

Migração de retorno da Venezuela para a Europa: de volta às raízes?

*Return migration from Venezuela to Europe:
Back to the Roots?*



*Migración de retorno de Venezuela a Europa:
¿Regreso a las raíces?*

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RESUMO

O êxodo da Venezuela aumentou de intensidade até a pandemia de Covid-19. As chegadas à Europa foram significativamente inferiores às da América Latina, mas também cresceram e mostraram uma mudança na composição, incluindo uma percentagem decrescente de pessoas de origem europeia. Este estudo investiga a migração da Venezuela para a Espanha, Itália e Hungria no século 21. Ele começa com uma estrutura teórica detalhada e, em seguida, examina fluxos de migração específicos. A análise cobre as principais características desses movimentos migratórios, incluindo antecedentes, motivos e motivações, tamanho, distribuição geográfica e indicadores relacionados à integração. Métodos mistos são usados, qualitativos e quantitativos. Os resultados mostram que a atual emigração da Venezuela para a Espanha, Itália e Hungria pode ser considerada como migração de retorno, pois os fluxos originais existiram nos séculos 19 e 20, e os atuais contrafluxos não só incorporam os descendentes de imigrantes, mas também baseiam-se nos sistemas e redes migratórias existentes entre esses países.

Palabras chave: Migração internacional; Venezuela; Espanha; Itália; Hungria

ABSTRACT

The exodus from Venezuela increased in intensity until the Covid-19 pandemic. Arrivals in Europe were significantly lower than in Latin America, but also grew and displayed a shift in composition, including a decreasing percentage of people with European origins. This study investigates migration from Venezuela to Spain, Italy, and Hungary, in the 21st century. It begins with a detailed theoretical framework and then examines the particular migratory flows. The analysis covers the major features of these migration moves, including antecedents, reasons and motivations, size, geographical distribution, and indicators related to integration. Mixed methods are used, both qualitative and quantitative. Findings show that current emigration from Venezuela to Spain, Italy, and Hungary can be considered

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as return migration because original flows existed in the 19th and 20th centuries, and current counterflows not only incorporate descendants of immigrants, but are also based on the existing migratory systems and networks between these countries.

Keywords: International migration; Venezuela; Spain; Italy; Hungary

RESUMEN

El éxodo de Venezuela aumentó en intensidad hasta la pandemia de Covid-19. Las llegadas a Europa fueron significativamente más bajas que en América Latina, pero también crecieron y mostraron un cambio en la composición, incluido un porcentaje decreciente de personas de origen europeo. Este estudio investiga la migración de Venezuela a España, Italia y Hungría, en el siglo XXI. Comienza con un marco teórico detallado y luego examina los flujos migratorios particulares. El análisis cubre las principales características de estos movimientos migratorios, incluidos antecedentes, razones y motivaciones, tamaño, distribución geográfica e indicadores relacionados con la integración. Se utilizan métodos mixtos, tanto cualitativos como cuantitativos. Los resultados muestran que la emigración actual de Venezuela a España, Italia y Hungría puede considerarse como migración de retorno, porque los flujos originales existieron en los siglos XIX y XX, y los contraflujos actuales no solo incorporan a los descendientes de inmigrantes, sino que también se basan en los sistemas y redes migratorias existentes entre estos países.

Palabras clave: Migración internacional; Venezuela; España; Italia; Hungría

Initial considerations

In our contemporary world, globalization, global warming, political, and economic circumstances, as well as advances in transportation and communication fuel international mobility, making its pattern more complex in nature and geographically more diverse. According to the volume and composition of the migrant outflows, three basic migratory phenomena dominate movements in Latin America today: “north-south intracontinental migration to the United States and Canada; interregional migration [...]; and transoceanic migration to Europe, Japan, and Australia” (DURAND; MASSEY, 2010, p. 20). This study will focus on the latter, investigating migration flows from Venezuela to three particular European countries: Spain, Italy and Hungary.

The ongoing socioeconomic crisis, repression of political dissent and growing violence in Venezuela has triggered “the largest external displacement crisis in Latin America’s recent history” (IOM, 2020): approximately 4.5 million people have left by October 2019 (R4V, 2020), more than 10% of the population. Nearly 80% of migrants and refugees are in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNHCR-IOM, 2019), and a much smaller portion headed for Europe. Therefore, due to relatively low numbers, less scholarly attention has been paid to overseas migratory moves. Yet, it is important investigating Venezuelan migration to the old continent, on the one hand, because numbers have been on the rise, and, on the other hand, for the reason of its special context.

Countries were selected for the analysis on the basis of historical ties – that is, the existence of previous migratory experience and of a diaspora in Venezuela – and representativeness with respect to the presence of Ve-

nezuclans in Europe. Among the immigrants who settled in Venezuela in the 19th and 20th centuries there were Spaniards, Italians and Hungarians and all three countries have diaspora groups, though of different size, in this South American country. As for the current emigration and exodus from Venezuela, Spain is the home of the biggest Venezuelan diaspora in Europe, whereas Italy follows in second place (CARA LABRADOR, 2019). Hungary might be negligible concerning sheer numbers, but its unique and unknown features can complement the general trends and characteristics derived from the previous two cases.

The hypothesis is that 21st-century emigration from Venezuela to Spain, Italy, and Hungary can be considered as return migration because original flows existed from Europe to South America in previous centuries, and current counterflows not only incorporate descendants of immigrants, but also have been based on the existing migratory systems and networks between these countries. It has to be noted though that the composition of this migration move is mixed and has been changing over the years in a way that returnees tend to form decreasing percentages.

