

RETURN

OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED
MIGRANTS TO THE
WESTERN BALKANS



Group 484



B | T | D The Balkan Trust
for Democracy

A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

RETURN OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED MIGRANTS TO THE WESTERN BALKANS

COMPENDIUM OF POLICY PAPERS

Belgrade , December, 2011.



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INTRODUCTION

Due to the globalisation process, development of transport and technology (especially IT technology), return has become only a stage in the migration cycle, instead of its final part as it was previously perceived. In the case of migration of highly skilled people and professionals, the return is one stage in the process of “brain circulation” and the possibility to achieve “brain gain”. However, in order to achieve brain gain and the ‘return of innovation’ (Cerase, 1974), characterised by the application of knowledge and experience gained abroad for socio-economic development of the country of origin, there has to be a motivated returnee with high potentials, but also the support of the government to enable their implementation.

For that reason, through the project “Advocating for Brain Gain Policies aimed at Reintegration of High-skilled Returnees in the Western Balkans” we wanted to examine characteristics of returnees and return to the Western Balkans, as well as to determine the role of the government and state institutions in encouraging return of innovation. Our objective was to influence the governments in the region to develop a systemic support to the return of our citizens abroad, and thus motivate them to return to the country and contribute to its development with their potentials, rather than to go back abroad disappointed, due to a lack of support, and remain there forever, without any desire to cooperate with the homeland.

Characteristics of returnees and return to the Western Balkans was examined through a pilot study, by an electronic questionnaire, with returnees in five countries - Albania (66), Bosnia and Herzegovina (26), Montenegro (25), Macedonia (47) and Serbia (97). The questionnaire examined three periods of a returnee’s experience: 1) departure from the country of origin, 2) living abroad and 3) return to the country of origin. Difficulties in finding returnees have shown, on the one hand, that the migration of highly educated migrants is not monitored and that there are no data and information on the number and characteristics of returnees, and on the other hand, a question has been opened as to what extent the return to the Western Balkans is carried out, i.e. whether the departure from the Western Balkans is a one-way process. The analysis of the responses of the surveyed returnees indicates that they have the potential to contribute to the development of the field of their expertise, of their communities and society as a whole, that they have the motivation to do so, but at the same time they see the lack of support from the government and society.

Despite this perception of returnees, the analysis of the existing strategic and legal documents shows that the governments of all five countries have recognised the development potential of migration of highly educated citizens and professionals and that they have developed strategic documents that incorporate goals for developing better cooperation with the scientific and professional diaspora and creating conditions for their return and reintegration. Unfortunately, these documents are rarely followed up with concrete measures and budget. Only in Albania, in cooperation with the UNDP, the government has developed a systemic Brain Gain Programme, which has led to changes in the legal framework and development of incentives for the return of highly qualified migrants. In other countries there are some projects of state institutions, international organisations and civil sector, as well as examples of self-organisation of representatives of the diaspora and returnees, which although limited both in scope and resources, provide important lessons and guidance for the systemic development and institutionalisation of such a practice.

The findings of the research and analysis, as well as the recommendations based on them are summarised in five policy papers presented in this compendium. They are used as advocacy tools in five countries in the Western Balkans. They were presented at national round tables:

"Is returning to Albania worth it?", "Does BiH Want Experts? Framework for Integration and Deployment of Potentials of the Highly Educated Returnees within the Brain Gain Perspective", "Brain drain, reintegration policies and networking support for the returnees in Macedonia", "Development of Integration Policies for Highly Skilled Returnees in Montenegro", and "Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications in Serbia". Each policy paper contains conclusions from the held round tables and media articles about the event. The round tables were attended by around 150 representatives of ministries and government institutions, international organisations, CSOs, academic society and media. They were introduced to the obstacles facing highly skilled returnees in the process of reintegration and recommendations for their overcoming.

The final event was the regional conference "Return of the Highly Skilled in the Western Balkans - brain gain or brain re-drain?". The conference was opened by Žarko Obradović, Minister of Education, stressing that the return of professionals was the duty of the entire society and that more should be invested in education and scientific research, but also in developing capacities of the domestic economy in order to be able to accept the knowledge and experience of these professionals. At the conference, 60 representatives of state bodies, civil society, academia and highly qualified migrants from the Western Balkans exchanged experiences on policies and practices for encouraging the return of highly skilled migrants, as well as their integration into overall social developments in countries of the region. It was pointed out that regional cooperation in the Western Balkans is necessary for the return of highly qualified people, and that it is also the most efficient mechanism for integration into the European area. This compendium ends with the conclusions from the regional conference and "echoes" in the media, setting coordinates for further developments and progress in this area.

We would like to thank all the partner organisations in the project - European Movement in Albania, Academia (BiH), Centre for Research and Policy Making (Macedonia) and Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (Montenegro), but also all returnees who participated in the research with a desire to contribute to creating conditions in their homeland in which they could apply their knowledge and experience gained abroad and contribute to its development. We thank all the representatives of the government sector, civil society, academia and the media, who actively participated in intense discussions about the possibilities for developing closer cooperation with the professional diaspora and systemic support to returnees and helped placing this issue into the focus of the professional and general public.

Special thanks go to the Balkan Trust for Democracy, whose representatives, based on their extensive experience in the field of migration, immediately recognised the importance of initiatives to encourage the development potential of migration in the region and decided to give support to longstanding regional cooperation in researching this phenomenon and advocating for its better regulation.

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RETURN OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED MIGRANTS TO SERBIA: 'BRAIN GAIN' INSTEAD OF FACING 'BRAIN RE-DRAIN'



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INTRODUCTION

'It took me long to arrive at the decision to return to my home country and hometown. The desire to be with my family and friends and at the same time to provide my country with what I had learnt in foreign laboratories was stronger than to sit in CEO armchairs, be highly paid and world famous. I told my CEO: 'I am going to Serbia, because I couldn't live with the fact that I didn't give it a shot.'¹ These are the words of a famous returnee to Serbia, Dr Miodrag Stojkovic, the world-renown researcher in genetics, currently 47 years old.

