

RESEARCH ON THE MEANS TO IMPROVE HUMAN MOBILITY CHANNELS

RESEARCH PAPER 7

Circular Migration and Development of Skills

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ABSTRACT: This paper evaluates the impact of existing circular migration schemes on the development of migrants' skills. To the extent possible, it differentiates between "spontaneous" circular migration activities and managed or regulated circular migration schemes, focusing on the latter while referencing the relevance of the former. The paper examines how and with what efficacy the schemes facilitate migrant labour mobility and aid in the development of particular skills. It considers how they negotiate the interests of governments and societies of origin and destination and migrants themselves. As much as possible, particular attention is paid to circular migration in the Egyptian context. The paper is informed by desk review of data and literature on circular migration.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
Executive Summary	4
I. INTRODUCTION	10
II. METHODOLOGY	12
III. DEFINING AND MEASURING CIRCULAR MIGRATION	14
IV. CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN EGYPT	18
IV.A Defining Circular Migration in the Egyptian Context	18
IV.B (Circular) Migration Trends in Egypt	19
V. THE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF CIRCULAR MIGRATION	24
V.A The Triple-Win Scenario: Benefits and Challenges	24
V.B (Circular) Migration and Skills	29
V.C Portability of Skills	32
VI. MANAGING CIRCULAR MIGRATION	34
VII. CONCLUSIONS	39
VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS	41
WORKS CITED	43
AUTHOR DETAILS	48

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CES	Conference of European Statisticians
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Summary

The objective of this research paper is to provide an overview of circular migration in the context of Egypt and wider discussions around its measurement and (potential) impacts. For this purpose, the paper presents an overview of the current state of the art on defining and, to some extent, measuring circular migration, circular migration in the Egyptian context, the development implications of circular international movements and managing circular migration. Specific attention is paid to the “triple-win” concept, i.e. countries of origin and destination as well as the migrants benefitting from the movements, and to the role of skills and skill development in (circular) migration as well as the portability of skills across borders, especially in contexts where labour markets in countries of destination and countries of origin share few similar characteristics. The research paper is intended for different stakeholders, including policy makers in national governments, programme managers in international organisations or technical development cooperation agencies and researchers interested in circular migration, focusing on movements between Egypt and the EU.

This summary describes the main findings related to the measurement, trends and potential impacts of circular migration. It also investigates existing policy options for circular migration around the world and highlights several key gaps in the understanding of circular migration in the Egyptian context, especially when it comes to movements between Egypt and the EU.

DEFINING AND MEASURING CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Circular migration is a phenomenon that has been gaining attention among academics, policy makers and practitioners for several years. Yet, there is to-date no international definition of what circular migration actually is. Several different definitions are used by different organisations. The general consensus is that the term circular migration describes repeated movements between country of origin and country/ies of destination. What is clear is that circular migration is different from the concepts of permanent and temporary migration. It has a dynamic that those two terms do not contain as they refer to linear movements. It is therefore useful to think about the different components that make up the concept of circular migration. These are the repetition of movement, the directionality of movements, the time dimension, the purpose of migration and the legal nature of migration. Considering all of these points, the challenge when it comes to circular migration lies in how to capture all of this in one definition and how it can be measured. Practically, a recommendation by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe is to make a distinction between a conceptual and statistical definition respectively as this allows us to know what it is that needs to be measured and how to measure it. The conceptual definition is very much in line with

those cited above and states that circular migration is “a repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries” (UNECE, 2016, p. 18). When it comes to the statistical definition, a general and an extended (indicated in [brackets]) version are presented, which differ in the duration of stay they consider:

“A circular migrant is a person who has crossed the national borders of the reporting country at least 3 times over a 10-year period, each time with duration of stay (abroad or in the country) of at least 12 months [/of at least 90 days]” (UNECE, 2016, p. 20).

Even with this definition proposal in place, the measurement of circular migration remains a challenge. While many countries collect and report data on migration to and from their territory through administrative sources, such data rarely allows to identify circular movements as each movement is reported as a new incidence and it is not possible to track people over time. While surveys would allow to get a clearer understanding of circular movements, this requires including questions about entire migration histories of migrants. In practice, this is rarely done. And even in panel studies, such people are often those that drop out between rounds when they move temporarily and are then not traced again in the case that they move back. In order to capture the global scale of circular migration, data would need to capture information on migrants across space and time.

CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

In the Egyptian context, no established definition of circular migration exists. In practice it may, however, play a role in alleviating pressures from the domestic labour market and resources caused by population growth in the country. The main legal framework guiding migration of Egyptians is the *Emigration and Sponsoring Egyptians Abroad Law No. 111 of 1983*. Among other things, this Law outlines the rules and procedures for Egyptian emigrants and contains a clear distinction between permanent and temporary emigration, but does not refer to circular migration. The factors that determine the migrant status to be temporary or permanent are the duration of stay abroad and in the home country. When reflecting on circular migration then, the Law allows for flexibility in returning to the homeland while maintaining the migrant status and employment abroad only to some extent. The duration of time abroad and in Egypt are recorded and the emigration status is lost if the person returns to Egypt and lives there for twelve months or longer in the case of permanent migration. For temporary migrants the status is already lost when they return to Egypt for six months. It is also important to mention that the Law grants migrants the right to retain their Egyptian nationality along with the nationality of their country of destination and other rights such as the exemption from all taxes and fees on the returns of investments by Egyptian migrants in one of the banks operating in Egypt. Such policies are generally beneficial when it comes to circular migrants.

When it comes to measuring circular migration, especially between Egypt and the EU, there is currently no data that allows to do so. The best option is therefore to look at migration trends more generally to see if there is information that allows inferences about circular migration of Egyptians. For instance, Saudi Arabia only provides temporary status based on the 'Kafala' system. Hence, emigration flows from Egypt towards the Arab Gulf, main destinations of Egyptian migrants, are generally classified as temporary, while emigration flows towards Europe and North American countries are classified as permanent. Evidence on circular migration between Egypt and the EU, on the other hand, is completely lacking. No true circular migration scheme exists and while spontaneous circular migration could potentially include a variety of migratory flows, no data exists.

THE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF CIRCULAR MIGRATION

The interest in circular migration has grown in particular because policy makers and practitioners have recognised the potential that lies in such movements. In this context, the triple win scenario proposes that the country of origin, the country of destination as well as the migrants themselves all benefit. This notion is largely conceptual at this stage as empirical evidence that is specific to circular migration does not exist.

The country of origin can benefit from circular migration in multiple ways. The main channels for such benefits are remittances and (temporary) return. While abroad, migrants may accumulate financial and human capital, which might in turn have benefits for the country of origin. It is important to caution against high expectations in terms of origin country development put on circular migration. A prerequisite for positive implications is a favourable environment, referring to factors such as the investment climate, administrative procedures, infrastructure as well as low levels of corruption and conversely trust of migrants.

When it comes to the country of destination, the most direct benefit is the fact that circular labour migration allows addressing labour demands. In times of ageing societies and structural labour market shortages, such options are becoming more attractive for many countries and offer the opportunity to secure a supply of workers with different skills levels, without committing to permanent migration and integration of these migrants. This ignores the reality that migrants, which were intended to engage in circular movements, do then settle permanently. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether temporary, even if repeated, migration facilitated by circular migration policies and programmes is a sustainable solution to addressing employers', often structural, needs.

Finally, migrants themselves are also perceived to benefit from circular migration. Regular migration channels provide new opportunities for migration in a safer manner and reduce costs and risks for migrants. Furthermore, migrants may want to migrate only for a limited time to reach a savings goal or acquire skills that will enable them to improve their situation

in the country of origin upon return. In an ideal scenario, circular migrants are able to optimise their situation with every move that they make. This means that they improve skills, income, savings and assets, which in turn increases their socio-economic status, while decreasing their costs by building country-specific human capital and social networks. Practically, such behaviour is largely possible for EU nationals in the EU context, but much more difficult when it comes to third country nationals, such as Egyptians, where regular migration opportunities remain highly selective.

It should also be noted that some existing evidence largely contests the triple-win approach to circular migration as such. This is because the way that such approaches have been used by several countries in the Global North seems to focus on the securitisation of migration rather than the development implications. In addition, states face having to balance meeting labour market demands and overcoming fears regarding immigration in the general public. This generally has implications for the rights given to migrants arriving through these channels in order to keep the political and social costs low. This has implications for the way that circular migration can contribute to development in practice and how development-relevant aspects are taken into account when designing circular migration schemes.

THE ROLE OF SKILLS

Skill development and acquisition as well as education more generally are important at different stages of a migration trajectory. When returns to education differ between countries, this might be reason for people with specific skills to migrate to benefit from these higher returns. Educational and work background along with the transferability of these skills as well as the willingness to gain further knowledge and qualifications, determine the economic success of immigrants to a large extent. Many employers in destination countries have little interest to invest in the skills development of temporary workers, including circular ones. In this context, evidence exists that migrants often take jobs that require skills below the level that they have attained. Human capital generally does not transfer perfectly across borders caused by factors such as a lack of language skills or challenges with recognition of skills and experience or knowledge of the necessary procedure. Work experience in the destination country enables migrants to move into better positions over time, while prior work experience in the origin country may intensify the mismatch. In this context, evidence from Egypt shows that youth intending to migrate do not look for work opportunities according to their skill profile but are rather willing to take any job accessible to them. Even those that have specific skill sets and specialisation search for employment in unskilled sectors in countries of destination rather than in their respective field. Therefore, the likelihood of being in a situation of educational mismatch is high, but this is in those cases, at least to some extent, a calculated risk.

