WHY ROMANIANS DO NOT QUIT SPAIN?
ROMANIAN MIGRANTS’ COPYING STRATEGIES
AFTER THE CRISIS

Adriana ŞUIU
West University of Timişoara, Romania
Email: ssuiuadriana@gmail.com

Abstract. After the fall of communism in 1989 Romania experienced an unprecedented wave of migration. From 2000 onwards, Spain was one of the preferred European countries for migration because the similarities on language, culture, and a job market open for low skilled labor. With the economic crisis of 2008, the construction and services sectors have been seriously affected. This fact had as a consequence high rates of unemployment, especially among migrant workers. In order to copy with these circumstances, Romanians migrants have developed new strategies, like internal and external mobility. We contend that mobility within Spain has become an important characteristic of this population during the last years.

Keywords: migration, permanent migration, adaptation, economic crisis, immigrants

1. INTRODUCTION

Migratory movements of postwar Europe have experienced different phases being one of them the flows sent by post socialist countries (Drăguţ, A.1981). For the Spanish case, Romanian migration experienced in the 90s an important increase, leaded by members of ethnic and religious minorities. Thus, Adventist migrated before Orthodox (Viruela 2002a), and taking advantage of religious networks (Viruela, R. 2002b; Viruela, R. 2009; Gomez, S. and Molina, J.L. 2010), most of these emigrants were able to adapt successfully to the receiving contexts (Anghel, R. 2011). For the Romanian case, it is possible to distinguish three stages after the fall of the Ceausescu regime (Diminescu, D. 2003). The first stage (1990-1994) is marked by a short-term move to neighboring countries (Hungary and Germany). The second phase (1994-2001) is mainly driven by the search for a job under the pressure of a severe economic crisis due to privatization and restructuring. The third stage migration begins in 2002, when it removes an entry visa to the Schengen area. In the last two stages, favorite countries were Italy and Spain (Dida, A. 2013). After the onset of the crisis in 2008, new destinations were preferred by Romanian immigrants like Germany, England, France, Ireland, Norway, Belgium, and the Netherlands. A segment of the high-skilled workforce (especially medical staff) became interested in Britain, France and Germany (Alexe, I. and Păunescu, B. 2011). In terms of space, Eastern Europe has become one of the most important areas of labor migration. Flows between Romania and Spain became among the most important in Europe since the fall of communism (Viruela, R. 2013). In Spain, the crisis affected mostly the foreign population, Romanians being amongst the most affected (Viruela, R. 2013). Romanian emigrants developed during the
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crisis diverse strategies in order to face the new situation. These strategies can be grouped into five types: return migration, remigration, internal migration, circular migration and permanent migration. Permanent migration strategy is predominant, while Spain is the preferred destination country for Romanians at the expense of Italy, the criterion of ability appearing in second place (Sandu, D. 2015). Since 1980, Spain has become a good destination to find work and achieve an adequate standard of living, involving not only the return of many Spaniards who emigrated in previous years, but also attract new residents. A sizeable number of foreign residents in Spain comes from other countries in Western and Central Europe, attracted by the mild climate and lower prices to the countries of origin. They are mostly British, French, Germans, Dutch and Norwegians. These populations prefer the Mediterranean coast, the Balearic Islands and Canary Islands, where they choose to spend their lives who have retired or those working remotely (Viruela, R. 2008b).

2. EVOLUTION OF ROMANIAN MIGRANTS IN SPAIN

The analysis of population dynamics in Spain tell us that from 1998 to 2014, the population grew by nearly 7 million, total migrant population nearly being 5 million (fig. 1). But in recent years, Spain has a considerable decrease in the rate of immigration caused by the economic crisis. The decrease resulted immigration at the same time decreasing the number of inhabitants. Since 2010, the Spanish emigration to other EU countries grew more intense than in other countries in Southern Europe also affected by the crisis (Díaz, R.F., Domínguez, J. and Parreño, J.M. 2015).

