

**Europe at their feet? Free circulation, economic crisis and
exit strategies of recent Portuguese emigrants to the
European Union¹**

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Abstract: One of the rationales of the free circulation of people within the European Union (EU) is the enabling of a larger and more efficient labour market, where workers can move according to economic reasons, regardless of political barriers. The recent economic crisis overcoming the EU that started in 2008 and was aggravated by the financial woes of the Southern countries has been a favourable context to migration changes. The main objective of this paper is to discuss how Portuguese emigrants have behaved during the crisis, revealing their main reasons for leaving, migration strategies, labour insertion, transnational links and future plans.

Keywords: Migration, Free circulation, European Union, Portugal

Introduction

One of the rationales of the free circulation of people within the European Union (EU) is the enabling of a larger and more efficient labour market, where workers can move according to economic reasons, regardless of political barriers. The recent economic crisis overcoming the EU, started in 2008 and aggravated by the financial woes of the Southern countries, has been a favorable context to migration changes, since large pools of impoverished people from the South have been pushed to the Centre and the North. The mapping and characterization of recent movements, as well as the examination of their causes and consequences, are largely to be done.

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The main objective of this paper is to discuss how Portuguese emigrants have behaved during the recent crisis, revealing their main reasons for leaving, migration strategies, labour insertion, transnational links and future plans. The empirical basis **are** the results of a survey of recent Portuguese emigration, carried out between September 2014 and May 2015. Besides an online survey, open to respondents at all countries, face-to-face questionnaires and in-depth interviews were carried out in the United Kingdom, France and Luxembourg, in the EU, besides other three non-European destination countries, which constituted the main case studies in this research (for further details, see Peixoto *et al.*, 2016).

Issues to be explored in the paper include the changing profile of emigrants, with young highly skilled individuals coexisting with traditional less skilled workers; modes of labour insertion, displaying solid professional paths or precarious incorporation in the least favorable segments of the labour market; the enacting of transnational strategies, based on various ties with the home country, the possibility of return or the prospect of circulation; and the importance of exit strategies that may turn out to be permanent. Along the paper, a systematic comparison will be made between emigrants targeting European – mostly EU – and non-European destinations. As it will be seen, most of the results refer to highly skilled individuals.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first part, a brief description of the social and economic framework in which recent emigration takes place is made, taking into particular attention the mechanisms that link the enabling of an integrated economic space and a common currency area, such as the EU and the Eurozone, and the mobility of labour. In the second part, the research methodology used to produce the results displayed in the paper is presented. In the third part, some of the more relevant results of the survey are presented and discussed. Finally, some conclusive remarks are set.

Social and economic framework

One of the founding principles of the EU, since its beginning as an economic association in 1957 – the European Economic Community –, is free movement of labour. According to standard economic theory, enabling a better circulation of labour, such as the one of other factors of production, will generate economic efficiency, allocating

labour wherever it is needed – a principle which also explains why migration occurs (Todaro, 1969). This is still more valid in a common currency area, such as the Eurozone. One of the ways of overcoming economic shocks in a given region of a common currency area is through labour mobility between its regions (Mundell, 1961). With or without a common currency, the policy of free movement of labour may grant the EU similar competitive conditions as the ones existing in the United States (US).

Little attention has been given to the fact that the policy of free movement of labour – as well as free movement of goods, capital and services – has been coupled with a policy supporting the economic convergence of the member states. In order not to aggravate national (and regional) territorial imbalances, European cohesion funds and other mechanisms have been put in practice in order to decrease national and regional differences. Less developed regions has long received funds to achieve growth, thus decreasing its repulsive status. It may be argued that a coherent policy of migration and development has thus been put in place at the EU level, combining mechanisms of labour mobility and of economic growth, thus reducing the need of further migration. Its objective was to avoid the risk of structural unbalances, leading to a split between increasingly central and peripheral EU countries and regions.

