



**Project: Developing “brain gain” policies in the
Western Balkans**

NATIONAL REPORT OF MONTENEGRO

Centre for Democracy and Human Rights – CEDEM

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List of Abbreviations

- EOM - Employment Office in Montenegro
- EC - European Commission
- ERA - European Research Area
- ERASMUS PROGRAMME - European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
- BGP - Brain Gain Program
- CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
- TEMPUS - Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies
- MoE - The Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro
- HRMA - Human Resources Management Authority
- SEE - South-Eastern European countries



Introduction

Scope

Brain drain is one of the key problems regarding country capacities' facing the European assessment challenges. This brain drain process refers on large scale emigration of individuals with technical skills and knowledge due to the conflict, lack of opportunity, political instability or bad economic situation in the country of origin.

First of all, it is necessary to point out the considerable lack of statistics on migration which provide specific information on possibilities how to turn brain drain into brain gain. So far, an expert research concerning this topic in Montenegro has not been conducted. The greatest obstacle is the fact that Montenegro was a part of the State Union with Serbia and no separate findings related to this issue existed. Many institutions dealing with this issue are based in Belgrade, Serbia.¹

After Montenegro renewed independence in May 2006, several international and European contracts that regulate the field of migration were signed.² These contracts have led to the development of a new legal framework, but not to the actual implementation and monitoring over the laws. There was not a substantial practical experience in trying to establish a policy or at least a programme that would regulate and motivate highly educated people to stay in the country.

Montenegro faced this problem at a high level twenty years ago, when many of the highly educated people left the country in order to find better life conditions in the West European countries.³ It is still unclear how many students in total study abroad or stayed

¹ There are several institutions settled in Belgrade that are dealing this issue. But since independence of Montenegro 2006, Montenegro is dealing the issue separately and so far, there is no any research institute or similar institution dealing this problem.

² Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, 2004: Law on Registers of Temporary and Permanent Residents, 2008

³ Up to the data from Institute of sociological research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, there were more than 5% of the citizens of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia left the country between 1994 and 1999 2% of them are highly educated people.

in the country of emigration. But, the survey conducted by the King Baudouin Foundations shows that a very few students, only 26 of 2137, who study abroad wants to come back to their home country.⁴ Even though the economic and financial reasons forced them to leave the country then, this reason has remained as the main reason for many young professionals leaving the Balkans. Many of them want to return, but their country of origin does not have policies to infiltrate them into the system and provide them with good life conditions.

Factors

The main reason for brain drain is the bad economic situation in the Western Balkans countries.

Montenegro as a developing country has a small but also poorly developed labour market. Students from Montenegro in the survey concerning its mobility confirm that the main reason for leaving the country is career development in general (80.2 % of Montenegrin students agree upon this). This fact shows that there are no many opportunities to the best students to be infiltrated in labour's market structures. After graduation, young people are facing problems when looking for jobs. The first contact young graduates have with the job market is thus deceiving. One of the main reasons for not having an adequate job is the high level of corruption existing in recruitment processes. This phase often became very frustrating to most of the graduated students after which they make a decision to go abroad and find better conditions elsewhere. As our interviewers agreed, only graduated students whose parents are working in the Government or other relevant institutions could find a job in a short time span.

The second reason is the overall high rate of unemployment. The number of unemployed people with diploma has increased by 55.2% since 2007. There is a negative progress between the number of the students and markets need (2388 unemployed people in 2007 compared with 3705 unemployed people in 2010)⁵. This problem has its roots in hyper production of a private high schools or faculties in Montenegro since its independence. Many private faculties provide good conditions for studying, but a very small number of them provide a job for their students afterwards. Lidija Ercegovic, Counsellor for

⁴ Students' mobility in Western Balkan countries, Besic Milos, the King Baudouin Foundation, 2009

⁵ Interview with Ratko Bakrac, Assistant Director of the Employment Office in Montenegro



Educational Cooperation, said that Montenegro will have army of unemployed high educated persons in a few years if this process continues.⁶

The lack of communication between state institutions and human resources is one of the problems of the brain drain process in Montenegro. Even though state institutions show great interest in solving the brain drain problem, many of them do not have official policies in Human Resources management. None of the Ministries whose representatives were included in the interview process during this project said that they have cooperation with the Human Resources Management Agency or Employment Office in Montenegro or even has their own Managing of Human Resources.⁷

The Employment Office offers purely statistics, but does not verifying the actual needs of the market. The Agency has a very soft communication with the University of Montenegro as well with employers participating in the recruitment process. Private sector, as stakeholder in the process of recruitment, directly, is inflicted by the potential brain gain process, but they do not show any initiative to deal with this issue.

