

# **Pendular Migration of the Older First Generations in Europe: Misconceptions and Nuances**

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## **Abstract**

This chapter focuses on pendular migration of older adults. Four widespread beliefs among the general public on this topic are challenged by reviewing empirical literature, including findings from our own qualitative research. These beliefs are that pendular migration is a temporary event followed by a permanent stay or a definite return, a second-best option, a time of relaxation, and a private matter. Although the number of studies is limited and sample sizes tend to be small, the available empirical evidence largely points against these beliefs. More research is needed to better understand the emerging phenomenon of pendular migration.

**Key words:** aging migrants, first generation, guest workers, pendular migration, cross-border commuting, return intention, family and gender conflicts, transnationalism, retirement, life events, informal care, healthcare services, filial responsibilities, migration policies, the Netherlands, Italy, Moroccans, Turks, Albanians, Surinamese

## **Introduction**

Migration to Europe is a well-established phenomenon, although the intensity, patterns and composition of migration flows have varied greatly over time and across European countries. After World War II, decolonization triggered substantial migration flows to Europe. The largest groups came to France from its former colonies in North Africa and Indochina (1.8 million), to Portugal from its ex-colonies in Africa (about 1 million), and to the Netherlands from its former colonies Indonesia (300,000) and Suriname (350,000); smaller numbers arrived to the UK and Belgium from their ex-colonies in Africa and Asia. The main trigger for migration to the former colonial powers was to enjoy a higher standard of living and quality of life through better jobs and educational and public healthcare facilities, social security coverage, subsidized housing, and comprehensive pension schemes.

Labor was the second stimulus for migration to West Europe. During the economic boom after World War II, most migration was a product of a spontaneous decision in response

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to labor demand. However, under the pressure of labor shortages active recruitment was also carried out by several western European countries, especially among unskilled and low-skilled workers. The so-called guest workers were recruited through bilateral agreements with low-wage countries of Southern Europe (e.g. Italy and Spain) and the Mediterranean area (e.g. Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia). They were considered as temporary migrants, and were accordingly granted temporary work permits. The general belief of EU governments was that return to their home countries was the natural outcome of the bilateral agreements: after a few years of working hard in the destination countries and saving enough money, guest workers would have achieved their migration targets and were therefore expected to go back home. However, in order to keep guest workers during the economic boom, many companies and countries promoted and provided assistance with family reunification. Moreover, the economic recession following the 1973 oil crisis did not result in large waves of return migration either. As a response to rising unemployment and decreasing demand for unskilled workers, stricter migration policies were implemented with the intention to reduce migration flows; labor migration was no longer encouraged and the recruitment schemes were stopped abruptly. Along with the halted policies, migrants were encouraged to return through both in-cash and in-kind incentives (like vocational training) in order to facilitate their re-adaptation. But in the home countries economic prospects were not favorable either, and guest workers, especially those migrants from non-EU countries for whom free mobility was not an option, feared they could never return to Europe if they left.

The result of these tighter migration policies was counterproductive; many guest workers ended up as permanent residents of their new countries, as testified by large-scale family reunification and family formation (Constant et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the direction of labor migration diverted to Southern European countries, characterized by a persistent demand for unskilled workers, especially in the widespread informal economy, but not by legislation on immigration (King, 2002). Consequently, the proportion of foreign-born residents of West Europe increased from 1.3% in 1950 to 4.5% in 1990, excluding those who had been naturalized — which would have probably doubled this figure (Hatton & Williamson, 2005). According to Eurostat, on 1 January 2012 there were 20.7 million foreign-born European residents (citizens of a country outside the EU-27), representing 4.1% of the EU-27 population.

