

DEVELOPING “BRAIN GAIN” POLICIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



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National Report: Macedonia

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Introduction

Brain Drain in Macedonia

Scope

Brain drain has been pointed as a crucial problem for the Macedonian economy in many reports and papers. Vedran Horvat (2004) has portrayed Macedonia as a case where: “brain drain is significant, where there is little awareness that a problem exists, and where almost no research has been carried out in order to examine what impact political instability has on highly skilled labour migration out of the country. There are at present no policies which could reverse the adverse effects of this exodus, and according to the available data, there are no signs of any measures planned for the future.” The data provided by the World Bank (2005) points to the fact that the emigration rate of tertiary educated is 20,9%. In previous studies conducted by the CRPM (2007), it was argued that brain drain is “one of the biggest problems of the country, linked with loss of investments in human capital, creative work force, etc” . The IOM Country Profile for Macedonia (2007) says that “over the past decade, (...) Macedonia, like most of its neighbors in South East Europe, has suffered from brain drain, with a strong decline in the number of researchers throughout the 1990s. Between 1995 and 2000, for example, the number of scientists and engineers in research and development has decreased by over seventy percent (from 1,332.7 per million people to only 387.2). A 2003 study estimated that between 12 to 15,000 young, educated, and highly skilled persons left the country in the decade

preceding the year of the study.

However, there is no policy in place to address the brain drain or any research on the clear extent of the brain drain.”

One large-scale survey on the aspirations of young people in Macedonia conducted in 2006 (FES/ IDSCS 2006) says that “the majority of the young people surveyed express a desire for permanent relocation”. Furthermore, the survey comes up with disturbing findings, such as the one that: “42.6% of the young people who are planning to emigrate would leave the country for good (...) Young people in the Republic of Macedonia perceive the same problems as other parts of the population, but the responses indicate that they place more emphasis on certain problems and needs. The main problem they report is unemployment. Young people who should become part of the workforce certainly don't want to join the ranks of the unemployed, or, on the other hand, to work for low salaries or at unsatisfying employment. That is the reason why some of them want to leave the country in the search for a more secure future. (...)”.

Factors

As Margareta Nikolovska (2004) argues, the bad conditions of the Macedonian economy have induced a spiral of brain-drain: “One of the most significant factors for emigration from the FYR of Macedonia was and still is the very high level of unemployment. (...) On the whole, the labour market in the FYR of Macedonia has experienced a long-lasting period of unfavorable conditions. During the transition from one socio-economic system to another, unemployment reached its peak and

went through significant structural changes. Unemployment in the FYR of Macedonia is one of the greatest economic and social problems, which began at the start of the transition period and has deteriorated over the last few years. (...) [D]ue to insufficient economic development, chances of eventual employment are still small. Because of this, many graduates emigrate, representing the loss of important development resources. (...) If we take into account the high numbers of people with primary and secondary education in the total number of the unemployed, which together comprise about 85 percent, the situation may be considered as highly unfavorable. The most serious situation is that of youth unemployment. (...) The significant presence of unused, younger, skilled labour serves not only as a limiting factor to the growth of the Macedonian economy, but is also the main reason for the unwillingness of young people to get married and have children. This results in unfavorable demographic developments, and forces people to work and live abroad. In circumstances such as those described above, the idea of migrating abroad is very attractive among the unemployed, especially among those with higher education who have been waiting for a job for a long period of time. The young higher educated people and professionals who already have a job, but are not satisfied with their wages, including young scientists and students who are close to finishing their education, represent a large group of potential Macedonian emigrants.”

Partially due to the better socio-economic conditions, the developed countries, in the first place the ones from the EU, but also the US, Canada and Australia attract highly-skilled migrants from Macedonia. The salaries, the working facilities and the possibilities for career advancement in these areas are much higher than they are in Macedonia. As well, the tendency is that the entrance in the European Union is significantly easier for highly skilled workers and for prospective students, rather than for older, not very skilled workers and part-time “Geistarbeiters”. Therefore, it is a

common perception that “the West steals our young minds”, and along with that, diminishes the hope for a better future.

Besides the socio-economic factors, however, it should not be omitted that there are other “push” factors in the country. As Horvat (2004) puts it, the problematic democratization process is also a factor that motivates highly educated individuals to leave. Other than that, the general lack of capacity of the system to deal with the generic needs of the citizens is more than demotivating.