After obtaining his PhD in the field of embryology and biotechnology, and working experience in Hamburg, Munich, Newcastle and Valencia, and after numerous accomplishments - obtaining the permit from the British Government to be the first in Europe allowed to start working with embryonic stem cells from human embryos created using cloning technology, creating lines of embryonic stem cells, which the British scientists had been trying to achieve for 5 years unsuccessfully, and becoming one of the 12 most eminent scientists in the world - he returned to Serbia, his home town Leskovac, leaving the position of Deputy Director of the Prince Philip Centre of Investigation in Valencia that lies on 32,000 square meters and has 300 scientists-associates, after having spent 19 years abroad.

Accomplishments of Dr Miodrag Stojkovic upon his return to Serbia and his contribution to the development of the scientific area he works on, to local community and the country in general, demonstrate how much a country can gain if it enables and supports the return of such experts from abroad.

He opened a special hospital for infertility in Leskovac, initiated the establishment of a Scientific and Technology Centre with the bank of stem cells in Kragujevac, became a professor at Kragujevac Medical Faculty and has been the editor, for three years now, of the most distinguished American medical magazine called 'Stem Cells'. All these projects and activities are highly beneficial. The special hospital for infertility has, in the three-year period of its existence, enabled the birth of 250 babies, employed 19 people and enabled the work of local tourist facilities (the number of overnight stays increased to 5,000 in 2010). The Centre with the bank of stem cells will enable the preservation of stem cells and their use for transplantation and treatments. Extraction, freezing and preservation of stem cells from the umbilical cord cost up to 2,000 euro since it is done abroad. In 2010, 2,000 samples were sent abroad, which is an expenditure of 4 million euro. By establishing the abovementioned centre, these resources would remain in the country. The Centre will enable the training of young employees and connections with their international associates. In 2005, the Medical Faculty where Mr. Stojkovic is working now, had only seven papers published in magazines on the SCI³ list, whereas in 2011 it had 176 papers published, which makes 8% of the papers published in the entire country.⁴

Naturally, these accomplishments of Dr Stojkovic could hardly be achievable without the support of local and national authorities. Local authorities enabled him to rent, for an unlimited time, a two-storey house and financed its renovation and adaptation by

² I am leaving Leskovac, but hopefully not forever, daily 'Blic', Milica Ivanovic, 08/07/2007.

³ SCI – Science Citation Index.

⁴ Introductory speech of Dr Stojkovic at the Conference Return of Highly Skilled Experts in the Western Balkans-Brain Gain or Brain Re-drain? of 15/12/2011.

investing 22 million dinars. The Management Board of the Development Fund of the Republic of Serbia granted a loan of 22 million dinars for the purchase of the commercial equipment for the Special Hospital. The Government of the Republic of Serbia granted 10 million dinars which it allocated from its National Investment Plan (NIP) for the purchase of the equipment for scientific work. He also obtained the permits from competent governmental services and ministries necessary for his work. There are also plans to invest 10 million euro of the European Investment Bank in the future Scientific and Technology Centre with the bank of stem cells in Kragujevac.

This is the example of the so-called 'return of innovation' (Cerese, 1974), which leads to application of knowledge and social and economic changes in the country of origin. There may be various motivations for a return and it could have various consequences for both the migrant and the country he/she returns to. For the return to be successful, it is necessary on one hand that the returnee has the resources and be ready to initiate changes, and on the other to have the support of his/her country of origin. Otherwise, it is more likely that those who return would emigrate again, and permanently this time, if they cannot find appropriate job matching their skills and fulfilling their aspirations, than it is the case with non-migrants (Balaz and associates, 2004). The way a country treats its returnees is the message for those living abroad about how wanted and necessary they are in their country of origin, and is therefore either an invitation for them to return, or a clear message not to do so.

It has proved so in the case of Dr Stojkovic as well. In 2007, although with the resources and a strong will, he was disappointed and wanted to return to his job in Valencia. 'Unfortunately, our plans are being realised at a very slow rate. It seems I have been too naïve. We have been marking time for nine months. In addition, it is a long interruption in the work of a scientist. In the nine months, I have witnessed a lot of stupidity and depravity.⁵ Then, the state financially supported him and the special hospital was opened on April 29, 2008. It took three years to adapt and equip it, and it took three years of the scientist's efforts to provide his country with what it needs most - birth rate increase and new jobs.

This example raises questions: Does our country need a person like Dr Stojkovic? Have there been people like Dr Stojkovic who gave up in the first year of their efforts? Are there more people like Dr Stojkovic abroad who, having in mind this example, have no intention of ever returning in or even cooperating with the country in which most renowned experts need to invest extraordinary efforts to realise their projects, which would be more than welcome in another country? There is also a question of what generally happens with educated people who worked abroad, were educated abroad or/and took professional training abroad and then returned to Serbia, when it took so much time for a renowned expert to realise projects of national interest, and in the part of Serbia to which young people from this region, studying in Belgrade, the capital city, rarely return. Do the highly educated returnees have an opportunity to apply their experience and knowledge gained abroad and initiate economic and social development of the country, and is the country interested in it and does it support them?

Trying to find the answers to these questions, we have conducted a research on highly qualified returnees, an analysis of the existing strategic documents and policies developed by the country as a response to returnees' challenges and activities of key actors in this field. In this manner, we want to contribute to the development of migration and development policies in Serbia which will, fully realising the rights of migrants, enable the fulfilment of their potentials and their contribution to social and economic development of their home country.

⁵ I am leaving Leskovac, but hopefully not forever, daily 'Blic', Milica Ivanovic, 08/07/2007.

