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The Regional Response to Venezuelan Migration: A Comparative Analysis of Governmental Measures in Colombia, Argentina, and Chile (2015-2019)

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Abstract: This study provides a comparative analysis of the legislation, resolutions, and practices concerning regularization procedures and the recognition of fundamental rights (healthcare and education) of Venezuelan migrants between 2015 and 2019 in three host countries: Colombia, Argentina, and Chile by constructing six indicators: the date of issuance, the possibility of naturalization in the country of destination, the requirements and the application procedure, the cost of processing, the waiting period, and policy restrictions. The results show, first, a significant heterogeneity in the different legal responses in terms of the possibility of naturalization, application requirements, and the recognition of rights. Second, the analysis identifies the main factors that can explain the cross-national variation in the policy frameworks implemented towards the Venezuelan population. Third, our study suggests that these reception strategies are characterized by temporality, the ad hoc model, and discretionality, which significantly affect the social integration of Venezuelan nationals in the three host countries. **Keywords:** Venezuelan migration, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, reception strategy.

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La respuesta regional a la migración venezolana: Un análisis comparativo de las medidas gubernamentales en Colombia, Argentina y Chile (2015-2019)

Resumen: El objetivo del trabajo es realizar un análisis comparativo de la legislación, las resoluciones y las prácticas relativas a los procedimientos de regularización y el reconocimiento de los derechos fundamentales (salud y educación) de los migrantes venezolanos entre 2015 y 2019 en tres países de acogida: Colombia, Argentina y Chile. Este trabajo aplica un enfoque cualitativo y está concebido dentro de un proyecto descriptivo. Se han construido seis variables: la fecha de expedición, la posibilidad de naturalizarse en el país de destino, los requisitos y procedimiento de solicitud, el costo de trámite, el tiempo de espera, y sus propias limitaciones del uso, los cuales nos permiten resaltar tanto diferencias como rasgos en común en el ámbito de sus diseños. Los resultados muestran, en primer lugar, una importante heterogeneidad en las diferentes respuestas legales en cuanto a la posibilidad de naturalización, los requisitos de solicitud y el reconocimiento de derechos, por ejemplo. En segundo lugar, el análisis se centra en tres razones que explican la heterogeneidad. En tercer lugar, el estudio confirma tres características de las estrategias de acogida, que afectan considerablemente a la integración social de los nacionales venezolanos en los países de acogida.

Palabras Clave: migración venezolana, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, estrategia de acogida.

1. Introduction

The political and economic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since 2015 has led to over 5.4 million people leaving the country, which constitutes the largest exodus in recent Latin America's history (UNHCR, 2020). In response, the region's governments began to assimilate their new role as hosts, given that 82.7 % of the Venezuelan emigrant population settled in Latin America (ECLAC, 2019a). However, a wide range of migration reception policies have been adopted across different host countries, leading to diverse living conditions for these arrivals. While there is a growing body of work on Venezuelan migration (Bolívar & Pérez, 2019; Farné & Sanín, 2020; Freitez, 2019; Louidor, 2018; Salgado Bustillos et al., 2018), few studies to date have conducted a comparative analysis of both general and specific reception strategies across different host countries in terms of regularization and the recognition of migrants' rights, which shows a significant knowledge gap. The analysis allows us to identify a set of good practices and achievements, as well as challenges for the management of Venezuelan migration in Latin America.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to provide a comparative and empirical analysis of different reception strategies regarding Venezuelan immigrants in three host countries: Colombia, Argentina, and Chile, which are among the main destinations in the region (UNHCR, 2020) whereas representing very different economic, social, and political contexts and adopting different types of reception measures. Specifically, this study aims to address the following research questions: 1) What are the differences in the policy frameworks implemented towards the Venezuelan population within the three host countries? And 2) What are the underlying factors that account for the variation in the configuration of these migration mechanisms across the region? Accordingly, our general hypothesis is that the instruments adopted to serve the Venezuelan population are different in the three countries; and we expect that this heterogeneity can be explained by the migration laws related to immigrant integration of each nation-state.

2. Data and Methodology

The study is carried out by examining primary sources of legislative acts, administrative resolutions, government directives and policies related to Venezuelan nationals in Colombia, Argentina and Colombia during the period 2015-2019 (i.e., the archives of Migración Colombia, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of Argentina and the Ministry of Immigration and Migration of Chile), which allow us to explore the political positions towards the Venezuelan population in each country. Our study takes 2015 as its starting point, because it represents a watershed in the country's migratory history with the beginning of a massive exodus (Freitez, 2019), and sets 2019 as the final date of analysis, because the new global reality marked by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 has brought greater uncertainty both for the future of these migratory dynamics and for the formulation of policies.

In terms of methodology, we construct six indicators to compare the government policies implemented in the three countries: the date of issuance, the possibility of naturalization in the country of destination, the requirements and the application procedure, the cost of processing, the waiting period, and policy restrictions. Based on a comparative perspective, the results of this study interestingly reveal a significant heterogeneity in the legislative measures in response to the Venezuelan diaspora across the region.

3. Venezuela: from host Country to origin of exodus

Venezuela, a country with a long history of immigration, has become a source of emigration in the last two decades (Gandini et al., 2019). During the 1960s, the country was one of the most important destinations in the region, both for neighboring populations and people from other continents, attracted mainly by job opportunities based on the oil industry (Pizarro et al., 2016). Until the 1980s, immigrant numbers in Venezuela increased to 1,074,629, accounting for around 7.4 % of the overall population (Texidó & Gurrieri, 2013).