When we are talking about brain gain, and especially about the possible return of highly skilled individuals to Macedonia, there are other factors that have to be taken in account. For instance, one extremely de-motivational factor for Macedonians that have graduated from universities abroad to return home are the complicated, by many described as “Kafkaesque” procedures for recognition of foreign diplomas, which are also quite expensive with regards to the living standard in the country. As a study by the CRPM has revealed: “(...) In order to validate a diploma earned abroad Macedonian universities often ask the candidates to rewrite their theses, or take additional exams. If the academic standards at the local department are different than those at the graduate school one studied abroad, there is a risk that your diploma might be downgraded. (...) A special problem is the recognition of diplomas of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary studies. (...) In fact, many Macedonian students educated abroad have problems with the recognition of their higher education diplomas once they return to their home country. Based on an independent research and a questionnaire that was circulated among Macedonian students that have graduated abroad, the Center for Research and Policy Making has identified different problems that our students face validating recognizing their diplomas by the Macedonian institutions. (...) About 70% of these (interviewed) students have not even tried to apply for recognition of their diploma, 20% still waiting for a response by the Ministry of Education. Only 10% of these Macedonians graduates of distinguished

universities such as London School of Economics, or Cambridge University have had their diplomas recognized, although many after up to 12 months long procedure.” Nonetheless, in 2008 a new Law on the Higher Education has been enacted which is supposed to significantly enhance the recognition procedure, that is supposed to last around 20 days.

However, the practice seems to be not very efficient. The procedure still fully depends on the actions of Minister of Education himself. The risks of downgrading the diploma, the problematic recognition of diplomas of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and specialized studies and the expensive procedure are still factors that make the process a difficult one.

The inability of the official institutions to properly recognize certain specialties also corresponds with the reality of the Macedonian labour market, where certain qualifications (such as advanced science, interdisciplinary social science or advanced research) are simply not demanded and there is no room for people of such background to develop their careers. That has been especially the case with the social sciences, where according to a study of the CRPM (2008), the situation is far from promising. The Macedonian social science sector has a very low capacity and can not be beneficial for eventual returnees that want to get involved in research work: “the number of research projects conducted (i.e. financed) in the social science sector is among the lowest. This may mean that the social science topics are not considered a public interest, or that these researchers more frequently tend to finance their projects on their own (since they typically cost less than the ones in technical, technological and medical sciences). Also, the existing structures (although in place) insufficiently promote and encourage social science research, which causes Macedonia to be poorly represented in the international social science research networks (...) This situation has the danger of affecting the quality of the research conducted, because the standards for what constitutes a good



THE BRAIN DRAIN CLIMATE

Between 1995 and 2000, the number of scientists and researchers in scientists in Macedonia has decreased by more than 70% due to the massive emigration of the highly skilled abroad. In 2006, a study showed that the majority of young people want to leave the country, and a significant portion of them want to leave it for good. Structural problems, such as bad economy, unstable politics, bureaucratic procedures, bad education system and no meritocratic values are the “push” factors that create such attitudes.

research are not clearly defined. (...) The lack of public funds especially affects the research activities of the state universities and institutes. Hence, they tend to additionally apply for funding from international donors in order to be able to realize their research activities. However, this prevents them to always conduct the studies they believe are important, but instead need to adapt to the requirements set by the funding institution”.

These are all of course, only some of the factors that contribute to the brain drain tendencies, but also to the inability to mitigate its adverse effects. There are certainly other factors which have not been examined, such as the personal needs of highly skilled individuals living abroad, beyond the socio-economic reasoning (for instance, the need for a good infrastructure, urban culture, high tolerance towards all kinds of diversity, and many other features that Macedonian society lack). As well, it is important to take in account that Macedonia still struggles with corruption in all the spheres of social life, and still fails to adopt meritocratic values in the public sector. All of these are “push” factors that perpetuate the attitudes that

the life abroad is much better than the life in the country and stimulate brain drain, and are also a big challenge in the efforts to achieve brain gain.

Existing frameworks in the field of brain drain and brain gain

Legal instruments, policies, strategies and programs

European Level

Brain drain is not just a challenge for Macedonia and the Western Balkans. The EU faces notable emigration of its highly skilled workers, especially the researchers and scientists. The data say European researchers' preferred destination are the United States. Although there can be hardly found an exact data on the migration of the highly skilled European scientists, many European institutions have acknowledged the rising emigration of highly skilled professionals, and labeled it as an important issue. Therefore, the European institutions have adopted a multi-layered policy approach towards overturning brain drain and achieving brain gain. There are several legal instruments that improve the mobility of researchers and highly skilled workers and programmes

that regularly allocate abundant share of European budget for human resources, which to a great extent addresses the issue of brain drain and its reversal into brain gain.

Migration in general, has been one of the most important issues for the European institutions in the last decade. With the Treaty of Amsterdam signed in 1999, immigration became a Competence of the European Union. With the inauguration of the Hague Programme in 2005, Migration became one of the ten priorities for the EU for the period of 2005-2010.