Regarding the presence of Romanians in Spain, their numerical growth has been spectacular, Romanian population in 2012 reached almost 16% (897,203 persons) of the total migrant population (5,736,258 people). In 2015 the population of Romanian origin present in Spain fell by only 16% (144,935 persons) than the maximum number of residents reached in 2012. In the 17 autonomous communities in Spain, until 2012, the highest concentration Romanian migrants (Viruela, R. 2006) registered in the Community of Madrid (219,567), Valencian Community (148,331) and Andalusia (106,912). Though the number of Romanian migrants present in Spain began to decline in 2012, the number of Romanian migrants in the province of Catalonia (according to the Institute of Statistics of Catalonia - Idescat) has not ceased to grow, reaching a in short period 123,747 people of Romanian origin, in 2014. By 2014 there were slight increases in other provinces of Spain: Canarias (Tenerife), Galicia (Lugo, Ourense), Navarra, Basque Country (Álava, Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya) y Andalucía (Huelva). Research on the subject has emphasized from the outset that the current crisis of the Spanish economy will have negative consequences for Romanian migrants (Viruela, R. 2008b) and it revealed that there is an ongoing internal migration process in Spain. For instance, 38% of Romanian migrants interviewed in September 2008 in the province of Madrid had changed their place of residence (Viruela, R. 2010). Therefore, the increase in the number of Romanians in provinces of Catalonia can be due to a process of internal migration taking place. Adventist and Orthodox churches have special importance for helping to find a jobb Romanian workers from the provinces of Valencia (Viruela, R. 2002a) and Catalonia (Pajares, M. 2007).
Fig. 1. Evolution of the total population, immigrants and Romanian migrants in Spain

Source: www.ine.es and www.idescat.cat
3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this research, fieldwork have been carried during 6 months (November 2015 - April 2016) in different Spanish cities (Barcelona, Manresa, Vilanova la Geltrú, Tarragona, Castellón de la Plana, Huesca, Roquetas de Mar, Almeria and Palos de la Frontera). In these cities (fig. 2), there is a considerable presence of Romanian migrants. We applied semi-structured questionnaire to 100 people (48 men and 52 women), aged 27-67 years. In addition, we conducted 6 interviews with Romanian who lived all the time in the same province and were not going to return to Romania in the coming years.

Structured questionnaire was composed of 64 questions exploring different aspects: sex, age, important data before the departure of Romania (if they left the urban or rural area, level of schooling, marital status, whether they had children, what were the reasons that led them to migrate, what thoughts were on departure, if they had previous experiences of migration to other countries), data about his experience in Spain (if they arrived to urban or rural area, why they chose the province of destination, what time they arrived, how many years they are established in Spain, which was the biggest difficulty encountered, who helped to find a job), and the current situation (in what situation they are now and what field they operate, whether they intend to return to Romania, to what extent are satisfied with the present life, in which they have invested money saved, if voted in presidential election 2014 in Romania, if the dwelling is rented or mortgage, how affected his personal crisis, as did the crisis and why they chose not to go in Spain).
Finally, the interviews and questionnaires were complemented with participant observation, which consisted of attending meetings organized by the Romanian associations: Reus (200 persons) in the feast of International Women's Day, Huesca (100 persons) in the feast of Easter, the different religious services Orthodox, Pentecostal, Adventist and Baptist (Castellón de la Plana, Vilanova la Geltrú, Barcelona, Almeria and Roquetas de Mar). The research was carried out always with the authorization of the priest or pastor. At the end of the event questionnaires were gave away to persons who freely agreed to participate.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most Romanian migrants in Spain are not going to return to Romania despite the negative effects of the economic crisis. Among all immigrants, Ecuadorians, Romanians and Moroccans had the highest figures in terms of unemployment (Ferrero, T. and Lopez, A. 2009). To cope with this problem, most are forced to deal with the revenue the wife to seek other job opportunities in other regions of Spain, to seek another country of destination or to return to Romania (Bucur, R. 2011).

Even though many authors foresaw a massive return of Romanians in Spain (Sandu, D. 2008) and this has not happened so far. In 2008, at the beginning of the crisis, nearly 71% of Romanian migrants in Madrid region said they would like to return home and only 47% of immigrants say they would like to return home in the next five years, and those determined to be return to the country in the next five years accounted for about 30% of all immigrants interviewed.

At the moment (statistics from 2015) confirmed that only 16% of Romanians have left Spain or other countries, or returned to Romania. From the data it is clear that many migrants prefer to seek his livelihood abroad, rather that coming back to Romania. Although there is no official national data on return migration it is possible to make some estimates of the number of people back into the country from sources of host countries. There is no certainty that the migrant who returned to Romania in 2008, is living currently in the country, has come back to the former host country or has re-migrated to another country (Vlase, I. 2011).

Therefore, I proposed to identify the reasons for which Romanians chose the province where they established themselves, and, especially, how did the crisis and why have not returned to Romania or they did not choose another country of destination. I have into account also other important aspects of the experience before the departure of Romania, data about his experience in Spain and aspects of the current situation. Analyzing the questionnaires the main reasons for migrating (fig. 3) were: getting jobs better paid (25%) achieving a better life, decent (28%) and a future for the children (12%).
Before leaving Romania (fig. 4), 94% had an medium level of education, and 5% had a university degree level. Many of them (68%) were married and had children (66%), which demonstrate that the family character of migration (Sandu, D. 2010). 81% responded that they had a bad-paid job, and 58% coming from a rural area. Of all respondents, 92% had no previous experience of migration, and 89% thinking to go back home with some savings. House where they lived in Romania was personal property (53%) or owned by their parents (38%).