RETURN – DEFINITION AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Although the research in the region of Southeast Europe (Ciumasu, 2010, Nikolic et al., Pavlov et al., 2010, Vangeli et al., 2010) indicate that the return of highly qualified migrants into their countries of origin is the least realistic option for brain gain, it still exists. Above all, owing to the fact that the globalisation process and development of communication and transport have resulted in migration forms characterised by the mobility - `mobility is an ongoing reflexive process combining shorter and longer episodes` (Ackers, Gill, 2008). Mobility is particularly typical for scientists and experts who develop their skills and knowledge through it and make progress in their careers. In this context, the return does not constitute the end of a migration cycle, but rather a stage in the migration process (Cassarino, 2004).

The return was for a long time seen as the end of a migration experience, pessimistic from the point of view of advocates of migration neoclassical economics, as an unsuccessful migration experience which has not provided the expected benefits – income, employment, staying till the retirement, or optimistic from the point of view of the advocates of new economics of labour migration, as a logical result of the achieved goals – higher income, savings and remittances sent. However, development of social network and transnational theories annuls the dichotomy of the departure and return, introduces the transnational space and social network which enable the return to be a part of a circular system of social and economic relations and of exchanges which facilitate migrants' re-integration while conveying knowledge, information and membership (Cassarino, 2004).

The returnees may sociologically be defined as a specific social group that integrated various life experience and identities - of the local community in their country of origin, migration experience, experience adaptation in the destination country, i.e. new social values, working and professional experience and the experience of reintegration into the country of origin (Perackovic, 2005).

Nedostaje pocetni deo recenice: In Serbia, after the change of the authorities in 2000, the mobility of scientists, experts, researchers and students has increased for the purposes of obtaining education and training abroad, without motivations to remain in the country of destination permanently. Even among those who left the country in 1990s without wishing ever to return to the country which disappointed them due to its political and economic collapse, there are those who have returned or wish to do so. The number and the structure of the highly educated and highly qualified returnees in Serbia are unknown. Research conducted in other countries indicate that between one quarter and one third of the total number of migrants return (Mayr, Peri, 2009, Lalonde, Topel, 1993).

RETURNEES ABOUT THE RETURN

`I know that many people couldn't understand why I returned to my home town, but there is nothing I could add if some people find it difficult to understand why a person wishes to come home.`

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Trying to examine what the return of our highly educated citizens from abroad to Serbia looks like, we conducted a research on returnees. We wanted to establish

⁶ Miodrag Stojkovic: There is hope as long as we keep in touch, Daliborka Miljkovic, March 12, 2011

whether they had the opportunity to apply in their country of origin and in the best possible way the knowledge, experience and contacts obtained abroad, for the purpose of their own development and benefits, but also for the benefits of the community they returned to and the country in general, and whether they had the support of the state in it. We also wanted to hear their opinion on the most serious difficulties they faced when they returned, on the obstacles they met when trying to make a better use of their potentials for the purposes of developing the society in general, and the best ways to overcome them.

The first obstacle we came across when conducting the research was the lack of data on highly educated and highly qualified migrants and the lack of a single database with their contacts. For that reason we used the 'snowball sampling' method, starting with an informal association of returnees 'Repats', but also used databases of alumni associations - Chevening, Fulbright, DAAD and the databases of the Serbia's Fund for Young Talents in the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Tempus Office in Belgrade. The survey used in the research also contained the question referring to contacts with other returnees. We had a sample of 97 returnees. The sample included persons who had at least a university degree, had stayed abroad for more than a year and after the return, lived in for Serbia over a year. In this way, we wanted to include people who experienced staying abroad for a longer period⁷ and whose return to Serbia was also a lengthy process. Data gathering was conducted between June and November 2011.

The research was conducted through an e-survey. The survey consisted of 71 mostly closed-ended questions. There were only 11 open-ended questions. The questions were divided in three periods of a returnee's experience: 1) departure from Serbia, 2) living abroad and 3) return to Serbia. The whole migration experience is what makes the returnees a social group with similar features and experience - migration experience, experience of adaption to a new environment through integration process and the experience of returning and adaption to the 'old' environment, i.e. the experience of reintegration in the country of origin (Perackovic, 2005). In all three periods, the motivations for leaving/return and social and economic status of the migrants were examined. The questions regarding the return, referred to the difficulties they faced upon the return, the support of the institutions, satisfaction with the decision to return and plans.

SAMPLE

Taking into account that the sample is not representative, it is important to have in mind its characteristics while interpreting the results. Women participated in somewhat higher percentage in the research (55%). The focus is on the population capable of working, which at the moment of the first longer absence from Serbia (for more than a year) in highest percentage consists of individuals aged 18 to 28 (67%), 23.3 years old on average, and who are presently aged 29 to 30 (65%) at the highest percentage, 33.9 years old on average. They completed undergraduate studies (36%) and master studies (32%), but there are also individuals who completed doctoral studies (14%) and those to whom higher levels of education were not recognised (18%). The majority was educated in the field of social sciences and humanities (58%), followed by natural (21%) and technical sciences (13%). They are mostly employed (72%), while unemployed (20%) and company owners (5%) form smaller percentage. They are mostly unmarried (59%), compared to married (28%). The majority comes from Belgrade (89%). They stayed in the following countries: USA – 37%, Great Britain – 28%, Italy – 14%, Germany – 12%, Spain – 9%, Belgium – 7%, Australia – 6%, Switzerland – 6%.