These are only some of the reasons of the continuing brain drain tendencies in Montenegro. There are also other factors which have not been examined. In particular, individual reasons related to family reunion contribute to the brain drain process and policies cannot act on these reasons.

Existing frameworks in the field of brain drain and brain gain - Legal instruments, policies, strategies and programs

Brain drain policy is not only a big issue in the countries of the Western Balkans, but equally in the EU countries. Many European scientists or researchers prefer working in the United States. United States are still regarded as ‘land of promise’ even for highly

⁶ Interview with Lidija Ercegovic, Counselor for Educational Cooperation, Bureau for Scientific, Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation of Republic of Montenegro

⁷ During interview with Mirsad Bibovic, the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Montenegro considers that there is no any modern public management incorporated in the field of public administration in order to improve its capacities.



educated European people. Better practice in the fields of social benefits in the United States and overall conditions of employment contribute to a great degree of brain drain process in the EU countries.

Since the Maastricht Treaty, EU tries to face the problem by passing different Directives, Regulations, Recommendations or launching various projects.

The movement of researchers out of Europe - Brain Drain - is an issue of deep concern on both national and European level. By understanding the factors which influence researchers' mobility decisions, the movement can potentially impact public policy governing mobility and see the possibility to convert brain drain into brain gain.

To better understand the mobility of researchers, a Researcher Survey was devised and compiled through the More brain Project, EU FP7.

This EU FP7 funded project is collaboration between Iceland, Ireland, Israel and Spain. These countries have a long history of their researchers living and working abroad. On December 18, 2006 the Council adopted decisions establishing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community (EC) for research and technological development for the period 2007 to 2013 and the FP7 for nuclear research activities for 2007 to 2011.

Through the FP7 Programme, Mr. Dragan Batricevic, a journalist at *Prosvjetni rad* in Montenegro, has collected stories about 45 young researchers who left Montenegro in the last twenty years. He found some of them through their families and friends, but there are also some of them who contacted Mr. Batricevic. We can assume that highly educated people who left the country and find good jobs abroad are very interested in sharing their experience with young people in Montenegro. The negative aspect of the issue is the lack of institutional access to the topic. Simply put, if no one is interested in the topic, there is no story. And afterwards, one cannot identify the reasons of professionals leaving their country and suggest a new policy in order to turn brain drain into brain gain.

European Commission has also adopted the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in order to define the role of the fellow researcher, at one side, and the employers, at the other. By its implementation the process of employment should be transparent and just. Even though these measures exist, there is an overall consensus that creating European Research Area (ERA) is a slow initiative. From Mr. Batricevic's stories there is an overall picture that many people, who left the country with a Degree in their hands, could not find appropriate jobs in the EU



countries. Only some of them succeed in having a perspective job which fulfils their expectations.⁸

Because of the lack of practical experience, the European Commission has published a directive entitled “Better careers and more mobility - A European partnership for researchers”, in which the EC suggests several measures that will improve human resources in European Research Area. Up to 2010, the European Partnership (an agreement between the EU countries and countries in the process of assessment) should progress in the following fields: transparent employment, fulfilment of the needs of researchers in the field of social assurances, good conditions for employment and improving the knowledge and professional skills of the research himself. Montenegro has adopted this Directive, but so far, very little has been done in practical terms.

Student exchange programmes

The overall perception of the Montenegrin educational system also contributes to the fact that young people chose to leave the country. Many professors from the region are lecturers at the University of Montenegro. The University compensates them travel and accommodation costs, instead of giving out scholarships to talented young people in order to give them an opportunity to become a part of the educational system in Montenegro. During the nineties, the EU countries did not give out many scholarships to students from the Balkans. But since 2000, the European Commission has created a special field of its authorities to bring non-EU students to attend schools in EU countries by launching various students exchange projects.

CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies) is a multilateral mobility programme between Central European higher education institutions. CEEPUS came into being in 1993, when Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia signed the first cooperation agreement. The agreement was later joined by Croatia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

⁸ Data available at web presentation of FP7 in Montenegro,
http://www.mneresearch.ac.me/cg/naucna_dijaspora_arhiva.php



Macedonia and Albania. These opportunities are designed to strengthen professional and personal relationships among Central European scholars empowering and developing Central Europe both in political and economical levels.

THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME is EU student exchange programme established in 1987. It forms a major part of the EU Lifelong learning Programme 2007-2013 and is the operational framework for the European Commission's initiatives in higher education. Students who join the Erasmus Programme study for a period of at least 3 months to an academic year in another European country. The Erasmus Programme guarantees that the period spent abroad is recognized by their university when they come back as long as they abide by terms previously agreed. Students from the Western Balkans can also apply through the *Basileus* project. The majority of Montenegrin students, 92.8 are not even informed about scholarships or mobility programmes. Only 1.9% of the students at the University of Montenegro have all the information about Erasmus Programme. There is no any country programme about informing Montenegrin students of mobility programmes. Internet and the students who have already studied abroad are the most important medium for obtaining information about study opportunities.⁹

TEMPUS is a third programme of the European Commission that supports the modernization of higher education and creates an area of co-operation in countries surrounding the EU through different regional projects. Established in 1990, the scheme now covers 27 countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

On October 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Podgorica introduced FORECAST, the undergraduate student exchange program for 2009-2010. Nineteen Montenegrin students were selected for full scholarships through this program over the last two years. Ten of them are currently attending various U.S. universities during this academic year. The FORECAST program provides scholarships for one academic year of undergraduate, non-degree study in the United States. The scholarship covers international/domestic travel, tuition, room and board, accident/sickness insurance, a small monthly stipend and funding for books. Students live in university dormitories and have the opportunity to participate in campus organizations and activities and internships. They take part in community service activities in order to gain a better understanding of U.S. society and values.

⁹ Students' mobility in Western Balkan countries, Besic Milos, the King Baudouin Foundation, 2009



The procedures for obtaining these scholarships are very complicated and it becomes very frustrating for the students. Nevertheless, the linked paperwork, a very little help from The University of Montenegro to get through the procedures or no functioning university partnership are also related to the small number of students studying abroad.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro is in charge of launching Programmes funded by the European Commission. Even though there is an agreed procedure of obtaining scholarships, as our interviewees agree, only those whose relatives are at the positions influencing the final decisions often get these scholarships. Even if a talented young person gets the scholarship, he/she rarely returns to his country of origin. This is the moment where the problem is been set on the national level. There is no Action Plan or Strategy brought by the Government to possibly make conditions for the return young professionals to Montenegro. There are several Initiatives, only supported by international organizations, which are potentially going to increase the number of people returning to the Balkan countries.¹⁰

Policies and programmes on brain drain and brain gain in Montenegro

Montenegro is viewed as a country with a lack of legislation considering the brain drain issue. The only document related to the policy over the young educated people is National Youth Action Plan of Montenegro, brought by the Government in 2006. This Plan recognizes the unemployment problem as one of the main reasons of the brain drain process, but there is no activity mentioned to improve the situation in Montenegro regarding this issue.

The Employment Office of Montenegro has announced that the main characteristic of the labour force in Montenegro is the lack of structural adjustment between labour force supply and demand, whereas supply relates to the number of unemployed persons from the register of the Employment Office. The discrepancy between labour force supply and demand resulted in an increased average waiting period for employment. This has a negative influence on the reduced quality of labour force supply, or in the loss and

¹⁰ WUS Austria Brain Gain Program, UNESCO – Conference on launching the crosscutting Strategy of Science, technology and Innovation 2009 – 2015



outdating of knowledge and abilities acquired in regular education. The average waiting period for employment is approximately 3.5 years, while the average age of the unemployed is 33.

As the unemployment remains a complex and important issue in Montenegro, the state created stimulation programmes as the one that contributes preparation for employment organized by The Employment Office in Montenegro.

The aim of this programme is the opening of new vacancies through the support and development of entrepreneurship. Preparatory programmes refer to different fields in order to improve human resources' capacities (ICT, foreign languages, further qualification, re-qualification or specialization). The highest number of participants in these programmes, around 60%, comes from the younger unemployed population, especially in the programmes dedicated to the acquiring of computer skills and foreign languages, etc.

The system of higher education in South-Eastern European countries (SEE) is mainly influenced by the academic isolation of the past years, the underdeveloped infrastructure at the universities, the complicated political structures and the bad economic situation. As a consequence, many young people and scholars have left their countries to study, teach and conduct research abroad, which led to the widespread phenomenon of brain drain. Some of them finished their studies and specializations, and work throughout the world at universities or similar institutions, or are experts in relevant areas. These scholars would like to visit their home countries in order to share their experiences and to disseminate new methods. Conversely there are gaps in the local research and teaching capacity at the universities in Montenegro, especially on the postgraduate level.

