Migration of Ukrainian Nationals to Portugal: Changing Flows and the Critical Role of Social Networks

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In a short period of time, Ukrainians became the second largest foreign community living in Portugal. Without historical ties linking the two countries, the 'migration industry' as well as positive feedback and assistance provided through pioneers' social networks were decisive for the constitution and rapid expansion of the flow. However it slowed down in only few years and the economic crisis affecting Portugal since 2008 has introduced new limits to a possible future expansion. The goal of the paper is to provide insights with respect to the evolution of the flow, particularly looking at mechanisms of assistance and feedback provided and received within social networks, including the role of the 'migration industry'. We explored quantitative and qualitative data collected through questionnaires applied to 306 Ukrainians and interviews conducted with 31 Ukrainians in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area in 2011 and 2012. The research confirms the importance of assistance received through social networks at different stages of the preparation of the move, upon arrival and throughout the settlement process in Portugal. We conclude that negative opinions on the present economic opportunities in Portugal have replaced initial positive perceptions about labour market opportunities and this information is being transmitted through social networks to Ukrainians back in Ukraine. We suggest that the significant decrease of the inflow can probably be explained by negative feedback and a more limited willingness to assist the migration of others. Future trends in the migratory flow of Ukrainian citizens to Portugal as well as the permanence of these immigrants in the country are uncertain. On the one hand, migrants are struggling to live through the crisis, while the recent social upheaval in Ukraine pushes them to leave.

Keywords: migration, social networks, feedback, Ukraine, Portugal

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Introduction

While the presence of Ukrainian migrants in Portugal is very recent (from the end of the 1990s), in very few years it became the second-largest foreign community living in the country. However, from the mid-2000s the flow has been declining (with punctual growth episodes). The sudden and fast emergence of this immigration flow is quite unique, particularly given that previous immigration flows to Portugal were mostly from Lusophone countries, largely related to the country's colonial past.

Analysing the composition of the migrant stock according to nationalities, one of the most striking features is the very low figure of Eastern Europeans in the country, including Ukrainians, up until the early 2000s. Indeed, on 31 December 2000 there were only 167 documented Ukrainians in the Aliens and Borders Office database, whereas the population census conducted on 12 March 2001 counted 10 793 Ukrainian nationals residing in Portugal for more than one year. The disparity between the two numbers reveals that a significant number of undocumented Ukrainian immigrants were living in the country at that time.

Aside from the geographical distance, Portugal and Ukraine do not share historical links, a common religion or language. The intense and recent inflows of Ukrainian citizens to Portugal resulted from a combination of specific economic and social conditions in both countries, but also from the important role played by social networks and organised groups (sometimes of a criminal nature) in feeding the flow, once it was started by pioneers in the late 1990s (Baganha, Marques, Góis 2004; Peixoto, Soares, Costa, Murteira, Pereira, Sabino 2005; Baganha, Marques, Góis 2010).

Indeed, the notable expansion of the Portuguese economy between the second half of the 1980s and part of the 1990s, due to foreign investment and European Union structural funds for public works and the construction sector, led to an increase in labour market needs that were solved with imported foreign labour (Fonseca, Malheiros, Esteves, Caldeira 2002; Fonseca, Malheiros 2003; Fonseca 2008; Pereira 2010). During this time, Ukraine was going through a complex process of independence from the Soviet Union, with a concomitant change in the prevailing economic model, growing wage differentials, rising unemployment and underemployment, delays in salary payments, declining living standards and social discontent. All these factors stimulated international labour migration (Malynovska 2004; International Organisation for Migration 2011). Moreover, the lack of investment and the disparity in wages between the Western and Northern *oblasts* (more agrarian) and the Eastern regions of Ukraine (more industrialised), including Kiev, led many people to leave the country (Coupé, Vakhitova 2013). At that time, there was massive emigration to Western Europe, among other destinations (Malynovska 2004). Initially, the flow to Portugal was by and large set in motion through the active engagement of 'travel agencies' –including smugglers and organised criminal groups – in Ukraine and nearby countries that promoted this country as a migration destination, despite its peripheral position in Europe (Fonseca, Ormond, Malheiros, Patrício, Martins 2005; Baganha, Marques, Góis 2004; Peixoto *et al.* 2005; Fonseca 2008). Lyuba (40 years old, Ukrainian immigrant, arrived in Portugal in 1999) recalls how the 'travel agency' proposed that she migrate to Portugal, when initial plans of migrating to the Netherlands failed:

> *No, I never thought... Our destination was the Netherlands, but the firm that took care of the papers/visa, that is a great mafia... the proposal was the Netherlands, but it was obvious that there was nothing in the Netherlands, and they started saying, with the Visa already, they started saying that the person that was supposed to be there waiting for us had problems... so our departure to the Netherlands kept being postponed... I could not wait anymore. They asked us if we wanted to go to Italy, Spain or Portugal. And I don't know why, I said Portugal.*

Existing labour demand at that time, particularly in the construction sector but also in manufacturing and domestic service facilitated entry into the labour market and subsequent settlement. After the first immigrants settled in Portugal they began to mediate directly the migration of further family and friends, thereby reducing the need for the more expensive intermediation of 'travel agencies'. In addition, due to the criminal character of these 'services' that included not only the preparation of the move in the origin country, the organisation of the move (transport through Europe, usually in minivans with a short-term Schengen visa) and finding a job and accommodation upon arrival, but also subsequent practices of extortion and violence (Fonseca, Rato, Mortágua 2005; Peixoto et al. 2005; Pereira, Vasconcelos 2008), there was strong police crackdown on these organisations leading to their arrest and halting their operations to a large extent (Peixoto et al. 2005).