However, Venezuela has experienced a dramatic reversal in its traditional migration pattern since Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999, and until now there have been three waves of Venezuelan emigration (Paez & Vivas, 2017). The first wave began following the implementation of a political and socio-productive model, known as twenty-first century socialism(Muñoz et al., 2021), characterized by state intervention in the economy, the limitation of the private sector's productive capacities, and the introduction of a system of price controls. The emigrant group in this wave was composed of middle-income families and a highly educated population, whose primary destinations were Europe and the United States (Linares, 2021).

The second wave began in 2012, coinciding with the end of the Latin American commodity boom and the economic crisis (Acosta et al., 2019). The deterioration of the country's political and economic situation increased the outward flow of Venezuelan

nationals. In this second wave, the migrant profiles were more varied and involved different social classes. The destinations also diversified, and although there were Venezuelans that continued to migrate to developed countries, others began to settle in neighboring countries, such as Colombia, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (Paez & Vivas, 2017).

Table 1. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: estimations of population living
abroad, 1990–2020

Year	Number (thousand people)	Proportion of the national population (percentages)	Annual growth rate (per 100 inhabitants)		
1990	185	0.9	5.2		
1995	240	1.1	5.5		
2000	317	1.3	5.4		
2005	416	1.6	5.5		
2010	550	1.9	1.9		
2015	606	1.9	39.6		
2017	1400	4.8	75.6		
2018	3100	10.7	46.9		
2019	5000	17.5	36.1		
2020	7200	25.4			

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Social Development Division and the Statistics Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Whereas Venezuela's first migratory wave in the early 2000s was generally politically motivated, the post-2015 wave has been more socio-economic (Jeronimo Kersh, 2021). In 2013, Maduro was elected President of the Republic, the exacerbation of the deinstitutionalization process pushed the country into another period of political instability. The application of an intricate system of price and exchange controls led to hyperinflation. Consequently, the deep political crisis has been accompanied by a context of economic recession (Freitez, 2019), leading to the impoverishment of the entire population and leaving millions of people unable to cover their basic needs, such as food, healthcare, and medications³. It was in this context that the third wave of Venezuelan migration began, called the "Migration of Despair" (Paez & Vivas, 2017). By the end of December 2019, over five million Venezuelans had left the country, which represents nearly 17.5 % of the overall population (ECLAC, 2019b).

³ The Living Conditions Survey shows that 91 % of the Venezuelan population were living in poverty by 2018 (IOM, 2019).

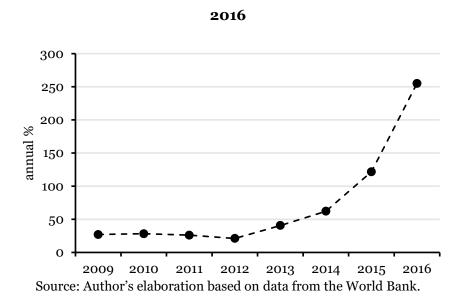


Figure 1. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: Inflation (annual %), 2000-

Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG.

4. The context of host countries: Colombia, Argentina, and Chile

Colombia, Argentina, and Chile are among the main countries hosting Venezuelan immigrants in Latin America⁴. Nonetheless, each of these countries shows a specific context of reception. In contrast to Argentina and Chile, Colombia is predominantly a country of origin for migrants rather than a host country, due mainly to the large-scale emigration caused by the internal conflict of past decades (Serrano et al., 2019). Venezuela, by contrast, was the primary destination country for Colombian nationals searching for peace and better living conditions during the "oil boom" (Louidor, 2018). Paradoxically, this trend has recently been reversed: on the one hand, the peace agreement reached in 2016 brought an end to the armed conflict in Colombia and allowed the country to regain a certain level of stability (Palacio & Otero, 2021); on the other hand, due to the geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and historical migratory flows between the two countries (Del Real, 2022; Serrano et al., 2019), the influx of Venezuelan nationals to Colombia has increased significantly since 2015. By 2020, nearly 1.8 million people had left Venezuela to settle in Colombia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia, 2020), making it now the largest host country for the Venezuelan diaspora (Serrano et al., 2019). In parallel, the Venezuelan flow to Colombia

⁴ By December 2020, Colombia, Chile, and Argentina were the first, third and fourth largest host countries in terms of residence permits and regular stay granted (R4V, 2020).

is characterized by three features: pendular migration ⁵, transit migration, and undocumented migration⁶ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia, 2017).

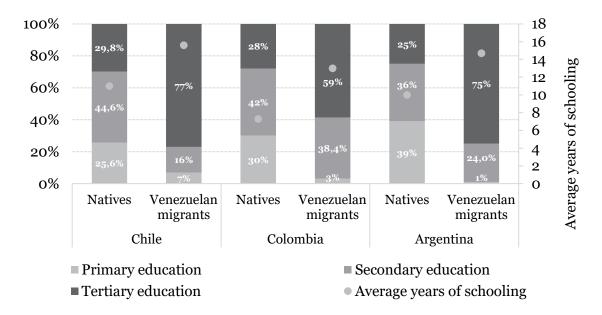


Figure 2. Colombia, Argentina and Chile: educational levels of Venezuelan and local immigrants

Source: Author's elaboration based on Census Chile 2017 (INE-Chile); La Matriz de Seguimiento del Desplazamiento de Argentina (DTM-Argentina), Banco de Datos de Encuestas de Hogares (2015); Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2018 (Colombia) and Radiografías de venezolanos in Colombia.

The Venezuelan migratory flow into Argentina began to increase in 2015, and by 2020 nearly 179,000 Venezuelans had settled in the country (IOM, 2020). Although Argentina is one of the most distant South American destinations for Venezuelan nationals, it has become the fourth largest host country in Latin America, with a high concentration in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires (Pacecca & Liguori, 2019).