The global economic crisis, started in 2008 in the US and rapidly extended to the EU, has put under considerable strain those mechanisms. At the EU level, the outcomes have been unequal, with some countries reacting well and quickly overcoming the crisis, whilst others plunged into a deep and long recession. The crisis affected particularly the Southern European countries, whose financial problems led in some cases to the external intervention of international entities (the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank) (for the Portuguese case, see Graça *et al.*, 2011 and Correia, 2015). In the Southern countries, the deterioration of the economic climate and the external bailouts led to the worsening of the standards of living of individuals and families and a deeply engrained pessimism.

In migration terms, the available evidence suggest that between 2007 and 2010 labour mobility decreased by 35 per cent within Europe, given the generalized problems in all

member states (OECD, 2014). But after 2010 intra-EU labour flows increased, mainly involving departures from the Southern countries and arrivals to Germany (OECD, 2014). Recent studies suggest that EU citizens are becoming more mobile than in the past, particularly at the intra-EU level. Economic cycles, unemployment rates at the sending countries and growth rates in the host countries seem to be the most important factors explaining flows (Beine *et al.*, 2013). For some studies, the pull factors are more important than the push ones: expectations about growth and employment in the destination seem to explain better than objective conditions in the origin these recent movements (Bertoli *et al.*, 2013).

Other studies about the increase of South-North migration within the EU, or about the overall departures from the Southern European countries, support the importance of expectations and draw the portrait of new migrants. Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2014) used the results of a survey carried out during 2013 in Spain, Greece, Italy, Ireland and Portugal to conclude that expectations about the future, either at the sending or the host country, as well as career opportunities, are the main drivers explaining outflows. New emigrants seem to be younger and more highly skilled than in the past. Among recent migrants only a minority is unemployed. Their conclusions are supported by other studies, such as Jauer *et al.* (2014), which also claim that this trend is similar to many flows currently undergoing in the US.

Similar conclusions have been presented for the Portuguese case (Azevedo, 2014; Pires *et al.* 2014 and 2015; Correia, 2015, among others). It is well known that emigration surged in recent years, particularly after 2011, year of the external intervention and start of financial assistance to the country. A long lasting recession, the decrease of family income and an increasing unemployment are the most evident reasons for departures. Among recent emigrants, a substantial proportion are young highly skilled individuals. Surveys also point out that expectations about the future play a prominent role, more than unemployment (Azevedo, 2014). However, differently from its Southern European counterparts, emigration from Portugal seem to affect proportionally more nationals (instead of foreign immigrants that re-emigrate) and more low skilled individuals.

Research methodology

The data in which this paper is based results from the research project “Back to the future: new emigration and links to the Portuguese society” (acronym REMIGR), funded by FCT, the Portuguese science funding agency, for 2013-2015. The main aim of the project was to characterize recent (post-2000) Portuguese emigration and to map the relationship that emigrants keep with Portugal. The target was constituted by individuals with Portuguese nationality or born in Portugal, with 18 years old or more, who had left Portugal after 2000.

The research used a mixed-method approach. It combined the collection of official statistics, either produced in Portugal or in destination countries; institutional interviews with relevant actors and representatives of emigrants, either in Portugal or abroad (for example, consulates and emigrants’ associations); an online questionnaire survey, available at the project’s website; and a paper-and-pen questionnaire survey. Given the geographical scattering of emigrants, a double approach was used: some of the methods, particularly the online survey, addressed all emigrants around the world; the remaining methods were used more in-depth in some specific countries. For this, six case studies were selected: UK, France, Luxembourg, in the EU; and Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, out of Europe.

Most of the evidence used in this paper results from the questionnaire surveys. The collected sample was from 6.086 questionnaires. Among these, 73 per cent (4.428) were obtained via online, the other on paper-and-pen format. The analysis covers a junction of both samples. Two-thirds of the total sample relates to Portuguese in European countries (Table 1). Among them, the United Kingdom is the main destination country, followed by France. These two countries accumulate more than half of the European sample. Then Germany and Luxembourg follow, each one accounting for almost one-tenth of the European sample. With the exception of Spain and Norway, much of the sample relates to Western European countries. Outside Europe, three Portuguese-speaking countries stand out: Angola, Brazil and Mozambique. They account for almost three-quarters of the non-European sample.

