

No longer the promised land? Mobility patterns of Eastern and Central Europeans in Spain during the economic crisis¹

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This article focuses on the mobility patterns of Central and Eastern European immigrants within the context of the economic crisis. The objective is to explore differences in these patterns between two categories of migrants and their determinants. More specifically, the authors distinguish between migrants from Central and Eastern Europe whose countries are members of the EU and migrants whose countries do not belong to the union. The initial assumption is that Central and Eastern European migrants from EU member states would be more inclined to return to their countries of origin as opportunity costs of such a decision are smaller. Descriptive analysis based on data from Residential Variation Statistics is rather inconclusive. In absolute terms, the volume of out-migration increases among EU Central and Eastern European migrants. In the case of non-EU migrants from Eastern Europe, the increase in departures is more moderate. In relative terms, the out-migration rate of non-EU Eastern Europeans is only slightly larger than that of EU Eastern Europeans. Statistical analysis based on OLS regression models shows that migrant groups from countries that are members of the EU and belong to the area of free movement of labour force do not have significantly higher rates of out-migration. Instead, the rate of regularity significantly affects the intensity of exits from Spain. The authors conclude that the institutional factor that shapes return decisions is not EU citizenship, but rather the residency permit, which may itself be a value added to the mobility allowing for both return and the freedom to travel within the whole Schengen Area.

Keywords: Spain, Central Eastern Europe nationals, return migrations, economic crisis, free movement of the labour force

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Introduction

Between 1996 and 2007, Spain experienced one of the longest and most intense periods of economic growth in its recent history. The booming labour market, along with weak inflow control and easy access to the labour market, were crucial pull factors for immigrants (Lopez Sala, 2013). As a consequence, Spain experienced a remarkable increase in immigration flows that was accompanied by a considerable diversification of origins, with immigration from Central and Eastern Europe supplementing earlier migrations into Spain from the Maghreb and Latin America (Stanek, 2009). The eruption of the global financial crisis at the end of 2007 had an especially dramatic impact on Spain's economic and social situation. The labour market contracted severely and unemployment rates increased exponentially, which had three main consequences for the migration dynamics in Spain. First, it led to a considerable drop in arrivals of new immigrants. Second, since the start of the economic crisis an increasing number of migrants re-emigrated or returned to their countries of origins (Larramona, 2013). Finally, Spanish emigration reappeared (Domingo i Valls et al., 2014; González-Ferrer, 2013). Even though this new migratory situation has drawn the attention of an increasing number of scholars, there are still several aspects of this changing reality that require further exploration, partly due to the relative novelty of the transformation of migratory trends and partly due to data limitations.

In this article, we will explore the impact of the economic crisis on the changing patterns of mobility of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. We are particularly interested in mapping differences and similarities between two categories of Central Eastern European migrants: those whose countries are members of the European Union and those whose countries remain outside this community². A number of studies point to the possible regulatory role of intra-EU mobility in the crisis and post-crisis period (Kahanec et al., 2014; Holland and Paluchowski, 2013). These authors argue that mobility within the area of free movement may be considered an important regulatory mechanism because it helps to reduce the volume of redundant workers by relocating them from areas hit

² In this article we include migrant populations from former socialist countries. We distinguish between Central and Eastern European EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and non-EU Central and Eastern European countries (Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine).

the hardest by the unemployment crisis to countries or regions that have labour shortages and scarcity (Dobson et al., 2009; Kahanec et al., 2014).

This perspective assumes that within the EU migrants from member states have no institutional obstacles and therefore no excessive opportunity costs to return to their home countries, if economic conditions deteriorate in their destination countries (Kremer et al., 2013). In contrast, non-EU migrants may be less willing to return to their countries of origin because of the fear that they may not be able to return because of tightened immigration controls. In the following pages, we will continue to explore how the mobility patterns of immigrants from various Central and Eastern European countries have evolved and we will analyse the determinants of return migration among Central and Eastern European immigrants, taking as the main differentiation criteria the institutional framework defined by whether or not they belong to the area of free movement of the labour force. The article is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief review of the recent research on the determinants of return migration. In Section 3 we describe the main data sources used in our analysis and their main advantages and limitations. Section 4 provides insight into the migration trends to Spain in the period previous to the economic crisis. Special attention is paid to the developments of inflows of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. The following section analyses the socio-economic situation after the outbreak of the economic crisis and the evolution of mobility patterns of migrants from Central and Eastern Europeans to Spain. Particular emphasis is placed on analysing data on out-migration from Spain during this period. Section 6 provides multivariate analyses of the main factors of out-migration of Central and Eastern Europeans from Spain. Finally, Section 7 provides a conclusion.

What are the main determinants of return migration?