MANAGING CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Trying to manage circular migration is not an easy task and it might even be said that trying to manage it will by default turn circular migration into temporary programmes of migration. Additionally, labour migration policies and programmes have been used to fight irregular migration by some destination countries. Such motivations are likely not in line with priorities of the Egyptian and other origin country governments, who would be interested in options for circular migration for their nationals for other reasons and likely have more focus on the development implications. In line with such critical stances, a review of existing circular migration schemes highlights that there are few and that even those that do exist could also be seen as temporary rather than circular labour migration schemes.

The few schemes that have been identified, none that include Egypt, highlight a pattern in terms of what countries of destination have been using circular migration schemes for. It is largely in seasonal work, to a large extent in the agricultural sector, or to address specific demands in the labour market, largely in low skilled occupations. Another observation relates to the fact that most of the cited schemes that allow for circular migration usually give migrants the option to apply for a new visa once they return home, rather than providing a set-up that allows truly flexible movements between country of origin and destination. Evaluations of these schemes are lacking, which further limits the understanding regarding effective ways of facilitating circular migration and the realities of the triple-win scenario.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Circular migration is a topic that has been widely discussed in the past two decades in both academic and policy circles. Yet, the review conducted for this paper shows that knowledge and practices are still in relatively early stages. In the context of Egypt, it can be assumed that much of the labour migration to the Gulf countries undertaken by large numbers of Egyptian nationals is circular in nature, while there is no reliable evidence on the nature of migration between Egypt and the EU available at this stage. No policies or programmes facilitating circular migration along this corridor could be identified.

In order to increase the understanding and work towards facilitating circular migration, several recommendations can be made. In the specific context of circular movements between Egypt and the EU, as well as more generally, more data needs to be collected and analysed to understand the role of these movements in migration patterns and trends. Exploring existing data and seeing whether there is information that already exists that would allow to produce an analysis of circular migration in the Egyptian context is a first step in this direction. Depending on the outcomes of such an assessment and to really understand the patterns and dynamics of circular migration in the Egyptian context, a survey might then be more useful. A module in a household survey could be a source to further the understanding of circular migration as could a more targeted demographic survey, which focuses exclusively on capturing individuals' migration history.

In order to facilitate circular migration, it is important to find a way to combine interests of different stakeholders. As such, designing effective policies and programmes for circular migration is an extremely challenging task. So far, few countries have piloted projects to do so and systematic evaluation of such initiatives are lacking. Without such evidence, including longer term perspectives, it will be difficult to develop policies and programmes further and to design them in a way that they indeed create a triple win situation for all involved stakeholders.

I. Introduction

Egypt has a long tradition of labour migration and has seen both temporary and permanent movements of nationals to a variety of destination countries. At the global level, evidence suggests that a large share of movements across international borders are in fact people returning to their country of origin, whether that be the country of birth or citizenship (Azose & Raftery, 2010; OECD, 2008). What is not clear is to what extent people returning “home” is the end of a migration trajectory. Evidence shows that in many cases migrants are involved in circular movements, where they move between their country of origin and one or more destination countries repeatedly (Zimmermann, 2014). It is likely that this is also the case in the Egyptian context.

Circular migration has always naturally happened in unmanaged, spontaneous ways. In relatively recent years, there has, however, been an increase in attention to the term circular migration¹ among policy makers and practitioners in the area of migration. The new awareness has resulted in countries trying to manage circular migration. In 2005, the first-ever global panel addressing international migration, the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), published its final report in which it “concludes that the old paradigm of permanent migrant settlement is progressively giving way to temporary and circular migration” (GCIM, 2005, p. 31). This is based on the observation that millions of people around the world move within as well as across regions for short-term employment to then return to the country of origin. They may do so once or repeatedly, which is when the movements take on a circular nature (GCIM, 2005).

It is in the same report that the GCIM calls for actions by countries of destination to promote circular migration. They also clarify that to achieve this, mechanisms and channels are needed that allow and facilitate the movement of mobile migrants to move between countries relatively easily (GCIM, 2005). Almost fifteen years later, similar notions are expressed in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which was adopted by the majority of United Nations (UN) Member States in December 2018 (IOM, 2020). Within Objective 5, the GCM calls to

“[d]evelop flexible, rights-based and gender-responsive labour mobility schemes for migrants, in accordance with local and national labour market needs and skills

1. It is important to note that in this paper, circular migration is distinguished from other types of migration, particularly temporary or seasonal migration. Circular migration implies repetitive or repeat migration which is not necessarily temporary or seasonal. The definition will be discussed extensively in Section III, but this is important to understand from the beginning.

supply at all skills levels, including temporary, seasonal, circular and fasttrack programmes in areas of labour shortages, by providing flexible, convertible and non-discriminatory visa and permit options, such as for permanent and temporary work, multiple-entry study, business, visit, investment and entrepreneurship”
(United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 13).

In particular, the GCM calls for the engagement in bilateral partnerships and programmes to facilitate mobility and circulation of migrants as well as skills development. To achieve this, channels such as student and professional exchange programmes are suggested as well as scholarships and trainee- or apprenticeships. The important part of such programmes is the option that participants can look for jobs or start a business after completion (GCIM, 2005). This is very much in contrast to many of the existing temporary labour migration schemes, which require migrants to return to the country of origin upon end of a work contract that was facilitated under the programme.

In practice, there are different ways in which governments can facilitate, or at least not stop, circular migration. They can facilitate such movements through managed or regulated circular migration schemes. It is, however, also the case that many migrants engage in circular movements naturally when this is possible. This is what is often referred to as spontaneous circular migration. Migration policies can limit such natural decisions of migrants when they do not allow migrants to move freely. Restrictive migration policies can have adverse effects such as the diversion of migration to irregular channels, migration becoming more permanent and involving families moving rather than individual mobile migrants. This might lead to welfare losses in both countries of origin and destination. It is when free labour mobility is possible that circular migration occurs and has potential to contribute to development. According to the triple-win concept, countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants themselves all benefit from circular migration in different ways (Zimmermann, 2014).

It is a matter of fact, that at present few practical examples of truly circular migration schemes exist at the global level. In order to understand why this may be the case, this paper will cover different topics before coming to the discussion of circular migration schemes as such. The next section will discuss the methodology used to compile the information presented in this paper. Section III will then deal with the current state of the art on defining and, to some extent, measuring circular migration. Section IV looks at circular migration in the Egyptian context both in terms of definition as well as migration trends over time. The following section will then discuss the development implications of circular international movements and in doing so elaborate on the triple-win concept already mentioned above. More specific attention within this section will then be placed on the role of skills and skill development in (circular) migration as well as the portability of skills across borders, especially in contexts where labour markets in countries of destination and countries of origin share few similar characteristics. It is in Section VI that the existing circular migration schemes as well as any evidence on them will be presented. Section VII concludes with recommendations for future research as well as implications for policy and practice when it comes to circular migration focusing on movements between Egypt and the EU.

II. Methodology

The discussions of circular migration, specifically in the context of Egypt, in this paper are based on a review of existing literature. Both academic literature as well as grey literature was included to ensure coverage of different approaches to the topic. In the search for literature, the focus was two-fold. Firstly, literature specifically on circular migration was identified to cover several issues. This includes the matters of defining and measuring circular migration (see Section III) as well as the theoretical perspectives on the potentials of circular migration (see Section V).

A second round of searches was then conducted to identify existing circular migration schemes. For this part, schemes in which Egypt is or has been involved were initially the focus. However, only a small number of labour migration schemes could be identified, especially when looking for ones facilitating circular migration. As a consequence, the search was broadened. This serves the purpose of providing an overview of situations in which circular migration schemes have been used by governments to understand contexts where this has been found useful.

Thirdly, the specific aspect of skills development needed further attention as it was not a strong theme that emerged in the first two rounds of literature review. It was therefore decided to not limit the literature search on this aspect to its relationship with circular migration specifically. Instead, the scope here was widened to labour migration more generally. This allows to get an overview of the relationship between movements for the purpose of work and the development of skills of migrants.

In turn, it is likely that the more general findings are then also applicable to circular migration movements, at least to a large extent.

In addition to the review of literature, data was also consulted to try to see if data contains evidence on circular migration movements between Egypt and the European Union (EU) Member States. For this purpose, data from the Eurostat database was downloaded and analysed to look at the different types of labour migration from Egypt to Europe, which may be of circular nature, specifically when it comes to seasonal work. However, it turned out that existing data does not allow to do so as discussed in more detail in Section IV.B.

It is important to mention that this methodology as well as the state of the literature and data on circular migration results in several limitations. While circular migration is by no means a new phenomenon, it is extremely difficult to measure. This has led to a situation where its potential consequences and the movements as such have largely been overlooked in research on labour migration. Data limitations have led to limited empirical research, while there is literature that is more descriptive in nature. This is important to note as it limits the possibilities to develop strong recommendations regarding circular migration between Egypt and the EU based on the present review. It is therefore important to seek additional information and research on circular migration trends, policies and programmes. A first step in this regard would be to gain a better understanding of the trends of circular migration in this context. While no programmes facilitating circular movements specifically could be identified at this stage, it is possible that there is spontaneous circular migration already happening. Surveys or interviews with migrants could shed light on such trends and provide insights for further research in this area.

III. Defining and Measuring Circular Migration

Circular migration is a phenomenon that has been gaining attention among academics, policy makers and practitioners for several years. Yet, there is to-date no international definition of what circular migration actually is. This is in contrast to other kinds of migration which have been clearly defined within the system of the United Nations. The United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (1998) contain definitions on, for example, long-term and short-term migrants as well as return migrants. While these are very relevant in discussions on circular migration, they do not provide a clear understanding of what makes circular migration a concept that deserves specific attention.