This essay begins with a theoretical framework and seeks to provide a comprehensive summary of the existing approaches concerning the concept and the truly complex phenomenon of return migration. Then, it goes on to examine the migratory flows Spain-Venezuela-Spain, Italy-Venezuela-Italy and Hungary-Venezuela-Hungary. The analysis covers the reasons and size of the primary move as well as the motives of ‘return’, the shifts in the volume and composition of current migratory flows, the geographical distribution of the arrivals and the indicators related to integration. The research is based on qualitative analysis of press articles and quantitative evaluation of statistical data provided by national statistical offices, and international organizations, such as The World Bank.

Definitions and Typologies of Return Migration

Return migration has been the subject of various interpretations since the 1960s, though admittedly it was under inquiry with less attention than initial migration, due to its scarce measurability and comparability (CASSARINO, 2004, p. 253; KOSER, 2000), and because it is less voluminous than emigration or immigration. When it comes to an analysis in the context of return migration, multiple profound questions arise – alongside seemingly ‘simple’ ones on who returns, when, and why – which can only be explained with an interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional theoretical and methodological approach. Migratory movements fitting under the generic denomination of return migration are of a very varied nature. Hence, there is a conceptual vagueness with which the many existing synonyms are used in this regard. Synonyms for the term return migration include reflux migration, return flow, homeward migration, counter-current, second-time migration, repatriation or ‘retromigration’.

The term *return voluntary migration* is generally used when “migrants return to their country of origin, by their own will, after a significant period of time abroad” (DUSTMANN; WEISS, 2007, p. 238). When people move to a second destination, it is called *transit migration*. Often used as

a synonym of return migration, but according to Bovenkerk (1974), *remigration* or *re-immigration* is when one migrates back to the same destination after a period of return to his/her origin country. *New emigration* is actually moving from the destination country to a new destination after returning from the origin country. It mostly occurs when one cannot find his/her calculations. Finally, it is *circular migration* when round-trip movements between two places include more than one return. It takes place mostly in the framework of labour migration systems. All the migration types established by Bovenkerk – except in the case of transit migration – comprise at least one return movement, reflecting to the fact that return migration is usually part of a more complex migration history and that return does not necessarily imply the endpoint of the migration story.

As of the aim of the study, the concept of return migration will be in the focus, which can be further elaborated. The decision of moving – just as for emigration as well as for return migration – can be made by *choice* or it can be *forced* (deportation, expulsion). However, regarding the typologies, what must be taken into account is how much they are related to the migration motives, the causes of leave and return, intentions, and success of the migration. According to Gmelch (1980, p. 137-138), two dimensions are concerned: *the length of time* migrants intend to remain abroad and their *reason(s) for returning*. In both purposes, differentiation is made with respect to the migrants' intentions – both the initial immigration and later on the emigration plans – whether they dedicated their moves to be *temporary* or *permanent*. Intentions suggest outcomes for returnees in correspondence with the achievement of their objectives as a reason of migration, ergo those who intend temporary settlement are more likely to return as soon as their goals are fulfilled. Correspondingly, permanent thinkers can have two ends to return: forcing factors pulled them home although they were meant to stay with successful circumstances or, on the account of failing to accomplish their goals, they choose to go back.

Some would argue that there is hardly a specific definition of the returnee, but multiple conceptualizations exist based on a *successful* or *unsuccessful* return (TOVAR; VICTORIA, 2013) that is assessed by the socio-economic integration of the migrants as well as their contribution to development – often verifiable long after their return. According to this approach, returned emigrants are referred to as “successes” or “failures” (BOVENKERK, 1974; WIEST, 1978). In order to explain whether return is a consequence of a positive or a negative selection process, Cerase (1974) developed four types of migration taking into account accomplishment or lack of accomplishment: (1) *return of failure*: unsuccessful migration experience with failed integration into the host society (this being the reason to return); (2) *return of conservatism*: when the migration motive was to secure an income to be consumed at home (typically successful); (3) *return of retirement*: when moving to the homeland after working years; (4) *return of innovation*: when after return the social and financial capital gained abroad is invested in the home country – its success depends on the follow-up.

Regarding the approach of this study, another typology must be highlighted, which is developed in the time perspective of emigration: *intergenerational migration* or ‘*roots migration*’. Members of the second – less re-

gularly third – generation have significant potentials to return to the place where their parents are from (WESSENDORF, 2007, p. 1083). Important triggers in their decision are the inclination or the relation to those who intend to perpetuate the national heritage and identity (family, friends or a bigger diaspora community). The likeliness of return is often higher for those who participate in ethnic organizations and social networks, consume ethnic media, and regularly travel to their parents’ homeland.

Motives to Return and Theories at Glance

Traditional interpretations of migration perceive migration as a one-time movement (CASSARINO, 2004; ILLÉS; KINCSES, 2009), meanwhile, it emerges as a recurring event in the concept of return migration. Numerous theories exist on migration, but there is not one general theory that would alone explain such a complex-natured phenomenon as international migration (MASSEY et al., 1993, p. 432; ARANGO, 2000, p. 283), nor return migration (CONTANT; MASSEY, 2002; GMELCH, 1980). Nonetheless, depending on the exact research question, most of the migration theories that were originally created to throw light upon initial migration processes are applicable in explaining and classifying return flows and their outcomes, of course with the necessary adaptation to the logic of return migration. Often, they offer different hypotheses, which corroborate the idea that they should rather be treated as complementary. As in the general case of migration, the task of most of the studies on the phenomenon of returning has been to carry information on the various factors or social attributes that intervene in the process of returning to the native land, showing the empirical regularities or uniformities that are observed around the aforementioned return (CASTILLO, 1997, p. 33). In order to do so, studies (eg.: HARE, 1999; CONTANT; MASSEY, 2002; DE BREE; DAVIDS; HAAS, 2010) often refer to general theories of voluntary migration such as neoclassical economics, push and pull theory, the new economics of labour migration, structuralism, transnationalism and social network theory among others.