Chile, a country with a long history of emigration, has become a country of immigration as the democratic and economic situation has improved over the past three decades (INE of Chile, 2019). It is one of the new destinations for Venezuelan emigrants, whose number had increased to 455,494 by 2019, making the Venezuelan diaspora the

⁵ Pendular migration occurs in the border areas between the two countries, characterized by the daily movement for various reasons, such as family visits, agricultural and industrial activities, tourism in the border area, as well as the purchase of food and medicines (AceVedo et al., 2020).

⁶ By September 30, 2020, over 946,624 Venezuelans were in an irregular administrative situation for exceeding the length of stay or for unauthorized entry into the country, representing about 55.2 % of Venezuelan migrants in total (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia, 2020).

largest migrant community in the country (30.5%) (INE of Chile, 2020). The main factors for choosing Chile as a destination country are migrants' family networks and the country's greater economic stability (Salgado Bustillos et al., 2018).

Before proceeding to a comparison of government policies implemented at the national level, however, it is important to address the socio-demographic profiles of Venezuelan migrants in the three countries, which may differently affect the reformulation of migration policy at the national level. As shown in Figure 2, one of the characteristics of the Venezuelan population in the region is its high educational level, especially in Argentina (Linares, 2021) and Chile (Soto-Alvarado et al., 2019). Notably, in Chile, according to the 2017 national census, the Venezuelan population has a higher level of education compared to other immigrant groups, with an average of 15.6 years of schooling (INE of Chile, 2019). Similarly, in the case of Argentina, the average years of schooling of the Venezuelan population reaches 14.7 years while the average for international immigrants in Argentina is less than 12 years (Carrasco & Suárez, 2018). In contrast, the Venezuelan community in Colombia shows a lower level of education. Of the Venezuelans, 40.4% had undergraduate studies, which is almost 10% less than in the case of Chile (50%) and 8% less than in the case of Argentina (48%). At the same time, only 1.8% had postgraduate or doctoral studies, which contrasts with 14% in Chile and 12% in Argentina for this same level of study.

5. Reception strategies in the three countries

The growing number of Venezuelan immigrants has led Colombia, Argentina and Chile to adopt specific measures concerning the regularization of their status and the recognition of social rights. This section introduces the governmental measures aimed at Venezuelan migration in each country.

5.1. Reception strategies in Colombia

As from 2016, the Colombian government adopted two exceptional instruments successively aimed to facilitate the movement of people in border areas and regulate their residence in the country: The Border Mobility Card (TMF, Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza in Spanish) and the Special Residency Permits for Venezuelans (Permiso Especial de Permanencia, PEP). The TMF is a border transit document created by Decree No. 1220 in August 2016 to regulate "pendular migration" in border areas, making the presentation of a passport unnecessary at entry points (Colombia Migration, 2019). This

card is valid for two years, and the immigration authority will define its extension thereafter. By September 2019, Colombia's migration systems had registered 4,315,103 Venezuelan recipients of the TMF, mainly at Táchira, Carabobo and Barinas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia, 2019). The issue of TMF allows Venezuelans to enter Colombia legally, which greatly reduces the risks associated with human trafficking and smuggling or being exposed to the threat of illegal armed groups at informal crossing points (IOM & UNHCR, 2020). Despite this, the use of the TMF has its limitations. First, the TMF is not an ID card and it should be presented together with the national ID document to the immigration, police, or military authorities in Colombian territory. Second, the TMF only allows its beneficiaries to travel in specific border areas for no more than seven continuous days, which to some extent restricts their mobility in the country.

On 25 July 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia authorized the Special Residency Permits for Venezuelans (PEP) by Decree No. 5797/2017, which stipulated that the Colombian government formally recognized the existence of Venezuelan migration in the country and began to take a series of measures concerning their regularization procedures (Serrano et al., 2019). The PEPs provide Venezuelans with two years of legal residency, work authorization, and the right to public healthcare and education (Del Real, 2022). In February 2018, the second phase of PEP was implemented by Decree No. 0740 for those Venezuelan nationals that had entered Colombia before 2 February through an official immigration checkpoint and were currently residing in the country (IOM, 2018a). Additionally, in August 2018 the Colombian government authorized access to PEP by the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV)⁷, regardless of whether they had entered through a controlled immigration point or with a passport (Serrano et al., 2019). By the end of 2019, the PEP had been issued in six batches.

In contrast to TMF, the PEP is an ID document that allows Venezuelans to take up temporary residence in the territory for 90 days, and it is renewable for up to two years, although it does not replace a passport nor is valid as a travel document to enter or leave the country. Once it has expired, Venezuelan nationals need to have obtained a visa from the Foreign Ministry or must leave the country. Otherwise, they will incur an irregular status (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia, 2020). However, given that the majority of the recipients of PEPs issued between 3 August 2017 and 31 October 2017 "have not

⁷ The Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV) is a process that seeks to expand the information on the migration of Venezuelans in Colombia (Colombia Migration, 2018a).

definitively regularized their immigration status and that the valid date will be gradually exceeded from August 3, 2019", the renewal procedure for PEP was established on 28 May 2019, extending its validity for an additional two years (SCMAU, 2019). The PEP remains the country's main mechanism of regularization; by 2020, over 600,000 Venezuelans had therefore benefited from a two-year regular status (IOM & UNHCR, 2020).