In February 2013, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) established a taskforce to address this lack of an international definition. The Task Force on Measuring Circular Migration is also tasked with clarifying the concept in a way that it becomes possible to measure circular migration in a fashion that it becomes comparable across countries. In October 2016, the Task Force presented a report on *“Defining and Measuring Circular Migration”* in which the current state of the knowledge on defining and measuring circular migration and the proposals for definition and measurement are presented (UNECE, 2016).

Prior to this report and still today, several different definitions were used by different organisations. The general consensus was that the term circular migration describes repeated movements between country of origin and country/ies of destination (UNECE, 2016). At least, this is the underlying information in definitions developed by institutions such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Migration Network (EMN) or the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). IOM defines circular migration as “[a] form of migration in which people repeatedly move back and forth between two or more countries” (International Organization for Migration, 2019, p. 27). EMN as “a repetition of legal migrations by the same person between two or more countries” (European Migration Network, 2011, p. 14) and the MPI as “the temporary or permanent return of migrants to their countries of origin” (Agunias & Newland, 2007, p. 1). Many other definitions exist and are used by different authors as elaborately discussed by UNECE (2016).

What these definitions show is that circular migration is different from the concepts of permanent and temporary migration. It has a dynamic that those two terms do not contain as they refer to linear movements. Yet, both of these more static concepts are closely linked to different types of circular migration (UNECE, 2016). To further explain this, Argunias and Newland (2007) put forward a typology of circular migration as shown in Table 1. In their typology, any movement that includes crossing an international border at least twice is therefore considered circular migration. This remains a rather broad and inclusive conceptualisation, which would, for example, also classify all seasonal migration to be a specific form of circular migration.

Table 1: *Typology of Circular Migration*

	Permanent Return	Temporary Return
Permanent Migrants	Migrants who reside abroad for an extended period of time and then return to their country of origin for good.	Migrants who reside abroad for an extended period of time and return to their country of origin for temporary stays.
Temporary Migrants	Migrants who reside abroad for a short period of time and then return to their country of origin for good.	Migrants who reside abroad for a short period of time and return to their country of origin for temporary stays.

Source: Developed by the authors based on Agunias and Newland (2007).

It is therefore useful to think about the different components that make up the concept of circular migration. Firstly, there is the **repetition of movement**. Circular migration can only occur when a person moves more than once and completes a full migration loop each time. Migration loops describe movements across international borders that start and end in the same country, the country of origin. A basic migration loop consists of the movement from country A to country B and back to country A. The move to country A is then return migration. In other words, more than one migration loop must be completed in order to consider the movements to be circular migration, for example two moves back and forth between country A and B. However, circular migration does not have to take place between the same countries, so it could also be a move to country C after returning to country A for the first time and then back to country A again after spending some time in country C (UNECE, 2016).

A second dimension of circular migration is the **directionality** of movements. This relates to the definition of a country of origin, which is in most cases the country of birth or citizenship. However, this is not a necessary condition to defining circular migration. In principle, circular migration can also take place between two or more countries of residence that are neither the country of birth or citizenship (UNECE, 2016).

Thirdly, the dimension of **time** is also important to consider when discussing circular migration. More specifically, time is important to consider in two ways. Firstly, it is important in light of the duration of stay in each of the countries a migrant resides in when moving circularly. In simple definitions this does not matter, but becomes especially important when it comes to measuring circular migration (UNECE, 2016). In general, any stay in a different country is not considered to be international migration when it is for a duration shorter than 90 days according to the United Nations definitions (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, 1998). In other words, visits to the home country for vacation, family visits or other short trips should generally not be considered to be a part of circular migration. Time is secondly important when it comes to determining the period over which cross-border movements should be counted to determine circularity (UNECE, 2016).

Next, the **purpose of migration** is also important to consider. This is particularly important when it comes to policy making on circular migration as depending on the reason for moving between countries, different visa and migration policies likely play a role. While not easy to measure, understanding the nature of circular movements can be beneficial as it might make a difference whether the movements are motivated by work, education or other reasons (UNECE, 2016).

Closely related, there is also the **legal nature of migration** which is important to consider. International definitions of migration generally do not limit the phenomenon to regular movements as this would ignore a large share of migration happening in the world. In the case of circular migration this would also exclude a large portion of the movements that were introduced before as spontaneous circular movements rather than managed ones (UNECE, 2016).

Considering all of these points, the challenge when it comes to circular migration lies in how to capture all of this in one definition and how it can be measured. In their report, UNECE (2016) they goes a step further than the existing definitions and provide proposals for a conceptual and statistical definition respectively. This is important because when it comes to measuring circular migration, it is important to a) know it is that needs to be measured and b) how to measure it. The conceptual definition is very much in line with those cited above and states that circular migration is “a repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries” (UNECE, 2016, p. 18). When it comes to the statistical definition, they provide a general and an extended version. The general one reads as follows:

“A circular migrant is a person who has crossed the national borders of the reporting country at least 3 times over a 10-year period, each time with duration of stay (abroad or in the country of at least 12 months” (UNECE, 2016, p. 20).

This definition focuses on rather long periods of stay, which is why it is complemented by the extended definitions, which also considers short-term migration:

“A circular migrant is a person who has crossed the national borders of the reporting country at least 3 times over a 10-year period, each time with duration of stay (abroad or in the country) of at least 90 days” (UNECE, 2016, p. 20).

This definition becomes much broader but still excludes, for example, one-time seasonal migration or seasonal workers that only go abroad for two months every year. Yet, in practice, many seasonal movements remain circular in nature and when examples of circular migration schemes are presented later in this paper (Section VI.) this will become clear as many of the practical examples can actually be found in the form of seasonal worker schemes. As such, a clear distinction between circular and seasonal migration is difficult to make in practice.

Also, at this stage these remain proposals and the measurement of circular migration a challenge in many contexts (UNECE, 2016). While many countries collect and report data on migration to and from their territory through administrative sources, such data does rarely allow to identify circular movements as each movement is reported as a new incidence and it is not possible to track people over time. While surveys would allow to get a clearer understanding of circular movements, this requires including questions about entire migration histories of migrants. In practice, this is rarely done. And even in panel studies, such people are often those that drop out between rounds when they move temporarily and are then not traced again in the case that they move back. In order to capture the global scale of circular migration, data would need to capture information on migrants across space and time (Zimmermann, 2014).

At this point, this has not been done and no comprehensive overview of circular migration at the global level exists. And as stated, even in terms of definitions there is no general international agreement at this stage. For the purpose of this paper, it is therefore important to look more specifically at circular migration in the context of Egypt to understand how circular migration may fit into the overall migration trends in the country and to what extent it is possible to measure it.

IV. Circular Migration in Egypt

IV.A DEFINING CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

No established definition of circular migration as such exists in the context of Egypt. However, existing reviews identify that migration is used by the Egyptian government, at least to some extent, to alleviate pressures from the domestic labour market and resources caused by population growth in the country (Badawy, 2008; Jureidini, 2010). In this context, circular migration may potentially play an important role, when also considering its development implications (see Section V). It is, therefore, important to take a look at the existing legal and policy framework to get a sense how circular movements may fit in.

The main legal framework guiding migration of Egyptians is the *Emigration and Sponsoring Egyptians Abroad Law No. 111 of 1983*. Among other things, this law outlines the rules and procedures for Egyptian emigrants and contains a clear distinction between permanent and temporary emigration (Jureidini, 2010). As circular migration is considered to be a phenomenon in which a person rotates between the country of origin and the country/ies of destination, it is important to look at these definitions by the government to see how they relate to the concept of circular migration. According to Article 8 of the Emigration Law:

“[a] permanent migrant is the Egyptian who stays abroad permanently, by obtaining the nationality of a foreign country, or a permanent residence permit to stay in this country; or who stays abroad for at least ten years, or obtains an emigration permit from one of the countries of emigration specified by a resolution of the Minister concerned with Emigration Affairs” (Badawy, 2008, p. 4).

When it comes to temporary migration, Article 13 of the Law states that:

“[a] temporary Egyptian migrant is the Egyptian citizen, who is not a student, or seconded employee, who settles and sets up his main activity abroad, and has a job

to make his living, providing that he has stayed abroad for one year and has not taken the permanent emigration procedures stated herein, or that he has taken the said procedures and returned to his homeland before fulfilling any of the conditions stated in article (8) herein. The period of one year referred to in the above-mentioned paragraph is to be considered a continuous year even if it is interrupted by intervals not more than thirty days. This provision shall not prejudice the extension of sponsorship duty to all Egyptians abroad” (Badawy, 2008, p. 4).

That means that the factors that determine the migrant status to be temporary or permanent are the duration of stay abroad and in the home country. When reflecting on circular migration then, the Law allows for flexibility in returning to the homeland while maintaining the migrant status and employment abroad only to some extent. The duration of time abroad and in Egypt are recorded and the emigration status is lost if the person returns to Egypt and lives there for twelve months or longer in the case of permanent migration. For temporary migrants the status is already lost when they return to Egypt for six months (Badawy, 2008). Considering the proposed definitions by UNECE (2016) (see Section III), this would limit possibilities for circular migration in the general sense and allow it in the extended sense.

In practice, the temporary or permanent status is also determined by the country of destination and the respective policies and opportunities there. For instance, Saudi Arabia only provides temporary status based on the ‘Kafala’ system. Hence, emigration flows from Egypt towards the Arab Gulf are generally classified as temporary, while emigration flows towards Europe and North American countries are classified as permanent (Ghoneim, 2010; Nassar, 2008). This calls for a further analysis of the main emigration trends in Egypt in the light of circular migration in the following section.