The first generation of migrants in Europe has now reached or is approaching retirement age, and it is to be expected that the number of older migrants will continue to increase in the future: although retirement is a trigger of migration (Bolzman et al., 2006; King, 1986; King et al., 1998, 2000; Warnes & Williams, 2006), and even though older migrants often still cherish the desire to return, most of them are likely to remain in Europe (Bolzman et al., 1999; Ganga, 2006). Key reasons to stay include living close to children and grandchildren, retaining pension rights and residence permits, and having access to good quality of healthcare services and social security (Bolzman et al., 2006; De Haas & Fokkema, 2010; Ganga, 2006; White, 2006). Making the decision to maintain official residence in Europe does not mean, however, that older migrants cut or loosen the ties with their country of origin. On the contrary, free of work and daily responsibilities, older migrants have more time to strengthen such ties. Globalization and advances in communication and transport technology have definitely supported their transnational way of living (Bolzman et al., 2004, 2006; Ganga, 2006; Poulain & Perrin, 2002; Warnes & Williams, 2006).

Moreover, although official statistics are not available, an increasing number of older migrants seem to have adopted pendular strategies, that is, traveling back and forth and spending several months per year in their country of origin (Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Baykara-Krumme, 2013; De Haas & Fokkema, 2010; Ganga, 2006; Hunter, 2011; Warnes &

Williams, 2006). A Dutch survey among the largest groups of older migrants, carried out in 2003, showed that 17% of the Surinamese, 28% of the Turkish and 30% of the Moroccan respondents aged 65 and over had been in their home country in the previous year for more than three consecutive months (Schellingerhout, 2004a). More recently, another study demonstrated that 25% of the older migrants from these three groups spend more than one time per year in their country of origin, with an average duration of stay of 9.5 week (Weltevrede et al., 2013). In France, a large-scale survey of non-nationals, aged 45 and over in 2003 who were not retired, found that 24% prefer the prospect of living part of the year in their home country (De Coulon & Wolff, 2010). An even higher percentage – between 26 and 40% – was reported by those from African countries who mainly migrated in the late 1960s and 1970s as guest workers. A quite similar finding is observed among Italian and Spanish retired migrants in Switzerland: one-third expressed the intention to divide their time between the host and the origin country (Bolzman et al., 2006).

Several stereotypes and common beliefs are prevalent in public and policy debates on this older migrants' pendular behavior. In this chapter we will challenge four of them by providing a review of the existing literature, together with results from our own work. The first popular belief that prevails is that pendular migration is a temporary phenomenon, an intermediate stage between 'staying' and 'returning'. The second stereotype is that pendular migration is a second-best option. The third is that older migrants' stay in their country of birth is a time of relaxation, enjoying the climate and visiting family and friends. The final common assumption is that pendular migration is a private matter, where there is no room for public support and no negative societal consequences. We will elaborate on these four assumptions successively and confront them with research findings in order to find out to what extent they are supported by empirical evidence. A substantial part of the research findings stems from two of our own qualitative studies: (a) a survey conducted in 2011 among 22 Turkish and Surinamese persons 55 years or older, residing in the Netherlands but regularly traveling back and forth (Witter, 2011); and (b) interviews in 2013 among 23 migrants aged 50 or older, of Moroccan and Albanian origin, carried out in the Marche region of Italy (Cela & Fokkema, 2014).

### **Stereotype 1: Pendular migration is a temporary phenomenon**

Pendular migration is commonly considered in public and policy debates as a temporary phenomenon. In EU policy reports, for instance, circular and temporary migration are often placed side by side as circular migration in the Member States "is often understood as a form of temporary migration, albeit repeated temporary migration, given that circular migration is often de facto included within the definition of temporary migration used by the Member States (European Migration Network, 2011: 21). Moreover, in line with the classical migration models, migrants are supposed to definitively settle in the country of origin or in the adopted country. While the neoclassical migration theory (Harris & Todaro, 1970) predicts that "winners" — in terms of successful integration — settle and "losers" return" (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011: 757), exactly the opposite is assumed by the more recent New Economic of Labor Migration (NELM; Stark & Bloom, 1985). Regardless of which one is more prevalent, however, return migration is commonly expected to be a prospect long contemplated, for some a transition prepared for by earlier return visits.

