

# Are the guest-worker programmes still effective?

## Insights from Romanian migration to Spanish agriculture

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### **Migration, development and guest-worker programmes**

In 1986, Castles published an article titled ‘The guest-worker in western Europe – an Obituary’ in the *International Migration Review*. Twenty years later, the same renowned scholar authored ‘Guestworkers in Europe: A Resurrection?’ in the same prestigious journal. The two titles reflect the major changes defining the way scholars, and even more so policymakers, have positioned themselves in relation to migration and development during the last decades.

When the first article was written, pessimism dominated the migration–development debate, fed by the perceived failure of the post-Second World War European guest-worker programmes. At the beginning of the millennium, when the second article was published, new evidence and theoretical frameworks to interpret it stimulated a rather optimistic view (De Haas 2010). Within this context, a new wave of guest-worker programmes has developed in Europe (Rye and Scott 2018). According to their promoters, these programmes would be more than a way to open safe channels for migration, as they would also promote co-development experiences (Macías Llaga *et al.* 2016). This perspective, stressing the benefits of migration for individuals, their countries of origin, and their destinations, has been actively promoted under the label *triple-win*.

By investigating Romanians’ migration to work in the intensive agriculture sector of Huelva, Spain, this chapter questions the idea that the triple-win approach offers overall benefits, primarily at the migrant level. To assess the tenets of the triple-win approach, the cases of the Huelvan guest-workers programme and Romanian migrants are particularly relevant. The Huelvan programme, one of the new wave of European guest-workers programmes, has attracted the attention of both scholars (e.g. Plewa 2009) and policymakers (e.g. Wickramasekara 2011) and is often labelled as ‘good practice’ in the field (López-Sala 2016). On the other hand, Romanians have been one of the most numerous migrant groups working in Huelva agriculture

in the past 20 years (Molinero-Gerbeau 2018). Since Spain and Romania both belong to the European Union (EU), which promotes free circulation of labour, Romanian migration to Huelva has evolved through a complex history from managed migration to free circulation; this makes the case even more interesting. To emphasise this change, we distinguished two phases in the history of this migration: The first lasted from 2002 to 2008, when migration developed on the basis of a bilateral agreement, and the recruitment was managed at the source by public authorities: it is therefore called the *public* phase of migration. The second began in 2009 and is still underway. During this phase, Romanians, as EU citizens, have had the right to sign a work contract directly in Spain without the need for a visa. Spanish employers have taken the lead in recruiting the migrants: it is therefore called, as expressed by Molinero-Gerbeau (2018), the *private* phase of migration.

Our analysis is based on two approaches: first, using legal and official documents, we investigate the context within which this migration was initiated and how it was implemented. Our primary aim in this direction is to understand whether the managed migration intentionally addressed positive effects and development goals. Our analysis points to the predominance of the Spanish employers' needs, without any attention directed towards other consequences of migration.

The second approach is based on qualitative research with Romanian workers in Huelvan agriculture, both at the origin and the destination. Our analysis investigates the differences in migration practices associated with the two identified phases as well as the benefits of migrating abroad at the individual level. We argue that the passage from managed migration to free migration did not fundamentally impact the way migration was experienced by the participants. We argue that, even if the migration is profitable for participants, its impact ultimately remains limited; this argument holds even for individuals involved in circular patterns of mobility for a long time.

### **Who benefits from circular/temporary guest-worker programmes? The triple-win approach**

The *win-win-win* approach, also known as the *triple-win* approach, is intimately linked to the promotion of circular mobility as a beneficial form of migration. The advocates of this type of temporary migration claim that migrating under circular schemes stimulates co-development (Macías Llaga *et al.* 2016), bringing benefits to the three involved entities: the countries of origin, the destination, and the migrants themselves. Developed by think-tanks (Agunias 2006) and endorsed by international bodies such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD 2007), the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2010) or the European Migration Network (EMN 2011), the triple-win approach has become the most widespread argument

for legitimising the initiation of new temporary circular initiatives. This type of safe migration would have advantages for destination countries, as they would receive the required workforce, avoiding both irregular migration, and the social costs of long-term integration. For origin countries, it would bring economic and social remittances, limiting the effects of brain drain and, given the contexts at the origin, fostering development. Migrants themselves would also benefit by gaining economic and human capital – professional and language skills – and resources to improve their lives at home, while working abroad under legal conditions. They would also be able to return to their origin country, thus avoiding family breakups (Agunias 2006, López-Sala and Godenau 2015, Agunias and Newland 2007, Newland 2007).