5.2. Exceptional measures in Argentina

Due to the ongoing crisis, Venezuelan nationals find it difficult to obtain official documents, such as passports, birth certificates, and criminal records. The lack of documentation to large extent hampers the regularization process and access to basic services for the Venezuelan population, especially for those in an irregular situation, who are particularly vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse, violence and discrimination, smuggling, and trafficking (IOM & UNHCR, 2020). Argentina's response strategy has therefore addressed issues designed to simplify entry requirements and the recognition of academic qualifications for Venezuelan nationals.

Given that the delay in obtaining the required documents at home country impedes the regularization process for Venezuelans, the Argentine Republic passed Decree 594/2018 issued by Director-General for Immigration (DNM in its Spanish acronym) in February 2018. This legislation states that the DNM is allowed to simplify and even exempt relevant documentary requirements after evaluating and considering each particular case, as long as it does not jeopardize public safety (DNM, 2018b). This simplification of access to residence and documentation largely facilitates the regularization of migratory status and eliminates access barriers to basic services for Venezuelan nationals in the country. In addition, in responding to "the unprecedented humanitarian crisis that the Venezuelan people are experiencing", on 29 January 2019, the DNM adopted the "Assistance Program for Venezuelan Migrants" though Decree 520/2019, designed to facilitate the legal entry, status regularization, and social insertion of Venezuelan migrants in Argentina, which approves the entry into national territory of Venezuelan nationals with an expired identity card or passport, whose expiration date does not exceed two years from the date of disposition, and authorizes the initiation of the residence process with the expired documentation or birth certificate (DNM, 2018c). Notably, these special permits that allow people to enter and reside in the country with an expired identity card or passport are particularly important for Venezuelan migrants, given the difficulties involved in obtaining valid documents in their own country. Furthermore, the legalization on the need for a Certificate of Non-Criminal Record from

Venezuela has been repealed, with the need to simply consult the relevant web page (Acosta et al., 2019). According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix⁸, in the last two years, the Argentine government has issued more than 200,000 residence permits to Venezuelan nationals; by 2020, over 179,000 Venezuelan migrants were living in the country.

In addition, to simplify the procedure for accrediting studies from Venezuelan institutions, since 2018, the government of Mauricio Macri prompted a selective migration policy aimed at Venezuelan migrants in the country (Linares, 2021) such as the Decree 230-E/2018 and Decree 232-E/2018. Firstly, the Unified Procedure for the Validation of University Degrees was implemented by Decree 230-E/2018, thereby "entitling the National Directorate of University Management to validate degrees, diplomas or university academic degrees issued by a university or institutions duly recognized by the competent authorities of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" (Argentine Ministry of Education, 2018a). The validation process is operated through the remote procedure platform which can take a year or even longer. The universities that evaluate the documents inform the applicant directly if they recognize the title or if the individual needs to study certain specific courses to validate it. Once the procedure has been completed, the university submits the document to the Ministry of Education, which issues its validation (Pacecca & Liguori, 2019). In parallel, considering that "the people who have emigrated from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in an emergency may not have the educational documentation to prove their studies, and it is necessary to enable students to continue with their academic studies", the National Ministry of Education adopted Decree 232-E/2018, which states to establish preferential treatment in the administrative procedures for the recognition of obligatory education to allow students to access educational establishments in the Argentine Republic.

The education sector's response to the simplification of degree validation and the preferential treatment for Venezuelan nationals in administrative procedures for recognizing prior obligatory education goes a long way to reinforcing their social inclusion in Argentina. For instance, more than a thousand Venezuelan professionals from the health sector, particularly experts in respiratory diseases, who are part of the Association of Venezuelan Doctors in Argentina, have been combating the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. These professionals practice their profession thanks to the

⁸ The Displacement Tracking Matrix gathers and analyzes data to disseminate critical multi-layered information on the mobility that enables decision-makers and responders to provide these populations with better context-specific assistance (IOM, 2018b).

simplified procedure that recognized their existing qualifications, which shows that the procedure's appropriate implementation not only facilitates Venezuelan migrants' social inclusion in Argentina but also meets the country's professional needs (Álvarez, 2020).

5.3. Exceptional instrument in Chile: Democratic Responsibility Visa

In response to the growing number of Venezuelan migrants in the country, in April 2018 Chile issued the Democratic Responsibility Visa (VRD, by its Spanish acronym) for Venezuelan citizens with no criminal record seeking to settle in Chile. The VRD is a temporary visa, which grants its beneficiaries access to basic rights and services, including healthcare, education, and employment, allowing them to carry out any legal activity or occupation in the country.

Venezuelans used to have to apply for the visa at the Chilean consulates in Caracas or Puerto Ordaz. In June 2019, Circular No. 160 stipulated that the application for a VRD could be made at any Chilean consulate in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chile, 2018c). Nevertheless, the VRD does not regularize the migratory status of those already in Chilean territory (Bolívar & Pérez, 2019), which differs from Argentina's measures for Venezuelan migrants residing in that country. Beneficiaries will be issued with a oneyear residence permit, which can thereafter be extended only once, after which the person must leave the country or apply for another residence permit. Once the visa has been approved, the holder has 90 days to enter the country. After their first entry, the beneficiaries have 30 days to request the visa registration certificate and the ID card for foreigners from Chile's Investigations Police.