Operating at the meso-level of communities and localities, the role of networks in feeding the flows became critical. In migration processes, it is through these networks that assistance is given and received both to prepare the move and after reaching the destination country. The support provided includes monetary help, information on job opportunities and the housing market, advice on legal issues or other practicalities of the daily life, or hosting a country fellow upon arrival. Additionally, the information sent to the country of origin in the form of positive feedback mechanisms plays an important role in how networks stimulate and enable further migration, thereby generating a process of cumulative causation (Massey 1990; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pelligrino, Taylor 2005). Conversely, negative feedback mechanisms contribute to dissuading further migration thereby leading to an inverse effect of cumulative causation that leads to shrinking migration flows (Massey 1990; de Haas 2010; Engbersen, Snel, van Meeteren 2013).

Based on this framework, the goals of this paper are twofold: on the one hand, to provide an overview of the evolution of the flow of Ukrainians to Portugal from early 2000s to the present moment. On the other, it relies on the results of recent research to explore the role of networks involving different actors over time, including the 'migration industry', in mediating the migration process and in providing feedback to the origin country as enhancers or gatekeepers of migratory flows. In this case, the 'migration industry' includes not only private lawyers, travel agents, recruiters, organisers, fixers and brokers who sustain links with origin and destination countries (Cohen 1997: 163) but also criminal organisations and their active role in promoting Portugal as a destination of Ukrainian migration.

In the following sections the paper presents: 1) a brief review of existing literature and research on Ukrainian migration to Portugal; 2) the methodological approach, explaining how empirical data was collected in recent research in the ambit of a NORFACE funded project – Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems (THEMIS) – and whose analysis will support the remaining sections of the paper; 3) the basic features of Ukrainian migration to Portugal – volume and dynamics of the Ukrainian flows over time, a short characterisation of the migrants' settlement patterns and socio-demographic profiles and the spatial dynamics involved in terms of origin and settlement regions; 4) a discussion of the role of networks in migration from Ukraine to Portugal, with a specific focus on assistance and feedback mechanisms within these networks; 5) the present context and its impact on feedback mechanisms and potential effects on the flow from Ukraine to Portugal; 6) future prospects for Ukrainians residing in Portugal in terms of permanence, re--emigration and return. The paper concludes with final remarks stressing the effects of macro-economic conditions on assistance and the generation of negative versus positive feedback, and the potential impact of these mechanisms on the dynamics of Ukrainian migration to Portugal.

Literature and research overview

Studies and subsequent publications about Ukrainian migration to Portugal are as recent as the inflow to the country. As described above, this flow emerged unexpectedly around the end of the 1990s but increased very rapidly within only a few years, peaking in the early 2000s (2000 and 2001 in particular). The first studies began to be carried out shortly after. There were no historical records of any prior migration to the country.

Based on the first comprehensive and large scale study carried out in Portugal on Eastern European migration (mostly from Ukraine but also from other Eastern European countries), Baganha *et al.* (2004) offer a global overview of the main characteristics of the flow, the trajectories of the migrants, their demographic and socio-economic profile, and also the patterns of their settlement in the country. Also Fonseca, Alegria and Nunes (2004) explore the migrants' geographical dispersal across the national territory, which is unlike previous migration flows that had mostly concentrated on the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Particular emphasis is given to the conditions that enabled the constitution of such an unexpected and new influx, including the initial role played by the migration industry and organised groups (Baganha *et al.* 2004; Peixoto *et al.* 2005) as well as the subsequent emergence of autonomous migrant networks that began to link Portugal to Ukraine. Peixoto *et al.* (2005) focus specifically on the issue of trafficking as a relevant dimension to understand Eastern European (including Ukrainian) migration to Portugal, based on interviews and analyses of court cases related to trafficking for both labour and sexual exploitation as well assistance in illegal migration.

Subsequent studies have aimed to further understand the settlement patterns of Ukrainian immigrants in Portugal, specifically in terms of work, housing, legal status, education, access to health care and religion, within the realm of a conceptual framework of 'integration'. This 'integration' of Ukrainian immigrants in Portugal was approached both globally, at the national level, and in specific local and socio-professional contexts (the healthcare sector in particular). In addition, some generalist studies undertaken in the mid--2000s shed further light on the particularities of the migration flow to Portugal: Wall, Nunes and Matias (2005) and Hellerman (2006) explored the specific trajectories of migrant women, which included Ukrainian immigrants among other nationalities; Fonseca *et al.* (2005) examined family reunification processes, and Carneiro (2006) described immigrants' labour market trajectories in Portugal. More recently, Baganha, Marques and Góis (2010) published a thorough study dedicated to the Ukrainian community living in Portugal with quantitative data obtained in a survey conducted in 2004 covering a wide range of issues, such as incorporation in the labour market before and after migration, language fluency, civic participation and perception of discrimination, just to name a few.