Advised by EMN, the European Commission (2007) adopted this approach and decided to test it by financing, among other programmes, two pilots in Spain's seasonal agriculture, one in the province of Lleida and the other in Huelva. The objective was to evaluate the impact of circular migration programmes to promote their implementation throughout the EU. Even if the Spanish programmes were considered successful by their promoters (Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone 2018), some academics remained sceptical, highlighting that triple-win served only as an argument to legitimise the circular/temporary programmes whose winning effects had not been proven empirically (López-Sala and Godenau 2015).

The discussion about Spanish programmes thus resumed a long debate in migration studies that debunked the optimistic view of guest-worker programmes, especially in their seasonal/circulatory version, as the 'best' way to manage migration in relation to development (e.g. Rush 2002, Rush and Martin 2008, Martin 2003, Wickramasekara 2011, Castles and Ozkul 2014). We here contribute to this debate by reviewing how Romanian migration was channelled to the agriculture of Huelva and the effects of this experience, especially on migrants.

## **Investigating Romanian migration to Huelva**

Our analysis is based on qualitative research on Romanians' seasonal migration to work in the Huelvan agriculture. We base our text on 16 interviews (four men and 12 women) with former or current Romanian workers in Huelva. Their ages varied from 30 to 39 (men) and 20 to 55 (women). The majority of respondents were married (10), five were single, and one was divorced.

In Romania, the fieldwork was carried out from November to December 2016 and August 2017 in one village in the south of the country. In Spain, it was conducted in May to June 2015 in five towns in the province of Huelva. The interviewees were selected according to two criteria: the year of first departure from Romania (before versus after 2007) and the pattern of migration (single versus repeated migration). This way, the sample became

heterogeneous in terms of phases (the *public* phase of migration versus the *private* one) and circularity. The interview protocol was the same for the two countries. Interviewees were openly asked to evaluate their migration experience and prompted to discuss its positive and negative facets. In addition to interviews, we also inspected official documents, legislation, and administrative data. These all formed the basis of how migration to Huelva was initiated, from a top-down perspective.

### **Agri-food industry in Huelva and its need for seasonal workers**

Huelva is an Andalusian province, famous as producer of strawberries. Yearly, about 80 per cent of Huelvan strawberry production is exported, generating a total turnover of around 250 to 300 million euro (López-Sala 2016). Since the 1970s, ‘a post-Fordist, ultra-modern [and] technologically advanced agriculture, well embedded in the global value chain’ (Caruso 2016, 265) has developed in the region. The production is highly dependent not only on constant capital but also on variable capital – mainly on labour. For every hectare of strawberry crop, five to six workers are required, totalling 40,000–60,000 every campaign (Plewa 2009).

In the 1990s, the ‘huge workforce problem’ (Reigada 2012, 109) of Huelvan agriculture found its first solution in employing Moroccans and Sub-Saharan Africans already living in Spain, most with irregular status. After massive regularisations in 2000 and 2001, when their status was legalised, these migrants moved to other economic sectors with better working conditions and higher salaries. Pressed to find a solution, employers tried to bring the workers needed directly from abroad (Gualda Caballero 2012). The micro-guest programmes were therefore designed by Huelvan authorities, employers, and trade unions. Based on bilateral agreements, these programmes recruited directly in the origin countries; they have been implemented since 2001. With Romania, a bilateral agreement was signed in 2002, initiating the migration of interest for us here.