The Brain Gain Program (BGP) organized by WUS Austria is aimed at inviting professors, assistants or experts in relevant fields originating from former Yugoslavia or Austria to teach as guest lecturers – for several days up to 3 weeks at universities or faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Through this Programme 33 experts, who work in the EU countries, came to Montenegro to be lecturers at the University of Montenegro. The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics use this Programme often in order to invite its former students to be visiting



professors in Podgorica.¹¹ Most of them are working in the big international industrial companies or in well-known Research Institutes.

Through Strategy of Science and Research Activities, the Ministry of Education and Science provided research practice for PhD students between 27 and 34 years old at one of the best European universities.¹² There are also activities related to financing scientific activities of Montenegrin people who are working abroad by connecting them to scientific institutions in the country of origin.

Aiming to decrease the level of brain drain, the Ministry of Education has solved the housing problem of all PhD employed at the University of Montenegro by offering them housing facilities.¹³ So far, there is no official document that would recognize this problem as one of the main reasons to increase brain gain process in Montenegro.

Human Resource Management Authority is doing a research on creating data of all Montenegrin scientists living and working abroad. This research has begun in April 2010. Identifying Montenegrin experts who are living abroad is the first step of involving them and their knowledge in the expert community.

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

There are many international programmes that provide students' mobility in the EU countries. But, even though they are active in Montenegro, not many students use these opportunities to improve their education. There are several reasons for this situation.

The first one is the high degree of nepotism in the communication between the organization that provides scholarships and the students in Montenegro. As the Ministry

¹¹ Interview with Predrag Stanisic, the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

¹² Strategy of Science and Research activities 2008 – 2016

¹³ There were 134 apartments that were given to the PhD. employees at the University of Montenegro. Data available at link <http://www.pobjeda.co.me/citanje.php?datum=2005-12-15&id=77689>

of Education is often responsible for the recruitment process, people who are working in the Ministry often use this opportunity to give out the scholarships to either their relatives or students they somehow know for even though there is an agreed procedure of obtaining a scholarship. That is why many talented students stay without opportunities to experience other educational system. But even if the talented young students obtain the scholarship, the Montenegrin Government does not offer any policies to attract its students back to the country.

Also, the Montenegrin system of education does not attract foreigners to the University of Montenegro. Foreign students have to pay a high tuition fee in order to study at Montenegrin faculties. Sometimes, these fees are smaller in other EU countries than they are in the Balkans. For example, the approximate scholar fee in Montenegro is 1500 Euros per year compared to Italian fees which are only 300 Euros. The scholar fees at the other countries of Western Balkans are also very high, but despite this fact, many Montenegrin students decide to study in Serbia, especially at the University of Belgrade and University of Novi Sad. Even though Serbia is one of the most important destination of the Montenegrin students and thus contributes to the Montenegrin brain drain and Serbia brain gain phenomenon, there are no data of how many students are actually studying there. The lack of competitiveness of Montenegrin schools contributes to the absence of interest for foreigners. As the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Predrag Stanisic says, the quality of the educational system has decreased from 2004 compared to the period of involving Bologna process in the educational system of Montenegro. Bologna process accelerates studying, but does it make the educational system better? He considers that in spite regarding the Bologna process as something positive, its results are going to be seen very soon.¹⁴

Since 2006, Montenegro has attracted many foreign companies to invest in the country. The businessmen usually arrive with their families. All of them need to obtain legal documents as foreigners and need to recognize their diplomas. This recognition is necessary in order to either be employed, either to continue to study. Many of these foreigners graduated from various private faculties in Russia and the former Soviet republics. Since the Office of Montenegrin Ministry of Education which publishes diplomas is overloaded with foreign diplomas, they often do it without checking the relevance first. This almost random recognition also contributes to an increasing number of highly educated people in Montenegro.

¹⁴ Interview with Predrag Stanisic, the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics



Key Stakeholders in the Field of Brain Drain/Gain

Governmental institutions of Montenegro:

Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Media, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Interior Affairs and Public Administration, Ministry of European Integration.

International Organizations:

International Organization for Migration IOM, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR, Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Montenegro.