The earliest consideration in explaining population movements – size and direction – was Ravenstein’s *migration laws* (1885), which are applicable to return migration flows as well. Return migration can be understood in the context of each significant migration flow – with a time phase shift – creating a counterflow with a smaller magnitude than the initial outflow. The further developed assumption by Lee (1966) introduced the *push and pull factors* that regulate migration decision and direction. The decision to return is often driven by a set of influencing negative, so-called “push” factors in the host country – such as in the case of less voluntary migration from Venezuela –, and “pull” factors indicating the attraction or positive attributes of the motherland –, which indeed more commonly have a bearing on return migration decision (GMELCH, 1980, p. 140). Intervening obstacles and personal factors might be also inherent in the decision and motivation.

As far as the *neoclassical approach* is concerned, international migration is caused by wage differentials between countries and markets, as

well as by higher expected earnings in the host countries (TODARO, 1969, p. 140). Along these lines, emigration intension is permanent to raise and maximise wages in the place of destination, thus untimely return “is considered a ‘failure’ caused by miscalculation” (TEZCAN, 2019, p. 3). Those with failed migration experience do not have considerable assets acquired abroad, so they will not invest in their country after their homecoming.

The *new economics of labour migration* (NELM) – unlike neoclassical theory – offers the idea that emigration and return migration decision is determined in the household, not being made at the individual level (STARK, 1991). Migrants are preoccupied to minimise their risks and certainly aspire to achieve their goals and earn sufficient assets and knowledge (STARK; BLOOM, 1985). In case integration is unsuccessful, the projected return is then periodically postponed. Thus, return is viewed as a “calculated strategy”. In connection with the NELM perspective, one can refer to remittances, which – other than their development potential – are constituents of a strategy set out to diversify the household resources inasmuch as to minimise risks (CONSTANT; MASSEY, 2002). Return then is foreseen to be a successful migration experience. Even though these theories are laid in the success-failure paradigm, the following thesis will show that they cannot fully explain the return migration phenomenon.

The *structural approach* to return migration introduces a new understanding by the realization that the return is very much related to social and institutional factors. Structural thinkers of return migration focus on the cruciality of the return decision and the reintegration of the migrants that are based on the financial and economic resources brought back to origin countries. As the original theory corresponds to the global imbalance of capital distribution and development, so does the return logics. Migration decision is presented in a more deterministic form, inasmuch as movements are outcomes of a broader structural process. However, again when it comes to the development nexus, a substantial relationship is concerned with the links between the returnee’s expectations and the conditions at the home country, in particular the social and economic context (CASSARINO, 2004, p. 257). (Perceived) positive change at home can contribute to return decisions, whereas the lack of change or negative alterations in comparison with the situation at the time of emigration may deter people from going back (CONDON; OGDEN, 1996, p. 45).

Attention has been paid to the *transnational aspects* of international (re)migration experiences and practices in order to explain persisting migratory and return flows. Transnationalism attaches importance to the connections that migrants establish between countries; exchanges and interactions across borders that can create powerful social and economic ties between migrants’ host and origin countries. Return is apparently not the endpoint of the migration cycle, so transnational migrants are perceived as part and parcel of a circular system, benefiting from the economic and political situation both in the country of origin and destination (PORTES, 1997). Therefore, resilient bonds with the previous and successful integration in the latter are not substitutes or opposites, but could complement each other (VAN HOUTE et al., 2015, p. 692). “Migrants have become increasingly important, not only as a source of remittances, invest-

ments, and political contributions, but also as potential “ambassadors” or lobbyists in defence of national interests abroad” (NYBERG-SORENSEN et al., 2002, p. 18). Returnees with their new transnational identities can have a significant impact on their motherland, in a way that it can cause remarkable transformation in the local economy, politics, and culture.

Coupled with migration systems and the analysis of migration as a social process, it is *social network theory* that – similarly to transnationalism – explains return as an outcome of strong social and cultural ties and suggests that, in the long run, these networks will keep migration and remigration between the sending and the receiving country in place (TILLY, 2007; BOYLE, 2009). Return affects and is affected by social structures that increase the availability of resources and information. In the developmental context, this social capital of returnees – that is inherent in the structure of people’s relationships (PORTES, 1998) – facilitates their effective initiatives.

Overall, despite their sometimes contrasting interpretations, the above mentioned theories make it clear that there are numerous reasons for people moving abroad and returning home, and they can be explained in very different ways. Nonetheless, these theoretical schemes do not represent a theoretical body proper, capable of systematically, coherently, and globally explaining such a collective phenomenon as return migration (SINATTI, 2014, p. 12-13).

Consequences and Outcomes of Return Migration.....

Return migration has considerable impact both on countries of origin, transit, and destination, as well as on the migrants themselves, transforming demography, impacting development, trade, and international relations, and sometimes putting a burden on health, security, and human rights too (JEFFERY; MURRISON, 2011). It would be a rather impossible venture to elaborate on each ground, and as it is not in the scope of the study, primarily the migration-development nexus, coupled with integration instances will be inspected concerning return migration.

