows. The underlying claim is that it is the conjunction of individual aspirations for migration, stringent migration policies and organised intermediary agents that lead to the surge of dynamic modalities for channelling flows. The fact that each agent actively interacts with the others explains the continuing changes in the process.

Keywords: Trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration, Portugal.

Trafficking and human smuggling in contemporary societies has received considerable attention in recent years. Scientific research on the theme and the number of references to it sharply increased, accompanying the worldwide growth of these flows (for a recent review, see Peixoto *et al.* 2005). One of the recurrent debates in the literature has focused on conceptual issues: despite the conscience that largely different types of movements occur on this field, the characterization of trafficking of human beings, at the one hand, and smuggling of migrants, at the other, often overlaps (Aronowitz,

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