The empirical observation of the sudden rise and expansion followed by quick stabilisation contradicts to some extent the proposal of 'cumulative causation' put forward by Massey and colleagues (Massey *et al.* 2005). In this case, no *ad infinitum* increasing migration took place leading to the formation of a 'migration system' as a result of expanding social networks linking origin and destination. In addition, at least initially, there was the important role played by 'migration industry' agents who actively sought to promote Portugal as a migration destination. It was only in subsequent stages that migrant networks began to facilitate further migration. For these reasons, this particular migration flow calls for a renewed analysis of the role of networks in migration processes, their transformative character over time, their interaction with changing contexts in both origin and destination countries, as well as their potential to contribute to inverse processes of cumulative causation leading to reduced flows (de Haas 2010; Engbersen *et al.* 2013). In the next sections we will describe how this flow and consequent settlement processes evolved and how the networks contributed to this evolution.

Data and information sources

This article draws on registered data from the annual statistics of the Portuguese Aliens and Borders Office (SEF) and data from fieldwork conducted in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area in 2012 and 2013, in the ambit of the *Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems* (THEMIS).[1] As part of this project, 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted with and 306 questionnaires administered to immigrants from Ukraine.
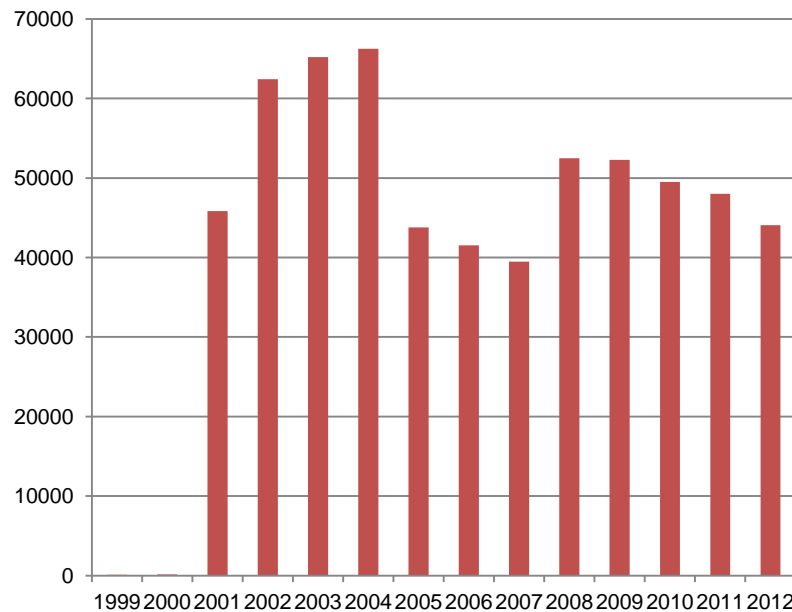
The Ukrainian citizens interviewed were selected through a snowball sampling strategy. In the case of the survey, a sample was selected using the respondent-driven sampling method (RDS). According to the theoretical principles underpinning RDS, the initial selection of seeds, which initiates the recruitment of other respondents through the creation of waves,[2] does not have significant implications in the final balance of the sample, because this depends mostly on the generated number of waves and on the degree of homophily of the sample[3] (Heckathorn 1997; Gile, Handcock 2010). The selection of the seeds was based on the attempt to achieve a final sample that reflects the diversity within this group of immigrants, both at the social and demographic levels (e.g. sex, age, socio-economic status, level of education), and at the level of the immigrants' migratory and integration processes (e.g. year of immigration, legal status, region of origin, main motivation).

The recruitment chains of our sample are long enough to claim that there is no correlation of characteristics of the seeds with the outcome (homophily), in terms of sex, age, decade of arrival, educational level, activity status and legal status. Indeed, the ratios of men and women among the interviewed population (52.9 per cent and 47.1 per cent, respectively) are very similar to those of the Ukrainian citizens, aged 20 or more, residing in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area at the time of the 2011 census (men: 52.5 per cent, women: 47.5 per cent).

Basic features of Ukrainian migration to Portugal

Volume and dynamics of the Ukrainian flows over time

Ukrainian immigrants first became visible in official statistics in 2001 due to the large regularisation programme carried out that year (it was in place up until 2003, but most 'permanence permits' were granted in 2001) (Figure 1). The Ukrainians were the largest beneficiaries of this regularisation, receiving 64 730 permits. After some years of decline the population showed signs of recovery in 2008 and 2009 due to the opportunities created by the new immigration law published in 2007. Between 2009 and 2012 the number of documented Ukrainian migrants registered a drop of nearly 16 per cent (from 52 293 in 2009 to 44 074 in 2012). Besides the break in the statistical series, the reduction in the number of documented Ukrainians living in Portugal between 2005 and 2007 can also be explained by the growing numbers of those leaving the country, both to return to the country of origin and to migrate further to other European countries. Many took advantage of labour market opportunities in Spain, for example, where the construction sector was booming at the time. The registered unemployment rate among Ukrainians in Portugal increased markedly between 2004 and 2006 (18.5 per cent), showing how serious the labour market situation had become (Malheiros 2007). According to data from Aliens and Borders Office (SEF), Ukrainians have ranked among the largest foreign-national groups in Portugal since 2001, and since 2008 they have maintained a stable second position in the ranking of foreign nationals residing legally in Portugal. The reduction in the stock of Ukrainian nationals can also be explained by the acquisition of Portuguese citizenship, a procedure made easier by the law enacted in 2006 which reduced the required length of legal residence in Portugal and reinforced the principle of 'jus soli'. According to Eurostat, the number of concessions of Portuguese citizenship to Ukrainians grew from 4 in 2003 (representing 0.2 per cent of the total number of deferred requests) to 484 in 2008 (2.2 per cent) and to 3 322 in 2012 (15.2 per cent).