The significant deterioration of the social and economic conditions after the global financial crisis in 2008 reopened a debate on the scale, patterns, and determinants of return migrations. At the onset of the global economic crisis, it was anticipated that the economic downturn would reduce the intensity of international flows and trigger massive returns (Castles and Vezzoli, 2009). These predictions seemed to be especially pertinent in the case of the European Union since as a consequence of the economic crunch many of its member states have entered into a long economic recession. However, although limited, the empirical evidence to date indicates that no mass return took place

during the economic crisis. Instead, many migrants seemed to have opted for either a wait-and-see strategy by staying in the host countries or migrating onward to other destination countries (Barcevičius et al., 2012). Furthermore, we can observe some significant differences in the scale of return migration among specific areas or countries within the EU. Available data shows that the return flows of foreigners from Southern European countries have increased more compared to those from other countries (Lafleur and Stanek, forthcoming). In the case of Spain, immigrant returns have been increasing throughout the economic crisis. Even so, the available data indicate that returns or re-emigration has become a strategy used to deal with the adverse social and economic situation for a relatively small number (when compared to scale of economic downturn) and specific categories of migrants (Cebolla Boado and González Ferrer, 2013; Parella and Petroff, 2014). This leads to question the determinants of returns. Previous empirical evidence indicates that at the individual level there are various factors that can have an effect on the decision to return. It has been observed that the initial intention of remaining in the destination country temporarily, the small investment made in moving to the destination country and the investments made in the destination country, as well as the short time that has passed since arrival, are important (although not exclusive) factors that can influence the decision to return (Lang et al., 2012; Beets and Willekens, 2009). Beyond the individual characteristics, the family situation can also play an important role in the decision making process. People who came in family migrations and immigrants who started their families after arriving to the host country are less likely to return (Dumont and Spielvogel, 2008).

In addition to the aforementioned individual or family characteristics, the key factors that affect decision-making are the economic and social conditions of the immigrants. Firstly, as noted by Awad (2009), a significant feature of the mobility during the current economic crisis is that in contrast to migration flows during the pre-crisis period, local unemployment has become the most important pro-migration driver. In addition, it has a general influence on deteriorating working conditions in terms of salaries, working time (hours of work, rest periods, and work schedules) as well as the physical conditions. So even if many migrants keep their jobs, a significant cut in wages and a drop in job quality can influence the decision to return. However, as Dumont and Spielvogel (2008) point out, when deciding whether or not to move back to the country of origin, migrants consider not only their current situation in the destination country but also the opportunities in their country of

origin. Lower wages alone will not prevent migrants from returning because it is not the absolute wage level that counts, but rather the wage relative to current wages in the origin country. Similarly, being out of a job might not be sufficient reason to return, as employment prospects in the home country may also be weak. In summary, the extent to which the economic cycles of the home and host countries are aligned will be reflected in determining return flows of migrants of specific origins.

The impact of economic performance on the decision to return may be mitigated or strengthened by additional non-economic factors. For instance, Borjas and Bratsberg (1996) highlight the importance of political and institutional stability. On the other hand, migration policies, particularly institutional barriers to international movement, may also be considered an important factor that shapes the return decisions of immigrants. The lack of legal restrictions on mobility, such as visas, and of obligatory residence permits may constitute an important incentive to return, as it considerably reduces the opportunity costs of mobility. From this perspective, the right of free movement of workers within the EU would be an important factor when deciding whether or not to return to the home country. This is because it is easier for migrants who are allowed to come back to the host country again to decide to return home (Akkoyunlu and Schlaepfer, 2013). On the other hand, non-EU migrants may refrain from returning for fear that once they leave their country of destination they might not be able to return (e.g. re-entry ban) or because of the high cost of re-entry and reinsertion into the host country (Herm and Poulain, 2012).

Available data sources

With some exceptions (see Dustmann, 2003), researchers interested in studying the phenomenon of return migration have to deal with considerable analytical problems related to the insufficient and deficient data sources available (Dumont and Spielvogel, 2008). One of the main sources of information on migration flows has been the Residential Variation Statistics (RVS) compiled from the Spanish population registers (Padrón municipal) by the Spanish Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE). This data will be the main source of information on the exit of foreigners in this article. Residential Variation Statistics are based on the Municipal Registers and reflect movements between municipalities and regions, as well as departures abroad. It is compiled from entries in the Municipal Registers on registrations and deletions due to residence changes. With regards to the growing

outflow of foreign and also native population, the RVS has become an important source for the exploration of this phenomenon (Larramona, 2013; González-Ferrer, 2013; Parella and Petroff, 2014; Domingo i Valls and Sabater Coll, 2013; Domingo i Valls et al., 2014).

Although this source is increasingly used, it should be highlighted that it contains several limitations that are to be taken into account when analysing data or interpreting results. Its main limitation is that individuals unregister from municipalities based on how long they plan to be outside the host country. Accordingly, if they plan to return to the host country shortly, they may decide not to unregister at all. Furthermore, there are hardly any incentives for people from Spain moving abroad to unregister from the *Padrón municipal* in Spain as they lose access to some welfare state benefits and remaining registered will not lead to an administrative sanction. There is also a significant delay between the actual departure of the individual and the deletion of his/her entry from the register. The RVS does not include complete information on the destination of the outbound flows since it is not mandatory to provide that information when unregistering. In addition, a significant number of cancellations from the Municipal Register are due to immigrants failing to renew their residency³. As can be expected, the administrative paperwork involved in unregistering does not include destinations, so the information on the movements registered by the RVS does not indicate if it is a return migration or re-emigration to another country. Finally, it should be considered that the RVS counts movements and not persons moving. So it is possible (although rather improbable) that the same person registers and unregisters several times over the course of a year, which would be counted as various movements.

Since 2004, several measures have been introduced to improve the coverage and reliability of data (for more discussion see Domingo i Valls and Sabater Coll, 2013); yet, when interpreting the results, the above mentioned limitations are to be taken into account. In light of the lack of complete and reliable information on the destinations of out-migrations, we assume that they are return migrations. In order to describe the dynamics and context of the mobility of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe we also use other sources of statistical data, such as stocks of foreign population according to the Municipal Register statistics. This is

³ As foreigners often do not unregister, a legal reform implemented in 2006 requires non-EU foreign nationals who do not have permanent residence permits to renew their registration every two years. If this renewal does not take place the municipality cancels the registration.

an administrative register of the residents of each municipality, regardless of their legal status, and it is currently one of the most widely used sources for the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrant population in Spain. We also include data from the Spanish Labour Force Survey in order to explore the main features of the labour market situation of migrants. However, sample limitations only allow us to carry out our analysis using aggregated categories of migrants.

