

Contradiction and obstacles in the promotion of temporary versus permanent migration in the EU, with a focus on the recent Spanish experience

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the extent to which different countries in the EU, with particular attention to the Spanish case, have encouraged, or not, temporariness and return of migrant workers differently depending on their skills level, over the last 25 years. In the second part of the paper carries out a preliminary comparison of the recent Japanese experience in dealing with temporariness, both at the discourse and practical level, in order to identify similarities and differences with the Spanish case and the potential factors accounting for them.

The analyses for the European cases are based on the preliminary exploitation of the Immigration Policy Dataset (ImPol), which codified policies and measure policy restrictiveness in three dimensions: a) admissions and eligibility, b) rights granted to migrant workers, and c) security of status and transitions permitted to different types of (labour) migrants, since 1990 up to 2015.

Our results suggest that: 1) temporariness has not been systematically encouraged by immigration policies during the last two decades in the countries under analysis, 2) obstacles to extended stay and settlement were only fully enforced for some types of low skilled migrants and, in some cases, also international students, 3) specific admission routes designed for specific occupations often granted fewer settlement options and rights than the general entry route, not always consistently with the numbers versus rights argument since temporariness varied not only across skill levels but also across occupations within the same skill level, probably reflecting differences in the labour market structure of the receiving countries, as well as the well-known gap between the political discourse on immigration and actual immigration policies.