The “successes” or “failures” question on the positive or negative selection process with regard to return migration is a fundamental issue when analysing the effects of counterflows on the sending societies. In case the return is the result of the migrants’ socio-economic failure in the host country, their impacts on the origin country are expected to be less constructive, while if the migrants’ experience is positive, returning with new skills, capital, and plans for investment, they are more likely to take part in the development of their nation.

Another approach though, according to Cassarino (2004, p. 271) is that in order “to strengthen the link between return migration and development at home, return should not simply be viewed as a voluntary act on the part of the migrant but, above all, as a proof of readiness”. In this sense, return pertains to a process of resource mobilisation (both material and intangible capital, skills and knowledge), and not only willingness, but actual preparation. Respecting all this, one can examine the impact of returnees on the motherland in terms of development.

Nevertheless, exploring the variation of return migration outcomes, the impact of human capital is regularly under inquiry. The degree to which returnees can successfully integrate and / or appear as actors of change depends on the aforementioned migration experience, preparedness, and the applicability of the specific skills, knowledge, social, and financial capital that the emigrated returnee acquired abroad. Evidence shows growth and innovation trajectories with regard to the returnees' human capital investment are determined by structural factors, local power relations, traditions as well as values in home countries (GLORIUS, 2013; CASSARINO, 2004).

In relation to human capital and scientific and technological resources, the phenomenon of 'brain return' in the context of 'brain drain – brain gain' discourse arises as a developmental factor especially for less developed countries of origin. The emigration of highly skilled labor usually impacts sending countries negatively. However, the return of these formerly emigrated individuals – with knowledge, skills, and social networks, i.e. relatives-acquaintances' interpersonal or organized-institutional ties (POROS, 2011) – may reverse the brain drain into significant brain gain for the origin country (MAYR; PERI, 2008). This is why initiatives and policies in support of return migration are decisive in the long run.

Remittances are considered to be a positive consequence of migration, which might balance up to a certain extent the negative effects of emigration and brain drain. They serve various purposes: provide financial help to family members at home and also "prepare the return of donors themselves by maintaining and reinforcing their economic and social capital in their origin countries" (ALBERTINI et al., 2019, p. 1700). According to remittance behaviour (GRIECO, 2004, p. 243-252), the level of remittances sent by migrants peak soon after arrival and although it continues to decline through time, remittances and the probability to return correlate.

Last, but not least, it is the reception and integration of return migrants that can pose serious challenges to transit and origin countries. Reintegration into the home country is influenced by a number of factors, including the returnee's gender, status, work, previous contact with the return country, personal migration experience, language, and reintegration programs. Social and cultural reintegration and economic incorporation of returnees are considered as key to migrants' economic and social success in home countries (POROS, 2011).

There is also a correlation between the preparedness for return and the mobilization of resources in terms of the reintegration successes (CASSARINO, 2004) and those who are integrated successfully are often well-placed to contribute to the development of their countries of origin. Integration successes, in fact, can be evaluated only after a substantial time spent in the home country after return. Education, health, housing and the labour market are domains that have been consistently identified as critical at the local level to ensure the possibility of integration. However, this is not, incidentally, to say that other domains or contexts are not essential to be considered. Factors that might hinder or promote integration can be the existence of a sizeable co-ethnic community and the number and composition of those who arrive, contact with the country

of origin, language, and integration programs – these will be considered in the analysis. It is governmental policies that can foster the institutional and legal framework of reintegration by lifting migration boundaries and assisting migrants in accessing employment and public services. All the same, if counter-currents are poorly governed, it can also negatively impact on development.

Having a clearer grasp of the manifold phenomenon of return migration, this review goes on to the case-study investigating the particular migratory flows originating from Venezuela to Spain, Italy, and Hungary with a special focus on returns.

Venezuelan Migration

Venezuela can be characterized as a country of sporadic immigration in the 19th century, an immigration destiny for most of the 20th century and a country of massive emigration in the 21st century, in the context of international migration (GARCÍA ARIAS; RESTREPO PIÑEDA, 2019, p. 72-74; PÁEZ; PHÉLAN, 2018, p. 323). In order to have a better understanding of migratory flows, it is convenient to use a more specific periodization.

Table 1. Periodization of Immigration to Venezuela

According to Susan Berglund		According to Tomás Páez and Mauricio Phelan	
1810-1900	Experimental Stage of Immigration	1824-1936	Frustrated Immigration
1900-1945	Foreigners as Trouble-makers	1936-1945	The Transition
1945-1961	Postwar Immigration	1945-1958	Open Doors
1961-1992	Immigration and Democratic Governments	1958-1970	The Beginning of Democracy
		1970-1983	Crude Oil Boom

Source: BERGLUND, 1994, p. 173-209; PÁEZ; PHÉLAN, 2018, p. 319-355.

The cited investigations coincide in that the first period of immigration embraces the era from the independence until the end of the Second World War, and divide this early era into two, considering either the Venezuelan economic crisis of the turn of the century and the subsequent European military intervention in 1902 or the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 as the dividing line. Both investigations treat the years between 1945 and the beginning of the democratic political period (1958 and 1961 respectively) as a separate period, characterized by a major inflow of European immigrants. Immigration did continue in the years afterwards, but its origins gradually shifted from Europe to South America. People fleeing from insecurity in neighbouring Colombia as well as from dictatorship in the Southern Cone started to form the bulk of new arrivals (OSORIO ÁLVAREZ, 2014, p. 323).