Migration from Central and Eastern Europe in the period of economic boom

One of the main features of the Spanish economic structure is a highly volatile labour market. While its labour market tends to suffer from massive job destruction during periods of economic downturn, it also creates a plethora of jobs during periods of expansion (Dolado and Jimeno, 1997). The creation of jobs was a feature of the economic boom experienced by Spain from late 1990 until 2007. Access to cheap credit fuelled a property boom and demand for consumer goods and services, and subsequently led to the further expansion of low productivity sectors, generating extraordinary demand in low skill and unstable jobs (Bernardi and Garrido, 2008). On the other hand, the rise in the standard of living, the drop in birth rates, the increase in education and training levels and, consequently, of aspirations and expectations, meant that this demand could not be met by the native population (Pumares Fernández et al., 2006). Since the 1990s, this shortfall has been remedied by the massive arrival of foreign workers (Domingo i Valls and Houle, 2005; Carrasco et al., 2008).

According to the official Municipal Register statistics, the total number of registered foreigners tripled, rising from 1,470,000 in 2000 to 5,250,000 in 2007. The largest increase in the number of foreigners residing in Spain took place between 2001 and 2007, when the average yearly addition to the number of immigrants was around 600,000, making Spain the second largest destination country for foreign population in terms of flows, after the United States (Lopez de Lera, 2007). The scale of the increase during this period is revealed by the fact that at the end of the 1990s Spain was the country with the smallest foreign population in Southern Europe (Baganha and Reyneri 2001). The intensification of immigration flows was accompanied by a considerable diversification of the origins of immigrants, with immigration from Central and Eastern Europe supplementing earlier migrations into Spain from the Maghreb and Latin America.

Table 1. Evolution of immigrant stock in Spain 2000-2007 by areas of origin.

	EU-15	New Accession EU	Other Central and Eastern European	Maghreb	Latin America	Others	Total
2000	573.198	23.627	16.952	256.629	390.035	212.017	1.472.458
2001	630.599	67.275	35.597	330.055	646.165	259.578	1.969.269
2002	696.326	131.492	63.632	413.292	977.707	311.603	2.594.052
2003	780.146	235.428	93.221	489.698	1.331.796	372.151	3.302.440
2004	773.819	325.816	113.001	528.904	1.557.131	395.135	3.693.806
2005	883.149	466.945	142.741	620.078	1.794.433	484.138	4.391.484
2006	991.971	576.368	154.999	669.622	1.902.000	542.662	4.837.622
2007	1.092.091	731.492	158.641	682.759	2.029.493	555.517	5.249.993
Total							
2000- 2007	90,50%	2996,00%	835,80%	166,00%	420,30%	162,00%	256,50%

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data from the Municipal Register, years 2000-2007, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

The number of immigrants coming from Central and Eastern European EU accession states has multiplied by more than 30 between 2000 and 2007, making those states one of the major geopolitical areas of origin of immigrants in Spain. The absolute volume and relative share of the population of migrants coming from non-EU Central and Eastern European countries was appreciably lower in 2007. This population accounted for 158,641 individuals, which made up approximately 3% of the foreign population residing in Spain in 2007.

The increase in the proportion of the Central and Eastern European migrant population was mainly due to the massive arrival of Romanians (Stanek, 2009). At the start of 2007, the Romanian population included over 500,000 individuals, representing 57% of all Central and Eastern European immigrants and almost 12% of all foreign-born residents in Spain, making it the largest immigrant group in the country (along with Moroccans and Ecuadorians). The other large groups from Central and Eastern Europe are the Bulgarians and Poles. Interestingly, Poles were the most numerous migrant groups from Central and Eastern Europe in Spain until the beginning of the current century. The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and especially the introduction of the free movement regime changed

the scale and dynamics of Polish mobility within the EU, but also the destination of flows. The UK and Ireland became the main destinations of the post-2004 flows of Poles, which also partly affected the intensity of flows towards other countries, Spain among them (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2013). Regarding non-EU Central and Eastern Europeans, Ukraine and Russia are the principal countries of origin. In 2007, nationals from these two countries accounted for almost 75% of this population.

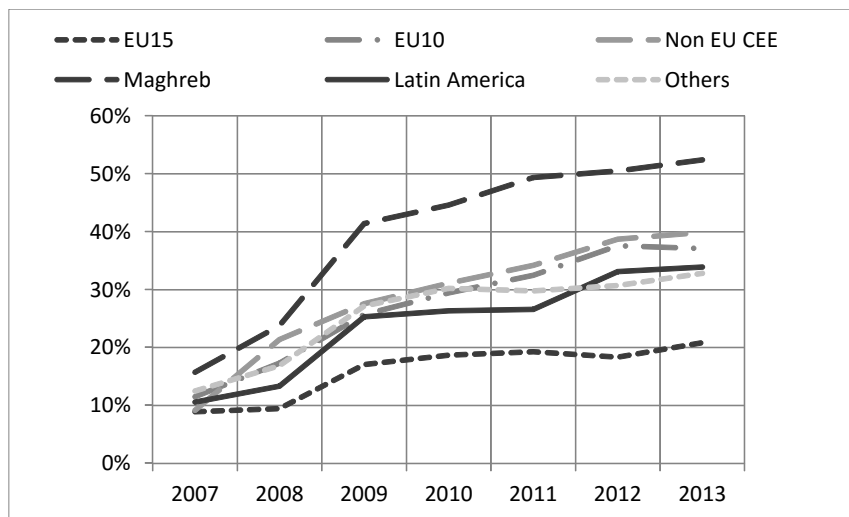
Impact of the economic crisis on foreign population stock and mobility