### **Romanians working in Huelva agriculture – a top-down perspective**

The agreement with Romania was similar to the agreements Spain concluded with other countries during the same period (Ferrero-Turrión and López-Sala 2009). Its lack of specificity pointed to a focus on the Spanish side’s needs, without considering those of the origin countries. *On paper*, the agreement with Romania was rather large in scope, addressing not only seasonal workers but also permanent workers and trainees. *De facto*, it functioned mainly with regard to agricultural seasonal workers, as the official data prove. The agreement revolved around the idea that one migrant equals one worker. The

aim was to select the workers best fitting the employer's needs, transfer them safely abroad, guarantee they offered their labour under regulated conditions and, then, once they were no longer needed at the destination, transfer them back to their place of origin. In this vein, the legal document devoted large sections to the selection process, the work contract and its associated rights and to the workers' return. The migrant worker, rather than the migrant human being, to refer to Max Frisch' famous words, was the key perspective, and the effort went towards transferring the labour back and forth safely and lawfully.

There was only a vague connection between the agreement and any development goal. The legal text addressed the benefits Romania would gain through the return of migrants (as they would bring valuable skills) and mentioned 'measures to promote the reintegration of migrant workers in the origin state' to be implemented, without providing any specific details on this (Law 2002, 464).

In implementation, the agreement favoured setting up the Romanian institutional apparatus for sending a labour force abroad: the Office for Labour Migration Abroad (OLMA), a public institution that was established shortly before the agreement was signed, was in charge of implementing it. This state 'monopoly' simplified the process for the Spanish side but excluded other actors (e.g. private recruitment companies) who could compete with public authorities in recruiting.

Recruitment was a multistep process involving trips to Bucharest, where the OLMA offices were located. Long queues and people sleeping overnight in the front of OLMA offices were the typical images spread by the Romanian media during the selection campaigns.

Together with the contract (limited to a maximum of nine months per year), the workers were bound to sign a commitment to return to Romania at the end of the contract, and to visit the Spanish Consulate in Bucharest within a month after return. It is interesting to note here that migrants were not only pressed to return, they also paid the cost of proving that they were back in the origin country. Those not obeying were banned from participating in the programme for three years; there were additional sanctions if they tried to obtain a residence or work permit in Spain.

Without explicitly mentioning circularity, the agreement allowed for it. The employers encouraged the 'good' workers to come back for the next season, offering them a nominal contract that was sent directly to the Spanish Consulate in Bucharest. In this way, the migrants avoided the costs of repeating the recruitment. Apparently to the advantage of the migrant, the procedure excluded the Romanian authorities (and their control) from the process and pressed the workers to better conform to the employers' requirements. The number of 'repeaters' was probably substantial: a short comparison of the figures published by Romanian and Spanish sources points to a difference in

the number of contracts of about 21,000 up to 2008. This suggests that circularity was relatively high among the Romanians working in Huelva and that the Spanish employers' practice of contacting the Romanian workers directly was widespread.

These procedures, set up in 2002, remained basically unchanged until 2007, when Romania became an EU member. That event impacted the way Romanian authorities approached managed migration. In 2007, OLMA was disbanded and all its tasks related to migrant recruitment were transferred to the National Agency for Employment. Placing all the national/international issues of employment under the same umbrella was a clear sign that Romanian authorities were ready to fully embrace the EU concept of mobility. However, as a new EU member, Romania was subject to transitional arrangements. On assessment, every (long-standing) member of the EU had the right to impose restrictions on Romanians' access to its labour market. As in 2007, the Spanish authorities decided to not open the labour market for Romanians, and the bilateral agreement continued to be applied. This lasted until 2009, when Spain dropped the transitional arrangements and Romanian workers could freely sign a contract with the Spanish employers.