Nevertheless, the VRD implementation process is both selective and restrictive, with a strong sense of national security, as in practice it was noted that individuals with a higher level of qualifications are more likely to obtain the VRD. According to Acosta et al. (2019) , based on national frameworks and laws, Chile aims to "select Venezuelan people with more socio-economic resources, while restricting the entry of those that do not have access to the profession or even impose a social burden on the country". As a result, the strict requirements of VRD lead to a growing refusal rate. By December 2019, out of 207,038 applications, only 55,300 visas had been issued, representing a 26.7 % approval rate, while 95,487 requests (46.1 %) are still pending approval, and 56,251 applications (27.2 %) have been rejected due to a lack of the corresponding criminal records or falsified documents (OEA, 2020). Besides, the requirements are difficult for Venezuelans to meet in practice due to the lack of documentation, such as the Non-Criminal Record apostilled by their country's Ministry of People's Power for Foreign

Affairs, which is only valid for three months (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chile, 2018a). Additionally, on 21 June 2018 the Twitter account of the Chilean consulate in Venezuela confirmed the inclusion of two new requirements for the VRD "the passport with a minimum of 18 months' validity from the date of application, and a birth certificate apostilled with a validation code for minors". In practical terms, this introduction of further entry requirements impedes Venezuelans' long-term residence.

5.4. Recognizing social rights in the three host countries

Whereas Argentina, Chile, and Colombia have adopted a regional plan of action as member states of the Quito Process⁹, there is a significant disparity in the recognition of basic rights for Venezuelan migrants across the three host countries. This section will therefore explore their access to healthcare and education at community and institutional levels.

5.4.1. Access to healthcare

Healthcare is a fundamental human right that should also be guaranteed for migrants (ECLAC, 2019a). In Colombia, according to article 100 of the 1991 Constitution, "aliens enjoy the same civil rights as Colombian citizens". Concerning the particular case of Venezuelans, although the TMF does not grant its beneficiaries access to the health system in Colombia, since 2017 the PEP is considered a valid ID document in the country's Social Welfare System according to Decree No. 3015. However, the rights of migrants in Colombia are subject to their legal status in the country. In other words, those in an irregular status can only access emergency healthcare services (Serrano et al., 2019). In June 2019, 77 % of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia were not affiliated to the General System of Social Security in Healthcare (SGSSS). Among the beneficiaries, 51.4 % were covered by the subsidized regime, and 48.1 % were under the contributory regime. Nevertheless, existing reports show that migrants are being treated despite not being affiliated in Colombia. According to Proyecto Migración Venezuela (2020), between July 2017 and June 2019, 414,495 Venezuelans benefited from hospitalization services or emergency care. This access to health services to some extents guarantee the healthcare rights of Venezuelan migrants.

In Argentina, access to social welfare is guaranteed under Migration Law No. 25,871,

⁹ The Quito Process was launched in 2018 to promote communication and coordination between countries receiving Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean.

passed in 2004. Article 8 states that "access to the right to health, social assistance and medical care for all foreign nationals that require it, shall not be denied, or restricted under any circumstances, regardless of their legal status" (Argentine Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2004), therefore, undocumented and irregular migrants can also access healthcare services. According to IOM, indeed, the majority of Venezuelan immigrants received proper treatment when they required medical care by presenting their passport, except for a few cases that reported discrimination or refusal of care at certain health facilities (Pedone et al., 2019).

In Chile, in line with the right to health for the population in an irregular situation, the Ministry of Health (2016) issued Decree No. 67, which establishes that foreigners in an irregular administrative situation have access to public health services, as they are included in the National Health Fund (Correa, 2021). The country has also adopted a series of specific policies to provide health care to immigrants regardless of their legal status. For example, Decree No. 1914 of 2008 guaranteed access to healthcare in public facilities for children and adolescent immigrants under the age of 18, regardless of their own migratory situation in Chile or the status of their parents, tutors, or legal guardians (Díaz Tolosa, 2016). Broadly, these administrative measures to large extent guarantee migrants' access to health care.

5.4.2. Access to education

Access to education is widely recognized as a basic right in international conventions. And the enrolment in the educational system is an essential pre-requisite for the subsequent economic integration of migrant adults and the socialization of children. The United Nations states that

"Each child of a migrant worker shall have the basic right of access to education on the basis of equality of treatment with nationals of the state concerned. Access to public pre-school educational institutions or schools shall not be refused or limited by reason of the irregular situation with respect to stay or employment of either parent or by reason of the irregularity of the child's stay in the State of employment" (OHCHR, 1990).

In Colombia, Article 100 of the 1991 Constitution prescribes that aliens in the country enjoy the same civil rights as Colombian citizens (Serrano et al., 2019). With regard to people from Venezuela, in 2018 the Colombian Ministry of Education issued Circular No. 16 establishing the obligation for educational institutions to provide access to migrant students, irrespective of their legal status in the country. The Circular indicates the process that must be followed with children and adolescents requesting access to public education, and the procedures concerning their enrolment and qualifications, among others (Colombia Migration, 2018b).

Nevertheless, the latest governmental figures indicate that by the beginning of 2019, out of the 327,000 Venezuelan children and adolescents living in Colombia, 74,374 were enrolled in public or private schools, a figure that represents only 22.7 % of the total migrant population. Among the main reasons Venezuelans did not send their children to school, 22.9 % reported that they had not been accepted due to a lack of papers (Proyecto Migración Venezuela, 2019), although, according to Circular No. 16, educational establishments in the country cannot refuse to enroll children due to the lack of a visa, PEP, PIP, or other documents; it therefore recognizes that the implementation of immigration regulations do not always comply in practice with the provision.

In Argentina, Migration Law No. 25,871 in 2004 ensured immigrants' right to education, regardless of their legal status in the country. Article 7 states that

"Under no circumstances shall a foreign national's illegal migratory status preclude enrolment as a student in public, private, national, provincial, or municipal educational institutions at elementary, secondary or higher levels. Officials of the educational institutions shall provide orientation and guidance regarding the corresponding procedures to correct illegal migratory status" (Argentine Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2004).