IV.B (CIRCULAR) MIGRATION TRENDS IN EGYPT

Looking at Egyptian migration patterns allows to further develop the understanding of the role of circular migration. However, when it comes to measuring circular migration, especially between Egypt and the EU, there is currently no data that allows to do so. Reviewing data provided by Eurostat, the European Statistical Office, does not allow to capture repeated movements and neither does publicly available data from national statistical offices. The complexity of obtaining such data is clearly expressed in the UNECE (2016) report. In the report, examples of how existing data can be used to measure circular migration are provided. One of the practical examples provided in this context is Italy, the main country of destination of Egyptians in the EU. Generally, immigration and emigration in Italy does not contain information on the (intended) duration of the stay or any information on prior movements. To get such information, the Italian statisticians linked data from the population register and the migration flow data. Unfortunately, Egypt is not one of the countries of origin that was included in this exercise (UNECE, 2016).

The best option is therefore to look at migration trends more generally to see if there is information that allows inferences about circular migration of Egyptians. Emigration trends from Egypt have undergone a drastic change over time, which in turn also has had impacts on circular migration of Egyptians. The period between the 1950s and the mid-1960s witnessed very restrictive emigration policies. It was not until 1964 that an institute was established to assist certain emigration cases. That year the Committee for Manpower was established and consequently authorised to issue “a few thousand permits per year” (Ghoneim, 2010, p. 13). Under Nasser’s regime (1956 to 1970), migration policies witnessed a drastic reform, and, in most cases, these were politically driven. As a tool of soft-power, migration policies shifted from restricting emigration in the light of avoiding brain drain to encouraging migration especially during the period of Pan-Arabism (Tsourapas, 2020).

During Sadat’s era from 1970 to 1981, emigration was declared a right for Egyptian nationals under Article 52 of the 1971 Constitution. From the standpoint of circular migration, it was the first step towards promoting such movements as nationals have the right to emigrate and return home. In addition, “Law 73/1971 allowed public-sector employees to return to their jobs after an absence of one year, subsequently extended to two years together with the removal of other legal impediments. Following the open door policy adopted in 1974, all restrictions on labour migration were lifted (Ghoneim, 2010 p. 13)”. As such, this period witnessed the expansion of migratory rights and the Egyptian government established institutions to manage migration flows and maintain links with Egyptians abroad. For instance, the Ministry of State for Emigration Affairs was established after the Presidential Decree 574/1981.

As previously said, migration in Egypt is currently governed by law and distinguishes between permanent and temporary migration. The law also grants migrants the right to retain their Egyptian nationality along with the nationality of their country of destination. Moreover, Chapter 4 of the Emigration Law addresses migrants’ rights. For instance, Article 15 grants the exemption from all taxes and fees on the returns of investments by Egyptian migrants in one of the banks operating in Egypt (Ghoneim, 2010). All of these are policies that are generally beneficial when it comes to circular migrants (Zimmermann, 2014).

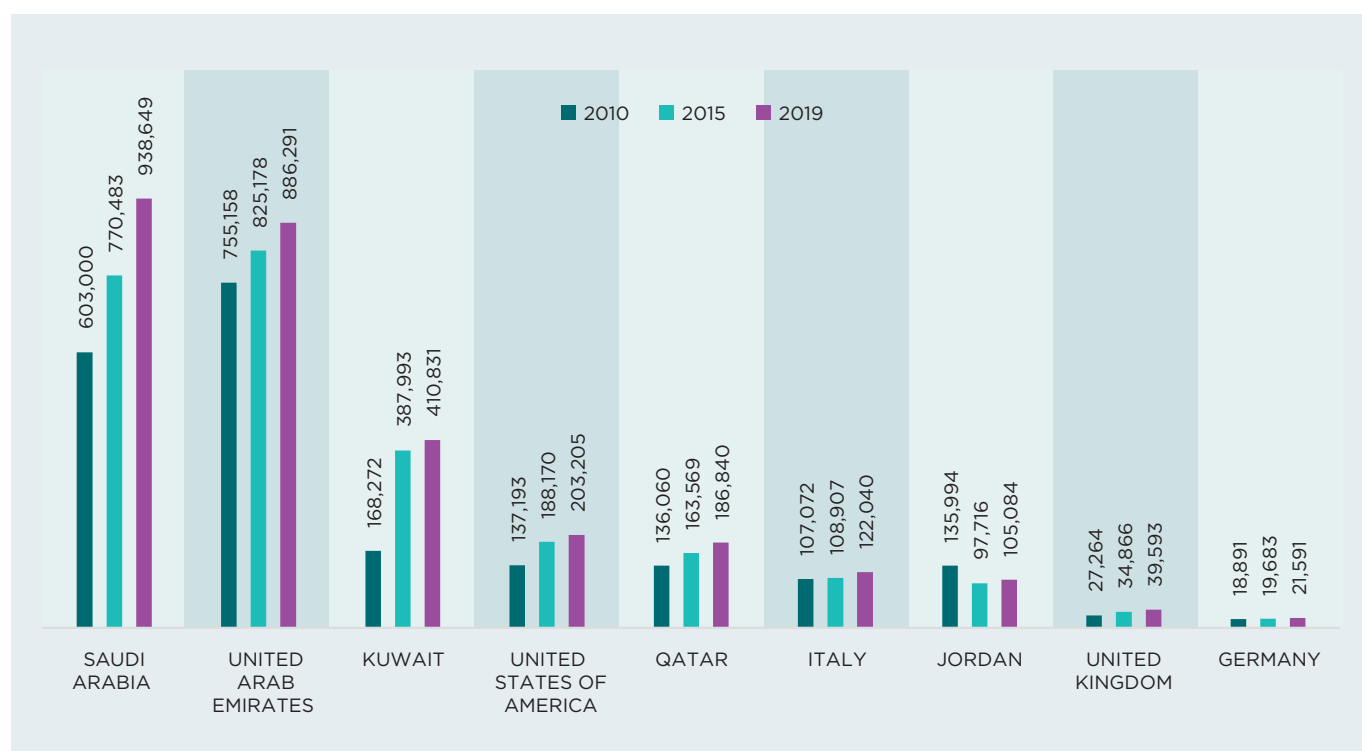
In 1996, there was a shift in duties and responsibilities in Egypt regarding labour migration. The Ministry of Manpower and Emigration replaced the Ministry of State for Emigration Affairs and took over their duties regarding labour migration. The Ministry of Manpower and Emigration established a Higher Committee for Migration where several activities for potential migrants were initiated. The Higher Committee for Migration was, for example, given the responsibility for preparing potential migrants for their migration journey, as well as maintaining ties between Egyptian migrants and their homeland. However, according to Ghoneim (2010) the committee rarely meets which limits the effectiveness of their activities.

Coming back to specific evidence on circular migration in the Egyptian context, it is important to take a closer look at data on the main emigration trends. As already briefly mentioned in the previous section, there are different permanent and temporary trends that characterise Egyptian emigration. While the majority of Egyptian migrants reside in the MENA region, there is also a significant population of Egyptian migrants in Europe and North America. As explained in earlier papers of this research paper series (see especially Research Paper 1), clear destination hubs have emerged across Europe's different subregions.

Data by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) provides one of the most contemporary assessments of global migrant stocks in countries of residence by country of origin.² The data shown in Figure 1 shows the important role of the Gulf countries as destination countries for Egyptian migrants. Furthermore, the data shows that overall Egyptian emigration increased between 2010 and 2019, but that there were no significant changes in the destination countries. The role of the migration of Egyptian workers to other Arab countries is significant. Egypt is one of the main providers of migrant workers in many of the countries and migration is generally indeed temporary. The lack of opportunities for permanent migration to the Gulf countries has led to a situation where Egyptians tend to stay for several years, but circular migration movements between Egypt and the main countries of destination are also rather common (Tsourapas, 2020). In this context, Nassar (2008) concludes that “most of the Egyptian is temporary migration and part of temporary is likely to be circular” (Nassar, 2008, p. 2).

Even less evidence exists on circular migration between Egypt and the EU. At present, no true circular migration scheme exists (see Section VI). In terms of spontaneous circular migration, this could potentially include a variety of migratory flows. For instance, Egyptian students that study abroad as well as Egyptian nationals who independently find a job, either after their studies abroad or from Egypt, could engage in spontaneous circular migration. These kinds of individuals have the opportunity to engage in circular movements, however, no data can be identified in this regard to investigate in how far they actually do.

2. Depending on the destination country the country of origin is defined either by country of birth or citizenship.

Figure 1: *Egyptian Migrants by Main Countries of Destination*³

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Population Division (2019).

NOTES: Please note that estimates on migrant stock are based on the country of birth in the United States, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany and on citizenship in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan.

It is also important to briefly note that, due to its geographical location, Egypt is considered to be a sending, receiving and transit country. After the 2011 uprising, irregular migratory routes became popular and attracted mixed migratory flows.⁴ While regulations and laws around regular migration have developed over the years, irregular migration was not governed or controlled until the issuance of Law 82 in 2016. This was the first law to criminalise irregular migration in Egypt and it came into place after a boat which departed from Egypt capsized, killing approximately 500 passengers. While it is perceived as a positive first step towards combatting irregular migration, it has been criticised for providing measures ensuring the protection against non-refoulement for asylum seekers and refugees as such failing to ensure important rights for refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2016). However, irregular migration is also a strategy chosen by unemployed Egyptian youth. High unemployment rates and a lack

3. The United Kingdom and Germany are not among the main destination countries overall, but the main destination countries in Europe besides Italy.