Table 1: Main destination countries

Europe	n	%	Outside Europe	n	%
United Kingdom	1.454	36,2	Angola	579	27,9
France	600	14,9	Brazil	496	23,9
Germany	369	9,2	Mozambique	415	20,0
Luxembourg	368	9,2	USA	107	5,2
Switzerland	222	5,5	Australia	83	4,0
Belgium	161	4,0	United Arab Emirates	58	2,8
Holland	159	4,0	China-Macau	54	2,6
Spain	129	3,2	Canada	40	1,9
Norway	126	3,1	East Timor	22	1,1
Ireland	100	2,5	China	17	0,8
Others	326	8,1	Others	201	9,7
Total	4.014	100,0	Total	2.072	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

In order to achieve a meaningful dimension of the sample in the six case studies, a minimum target of surveys was set for each of these countries. This explains why the dimension of the respective samples is often much higher than the corresponding emigration reality. Furthermore, responses were obtained, especially in the online mode, from countries that were not previously determined. Moreover, the selection process of respondents prevented statistical representativeness. The response to the online survey was self-determined, whilst the contact with respondents in the paper-and-pen survey was made by convenience. All in all, the evidence presented in this paper must be considered as exploratory and not representative of recent outflows.

Survey results

Destination countries

According to some statistical sources – in this case, collected by the Observatory of Emigration in the destination countries –, the top five countries of recent Portuguese emigration are the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Germany and Spain (Pires *et al.*, 2015 p.52). Our own sample reflects in part this reality (Table 1). As said above, some of the differences between the official data and the sample result from the effort

to collect extensive information in the countries selected as case studies. Still according to the available sources – again the Observatory of Emigration –, the first five non-European countries of destination are Angola, Mozambique, USA, Canada and China-Macau (Pires *et al.*, 2015 p.52). They are, in the same way, well represented in our sample.

The preponderance of the EU countries, i.e., of intra-EU migration, as the major destination of recent Portuguese outflows is clear in all sources. This is the case of the data collected by the National Statistical Institute in Portugal (Peixoto *et al.*, 2016), the data collected by the Observatory of Emigration in the destination countries, and our own sample. This fact results for the ease of circulation within the EU, coupled with other important factors: the former and long-lasting insertion of Portugal in the European migration system, as well as the increasing divergence between the economic conditions in this area.

The literature addressing recent outflows in this direction is rapidly increasing, covering movements such as young highly skilled individuals to France, the active recruitment of nurses to the UK and the growing brain drain (see, for example, Lopes, 2014; Pereira, 2015; Gomes, 2015).

Regarding the destination countries outside Europe, the Portuguese-speaking countries stand out in all sources. Angola, Mozambique and Brazil, all of them former colonies, are the most important. East Timor and China-Macau, also former Portuguese territories, attract a smaller quantity of emigrants, but remain interesting given its small geographical size. Also of importance are some Anglophone countries, namely the US, Canada and Australia, as well as the United Arab Emirates.

Among these non-European destinations, Angola was one of the most mediatized cases in recent years, accompanied by some interest from the academy; however, there is for the moment scarce research with published results (partial exceptions are the cases of Grassi, Vivet & Marinho, 2016, Sangreman, Lopes & Galito, 2015, Santos, 2013 and Galito, 2015). Recent outflows to Brazil have already been the subject of some investigation (Fernandes & Faria, 2015; Finotelli *et al.*, 2013); this followed an abundant line of historical research of emigration in this direction. The US and Canada have also been much studied in earlier times (see, for example, Baganha (1990) and Scott (2009) for the US; and Brettell (1981) and Teixeira and Rosa (2000) for Canada); however, studies addressing recent flows are unknown to us. The case of the United Arab Emirates seems interesting, given the