The last quarter of the 20th century can be considered as a period of transition with respect to migration trends characterizing Venezuela; there was a shift in the dominating direction, from immigration to emi-

gration. The background factors were both international and internal. Following the end of dictatorships in Spain and Portugal in the middle of the 1970s, a peaceful democratic transition took place in both countries and they succeeded in joining the European Communities in 1986. These changes decreased outflows from the Iberian Peninsula and greatly contributed to converting it into a destination of migrants, both for returnees and newcomers (MOLNÁR; SZENTE-VARGA, 2020, p. 80-81).

The general economic crisis in Latin America of the beginning of the 1980s played an important role in discrediting and bringing down governments, but while these were military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina and, thus, the path was opened to civilian rule and a transition to democratic political life, the crisis in Venezuela affected negatively the democratic political system, to be further shaken by the social costs of the introduction of neoliberal reforms at the end of the decade (SKIDMORE; SMITH; GREEN, 2010, p. 234-235). All this resulted in less emigration from South American countries towards Venezuela and the return of various people, in particular, political exiles to their homelands. Venezuelans themselves started to look for opportunities abroad. This combined outward flow, which at the beginning was rather modest, turned into a major exodus in the 21st century with the further deterioration of the internal conditions in Venezuela itself (GOULART; TEIXEIRA DELGADO, 2017, p. 101-108; HEGEDŰS, 2019, p. 163-170).

The major receiving countries are in South America, but movement towards Europe, though much smaller in volume, has also been rising until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the following, migratory flows from Venezuela to Spain, Italy, and Hungary are examined together with their respective antecedents. The first two are the principal destination countries on the old continent, whereas the latter does not outstand for its size but due to its unknown nature.

Spain

Spaniards have migrated to Venezuela since the very formation of the country. Approximately 20,000 settled in agricultural colonies in the 19th century, followed by Spanish republicans, arriving at the end of the 1930s, first half of the 1940s. After the Second World War, Venezuela became the major destination of Spaniards in the Americas, and the decade which experienced the major inflows was the 1950s (CASTRO TRUJILLO, 2019, p. 392). The direction of the migration began to alter after the death of Franco in 1975, which marked the beginning of a counterflow of returnees. The major destinations in Spain were the places of origin: the Canary Islands and Galicia. By the end of the 20th century, 46,388 people were registered in Spain, who had been born in Venezuela. 82% had Spanish nationality and only the rest carried other, for example Venezuelan passports (Table 2). These data correspond to 1998, the year of the electoral victory of Hugo Chávez, and the starting point of this analysis.

In order to examine Venezuelan migration to Spain, it would be convenient to use statistics from both sides of the Atlantic. However, it seems that the Venezuelan government is reluctant to disclose data of

the people who leave, therefore Spanish sources will be used, mainly the *Padrón Municipal*, drawn up with an annual frequency since 1996 by the Spanish municipalities. The data is processed and published by the National Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, INE). Anybody can register in the *padrón* with valid identification and residence. No work permit is needed, which allows both regular and irregular migrants to register. Being in the *padrón* has important benefits that can raise the standard of living of the immigrants: accession to public health care and education. Therefore, irregular migrants are likely to feature, too, making the registry rather accurate and reliable.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to draw attention to the shortcomings of the *padrón* with respect to this research. The number and residence of people of Venezuelan background can be investigated either looking at Venezuelan nationals in Spain or people born in Venezuela – having Spanish or non-Spanish citizenships – residing in the country. The second number is, of course, higher and reflects better the migration phenomenon in question, as it also includes the descendants of Spanish emigrants in Venezuela, who have Spanish nationality due their parents or grandparents. Notwithstanding, Spanish people who had emigrated to Venezuela and later returned do not feature in the statistics, nor do the children of Venezuelan immigrants born already in Spain.

Table 2: Venezuelan migration to Spain (1998-2019)

People residing in Spain		1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	2019
Having Venezuelan nationality		8,986	29,716	58,317	56,338	95,633	137,776
Born in Venezuela	Spanish	38,136	50,075	83,524	100,051	141,678	159,392
	Non-Spanish	8,252	21,522	61,069	62,093	113,393	164,435
Born in Venezuela (total)		46,388	71,597	144,593	162,144	255,071	323,827

Source: INE, 2020a; INE, 2020b.

Venezuelan migration to Spain has grown spectacularly in the last 20 years. The number of Venezuelan nationals living in the country multiplied more than fifteen fold, whereas the number of people in Spain who had been born in Venezuela – irrespectively of nationality – grew more than nine times. Both data sets display similar characteristics. There was a peak of arrivals in 2003-2004, possibly as a result of insecurity and anxiety caused by the failed *coup d'état* in 2002 and the general strike (2002-2003) in Venezuela. Numbers stagnated around 2013, most probably because of expectations of a change due to the terminal illness of Hugo Chávez. Arrivals grew again in the second half of the 2010s, and kept gathering speed by reason of an increasing necessity to leave Venezuela (DEKOCKER, 2019, p. 293-336). Thus, the biggest growth can be seen in the last column of Table 2, which refers to the years 2018-2019. It was the Covid-19 pandemic that put an abrupt end to Venezuelan migration to Spain.

The time span of two decades allows for the observation of certain tendencies. Sticking to the group of people born in Venezuela, it calls the attention that the number of Spanish nationals had always exceeded those of the non-Spaniards, yet the difference was getting smaller with the passing of years and for the first time, in 2019, the order changed, out of the 323,827 Venezuela-born people registered in the *padrón*, 50.8% were non-Spanish and 49.2% were Spanish nationals.