For Romanian migration to Huelva, 2008 marks the end of publicly managed recruitment, the *public* phase; however, the event did not put a stop to migration. Spanish employers took the initiative themselves to recruit in Romania as the national government froze the programme with Morocco, and eastern European citizens became the only reliable source for the workforce. For that purpose, they used different strategies: contacting the former migrants directly, asking them to bring new workers, using former migrants as recruiting intermediaries, working with private recruiting companies or using the services of the publicly managed EURES network. Previous studies (e.g. Lopez-Sala 2016) suggested that the practices of contacting the former 'good' workers directly, offering them a new contract, and using their social network to attract new workers became widespread. This is, at least in the Romanian case, just the extension of the nominal contract form of recruiting used previously.

In 2011, as an effect of the economic crisis, the Spanish government reintroduced the labour market restrictions for Romanians. This lasted until 2013, when all the transitional arrangements related to the incorporation of Romania in the EU ended. However, the restrictions only marginally affected the migration practices in this case, as Romanians already had the right to free movement (granted in 2007), and for their work contracts, the employers only needed special approval (not related to any quotas). As such, this new *private* phase of migration did not seem to bring substantive changes in the way migration was experienced by Romanians recruited to work in Huelvan agriculture.

## Romanians working in Huelva agriculture – a bottom-up perspective

The involvement of the Romanian public authorities in recruitment introduced differences between the two identified phases, mainly with regard to the selection process in origin and return obligations. Apparently, according to our informants, the rest of the process/conditions (work at destination, housing, and social integration at destination, including earnings) remained mostly undisturbed by the changes during the two periods.

When organised by state agencies in Romania, the selection process prioritised the Spanish employers' preferences. Middle-aged women with work experience in agriculture and healthy physical appearances were, in the words of migrants, the perfect candidates. Word-of-mouth dissemination of information about recruitment campaigns involved the programme's participants in the selection process itself. They added their own evaluation of who was the most 'fit' according to the promoted criteria. One of the women, for example, was convinced she had been rejected at her first attempt to gain a contract in Spain, when the agreement was operational, because she was 'too' tall.

*They were looking for shorter persons. This is what I gathered the first time. Because with strawberries, it's truly very hard for the tall ones. Because I used to work on my knees.*

(Woman, age 48, repeated migration)

Following this, migrants themselves caused the selection to evolve into a more complex process that reinforced, and even strengthened, the Spanish employers' criteria by reducing the costs of selection (for instance, only those who previous migrants appreciated as 'fit' were advised to apply for this migration), and increasing migration selectivity on the basis of their network. The interposition of former participants in the programme as recruiting agents added a new layer to selection. Driven by the willingness to bring 'proper' workers to the employer and/or to reduce the risk of an inappropriate migration experience for the candidates, the participants in migration became themselves instances of selection. During the private phase, this process seemed to be accentuated. Talking about a departure in 2009, one of the circular migrants told us the story of a selection through an intermediary, a Romanian woman, who came directly to her village.

I: *And she took everyone who wanted to go, or was there some sort of preselection on her part?*

R: *There was some sort of preselection, you had to... it was, it was also the age at that moment, because they would only take [women] up to a certain age, up to 50 years old, and she had to see them, to make sure they are not... Oh! And we also had... But no, she did not take her. Yes, another girl came and*

*she was deaf. She could hear, but it was very difficult for her, and she [the woman in charge with finding women to work in Spain] did not take her.*

(Woman, age 48, repeated migration)

From the very beginning of the migration to Huelva, between the moment of selection and the departure, there was an unspecified waiting period. The departure time used to be announced from day to day, via a phone call. This seemed to be the main instrument to manage the departures, and it appeared repeatedly in the interviews. Whether the caller was the public agency, the Spanish employer himself, the intermediary, or the private company, the call provided brief news about departure. The cost that migrant labour had incurred for employers in the non-activity period was thus transferred to the origin, transforming the potential migrants into migrants for the shortest term possible, when their labour force was fully needed at the destination. One of the women recalled that, in December 2008, she participated in a selection organised by the state agency, but she only left in February 2009, as briefly announced via a phone call.