4 These include asylum seekers, refugees, labour migrants and Egyptian Nationals.

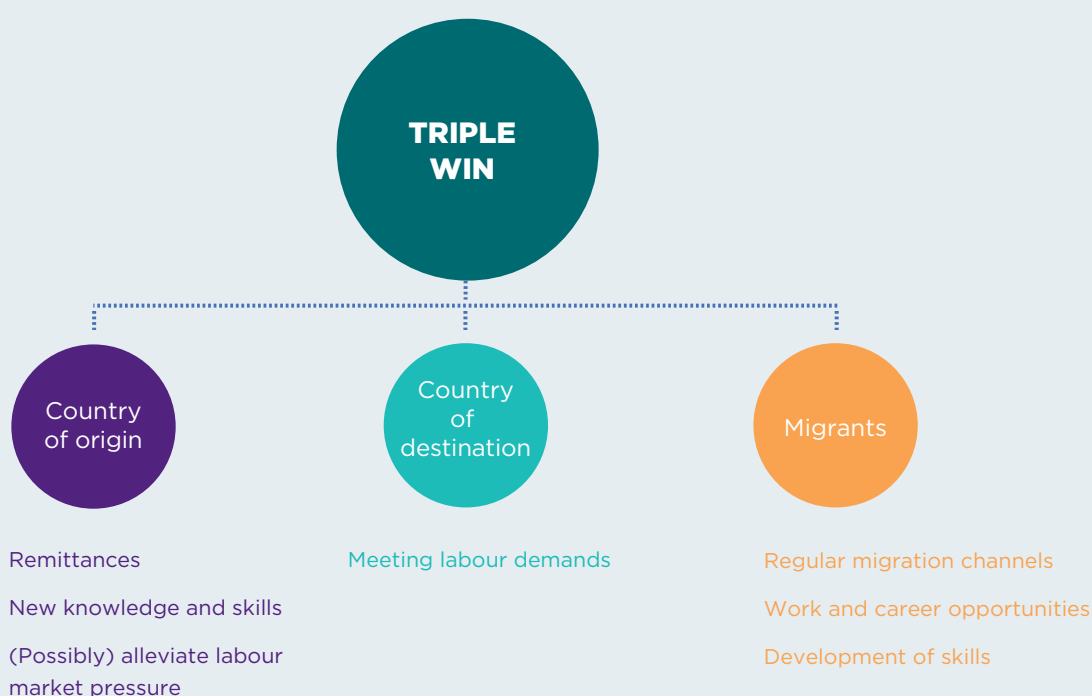
of good work opportunities in Arab countries, has driven many to migrate to Europe irregularly. Such flows include both low skilled and qualified workers. Social networks as well as proximity are the main factors determining destination within Europe, with the main countries being Italy, Malta, Cyprus and France (Badawy, 2008; Völkel, 2016). However, no reliable information on the nature of these movements in terms of duration and circularity is available. It is unlikely, however, that these migrants would engage in circular movements considering the dangers involved in irregular migration and the risks of leaving once and not being able to enter again. It is much more likely that these movements are motivated by work opportunities and, as such, the young migrants return home once they have reached a savings goal or face hardships that make staying impossible.

V. The Development Implications of Circular Migration

V.A THE TRIPLE-WIN SCENARIO: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The interest in circular migration has grown in particular because policy makers have recognised the potential that lies in such movements. In this context, the triple win scenario proposes that the country of origin, the country of destination as well as the migrants themselves all benefit. This scenario has become somewhat of a mantra which frames discussions around policy options especially when it comes to migration from the Global South to the Global North (see Section VI for more on this). It is important to note, however, that these notions are largely conceptual at this stage and that little practical experiences and empirical evidence exist that are specific to circular migration (Constant et al., 2013). At the same time, in many ways circular migration is maybe not so different from temporary migration and a lot of the implications are similar.

Figure 2 provides a summary overview of the main benefits often cited for the different parties. These will then be discussed below the figure in more detail. At the same time, it also should not be ignored that circular migration, like migration in general, may also have negative, or at least not the overly ambitious positive, effects on the involved parties. The more critical views will also be discussed for the three different sets of stakeholders in turn.

Figure 2: *The Triple-Win Concept: Main Potential Benefits*

Source: Author's own compilation based on the literature review presented in this section.

Country of Origin

The country of origin can benefit from circular migration in multiple ways. As in the migration and development nexus more generally, the main channels for such benefits are remittances and (temporary) return (Agunias & Newland, 2007; IOM, 2010). While abroad, migrants may accumulate different types of capital, which might in turn have benefits for the country of origin when they return. Firstly, they may acquire new human capital, in the form of qualifications and skills, which they then bring to the country of origin (Agunias & Newland, 2007). The link between migration and skills as well as the portability of skills will be discussed further in the following two sections. Secondly, they may also acquire financial capital. Yet, in many cases, especially low skilled, migrants end up being able to save little, possibly even driving them to stay longer than originally intended to meet a savings goal (Castles & Ozkul, 2014). See more on this also below in the discussion of the benefits for migrants themselves.

In general, the expectations in terms of origin country development put on circular migration are often aimed too high. As de Haas (2010) puts it, expecting circular migrants to automatically drive development in their country of origin reflects “the naivety of recent views celebrating migration as self-help development “from below”” (de Haas, 2010, p. 227). He goes on to explain that these are ideological expectations that do not reflect the reality of existing structural constraints (de Haas, 2010). What should not be overlooked is the fact that states play a vital role in facilitating developmental impacts of migration. They need to create an environment that is

favourable for this to happen. This includes things such as the investment climate, administrative procedures, infrastructure as well as low levels of corruption and conversely trust of migrants (Castles & Delgado Wise, 2008).

In this context, it is also important to remember that migration is selective. In other words, migrants are generally not a random sub-group of the population at origin, but differ in terms of characteristics such as qualifications from non-migrants (Borjas, 1987). Furthermore, characteristics of migrants may determine where they move. Lower skilled migrants can often find work in countries relatively close by, while those with specific skill sets might have to look further away for a job that matches their skills and preferences (de Haas et al., 2020). This also matters in terms of development implications. Who migrates, as well as who returns, may have diverse social and economic effects. So, in the end the actual benefits of circular migration always depend on the context in which the migration takes place.

There is also in most cases a relationship between emigration and labour markets in countries of origin, including effects on unemployment. What this relationship looks like largely again depends on the composition of the migration flows. Depending on who leaves and who stays, it might either create a gap in the labour force or it might alleviate pressure. If migrants were unemployed before their migration this is also likely to have different effects than if people that leave were employed until the moment they leave (David & Marouani, 2016).

Country of Destination

When it comes to the country of destination, the most direct benefit is the fact that circular labour migration allows addressing labour demands. This might be either gaps, where not enough labour is available within the country to meet the demand, or a mismatch, where not enough labour with the right set of skills is available. Addressing such demands with circular migration is possible when migration policies provide ways to do so. This is then usually done in a way that links the option to migrate to the availability of work in the country (Constant et al., 2013). In times of ageing societies and structural labour market shortages, such options are becoming more attractive for many countries and offer the opportunity to secure a supply of workers with different skills levels, without committing to permanent migration and integration of these migrants (Agunias & Newland, 2007). Often migrants are also willing to work for lower wages than citizens, while policies may not allow them to switch jobs (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

This is at the same time one of the main risks for countries of destination. There is the possibility that migrants, which were intended to engage in circular movements, do then settle permanently. This could be done by overstaying their visa or, where this is an option, changing their status. This is often explicitly not the aim of circular and temporary policies and programmes. Many governments use these kinds of policies specifically to avoid the permanent settlement and to stress the temporary element of the migration, which is a way of making migration a more attractive option to filling labour market demands among the general public (Hugo, 2009; Zimmermann, 2014).

Yet, evidence also shows that, in particular highly skilled, migrants generally have a preference for long-term residence and care about options for family reunification when selecting their country of destination. This is independent of whether they aim to stay in the country indefinitely (Castles & Ozkul, 2014). Other authors argue that circular migration matches the plans of migrants well as most only intend to move abroad for a period of time anyway (Agunias & Newland, 2007).

Furthermore, it is far from certain that the temporary, even if repeated, kind of migration facilitated by circular migration policies and programmes is a sustainable solution to addressing employers' needs. When demands are structural, and therefore long-term, circular migration only works when labour migrants are rotated in their moves between country of origin and country of destination. This is often not the preference for employers as it disrupts workflows and requires additional resources. A good example for this is the care sector, which is one facing significant challenges in many countries. In the contact with patients and especially elderly people, consistency in staff is important and employers generally avoid staff turnovers when possible (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

In general, labour migrants fill specific market needs in the destination country and, through their participation in the labour market, contribute to local economic development. There is evidence that integration is an important process for such contributions to happen. Temporary and circular migrants with uncertainty about the period they will spend in the country are less inclined to invest in language learning and other integration measures. As a result their chances to develop careers and receive higher wages are smaller and the risk of marginalisation higher. This, in turn, limits their productivity and contributions to economic growth (Anderson & Huang, 2019). In some cases, they may even be excluded from integration efforts, which puts these individuals in a vulnerable position, when trying to find housing and arriving in everyday life in a new environment (Castles & Ozkul, 2014). This leads us to looking at the benefits of circular migration for the migrants themselves.