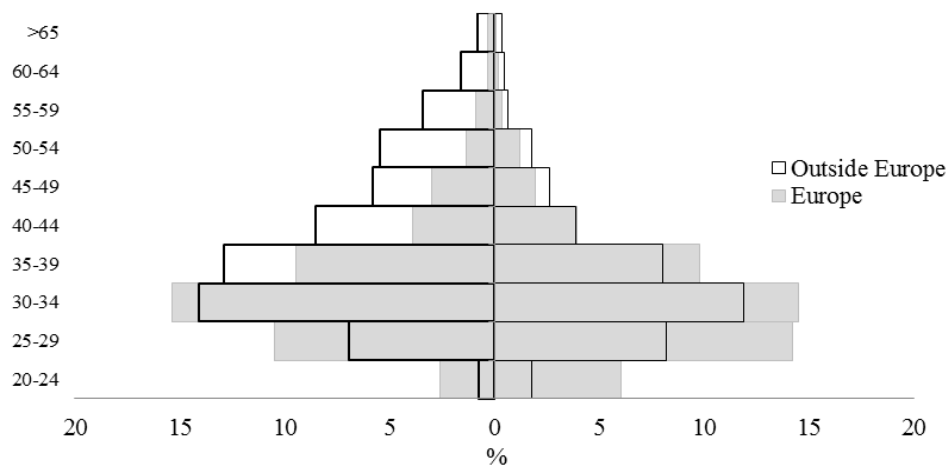
importance of active recruitment for specific industries, such as nurses (Pereira, 2015), but little is known about the general profile of these migrants.

The next sections are based on the survey results and compare systematically the characteristics of recent emigrants to European (mostly EU) and non-European destinations. Despite the related shortcomings, this will allow some insights about the specific attributes of intra-EU flows when compared to other international movements.

Socio-demographic characteristics

The demographic profile of recent emigrants, according to aggregate destinations, is displayed at Figure 1. Regarding gender differences, the profile of movements driven to European countries is better distributed than to non-European ones. In the European group the percentage of men is 48 per cent, whilst outside Europe is 60 per cent. It is especially in younger ages (under 30 years old) that the women's weight for European destinations is higher.

Figure 1: Demographic profile



Source: REMIGR project

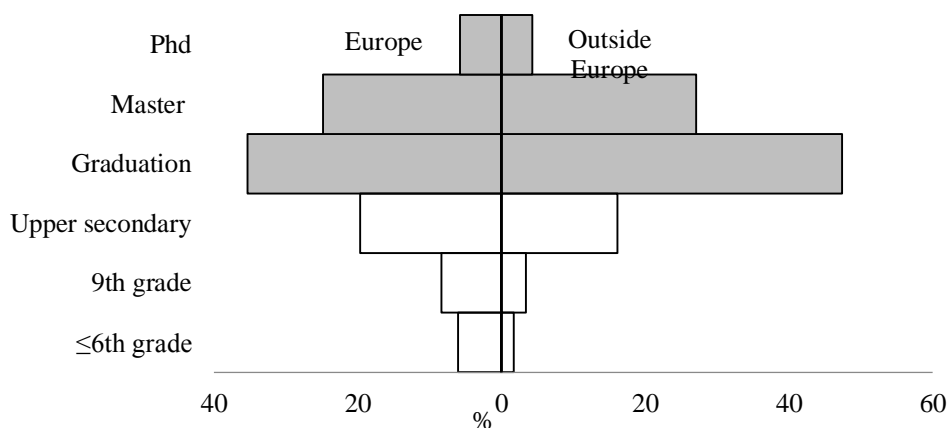
Regarding age, respondents leaving to Europe are younger. The majority of them are positioned in the echelons of 25-29 and 30-34 years old. At the contrary, emigrants heading to outside Europe are mostly concentrated in the groups of 30-34 and 35-39 years old. The

major difference is among older men: they are disproportionately more present in the non-European destinations.

In broad terms, it seems that emigration to Europe is framed by the search of a first job after finishing studies or by academic projects like post doc careers, PhD and Erasmus projects. Emigration to outside Europe appears to occur in a later stage in the life cycle, when the individuals are already inserted in the labour market. Data presented below will support this assertion.

When the educational profile of both groups is compared (Figure 2), the predominance of higher education graduates in both cases is overwhelming. As stated above, these numbers should be above all the result of a greater willingness to participate in the questionnaire surveys by the most educated emigrants and not so much the result of a statistical representativeness. Most of the recent studies and statistical reports confirm that current Portuguese emigration is still composed of lesser educated individuals (Pires *et al.*, 2014 and 2015; Peixoto *et al.*, 2016). This fact confirms that the main shortcoming of the sample is a strong bias towards the highly skilled.