However, the sub-topic of labour migration in particular has been a subject that is marked by diverse regulations that differ one from another and a lack of general European policy to address it. At present, the EU institutions can only regulate the legal and procedural matters of entry and residence of immigrants and the rights of national of non-member countries moving to or residing in Member States. The measures taken at European level, first of all are intended to standardize and improve the legal status of the highly skilled individuals and especially the ones in the research industry. Depending on the legislative in

the country of residence, they can be categorized as employees, self-employed citizens, civil servants or students. For example, it can be an additional motive for a researcher to move out of a country if in his new destination, he would have a better status (to become full-time employee instead of self-employed). As well, the level of social security and benefits varies across countries. In some cases the friendly taxation policies and the high level of social security can be an important factor for researchers to move or remain in a given country. In the worst case scenario, they can be a subject of double taxation or to experience difficulties with the pension taxation. Therefore, the EU institutions put efforts in the standardization and optimization of social security regulation concerning researchers, highly skilled individuals and students.

In terms of the improvement of the status of the highly skilled, there are several notable EU legal instruments adopted in the last 5 years. On 12 October 2005, the European Council issued a Recommendation to facilitate the admission of third-country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Community (2005/762/EC), without legal obligations to the Member States. The Recommendation had several proposals regarding the facilitation of the process of long-term admission of third-country researchers to conduct scientific work in the European Community. As a follow up, the Council has adopted the Directive on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research which determines “the conditions for the admission of third-country researchers to the Member States for more than three months for the purposes of carrying out a research project under hosting agreements with research organizations”¹. Some of the Member States fulfilled the obligations from this Directive with the introduction of a so called “research” or “scientific visa” (France being the typical case). The “scientific visa” has been issued as a legal permission to for researchers that are third-country nationals to enter, reside and conduct research work in the EU.

In May 2009 the European Council adopted a Directive on the Admission of Highly Qualified Immigrants, which determines: “(a) the conditions of entry and residence for more than three months in the territory of the Member States of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment as EU Blue Card holders, and of their family members; (b) the conditions for entry and residence of third-country nationals and of their family members under point (a) in Member States other than the first Member State.” with this Directive the Council finally accepted the proposed the EU Blue Card instrument after plenty of debates and disagreements and for now is accepted by 24 of the Member States, with the exception of United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark . The “Blue Card” is conceptualized as a work permit, which should resemble a counter-part to the American “Green Card” and similar instruments in world economies that regulate the inflow of foreign workers. In the Directive, the term is defined as: “EU Blue Card’ means the authorization bearing the term ‘EU Blue Card’ entitling its holder to reside and work in the territory of a Member State”.

The “Blue Card” policy is especially friendly towards the highly skilled migrants and advances further the family reunion rights. However, the “Blue Card” will only provide a common basis for development of further European policies, while leaving the possibilities for different programs (primarily more advantageous) among the Member States that have accepted it. The duration of the EU Blue Card will be variable with a possibility for renewal. The applicants for EU Blue Card will have to fulfill several conditions: “(a) present a valid work contract or, as provided for in national law, a binding job offer for highly qualified employment, of at least one year in the Member State concerned; (b) present a document attesting fulfillment of the conditions set out under national law for the exercise by Union citizens of the regulated profession specified in the work contract or binding job offer as provided for in national law; (c) for unregulated professions, present the

documents attesting the relevant higher professional qualifications in the occupation or sector specified in the work contract or in the binding job offer as provided for in national law; (d) present a valid travel document, as determined by national law, an application for a visa or a visa, if required, and evidence of a valid residence permit or of a national long-term visa, if appropriate. Member States may require the period of validity of the travel document to cover at least the initial duration of the residence permit; (e) present evidence of having or, if provided for by national law, having applied for a sickness insurance for all the risks normally covered for nationals of the Member State concerned for periods where no such insurance coverage and corresponding entitlement to benefits are provided in connection with, or resulting from, the work contract; (f) not be considered to pose a threat to public policy, public security or public health.”

At the end of 2009, the Stockholm Programme was adopted. One of its objectives is: “reinforcing the link between migration and development by involving migrant communities in the development of their country or region of origin, adopting measures aimed at preventing and reducing brain drain and facilitating transfers of remittances; and making a more efficient use of the existing Union’s cooperation instruments to increase the capacity of the central, regional and local authorities of third countries to manage migration issues, including improving their capacity to offer adequate protection”.

EU and the research industry

Another field in which policies regarding brain drain are implemented is the financial investment in the research industry, depicted in the action plan “Investing in research: an action plan for Europe”. According to this plan by 2010 the EU was supposed to “provide a stronger public research base and make it more attractive to private investment to attain the objective of devoting 3% of GDP (gross domestic product) to research”. With these measures, the EU attempts to compete with the US, as the big and widening gap between the US



INVESTING IN RESEARCH

EU's FP7 is set to last for seven years (2007-2013), through which over € 50 billion will be spend in order to address Europe's "needs in terms of jobs and competitiveness, and to maintain leadership in the global knowledge economy."