The outbreak of the global financial crisis revealed that the spectacular economic growth and job creation had unstable foundations. As a result of the macro-financial downturn, the Spanish economy went from intense growth and job creation to a sharp slowdown with a rocketing increase in unemployment rates. During six years of economic decline, employment rates have fallen to levels similar to those of the late 1990s. The unemployment rate in 2013 reached 26.1%, more than 15 percentage points above the EU average. Although initially the crisis affected workers in the construction sector most severely, subsequently, the general decrease in consumption levels, lack of private and public credit and a drastic cutback in public spending affected occupation rates in every sector of the Spanish labour market, with varying intensities. The most affected sectors were construction, industry and consumer services, with low added value and a large percentage of temporary contracts (Galindo Martín and Sosvilla Rivero, 2012). It is therefore hardly surprising that the migrants have been among those hit the hardest by the deteriorating economic environment. The gap in unemployment rates between the native and foreign population, which already existed in the pre-crisis period, increased substantially. At the beginning of 2007, the unemployment rate for the active native population reached 7.8%. During the same period the unemployment rate of foreigners was over 13%. By the middle of 2013, the statistics were considerably worse: the unemployment rate for natives was 24.7% and 35% for foreigners.

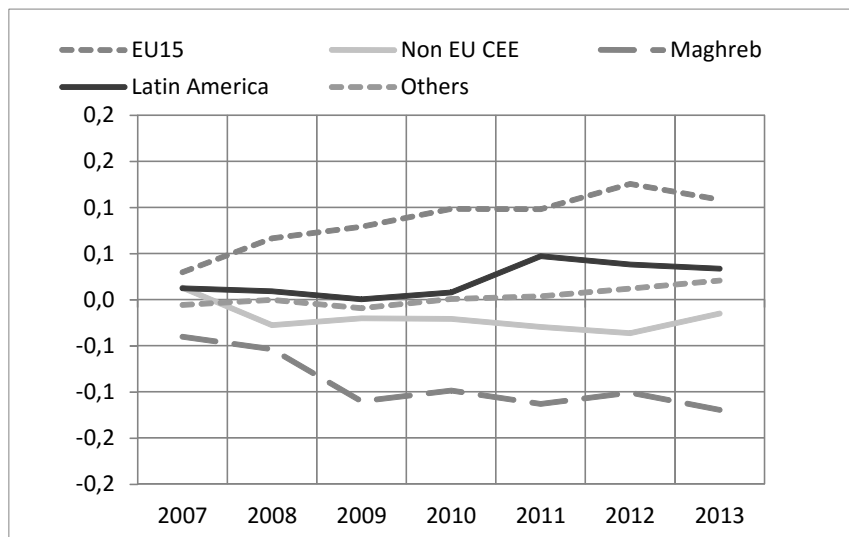
As revealed in figures 1.1-1.4, the unemployment rates of nationals from the new EU accession countries and nationals from non-EU Central and Eastern European countries follow very similar trajectories. At the beginning of the crisis, total unemployment was around 10% in both groups, later rising to 38% by the end of 2013 for new accession state nationals and 40% for the rest of the Eastern Europeans.

Figures 1.1-1.4 Evolution of unemployment rates by origin 2007-2013.

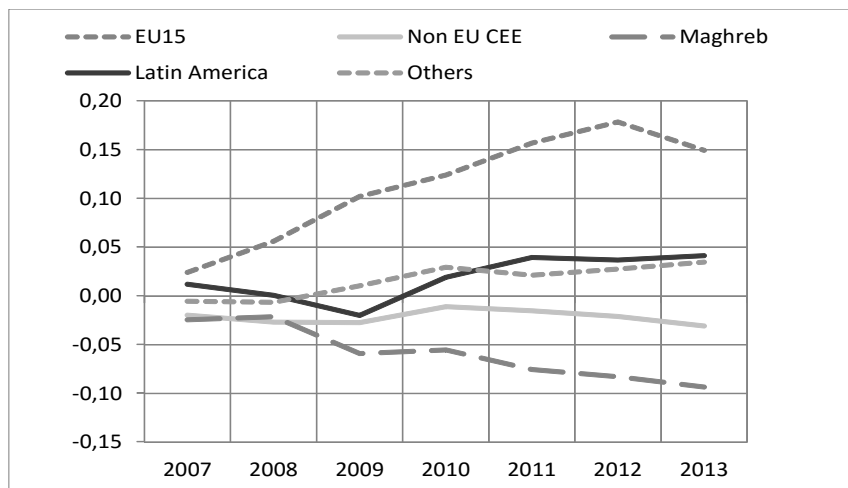
1.1 Evolution of unemployment rate by origin (%)