Figure 1. Stock of documented Ukrainian citizens residing in Portugal (1999-2012)

Source: Aliens and Border Service (www.sef.pt).

This immigration flow was by and large labour market-oriented and initially dominated by male adults (Baganha *et al.* 2004; Fonseca *et al.* 2005; Pereira 2010; Malheiros, Esteves 2013), even though independent migrant women have also been present from the start (Wall *et al.* 2005; Hellerman 2006). Indeed, in a survey conducted in Lisbon[4] in 2012, around 60 per cent of earlier migrants (arrived between 1998 and 2003) were male (Table 1) and 77 per cent of them indicated that their main motivation to migrate to Portugal was: 'opportunities for work' (Table 2). The percentage substantially decreases in subsequent years, as women become more present in the flows and the motivation of 'being with family members or other people you care about' gains importance as a consequence of processes of family reunification and family formation. Since 2007, and according to data from SEF, the annual inflow of Ukrainian migrants to Portugal consists mainly of women. In more recent years (arrival between 2009 and 2011), 'opportunities for studying' has gained importance as a motivation to move to Portugal, which is probably related to processes of family reunification with parents that had migrated earlier (Table 2).

Table 1. Respondents by gender, according to the year of arrival in Portugal

Time of arrival	Male (per cent)	Female (per cent)	No.
1998-2003	57.6	42.4	217
2004-2008	41.5	58.5	41
2009-2011	41.7	58.3	48
Total	52.9	47.1	306

Source: THEMIS data.

Table 2. Motivations to move to Portugal, by time of arrival (per cent)

Time of arrival	Experiencing the culture and life of another country	Opportunities for work	Opportunities for studying	Learning a language	Being with family members or other people you care about	Total N
1998-2003	5.1	77.1	1.9	0.9	15.0	214
2004-2008	2.4	36.6	2.4	0.0	58.5	41
2009-2011	4.2	31.3	12.5	0.0	52.1	48
Total	4.6	64.4	3.6	0.7	26.7	303

Source: THEMIS data.

Initially, Ukrainian migrants showed intentions of staying in Portugal only for a limited period of time. Overall, migration to Portugal was conceived by Ukrainians as a temporary migratory project (Baganha *et al.* 2004; Fonseca *et al.* 2004; Fonseca *et al.* 2005; Pereira, Fonseca 2012). According to a national survey conducted in December 2004 and January 2005 (Fonseca *et al.* 2005) and another one conducted in the Alentejo region in April 2003 (Fonseca *et al.* 2004), more than 70 per cent of Ukrainian migrants claimed that they intended to stay in Portugal for less than six years and approximately 20 per cent showed the intention of re--emigrating to another European country or the USA. Only approximately 12 per cent said they intended to stay permanently in Portugal. However, with time, other time-frames seem to have gained importance. Recent research for the THEMIS project has shown that a number of Ukrainians have remained in Portugal for ten years or more (71 per cent of the respondents were in this situation). However, further research is required to provide more conclusive data. Certainly, life cycle transformations, including the formation of families and reunification processes, may have played a role in more permanent settlement. In the THEMIS survey, 29.9 per cent of those claiming to have migrated to Portugal to join family members said that, in the first place, they migrated to join their mother or father. For example, Andriy (37, arrived in Portugal in 2000), interviewed in Lisbon says: *And another thing, now we have our son, and if he will know Russian, Portuguese, English, French, I think that here in Portugal he will have a better education, and near his parents, because already we were three years without him, and my wife cried...* Nevertheless, overall, the future of this flow and the stability of Ukrainian presence in Portugal are uncertain, particularly in face of the current low demand in the labour market in Portugal, which is in fact generating large Portuguese emigration (we shall come back to this in a later section).

Settlement patterns and socio-demographic profile

Ukrainians first entered mostly with tourist Schengen visas and remained irregularly in the country until obtaining their first permit to stay legally. A considerable number of these migrants benefited from the regularisation process carried out in 2001, through the change in immigration law that took place that year, as mentioned above (Marques, Góis 2007). Following the implementation of this legislation, irregular immigrants were able to obtain a 'permanence permit' by presenting a working contract validated by labour inspection authorities. This permanence permit needed to be renewed every year during a period of five years, as long as the immigrant could present a valid labour contract, after which the immigrants became eligible for a residence permit. In SEF's statistics for 2012, nearly all Ukrainians already had residence permits. Despite successive regularisation campaigns, there are still a number of Ukrainian immigrants who are undocumented or in process of regularisation. According to the results of the THEMIS project, 4.5 per cent did not

have any permit to stay in Portugal and 1.9 per cent had applied for a permit but had not received an answer at the time of the interview.

Concerning age, Baganha *et al.* (2004) indicate that the average age of the sample surveyed in 2002 was 36 years old and indeed, data from SEF for 2006 reveals that around 69 per cent of legal residents of Ukrainian origin were 30 years or older with the highest concentration in the interval of 30-34 (18 per cent) followed by 35-39 (15 per cent). The average education level of these migrants is high in comparison with both the Portuguese population and other third country nationals. In the sample surveyed by Baganha and her team (Baganha, Marques, Góis 2005: 38), 69 per cent had completed secondary education or equivalent vocational training and 31 per cent had tertiary education. The THEMIS survey of 2012 indicates similarly high educational levels: 43 per cent with postsecondary vocational training, 24 per cent with undergraduate tertiary education and also a high percentage (12 per cent) with postgraduate training.