This general belief of a temporary pendularism does not match with empirical findings. The oft-quoted phrase "there is nothing as permanent as a temporary migrant" (Hugo, 2013: 3) is also true for the older first-generation migrants. Their cross-border commuting is generally neither a prelude to permanent return nor an indecisive situation between "staying" and "returning". Rather, it appears to be a deliberate, long-term decision, different from that

of permanent settlement at destination or return at origin. This is in line with Engelhard's argument that pendular migration is a distinct form of migration, hence pendular migrants can be classified neither as settlers nor as returnees (Engelhard, 2006). Older migrants opt for the "back and forth" strategy as they like to live "here" and "there", allowing them to maintain resources and attachments in both the origin and host countries (Bolzman et al. 2006), which generates a personal idea of "home". Circularity becomes an integral part of their livelihood strategies, living some months in the host country and others in the home country, as expressed by these respondents:

*If we are retired, yes, I'd like to spend the spring there (Albania), a few days of winter, and summer here. This way of life would be a dream for me. Our life does not stop here. We also have a beautiful house there, we bought it. The wish is to live back and forth. (In the future, will you return to Albania?) Forever? No, I don't like to live forever in the same place. (Albanian man)*

*When I retire I will go to Morocco from October to May and to Italy from May to October. I don't like winter, in Casablanca it's never too cold and there isn't the humidity we have here. I don't want to go just for the climate but especially because that's my homeland, my parents have lived there all their lives, I have a lot of childhood memories and the Moroccan mentality is different... I like to be there a little and here a little. Now that I have citizenship I can do that. I feel at home here in Italy too. (Moroccan man)*

Most of the pendular migrants want to continue to travel back and forth, unless major life events become obstacles to their pendular lives. Significant deterioration of health is one of the most important life events in this respect, as good health is an important condition fostering cross-border travels. Traveling back and forth becomes routine for many older migrants and a way to cope with familiar and personal interests, unless it is no longer possible due to poor health. This is echoed by an Albanian woman:

*I think that when we aren't able anymore to travel back and forth we should settle down in Italy. Our children already want us to settle here and travel less, but now traveling has become for us the routine, our children don't want us to stay away that much and we can't stay here, away from our home for so long. (Albanian woman)*

Besides travel difficulties, some of our respondents expressed that they do not want to be a heavy burden to others because of their poor health:

*I will stop traveling once I start having problems with my mobility. Otherwise I will be an albatross around their neck, causing inconvenience to others. (Suriname woman)*

Another life event that may hinder further pendular migration, or at least reduce its regularity, is a substantial deterioration of one's financial situation. This might not be exceptional, given the current, persistent economic crisis in Europe. Traveling is expensive and therefore it is not surprising that previous studies have found a positive relationship between one's income and the 'back and forth' intention (Bolzman et al., 2006; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Engelhard, 2007). The travel costs of pendular migration are generally higher the longer the distance between the host and the home country. But also those who have to travel a relatively short distance need sufficient income, as people left behind often expect financial support or gifts.

Even with their current income, many older pendular migrants live a sober lifestyle in the host country in order to be able to make the yearly trip to their homeland:

*I only have an old-age pension, you won't make a fortune out of it. Each year I have to save hard for my ticket to Suriname. I only wear cheap clothes from the market, I feel a bit ashamed about that. (Surinamese woman)*

It is relevant to stress here that pendular migration is sometimes also a strategy for older migrants to cope with their limited financial resources (Baykara-Krumme, 2013). Compared to their native peers, older migrants are often in a disadvantaged financial situation (Fokkema & Naderi, 2013), as many rights to pensions and social assistance in old age are dependent upon migrants' history with the paid labor market of the host society. Especially those who migrate later in their lives will receive very low pensions after retirement. Hence the lower costs of living in the home country attract older migrants to spend some months there, viewing pendular migration as an income-optimization strategy.