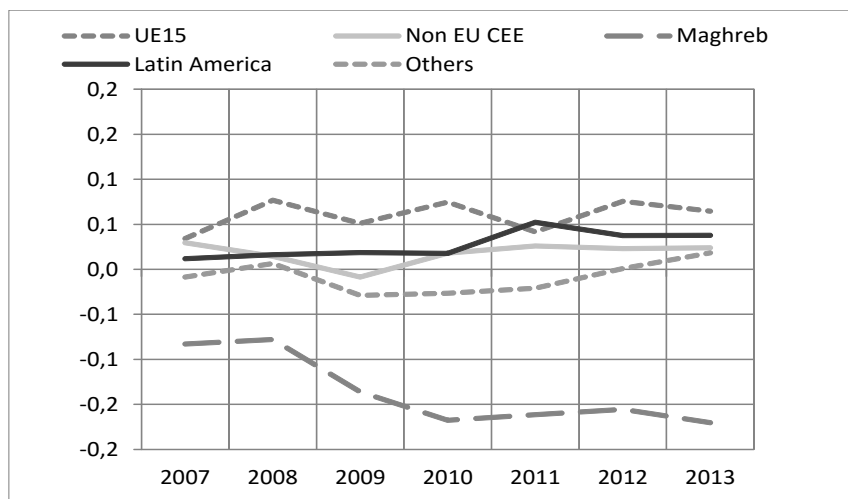
1.2 Evolution of predicted probabilities of being unemployed by origin*



1.3 Evolution of predicted probabilities of being unemployed by origin - men*



1.4 Evolution of predicted probabilities of being unemployed by origin - women*



* estimation after logistic regression, controlled by sex, age, educational level; reference category: EU-10.

** estimation after logistic regression, controlled by sex, age, educational level; reference category: EU-10.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data from the Labour Force Survey years 2007-2013, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

Data from the Municipal Register suggest that Spain has witnessed rising but still moderate emigration during recent years. First of all, the intense growth of the stock of foreign population has slowed down since 2008. As indicated in Table 2, the total foreign population increased by only 700,000 between 2008 and 2012, far below the growth rate of previous years. At the beginning of 2012 the volume of foreigners residing in Spain started to decrease. Between 2012 and 2014 the number of immigrants fell by approximately 500,000. At the beginning of 2014 Spain had approximately 6,283,000 foreign-born people, representing approximately 13% of the total population of the country.

Table 2. Evolution of stock immigrants in Spain 2000-2007 by areas of origin.

	EU-15	New Accession EU	Other Central and Eastern European	Maghreb	Latin America	Others	Total
2008	1.207.338	980.769	179.783	750.784	2.298.787	627.067	6.044.528
2009	1.274.422	1.055.282	189.691	810.596	2.437.556	698.731	6.466.278
2010	1.302.212	1.083.815	193.367	834.812	2.459.089	730.886	6.604.181
2011	1.305.090	1.111.549	199.951	844.568	2.456.375	760.306	6.677.839
2012	1.312.674	1.137.475	208.713	856.257	2.457.690	786.971	6.759.780
2013	1.271.473	1.090.430	213.149	854.093	2.419.329	792.062	6.640.536
2014	1.089.429	983.454	216.546	850.313	2.358.131	785.839	6.283.712
Total							
2008- 2013	-9,77%	0,27%	20,45%	13,26%	2,58%	25,32%	3,96%

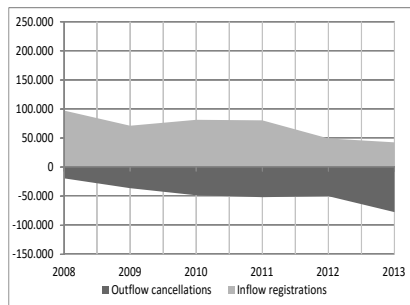
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data from the Municipal Register, years 2000-2007, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

The growth of the population of immigrants from the new accession countries began to decelerate between 2008 and 2011, and after 2012 the volume began to decrease. Since 2012 it has decreased by nearly 150,000, shrinking the population back down to its 2008 size. The slowdown and subsequent reversal of the migration trend is observed in all categories, with the exception of immigrants from Non-EU Central and Eastern Europe. The population from this area has continued to grow throughout the crisis in contrast to the significant drop in the volume of EU-15 residents and the less pronounced but accelerating

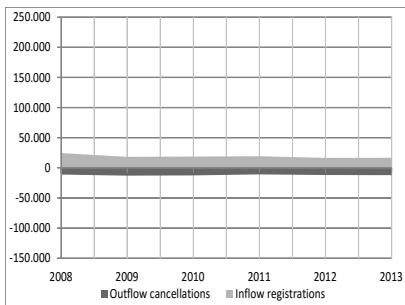
decrease in the number of immigrants from the new EU members and from Latin America.

Figures 2.1 – 2.6 Outflows and inflows of immigrants.