The data of the INE permits the investigation of the geographical distribution of the Venezuelan inflow (Table 3). Traditionally, the most popular destinations were the Canary Islands and Galicia, since these had been the most common places of origin. The descendants tended to go back to where their ancestors had come from, possibly because they still had some family ties or property there, and emotional reasons could also play a part.

Table 3: Geographical distribution of Venezuelans in Spain (2013-2019)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Canary Islands	47,917	47,555	47,374	48,682	52,454	58,413	66,593
Catalonia	19,504	19,579	21,144	23,836	28,483	35,216	44,476
Galicia	21,454	21,171	21,214	22,179	24,396	28,165	33,717
Community of Madrid	31,160	30,654	33,536	39,301	49,191	66,421	90,254
Valencian Community	10,902	10,711	11,194	12,630	15,149	19,578	27,164

Source: INE, 2020.

Until very recently, that is, 2017, the most numerous group of Venezuelans in Spain could be found on the Canary Islands. It was only in the last two years that Madrid took the lead. As the composition of migration coming from Venezuela changed, including an increasing number of non-Spaniards, so did the preferences of settlement within Spain, as people tended to choose places with more opportunity to work (PÁEZ; PHELAN, 2018, p. 245), heading towards Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, and the Valencian Community. Numbers in the latter case are still relatively low, but this Community produced the biggest growth ratio between 2018 and 2019.

Italy

According to the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), approximately 50,000 Venezuelans lived in Italy as of 2017 (CARA LABRADOR, 2019). The data of the Italian Statistical Office (ISTAT) with respect to Venezuelan nationals – available between 2003 and 2019 on a yearly basis –, however, are much lower. An increasing tendency can be noted in the last 15 years, with a temporary decrease in the first half of the 2010s; therefore, the results in 2011 (5,808) and 2016 (5,849) were almost identical (ISTAT, 2020). A steep rise followed in the second half of the decade, and numbers almost doubled between 2013 and 2019.

Table 4: Venezuelan migration to Italy (2003-2019)

People residing in Italy	2003	2008	2013	2018	2019
Having Venezuelan nationality	3,388	5,219	5,138	7,347	9,185

Source: ISTAT, 2020.

Table 4 however displays only Venezuelan nationals. Therefore, the arrival of people from Venezuela with Italian passports remains hidden in the statistics above. This is the reason why there is such a big difference between the 2017 numbers (ISTAT: 6,327 vs. CFR: 50,000). The most popular destinations within Italy are Lombardy and Lazio. Milan and Rome are the homes of the most numerous Venezuelan communities in the country.

Similarly to Spain, migration between Italy and Venezuela has had historic antecedents, reaching back to the 19th century. Around 2,700 Italians settled in Venezuela in the 1800s, mostly in agricultural colonies, and were later followed by other fellow countrymen. Nonetheless, the overall number of Italians did not increase significantly, possibly due to the high ratio of returnees. According to the 1926 census, 3,009 Italians were living in Venezuela. In 1941 numbers were almost the same (BERGLUND, 1994, p. 177-184). The biggest influx of Italians took place in the second half of the 1940s and the decade of the 1950s, with the result that 121,733 Italians figured in the 1961 census, making up more than 20% of the foreign population of the country (CUNILL GRAU, 1994, p. 160), ranking 2nd only after the Spanish. Return migration was frequent. Italians did not need to wait till the end of the Franco or the Salazar regime, like the Spanish and the Portuguese, and Italy was a founding member of the European Economic Community, established by the Treaty of Rome. Therefore, it is not so surprising that “the return rate, at least for Italians, [has been] extraordinarily high” (BERGLUND, 1994, p. 206). In 2018, Italians numbered 142,817, making the Italian community in Venezuela the 11th biggest in the world and the 3rd in Latin America – after the ones in Argentina and Brazil (STATISTA, 2018). In comparison, according to the Register of Spaniards Resident Abroad, 167,255 Spaniards lived in Venezuela in 2018 (INE, 2019). The numbers have been decreasing in both cases due to moves to Europe.

Hungary.....

Hungarians are among the foreigners who have settled in Venezuela, yet their numbers were much smaller compared to those of the Spanish and the Italians, therefore called less attention. Arrivals were sporadic both in the 19th century and also in the first decades of the 20th century. The number of Hungarians living in Latin America in the inter-war period is estimated to have exceeded 150,000-180,000 (ANDERLE, 2010, p. 188), with a concentration in Brazil and Argentina. According to the 1941 census, only 104 Hungarians lived in Venezuela (TORBÁGYI, 2004, p. 229). The first major wave of Hungarian immigration reached

the Venezuelan shores after the Second World War (BANKO, 2016, p. 63-75; SZONDY; SERES, 2011, p. 194-195). It comprised of about 4,000 people with different political convictions and social backgrounds, including those had collaborated with the far-right leadership in Hungary, others, who had fled from the advance of the Soviet Red Army, and also those who left because of the Sovietization and the formation of a one-party system. By the end of the 1940s Hungary became part of the Socialist bloc, which entailed the closing down of borders. The only time frontiers opened up was during and immediately after the 1956 Revolution, when approximately 200,000 people emigrated from the country. The great majority did not get to Latin America, though. Following the offer of the Venezuelan government to receive Hungarian refugees, around 1,000-1,500 arrived in the second half of the 1950s (TORBÁGYI, 2004, p. 238-241), forming the second and last wave of Hungarian immigration to the country (KUNCKEL DIETRICHNÉ, 2005).