*In Morocco I bought a house, so I don't have to pay rent when I go there and I can save some money. Unfortunately I don't know if I will have a pension (in Italy) or how much I will get when I will retire. I have worked 17 years in Morocco and 20 in Italy. My Moroccan pension for those 17 years will be around 200 or 250 euros per month. (Moroccan man)*

A final major life event that would make continuation of pendular migration difficult is the death of a spouse — at least this seems to be the case for females, especially those from more traditional, patriarchal societies like Morocco and Turkey:

*I will only continue to visit Turkey if my husband travels with me. I can't and don't want to go alone, that would be too heavy. (Turkish woman)*

Albanian women, even though they also come from a traditional patriarchal society, seem to be less reluctant to continue traveling back and forth after they are widowed; this is probably related to their higher level of education and urban origin. Especially those coming from urban areas express the will to travel back and forth “even alone” after the death of their husband. Surinamese women, on the other hand, learn from an early age to take care of themselves, to live independently, therefore they do not view traveling alone in the future, after the death of their husband, as a largely negative prospect.

Such life events will force many of the older migrants to either stay permanently in the host country or return definitely to their home country. Which choice will prevail is a question for future research: most of the older migrants in Europe are still relatively young, living with their spouse and in relatively good health. However, both previous studies (Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Bolzman et al., 2006; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010) and our data suggest that the decision about the final destination later in life will generally favor the host country. There are more pull than push factors to stay permanently in the host country, including better social security and healthcare systems, as well as proximity to children and grandchildren. As one of our respondents commented:

*After living in Italy for thirty years, it would be a radical change if I returned to Albania. If I go there my point of reference, which is my children, won't be in Albania. For them, life would become more difficult, also because if I needed them, they would*

*have to take days off work to come over. As long as my health is good I will commute.*  
(Albanian woman)

### **Stereotype 2: Pendular migration is a second-best option**

Another type of evidence that pendular migration is a distinct form of migration comes from studies comparing older pendular migrants with returnees and/or stayers, concluding that characteristics are different from one group to another (Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Bolzman et al., 2006; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010). The qualitative study of De Haas and Fokkema (2010) on older Moroccan pendular and return migrants is an excellent example in showing that the two migrant groups differ mainly with respect to the location of their family members: while pendular migrants generally brought over their wives and children in the 1970s and 1980s, most return migrants decided to leave their family in the country of origin. Several quantitative studies have also shown that, besides economic ties (e.g. business, ownership), social ties in the country of origin increase the likelihood that migrants (prefer to) return (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; Jensen & Pedersen, 2007). With regard to older first-generation migrants in particular, especially the presence of children in the home country encourages a return, while children's residence does not seem to affect the 'back and forth' option (Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Bolzman et al., 2006; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010).

The main reasons why older return migrants did not reunify their families in Europe, although wives and children often wanted to migrate, are related to: the belief that investment in the education of their children (i.e. sons) in the country of origin would bring better results, namely good diplomas with an expectation to obtain a decent job without the humiliation they experienced in Europe; the burden of financial support if the whole family lived in Europe; and last but not least, the fear of losing control over women and children, who would be "westernized" in Europe (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). The decision not to reunify their families as well as to return after their working life was often taken unilaterally by the male migrant and not exclusively in the interest of the whole household. This is consistent with findings of other studies showing that, especially in patriarchal societies, households are not just a group of people sharing the same norms and interests and that participation in the family decision-making process depends on the person's role within family hierarchies, usually distributed along gender and generational lines (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2003; King et al., 2011; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Pessar, 1999).