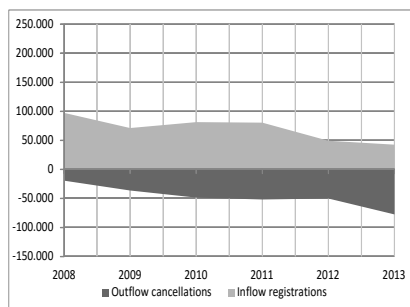
2.1 EU-10



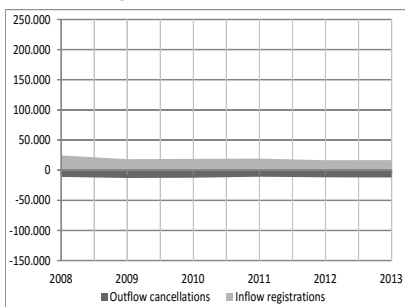
2.2 Non-EU Eastern Europe



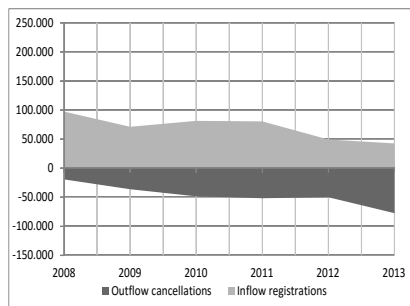
2.3 EU-15



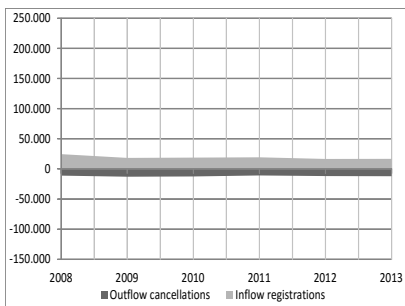
2.4 Maghreb



2.5 Latin America



2.6 Others



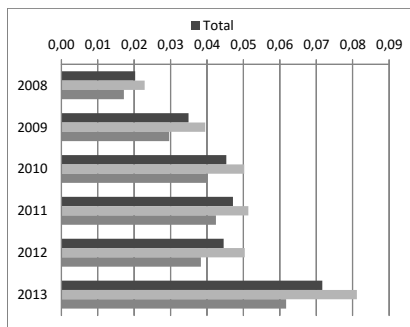
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on deletions and registrations in the Municipal Register 2002–2013, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

The information provided by the RVS allowed us to complete the description of the changes in the patterns of mobility of migration groups in Spain. Figures 2.1-2.6 show the evolution of registrations and cancellations from the Municipal Register from 2008 to 2013, which can be considered a proxy of outflows and inflows to Spain. These figures reveal a relatively sharp decrease in arrivals at the beginning of the crisis, followed by a gradual increase in departures. This pattern is generally consistent with the description of the migration processes provided by Dhéret et al. (2013) who argue that the recent crisis comprised two phases: during the first phase, migration rates generally fell, which was attributable to the deterioration of pull factors and the rise in the significance of push factors, with unemployment as a key factor. During the second phase (since 2010), a rise in migration has been recorded. The latter phenomenon can be explained by the simultaneous emergence of push factors in Southern Europe (mainly unemployment) and the economic recovery in major destination countries in other parts of Europe. However, some particularities regarding specific origins can be observed. On the one hand, migrants from the new accession countries, Latin America, Maghreb and the EU-15 seem to follow the above-mentioned pattern. On the other hand, the inflows of migrants from non-EU Central and Eastern Europe decreased slightly, while outflows remained on the same level throughout the analysed period.

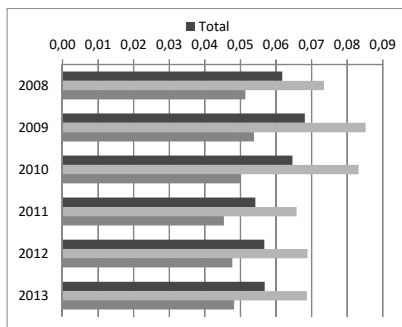
What is the scale of out-migration from Spain in relative terms? Figures 3.1-3.6 show the rate of outflows calculated as a proportion of total cancellations from the municipal register of migrants of specific origin throughout a year by total of population of this nationality registered in the municipal register at the beginning of that year. In relative terms, the total outflow of migrants from Spain seems moderate, especially considering the magnitude of the deterioration of the labour market in Spain since the beginning of the crisis. The annual rate of departures is not greater than 7% for any of the groups analysed, which clearly contrasts with the very high rates of unemployment among the immigrant population. This confirms that return migration has not become the main strategy used by migrants to deal with adverse social and economic conditions in the host country. If we consider gender, the data indicate that the emigration rates are higher among males. It is well known that foreign men were overrepresented in the occupations and activities that were hit the hardest by the economic crisis, such as construction. This partially explains the asymmetry in the out-migration of the male and female populations.

Figures 3.1-3.6 Yearly outflows' rates by origin.

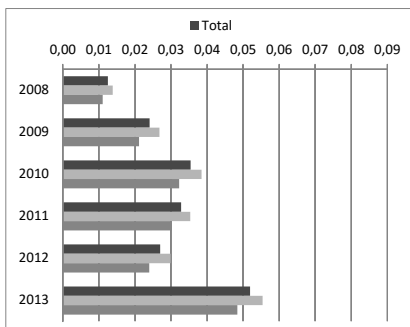
3.1 EU-10



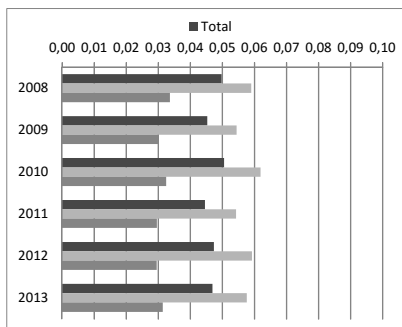
3.2 non-EU Eastern Europeans



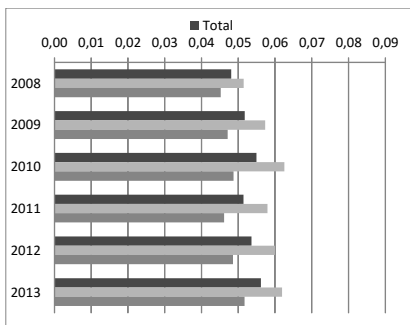
3.3 EU-15



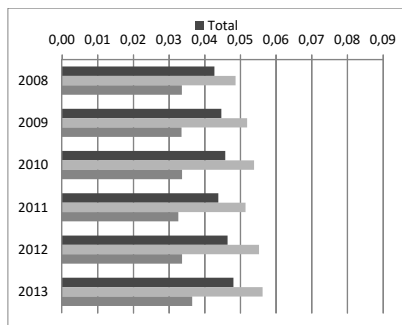
3.4 Maghreb



3.5 Latin America



3.6 Others



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on deletions and registrations in the Municipal Register 2002–2013, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