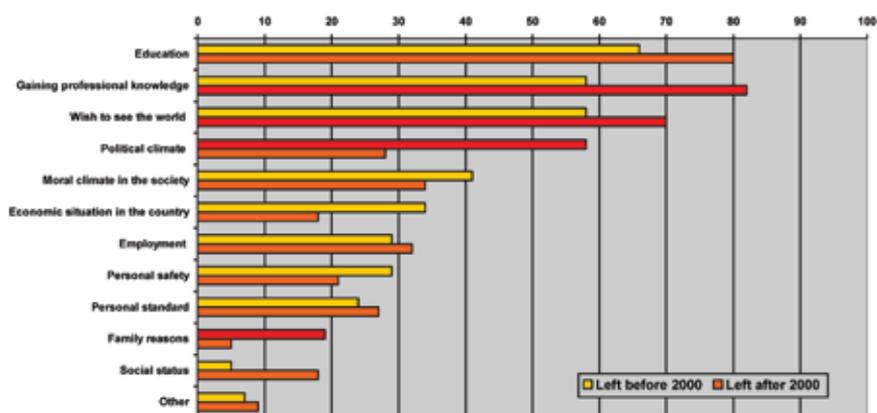
⁷ According to the definition of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a long-term migrant is 'A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.' Perruchoud, R. (ed.) (2004). *Glossary on Migration*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration.

RESEARCH RESULTS

FINDING 1: HETEROGENEITY OF RETURNEES AND CIRCULAR CHARACTER OF MIGRATIONS

The analysis of characteristics of sample of returnees and their migration experience indicates that the returnees are a heterogeneous group. Observation of the point of departure reveals that somewhat higher percentage of returnees left after the democratic changes in Serbia in 2000 (58%), than before 2000 (42%). These two groups of returnees have different characteristics. The returnees who left before 2000 were 19 years old on average, they were high school students (76%) who in higher percentage left with their parents (34%) than the ones after 2000 (2%). Returnees who left after 2000 were 27 years old on average, mostly with completed undergraduate studies (63%) and mostly employed (46%), especially at faculties (23%). They also differ regarding the reasons for leaving Serbia (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Reasons for leaving Serbia (response 'very important')

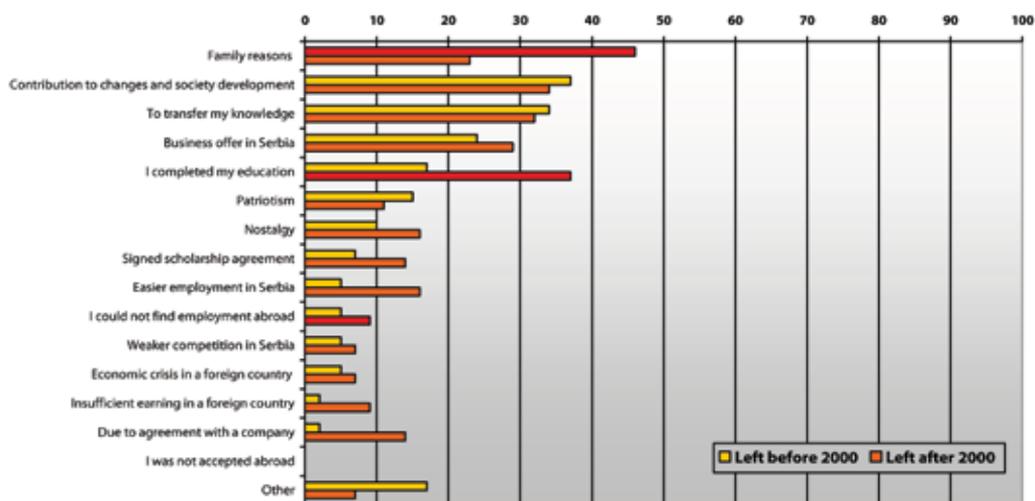


The returnees were offered 12 reasons for leaving Serbia and they were to mark them separately as 'unimportant', 'important', or 'very important'. Both groups of returnees quote education, gaining professional knowledge and wish to see the world as the most important reasons. However, they differ in finding four factors as important. The returnees who left before 2000 pay higher attention to political factors and family reasons than the returnees who left after 2000, while the latter marked gaining professional knowledge and wish to see the world as more important.

These two groups of returnees differ in the length of their stay abroad. The returnees who left before 2000 spent on average 115.44 months (9.62 years) abroad, while the returnees which left after 2000 spent 31.23 months abroad (2.6 years). They also differ in employment status before the return – the returnees who left before 2000 were in higher percentage employed (63%) and gained 56.83 months (4.7 years) of work experience on average. Those who left later were in smaller percentage employed (32%) and gained on average 10.68 months of work experience. The returnees who left earlier were mostly employed in the positions that matched their education (94% percent compared to 70%). They also differ in the number of times they changed the place of residence. The ones who left earlier changed more often their place of residence (2.6 times on average, only 22% did not change the place of residence) than those who left later (on average 1.2 times, 50% stayed at the same place of residence).

Differences are also reflected in the year of return and reasons for returning (Graph 2). The returnees who left before 2000 returned mainly in 2006 and 2007 (39%), while those who left after 2000 returned in 2009 and 2010 (48%). From the list of the suggested reasons for return, the returnees who left before 2000 marked family reasons as important, while those who left after 2000 – completion of education. Additionally, the reason 'I could not find job abroad' was marked as very important in higher percentage with the returnees who left Serbia after 2000 compared to those who left before 2000. Both groups estimated as very important the following reasons: contribution to the changes in society and its development, share and transfer of knowledge and business offer in Serbia. However, when these reasons are compared to the reasons for leaving Serbia, it can be seen that among the reasons for the return there are no such strong motivators as among the reasons for leaving Serbia for which even 80% claim that are very important, while with reasons for return the percentage of returnees that marked some reason as important does not exceed 40% (only one reason is higher than 40%, but does not reach 50%).

Graph 2: Reasons for returning to Serbia (response 'very important')



These findings actually indicate that the sample of returnees comprises of at least two different groups of returnees. One group consists of high school students who left because of difficult political and economic situation in the country during 1990s and whose parents wanted to secure better future and enable good education abroad. The other group consists of people who graduated from universities and who were leaving after the democratic changes in Serbia mostly to gain professional knowledge and obtain further education. The first group returned mostly for family reasons, while the second did so due to completed education. Apart from these two groups of returnees formed based on the time of leaving the country, we could also observe the differences from the aspects of age in which they left, different periods of staying in destination countries, different work experience and fields of education. Heterogeneity of returnees indicates the need for their detailed and deeper research and development of targeted policies for supporting these migrants.