and EU in terms of research investment is pointed as one of the reasons for undertaking the plan. The plan consists of several crucial areas: ensuring a process of European coordination, improving public support to research and technological innovation, redirecting public spending towards research and innovation and improving framework conditions for private investment in research. The European Commission has generally established a trend of increasing investments into research. These investments have been implemented through the expansion of financial schemes that benefit researchers and highly skilled workers, and through the establishment of networks for assistance for researchers; as well as through the advancement of Internet-based information services; and through programs on knowledge-transfer towards the peripheral countries of the EU and the Candidate ones. As well, the EC has taken other actions for reversing brain drain. Besides investing in research, the EU "competes" against the brain drain mainly through policies that "make Europe attractive to researchers from the rest of the world", that consist of improving legal and administrative

conditions for the mobility of researchers (such as possibilities for re-entering their native country, stable social security, "user-friendly" recognition of degrees). The most important financial tool for financing the research industry in Europe is the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (7FP). Generally 'Framework programmes' (FPs) are the most important European financial tools for the support of research and development activities. FP7 is set to last for seven years (2007-2013), through which over € 50 billion will be spend in order to address Europe's "needs in terms of jobs and competitiveness, and to maintain leadership in the global knowledge economy." The programme, which is very competitive, functions on a basis of grants that are awarded to researchers and research institutions from Europe and beyond for conducting purely scientific work, that will enhance the scientific and technological base of European industry and improve its "international competitiveness, while promoting research that supports EU policies." Macedonia joined FP7 in 2007 along with Turkey, Croatia and Serbia

through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Student exchange programmes

The perception of stake-holders and generally policy makers in Macedonia is that most important programmes in the field of brain drain and brain gain are the ones under the European Lifelong Learning program. The assumption that Macedonian education system is somewhat inferior to the one in the other European countries has contributed to the perception that a limited time abroad for Macedonian students means an excellent opportunity to gain advanced experience, knowledge and skills that they can hardly obtain if they stay in their homeland. The impression is that after coming back to Macedonia, the returnees contribute to the economy with their advanced skills obtained abroad which is in fact seen as the brain gain effect.

The Lifelong Learning Programme has been enacted by Decision No. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 which aims to generally improve and standardize the European education system, make quality education more available to individuals regardless of their age, origin and social status,

stimulate student's mobility and to give the education a more practical component that would bridge the gap between the education system and the labour market.

The Programme includes six sub-programmes.

The Comenius project supporting actions for pre-primary and primary schools and is therefore not an object of interest of this report.

The European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (known as "the ERASMUS Programme" or simply Erasmus – as a tribute to the philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam who has lived and worked in the XV-XVI century) is considered to be the most important brain gain agency in Macedonia. It provides opportunities for student exchanges in higher education and volunteering, as well as for cooperation and establishment of joint programmes between higher education institutions. The Programme has been established back in 1987 and has achieved immense success. The official website of the European Commission says that: "Around 90% of European universities take part in Erasmus and 2 million students have participated since it started in 1987. The annual budget is in excess of €440 million, more than 4,000 higher education institutions in 31 countries participate, and even more are waiting to join."

The Leonardo da Vinci programme (named after another famous European from the history, the renaissance man Leonardo who lived and worked in the XV and XVI century) targets students who want need support in their initial and continuing vocational education and training. Its main goals are providing opportunities for advanced training for students, improvement of the general level of quality in advanced education and enhancing the appeal, mobility and individualism of advanced studies and internships. The final goal for the programme is to improve competitiveness of European labour market and to support innovative actions in vocational education and training. The programme is important since it deals precisely with the sphere of vocational education and

training, which in Macedonia is seen as underdeveloped.

The Grundtvig programme (named after the Danish pastor from the XVIII and XIX century) deals with adult education and training. Although there are clear benefits from the programme (for instance, increasing the general level of highly educated population), its impact for the brain gain is limited as its subject are not young highly-skilled potential migrants. Two less discussed sub-programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the Macedonian context are the Jean Monnet Project which is focused on excellence in studies related to European integration, and the Transversal programme that supports activities in the fields of studying foreign languages, improvement of education policy and ICT development. They have the potential as the rest of the sub-programmes, yet they have not been on agenda of the National Agency and there are not much data on their implementation in Macedonia.

Another set of European programmes considered by stakeholders as important instrument for achieving brain gain in Macedonia are the external programmes and policies. The most important from them is the Tempus programme which "supports the modernization of higher education and creates an area of co-operation in countries surrounding the EU. Established in 1990 (...), the scheme now covers 27 countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East." The Tempus includes two sets of activities: joint projects implemented by higher education institutions and structural measures intended to reform of higher education institutions and education systems in the EU and in the partner countries. Currently, Tempus IV is being implemented in Macedonia, after the completing of the previous three phases. It supports reforms in the academic curricula which are reflected through the introduction of the three-cycle system, modernization of the curricula and the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the recognition of degrees.

Tempus also covers structural measures, such as governmental reforms related to the university management and services for students, introduction of quality assurance, improving institutional and financial autonomy and accountability, providing equal and transparent access to higher education and developing international relations, contributing to the general improvement of the education system in the country.