In addition, with the exception of EU-10 and EU-15 migrants, the rate variation throughout the period under consideration is very limited, with the tendency to decrease over the last years. This is not the case for the two migrant groups from the EU. The data indicate that the rate of out-migration is increasing. In the case of immigrants from EU states in Central and Eastern Europe, the rate is 7% in 2003, the year in which unemployment rates were highest during the crisis. This data seems to at least partially confirm the initial premise of this article, which assumed that belonging to the free movement area would encourage immigrants to return home if the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions continued to be significant.

Determinants of return migration

As suggested earlier, assessing the factors that affect the decision on whether or not to return is very challenging. At the conceptual level, researchers have to deal with the fact that the decision to migrate is influenced by a complex combination of individual characteristics, attitudes and goals, perceptions of reality and also objective contextual determinants that are both structural and conjunctural (Hosnedlová, 2014; Dumont and Spielvogel, 2008). Furthermore, the conceptual and theoretical complexity of this phenomenon is exacerbated by the lack of available data. In this section we will try to approach some factors that could potentially influence the rate of return of Central and Eastern European migrants from EU and non-EU countries.

The fact that we do not have data covering individual characteristics forces us to analyse aggregate data. Each case represents a country in Central or Eastern Europe, as defined at the beginning of this article (see Footnote 1) for each year of the period between 2008 and 2013. In our analysis we perform an Ordinary Least Square regression model in which the dependent variable is the outflow rate of each country of origin at the end of each year. The independent variables represent contextual factors: institutional, economic and political. More specifically, the main institutional variable is if the country belongs to the EU's free mobility area for workers. These are member states of the European Union whose citizens are not affected by the transitional agreements on the free movement of workers.⁴ Regarding the socio-economic factors,

⁴ It must be noted that the situation in the various new accession countries is not the same. Workers of countries from the 2004 enlargement have been free to work in Spain since 2006, when the Spanish government suspended transitional arrangements regarding workers from those countries. On the contrary, the mobility of Bulgarians and Romanians was restricted since their accession in 2007 until the end of 2008 and these restrictions were re-established between July 2011 and December 2013.

we include unemployment rates and general national income (GNI) per capita adjusted for differences in purchasing power parity. However, it should be highlighted that, as suggested by Izquierdo et al. (2015), changes in unemployment appear to be a crucial factor to approximate relative economic opportunities over time, in particular, during the current recession when wages reacted slowly to the worsening of the economic situation, showing, once more, significant real and relative rigidities. As stated previously, the macro level determinants of return should be seen as a resultant of pull (home country) and push (host country) factors. Therefore, the socio-economic variables included in our analysis are operationalized as a differential between measures for Spain and each country in each year of the period under consideration.

Additionally, as control variables we include two measures regarding the perception of political and institutional stability, namely: the control of corruption index and the political stability and absence of violence index provided by the Worldwide Governance Indicators⁵. We start with the assumption that political instability and the perception of physical and legal insecurity could influence the decision to return. (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). Finally, the analysis includes distance as a control variable of the cost of moving, starting with the supposition that migration costs rise with distance (Borjas and Bratsberg, 1996).

Table 3 displays the results of the regression carried out. The outcomes of our analysis are only partially in line with our expectations. First of all, freedom of movement of the labour force within the EU has no effect on rates of exits from Spain. No significant results have been obtained for either total population or men and women. It seems that, in the case of Central and Eastern Europeans, the absence of restriction in the case of nationals from EU member states not affected by transitional arrangements is not an important element in return decision making, which is contrary to our assumptions.

If total population is taken into account, differences in unemployment rates seem to have an important impact on return. Nationals from countries that have significantly lower unemployment rates than Spain have a higher probability of returning. However, the analyses run separately for men and women reveal that this is strongly related

⁵ The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) is a research dataset that summarizes the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprises, citizens and expert survey respondents. Measures included in WGI allow broad cross-country comparisons and trends to be analysed over time. <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc>.

to gender. For men, as the gap between skyrocketing unemployment rates in Spain and unemployment rates in their country of origin widens, their out-migration increases. In the case of women, comparatively better employment situations in their countries of origin do not seem to have any considerable impact on their return decisions. On the other hand, the income gap between Spain and certain Central and Eastern European countries does have a moderate impact on return migration rates. In other words, if the difference in GNI per capita between Spain and the home countries narrows, return migration increases. Finally, the political setting plays a relatively important role in return migration: less corruption, more political stability, and less violence in the home country positively affect return rates.

Table 3. Determinants of out-migration rates: OLS regression (model 1).