It is also important to note that, especially after 2000, migration with characteristics of mobility and going abroad with the aim of professional improvement, education and knowing the world (pull factors in the country of destination) appeared in Serbia, without dominant pressure of push factors – difficult economic and political situation as it was in 1990s. This migration is

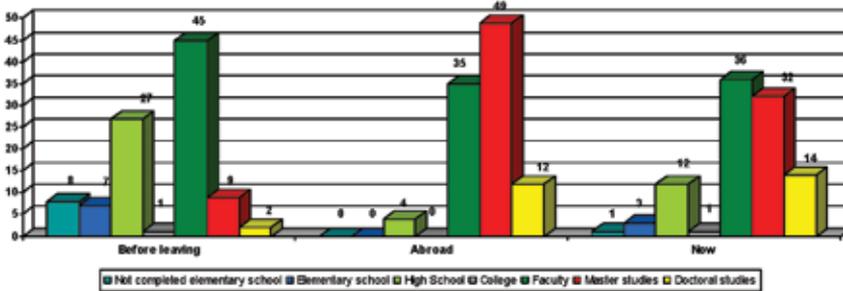
presumably also the result of intensive efforts of the EU to develop a single European Higher Education Area and a single European Research Area, but also of the effort of overseas countries to attract highly skilled workers. Thus, they indicate that Serbia is becoming a part of global market and that temporary and circular migration, as well as that life and work in transnational space are becoming reality for our citizens.

Another important finding is that the motivation for leaving Serbia is stronger than the motivation to return. It seems that the pull factors of destination countries are stronger than the pull factors of Serbia, which points to the necessity to develop these factors in Serbia. It was indicated that the factors which could attract returnees should be further strengthened – the possibility to contribute to changes and development of society, to transfer their knowledge and be offered a job.

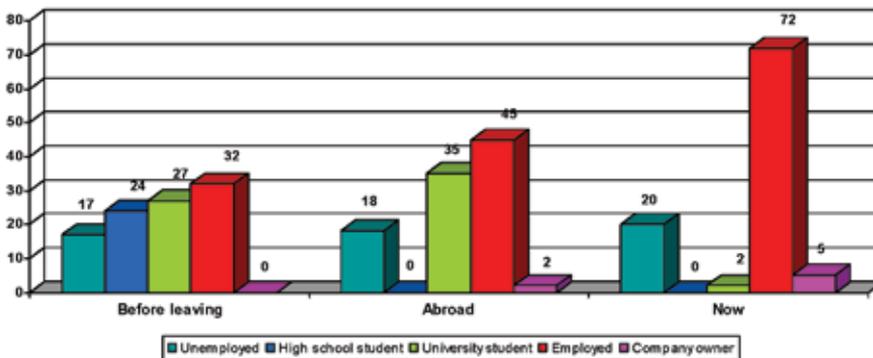
FINDING 2: SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL GAIN

Staying abroad has brought significant personal gain to the returnees (to both of the above stated groups) – improvement of educational and employment status (Graphs 3 and 4). Before going abroad, only 9% of the returnees had master degrees, 49% of them acquired them abroad, but this percentage decreases to 32 after returning to Serbia due to the difficulties with diploma recognition. Additionally, 54% of the returnees were granted scholarships (81% foreign and 23% national) for professional improvement/ education abroad. The improvement in employments status is indicated by the percentage of the employees before leaving Serbia – 32%, then the percentage increases abroad to 45% and after returning it reaches 72%. Two percent of returnees started their own companies abroad, and 5% after returning to Serbia.

Graph 3: Education of returnees in different phases of migration cycle

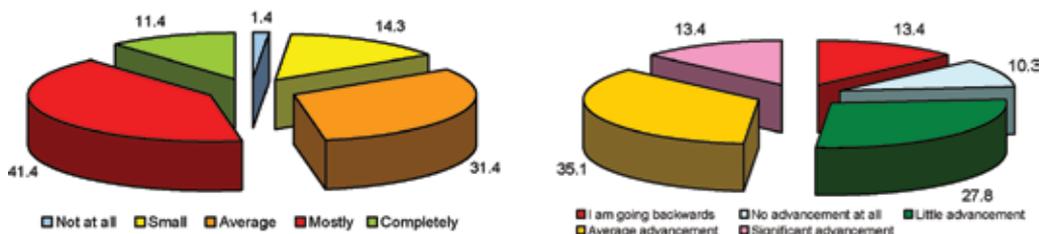


Graph 4: Employment status of returnees in different phases of migration cycle



Employed returnees are mostly engaged in the positions matching the highest education they acquired – 74%. It is also shown that the returnees are satisfied with their jobs through answers to the questions regarding the realisation of their own potential at work (To which extent can you realise your potential at present workplace?) and possibilities for professional improvement (Do you find that you can advance in terms of profession now when you are in your country of origin?).

Graph 5: Possibility for realisation of personal potential at work Graph 6: Possibility for professional improvement in Serbia



The highest percentage of employed returnees find that they could realise their potential at work (84%) – mostly 42%, average – 31% and completely – 11%. Additionally, 76% of the returnees find that they advance professionally in Serbia – average 35%, little – 28% and significantly – 13%. There is no difference in these estimations between the returnees who left before and those who left after 2000.