Ukrainians found jobs mostly in construction, manufacturing and agriculture (Baganha *et al.* 2004; Santana, Serranito 2005). These immigrants showed a higher level of occupational diversity in comparison to immigrants from other origins, particularly as a result of their entry into agriculture and manufacturing, where the presence of immigrants had been scarce up to that point. Despite their qualifications, a large proportion of them performed low-skilled jobs. In a survey conducted in 2002 it was found that 62 per cent had found work in unskilled jobs, (Baganha *et al.* 2004: 34). The THEMIS survey in 2012 also indicates that the most important entry occupations (corresponding to the first job in Portugal) were unskilled and skilled construction work, cleaning and domestic work. In addition, upon arrival some Ukrainian migrants faced abusive and exploitative conditions in the labour market (Pereira, Vasconcelos 2008). With time, a number of them were able to obtain jobs more in line with their qualifications and with better working conditions. One such example was the programme for the recognition of competencies for medical doctors in 2002 (109 Eastern European doctors completed the course successfully) and again in 2008, sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

In recent years, Ukrainians seem to have been affected by the rising unemployment in Portugal, as a consequence of the post-2008 economic crisis. In 2012, the majority of Ukrainian respondents (72 per cent) in the THEMIS survey did not hold their entry occupation, and for the majority this was due to loss of employment (20 per cent). Also, only 4 per cent were employed as skilled construction workers (down from 16 per cent in the first occupation). Despite a decline, domestic work and cleaning remained important occupations.

Spatial dynamics: regions of origin and destination

The regions of origin in Ukraine have been researched less, but information collected through interviews and in the survey conducted for the THEMIS project in 2012 has shown that there is a remarkable dispersion of sending regions, although there is a large predominance of immigrants from Western Ukraine, particularly from Lviv, Ternopil, Ivanofrankivsk and Chernovitskaja, but also from Donetsk (in Eastern Ukraine) and Cherkasy (Central Ukraine). The geographical dispersion has also been noted in a survey conducted in 2003/2004 with 100 Ukrainian migrants settled in the metropolitan area of Oporto (Caldeira 2011), although the regions of Kiev and Odessa together represented more than half of the total number of respondents.

Regarding patterns of geographical settlement in Portugal, SEF's data reveals that Ukrainian immigrants settled throughout the country but with higher concentration levels in the districts of Faro (around 20 per cent in 2005), Lisbon (around 20 per cent in 2005), Santarém (around 12 per cent in 2005) and Leiria (around 10 per cent in 2005). It is possible to observe an increasing concentration in Lisbon over the course of time (in 2012, data from SEF recorded around 28 per cent in this district), and a decrease in Santarém (7 per cent in

2012), although patterns of internal mobility in Portugal have not been examined. Results from the THEMIS project seem to confirm the tendency towards increasing concentration in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, given that approximately 15 per cent of the respondents had resided first in other Portuguese regions.

Migration processes: the role of social networks in migration from Ukraine to Portugal

The important role of social networks in migration processes has been well documented in migration theory. Social networks are fundamental to explaining the development and perpetuation of migration flows between particular origins and destinations. Indeed, informal social relations link potential migrants in origin countries to previous migrants residing in different destination countries. Through these relationships, information is provided on the host society and vehicles for assistance are created with respect to obtaining legal documents, finding a job and accommodation, financial help, and so on (e.g. Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pelligrino, Taylor 1993; Arango 2004; Massey *et al.* 2005; van Meeteren, Pereira 2013). Besides assisting migrants with the settlement process, family and personal networks provide emotional support to migrants, helping them to maintain a sense of identity and community, often through transnational social practices (Boyd, Nowak 2012). Social networks convey relevant information on job opportunities, wages and working conditions, and facilitate access to the labour market. However, their benefits to workers can also be negative. Several authors stress the unfavourable consequences of exploitative hiring by unscrupulous employers, especially in the informal sector of the economy, and the diversion of migrants from jobs better suited to their qualifications (Boyd, Nowak 2012). In addition, a 'migration industry', understood as specialised social actors and profit-making commercial institutions, also developed to assist and benefit from the mobility and adaptation of the migrants to the new country (Salt 2001; Garapich 2008: 736).

The rapid development of new information technologies and the widespread access to the internet are also facilitating migratory movements by offering easy access to relevant information on the place of destination, through websites, social media and online-based virtual communities (Satzewich 2002; Ros 2009; Oiarzabal, Reips 2012; Dekker, Engbersen 2013; van Meeteren, Pereira 2013).