Figure 2: Education level



Source: REMIGR project

Notwithstanding this bias, some facts must be mentioned. In the European sample 66 per cent of the emigrants hold a university degree. Outside Europe these numbers attain 79 per

cent. The proportion of individuals without higher education is higher in the group targeting the old continent. This seems in line with the sources that admit that most of the low skilled emigration is driven to Europe, whilst non-European destinations display a higher selectivity factor (Pires *et al.*, 2014 and 2015; Peixoto *et al.*, 2016).

Indeed, the preponderance of higher educated individuals found in the sample outside Europe seems reliable. In developing countries most of the skill shortages are in higher skilled occupational strata. Moreover, it is sometimes necessary to prove that the tasks that the emigrant will play cannot be performed by natives. The practice of expatriation of highly skilled individuals by foreign companies add another factor to explain the predominance of the highly skilled in this sample.

Migration trajectory

Motivations for leaving Portugal differ according to the destination (Table 2). In the case of Europe the idea of having no future in Portugal dominates (42 per cent). Those that depart to outside Europe make it especially because it is a new experience (40 per cent). The first ones also refer more often poor career prospects, wage dissatisfaction, as well as situations of unemployment. In the case of countries outside Europe the proportion of people referring business opportunities is much higher.

Table 2: Reasons for leaving

	Europe	Outside Europe
Didn't had future in Portugal	42,0	30,3
Wanted to have new experiences	32,8	40,0
Had no future for professional career	32,8	26,5
Was employed but unsatisfied with salary	21,1	16,9
Was unemployed in Portugal	21,4	14,9
To study or improve professional formation	17,4	9,8
Family motives	12,3	12,4
Opportunity for own business	2,2	10,7
Others	9,6	12,9

Source: REMIGR project

As argued in the first part of the paper, the role of expectations stand out as an important motive for departures, although coupled with sound objective constrains. Disbelief about the

future of the country or about future professional prospects join with an objective economic condition. The economic woes of the country combine with the precarious insertion of the youth in the labour market to produce push factors. It is mainly the youth that looks for the EU destinations in order to overcome the obstacles.

Looking at the motivations behind the choice of the destination country (Table 3), job opportunities predominate in both cases: this is the reason pointed out for 57 per cent of the European emigrants and 62 per cent of the non-European. A second factor, also common to both groups, are the good economic prospects. Recent outflows thus fit well with typical economic migration, again coupling real economic opportunities with expectations of future developments.

Table 3: Reasons to choose destination country

	Europe	Outside Europe
Job opportunities	57,4	61,6
Positive economic outlook	31,8	38,1
Familiarized with the language	29,2	23,6
Quality of life	30,1	16,9
Have family and friends living here for a long time	14,6	11,0
Have family and friends living here recently	15,3	9,1
Ease of coming to Portugal	14,1	0,8
Dont need a visa	4,2	2,1
Other	11,0	16,7

Source: REMIGR project

Other factors are still noteworthy. The language accessibility is explicitly more relevant in the case of those who emigrated to Europe, even if, as already stated, much of the emigration to outside Europe targets Portuguese speaking countries. The domain of the English language by the younger generation is now an important asset. As to the quality of life, it is indeed a superior motive in the European case, where almost twice as many respondents selected this option. Also the family and friendship networks weigh more on the European case.

With regard to migration strategies (Table 4), migrating alone is the dominant option. The hierarchy of responses is here quite similar, with less frequent emigration with family, friends or colleagues in both cases.

Table 4: Departure strategies

	Europe	Outside Europe
Alone	51,3	55,6
With spouse partner or boyfriend/girlfriend	34,3	33,2
With other relatives	7,8	5,2
With colleagues or friends	5,2	5,8

Source: REMIGR project

Integration

Integration into the labour market was one of the issues addressed in the survey. Changes that occur with migration were especially taken into account (Table 5). On the European continent, integration takes place mainly in the personal services sector (14 per cent), including domestic services, followed by the industrial sector (14 per cent) and education (13 per cent). These three categories account for 41% of the European sample. However, these data must be taken with caution. Besides the representativeness problem mentioned above, it is necessary to take into account that the predominant item in this variable is the "another situation". Further work is yet to be done in these variables.