Migrants

It is generally perceived that the migrants themselves also benefit from circular migration. First and foremost, when countries open channels for circular migration and develop programmes that facilitate such movements, this provides new opportunities for migration in a safer manner through regularised channels (Agunias & Newland, 2007). This reduces costs and risks for migrants and is surely a benefit then. Furthermore, many authors argue that many migrants want to migrate only for a limited time to reach a savings goal or acquire skills that will enable them to improve their situation in the country of origin upon return. Yet, such an assumption is not without caveats. In many cases initial migration plans change once migrants are in the country of destination and get involved in social relationships (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

In an ideal scenario, circular migrants are able to optimise their situation with every move that they make. This means that they improve skills, income, savings and assets, which in turn increases their socio-economic status. At the same time, their costs for finding work, moving and being away from family and friends may decrease and the social capital increase as they build networks also in the country of destination. In theory, this gives them a comparative advantage over temporary migrants, who do not have the opportunity to maximise benefits, as well as non-migrants (Constant & Zimmermann, 2011). However, in order for this to be a reality, the legal framework must make it possible for the circular migrants to make the decisions that indeed allow them to optimise their situation. In the context of the EU, this is largely possible for EU nationals, but much more difficult when it comes to third country nationals, such as Egyptians.

Countries of destination are selective with regard to what kind of migrants they open up such regular migration channels for. Usually, this is for people with very specific skill sets, which are in high demand on the labour market. This generally puts the lower skilled migrants in a position where they still have to use irregular ways of migrating and engaging in informal employment when they have a savings goal, they want to meet by migrating. So in reality, it is the highly skilled that are more likely to benefit from circular migration policies and programmes. Yet, these are also the migrants for which opportunities for permanent residence already more readily exist. Lower skilled migrants may still engage in circular migration, but when they do so this is often through irregular channels (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

When considering the impacts of migration on the migrants themselves, wages are also one of the key factors. Literature on this largely has focused on the wage gap between immigrants and natives. Several studies have investigated the wage gap between natives and migrants and the impact of immigration on wages of natives. In the light of development impacts of migration, the latter is less relevant, while it is interesting to take a closer look at how migrants fare compared to natives as this may have consequences on the benefits of labour migration for the migrants themselves. Borjas (1999) finds that existing skill differences between natives and immigrants explain the initial differences in wages and that when these skill differentials diminish over time, migrant wages eventually rise to the level of natives. Similar findings come out of other research in, for example, the United States (Carliner, 1980; Chiswick, 1978), Canada (Baker & Benjamin, 1994), Germany (Dustmann, 1993) or Australia (Beggs & Chapman, 1991), while it cannot be confirmed in the case of Sweden (Hammarstedt, 2003). Dustmann (1993) specifically proposes that the optimal investment into country specific human capital should be lower in cases of temporary migration than for permanent migration.

Yet, even if migrants do not catch up with the natives, the income they earn in the country of destination may still be significantly higher than what they earned at home; that is, if they were employed before migration in the first place. As such, the income migrants earn is one of the most direct effects of labour migration on the migrants themselves. And in turn potentially on their families in the country of origin in cases where they sent a part of their income home as remittances.

Looking at the connections between migration and employment, it is also interesting to consider the impacts of a migration experience on labour market status upon return to the country of origin. There are a number of papers looking at different related aspects in different contexts. For example, a past migration experience increases chances of being employed in Uganda (Thomas, 2008), increases the probability of upward occupational mobility in Albania (Carletto & Kilic, 2011) and Egypt (El-Mallakh & Wahba, 2016) and leads to relatively higher earnings compared to non-migrants in, for example, Ireland (Barrett & Goggin, 2010), Egypt (Wahba, 2015) and several West African countries (De Vreyer et al., 2010). However, many of these effects cannot be generalised and the migrants for which such trends are found have specific characteristics. For example, in the analysis of De Vereyer et al. (2010), they only find a substantial wage premium for migrants returning from an OECD country, but not for those who moved elsewhere. Similarly, Thomas (2008) only finds a significantly higher likelihood of being employed among migrants with tertiary education levels, but not those returning migrants with secondary schooling or below. Further research also highlights that it makes a difference whether returning was a choice or whether it was forced. Forced returnees are more likely to face challenges in terms of labour market reintegration, as well as socio-cultural integration more generally, in the Maghreb countries (David, 2018).

General Criticism

It should also be noted that some existing evidence largely contests the triple-win approach to circular migration as such. This is because the way that such approaches have been used by several countries in the Global North seems to focus on the securitisation of migration rather than the development implications (Cassarino, 2013). In addition, as discussed above, states face having to balance meeting labour market demands and overcoming fears regarding immigration in the general public. This generally has implications for the rights given to migrants arriving through these channels in order to keep the political and social costs low (Castles & Ozkul, 2014). This has implications for the way that circular migration can contribute to development in practice and how development-relevant aspects are taken into account when designing circular migration schemes. This issue will therefore be further discussed in Section VI.

V.B (CIRCULAR) MIGRATION AND SKILLS

Skill development and acquisition as well as education more generally are important at different stages of a migration trajectory (Dustmann & Glitz, 2011). It is also important to consider the ways in which migration can further develop skills and grant people access to new qualifications. In this context, human capital theory provides a good basis for understanding education and migration as an investment (Becker, 2009; Massey et al., 1993; Sjaastad, 1962). Looking at the different stages of the migration journey at which education and skill acquisition may be important, at least four different points can be identified. Firstly, when returns to education differ between countries, this might be reason for people with specific skills to migrate to benefit from these higher returns (Dustmann & Glitz, 2011). Secondly, in many cases regular migration

channels are more readily available to those with specific skills in demand in destination country labour markets (Czaika & Parsons, 2017). Thirdly, educational and work background along with the transferability of these skills as well as the willingness to gain further knowledge and qualifications, determine the economic success of immigrants to a large extent. Finally, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in the country of origin might be the main motivating factor for moving to a different country (Dustmann & Glitz, 2011). It should, however, also be kept in mind that such newly obtained qualifications and knowledge are not necessarily beneficial for migrants. It is possible that the value of the new skills is actually not as high as anticipated when they return to the country of origin. This relates to the portability of skills, which will be discussed in the following section.

Evidence does highlight that many employers in destination countries have little interest to invest in the skills development of temporary workers, including circular ones. Especially when it comes to low skilled workers, employers see migrants as cheap labour, so investing in training would only increase costs for them. And even when willing to do so generally, the fact that the migrant will leave after some time is a further disincentive to invest in the development of their skills (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

However, there are also migration programmes that aim specifically at the development of skills. Germany, for example, has offered schemes for care workers from several countries such as the Philippines, Tunisia and Serbia, as well as engineers from Tunisia. In such programmes the participants receive specific training in these sectors. It is also ensured that such programmes are only established with partner countries where there is an oversupply of workers in the targeted sectors. In this way, the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) ensures to facilitate the triple win scenario, which is at the centre of their work on labour migration (GIZ, 2019). However, these are not circular migration schemes as the aim is to have these workers contribute to filling the structural labour market gaps in the German labour market in these specific sectors. While there is no requirement to stay, there is also no component of facilitating circular movements.

When discussing migration and skills, one term that immediately comes to mind is the term “brain drain”, which came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to a situation of emigration of a large share of the highly skilled population of a country. “Brain drain” expresses an anxiety that developing countries lose scholars and professionals to more developed countries, leading to a lack of public services and research, as well as tax revenues, in origin countries (Bhagwati & Hamada, 1974; Grubel & Scott, 1966). The early literature on this topic largely focused on the negative effects of such a pattern for the country of origin in terms of implications for development. Later research approaches the topic much more nuanced and acknowledges the complex relationship between highly skilled migration, productivity and equality (Mountford, 1997). Other research still finds negative effects of highly skilled migration in particular in the medical field (Bhargava, 2008; Chauvet et al., 2013).

A move in the academic literature from emphasis on “brain drain” to “brain gain” or “brain circulation” occurred in the early 2000s. “Brain gain” counters the “brain drain” narrative, highlighting that the emigration of skilled migrants can lead to increased human capital accumulation in countries of origin, particularly through increasing the rate of return on education (Borjas, 1987; Stark et al., 1998), and the return of skilled migrants who were trained abroad (Meyer et al., 1997, 2001). The return of skilled migrants is also termed “brain circulation”, which describes the flows of the embodied skills and information as bidirectional rather than unidirectional (Johnson & Regets, 1998).

The literature on “brain gain” and “brain circulation” has examined the enhancement of human capital accumulation in countries of origin and destination due to migration, of which knowledge transfer in the countries of origin is a central mechanism. Le (2008) examined the effect of domestic research R&D, international R&D spill overs and human capital accumulation on total factor productivity in 19 OECD countries and found strong evidence that labour migration plays an important role as a conduit of technological transmission. This has major benefits for both the countries of origin and destination, and developed countries can significantly contribute to global development through investment in R&D (Le, 2008). It has been argued that Indian and Chinese engineers working in Silicon Valley since the 1980s have been instrumental in fostering information technology industries in their countries of origin through technical knowledge transfers, promoting entrepreneurship and maintaining links with companies in the U.S. (AnnaLee, 2005; Wadhwa et al., 2011). A study of Chinese scientists finds that domestically trained scientists largely benefit from working with Chinese nationals who live overseas (Fangmeng, 2016).

Overall, the effects of skilled migration on countries of origin are not easily predicted and highly depend on the respective context. Important factors to consider are the duration of migration as well as the labour market structure. If migration is permanent, the risk of “brain drain” is larger than in temporary migration. At the same time, when unemployment rates are high, migration provides a way to relieve that situation (David & Marouani, 2016).

There is also evidence on the topics related to qualifications and knowledge specifically in the context of Egypt, where there is no strong evidence that “brain drain” is a concern. Wahba (2014) reports that the temporary nature of the majority of migration prevents this from happening. That is even though migrants are on average higher educated than non-migrants. A point of concern in this regard might be the public investment in education in Egypt. If migrants educated in the country then leave, this could indeed be an indication of a brain drain. Yet, since the incidence of unemployment among educated people is quite high, this migration rather takes pressure off the labour market (Wahba, 2014).