Among the population surveyed in the THEMIS project, it is evident that most migrants already knew someone in Portugal before they arrived (79 per cent of respondents). As expected, the proportion increases over the course of time (reaching 100 per cent for those who arrived in 2010 and 2011), and is also higher for women (85 per cent). Family or neighbourhood networks, activated from the origin, allowed the first migrants to be followed by close family members, neighbours and friends in a network of geometric progression in a short period of time (Baganha *et al.* 2010: 17). Being a recent migratory flow, for almost all of the respondents the contacts they had in Portugal were exclusively with co-nationals. The frequency of contacts with previous migrants in Portugal before migration is relatively high, with 33 per cent communicating every week and 21 per cent every month. Phone or Skype were the preferred means of communication (60 per cent). In addition, 52 per cent had met Ukrainians that resided in Portugal while the latter were on holiday in Ukraine. For example, Vladyslav mentions the advice passed on while on holiday back in Ukraine: *I advised people while I was there on holidays. Many asked: ah can I come [to Portugal]? But back then I had work; we could find work more easily.* The majority (60 per cent) acknowledged that such contacts with migrants in Portugal made them more interested in moving there (39 per cent said those contacts had the opposite effect).

For the migration to Portugal, the THEMIS survey confirms the importance of assistance received through social networks at different stages of the preparation of the move and upon arrival, and also of institutions such as 'travel agencies' in mediating the formation of these flows. To fund the trip, 33 per cent borrowed money from an individual or institution and 19 per cent received money. In this domain the majority of respondents received assistance from family members (parents and husband) followed by friends. Assis-

tance was received from persons based in Ukraine or already residing in Portugal. The relevance of assistance received from previous migrants already in Portugal increases with time of arrival. Indeed, it is not uncommon for previous migrants to help fund the migration of subsequent family members or friends. For example, Bohdan, a Ukrainian immigrant in Portugal says: *My older brother arrived after, maybe after three months. I earned some money and sent that to him so that he could make it*.

Furthermore, an important proportion also paid someone to obtain documents to move to Portugal (53 per cent) and 41 per cent relied on 'travel agencies' to obtain the necessary documents, usually Schengen visas as we saw before. The role of 'travel agencies' was particularly important in the early stages of the migration flow from Ukraine to Portugal, as already shown by previous studies on this community (Marques, Góis 2010; Malheiros, Esteves 2013). In the case of THEMIS, 60 per cent of the migrants that arrived in the late 1990s refer to their role, while only 42 per cent of those arrived in the 2000s mention their assistance, and none of the most recent arrivals in 2010 or 2011. In addition, a further 5 per cent mentioned the intervention of human smugglers or criminal organisations. Vasyl mentions the important role played by 'travel agencies' in the constitution of the migration flow to Portugal: *I talked to the travel agency, at that time in my village. There were many agencies that did these trips, but only for money. Of course we had to pay. And so we came here*.

Assistance was further granted throughout the settlement process in Portugal, particularly to obtain documents, find a place to stay and a first job. Once in Portugal, immigrants were allowed to apply and obtain other documents that entitled them to a longer stay in the country, namely through the 'permanence permits' mentioned before, which were linked to employment. The majority of respondents obtained a permit based on employment (44 per cent) but a significant share did not obtain any other permit immediately after arrival (37 per cent). At the time of the survey, the vast majority had a permit based on employment (76 per cent) and only a small proportion held documents based on family ties (7 per cent).

The majority of immigrants also relied on help by others to find the first job (65 per cent) and an important number paid someone for that (14 per cent). Friends, colleagues and neighbours have been the most important sources of assistance when it comes to finding the first job (53 per cent relied on them). Indeed, similar results have been found elsewhere (van Meeteren, Pereira 2013: 16). Symon's experience illustrates this:

Then I had a friend here who was my neighbour there [in Ukraine] and he found work here for me and my friends... We called. His father gave us his phone number and we called him 'is it possible or not?' and he said 'it is possible, come… I will help you'. He had a car and he went around looking for work for us… He would go to the construction sites and ask 'do you need workers? And they would say 'yes', two, three people.

Upon arrival the majority either stayed with someone who already had a house (52 per cent) or received assistance to find a place to stay (34 per cent). For example, Veronika mentions how she used to let people stay at her house upon arrival:

I used to help with work, house, they came to my house, I would not mind that they came to live for a while because I understand that people do not have anything there [in Ukraine] and want to have something.

In addition to receiving information from other migrants and assistance throughout their migratory project, a large share of immigrants also passed on information to Ukrainians back in Ukraine and enabled the migration of others.

The majority gave information on how Ukrainians are treated in Portugal (85 per cent), how to find a job in Portugal (67 per cent), on visas and immigration procedures (65 per cent) and how to find housing (60 per cent). This information was mostly given to relatives. Many of them were also specifically asked for assistance (35 per cent) and in most cases they always helped others: to fund the trip (78 per cent always helped when asked), to find a job (74 per cent), to stay at their own house (71 per cent), to find a house (67 per cent), or to obtain documents (54 per cent). Assistance was mostly given to friends.

Nevertheless, the majority says that they did not encourage others to follow in their footsteps to Portugal (57 per cent). Katya, for example, recounts how she looked for help when she wanted to move to Portugal but that she never, of her own initiative, encouraged others: *I, when I wanted to go to Portugal I called and asked a family member to help me, and they did; but no one has asked me and I myself never say 'come, come'.*

Under certain circumstances, migrant networks can also be selective or exclusionary, acting as 'gatekeepers' (enabling selective chain migration) or 'gateclosers', discouraging migration among potential migrants and thus leading to the decline of migratory flows (Engbersen *et al.* 2013). Therefore, in the next section we will analyse 1) how the economic and financial crisis affects changing perceptions and motivations of Ukrainian migrants in Portugal to provide assistance for potential migrants in their home country; and 2) the development of negative feedback mechanisms transmitted through migrant networks to prospective migrants.

