

Notes and Reflections

PORTUGAL 2010: THE RETURN OF THE COUNTRY OF EMIGRATION?¹

Jorge Malheiros

Associate professor at the Institute of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Lisbon.
Researcher at the Centre for Geographical Studies.
He works in the field of international migration with emphasis on issues of management of flows, the social and economic integration of migrants, segregation issues, and the relationship of transnational immigrant communities.

For about 15 years between the beginning of the 1990s and the end of the first decade of the twenty first century, Portuguese emigration acquired a status of near-invisibility in addressing migration issues associated with Portugal, both on the part of politicians and academics. Immigration, for many synonymous with developed country, in a context of modernization and economic growth, not only ensured employment for all indigenous people but also needed to fill various sectoral deficits (from the "classics" like those found in construction, public works or in domestic service to the "new ", such as agriculture, some segments of the industry and, increasingly, retail), took almost all the space reserved to the phenomenon of international migration in the political, academic and social agendas.

There is ample empirical evidence of this process. A governmental entity was set up in 1995 to address the issues associated with the integration of immigrants - the High Commission for Integration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIME) - which, in 2001, was converted into the current ACIDI, with corresponding upgrading of responsibilities, funds and resources, and, subsequently turned into the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (currently called ACIDI, IP). This entity set up two National Centres to address the needs of this community, which were further complemented with the establishment of a network of 87 Local Centres. In addition, the Portuguese consular network was "optimized" and proximity to the various emigration nuclei was reduced, which demonstrates that the importance of emigration was, to some extent, played down. This is further corroborated by the gradual disappearance of mechanisms for collecting and disseminating regular information on Portuguese migration flows and stocks (data from the Survey on Outgoing Migratory Movements - IMMS - were no longer made available by the INE from 2003 onwards, and emigration

¹ *In memoriam* of Maria Ioannis Baganha, a remarkable researcher in the area of migrations, and above all for having been a true friend.



estimates in the context of Demographic Statistics were published only a few months ago; the censuses almost exclude emigration), only countered with the creation of the Emigration Observatory in 2008.

Although some politicians may have recently drawn attention to the supposedly normal fact that Portugal has a "dual nature as a country of origin and as a country of destination of migratory flows"² (Vitorino, 2007:20), this happens only when information on the number of exits, even if incomplete and with gaps, points to an increase and diversification of migration. Indeed, in the 1990s and in the first half of the 2010s, when IMMS data estimates reported exits of about 27-28.000 people on a yearly basis (as in 1995-1999, 2002 and 2003) and emigrant remittances outweighed the volume of EU funds and still accounted for 3% of the GDP (nowadays they account for about 1.5%), the political agenda's myopia with regard to emigration flows was significant, as it only paid tentative attention to the consolidated, old and numerous "diaspora" (worth between 2.3 and 5 million, depending on whether Portuguese nationals, or of Portuguese origin, were counted)³, as evidenced by the reappearance of the Portuguese Communities Council (1996)⁴ and the enactment of legislation in 1997 that extended, albeit with some restrictions, the right to vote in presidential elections to Portuguese living abroad.

However, and as mentioned earlier, throughout this period the views of Portuguese academics also reflected this process of relative lack of visibility of Portuguese emigration. While the number of publications on research on immigration has increased almost exponentially in the last 15 years, studies on migration abated. For example, it is significant that the literature on Portuguese emigration kept at the Emigration Observatory points to the publication of only 17 books on this subject in Portugal, while just at the Immigration Observatory, about 40 works on immigration to Portugal were published in just half of that period (this does not include dozens of works published by research centres and publishers ...)⁵.

This imbalance in the treatment of the two phenomena could also be found in the national media, which multiplied news about immigration and ethnic minorities between the mid-1990s and the second half of this 2010s⁶. As evidenced by Ferin Cunha and Santos (2006, 2008) in their studies on the presence of this phenomenon in the press and on television, between 2003 and 2005 the number of news increased, which justifies the assertion that these issues "definitely became a theme in television news" (Ferin Cunha and Santos, 2008: 100). As for Portuguese emigration, despite continuing to be in the national news during this period, it tended to be mentioned in a

² Vitorino, A. (2007). "Introdução aos relatórios dos workshops realizados no âmbito do Fórum Gulbenkian de Imigração" in Vitorino, A. (coord.), *Imigração: Oportunidade ou Ameaça? – Recomendações do Fórum Gulbenkian Imigração*. Estoril: Príncipe: 19.