In connection with data related to the experience in Spain, reasons that influenced the selection of the province (fig. 5) where they live was: the presence of friends (52%) family (34%) and family reunification (14%). It thus reveals, once again, the role of social networks and kinship in propagating international migration of Romanians (Viruela, R. 2004).
Difficulties encountered (fig. 6) in Spain: language (46%), obtaining the residence (31%) and finding a job (13%). At first, most have settled in urban area (68%) because they had family (46%) or friends (42%) established in the area, which helped to find the first job, place finish which gives a minimum safety before an unknown place (Viruela, R. 2001).

The vast majority of respondents have an average residence in Spain of 13 years (fig. 7), since 95% of permanent migrants arrived in Spain before 2008 (33% between 1998-2001, 45% between 2002-2005, and 17% arrived between 2006-2008). In this period, Romanian migrants have become successfully integrated into the host society, which has helped them to develop survival strategies (Viruela, R. 2014), and strengthen their attachment to Spain and local communities.
At present, 67% of Romanians interviewed are dwelling in urban areas. Regarding the type of contract (fig. 8), 52% of respondents work a full-time contract and 18% a part-time contract. Of all respondents (fig. 9), 23% work in agriculture, 21% in cleaning, 13% in construction, 8% in restaurants, hotels, and trade, 7% in factory, and 4% are truck drivers. Only 3% are self-employed. Regarding accommodation, the majority have a rented flat (69%) or mortgage (28%). In contrast, 57% said they had invested their savings in Romania (buying or renovating a house) and only 16% have invested in Spain. This behavior shows their attachment to the origin country, hoping that they will return sometime.

Fig. 7. Arrival date in Spain

Fig. 8. Work situation in April 2016
Romanian emigrants who living in Spain, would like to return to Romania, but they do not know when (49%), are unsure about this issue (23%), or prefer to return after retirement (8 %). Regarding the crisis(fig. 10), it is remarkable the fact that 55% said that the crisis did not affect them at all. Just 10% say that they have been affected in one way or another, 20% remained unemployed and 15% got a cut in their salary.

For the majority (98%), migration to Spain was a positive decision, and they are convinced that living in Spain is better than living in Romania (44%). Referring to the situation in which it is currently, compared to 2007-2008, 64% said they are in the same situation, 21% that they are in a better situation and only 15% said that they are in a worse situation.
To cope with the crisis, some have sought other jobs (19%), others received unemployment benefits (22%) or accepted any kind job, even if it was bad paid (15%). Respondents said they have not returned to Romania (fig. 11) because they were convinced that Spain was better (59%, see also Viruela 2008a), it was difficult to start again (15%), they had to pay a mortgage (11%), or they made the decision because the kids were already integrated in Spain (15%):

"In the summer of 2014 I went to Romania with the thought of never return to Spain. I have an 8 years old boy, born in Spain. After 3 days, my son started crying and praying to go home ... In two weeks I had to come back to Spain" (Family 39-41 years old, Barcelona).

Another interesting issue is the role of mixed marriages as a venue for local integration of migrant Romanians:

"I came alone, in 2002. I was not married. In the first two years I worked in construction, then I did my company and I began taking various renovations. After 3 years, I met a Spanish woman nationality, we got married and now we have a son 3 years old. I am not going to go back to Romania ... " (Male 34 years old, Girona).

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**Fig. 11. The reasons of Romanian migrants for not returning to Romania**

Of all respondents, 53% answered that they voted in the presidential elections in Romania in 2014. This fact is a clear signal that this new diaspora (those who left to work abroad after 1990), wants to play an active role in the development of their home country, not just economic but also political-institutional (Sandu 2014).
5. CONCLUSIONS

Whatever specific strategy is chosen by Romanian migrants in Spain, it is important to realize that in general, the decision to migrate to Spain was assessed as positive and that Spain is preferred to Romania as a permanent place for making a living. Permanent migration is thus the most common form of migration among Romanians in Spain. Romanians have managed to adapt to the Spanish society and successful integrate in it, with high levels of assimilation. The decision is taken within the family, and most have children raised or born in Spain. Romanians’ migration to Spain should not be considered as a temporary phenomenon, because a quarter of this population consists of persons aged 0-14 years, and these children are “second generation” (Buitan, G., 2011) of Romanian migrants, who will be educated in Spain. The idea that the effective integration of migrants in the destinations countries, both among the local population and the public institutions, is the best way to deal with this socio-economic phenomenon, is gaining acceptation in Europe (Pajares, M. 2006).

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