Table 5: Activity sector

	Europe		Outside Europe	
	In Portugal	Now	In Portugal	Now
Industry	11,4	13,9	9,4	8,1
Health	9,7	9,1	21,1	22,8
Education	16,7	13,4	14,3	14,4
Personal activities, family and domestic	12,9	14,1	17,2	17,4
Financial activities, business services	12,9	9,6	11,9	11,5
Trade, hotels and restaurants, transport	9,0	11,7	4,7	4,1
Construction	2,4	5,0	0,9	1,4
Another situation	25,0	23,2	20,4	20,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

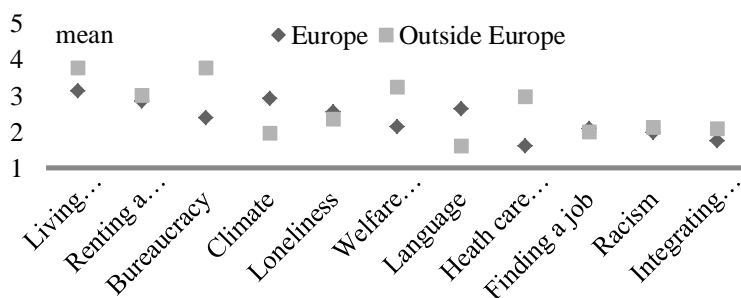
As to emigrants outside Europe, they work predominantly in the health sector (23 per cent), personal and domestic services (17 per cent) and in education (14 per cent). Again, the category of “another situation” is one of the largest.

Regarding labour trajectories before and after migration 58 per cent of the emigrants in Europe remain in the same activity sector in which they were previously. Outside Europe the observed value is 69 per cent. This seems to be an indicator of a superior social reproduction and maybe job security in the second case.

Given the shortcomings presented, these data is hard to interpret. However, it may tentatively be said that they combine heterogeneous situations. On the one hand, they display solid professional paths, such as the ones presented in the active recruitment of nurses to countries as the UK and non-European ones (Pereira, 2015) and in the expatriation of highly skilled workers through firms operating internationally. On the other hand, they reflect the precarious incorporation of workers in the least favorable segments of the labour market, in sectors such as personal services, hospitality and construction. The latter situations are strongly underestimated in the survey, given the bias towards the highly skilled emigrants.

With regard to the difficulties of social integration (Figure 3), they appear to be far superior in non-European countries. In Europe, the only difficulties mentioned as higher refer to the climate and the language (although for some individuals the linguistic proximity was a factor that weighed in choosing the destination, as mentioned above). All other items are superior in non-European countries. The differences are much higher in the items referring to bureaucracy, access to health services and access to social benefits.

Figure 3: Integration difficulties



Scale: 1=not difficult; 5=very difficult; Source: REMIGR project

Transnational practices

Some transnational practice indicators were also studied. One is remittances (Table 6). Although the proportions are similar, it is in the group placed outside Europe that sending money is more frequent (56 per cent). In Europe, the majority (53 per cent) did not sent remittances in the year previous to the application of the survey.

Table 6: Remittance sending

	Europe	Outside Europe
Yes	47,1	56,0
No	52,9	44,0
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

Emigrants residing in non-European countries earn higher salaries than the European ones, what is maybe an explanation for the higher volume of remittances (although the cost of living in these countries was not taken into account). Some of these emigrants, such as many working in Angola, have part of their salary paid in Portugal. The earlier position of the emigrants leaving to Europe in the life cycle is another possible explanation for the differences.

A second indicator of transnationalism concerns visits to Portugal (Table 7). In Europe, the most common situation is two yearly visits (31 per cent), followed by one yearly visit (29 per cent). Emigrants outside Europe have a similar situation: a third visit Portugal once per year and 29 per cent twice. On average, migrants outside Europe visit Portugal less often. One of the underlying factors is the geographical proximity of European countries, involving more affordable prices on air tickets, as well as shorter trips.