	Total		Men		Women	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
EU free movement	0.00551	0.00882	0.00156	0.00958	-0.00055	0.01452
Unemployment rate diff.	0.00171***	0.00052	0.00163***	0.00057	0.00183	0.00051
GNI per capita diff.	-0.00002*	0.00009	-0.00002*	0.00009	-0.00002*	0.00008
Control of Corruption home country	0.02891*	0.01650	0.02393	0.01275	0.03351*	0.01153
Political stability and non-violence at home country	0.04907**	0.02098	0.03690*	0.01385	0.05166**	0.02399
Distance	-0.00001	0.00041	-0.00001	0.00004	-0.00002	0.00047
Intercept	0.12675***	0.02127	-0.13092***	0.02314	0.12118***	0.02091
R ²	0.2396		0.2159		0.2695	
Number of cases	126		126		126	

*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

In her recent study on the mobility patterns of Ukrainian migrants, Hosnedlová (2014) observed that obtaining and renewing residence permits influences return intentions, decision-making processes and return planning. Hosnedlová found that length of stay in Spain and

return planning were affected by the irregular status of migrants. More often than not, irregular status led migrants to extend their stay and delay returns to such an extent that, in many occasions, migrants ended up changing their minds about leaving the country.

With this in mind, we carried out another regression model substituting the variable on belonging to the EU area of free movement for the rate of regularity in each migrant group and year. In order to estimate this measure, we compared the number of nationals registered in the Municipal registry with the number of valid residence permit holders and adjusted it by subtracting the number of foreign student permits, asylum seekers, and the estimated number of residence permits under renewal⁶. The maximum value in this variable is 1 and it corresponds to migratory groups whose countries were EU member states in a specific year.

Table 4. Determinants of out-migration rates: OLS regression (model 2).

	Total		Men		Women	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Regularity rate	0,10626	0.041571	0.09014*	0.0458089	0.12506**	0.04027
Unemployment rate diff.	0,00120**	0.00056	0.00119**	0.0006185	0.00122**	0.00054
GNI per capita diff.	-0.00002*	0.00008	-0.00002*	0.00009	-0.00002*	0.00008
Control of Corruption home country	0.03453*	0.01093	0.02962*	0.0120528	0.03982**	0.01059
Political stability and non-violence at home country	0.03907*	0.01199	0.02493*	0.0132154	0.04369**	0.01162
Distance	-0.00001	0.00001	-0.00001	0.00001	-0.00001	0.00001
Intercept	0.12675***	0.02127	0.21810***	0.04575	0.23718***	0.04022
R ²	0.2934		0.2486		0.3363	
Number of cases	126		126		126	

*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Our analyses of all categories of migrants from Eastern and Central Europe confirm the findings of Hosnedlova's research on Ukrainians.

⁶ For a more detailed description of the method of estimation of regularity rates, please see Cebolla and González-Ferrer (2008).

As shown in Table 4, high rates of regularity have a positive impact on out-migration. In other words, holding all the other independent variables constant, 1 pp of increase in regularity rates results in approximately 0.1 pp growth in out-migration rate. This effect can be observed for both men and women. In addition, similar to the previous model, variables related to economic and socio-political conditions play an important role in shaping out-migration.

To summarize, the results obtained in both models suggest that the right of free movement within the EU is not a determinant factor of return. In contrast, regular residence status has a positive impact on return rates. This clearly shows that, paradoxically, legal restrictions on residence have the opposite effect than those intended by the politicians and/or institutions of the host country. Irregular status seems to be an important factor leading to immobility. Our findings are consistent with Hosnedlová's study on Ukrainian migrants. Her study, based on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach, provides an interpretative framework for the results of our analysis. As Hosnedlová observes, one of the most remarkable findings related to the legal status of immigrants was that immigrants who initially intended to return (in the short, medium or long term), and some who were actually planning their return, were waiting in order to obtain a permanent residence permit.

Conclusions

We initially assumed that return migration would play a special role in adjusting labour markets within the European Union where freedom of movement is a fundamental individual right, allowing workers to circulate freely. From this perspective, in the area without internal borders and where national policies play an increasingly irrelevant role, migration should become a crucial regulatory element for the supply and demand of labour as returns do not involve considerable opportunity costs for migrants. As such, our initial hypothesis was that Central and Eastern European migrants from EU member states belonging to the area of free movement of workers would be more mobile, as they face far fewer obstacles in case they decide to move back to Spain compared to non-EU Central and Eastern Europeans.

Our research shows that the volume of out-migration in absolute terms has been increasing among EU Central and Eastern European migrants residing in Spain. This contrasts with the relatively stable dynamics of outflow of non-EU migrants. On the other hand, in relative terms the rate of outflow of non-EU Central and Eastern migrants

is slightly higher than new accession country migrants. The results were verified using an analysis based on regression models whose objective was to identify the factors that influence the change in outflow rates. The findings reveal that the legal status of migrants plays an important role in determining departures. However, in contrast to our assumptions, having the status and rights of an EU citizen, including the right to free movement, does not have a significant impact on the intensity of the outflows. Our analysis shows that the factor with the greatest negative impact on return rates was the proportion of people with legal residence: the larger the percentage of people in an irregular situation, the lower the propensity to return.

At the most general level our study confirms that restrictive policies controlling inflows and residence negatively affect return migrations. Our results show that legal restrictions on residence have the opposite effect to that intended by the politicians and/or institutions of the host country, as irregular migrants seem less likely to leave Spain even if the economic environment deteriorates considerably. On the other hand, our study also shows that, to the contrary of our expectations, institutional factors that shape return flows are not tied to EU policies, but rather to national policies.

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