The attitude of Socialist Hungary was far from friendly towards Hungarian emigrants living outside the national frontiers. It was illegal to leave the country and those who already resided abroad, no matter why they had left – 1956 Revolution, Second World War, or before, in the inter-war period because of the growing antisemitism or due to their sympathies towards the political left which were not welcome in the Horthy system – were seen with suspicion. The fact that they did not return was treated as kind of a proof that they did not like the actual political system. Therefore, they were a “bad image” for Socialist Hungary. The leadership went as far as to consider Hungarian emigrants as its enemies. Consequently, keeping in touch with them was not advisable or feasible. All this meant that the Hungarian community in Venezuela developed on its own for more than 30 years, without direct contact with Hungary. At its peak, at the beginning of the 1960s, it could reach 4,000 in numbers (ANDERLE, 2010, p. 172).

Later, with the passing of years, its size got smaller, due to the lack of new arrivals and some departures. The latter did not mean returnees to Hungary, but people who went on to live in other countries on the American continent. Hungarians, in general had a successful socio-economic integration into Venezuela, and various members of the community got rather prosperous. They managed to organize an intensive and fruitful community life, centred on *Casa Húngara* in Caracas, providing opportunity for scouting, charity and other social events, practicing Hungarian language and dances, etcetera (SOLTÉSZ, 2020, p. 385-397).

Links with Hungary were reconnected after the regime change in 1989/90. The peaceful transition improved the image of the country, which became even more attractive after its accession to the European Union in 2004. First-generation Hungarians, already in their seventies or older, did not tend to move back, but some of their children and grandchildren were interested. Due to the deterioration of local circumstances, the possibility to leave soon turned into a necessity.

The move of Hungarians and their descendants from Venezuela to Hungary is almost invisible in statistics, therefore it will be reconstructed upon press sources. One of the first references goes back to August 2017, when Zsolt Semjén Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary, at the awar-

ding ceremony of the Prizes for Hungarians Abroad (*Külhoni Magyarországért Díjak*), highlighted one of the winners, the Hungarian community in Venezuela, and commented upon its growing difficulties, adding that “Hungary was their home, and that they could come any time, with their families, and even those who did not speak Hungarian, because Hungary would give them all the support they needed” (HORVÁTH, 2017). Then almost a year later the first wave of related articles appeared due to events which took place in the excited atmosphere of the April 2018 General Elections in the quiet village of Balatonőszöd, where locals mistook the Venezuelan-Hungarians residing temporarily in the resort of the Hungarian government for illegal (African) migrants and reported them to the police. “A new panic related to migrants was about to erupt when it turned out that ‘only’ Venezuelan Hungarians were moved to the government resort in Balatonőszöd” reported *Magyar Narancs* (FÓNAI, 2018); “Migrant panic in Balatonőszöd – locals feared Venezuelan Hungarians” wrote another paper, the *HVG* (2018).

The reasons for this reaction can be traced back to 2015, when an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants arrived in the country from the Middle East and Africa. Since the beginning the Hungarian government did not agree with the EU crisis management tools and used a Sovereignist approach: built a fence along the southern border, refused to create a hot spot on its territory and to participate in the EU’s refugee quota system. The political and social discourse on migration intensified following 2015. Irregular migration was securitized, “immigrants [...] have been called the enemies of Hungary” (KOPPER et al., 2017, p. 109) and presented as a threat, forming a recurrent element of official government communication.

The news on Venezuelan Hungarians did not make headlines for long in the spring of 2018. The newcomers were soon taken to Budapest, being more cosmopolitan and also offering more opportunities to work. According to Lukács (2018), around 60 people arrived every month. It took another 10 months that the issue got back to the radar of the press.

The *Index* informed its readers on 21st February 2019 that the Hungarian state had received in secret around 300 Venezuelan exiles of Hungarian origins. They were provided with Hungarian passports, flight tickets; a place to live in Hungary for a year free of charge; programs of integration, including Hungarian and English language courses, and the necessary papers to be able to work (FÖLDES, 2019). Other press agencies joined in writing about the topic (Origo, Magyar Nemzet, Demokrata, 444.hu). Based upon their reports, it can be deduced that the move was organized with the help of the Hungarian embassy in Quito, and the Hungarian Charity Service of the Orden of Malta founded at the end of the 1980s by Csilla Freifrau von Boeselager (1941-1994) – born as Csilla Fényes in Budapest and raised in Venezuela after the emigration of her family. The first bigger group from Venezuela arrived in April 2018. By the beginning of March 2019, Hungarian news got international attention and the *BBC* published an article titled *Venezuela crisis: Secret escape to anti-migration Hungary*. It says that “about 350 [people] have already arrived on plane tickets funded by the state. Another 750 are on a list, waiting in Caracas, and more may follow” (THORPE, 2019). Some Hungarian news organs informed about the *BBC*

article (SARKADI, 2019; HVG, 2019). Besides that, there has been very little information, upon insistence that the success of these moves depended on their non-publicized nature and that Venezuelans of Hungarians origins staying in Venezuela could be vulnerable to retaliations.

Factors of Integration

Due to the short span of time, it would be too early to evaluate whether the integration of Venezuelans in Spain, Italy, and Hungary has been successful or not. Nonetheless, it is possible to make a summary of factors that might hinder or promote integration. The following areas will be examined: number and composition of those who arrive, remittances, contact with the country of origin, language, and integration programs.