The Erasmus Mundus programme which "aims to enhance quality in higher education through scholarships and academic cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world". The programme has initially been adopted in 2001, and currently it is in its second phase (2009-2013). It aims to stimulate structured cooperation between higher education institutions and academic staff in Europe and third countries, to create "centres of excellence" and to provide highly trained human resources. The Erasmus Mundus programme offers several special degrees in studies related to the European integration.

Policies and programmes on brain drain and brain gain in Macedonia

Macedonia is considered to be a country with a lack of policies addressing the brain drain issue. The single most important strategy brought by the Government and in general the state institutions of the Republic of Macedonia has been the National Resolution on Migration Policy 2009-2014. Some of the basic principles of the Resolution, among other things, are "the primacy of long-term macro-economic utility based on the free migratory movements" and the responsibility of the state for the return of members of Macedonian diaspora. In terms of the labour migration, the main goal is "to monitor and harmonize the national legislation with the EU acquis, (...) the creation of a centralized database on foreigners, and improved employment procedures concerning foreign employees able to fill the labour market gap for desirable and needed skills, such as investors and highly skilled professionals in various disciplines." Labour immigration is regulated with the Law on

Employment and Work of Foreigners, enacted in 2007. The main instrument that regulates labour immigration is the work permit, which is issued on the basis of equal treatment and non-discrimination, upon request of the worker or the employer. The procedure is rather complicated and painful. The law on the other hand, contains provisions and measures for regulating (limiting and stopping) the inflow of migrants in cases of increased migration, regulate the presence of self-employed ones, penalizing foreign workers with high fees, but it does not focus on the immigration of highly skilled individuals. Macedonian migration policy is especially concerned with the diaspora. The diaspora is an important economic factor as a lot of remittances and foreign direct investments come from Macedonian citizens abroad or foreigners that have family ties in Macedonia. Additionally, with the National Resolution on Migration, the diaspora is seen as a potential factor in overcoming the negative impact of the brain drain and initiating brain gain in the country. As the IOM (2009) suggests, "According to the resolution on the country's migration policy of 2009–2014 the main policy aim in relation to the diaspora is to mitigate the negative impact of brain drain on the country's socio-economic development and growth. Among the countervailing measures to stem the loss of local skills and knowledge are efforts to facilitate temporary or circular migration and to promote return, including temporary returns for expatriates to benefit from their special skills and expertise in various fields of importance to the country's growth, and that are not otherwise available. As part of this endeavor, the government is considering a number of measures to be able to assess the size and geographical spread of the diaspora communities more accurately, including the establishment of a database and the registration of particular categories of Macedonian expatriates whose support and contribution would be of particular value and benefit to the country and its citizens (diaspora mapping)."

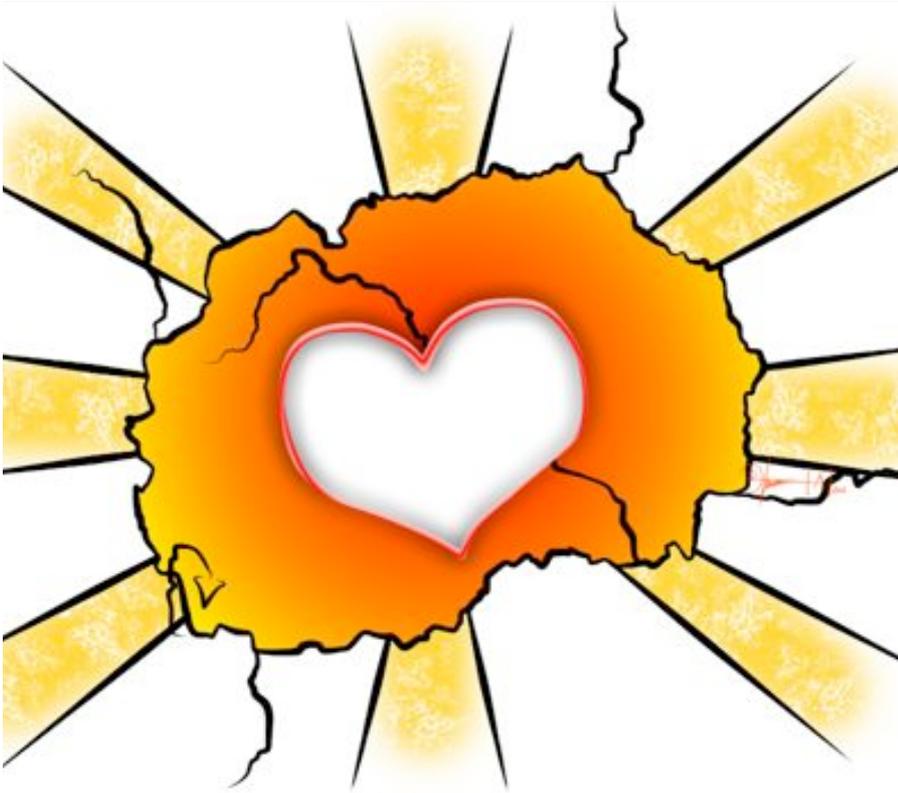
The Resolution sees emigration from Macedonia as an "intense" process