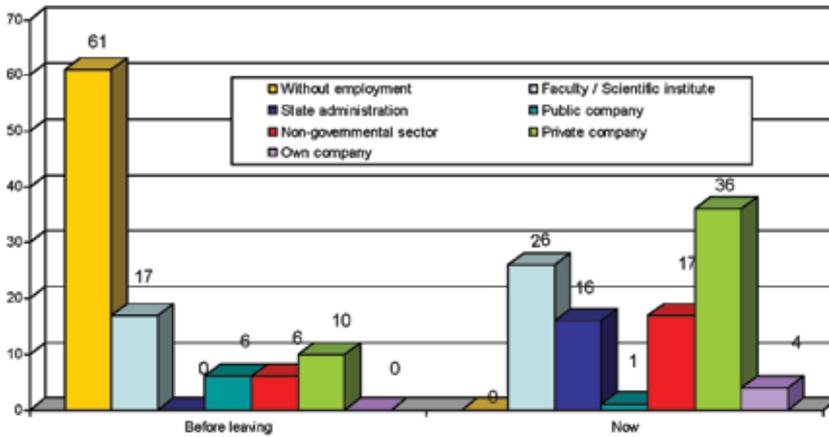
FINDING 3: QUESTIONABLE SOCIAL GAIN

‘Very small number of educated people from abroad, I know only a couple of examples, returned and started working in the institutions which can help the development of society. The only successful returnees in this regard are the lucky ones employed for international organisations (for example embassies, commercial offices, etc), NGOs or foreign private companies (although in this case these are strictly commercial activities, which do not directly influence the development of society).’ A returnee from Germany, 36 years old.

Indeed, if we observe more closely the sector in which the returnees are employed (Graph 7), it is noticeable that they are mostly engaged in private sector, while smaller number of returnees is included in public administration and state institutions. Higher level of inclusion of returnees in the public sector would encourage its development, modernisation and improve the efficiency and effectiveness, thereby contributing to a larger degree to the development of whole society. Still, we should have in mind that this is not a representative sample and that this finding above points to the need for investigating the possibilities of contribution of returnees to the given sectors.

We should also have in mind that there are 20% of unemployed returnees and that they include 42% of people who completed master and 5% doctoral studies, as well as that 53% of them were granted scholarships, and that they mostly returned to Belgrade, the country’s capital which offers more employment opportunities than other towns. At this point, the question is raised as to whether such employment status is characteristic for the whole population of returnees and what happens if they return to other parts of Serbia.

Graph 7: Sectors of employment for presently hired returnees before and after leaving Serbia



The state does not systematically support these people so that they could use their knowledge and potentials to contribute to the development of the field they were educated for and to the society as a whole. This can be seen from the answers of returnees to the following question: 'Have you received any assistance from the authorised institutions in the country of origin during the return process?'. 96% of respondents provided negative answers, while 4% stated that they received the following assistance: position of assistant professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, recognised diploma at the Faculty of Political Sciences and support of the Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia (1), while one person did not answer the question.

One of the returnees provided a very good definition of this lack of support:

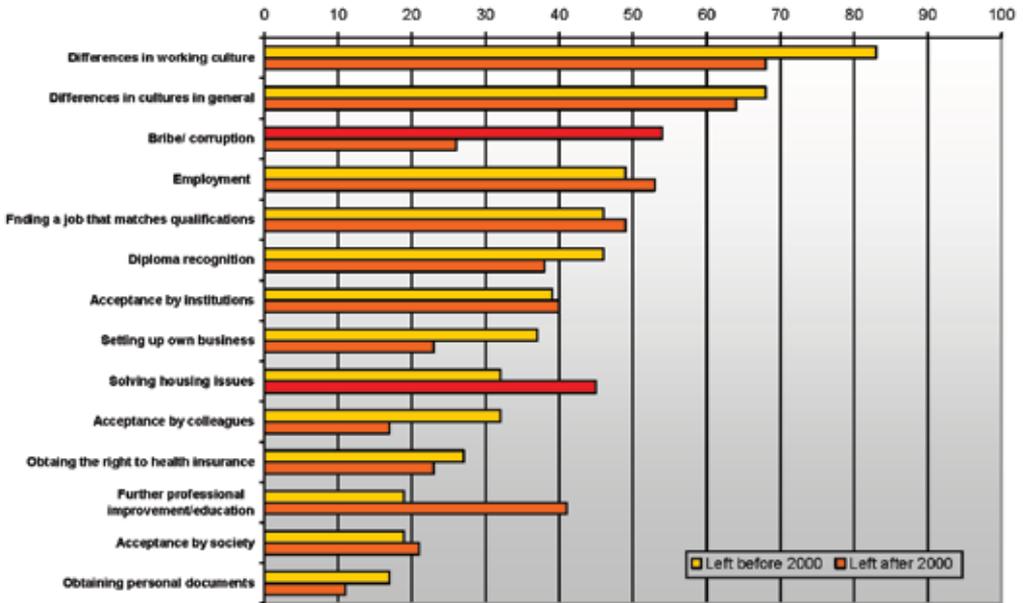
'My problems with employment were not related to finding job, as I was supported by great people who really wanted to hire me (thanks to them I had the support of the whole faculty), but to the facts that during the first year I worked part-time (for the compensation smaller than the minimum monthly pay), while waiting for the Ministry of Education to approve opening the position. Before that, it took half a year for diploma recognition, without which I could not even work at all, and all this time I also did some other minor jobs. Compared to the stories of some other people, I believe that I generally had lots of luck and that I can say I solved my status quickly, but this was thanks to the support of individuals and despite the system,` a returnee, Great Britain, 34 years old.

The result of the lack of systematic state support is that 42% of returnees see their place of residence abroad in the following five years, while this percentage reaches even 68% with the unemployed. Taking into account that 97% of them still have professional (51%) and private (78%) contacts abroad, while 16% have dual citizenship, this migration potential could easily be realised.

FINDING 4: NECESSARY CHANGES

Of all the offered potential difficulties during the return process, the returnees mostly quoted the differences between the working culture and culture in general (Graph 8). The returnees who left Serbia before 2000 in higher percentage point to the difficulty of bribe/corruption as compared to the returnees who left later. The case is reverse in quoting the difficulties as regards further professional improvement/education.