³ Pires, R. P. (coord.) (2010). *Portugal: Atlas das Migrações Internacionais*. Lisbon: Tinta da China: 92.

⁴ The first Portuguese Communities Council (CCP) was created in 1980 and carried out its activities as an advisory body of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1981 and 1987, being deactivated in the following year. The current council was created in 1996 by Law No. 48/96 of 4 September. On this subject, see Aguilar, M. M. (2009) "O Conselho das Comunidades Portuguesas e a representação dos emigrantes", in Padilla, B. and Xavier, M. (org.), *Migrações*, No. 5, Lisbon: ACIDI, pp. 257-262.

⁵ Historical publications exclusively about migration movements before the middle of the 20th century were not included in any of the reference information sources.

⁶ Ferin Cunha, I. and Santos, C.A (2004). *Media, Imigração e Minorias Étnicas: Televisão e Imprensa 2003*. Lisbon: ACIME and Ferin Cunha, I. and Santos, C.A, (coords.) (2006). *Media, Imigração e Minorias Étnicas II*. Lisbon: ACIME.



more sporadic way, with a traditional increase in the summer months when the emigrants returned to Portugal to spend the summer period.

Naturally, one may ask if the enhanced visibility of immigration in the political and public agendas in that period was fully justified by both the significant growth and diversification of incoming flows (in regional terms, in the forms of professional integration..), particularly during the transition years from one century to the next, and by the need to provide an effective social response to the phenomenon, ensuring, simultaneously, equal rights, control of possible national xenophobia and fair integration conditions. Although we believe that was the case, this does not justify the erasure of emigration as a social and political phenomenon that has continued to take place in Portuguese society in the 1990s and the first decade of the present century. Indeed, what seems to have taken place, in addition to the normal turn towards immigration provoked by the latter's sudden and significant growth, was a social construction of a certain social invisibility of the emigration phenomenon in Portugal, particularly with regard to its scope and numbers. This took place as part of a process widely encouraged by the political power, which was joined by academics, the media and other powers - which portrayed emigration as part of a past that should be forgotten, because it allegedly meant lack of development, poor employment opportunities, and backwardness. However, and as we shall see next, Portuguese emigration always continued, and the social networks that support it were activated with greater intensity from the middle of this decade, when the economic model adopted for the country's growth in recent years began to show clear signs of exhaustion.

The recent evolution of Portuguese emigration – intensity, destinations and profiles

While Portuguese emigration remained active in the 1990s, it was in the last decade that the various sources we have accessed begin to show signs of an increase in the number of exits, as part of a process that combined the search for new destinations (i.e. the United Kingdom and Spain, increasing between the late 1990s and 2007; Angola, in the last three years) with the revival of pre-existing emigration networks, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland.

In concrete terms, although there is no accurate data on current flows of Portuguese emigration, the figures point to a volume not far from 70,000 annual exits in the second half of the present decade. This figure, which is high and up by 30% between the first and the second half of first decade of the twenty first century (Table 1), must be interpreted in the light of two factors that differentiate it from the situation that occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s: on the one hand, the mobility framework has changed significantly, and a substantial part of this emigration has taken place in an area of free movement of workers within the EU; on the other hand, some of this mobility is temporary and of a non-permanent nature, something which has also been made possible thanks to the free movement. The relevance of the temporary nature of migration is supported not only by IMMS data released by the INE covering the period up to until 2002 and 2003, which showed a percentage of this type of flows corresponding to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total, but also by the fact that Portugal is one of 6 countries in the European Economic Area with the highest volume of placements



abroad⁷ in 2007 (Fig.1). This demonstrates that the Portuguese still use the European area as major emigration destination, and, above all, as an area for professional mobility, a process that has increased over the last years.