Intra-household power relations did change, however, for those who reunified their families in Europe. In line with previous studies (Bolzman et al., 2001; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Pessar, 1999; Richter, 2004), the position of women and children was strengthened by their migration experience, as did their coalition against a definitive return: while most male migrants persistently long to return after retirement as a way to regain status (Itzigsohn et al., 1999), their wife and children want to stay in the host country as a way to protect their social and economic achievements (e.g. freedom of movement, staying close to their children and grandchildren, better working conditions) and because of expected unfavorable (economic) prospects and problems with integration in their ancestral countries. As a consequence, after their working life they adopt a pendular life (or want to), spending some months "here" and "there" as a compromise between conflicting intra-household desires. Respondents of our studies also support this finding:

*At first I only wanted to come (to Italy) for a few years. Then I brought my family here, that was a mistake because we had many problems here. Of course, having brought my family here means never going back to Morocco, because the children grow up here*

*and become more and more Italian, and you can't just take them back to Morocco.  
(Moroccan man)*

*For a moment, we thought of returning to the sun after my retirement. But we have four children and seven grandchildren here. I wanted to go, but my wife absolutely not  
(Surinamese man)*

Given the above, at a first glance it seems — and is often assumed in public debate — that pendular migration is a second-best option, at least for male migrants. Some nuances are worth noting though. The return decision is not always as simple and taken for granted as it may appear, it is not just a simple matter of “coming home”, and many returnees face problems after they go back. Coming home for good is often a delicate moment of re-arrangement in the family and marks the start of family conflicts. From the study of De Haas and Fokkema (2010), for example, it turns out that, due to the long absence abroad, return migrants often encounter problems of re-integration even with their own family, as it is difficult to regain their pre-departure position and authority within the family hierarchy. Moreover, there are regular conflicts between the returned father and the adult children (usually sons), because of the latter's resentment of the missed opportunity to join their fathers in Europe at a younger age. Most return migrants' children do obtain a high school diploma, but are unemployed, as are many of their higher-educated peers in Morocco. Comparing their situation with their counterparts in Europe, they blame their father for his decision not to bring the family to Europe. Now that their father finally returned, the way to Europe is blocked to them and it is difficult to emigrate either legally or illegally. Besides family problems, many returnees also experience more general readjustment difficulties at the origin. Once home, they realize that they are more westernized than they thought, and accordingly face disappointments about issues like human relations, discrimination, bureaucracy, corruption, and quality of healthcare services.

Based on our pendular migrants' reports, it seems that most migrants are fully aware of the better healthcare system in the host country and their changed social norms and expectations during their permanence in Europe. So for them the reluctance of their wife and children is usually not the only reason why they choose for a pendular strategy instead of a definite return, as this awareness has made them change their plans accordingly. This is echoed by our respondents:

*I don't want to live in Morocco (for good) anymore, it's okay to stay one month or two but then I want to escape. Life is better in Italy, even now during the crisis. Here with a normal salary you have a house, car, clothes, you live better. The health system is better here, in Morocco if you don't have the money you can't do anything. Social services are not there, the King occasionally helps the poor and that's it. If you have nothing in Morocco you can go to the hospital for free but the service is not like here, the nurses and the service are not good. (Moroccan man)*

*(Do you want to return?) I don't think so. To me going back would mean a new migration. My children will not go back either. It doesn't make sense. Tirana is one hour away by plane, why to go back for good? Albania is nice for holidays, but everyday life is tough, you have to wish for yourself never to be in need to go to a public office, it's there where your dignity is trashed. For me, it would kill me. (Albanian man)*

*I will never quit commuting, that is not possible for me. I can't do without, I long for Turkey, the contacts, my country and history. I'm always looking forward to going. But*

*after staying four months in Turkey, I miss the Netherlands and especially the freedom of expression. (Turkish man)*

### **Stereotype 3: Stay in home country is a period of relaxation**

In public and policy debates, older pendular migrants are generally portrayed as those who take advantage of the privileged position of their transnational life, namely gaining the benefits of both societies: enjoying the climate and relaxed lifestyle of the home country while maintaining access to various social benefits and good healthcare services, and staying close to their children, grandchildren and other relatives in the host country. Moreover, there is a strong and one-sided view about the way pendular migrants spend their time when they are in the country of origin, namely relaxing, enjoying sun, visiting families and friends — in other words, recharging batteries.

