

Reverse Exodus Upends Migrant Lives

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their plans.

"Since 2000, there has been a resurgence of intra-European migration," said Rainer Münz, a migration scholar who is head of research and development at Erste Bank in Vienna. "To a certain extent, that's clearly unwinding now."

Between April 2008 and the end of April 2009, as many as 50,000 workers are likely to have returned home from Ireland, mostly to Eastern Europe, according to Alan Barrett of the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin.

"Things have changed quickly," said Monica Jelinkova, 25, who moved to Dublin from the Czech Republic 18 months ago. "I used to know 15 people here. Now there are only four friends left."

While unemployment is also rising in the Czech Republic, "it is much easier to be at home with family and with friends and not to have a job," she said, "than to be here and not to have a job."

The Czech government announced in February that it, in turn, would pay 500 euros, or about \$660, and provide one-way plane tickets to each foreigner who has lost his job and wants to go home.

And in Bucharest, Romania's capital, workers from China have been camped out in freezing weather in front of the Chinese Embassy for two months, essentially stranded after their construction jobs disappeared.

Like the Czech Republic, Spain is offering financial incentives to leave. A new program aimed at legal immigrants from South America allows them to take their unemployment payments in a lump sum if they agree to leave and not return for at least three years. The Spanish government says only around 3,000 people have taken advantage of the plan, but many others are leaving of their own accord.

Airlines in Spain are offering deals on one-way tickets to Latin America, and they say demand has increased significantly. Every day, Barajas airport in Madrid is the setting for emotional departures, as families send their jobless loved ones back home.

Japan has initiated a similar but more stringent program that targets hundreds of thousands of Latin American immigrants, part of a new drive to encourage them to leave this recession-racked country. So far, at least 100 workers and their families have agreed to leave, Japanese officials said.

But critics denounce Japan's program as shortsighted, inhumane and a threat to what little progress Japan has made in opening its economy to foreign workers.

"It's a disgrace. It's cold-hearted," said Hidenori Sakanaka, director of the Japan Immigration Policy Institute, an independent research organization.

"And Japan is kicking itself in the foot," he added. "We might be in a recession now, but it's clear it doesn't have a future without workers from overseas."

The program is limited to the country's Latin American guest workers, whose Japanese parents and grandpar-



DENIS DOYLE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

With Spain's construction boom fading, Constantin Marius Mituletu is leaving Alcalá de Henares and returning to Romania.

ents emigrated to Brazil and neighboring countries a century ago to work on coffee plantations.

Until very recently, countries like Spain, Ireland and Italy were nations of emigrants, not immigrants.

That changed in the decade-long expansion that began in the late 1990s. In Spain, where the growth has been the most explosive, the foreign population rose to 5.2 million last year out of a total of 45 million people from 750,000 in 1999, according to the National Statistics Institute. Ireland's population, now 4.1 million, was also transformed, with the percentage of foreign-born residents rising to 11 percent in 2006 from 7 percent in 2002.

"In the U.S., it took generations to build up a foreign-born population of that size," said Demetrios Papademetriou, head of the Migration Policy Institute, a research group in Washington. "These countries have done it at an unprecedented rate, but the society and

est level in 25 years.

"There won't be good employment opportunities for a while, so that's why we're suggesting that the Nikkei Brazilians go home," said Jiro Kawasaki, a former health minister and senior lawmaker of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

"Nikkei" visas are special visas granted because of Japanese ancestry or association.

Under the emergency program, introduced in April, the country's Brazilian and other Latin American guest workers are offered \$3,000 toward air fare, plus \$2,000 for each dependent — attractive lump sums for many immigrants here. Workers who leave have been told they can keep any amount left over.

But those who take advantage of the program will not be allowed to reapply for a work visa. Stripped of that status, most would find it all but impossible to return.

Spain, with an unemployment rate of 15.5 percent, allows immigrants to reclaim their residency and work visas after three years. And people like Mr. Mituletu, the Romanian, can return every three months to sign for his Spanish unemployment benefits.

Mr. Kawasaki, however, said the economic slump was a good opportunity to overhaul Japan's immigration policy as a whole.

"We should stop letting unskilled laborers into Japan. We should make sure that even the three-K jobs are paid well, and that they are filled by Japanese," he said. "I do not think that Japan should ever become a multiethnic society."

Rita Yamaoka and her husband, Sergio, who settled here three years ago at the height of the export boom, are undecided about their futures. But they have both lost jobs at auto factories.

"I feel immense stress. I've been crying very often," Mrs. Yamaoka, 38, said after a meeting where local officials detailed the offer in this industrial town of Hamamatsu in central Japan.

"I tell my husband that we should take the money and go back," she said, her eyes teary. "We can't afford to stay here much longer."

Others have made up their minds to leave. "They put up with us as long as they needed the labor," said Wellington Shihuya, who came six years

With jobs in flux, it's Dublin to Dublinski and back again.

institutions haven't even begun to have a chance to catch up."

The reverse exodus from more prosperous countries in Western Europe is likely to add to the pressures already buffeting Central and Eastern Europe, where migrants from developing countries are being encouraged to leave.

In 1990, the opposite case existed in Japan. Facing a growing industrial labor shortage, Japan started issuing thousands of special work visas to descendants of Latin American emigrants. An estimated 366,000 Brazilians and Peruvians now live in Japan.

The guest workers quickly became the largest group of foreign laborers in an otherwise immigration-averse country, filling the so-called three-K jobs (kitsu, kitanai, kiken — hard, dirty and dangerous).

But the nation's manufacturing sector has slumped as demand for Japanese goods evaporated, pushing un-

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