Table 1 - Portuguese inflows at main destinations (averages 2005/06 and 2008/2009)

	Average (05-06)	Average (08-09)	Rate of change 05/06-08/09
Germany	3395	4341	27,9
Spain	16993	13298	-21,7
Netherlands	1021	1993	95,3
Luxembourg	3779	4531	19,9
United Kingdom	10705	12605	17,7
Andorra	2438	722	-70,4
Switzerland	12290	15629	27,2
Angola	156	12631	7996,5
USA	1267	859	-32,2
Brazil	536	694	29,4
TOTAL	52577	67302	28,0

Notes: Netherlands and Luxembourg (2005/2006 and 2008); Angola (2006 and 2008/2009). There is no information for France.

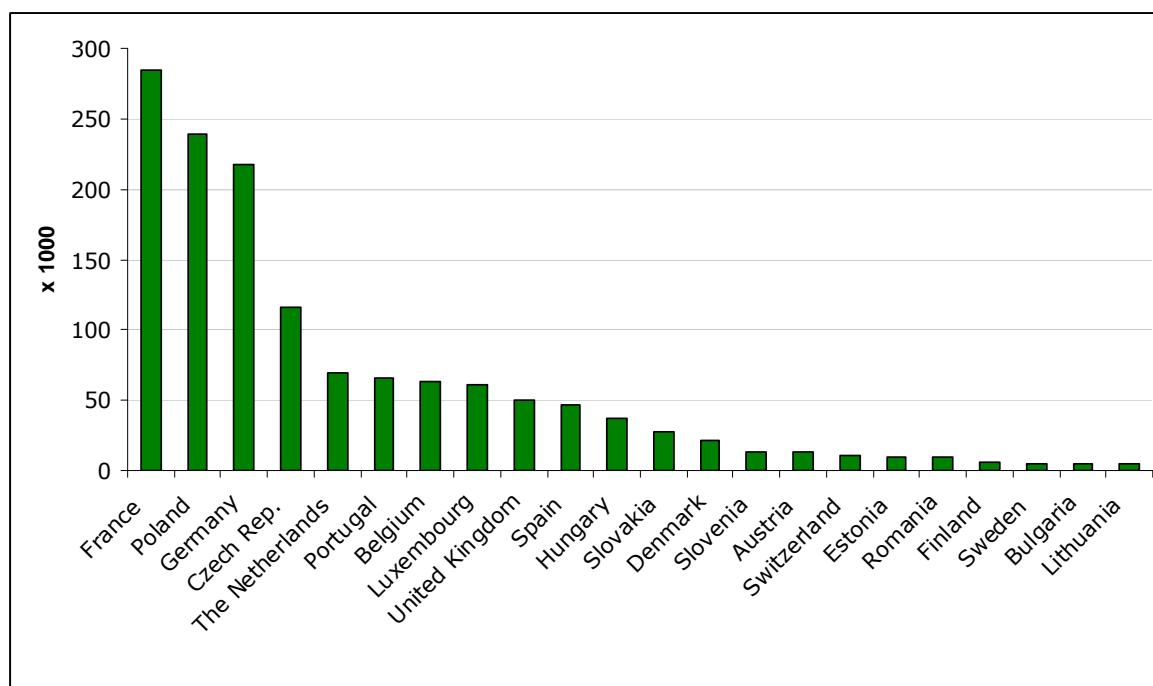
Source: Observatório da emigração (compilation of data based on various sources)

However, the analysis of the main countries of destination, with the exception of France, for which it was not possible to obtain information on annual flows, shows that Europe is not the only relevant target of Portuguese emigration, and that even within Europe some changes have taken place. Indeed, the emergence of Angola as a growing destination of Portuguese emigration after 2005/2006 (Table 1), is the best example of the present process of reorganization of the international mobility destinations of the Portuguese, who can take advantage of emerging countries with high economic growth rates, especially those that have Portuguese, Spanish or English as their official languages and have shortages of workforce with intermediate or higher qualifications in sectors such as construction, public works and tourism

⁷ The placements abroad regulated by the European Union refer to “workers who, for a limited period of time, carry out their professional activity in a country other than the one where they normally work in”. It leaves out people who are self-employed, and those who are in search of a job outside their own country. It therefore refers to professional workers employers deliberately relocate to other countries on a temporary basis to carry out their jobs. On this, see Directive 96/71/EC of the European Council and Eurofound (2010), *Posted Workers in the European Union*. Dublin, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.