On top of this, in higher education, and as mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Education adopted Decree 232-E on 7 February 2018 designed to allow Venezuelan students without probative educational documentation to access a general exam in the SEAD, which enables them to continue their studies. These exceptional measures largely contribute to an adequate integration of the Venezuelan population in Argentine society.

In Chile, the Political Constitution guarantees the right to education for all children and adolescents. Pursuant to Oficio No. 6232 and Oficio No. 07/1008, the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Migration promoted the incorporation of all migrant children into primary and secondary schools, regardless of their parents' migratory status (Díaz Tolosa, 2016), which facilitated the integration process of this group in the country (Pedone et al., 2019). Moreover, in 2007 Decree of Exemption No. 6677 established a joint agreement with the National Kindergartens Board that aims to facilitate the access of children under the age of five to preschool education, regardless of their own or their parents' migratory status (DEM & JUNJI, 2007).

6. Results: comparative analysis of governmental measures in Colombia, Argentina, and Chile

In this section, we compare the government policies implemented in the three countries from six perspectives: (1) the date of issuance, (2) the possibility of naturalization in the country of destination, (3) the requirements and the application procedure, (4) the cost of processing, (5) the waiting period, and (6) policy restrictions. Table 2 summarizes all the macro-level policies towards Venezuelan nationals. This table shows the existence of considerable heterogeneity and similarities across the region.

6.1. Differences among the three host countries

First, in terms of the implementation date, Colombia acted immediately. Since 2016, Colombia has adopted special measures such as the TMF and the PEP to regulate the influx of Venezuelan nationals, which can be explained by the geographical proximity of the two countries, sharing 2,219 km of border. In contrast, the Venezuelan migratory flow to Argentina and Chile increased appreciably in 2017, followed by the specific measures on Venezuelan migration implemented in 2018, such as the approval of Decree DNM 594/2018 in Argentina, and the issue of the VRD in Chile.

Second, regarding the cost of the procedures, while the TMF and the PEP in Colombia are issued free of charge, the application for temporary or permanent residence in Argentina costs Ars\$3,000 (approximately US\$34). Similarly, the fee for the VRD in Chile amounts to US\$30. Regarding the length of the procedures, while the TMF in Colombia can be obtained immediately through the online platform, the process of issuing the PEP in Colombia and obtaining temporary or permanent residence in Argentina take 90 calendar or working days, respectively. In Chile, although the estimated procedure for the VRD is three months, in practice the average time ranges from four months to a year.

Thirdly, regarding the possibility of naturalization, Argentina and Chile provide Venezuelan nationals with the option to apply for permanent residence once their ID document has expired, which allows them to remain in the country. By contrast, the PEP in Colombia aims to issue a special residence permit to Venezuelan nationals that do not intend to settle in the country. In this respect, although the PEP is extendable and renewable, it does not provide a direct path to legal permanent residency or citizenship (Acosta et al., 2019). Therefore, once the residence permit has expired, the beneficiary must apply for another visa within the legal framework or leave the country. Otherwise, those who do not meet the requirements are at risk of illegality.

Moreover, although the PEP in Colombia, the Argentine Nationality Criterion, and the VRD in Chile all allow their beneficiaries to carry out any legal activity in the territory, including recognizing the right to work; however, it is worth noting the practical obstacles Venezuelan nationals face to access the labor market in the three host countries. For example, in Colombia, despite that the employment rate of Venezuelan migrants rose from 56.7 % in 2015 to 65.1 % by 2018, the figure dropped to 63 % in 2019 (Farné & Sanín, 2020). According to the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV), by June 2018, 6.6 % of Colombia's unemployment rate corresponded to Venezuelan nationals (DNM, 2018a). Furthermore, among the employed Venezuelan nationals, only 25 % have an employment contract, and 75 % of them work in the informal sector, which makes them particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation. It is important to note the pay gap, whereby the salary a Venezuelan worker receives is 10 % lower than a Colombian worker (Farné & Sanín, 2020). In this regard, the lack of ID documents and the time required to regulate migratory status have a direct impact on the access to work (World Bank, 2018), negatively affecting the integration of Venezuelan migrants in their host countries. According to the Latin American Observatory for Sustainable Development (OLDS), although in the first half of 2018 the proportion of Venezuelans with higher education was 2.58 times higher than Chileans, the former's unemployment rate (15.52 %) doubled that of Chilean nationals (7.72 %) (Aroca, 2018). On the one hand, this can be explained by the possible lack of work experience among Venezuelan migrants due to their relative youth or the limited networks within the host community. Nevertheless, the restrictions on regularizing their migratory status and recognizing their qualifications have to some extent limited Venezuelan nationals' access to formal employment. At a meeting of Ministries of Labour in support of the Quito Process held in Argentina, the director of DNM, Mr. Osman Alza, commented that more than half of the Venezuelan migrants in Argentina held an undergraduate degree. The exceptional measures adopted to recognize academic degrees largely facilitated Venezuelan nationals' labor integration in the country. For instance, the presence of medical professionals from Venezuela as heads of services in Argentina for the first time enabled the country's vacancies to be fully covered (IOM & UNHCR, 2019). As a result, the policies favorable to Venezuelan migrants respond to their needs in terms of socioeconomic integration, and also contribute to the economic growth in the host society.

Last, in terms of the application procedure and required documents, emphasis should be placed on the simplified administrative procedures and flexible requirements concerning the absence of ID documents on the part of the Argentine government, which facilitated Venezuelan migration's access to regularization. By contrast, in the case of the VRD in Chile, the difficulties in obtaining the required documents, such as the apostilled criminal record certificate valid for three months and a passport with 18-month validity, as well as the lengthy administrative process, hinder the regularization of Venezuelan nationals.