The number and composition of Venezuelans – with or without European ancestors – who has settled in Europe, has changed considerably over the years. From a relatively small number of highly qualified people with financial resources, the tendency has shifted towards a growing volume of less qualified newcomers, with less or no savings (EGUREN; ESTRADA, 2018, p. 340). Needless to say, their successful integration is more complicated.

Remittances can be rather useful in assessing the scale of integration. Looking at tables 5 and 6, huge differences call the attention between amounts sent to and from Venezuela. The latter are much higher, implying socio-economically well integrated Spanish, Italian, and Hungarian colonies in South America, and also their readiness to help family members and friends in Europe. It is important to note that quantities did not decrease after 2016, but on the contrary, tended to increase despite the rampant economic crisis in Venezuela. Since this tendency coincides with a growth in migration flows towards the studied European countries, it could be interpreted as a preparation for emigration.

Table 5. Remittances sent from Venezuela (in million USD)

Receiving country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Spain	571	627	548	468	524	501	503	523	562
Italy	94	97	99	104	101	133	136	130	147
Hungary	3	3	3	6	6	6	6	6	7

Source: THE WORLD BANK, 2020.

Table 6. Remittances sent to Venezuela (in million USD)

Sending country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Spain	45	43	40	29	27	25	69	72	66
Italy	2	2	2	9	9	8	22	23	19
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: THE WORLD BANK, 2020.

Remittances from Spain and Italy to Venezuela have been modest, yet quantities show a substantial growth between figures *until* and *after* 2015, possibly due to the increase in the number of arrivals and in the size of the Venezuelan communities in Europe, coupled with the deterioration of the situation in Venezuela itself.

A great bulk of those who have left Venezuela for Europe, have European ancestry. The Spanish and Italian communities have been in constant contact with the mother country, and movements back and forth were quite common. There were of course periods when one direction was dominating, such as during the Franco dictatorship in Spain, but ties were not completely lost. On the contrary, Hungarians in Venezuela were cut from official Hungary for more than 30 years, and even though contacts were retaken after 1990, the closing of the Hungarian embassy in Caracas in the middle of the same decade made this rapprochement more complicated. The second and third-generation mostly learnt about Hungary from their parents and grandparents, who had emigrated in the 1940s and 1950s. Therefore, there might be a considerable difference between the image they have of Hungary and the actual conditions. This kind of difference could also exist among the Spanish Venezuelans and the Italo-Venezuelans, but is much less, due to constant new arrivals and more intensive relations with the countries of origin.

Language barrier is a considerable obstacle in case of Hungarian. It is not only a non-Indo-European language – that is, it is not even distantly related to Spanish –, but it is also very difficult to learn. Language and in general, cultural differences are much bigger in case of Venezuela and Hungary, than those related to the two other countries. This and the above-mentioned factors all had a part in the decision to provide comprehensive integration programs in Hungary, including housing, work permit, language courses, etcetera.

Yet integration in Spain or Italy is not easy either. It is not uncommon to find highly qualified professionals working in completely different areas. The Covid-19 pandemic provided a glimpse into the magnitude of this group in the area of health care. When it was approved in Italy via the Decree *Cura Italia*, that people with foreign medical and related qualifications already residing in the country could join the struggle against the disease, “150 doctors, 30 nurses and 20 biologists” volunteered from the Venezuelan community (FRONTERA VIVA, 2020).

In all three countries there are factors which help and hinder successful integration, therefore many Venezuelans face challenges that they cannot themselves overcome. Government support and help within the diaspora are essential. Yet Covid-19 pandemic can put serious obstacles into the process of integration. The crisis, which is not only a health crisis, but also a social, political and economic one, will result in dwindling financial resources and also in the rearrangement of priorities, all of which will possibly negatively affect the sustainability of integration programs and the intensity of government attention.

Final considerations

The exodus from Venezuela has tended to grow in size, in particular in the second half of the 2010s. Arrivals in Europe were much lower than in Latin America, but adhered to the general tendency of growth until the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted interoceanic migratory flows,

bringing a temporary halt. Migration from Venezuela to Europe did not only change in volume over time, but also in composition. The migration phenomenon examined in this article started out basically as a return or root migration and has later increasingly incorporated primary migration flows. Even though people from the latter group lack Spanish, Italian, or Hungarian parents or grandparents, they do rely on the already existing links between Venezuela and the above-mentioned countries when planning their emigration and future life. Consequently, it is not an exaggeration to use return migration to characterize the whole process.

Regarding the usual pendulum movement of the migration phenomenon, though counter-flows have always existed, theoretical and empirical attention has been given more concern to primary mobility processes. Yet, return migration is a fascinating and significant subject for investigation, being one of the most interconnected types of migration, “characterized by macro-social, meso-relational and micro-individual situations, in which returning can be the product of an individual choice, due to political, economic, social and cultural pressures in relation to the departure and arrival contexts” (CATAÑO et al., 2015, p. 104). In the case of people leaving Venezuela, for some, arriving in Europe means a permanent move. “My father fled from Hungary at the age of 17, in 1956. I was born in Venezuela. We have been talking a lot about how strange the ways of destiny are, and that now I need to flee back to the place he was coming from. This is a complete circle” (ERDÉLYI, 2019). For many, on the contrary, the move to the old continent is only part of the migratory process that will continue in the future with the change of circumstances. Re-migration to Venezuela, onward migration within the European Union is just some of the possibilities.

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