V.C PORTABILITY OF SKILLS

The focus in the literature when it comes to immigrants and skills is the educational mismatch of many immigrants in the labour markets of the destination country. This means that migrants take jobs that require skills below the level that they have attained (Piracha & Vadean, 2013). Chiswick (1978) finds that migrants positively self-select and are, on average, higher educated than natives. Yet, they often work in jobs that are below their education level and that is the case for migrants significantly more often than for natives. One reason for this phenomenon is that human capital does not transfer perfectly across borders. Factors such as a lack of language skills or challenges with recognition of skills and experience or knowledge of the necessary procedure can be problematic. Work experience in the destination country enables migrants to move into better positions over time, while prior work experience in the origin country may intensify the mismatch (Chiswick & Miller, 2009; Piracha & Vadean, 2013).

The share of immigrants that are in such a mismatched situation differs across countries and the mismatch as such is, in fact, not easy to measure. Often it is less likely to be the case for migrants from countries where the same language is spoken, or which share other similarities such as quality and structure of the educational system or labour market. In other words, cultural and language proximity often decrease the likelihood of an educational mismatch for migrants (Piracha & Vadean, 2013; Sanromá et al., 2015).

In this context, evidence from Egypt shows that youth intending to migrate do not look for work opportunities according to their skill profile but are rather willing to take any job accessible to them. Even those that have specific skill sets and specialisation search for employment in unskilled sectors in countries of destination rather than in their respective field (Elbadawy, 2011). Therefore, the likelihood of being in a situation of educational mismatch is high, but this is in those cases, at least to some extent, a calculated risk.

A World Bank report on return migration from Europe to overall four countries – Egypt along with Albania, Moldova and Tunisia – also identifies a significant mismatch between the skills migrants possess and the jobs they end up doing while abroad, especially in the case of people who migrate to the EU. Among the other varied findings of their study, Sabadie et al. (2010) report that the migrants returning to the countries do have the potential to contribute to development. Yet, there are no structures in place in the countries of origin that would facilitate this, therefore limiting development impacts of labour migration (Sabadie et al., 2010). Without such structures, a triple-win outcome is unlikely to happen.

There is also some evidence regarding the portability of skills in the country of origin upon return. Often skills and experiences from destination countries are not easily transferable to the country of origin as labour markets may differ in terms of structure and skills needed. Arwolo (2000), for example, finds that return migrants face challenges in terms of labour market reintegration in Namibia due to a mismatch of skills acquired abroad and those needed on the domestic labour market. This poses significant

challenges to their reintegration (Arowolo, 2000). A study by David and Nordman (2017) finds a mismatch of return migrants' education and labour markets in both Egypt and Tunisia, with it seemingly being a more significant issue in the latter. By comparing non-migrants with return migrants, they find that the migration experience is associated with a higher probability of being overeducated. They consider those to be overeducated that have an education level higher than the average level within their occupation plus a standard deviation. They do not distinguish between different kinds of destination countries in this analysis, but state that there are generally different patterns between the two countries, where migration from Egypt is more commonly to Gulf countries and of temporary nature, while Tunisian migrants work abroad for longer periods of time and more likely to go to European countries (David & Nordman, 2017). This might imply that movements to Europe lead to more problems in terms of overeducation upon return than migration from Egypt to the Gulf countries. There is, however, evidence that temporary migrants to the Gulf region also face similar challenges. Sadik (2019) reports this specifically for the case of return from Saudi Arabia. Return migration from there has increased due to bad working conditions and a lack of protection of migrant workers' rights. Upon arrival in Egypt, these returnees have a hard time finding a job and the ones that do resort to occupations in construction or as taxi/uber drivers (Sadik, 2019).

VI. Managing Circular Migration

When it comes to circular migration schemes, there is a risk of labelling temporary migration schemes as such to make them sound more attractive in times where policy makers rave about the potential development implications of circular migration and face anti-immigration sentiments among the general public as discussed in Section V.A. However, real circular migration schemes should enable the migrants to choose freely when and for how long they move between the country of origin and destination(s). And many of the programmes that are labelled circular, in fact, only seem to rebrand “guest worker” policies that were used by several countries in the past to fill demands on the labour market, particularly in low skilled occupations (Castles, 2006; Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

In the middle of the 1970s, the majority of Western European countries abandoned the guest worker programmes, which were installed after World War II. At that time, the demand for labour in the region was high as the industry-based economies were recovering and growing at a fast pace. Germany was among the countries that implemented such a scheme and the state tried to regulate it strictly as the aim was to disincentivise migrants to stay, but rather switch out the labour regularly through rotating them. To achieve this, their rights were restricted, and family reunion not made easy. As Castles (2006) states “Germany, like other Western European states, was trying to *import labour but not people*” (Castles, 2006, p. 742).

In this context, Skeldon (2012) has also warned that trying to manage circular migration is not an easy task. He goes further than that in the following statement: “...in the context of international migration it is argued that, while temporary migration can be managed, it is a contradiction in terms to speak of managing circular migration, as the very fact of managing the process will turn circular migration into temporary programmes of migration” (Skeldon, 2012, p. 53). While this may be a strong statement, a review of existing schemes highlights that indeed there are few and that even those that do exist could also be seen as temporary rather than circular labour migration schemes.

A second major criticism of managing circular migration is based on the use of such policies and programmes to fight against irregular migration already mentioned above at the end of Section V.A. This refers to the fact that countries of destination are opening temporary regular migration channels as a way to curb irregular migration. It is more than likely that with such motivations for the establishment of circular and temporary migration schemes, this does not match the priorities of the Egyptian and other origin country governments, who would be interested in options for circular migration for their nationals for other reasons and likely have more focus on the development implications (Ghoneim, 2010).

In this context, Cassarino (2013) talks about “securitised temporariness” that lies behind policy making regarding migration at the level of the EU and individual countries. He further argues that it is, in fact, rather unclear what policy and programming tools countries want to use to facilitate circular migration. The risk is that bilateral cooperation to establish circular migration schemes might put in place policies that constrain or restrict channels to certain types of migrants and hinder natural circular flows to some extent. This might mean that “in practice, the bilateral cooperation might promote the selective temporariness of labour mobility more than its fluid circulation (Cassarino, 2013, p. 23).

Practically, few existing labour migration schemes can be described as truly circular at this stage. It is important to mention here that there is a much wider variety of labour migration schemes, mostly facilitating temporary migration. Some of these that are relevant in the Egyptian context have been discussed in Research Paper 3 of this series. Here the focus is specifically on programmes for circular migration of which a small number have been piloted at this stage. A few countries have piloted projects and an overview of these is provided in Table 2.

There is no claim here that this is a complete list, but even these examples show a specific pattern in terms of what countries of destination have been using circular migration schemes for. It is largely in seasonal work, to a large extent in the agricultural sector. This is the case in the examples from Canada, New Zealand and Spain. In other examples, specific demands in the labour market are addressed, largely in low skilled occupations. Another observation relates to the fact that most of the cited schemes that allow for circular migration usually give migrants the option to apply for a new visa once they return home, rather than providing a set-up that allows truly flexible movements between country of origin and destination.

A main challenge is that it seems that in almost all cases no evaluations of the (pilot) programmes exist or are accessible. An exception is the Blue Bird Circular Migration Pilot Project carried out by the Netherlands. The evaluation identified both contextual and programme design factors as being problematic for achieving the goals of the pilot. Based on the research several recommendations for future similar projects were developed. Depending on the specific goals, objectives and needs, elements may need to be targeted specifically, but some basic criteria that will enable a project to have a higher likelihood of success can be identified as the following: a willing political environment; a capable implementer; a certain degree of flexibility, clear goals and objectives and a clear focus on these, an expert advisory board and clear criteria with regard to practicalities in implementation (Siegel & van der Vorst, 2012).

Coming back to the specific context of this paper, no actual circular migration scheme could be identified in which Egypt is involved. The Egyptian government has signed bilateral agreements with some countries such as Libya, Sudan, Qatar and Jordan “that regulate the right of entry, movement, ownership, and work” (Ghoneim, 2010, p. 20). Evidence suggests that the four freedom agreement signed with Sudan has promoted circular migration from Sudan to Egypt. The bilateral agreement with Sudan is the only agreement which directly relates to the migration of both Egyptians and Sudanese to the respective countries. The latter is perhaps due to the fact that the Sudanese migrants represent one of the largest foreign populations in Egypt. However, according to Ghoneim’s 2010 study, the Sudanese are allowed to own buildings and land in Egypt but not vice versa. The agreements with the other countries do not necessarily focus on the promotion of labour migration, for instance the agreement with Jordan focused on managing migration flows from Egypt to Jordan. It emphasises on the Egyptian government’s role to raise awareness of the condition of work and living in Jordan and that labour migrants must hold a valid work permit issued by the Jordanian authorities. Between 1974 and 1993 Egypt signed eleven labour migration agreements but this number has decreased afterwards (Ghoneim, 2010). Information on these agreements is not easy to find and more details on their role in facilitating circular migration is therefore not known.

When it comes to migration from Egypt to the EU, the main country of destination is Italy. Migration, both regular and irregular, has a long tradition and in the mid-2000s it became apparent that there was a necessity for better management of these flows. This included both stopping irregular migration that was happening at the time and establishing regular migration channels for Egyptian nationals. This has led to several initiatives, among which a bilateral labour migration agreement which was signed in November 2005. As discussed in Research Paper 3, this agreement and the resulting cooperation on migration cooperation has been credited as a model for labour migration facilitation across the EU. Yet, circular migration was not a specific aim of this cooperation (Roman, 2008).