*(...) I think, around 6th- 7th- 8th of December. This was on a Saturday when the preselection took place. We went there, to C., they made us fill out some forms, some papers to fill out and they say: [provide] the phone numbers where you can be reached at and... The truth is that they called us in February, around the 15th of the month...*

(Woman, age 52, single migration)

Once departure was announced, the potential migrant had to arrive (even from one day to the next) at the place communicated by her recruiter as the journey's starting point. The buses still prevailed in employers' preferences. The low cost and quick decisions about the dates of the trip probably favoured this choice. The freedom to decide on the time of the migrants' departure was also a means to reduce the costs associated with labour, as the migrants could be sent back gradually when the campaign reached its final stage.

Most employers paid half the cost of the trip. The journey from Romania to Spain was usually handled by the migrants (employers might advance the money and then deduct it from the workers' salaries), while the employer paid for the return. Our data suggested that the practice was common to the two phases. It is interesting that the cost of the trip back was transformed over time, at least by some employers, into a means to control the departure time. The practice of not paying for the migrants' return until the moment the employer chose put pressure on the workers to comply with the employer's will. All the women seemed to share this knowledge about the trip back.

*So, they used to pay, we paid one trip, and they paid the other, right? And, for example, lately, we would pay the ticket towards Spain and they would*



*pay for the trip back to Romania, and if you wouldn't stay for the campaign to be over, they wouldn't pay.*

(Woman, age 48, repeated migration)

Once in Spain, the migrants were quickly integrated into the work. The daily work activities were described as difficult and physically exhausting. Migrants worked six days a week, six-and-a-half hours per day. The supervision was tight and the migrants shared a perception of 'being watched.' Generally, the accommodation was isolated, near the field, and was characteristic of temporary/short-term housing. Normal conditions included sharing common spaces (kitchen and bathroom) and sleeping three to seven in a room. Contact with the host society was minimal, as the living quarters were isolated, and the workplace was temporary. Moreover, and more importantly, the employer mediated these contacts. He arranged trips to the grocery store and visits to the doctor, if needed.

*I spent the Easter there. Yes, the Easter. But they have nothing to do with it. (...) I mean, we didn't go to church to see how Catholics celebrate Easter, because the farm was in the middle of the field, and for us to go to town we would take the bus. So, when we received the salary, they would ask: Do you want to go to town? Yes. And they [the employers] would order a bus. Yes. So, it was all organized, one couldn't go as she pleased...*

(Woman, age 52, single migration)

As the employer facilitated, approved, or mediated every contact or need outside the field, the degree of perceived dependence was high, and migrants tended to act in a way that was pleasing to the employer. One migrant spoke of this type of migration as being a period of 'staying in order.' The explanation for this high conformism probably lies in translating different interests into behaviours that were beneficial for both sides – migrants and employers – framed by the pressure of the limited seasonal time. The migrants' motivations clearly pointed to the need to accumulate as much money as possible. The limited duration of migration meant that time was perceived primarily as a time of work, favouring migrants' availability for overtime. Isolation from the host community, which limited alternative ways to spend (free) time, favoured the openness to work extra hours.

*I: And was it mandatory to work the extra hours if the employers needed it, or...?*

*R: Yes. Well, no, it wasn't. It wasn't, but, as we were far away, what could we do? You didn't have the bus ready... to leave [go to town].*

(Woman, age 43, repeated migration)

The power of the employer over the migrants seemed to be linked mainly to the conviction that he was the one who controlled the time–money association.

The tendency to please the employer became understandable from this perspective. The fact that migrants in their first work experience were perceived as the most obedient (see also Plewa 2009) further supports this. The fear of being sent home – meaning the interruption of the time–money series – played a central role in the entire process. However, during the overall migration experience, respecting the initial deal was the essential measure against which the relation with the employer was evaluated. As the expectations were generally met, the migrants positively evaluated the employers and repeatedly qualified them as ‘sympathetic.’