Graph 8: Difficulties of returnees while returning to Serbia



To the open-ended question ‘In your opinion, what are the major obstacles for the potential of highly skilled returnees from abroad to be better used for the development of the society as a whole?’ the returnees stated seven groups of obstacles: difficulties regarding employment and inadequate working culture (44%), corruption, nepotism, partocracy and negative selection (32%), unsupportive climate – preconceptions, fear of competition, envy, disinterest and lack of state support (27%), difficult economic situation (24%), difficulties regarding diploma recognition – very long procedures, expensive and in case of interdisciplinary diplomas ‘mission impossible’ (15%), low salary (15%) and extensive administration and bureaucracy (11%).

Although the returnees mostly point to the structural factors as obstacles – low level of economic and social development, which require systematic and long-term changes, they also provide concrete proposals for overcoming mentioned obstacles. Concerning the obstacles related to employment, they suggest, in addition to vacancy announcements and meritocracy which never become reality in Serbia, some simpler solutions: to encourage networking of returnees as well as their connections with companies and institutions of the countries they resided in and which have offices in Serbia, to establish better system for exchange of information between returnees and employers by means of a website listing supply and demand and fairs, to develop employment projects ‘first chance’ for returnees, to establish ‘systematic support by the state and institutions for starting a business, innovations, science centres’, support of the projects by the Ministry of Education and Science for those not employed at universities or institutes, to create a centre/institution which would keep records of the returnees and gather

'Potential returnees do not have enough information about what are the actual activities of local institutions and companies and how they are performed, while local employers are not familiar with what they can expect from returnees', a returnee, France and Italy, 33 years old

'We, who lived abroad, did not have the possibility for professional networking, and it is difficult for someone to recommend us, unless they had the opportunity to work directly with us', a returnee, USA and Spain, 26 years old

'Diploma recognition is a very long process, expensive and often impossible as our faculties do not offer so diversified choice of departments. In my case, I should go to two or three faculties, and I was told that recognition would not be possible as majority of subjects does not exist here, so I could not submit them for review anywhere', a returnee, USA and Great Britain, 29 years old

'Due to the great number of administrative obstacles for doing business in Serbia, returnees encounter many setbacks to even try to set up a private company. As major problems in business environment I would like to note complicated administrative procedures and corruption', a returnee, USA, 35 years old

'Highly skilled returnees have the same problems as other educated people in Serbia. The problem is that the economy is not strong enough to create sufficient number of positions for returnees (as well as for those who never left)', a returnee, USA, 35 years old

'Disdaining in certain situation with explanations that I 'left everything when it was most difficult here and why I returned at all', that I am not patriotic enough, that I expect 'western treatment' for the things which are not 'western', a returnee, USA and Canada, 29 years old

them occasionally so that they could meet, exchange experiences, create projects and similar.

Proposals for improving the procedure of diploma recognition follow the direction in which state representatives are going. It is suggested that there should be one entity for recognition of diplomas and that the procedure should change the present character of validation (determining the sameness of the program studies) to recognition (defining the acquired knowledge, skills and competences), that the universities on the Shanghai list should be automatically recognised, as well as that the price of the procedure should decrease, even be free of charge.

Many returnees have pointed to the need for systematic state support by means of making one institution responsible for returnees, which was described by one of them in the following way: 'There must be some institution which would unite the brain gain back to Serbia. Some kind of community, which would be also useful for those who are returning, as they would be automatically connected to other people in similar situation and could exchange their experiences with them. On the other hand, this would also be useful for the government, as they would have insight into the knowledge and skills which could be positively used in our society, and they would know exactly which information is necessary for the returnees', a returnee, Germany, Norway, USA, 34 years old.

Finally, they indicated the need for creating different public opinion using the media and educational institutions and increasing the interest of state and society in Serbia for highly skilled returnees. `Although it is almost impossible to earn a salary in Serbia which is at least approximate to the universities in North America and the European Union, I believe that many would return if the state and the society showed that they appreciate them and want them, by offering adequate workplaces and housing solutions`, a returnee, USA and Great Britain, 30 years old.

It also should be mentioned here that the returnees themselves are motivated to actively contribute to these changes. 32% of the returnees are members of a professional or an activist group. Alumni associations of students who were granted scholarships, such as `Chevening Society of Serbia`, but also associations founded by migrants such as `Serbian City Club` in London and informal society of returnees in Serbia `Repats`, are especially active in this field.

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO RETURN

Although the attitude of the returnees is that they are rather invisible for decision makers, the analysis of strategic documents indicates that the decision makers have recognised the potential which highly skilled returnees may have. However, lack of their implementation still indicates that the encouragement to realise this potential is not considered a priority of our country.

Three strategies have especially highlighted the importance of return of experts and scientists: Scientific and Technological Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2010–2015, Migration Management Strategy and Action Plan, and Strategy for Preserving and Strengthening Relations between the Motherland and Diaspora, and the Motherland and Serbs in the Region.

The need for creating a long-term plan of return of our scientists from diaspora is highlighted in *Scientific and Technological Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2010 – 2015*, in the part in which the situation in science is described. In the section `Partnership with diaspora through joint projects` programmes of `return of scientists from diaspora including shorter and longer periods for studies` are planned, as well as the means for the scientists who wish to return to gather research teams and supply necessary research equipment (page 46). The strategy also states that the first direction of the development of human capital is the programme of return of researchers from diaspora through projects of shorter and longer stays and provision of working conditions, means, necessary equipment and favourable housing conditions. It was also planned that, during the competition for the new project cycle in basic research, which should have been announced in May 2010, the particularities of returnees from abroad would be taken into account.