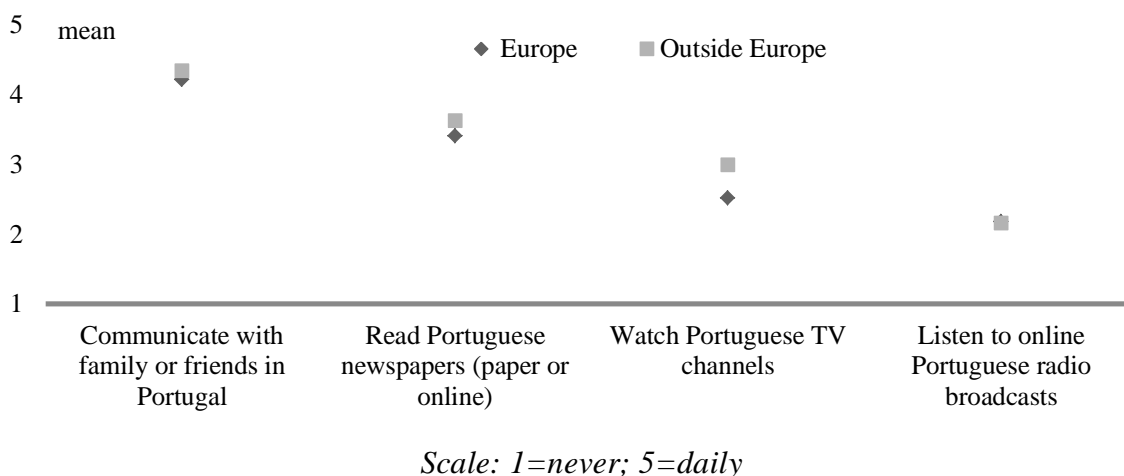
Table 7: Home visits

	Europe	Outside Europe
At least once per month	4,2	1,5
At least once every three months	23,7	19,0
At least once every six months	31,4	29,0
At least once per year	29,2	33,8
Less often	8,9	13,3
Never	2,6	3,4
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

Regarding the use of media to maintain contact with Portugal (Figure 4), the hierarchy is identical regardless of the location. The most common use of the media is to communicate with family and friends. It is followed by reading Portuguese newspapers and visualization of Portuguese television channels. The least frequent is the use of the internet to listen to radio programs.

Figure 4: Media transnational practices



Source: REMIGR project

The biggest difference between European and non-European destinations is observed on TV channel visualizations, where the latter score higher than the former. A possible explanation for the higher values in TV channels outside Europe is the existence of RTP Africa, a channel produced by RTP (Radio Portuguese Television) with coverage in African Portuguese speaking countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe). The fact that some of these countries possess low internet coverage⁴ can make the public television an alternative way of keeping in touch with Portugal.⁵

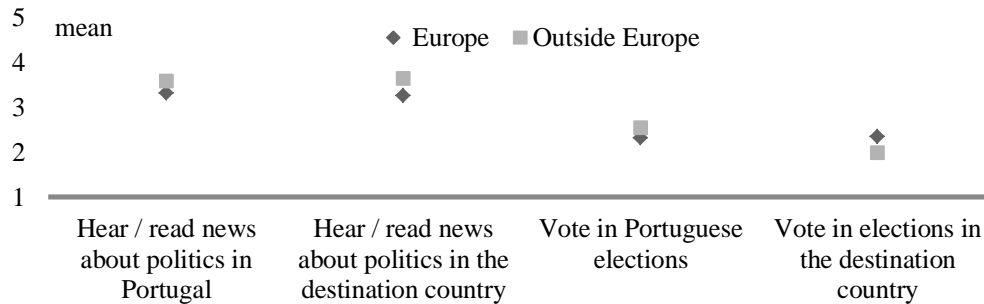
Moving on to political participation (Figure 5), it tends to be slightly more intense in the group of the emigrants residing outside Europe. This applies to items as being aware of host

⁴ According to Internet World Stats data, the internet penetration rate for African Portuguese-speaking countries was: Angola 26%, Cape Verde 40.3%, Guinea Bissau 3.3%, Mozambique 5.9% and São Tomé and Príncipe 25.2%. The world total figure was 46.1% and for Europe 73.5%.