*I: And what did you think about the employer?*

*R: He was very nice. (...) As long as he didn't pressure us or stress us or anything... I don't know if I ever saw his face. So, haven't seen him, ever. So, no... We would see the boss in the morning, sometimes. If only!*

(Woman, age 52, single migration)

Earnings were evaluated by comparing them with those acquired in a similar timeframe at the origin. As the comparison was always to the advantage of the destination, even if some rights were not fully respected (e.g. paying overtime hours at a higher rate), the payment was acceptable because it was considerably higher than what migrants could access at the origin. As one woman told us:

*...and better payment. Because there, so what I earned in two months there, a hundred million, a hundred and something, well, go figure... You do the math: how many months would it have taken me to earn as much here, with a salary of seven million per month?*

(Woman, age 52, single migration)

Defined as a period in which to earn money, the time spent in migration was structured around the idea of accumulating as much as possible. That was why consumption was reduced to a minimum and social life was curtailed to costless activities. The different interests of the employer (to have hard workers uninterested in connected activities) were satisfied by the behaviour of the carefully selected migrants.

*I: And you worked the extra hours if you wanted to, or was it mandatory?*

*R: Well, in a way you wanted to work overtime, because this was why you were there, to earn money, not to stay in your room. What were you supposed to do in your room from 2PM until the evening... until the next day?*

(Woman, age 45, repeated migration)

Although the difference between the origin and the destination in terms of earnings was high, this did not mean that migrants remitted or returned home

with large amounts of money. The time spent in migration was too short to allow for significant accumulations. About 1,000 euros per worked month did not allow large investments, even if pooled. That is why remittances were mainly a way to preserve or consolidate a predeparture position rather than to foster upward moves in the social structure at the origin. One of the women, after 11 years of repeated seasonal migration to Spain, explained what she used the money for:

*Rather daily expenses. Paying for the children's accommodation in Bucharest, for schools. Less for investments.*

(Woman, age 48, repeated migration)

Given the duration of the contract, the migrants strove to integrate the experience of working abroad in their household's ordinary life at the origin. If the effort was not successful, migration was abandoned. If they succeeded, then the migrants made the step towards circularity. However, circularity was not simply implemented by the employer. Rather, it was built based on both the employers' needs and the ability of the first-time migrants to integrate their migration experience in their ordinary life in Romania. Three to six months per year working in agriculture in Spain also meant six to nine months of not working in Romania, and the migrant had to solve this problem. The initial tendency was to exit the labour market while living at home between two successive migrations. Flexible arrangements on the labour market at the origin become part of the story (e.g. working as a seller for the small shop of a family member at the origin). However, in many cases, the strategy was not to find a work arrangement at the origin, but to increase the time in migration. This could be translated into an attempt to gain a longer contract or to combine temporary contracts in different EU countries; this strategy was easily accessible to Romanians beginning in 2014, when they enjoyed the full right of mobility within the EU. The case of one woman in particular is illustrative. Now aged 46, she entered migration in 2015, with a contract in German agriculture. In 2016, she had her first contract in Spain to supplement the departures to Germany, limited to one per year. Her motivations for working abroad were related to meeting the needs of the household and providing for her children. At the time of the interview, she had her bags ready, waiting for the phone call from her Spanish employers to start a new three-month contract there.

The skills migrants achieved during their experience in Spain were rather limited. The migrants were aware that the knowledge they accumulated abroad was highly specific to a type of crop that was not grown in Romania. The difficulty of the work lay not in its complexity but in the conditions. Good health was a prerequisite for success because perseverance was key to fulfilling the contract. The migrants did not value the experience for the skills they acquired but in rather general terms as nonspecific knowledge

about a different type of work, in a different culture, in interaction with different individuals. In itself, the experience was characterised as a mind-opening one.