Figure 1 - Placements abroad in 2007 - countries of the European Economic Area with 5000 placements and over



Nonetheless, this restructuring of the destinations for Portuguese emigration has also taken place in Europe itself, with Spain (the main destination of Portuguese emigration) and the United Kingdom emerging as highly attractive areas between the beginning of this decade and the 2008 crisis. However, in these cases, the qualifications of Portuguese emigrants are even more asymmetric, since the relatively high proportion of the workforce in highly qualified professions (almost 20% in the UK and around 11% in Spain) is counterbalanced by an even higher number of those who carry out unskilled activities (23.5% and 26%, respectively - Table 2).

Table 2 - Comparative elements of the stocks of Portuguese immigrants in France, Luxembourg, Spain and United Kingdom, 2000 (some basic features)

	France	Luxembourg	Spain	United Kingdom
Senior managers from the public and private sectors and leaders	3,4	2,6	7,1	12,1
Intellectual and scientific professions	2,0	1,4	3,6	7,4
Services workers and vendors	2,9	8,8	17,3	26,7
Labourers and related	51,4	34,1	23,8	5,7
Unskilled workers	8,4	32,9	23,5	25,9
Percentage de pop. Com ensino superior	4,1	2,9	7,5	19,3
Percentage of women	48,7	47,2	51,7	50,8
Percentage of population aged 15-24 in the over 15s	3,8	14,3	11,1	17,4

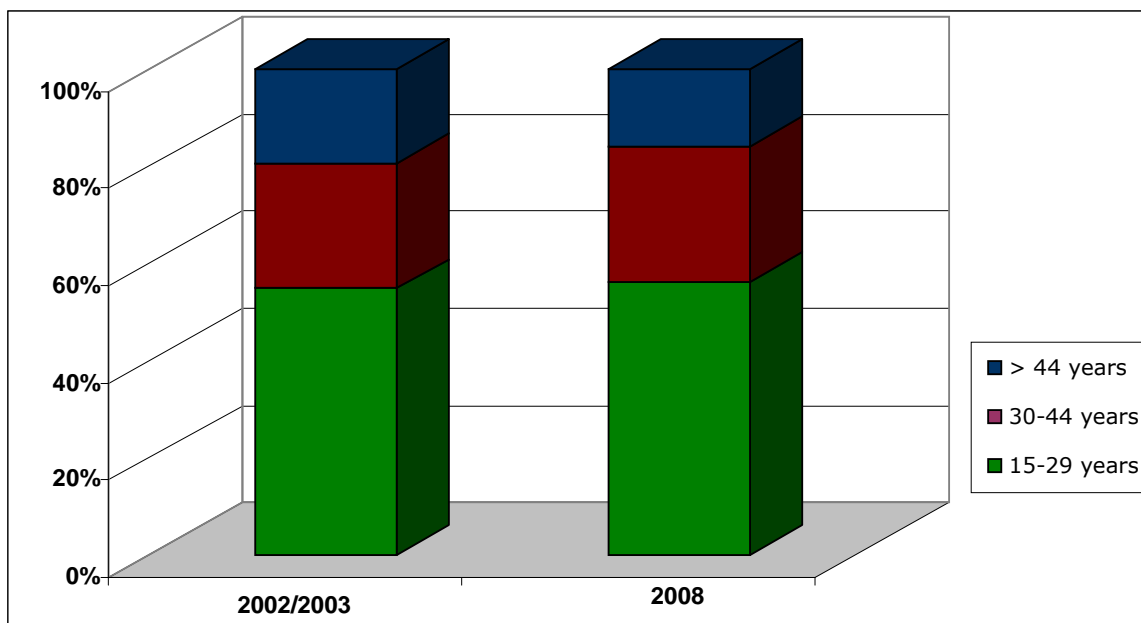
Source: OECD - DIOP - Database on Immigrants in OECD countries