This view is in line with the phenomenon of “sunset, lifestyle, amenity-seeking and retirement migration” (Huber & O’Reilly, 2004; King et al., 2000; Warnes et al., 2004): European retirees migrating to the south of the continent or American seniors to the Sun Belt states, looking for new lifestyles, coastal resorts and spas (Casado-Díaz et al., 2004; Warnes & Williams, 2006), wonderful landscapes like the Costa del Sol and Tuscany (King et al., 2000), but far from reality for the majority of the older labor migrants (Božić, 2006), who differ economically, physically and socially from Western countries’ retirees and who often belong to the pool of the “most disadvantaged and socially-excluded of western Europe’s older people” (Warnes & Williams, 2006: 7). In addition, although most of the pendular migrants of the older first generations, including our respondents, go to their homeland for social and environmental reasons (Cela & Fokkema, 2014; Weltevrede et al., 2013; Witter, 2011), some nuances of their stay should be mentioned. Contrary to common belief, not all older pendular migrants have a relaxed time during their stay in the home country. For instance, although they often enjoy to meet relatives and friends, visits are also sometimes overloaded with expectations and transform the permanence in a burden of responsibilities and social obligations. This is why some of them even avoid to go to their birthplace for holidays. Commitments in the home country seem to be gender specific: besides visiting their homeland for economic reasons (see Stereotype 1) and religious purposes (e.g. Ramadan; Hunter, 2011), some men are involved in business, including transnational trade activities, housing improvements and taking care of property ownership:

*The last two times I went to Morocco not to rest but because I have started to build a house and I was very busy. The house is almost finished and this year we will go there. (Moroccan man)*

Especially some female pendular migrants, on the other hand, are primarily driven by taking care of a family member or fulfilling their household duties and community responsibilities, like visiting relatives, friends and neighbors for special events like weddings, engagements and funerals or the graveyards of their parents(-in-law) and other dear ones.

*Every year I go for 3 to 6 months to Suriname to take care of my sister. She has Parkinson’s disease. Of course, I’m also going to Suriname to enjoy the nice weather and to meet old friends. But the main reason is to take care of my family, to help my sister’s children, to alleviate them a bit from their heavy care burden. (Surinamese woman)*



*(What do you do when you go to Albania?) In theory I like to go for a holiday. But in practice I spend the time visiting relatives and friends. I go to the cemetery to see my loved ones. And that's how the holiday goes. I return more tired than I was before I left, and I always say that I need another week to recuperate. (Albanian woman)*

#### **Stereotype 4: Pendular migration is a private matter**

The final common notion in public and political debates is that pendular migration is a private matter without social consequences, hence governments and other public agencies should not interfere in it. This notion is questionable for several reasons. To explain how or even if they should interfere, we will illustrate with the Dutch case. We choose the Netherlands not only because of author affiliation, but also because interference with and social implications of pendular migration have recently been the subject of numerous discussions and several studies in that country.

Firstly, through migrant-oriented and social security legislation governments already determine the possibilities and boundaries of pendular migration (Kilkey & Merla, 2013). For instance, for non-Dutch nationals staying more than six months abroad it is assumed that they have changed their main residence, consequently their residence permit expires. As regards social security, in 2008 the Dutch government expanded the pendular migration opportunities for older migrants considerably by removing important financial barriers. Social security recipients exempt from the obligation to seek work and participation in a reintegration program are since then allowed to stay in their country of origin for a maximum of 13 weeks; this exemption was previously only provided for those recipients older than age 57.5 without obligation to seek work. Moreover, those aged 65 or older who receive social benefit because of an incomplete old age pension (which applies to the majority of the older migrants) were then given permission to stay abroad for a maximum period of 26 weeks. Since 2012, however, the maximum staying period has been shortened to 13 weeks.

Secondly, older migrants who often travel back and forth may well benefit from a greater involvement of public health organizations and insurance companies. Usually not all medical care expenses incurred abroad are covered by the health insurance. It is also likely that older pendular migrants will use the healthcare system in their home country more frequently if more facilities are available and good access to appropriate care can be ensured.