Table 2: *Examples of Circular Migration Schemes*⁵

Programme	Country	Partner Country/ies	Type of Migration	Description
Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme	Canada	Mexico and several Caribbean countries	Seasonal agricultural work	This programme allows migrant workers from Mexico and selected Caribbean countries to work temporary in the agricultural sector. The first temporary workers came in under SWAP in 1966. An employer must offer a minimum of 240 hours of work within a period of six weeks or less, for a maximum duration of eight months. Both employers and foreign workers have to sign a contract which outlines their rights, obligations and duration of employment. The workers' performance is evaluated by the employer and when a foreign worker receives approval his name will be added to a list that allows return under the same scheme, often to the same employer. Practically, return rates are very high as well as repeat participation of migrants and employers (Newland et al., 2008; Siegel & van der Vorst, 2012).
Temporary Foreign Worker Programme	Canada	n/a	Occupations that require lower levels of formal training	This is Canada's programme for hiring foreign workers in occupations that require lower levels of formal training. Initially, after 24 months of employment, temporary foreign workers were to return to their country of permanent residence for at least four months before applying for another work permit (that means 24 months in, four months out). The requirement to return home has since been rescinded and the programme is as such not necessarily circular anymore (Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, 2014).
Bilateral Seasonal Migration Programme	France	Morocco, Poland and Tunisia	Seasonal work	The seasonal foreign worker programme facilitates circular migration of people from countries with which France has concluded a bilateral agreement for this purpose. The programme provides employers with regulations and guidelines on their obligations and ensures the protection of migrant workers' rights.
Bilateral Agreement	France	Mauritius	Diverse occupations	The two countries signed a bilateral agreement on 23rd September 2008 in Paris under which Mauritian workers will be allowed to go and work in France for a specific period. The purpose is that they gain experience and save money before returning to Mauritius to find employment in new sectors of the economy or set up their own business. There are several different categories of migration within this agreement and in some there is a possibility to extend the visa and therefore complete two migration trajectories. This applies to young professionals as well as works in specific sectors (GFMD, 2014; Nayeck, 2009).

⁵ The table contains an overview of different initiatives aimed at facilitating circular migration used by different countries. The author does not claim that this list is comprehensive, but it covers those examples most widely cited in the existing literature on circular migration.

Programme	Country	Partner Country/ies	Type of Migration	Description
Blue Birds Pilot	The Netherlands	Indonesia, South Africa	Shortage sectors (agribusiness, chemistry, engineering, finance, hospitality (including restaurants), industry, IT, logistics, technical, telecommunication and wellness)	The “Blue Birds” Circular Migration Pilot took place between December 2011 and February 2012. An evaluation found several factors that prevented the successful implementation of the pilot including the assignment framework, the quality of the implementation process and the timing as the pilot was carried out when the economic crisis came and there was a change of government (Siegel & van der Vorst, 2012).
Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme	New Zealand	Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Horticulture and viticulture industries	This is a managed circular migration initiative that is designed to provide benefits to employers in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. They can employ workers from Pacific states, where employment opportunities are limited (Bedford et al., n.d.; New Zealand Immigration, 2020).
Temporary and Circular Labour Migration Project (TCLM)	Spain	Colombia	Seasonal agricultural work	The project started in December 2006 and finished in December 2008. Participants received assistance to go to Spain to work in seasonal agriculture for a maximum time of nine months. When their visa expired, they had to return to Colombia. As long as they successfully complied with all conditions set by the programme, they were eligible to go to Spain again in the following year. The programme was suspended due to the economic crisis that hit Spain in 2008 (Hooper, 2019; Rinke, 2012).

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources cited for each scheme.

VII. Conclusions

Circular migration is a topic that has been widely discussed in the past two decades in both academic and policy circles. Yet, the review conducted for this paper shows that knowledge and practices are still in relatively early stages. In the context of Egypt, it can be assumed that much of the labour migration to the Gulf countries undertaken by large numbers of Egyptian nationals is circular in nature. While no structured evidence exists, anecdotal evidence suggests that this is the case. When it comes to circular migration between Egypt and the European Union, on the other hand, there is actually no reliable evidence available at this stage. While there is data on the stocks of Egyptians in the different Member States as well as annual immigration flows, including for seasonal work, data on circular migration could not be identified. This is due to the fact that the existing data does not allow to analyse whether those coming and going are the same or different people. It was also not possible to identify a reliable data source based on survey data, that would allow to provide an overview of existing circular migration patterns between Egypt and the EU.

Another major challenge becomes apparent when reviewing existing policies and programmes that would facilitate circular migration between Egypt and the EU. No such initiatives could be identified. While there are some options for temporary migration (see Research Paper 3 for an overview of these), none of these are practically facilitating circular movements. In the light of the labour market pressures in Egypt and irregular migration trends, there may be room to change this by engaging in dialogue about potentials for regular migration channels that facilitate circular movements between Egypt and the EU. Yet, designing such programmes is not easy and some authors even argue impossible.

This brings us to a more general challenge that was observed in the review of existing literature and evidence on circular migration that was conducted for this paper. It can be said that there is to a large extent a disconnect between theory and practice when it comes to circular migration. This applies both to the implications that such movements have for countries of origin and destination and the migrants themselves as well as policy making on circular migration. In the migration policy and governance sphere, circular migration has become somewhat of a new mantra. The theoretical implications for development of countries of origin, labour markets in the country of destination and benefits for the migrants themselves seem to be significant as expressed in the triple-win concept. Yet, empirical evidence questions such optimistic outlooks and highlights the challenges faced by temporary migrants, which largely also apply to circular migrants then.

When it comes to policies and programmes on circular migration, there is a risk that countries of destination use such tools to rebrand guest worker and other temporary migration schemes. Governments and employers recognise the value of migration to address labour shortages in the domestic labour market. At the same time, in many countries there is a general resentment of immigration and policies are rather selective in who is admitted for permanent residence. This runs the risk of ignoring that migrants are people and, as such, the social side of migration. In this context Wickramasekara (2011) states that this “reflect[s] the desire on the part of destination countries to bring in ‘labour’ but not ‘people’” (Wickramasekara, 2011, p. 1).

In such cases, temporary and circular migration schemes are often used for low skilled occupations. In addition, there is a sense that countries are using such schemes as tools in the fight against irregular migration. Managing circular migration risks the promotion of selective temporariness of labour mobility rather than fluid circular movements. It is, on the other hand, a fact that when migration is largely unregulated, people move between countries naturally and spontaneously.

VIII. Recommendations

Based on what has been presented above, several recommendations regarding furthering the understanding of circular migration in practice can be made. In the specific context of circular movements between Egypt and the EU as well as more generally, more data needs to be collected and analysed to understand the role of these movements in overall global migration patterns and trends. Data on migration ideally would provide ways to identify circular migrants. This can be achieved through administrative data registering changes of residence. A first recommendation, would therefore lie in exploring existing data and seeing whether there is information that already exists that would allow to produce an analysis of circular migration in the Egyptian context. However, even if data exists, it should be noted that this kind of data tends to be incomplete as migrants do not always register and deregister every time they move. Border control data is another possible source, though this often is limited in terms of the details it contains in terms of reasons for leaving the country. Yet, it is strongly recommended to exploit data that is already being collected as a first step.

Depending on the outcomes of such an assessment and to really understand the patterns and dynamics of circular migration in the Egyptian context, a survey might then be more useful. As proposed by UNECE (2016), a module in a household survey could be a source to further the understanding of circular migration. This can be relatively easy when an ad-hoc module is integrated in a survey that is being carried out anyway, such as Labour Force Surveys. However, surveys also come with limitations as it is often challenging for respondents to recall events in the past. UNECE recommends that this kind of module is done in countries of destination, asking about entries into the country. However, it seems that asking about prior and current experiences of household members in the country of origin, would also allow insights into patterns and dynamics of circular migration movements. Another option is a more targeted demographic survey, which focuses exclusively on capturing individuals' migration history, asking about details of different movements such as reasons for moving, activities while abroad and other factors, which in turn might be able to capture the implications for development of the movements. For this, topics such as remittances, skills and transnational activities can be covered in a survey that, in combination with existing evidence, would allow inferences regarding potential developmental impacts.

In order to facilitate circular migration, it is important to find a way to combine interests of different stakeholders. Evidence shows that the EU and individual Member States seem to engage in temporary and circular migration schemes in their fight against irregular movements. In the light of the call for more regular channels to facilitate safe migration, this is a strategy that makes sense to some extent. It, however, often ignores the interests of countries of origin, the migrants themselves and in some cases even the country of destination. The latter is the case when labour market demands by the scheme are structural and employers therefore would prefer migrants to come permanently to address these shortages. When it comes to the migrants, evidence has shown that temporary migration is not necessarily the preference for all migrants. There are indeed many migrants who only want to move abroad temporarily, in many cases to reach a specific goal. However, in a number of cases these plans change. Others have no clear strategy but opt for countries where they have the chance for permanent stay when they have a choice to make.

This means that designing effective policies and programmes for circular migration is an extremely challenging task. So far, few countries have piloted projects to do so and even fewer have aimed at understanding what works in this context and what does not. What is lacking at this stage are systematic evaluation of such initiatives. Without such evidence it will be difficult to develop policies and programmes further and to design them in a way that they indeed create a triple win situation for all involved stakeholders.

To this end, future projects should include research components on both process and especially impact but are necessary to understand how different initiatives and their components work or do not work. For this, it would be especially important to track the effects over time and follow migrants through multiple cycles, including return to the country of origin to see to what extent, for example, gained skills are utilised. Ultimately, comprehensive evaluations should cover the different dimensions of the triple win scenario, which is so widely promoted by many policy actors. Only by fully understanding the actual effects on countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants, will it be possible to develop circular migration schemes in a way that they indeed benefit all involved parties.

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