*And you got to see something different. Something different, and not just that, but also, another kind of life style, lots of things, I learned a lot. (...) I don't know, I think I changed, you change and you find a new perspective, you see things differently... and now, a person who was away, even for a little bit, I think that she sees things differently compared to those who didn't get out of here at all.*

(Woman, age 45, repeated migration)

### **Guest-worker programmes – the best way to manage migration?**

In examining the case of Romanian migration to Huelva, this chapter aimed to contribute to the renewed debate around migration and development issues, discussing the so-called triple-win approach. Largely promoted by some international organisations and think-tanks, triple-win has lately served to justify setting up a new wave of guest-worker programmes in Europe. We focused our attention at the individual level, trying to assess the benefits that seasonal migration to the intensive agriculture sector of Huelva brings to Romanian workers. The expectation was for our findings to reflect the triple-win approach's central tenet of benefits for the origin, the migrants, and the destination. This expectation was based on previous evaluations of the Huelvan programme as an exemplary one and the dynamics of Romanian migration, including its transformation from managed to free migration. However, our findings suggested that the wins for migrants were rather limited and fragile, whereas co-development, the major win for the origin, was not claimed or formulated explicitly in legal documents. In fact, while implemented on the basis of a bilateral agreement from 2002 to 2009, Romanian migration in the Huelvan agriculture sector mainly served the need of Spanish employers to build their labour force in a legal and orderly way.

The agreement signed with the Romanian authorities was only one of the protocols concluded by Spain with different countries in the same period. The similarity of these documents (Ferrero-Turrión and López-Sala 2009) suggests that the specifics of the origins were not actually taken into account and hints that the promoted model of migration was defined in the destination area and simply exported to the origin. The aim of the agreement was to select the workers best fitted to the Spanish requirements (without questioning them), to transfer them safely abroad, and to transfer them back to Romania once their job was complete. Workers entered the programme without a history, future, or present life at the origin. They were just workers whose labour was needed somewhere else.

The bilateral accord made only vague references to the return and measures to help returnees reintegrate at the origin, but no empirical or administrative information has suggested that this was more than a paper approach. The lack of any action to enhance the positive effects was striking, and the expectation that migration would produce such effects points to a simplistic understanding of the entire process.

The passage from the *public* phase to the *private* phase did not seem to change the practices associated with migration in any fundamental way, according to our data. The strategies of recruitment were different, based more on direct contact between employers and future employees, and involving social networks more extensively. However, the right of free work in Spain did not significantly modify the way Romanians travelled, lived, and worked in the agricultural sector in Huelva. Additional research is needed to better grasp why this happened. To our understanding, a certain inertia in migration practices was partially responsible. Moreover, the careful selection of the migrants as individuals with few occupational alternatives in their origin countries, prone to constituting a docile and disciplined labour force, and the power of social networks made up of migrants who learned to embody and enact employers' demands in selection probably played a role in the explanation.

Our informants pointed to limited individual benefits associated with this form of migration. Seasonal migration was accessed for its monetary value and evaluated comparing the job opportunities and wages at the origin (usually the poorest rural areas of Romania) and the destination. The short duration of the contract shaped the entire experience of working abroad and living under the pressure of the time–money association. While the amounts of money earned abroad were considerably higher than what migrants would achieve working at the origin, they were not large enough to allow for major investments. This migration was a strategy for surviving and making minor household improvements, rather than achieving prosperity. As the work was unskilled and performed in isolation from Spanish society, the migrants' benefits in terms of human capital were rather limited as well, and migration was valued by participants rather as a new experience associated with gaining diffuse knowledge of the world.

The repeated involvement of some workers in this type of migration was a sign that seasonal work in agriculture was a valuable option for them. However, the lack of any support to incorporate the season in Spain into normal life at the origin was a substantial difficulty that migrants had to manage alone. From this perspective, extending the duration of the contract was only one of the available solutions to increase the benefits of migration. Supporting flexible work arrangements at the origin, which would allow individuals to go to work abroad temporarily, could also be an option for consideration.

While far from suggesting that the Huelva programme was a failed experience, our analysis of Romanian migration invites a less optimistic view of its

effects than triple-win implies. The triple-win discourse serves to legitimise this type of initiative. However, to foster true experiences of co-development, more ambitious objectives are required, including explicitly mentioning co-development as a goal and more effective instruments that acknowledge the needs of migrants and origins.

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