It is well-known that older migrants are family-oriented and prefer informal to formal care; their use of institutional and home care services is low compared to their native peers (Albertsson et al., 2004; Bolzman et al., 2004; Ebrahim, 1996; Hansen, 2013). This is also the case in the Netherlands (Denktaş, 2011; Gerritsen et al., 2006; Schellingerhout, 2004b), even though many forms of formal care are covered by their medical insurance. Main reasons for the underrepresentation of older migrants in the formal healthcare sector are: lack of knowledge about public care accessibilities and availabilities, language barriers, different expectations and norms about types of help and treatment, and a general mistrust of the Dutch healthcare system.

An increasing number of older migrants does realize that obtaining informal support (mainly provided by their daughters and daughters-in-law) is less obvious than it would be in their home country, due to changed circumstances in terms of willingness and time (Arjouch, 2005; De Valk & Schans, 2008; Lan, 2002). There is uncertainty about whether their children will share the traditional views on providing care between the different generations (the elderly are to be taken care by their children or children-in-law in return for the care they themselves received as children) in the destination context, but these doubts are hardly discussed within the family. Although research has shown that younger-generation migrants place a lower value on family solidarity and internalize the cultural values of the host country

more strongly than their parents (Merz et al., 2009), most children still feel responsible and are motivated to take care of their parents or in-laws (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012). The conditions to take on the full responsibility for such care are more difficult in the European context though: compared to the situation in the home country it is less common for children to share a house with parents or in-laws, children are more likely to live further away, and often both sons and daughters work and accordingly have less time to spend with their parents or in-laws. The pendular migrants we interviewed also acknowledge these less favorable conditions in Europe, and would rarely want to call upon their offspring in old age if it meant them having to give up their jobs:

*(Do you hope that one of your children will take care of you?) (Man) Yes, I hope so. But I don't know if they will. (Woman) Because now things are different. Before, Moroccan women were always at home. They cooked and they looked after their family members. But now the women work, and this is no longer possible. (Moroccan couple)*

*My children have their own clothing shop, which is not around the corner. Having your own business, you can't leave, I know as I had restaurants myself, it's a busy life. (Turkish man)*

*The children will not care for us, they simply need to work. We understand this very well. I know how important it is to work and make money. They have their own lives and that's good. They do well and they are good children, but if we need care, we want to have it from professionals. They will continue to do the small tasks as long as they want. (Surinamese man)*

Instead of being a burden to their children, and given their reluctance to be institutionalized in the host country, unless ethnic or culturally-specific long-term care facilities are present several of our respondents, mainly those living in Italy, expressed the desire to make use of informal, foreign home caregivers (*badante*), usually from Eastern Europe. Some others, mainly living in the Netherlands, would like to make use of long-term care services in the country of origin, if available and especially designed for pendular migrants:

*If commuting is not physically possible anymore, then it stops. There will come a day that everything stops. In Suriname there are few facilities, they don't have care services like here. If those facilities were there, I would make use of them. (Surinamese man)*

In recent years, despite the lack of specific policies for pendular migrants, several Dutch health providers have operated (or attempted to) across borders. One of the biggest international initiatives is the care hotel in Paramaribo, the capital city of Suriname. It has been proven, however, that it is very difficult to develop cross-border projects, as the current legislation complicates activities outside the Netherlands. In addition, Dutch healthcare providers experience organizational barriers in these countries (e.g. non-cooperative governments, difficulties obtaining a piece of land) and limited financial resources. As a result, only a few initiatives have been successfully implemented and maintained, and currently there is little interest among healthcare providers to be active internationally.

Finally, there are actual and potential negative societal consequences of pendular migration which justify government intervention. One disadvantage of commuting may be that older migrants are not sufficiently prepared for their old age in the host country, so they delay too long before seeking appropriate care and/or a suitable home. As mentioned above, although older migrants prefer to receive informal rather than formal care, it is not always

certain that their children or other family members can meet this preference. Moreover, in some cases the family will not be able to meet their specific care needs, for example when knowledge is lacking about disorders such as dementia. In such cases, despite all the good intentions of the family, the older migrants will not receive the care they need and this may result in social isolation and a reduced quality of life. It is therefore highly recommended that governments and other public agencies warn older pendular migrants of these dangers.