With regard to the more traditional European destinations, Switzerland, which is the 2nd largest recipient of Portuguese emigrants, assumes prominence, alongside Luxembourg (and, to a lesser extent, Andorra) which, due to their demographic size, must be seen as relevant destinations for current Portuguese emigration. As for France, despite the shortage of information, and Germany, which, during the most intense period of the public reconstruction works in the States of the former GDR, became one of the most important two or three top destinations for the Portuguese, they have lost the standing they once enjoyed.

In short, current Portuguese emigration numbers are still significant and continue to make an important contribution to Portugal's GDP, despite the slight decrease noted after 2007 and which has to be attributed to the economic crisis in many major places of destination (2288.5 Euros in 2007; 2281.9 in 2009, which corresponded to about 1.4% of GDP). Despite continuing to use existing social networks in many countries (Switzerland, Luxembourg, Andorra ...), Portuguese emigration has undergone a reconstruction process that simultaneously takes advantage of geographic and historical-cultural proximity (Spain, Angola) and regional economic dynamics within a globalization and facilitation of worldwide mobility framework.

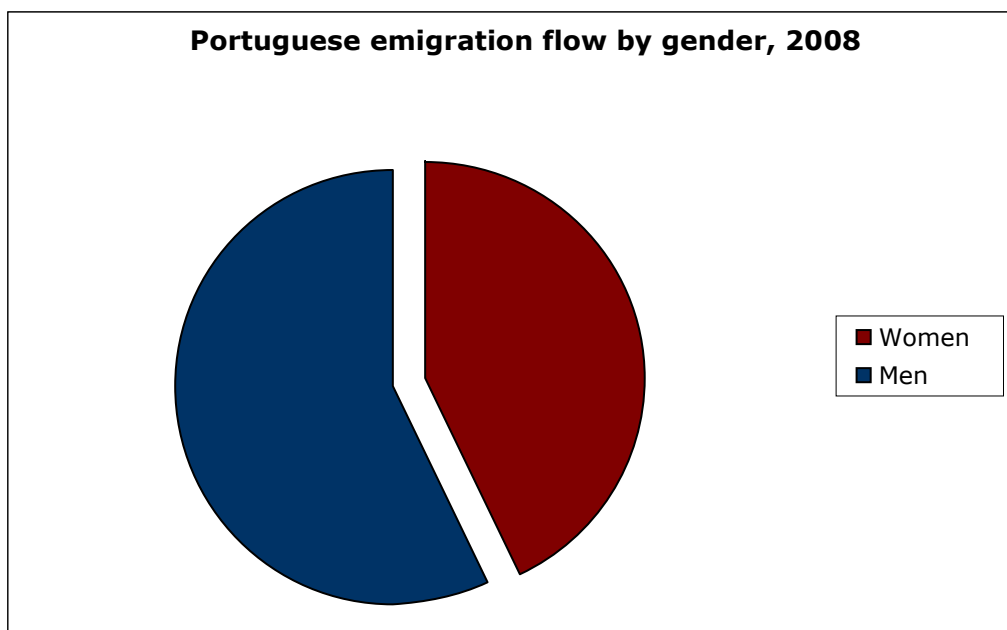
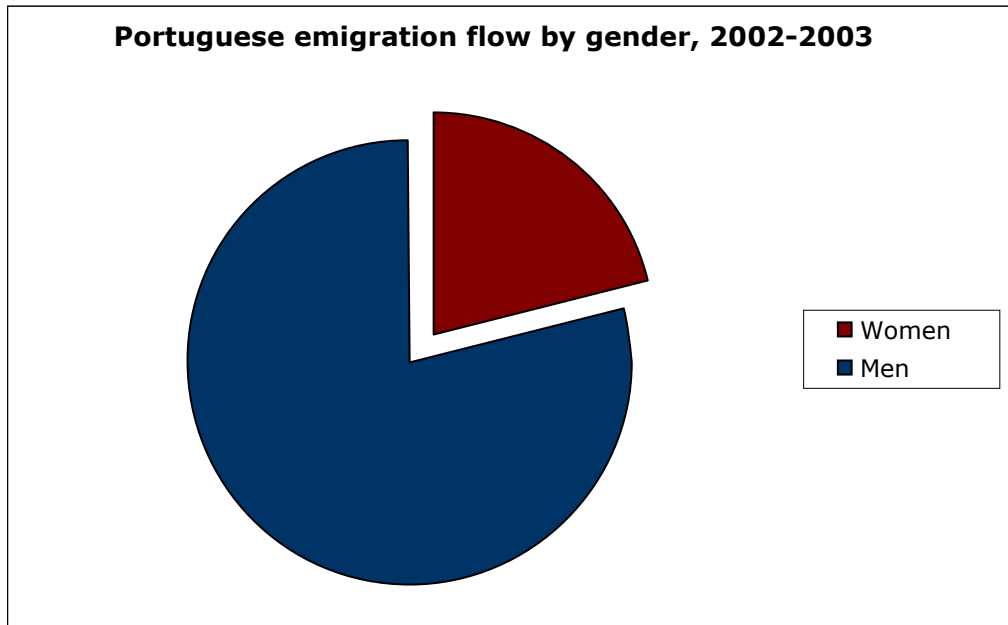
Figure 2 – Age structure of Portuguese flows (02/03 and 08/09)