The present: macro-economic crisis and the role of feedback mechanisms

The end of the cycle of economic expansion and the impact of the financial collapse have taken its toll on the Portuguese economy and society at large (Reis, Pereira, Tolda, Serra. 2010; Fonseca, McGarrigle 2014). The country's bailout by the so-called Troika of the IMF, European Commission and Central European Bank, with the subsequent introduction of an austerity plan, that has included wage cuts, increasing taxes and cut down on public services, has been accompanied by rising unemployment which has affected both national and foreign workers. The perception of the country's poor economic performance is transmitted by immigrants to friends and relatives in the home country through negative feedback that may dissuade potential migrants, leading to declining emigration to a specific destination (Engbersen *et al.* 2013).

Today, the majority of Ukrainian immigrants would not recommend moving to Portugal to other Ukrainians (63 per cent), according to data gathered by the THEMIS survey. This is due more to the lack of economic opportunities found in the country – 49 per cent considers economic opportunities in Portugal to be poor – than to a strict immigration policy – 77 per cent feels that the immigration regime in Portugal is not very restrictive. Indeed, in migrants' discourses the difficulties and reluctance to assist others or to encourage the move to Portugal are largely related to current constraints in the Portuguese labour market, as the quotes below clearly illustrate.

Now many people want to come here. But they get here and there is not much work. My father can give my number, then someone from my home village calls me. I have to explain that I don't have work, I can't, he can't even speak the language, doesn't have a visa or anything. What is there for him to do here now? (Vladyslav).

In the same way, Andriy talks of the same difficulties:

Now it's not worth coming to Portugal, because if he comes [he is referring to an acquaintance], he can't speak [Portuguese], he may stay with me, ok, but concerning work, how much is he going to earn? Five hundred, six hundred euros … it's not enough. There won't be any money left in the bank account (...), it's not worth it. It's better to stay there.

Olga specifically mentions the lack of work for men, mostly as result of the decline in construction work:

Now, it's not interesting to come to Portugal because our Ukrainians say they don't have work, it's difficult to find work. Many Ukrainian men are here in Portugal either without work, or registered at the Employment Centre, or they work for one month, then they stop for two weekends. It's like this.

When contacting their friends, relatives and acquaintances in Portugal, potential Ukrainian migrants are informed of the difficult labour market situation. As Mykhaila says, *Many Ukrainians ask if there are jobs here and people tell them there aren't. (...) They do not want to take risks now because there is less work. They do not want to come and remain jobless.*

In addition, 20.6 per cent of the 306 interviewees admitted that they had already discouraged people from Ukraine to move to Portugal and approximately one third (33 per cent) would advise people to move elsewhere. In the words of Liliya:

No, nowadays no, things changed a lot, a lot, a lot. It's not like when I arrived, now everything is more difficult, with the crisis there is less work, things are more expensive. Thus I'm not going to advise people to come, not even the family because one doesn't know how things will go on… Presently, I would advise people to go to Germany, England, but not to come to Portugal.

Despite this overall negative opinion regarding current prospects in Portugal, it is also evident that the feedback sent home concerning migration to Portugal also involves some selectiveness in perception and/or in the people to whom the advice is given, suggesting that the advice provided, and eventual assistance, can be different in specific conditions and for particular persons. Indeed, 18 per cent of the interviewees stated that *in some cases but not in others* they would recommend people to move to Portugal. In addition, if asked for assistance, the majority revealed a willingness to assist in most cases, particularly to find a house (66 per cent would always try to help), a job (53 per cent) and obtain documents (42 per cent). They are however less inclined to fund the migrant's trip (23 per cent would always try to help) or let them stay in their own house (39 per cent would always try to help).

The continuing poor performance of the Portuguese economy with persistently high unemployment rates, especially among foreign workers,[5] precarious contractual relationships and lower salaries has stimulated the re-emigration of foreign workers as well as the emigration of nationals. The scope of the outflow is difficult to determine due to a lack of statistics, but more than 84 per cent of the Ukrainian citizens surveyed in the Lisbon region knew fellow countrymen who previously lived in Portugal but now had left the country. Almost half of the 306 respondents (48 per cent) knew five or fewer people who left, whereas 27 per cent knew more than 10 people, and the remaining 25 per cent knew between 6 and 10 individuals who no longer reside in Portugal.

In summary, we can conclude that the THEMIS survey, together with the testimonies of settled Ukrainian migrants in Lisbon, show that the initial positive perception of labour market opportunities has now been

replaced by largely negative views on current economic opportunities in Portugal. At the same time the flow has stopped, which can probably be attributed to negative feedback and a more limited willingness to assist the migration of others.

Future prospects for the migratory project of Ukrainians in Portugal

Future trends in the migratory flow of Ukrainian citizens to Portugal as well as the permanence of these immigrants in the country are uncertain. The results of the research conducted as part of the THEMIS project show that remaining in Portugal is still an option for 29 per cent of Ukrainians, as mentioned earlier. Despite all the drawbacks and daily challenges, remaining in Portugal is still regarded as a plausible possibility by many interviewees and confirmed by a member of a Ukrainian association. In his words:

> *As a member of the association, there are approximately 60 thousand Ukrainians here [in Portugal], and two thirds will stay, I believe. They have their families here. I know people who own their home, opened businesses, obtained equivalences to their diplomas, work in garages, or in hospitals as medical doctors. Thus, two thirds will stay [in Portugal]* (Viktor).