As to the limitations of use, in Colombia, as mentioned previously, and in contrast to the PEP, the TMF is not an ID document, and should be presented together with the national ID card within the indicated border area during a period of no more than seven successive days. Likewise, in the case of the VRD in Chile, it does not regularize the Venezuelan population already residing in the country.

6.2. Similarities of legal responses

In addition to all the above-mentioned differences concerning the exceptional measures and the reasons behind them, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile share a series of similar characteristics in their legal responses to the influx of Venezuelan migrants. This section reviews some of the features mentioned in the three countries.

First, when comparing the regional responses of all three states, the most prominent feature is the temporality of residence permits. The regulatory measures are mostly temporary, and can be amended with no prior notice due to changes of government at national or regional level, given that they are administrative measures rather than state policies (Acosta et al., 2019). In Colombia, both the TMF and the PEP are temporary and exceptional instruments designed for the influx of Venezuelan nationals, which do not constitute a comprehensive response or permanent regularization mechanism (Selee et al., 2019; Serrano et al., 2019). Similarly, in the case of the VRD in Chile, it provides a one-year temporary residence permit and can be extended only once, after which its holder must apply for another regularization process or leave the country. The temporary nature of residence Agreement, in which foreign nationals can only apply for permanent residence before the expiry of their temporary residence permit if they can

prove they have sufficient resources, which is not always possible in labor markets with high levels of informal employment. This temporary nature clearly complicates Venezuelan migrants' regularization process. It also generates more uncertainty for individuals, as the procedure for residence renewal always requires sufficient resources, both in terms of time and cost.

The second aspect of the exceptional measures is the *ad hoc* model of an extraordinary nature to deal with Venezuelan nationals' urgent and specific needs. As noted, Venezuelan migration's unprecedented and massive regional displacement poses a series of challenges for host countries, whereby they have begun to adopt various reception strategies according to their own national realities. In Colombia, the government has addressed the pendular migration in border areas characterized by continuous daily movement by creating the TMF as a border transit document with restrictions on its spatial and temporal use. Accordingly, the application process is also easy and accessible (Del Real, 2022). Consequently, the creation of the TMF regularizes pendular migration and facilitates the mobility of Venezuelan nationals in the border region. Similarly, the PEP has been created as a temporary residence permit to regularize the status of undocumented migrants from Venezuela. In parallel, the Colombian government has adopted corresponding adjustments and modifications as Venezuelan migration has evolved in the country. For example, by issuing the Special Residency Permits for Venezuelans (Permiso Especial de Permanencia, PEP), the state has accordingly expanded the PEP's beneficiary coverage to include members of the Venezuelan Armed Forces and Police, who have had their application or refugee status rejected.

In Argentina, the exceptional measures taken by the Ministry of Education facilitate the social inclusion of skilled Venezuelan migrants with a high educational level and a specific need for revalidating their academic qualifications. In parallel, the approval of Decree No. 594/2018 and the Assistance Program for Venezuelan Migrants simplify their regular entry and the administrative requirements to remain in Argentina. All exceptional measures discussed above have been adopted in response to the emerging challenges of Venezuelan migration in each host country, finally revealing their effectiveness through appropriate administrative implementation.

Last, it is important to note the discretionality in regulatory measures concerning Venezuelan nationals in the host countries. In the case of Colombia, for example, which does not have an immigration law, the legalization programs for the Venezuelan population in the country largely depends on executive officials' discretion (Del Real, 2022). Colombian Presidents and immigration authorities therefore have discretionary power to end, renew, or expand the PEPs and ETPV without congressional oversight and if their political calculations deem it necessary (Del Real, 2022). In this context, the TMF was suspended by the Colombian government on 8 February 2018 at a meeting with the border authorities in Cúcuta, arguing that "[...] after considering that enough time had been given for Venezuelan citizens to carry out the procedure and that Colombia Migration reported 'a misuse of this document by some foreigners'" (BBC, 2019).

Indeed, since its creation, the TMF has been informed by considerable discretionality, as article 19 of Decree No. 1220 states that:

"The migration authority may cancel the Border Transit Authorization and withdraw the Binational Border Migration Control Document discretionally, in cases of improper use, either presumed or established, transit outside the authorized area for border mobility, loan of the document, breach of migratory regulations, or intervening causes or verifications subsequent to the initial registration that give rise to administrative or judicial proceedings, or any other cases in which the foreign national's presence in the national territory is deemed inconvenient, without prejudice to the administrative or judicial actions that may take place as appropriate" (SCMAU, 2016).

Notably, on 23 November 2018, the government reinstated the TMF procedure through the document CONPES 3950, and thereby corroborated the discretionality in the implementation of specific measures for Venezuelan migrants. This is not an isolated case. Influenced by its current migration law, Chile's reception responses also reflect a broad discretionality. In June 2018, the possession of a passport with 18 months of validity was included as a new requirement for the VRD, which caused some opposition as it was considered that 'the Chilean government is gradually closing the doors to Venezuelan migrants' given their inability to obtain or renew ID documents from Venezuela". There is no doubt that these recurrent modifications to the issue of documentation and an institutional framework with a lack of continuity due to official discretionality substantially affect migrants' access to regularization and generate uncertainty among them.