In addition, the profiles of Portuguese emigrants seem to be undergoing changes. Structural changes in the educational levels of nationals, associated with rise in unemployment among young people, many of whom well-qualified, are contributing to the slight drop in age (Fig.2) and to the diversification of the types of "Portuguese emigrant". Although men still prevail over women, the number of women is increasing, exceeding 40% according to the data published by INE in 2008 (Figs. 3a and 3b).



Figures 3a and 3b – Gender composition of Portuguese emigration 2002/03 and 2008



Source: INE, Estatísticas Demográficas 2003, 2004 e 2010

As for professional integration, besides the differences and opportunities associated with the characteristics of labour markets at the various destinations, there is an important vulnerable group of emigrants with low education levels who take on unskilled jobs available in the market, and those with low-middle and intermediate qualifications who, in more recent countries of destination (Spain and especially the UK) are far more established in the services' sector than in the former countries of



emigration (France and Luxembourg), where construction works and, to a lesser extent, the transformation industry are dominant. In addition, there is a growing presence of qualified emigrants in the new destinations (Table 2), which attests the existence of a new face of Portuguese emigration. While it is simplistic to speak of "brain drain", already back in 2000 Portugal was the 3rd EU country with the highest rate of graduate emigrants (13%)⁸, and the number of highly qualified young people who go abroad to carry out a postgraduate course, an internship or look for their first job and do not return to the country is increasingly significant. Moreover, the prolonged economic stagnation with a systematic increase in unemployment, coupled with high levels of precarious work and the slow conversion of a production model that is traditionally labour-intensive and cheap, may further increase the number of exits and particularly hamper the eventual "go out-and-come-back " of skilled workers.

Current profile of Portuguese emigrants: from the cardboard suitcase to the leather suitcase, alongside executive folders and sports bags

The contemporary Portuguese emigrant tends to be part of temporary flows rather than definitive ones. He/she is primarily young (over 55% are under 30 years of age) and predominantly male, although women now represent over 40% of the movement. Individuals with low or middle-low education levels are still significant in number, a fact that makes them join low-skilled sectors in the industry or civil construction business. However, an increasing number of young people with middle and higher education qualifications are emigrating, which is reflected in their greater presence in the trade and services sectors, and also in the most skilled professions (compare, in Table 2, the percentage of executives and scientific professionals in the older countries of emigration - France and Luxembourg - where they do not exceed 6%, with the percentage of the same professional groups in Spain - about 11% - and in the UK - almost 20%).