and punctuates the lack of accurate data on that matter. The Resolution also points to three most common types of emigration after 2000: the one motivated by the idea of uniting with the family members that are already abroad; the temporary economic migration of young people seeking part-time jobs for a limited amount of time in more developed countries and the brain drain, or the increased emigration of young highly skilled people, which is often permanent. The brain drain is hereto labeled as "worrying" for the future of the country. However, there is an evident lack of advanced policies that will relate the diaspora with the issue of brain gain. The only direct measures taken are in the field of brain circulation, since every year the Government provides scholarship for several students to complete their expertise abroad, after which they are obliged to come back in Macedonia and work in the public administration for an arranged period of time.

The impact of these policies and programmes Effects and/or counter-effects

Due to the objective lack of reliable statistical data, the research team has been forced to use reduced methodology which was based primarily on anecdotal studies of individual cases, and analyzing the outcome of the brain drain / brain gain policies in the light of other tendencies in the Macedonian society. Several of the interviewees have stated that the student exchange programs have resulted with increased student mobility. The involvement of students from Macedonia in European exchange programmes seems to be on the rise compared to the years before. The assumption is that students receive good education through which they improve their skills and competences and after their return they contribute to the increase of quality at the domestic labor market. Similarly, representatives of youth organizations that participate in the internship and volunteering programmes, have stated that through the experience that students acquire abroad has the same effect of improving their

starting positions in the labor market, but also improves the general level of the market itself. However, there have been objections to this claims. Some of the stake-holders claim that regardless of the possible increase, still no large number of students from Macedonia are actually involved in mobility programs. On the other hand, Macedonian universities are not ready to accept foreign students as part of the exchange, which is also a factor for the limited participation of Macedonian students in the process. Furthermore, the lack of capacities of Macedonian educational institutions to provide the necessary conditions for attracting foreign students, is a negative indicator for the possibilities of achieving brain gain. Another remark made by experts in the field (Filkov, 2010), is that there is a demeaning trend demonstrated by public offices in terms of the utilization of highly skilled returnees in Macedonia. Namely, there is often a case that students or young working people that are sent abroad for completing their education, completing advanced programmes and training and obtaining important experience, knowledge and skills, after their return in the homeland are put on inadequate positions, for which they are either too qualified or not qualified at all. These impressions have been confirmed during our contacts with several young highly skilled returnees, who have complained about their unfavorable position after their return in Macedonia. Some of them have even stated that they are now in positions that are lower payed than before leaving, and that they seriously consider leaving the country after they fulfill their obligations. In these cases, the problem of brain waste emerges, since the investment in one's advanced training is not returned. As well, the improper usage of individual's capacities can harm their own well-being and future development. The extreme case of corruption that broke out in the National Agency for European Education Programs and Mobility is another indicator of the problem of corruption even in the field of brain circulation. The National Agency has been involved in a major financial fraud, while it failed to implement some of the arrange tasks



PERSPECTIVES

The general impression is that it will be very hard to mitigate the adverse effects of the brain drain. Macedonia lacks concrete policies and programmes that address the issue properly. Official institutions frequently declare their concerns over the developments yet there is no follow up in terms of concrete measures. At the same time, although Macedonian diaspora is considered an important political factor and a possible factor in the economy, there is no steps towards its engagement into brain gain processes. The picture is the logo of the so called Diaspora Coordination Body which was established in 2007 and mysteriously stopped working since.

with the European institutions that were generally intended to help Macedonian researchers (FOSIM, 2010). Another factor that has a negative impact on the efforts to achieve brain gain is the hard procedure for foreigners willing to obtain work permit in Macedonia. Several cases analyzed by the CRPM have shown that the bureaucratic procedures are rather demotivating for foreigners, and even among them highly skilled ones, willing to work in Macedonia. As the study suggests that the number of foreigners possessing a Macedonian work permit “is small does not seem surprising”. The reasons for such situation are “not to be purely economic, but also legal and administrative. The complicated administrative procedures and the feeling of being a priori rejected by the society because of being a foreigner may prevent many people from emigrating to Macedonia, and make some of those that have done this question their choice. Hence, the country becomes deprived of many individuals that are highly educated and have the possibility of contribute towards the country’s development. This only adds to the problem of brain-drain from the country and further hinders the country’s progress. In addition to the

trend of highly educated professionals leaving Macedonia, a parallel trend of less educated illegal immigrants coming to work in the country occurs” (CRPM, 2008). As well, there have been no significant effects in terms of the linking with the diaspora. First, there is a constant failure on keeping track of the movement of Macedonian citizens (CRPM, 2008). Second, there has been a failure in terms of mapping the diaspora comprised of people that are not Macedonian citizens, but in a way have ties with the country and can contribute to the country’s development (Damjanovski, 2008). Third, the governmental Agency of Emigration, the public organization House of Emigrants as well as many diasporic associations have engaged primarily in cultural activities abroad, rather than in strengthening the cooperation between Macedonia and Macedonian diaspora. Finally, the only economic tie between Macedonia and the diaspora can be seen in the remittances and in the field of FDI, while there are rare attempts to utilize the human capital the Macedonian diaspora has for “virtual return” or for formation of knowledge and skill based networks. (Damjanovski, 2008).