⁵ Coincidentally, in the list of countries with more than 25 responses, the three countries with higher values for the Portuguese television channels were Angola, China-Macau and Mozambique.

country's politics, home country politics and voting in Portuguese elections – although in the latter case both groups score low. The only item in which the European group attains a higher position is the turnout for elections in the destination country.

Figure 5: Political transnational practices



Scale: 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=once in a while, 4=frequently, 5= whenever is possible;

Source: REMIGR project

Mobility prospects

Important is also the migratory experience (Table 8). Despite the diffusion of the hypermobility theories (e.g.: Gössling, Ceron, Dubois, & Hall, 2009)⁶ and the arguments defending the network society and the existence of an increasing space of flows (Castells, 2007), the previous migratory experience of Portuguese recent migrants is not overwhelming. Former international experiences (living in another foreign country besides the current one) exist in 31 per cent of the Portuguese in Europe and in 39 per cent of emigrants in other countries.

Table 8: Circular migration

	Europe	Outside Europe
Yes	31,4	38,8
No	68,6	61,2
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

⁶ The model put forward by Gossling and colleagues involves the category of expatriates, with which many of the most qualified migrants self-identify.

Even if the above figures correspond to a minority of migrants, it may be argued that they suggest a radical change compared to traditional flows. Unfortunately, no comparative data has been systematically gathered for traditional flows, a reason why it is hard to defend that mobility has increased or not with the time. But the fact that young Portuguese emigrants – as seen above – have already had, at least in 30 per cent of the cases, another emigration experience, is in itself a relevant fact deserving further research.

Finally, the plans for the future drawn by recent emigrants were subject to consideration (

Table 9). In the case of emigration to Europe, the opinions are divided between staying in the destination country (33 per cent) and indecisions (32 per cent). Outside Europe, the plans for staying are much lesser (18 per cent), the proportion of undecided is similar (31 per cent) and the returning plans are much higher (36 per cent). One possible explanation is the greater proportion of individuals living outside Europe which are married and have a spouse living in Portugal.⁷

Table 9: Plans for the future

	Europe	Outside Europe
I do not have definite plans	32,3	31,1
Stay in this country for a while and then return to Portugal	25,4	36,2
Stay in this country	32,9	17,8
Emigrate to another country	9,5	14,9
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: REMIGR project

There are also prospects to re-emigrate, i.e., intention of moving to another country. Although these cases are a minority in both groups, they are more present in the residents outside Europe – the ones in which the emigration experience was already more frequent, again revealing a high propensity for mobility.

⁷ As to married respondents residing in Europe, 76 per cent were with the spouse; outside Europe the corresponding figure was 64 per cent.

Final remarks

Intra-EU mobility does not constitute a major research area in international migration nowadays. The external pressure continually manifest in the EU borders, either through the form of economic migrants or refugees, and the toughest political dilemmas regarding third-country nationals, are maybe the reasons why non-European movements are higher in the EU research agenda. However, it is our view that more attention must be devoted to the internal EU situation, given the existing economic imbalances and the possibility that some will reach a point of non-return.

One possible outcome of the EU free circulation regime is the long-term exit of young and skilled individuals from increasingly peripheral countries, such as Portugal, to more central EU ones. The lack of economic and social opportunities, as well as the increasing disbelief in the home country, on the part of young Southern Europeans, may act as a cumulative causation factor and radically unbalance the European landscape. It must be stressed that this (free) movement favors the whole EU and the growth of the destination countries. As such, it may easily be defended that these flows must be accompanied by re-equilibrium policies – as occurred in the past –, in order to grant Southern European countries the conditions to regain attractiveness, thus avoiding a permanent loss of people and skills.

A less feasible outcome of the free movement of labour is the mass return to the home country, once the economic troubles are over. A more possible outcome is the enacting of a new and transnational Europe, in which Portuguese and other Southern European emigrants – young or not, skilled or not – will display multiple and complex itineraries, but always keeping as a node their home country. Frequent links and dual lives will change the European map, which will in the future gather citizens voicing their identities and projects in multiple countries and locations.

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