This diversification in profiles, which are younger, include a higher number of women, and are more qualified, has been accompanied by changes in major destinations. Since the 1990s, the UK has become the preferred destination in the EU, while Spain has emerged as the principal receiver in the present decade (receiving an annual average of almost 18 000 Portuguese emigrants between 2005 and 2009). As for major the traditional emigration countries, Switzerland remains a key destination (the annual average received in the aforesaid period is slightly above 14 000 persons), whereas the flows directed to Germany, Luxembourg, Andorra, Belgium, and Holland are still significant, although much less than in the case of Switzerland.

Outside Europe, the economic growth and modernization of Angola has attracted high numbers of Portuguese emigrants, especially after 2007, when the economic crisis took the edge off exits to destinations such as Spain.

⁸ Pires, R. P. (coord.) (2010). *Portugal: Atlas das Migrações Internacionais*. Lisbon: Tinta da China: 94.



How about the future? From emigration as a dramatic event to emigration as an asset...

Given the scenarios of the Portuguese economy set for the next few years, Portuguese emigration will not tend towards a reduction, and will probably increase in the short term, particularly in the context of free movement in Europe, and especially if some of the states where Portuguese emigration networks are more consolidated recover quicker from the crisis than Portugal, and also if other countries with which there are intense socio-cultural links maintain or accelerate their pace of economic growth and modernization, as in the case of Angola and Brazil. In addition, other emerging countries are likely to become targets of skilled and technical emigration, like China, particularly if some encouraging factors are brought together (increased investment, promotion of Mandarin learning, use of Macao as a gateway). Finally, traditional destinations far less affected by the crisis (i.e. Canada) can also be reactivated, in addition to the fact that migratory movements (such as temporary work at various destinations) by many Portuguese professionals are not just expected to be maintained but to increase.

In terms of flows, predictions point to relatively high annual numbers in absolute terms (between 75 000 and 100 000), corresponding to about 1.3-1.8% of Portuguese workers, of whom an increasing number will have intermediate and higher education qualifications (although they may not be the actual majority), which means they will alternate between staying in Portugal or work abroad during the year. In short, it appears there is a dual diversification trend - i) one in terms of emigration destinations, mitigated by the fact that the Portuguese social networks act as drivers of movements heading to traditional destinations, ii) the profiles of emigrants, attenuated by the relatively low qualifications amongst older people⁹.

While these figures may, at first glance, be seen as almost dramatic, in economic (in terms of workforce) and demographic terms, as happened in the 1960s and in the early 1970s, such an interpretation should be subject to closer examination. Indeed, globalization and the European integration contexts currently delineate a situation that is completely different from the one that prevailed forty or fifty years ago. This means that open and peripheral small-scale economies, such as the Portuguese one, are inevitably forced to become both receivers and senders of workforce, in the framework of reinforced economic interdependence and international mobility of labour force, particularly in the free movement area, but not limited to it.

Given the inevitability of emigration, at last in the short and medium term, the challenge is how it should be incorporated into national policies. If the option is to "disguise" the outflows (given that emigration means backwardness and attests the reality of unemployment, etc.), relegating them to the periphery of the political agenda and not creating the necessary conditions for a movement quality (recognition of the added value brought about by financial remittances, in addition to added value associated with the experience and skills of the qualifications of young emigrants; enforcement of agreements between Portuguese and foreign companies and research centres that have emigrants as a connection point; maintenance of consular services to ensure a good service to the communities; enforcement of agreements with the

⁹ According to INE, in 2008 people over 44 years of age accounted for about 16% of the flow (Fig.2).



Confederation of Portuguese Speaking Countries - CPLP with regard to migration ...), then the loss can be significant.

If, however, emigration occupies a visible place on the political agenda - which also means conferring it respect and public social recognition, - and if Portugal recognizes the existence of a major "mobile nation" that may contribute to the development of the country, then emigrants can become an asset that will assist Portugal in the difficult process of national economic and self-esteem recovery.

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