From here on, we can conclude that there has been no significant effects in terms of preventing or reducing the brain drain tendency; no significant effects in terms of stimulating brain gain neither through the attraction of highly skilled workers nor through stimulating the return of highly skilled emigration from Macedonia; the only result that can be pointed out that there has been some increase in the student mobility as a consequence of the implementation of European student exchange programmes, and there has been also a small yet insufficient progress in terms of reforming the education system, partially due to the usage of European funds. However, even in these two areas, there has been a notable failure, in terms of the financial frauds by the National Agency for European Education Programmes and Mobility. ■

Q&A Key Stakeholders in the Field of Brain Drain/Gain*

Governmental Institutions and Public Agencies Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Emigration Agency; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Economy; Agency for Employment; Ministry of Education and Sciences; National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility; Agency for Youth and Sports; Economic Chamber; House of Immigrants; Diaspora Coordination Body

International Organizations International Organization for Migration; United Nations Development Programme; Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Macedonia; Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative

Institutions of Higher Education Institutions of higher education have been considered stake-holders in the brain drain / brain gain field, since they are directly involved in the work with students and youth, but they also carry research and surveys and can provide solid expertise regarding the issue. We have managed to establish contact with two representatives from the public University Ss Cyril and Methodius from Skopje (UKIM) which is by far the largest in the country, and with one representative from the State University of Tetovo, International University of Struga, University MIT of Skopje, and the FON University of Skopje.

Non-Governmental Organizations We have considered non-governmental organizations dealing with students exchanges and youth issues as important stake-holders in the process of development of brain gain and brain circulation policies. We have invited the following organizations to participate in our research: AEGEE (Association des Etats Generaux des Etudiants de l'Europe – European Students Forum); ELSA (European Law Students Association); MOF (Youth Educational Forum); AIESEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales); BEST (Board of European Students of Technology); creACTive; Volunteers Centre Skopje.

Business Sector Representatives of the business sector are considered to be important stake-holders in the processes of achieving brain gain ; however the focus on our research was put on the policy makers. During informal contacts with members of the business community we have received important remarks and suggestions for addressing certain issues in the field.

The general impression of the process of interviewing stake-holders, however, was that their capacities in terms of knowledge and interest in the topic did not meet the project's expectations. Out of the 27 attempted interviews* (with representatives of 10 governmental institutions or public organizations; 4 international organizations; 5 representatives of institutions of higher education; and 8 non-governmental organizations), we successfully carried only 16 interviews. By successfully carried interview we refer to those interviews where the interviewees actually answered our questions. In the 11 cases where we did not manage to complete the interviews, either the interviewees rejected

answering the questions at the personal meeting or via email, or we failed to even arrange the interview. From the successful interviews, it can be seen that generally the stake-holders are not very familiar with the existing European policies, but many of them are in fact familiar with student exchange programs and consider them as important instruments for achieving brain gain. There has been almost no feedback on the questions regarding brain drain and brain gain related policies and programmes on a national level, which only contributes to the assumption that there is a serious lack of such policies and programmes. Regarding the perception of the effects, it is also very illustrative that no one from the

respondents had no idea about existence of any concrete results about the brain drain or brain gain in the country. The majority of the interviewees assumed that there is an increased student mobility as a result of the student exchange programmes. Their suggestions for overcoming gaps in the field were mostly grounded on the critique that there is no relevant data on labour migration from/to/in Macedonia, in general. Regarding the proposed measures for achieving brain gain, the stake-holders have been generally focused on the financial incentives for the returnees.

Existing Gaps or Challenges in the Field

One of the strongest impressions from the work conducted during the survey, which has been later confirmed by the answers from the stake-holders is that there is not much possibility for successful monitoring of the effects of the existing policies and programmes in the field of brain drain and brain gain. The lack of statistical data curtails researchers' possibilities for examining the effects of such policies and programmes. Even the State Statistical Office (2007) has concluded that: "Available data do not entirely cover the migration features. Therefore, establishing good databases for migration profiles could be an important element for the creation of appropriate measures and a migration policy." Hereto, obtaining accurate statistical data on emigration in general remains as a key task for the responsible institutions. As well, research on the diasporic structures and diaspora mapping needs to be carried in order to create successful policies. There has also been lack of sociological surveys on the attitudes of the highly skilled individuals that are currently abroad, or on the attitudes on anyone that is on a longer stay in a foreign country. There has never been a survey on the reasons for migration, while there has always been an assumption that it is the economy, the education, the problems with the law and so on. However, there needs to be a survey on the "push" and the "pull" factors. If the "push" factors are related to the general political and economic situation in the country, or some particular problem, such as the lack of social security, then they can not be addressed simply by direct policies; it will be rather an evidence of structural problems that are only reflected through the brain drain (if brain drain is not always the reflection of structural problems). Another important gap is the absence of advanced categorization of migrants according to their skills. That goes both for the emigrants, but also for the immigrants. There can not be policies reversing brain drain or stimulating brain