Country	Specific legislative or regulatory provisions		Date of impleme ntation	Cost of procedure	Length of procedure	Possibility of naturalisation	Right to work	Documentation requirements	Right to healthcare in irregular status	Right to education in irregular status
Colombia	The Border Mobility Card (TMF)		2016	Free	Immediate	No	No	/	No	Yes
	The Special Permit for Permanence (PEP)		2017	Free	90 days	No	Yes	/	No	Yes
Argentina	Decree No. 594/2018		2018	/	/	/	/	Yes	/	/
	The Response of the Education Sector	Decree 230- E/2018	2018	/	/	/	/	Yes	/	/
		Decree 232- E/2018	2018	/	/	/	/	Yes	/	/
	The Assistance Programme for Venezuelan Migrants		2019	/	/	/	/	Yes	/	/
	The Unilateral Recognition of the Nationality Criterion		2004	\$34	90 days	Yes	Yes	/	Yes	Yes
Chile	Democratic Responsibility Visa (VRD)		2018	\$30	4-6 months	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

Table 2. Exceptional measures for Venezuelan migrants, 2016-2019: Colombia, Argentina, Chile

Source: Author's elaboration.

Nonetheless, in some cases, the discretional nature of the regularization procedure can also favor Venezuelan migrants (Acosta et al., 2019) . For example, given the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants in the country, the Argentine authorities have amended the country's legislation and successively adopted decrees 230-E/2018, 232-E/2018, Decree No. 594/2018, and the Assistance Program for Venezuelan Migrants, which meet the urgent and specific needs of Venezuelan nationals.

7. Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this research was to examine the migration policies towards the Venezuelan population in three host countries: Colombia, Argentina, and Chile, in terms of the regularization procedures and recognition of social rights. Our findings suggest that based on the legal frameworks, all three states have responded to the unprecedented and rapid increase in Venezuelan migrants by adopting exceptional measures, however, there is considerable heterogeneity in the legal responses across the states in terms of the implementation date, eligibility for naturalization, documentation requirements, costs, and length of procedures, as well as policy restrictions. These differences, however, can be explained in three ways.

First, the exceptional measures towards Venezuelan migrants are largely based on the immigration policies of each country, which partially corroborate our hypothesis. For example, the current Chilean Migration Law No. 1094 of 1975 was introduced under the paradigm of national security, which mainly establishes regulations regarding entry into the country (restrictions and prohibitions), temporary and permanent residence permits, and deportation measures (Solivellas, 2009). In this regard, the VRD reveals the country's approach to national security, which shows a clearly selective and restrictive criteria (Vásquez et al., 2021). In Colombia, as stated in Decree No. 4000, migration policy is aimed at maintaining the security and integrity of the borders (Mojica, 2014). To this end, it limits the entry of people who could jeopardize local employment or cause economic, political or social problems. Conversely, Argentina, has led the shift towards a rights-based approach in the region's migration legislation since 2004 (Gandini et al., 2020), which, in turn, contributes to more receptive government policies to facilitate access to higher education for Venezuelan nationals.

Second, the heterogenous legal measures for Venezuelan migrants are shaped by the nation-state's political discourse toward the government of President Maduro, as the legal responses to Venezuelan migration have long been perceived as foreign policy 46 (Brumat, 2019). For example, the government of Mauricio Macri in Argentina, which openly criticized the Maduro regime, adopted a series of preferential provisions to facilitate the administrative procedures for the integration of Venezuelan nationals in the country (Linares, 2021), such as the Provision No. 594/2018 and the Assistance Program for Venezuelan Migrants. Similarly, other state governments, such as Chilean President Sebastián Piñera and Colombian President Iván Duque, have also condemned the Maduro government's model and even pushed for some armed intervention (Ramírez, 2020); therefore, they have shown a more positive reception of Venezuelan migration by introducing exceptional government measures.

Third, the existing differences in nation-states' legalization programs are also related to the geographic proximity of the country to Venezuela, as well as to the different socioeconomic profiles of Venezuelan migrants in the region. For instance, due to its geographical proximity and relatively low travel costs, Colombia becomes the largest destination for Venezuelans, accounting for 29% of all Venezuelan migrants (Del Real, 2022). Therefore, compared to other geographically distant countries such as Argentina and Chile, Colombia has responded more quickly and PEPs programs have mainly focused on the legalization process of Venezuelan migrants in the country. Conversely, due to the geographical distance and selective access to migration and integration, Venezuelans in Argentina and Chile have a relatively high level of education and a larger proportion of working-age population (Stefoni & Silva, 2018), as discussed above. As a result, government policies for Venezuelan migrants in Argentina show relevance in facilitating the administrative procedures of Venezuelan nationals for the recognition and validation of university degrees (i.e., Decrees 230-E/2018 and 232-E/2018), and the VRD in Chile pays special attention to the access of migrants to exercise their profession, in order to address their socioeconomic integration.

Furthermore, despite the heterogeneity mentioned above, this study has identified three main features in the instruments adopted by Colombia, Argentina, and Chile: temporality, the *ad hoc* model, and discretionality, which, on the one hand permit the host government to adjust their reception strategies according to the evolution of Venezuelan migration in the region, and on the other, centrally affect the regularization and integration process of Venezuelan nationals. Moreover, the analysis shows that despite the right to work granted by temporary residence permits, Venezuelan nationals face problems such as informality, pay gap and labor exploitation in the three host countries.

Last, despite the different migration policies adopted in each host country, however, we argue that it is difficult to assess the extent to which countries are more advanced than others given the significant heterogeneity regarding the degree of implementation, and the obstacles in the discursive and administrative order in different countries. Importantly, it should be noted that the future of Venezuelan migrants in host countries does not yet have a clear answer, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world since 2020, Venezuelan migrants have become more vulnerable due to the circumstances of their journey and poor living or working conditions (R4V, 2020). Therefore, we argue that more attention needs to be paid to the legalization procedures and social rights of Venezuelan migrants in host countries.

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