Another negative side of pendular migration is the long-term vacancy of pendular migrants' property or, when institutionalized, rooms in old age homes. As noted by one of our respondents:

*Most of the elderly here are commuters, so for half a year it's very quiet. Only those who cannot travel stay, and they take care of the mail and the plants. That's very difficult for them, they are pretty lonely here. I feel at home here, but I couldn't live without going to Turkey. (Turkish man)*

Besides possible negative impacts of long-term vacancy on the viability of the neighborhood, the house is often unattended during the long stay abroad and pendular migrants pay rent unnecessarily. Dutch residents may lose their rooms in old age homes if they are away for more than two weeks. So far, old age homes are not experiencing major long-term vacancies and they are accommodating towards those who stay for a longer period in their country of birth, as long as those residents keep paying rent for their room. Nevertheless, given the shrinking number of places in old age homes in combination with an aging population, there is an increasing resistance towards long-term vacancy and a lively debate about alternative forms of housing and residential care for older pendular migrants.

A recent study among older pendular migrants aged 60 and older of Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese origin who currently live in subsidized rentals in the Netherlands shows that a substantial proportion of them is interested in a flexible form of housing that better fits with their pendular life (Weltevrede et al., 2013). They are most in favor of a three-generation house where the kitchen is shared and the private space is smaller than in regular subsidized housing. Temporary rental of the house to third parties for the period they are away, as well as living in a house with age peers (preferably of same ethnic background and a small number of residents), are also relatively popular types of housing. They are less enthusiastic, on the other hand, about living in a short-stay accommodation – a sort of residential hotel with common areas and facilities (including a service counter, medical care, restaurant and guest rooms for visitors) where the residents do not need to pay rent during their stay abroad and are assured of a studio when they return.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter focused on pendular migration of the older first generations in Europe, periodically traveling back and forth between Europe and their home countries. By reviewing existing research related to this topic, including findings from our own qualitative studies, four popular beliefs on pendular migration were challenged. The first one, that pendular migration is a temporary stage between permanent stay or definite return, is not supported by empirical evidence: pendular migration is an distinct form of migration and, accordingly, pendular migrants can neither be classified as settlers nor as returnees. With regard to the size and frequency of pendular migration we can only speculate, as pendular migrants are not captured in migration statistics. No strong supportive evidence was found either for the second common belief that pendular migration is a second-best option. Even for the older male migrants, often cherishing for a long time a return to their country of birth, pendular

migration seems to be the optimal choice, not only to meet the preferences of their wife and children but also to keep enjoying the benefits of official residence in Europe, like access to social security benefits and health care. The third popular belief, that pendular migration is a time for relaxation, enjoyment of the climate and visiting family and friends, is largely confirmed by research. This however does not mean that pendular migrants are only having a good time and being passive during the stay in their homeland: relatives and friends are sometimes visited because of duty and responsibility and while female pendular migrants sometimes take an active role in caring, their male counterparts may be involved in business activities. Several contradicting arguments could be offered too for the final common belief we challenged, that pendular migration is a private matter with no role for government or other public organizations, and without societal consequences: existing legislation and availability of healthcare services, both “here” and “there”, partly determine the boundaries of freedom to travel back and forth. Governments, healthcare providers and public agencies can play an important role in ensuring a good old age for a likely-to-increase number of pendular migrants.

Evidence for rejecting or supporting these four popular beliefs was mainly gathered from small, qualitative studies among a limited number of migrant groups in a few European countries. Given the increasing number of aging migrants in Europe and their strong bonds with their countries of origin, more research, especially large-scale quantitative and mixed-method studies, is needed to ascertain whether our findings and conclusions are generalizable and hold true for large number of migrant groups and across Europe, and, more in general, to unravel the phenomenon of pendular migration.

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