University of Montenegro

Institutions of higher education are one of the key institutions in converting the brain drain into brain gain. But there are not many active initiatives supported by either the University or the Government of Montenegro. The only initiatives in terms of brain gain are supported by international organizations, as WUS Austria, European Commission, and Embassy of United States in Podgorica.

During this research, only the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economics and the “Rektorat”¹⁵ accepted to help this project with their own material.

Non governmental organizations

Some of the non-governmental organizations in Montenegro are dealing with this issue. Many of them are mediators between international or European programmes and Montenegrin students who want to study or work abroad after completing studies in Montenegro.

¹⁵ Rektorat is the highest academic official office of University of Montenegro.



Business sector

Even though the representatives of the business sector in Montenegro are very interested in brain gain to strengthen their human capacities, so far, they have not been included in projects regarding this issue.

During the process of interview, there comes out a general impression that stake holders (20 of them interviewed) recognize this issue as a key topic to solve the situation in terms of human resources in Montenegro.

As stakeholders who are directly inflicted by the issue, they are not familiar with the European projects or programmes in this field. Many of them, except the Ministry of Education and Science and some of the international and non governmental organizations are not familiar with on the national level.

They all agree that there are several reasons for the brain drain process. The bad economic situation in the Western Balkans influences this problem. After graduating, many students expect more than the country can provide them with in terms of financial and professional compensation. Each stakeholder considers nepotism in recruitment processes in the field of employment as one of the main problem in Montenegro.

In order to develop adequate policies, the state institutions, they all agree, need a comprehensive research that would potentially provide data on both brain drain and brain gain and the structure of it. So far, none of the institutions found itself as the one that will be in charge of conducting this kind of research.

Existing Gaps or Challenges in the Field

The general impression after finishing this research is the lack of data dealing with this issue. Data lacks not only on the number and profile of highly skilled persons that left the country but also on the number of immigrants who are at the same level of education and their position in the structure of Montenegrin labour society.

Lack of business opportunities in the country leave the impression that it is better to go abroad and work there even if the job is relevant to one's profession. Financial reason (that is in connection with job recruitment process and the offer in labour market) is one of the main reasons young people left the country as well as one of the main reason for



young students staying in the country of origin even though they want to study abroad. The Montenegrin government recognizes the importance of improving education and understands that it has to be a priority of the government. Montenegro needs to have a specific policy or strategy that will potentially create more qualitative human resources in both public and private fields.

The third reason of the existing gap is the structure of foreigners who work and live in Montenegro. The process of recognizing their diplomas enables us to see the profiles of foreigners in Montenegro. This “hyper production” of highly educated people, from Montenegro or abroad, gives them an opportunity to take part in the labour market that is not big enough for Montenegrin graduates. The Montenegrin labour market lacks the ability to integrate a higher number of highly educated professionals in its structures.

Recommendations - How to Develop Brain Gain Policies and Programmes?

The lack of adequate data and policy create a field where any serious research is not easy to be conducted. This type of research is necessary due to numerous reasons. First of all, one of the state institutions should conduct an extensive survey on the current state of migration of Montenegrin highly skilled or highly educated people. This survey would indicate whether they are interested in coming back and under which conditions would the talented young people stay in the country. Even though “only” between 15.1% and 26.3% of students, who study abroad intend to work abroad after having finished their studies, this should be a concern to policy makers in the Western Balkans.¹⁶

All interviewers agree upon proposing a new official legal document whose implementation will contribute to the brain gain process. By adopting a document for promoting brain gain process in Montenegro and its implementation in both public and private sector the situation could be improved. The Montenegrin Government will keep talented students in the country or even create possibilities for highly educated foreigners to find adequate jobs in Montenegro.

¹⁶ Students’ mobility in Western Balkan countries, Besic Milos, the King Baudouin Foundation, 2009



Concluding remarks - about the Project and Further Work

The project “Developing brain gain policies in the Western Balkans” is coordinated by Group 484 Beograd and is being carried out 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 was based on the interviews with stake-holders, along with the desk research and the review of existing policies in the field. The first phase is concluded with the writing of this report. The outcome after interviewing stakeholders, 20 of them, has shown they are more interested in this issue in theory than in practice. The consequence of that situation is the lack of brain gain policies in Montenegro. The Government adopted only the National Youth Action Plan, but there isn't a document related exclusively to this issue. For some further projects, stakeholders suggest adopting the Strategy for promoting brain gain process.



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