Combining the best of both worlds through circular migration between Portugal and the origin country appeals to 29 per cent of Ukrainian migrants. This flexibility of movement pleases individuals who feel comfortable with transnational practices and view adaptability to circumstances as a way of life (Vertovec 2004; Levitt, Glick-Schiller 2010). Immigrants live in the host country when it is more convenient to do so, and return to the origin country if better perspectives can be found there. According to Lyudmyla:

> *I know people [Ukrainians] who left and came back [to Portugal] who were not able to live there [in Ukraine]. Even our friend who bought a van and went back to Ukraine and said that he would never come back. He stayed there for half a year and came back [to Portugal]. The same happened with my husband. After being in Portugal for two years, he went back to Ukraine and said «ok, I won't go back to Portugal». He stayed home for four months and spent all the money he had earned. He [dealt with the paperwork] and obtained the visa again and came to Portugal. He thought [his first experience] was enough and would not come here again. But he did.*

However, returning to the home country (22 per cent) or continuing the migratory project in another country (17 per cent) are also seen as viable options. According to Anatoliy:

> *I believe that half of the people returned to Ukraine. They worked here for a while, saved some money and went back home. (…) Some people started to go back to Ukraine because they were tired of being here [in Portugal] and far away from the family, since 2006 (…) And now, with this crisis, many more people are returning to the origin country.*

The economic and social situation in Ukraine is also a motive for re-emigrating. Despite all the challenges and constant hurdles, after an experience abroad, migrants might feel the need to leave again. The remittances sent to the home country, personal fulfilment, social mobility, labour experience and contact with different cultural environments combined with little hope of better days in the home country, may function as stimuli to re-emigrate (Pereira 2012). In the opinion of Vasyl:

And there are others who try to go to other countries, to Spain, to France, where they can obtain the documents and move there. Because a friend of mine has already obtained his documents and has received the authorisation. He went back to Ukraine to reunite with his family, his children are grown up now and they are studying. He then wanted to come back here [to Portugal] but he didn't have the documentation. He's now working in Moscow. He worked in Kiev, in our capital city, but now he's working in Moscow.

The recent faint 'recovery' of the Portuguese economy, visible in the slow decline of the unemployment rate and positive growth of the GDP[6] on the one hand, and growing social unrest in Ukraine on the other, involving violent clashes in Kiev and elsewhere in February 2014, will certainly play a role in the future trends of migration to Portugal. The Revolution of Dignity, which brought together protesters against president Yanukovych's refusal to sign the Agreement of Association with the European Union and citizens wanting to initiate criminal proceedings against those involved in government corruption, has played and will continue to play a major role in shaping migratory flows is of major importance to define the evolution of the outflows from Ukraine.

Conclusion

The literature review and research presented here portray the quick evolution in the Ukrainian migration flow to Portugal, going from a very rapid expansion to decline and stabilisation in just a few years. Framed by an unfavourable macro-economic and social context in Ukraine combined with economic expansion in Portugal, largely due to a booming construction sector, this flow was largely supported by the active role of the 'migration industry' and of migrants' social networks. The emergence of 'travel agencies' (ranging from profit--making businesses to criminal organisations) that facilitated the migration to Portugal was instrumental at the early stages of the flow, but were slowly replaced by the active role of social networks in providing assistance and positive feedback to others in subsequent years. This development testifies to the transformative character and dynamism in the networks that constitute and facilitate migration.

More recently, the post-2008 economic crisis in Portugal is being transmitted through the same social networks back to Ukraine and current advice is not as favourable, mostly due to decreasing job opportunities in the Portuguese labour market. In addition there is more reluctance to assist further migration, which is likely to create a more selective process. Nevertheless, there seems to be a certain overall trend towards the permanence of current Ukrainian migrants in Portugal. Recent social upheaval in Ukraine (early 2014) may boost further emigration, but it is uncertain whether Portugal will continue to offer a viable destination for new potential migrants, given the ambiguity in migrants' views. On the one hand, advice given is negative, while on the other, there is still evidence of a willingness to assist others if asked. This is clearly a matter worthy of further research at both ends of the migration flow.

Notes

[1] Financial support for THEMIS from the NORFACE research programme on Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and Policy Dynamics is acknowledged.

[2] A wave corresponds to the stage of evolution of each chain of recruitment that statistically expresses the level of differentiation reached in relation to the individuals surveyed at the beginning of the recruitment. The seeds are wave number '00', the individuals recruited by them are wave number '01', and the next recruited people are wave number '02', and so forth.

[3] Homophily assesses how far respondents prefer to recruit others within their own group in detriment of a random recruitment. This measure varies between -1 and 1. Zero corresponds to a totally random selection, whereas 1 corresponds to a selection only within one's own group and -1 to an exclusively extrinsic recruitment (Heckathorn 1997).

[4] Lisbon Metropolitan Area, within research Project THEMIS – *Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems*.

[5] In February 2013 the unemployment rate in Portugal reached a peak of 17.6 per cent. For 2012, the unemployment rate among foreign workers was 26.5 per cent (Source: Pordata).

[6] For ten consecutive months, since February 2013, the unemployment rate in Portugal has decreased. The Portuguese GDP showed a 1.6 per cent growth rate in the fourth trimester of 2013, compared to the same trimester of 2012.

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