gain if there is no emphasis put on the labour migration of the highly skilled individuals. It is also of great importance to see the structure of foreigners working or willing to work in Macedonia according to their qualifications. Yet another possible challenge for researchers is the questionable fate of the returnees after coming back in Macedonia. In the first phase of the research we have come across several cases in which the returnees have been put on inadequate jobs and have been underpaid. This has led to a brain waste and loss of their potential. If that turns out to be the occasion in more than just a few cases, then it will impose another problem that will have to be addressed.

Recommendations How to Develop Brain Gain Policies and Programmes?

Upon the review of abundant literature and the discussion with several stake-holders, we have come up with several preliminary recommendations for developing brain gain policies and programmes. These are general directions that are going to be deeply researched and elaborated in the course of the project. The first set of measures would be to offer multi-dimensional incentives (financial, but primarily "personal") for potential highly skilled immigrants from foreign countries, as well as to those who have already migrated. The personal incentives should address the problem of family reunion and family maintenance; and to facilitate the struggle with bureaucracy for issuing work permit and other documents. This would also refer to the procedures for recognition of diplomas – they do not need to be verified by the minister personally – and that would shorten the procedure significantly. Grants are also one way of motivating return migration.

Second, as the low level of highly skilled individuals in the society is not a result exclusively of the brain drain, long term investment in higher education needs to be carried. The institutions of higher education need to establish centers for career and institutes and other facilities through which opportunities for

practical work for the students will be offered. Initiate academic and research networks for temporary mobility of mostly young academics and researchers;

Alternatively, as DIIS (2008) has suggested, provide three pillars of development: "Technical assistance: Temporally deploy skilled foreigners to secure the skills needed to produce reforms in fragile situations.; 'Open door' policy: Facilitate the re-entry of skilled migrants back into the host country after a period in their home country to mitigate migrants' fears of losing legal residence rights. Improving conditions for those who stayed behind: Secure adequate salary levels (and regular disbursements) for skilled people who remain behind so that they stay in their profession. This is a prerequisite for improvement in performance, as well as recruitment and retention". In the absence of own ideas and resources for in-depth analysis, you can copy from the successful - UNDP Albania's Brain Gain Project (2008) recommends the following measures: "identification of graduate students that are engaged in scientific activity abroad; bringing together Albanian students abroad in conferences and workshops taking place in Albania; facilitating the activity of the Diaspora Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania; facilitating the creation of a fellowship scheme for CEOs with the most important public enterprises; creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment for the inclusion of overseas graduates in the Albanian civil service; promotion of Diaspora entrepreneurship in Albania; and developing trade links, including capacity building of relevant institutions." Finally - use new technologies in order to stimulate "virtual return" and knowledge sharing, but also to bring the highly skilled Macedonian citizens or members of the diaspora into one place.

Concluding remarks About the Project and Further Work

The project "Developing brain gain policies in the Western Balkans" is coordinated by Grupa 484 Beograd and is being carried in 5 countries

simultaneously (Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania). It is funded by the Balkan Trust for Democracy. In the first phase the report based on the interviews with stake-holders took place, along with the desk research and the review of existing policies in the field. The first phase is being concluded with the publishing of this report. Prior to the finalization a round-table was carried in which CRPM's researchers had an opportunity to hear to the suggestions by stake-holders. The event took place on 07.04.2010 in CRPM's offices. It was covered by several print and electronic media.

Nonetheless, we consider the round table having only a partial success. It was attended by only 11 out of 20+ invited stake-holders. All of the attendees were representatives of civil society organizations and institutions of higher education. This outcome has also shown that the most important stake-holders are not as interested into working in the field. The discussion during the round-table confirmed our general impressions on the lack of existing brain gain policies and instruments in Macedonia. Some of the participants emphasized the fact that besides not having a strategy to initiate a return migration of the highly skilled emigrants, Macedonian institutions also discourage highly skilled foreigners that want to work for a local company. There was a strong remark that in the further work we have to consider the business sector as a relevant factor, and to involve representatives from the business sector in the project.

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ABOUT THE CRPM

The Center for Research and Policy Making is an organization that has a mission to promote good governance and development in Macedonia on the basis of relevant, evidence based policy research, capacity building and trainings, evaluations, analyses and surveys, without regard to and independently of the particular interests of any group of the society, either political, social or economic.

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