Migration Management Strategy (2009) states the necessity for the creation of programmes and projects in cooperation with international organisations for `temporary return of highly-educated workforce which left Serbia`, `using their knowledge and skills on distance`, but also for their return and active involvement in labour market. The Action Plan 2011-2012 states the following activity `to create programs for encouraging migrant highly-qualified experts to invest their professional potentials into undeveloped areas`, and programmes for encouraging return of highly-qualified experts are expected as outcome. Another two important activities are included in this plan and they are generally significant for all types of migrations and phases of migration cycle – encouragement of scientific community to explore migration and statistical monitoring of migration.

Strategy for Preserving and Strengthening Relations between the Motherland and Diaspora, and the *Motherland and Serbs in the Region 2011* quotes the measures for improving the use of capacities from diaspora such as meetings between the businessmen from diaspora and motherland in the form of business forums or fairs, profit tax exemption in the period of five years after company registration for returnees, motivating professors from diaspora to lecture at universities in Serbia and scientists from diaspora to contribute to motherland.

Highly skilled returnees are mentioned in other strategic documents. *The Action Plan for implementing National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2011-2017* states as an objective to 'abolish the factors which influence brain drain by creating more favourable conditions for return of diaspora or its investment in the Republic of Serbia' through encouragement of expert practice for students from diaspora, simplification of the diploma validation and licensing work permits for experts from diaspora, incentive measures for attracting experts, development of strategic measures for return of young people – maintaining good relations with diaspora, stimulating investment and creating return and employment policy. *Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2007 – 2012* and the *Action Plan* for its implementation envisage creation of conditions for employment of returnees, especially highly qualified workforce, with the aim of transferring knowledge acquired while working abroad.

However, the above-mentioned strategies either still do not have action plans, or the planned measures for returnees have not yet started with implementation. Therefore, institutional initiatives for the support of highly qualified returnees are very rare. Presently, it could be said that there are actually three of them.

A very important institutional initiative for returnees which is presently being realised is *simplification of the procedure for recognition of foreign documents of high education*. A committee has been formed, consisting of certain ministries and headed by Professor Neda Bokan, Belgrade University Vice Chancellor.

We should have in mind that there are two different procedures for recognition of documents regarding education. The first refers to their recognition for the purpose of continuing education and this procedure has been simplified, as a result of a European project, and the 'Rulebook on recognition of foreign documents on education for continuing education in Serbia' has been adopted. This Rulebook was adopted first by the University in Belgrade in February 2010. According to this Rulebook, the procedure of recognition of diplomas for continuing education is performed by the University. The University directs a note to ENIC⁸ centre in order to check the status of the institution which has issued the document and accreditation of the studied programme, after which it provides a request with complete documentation to the manager of the particular programme the candidate wishes to enrol. During this procedure qualifications are not recognised, but only the right to continue education at the programme of studies the candidate has chosen. Within 15 days from the date of receiving the documents the University should decide on the possibility for recognition of the document issued by a high education institution/programme of studies. This procedure costs 10,000 dinars.

⁸ European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility

Another procedure, where changes are much more difficult, is the procedure of recognition of foreign documents on high education for the purpose of employment. For this procedure, separate faculties are responsible, and each faculty by means of their own regulations, defines the procedure. The problems with this procedure are manifold. Firstly, it is actually a validation procedure, which means that the sameness of the subjects from programmes of studies is checked and passing additional exams for the subjects not included in respective programmes abroad is required. According to one of the committee members, Dr Pera Tumbas,⁹ a candidate who had studied and completed economics in Great Britain was required to pass additional 17 exams. Another issue relates to interdisciplinary studies and the difficulty of defining the faculty in charge. It is also difficult to expect from the faculty or professors to acknowledge documents with no expertise for assessment. Finally, the procedure is lengthy and very expensive. The costs for the procedure amount to 54,000.00 dinars for doctoral studies, 36,000.00 for professional master and postgraduate academic master studies and 24,000.00 for undergraduate studies. The expenses for translation of works and documents are often added to these amounts.

The development of *National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and National Occupational Classification System* in accordance with the international and European standards is closely related to the procedure of recognition of higher education documents. The Serbian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education defines learning outcomes expected from every qualification – what a student should know, understand, and be able to do based on the acquired qualifications. It was adopted by the National Council for Higher Education on April 23, 2010. However, it does not define only general outcomes of learning process, but outcomes of every specific study programme are important as well, i.e. knowledge, skills and competences appropriate for concrete scientific and educational field. Defining the classifications according to different areas in compliance with the European standards and taking into account reality in Serbia, so that the procedure of recognition of foreign diplomas could be realised, is yet to come. The National Occupational Classification System, harmonised with the international classification of occupations (ISCO 2008) is necessary so that the returnees with occupations acquired abroad could apply to the National Employment Office. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia has drafted a new system of classification of occupations, including 10 major fields of work, 434 separate groups and 2,000 occupations. So far, approximately 650 occupations have been described. Public discussion on this draft is expected.

All these processes develop very slowly, without coordination, and it seems that there is no political will that they gain in speed or support. The process of developing the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education was initiated in 2001. The Committee which started the creation of Law on Recognition of Documents Issued by Foreign Institutions of Higher Education for the Purpose of Employment got 'stuck' dealing with regulated professions¹⁰ and necessary competences for their performance, as this requires active involvement of each ministry in charge, which is difficult to facilitate. According to Professor Tumbas,¹¹ the Committee has been working for already two years now, on a volunteer basis, so its members do not regularly attend the meetings, while representatives of certain ministries do not even answer the calls. However, involving wider scope of experts and public, as well as returnees themselves, in the creation of this law would undoubtedly accelerate its finalisation and increase the pressure on decision makers to more strongly support all the processes necessary for facilitation of the procedure regarding foreign diplomas recognition.

⁹ Law will regulate diploma recognition for employment, Dnevnik, August 24, 2011.

¹⁰ Regulated profession is a professional activity or a group of professional activities for which the access and performance, i.e. way of doing certain activities, is based on legal or other acts founded on legal authorisations (regulatory acts), and which is indirectly or directly conditioned by possessing certain professional qualifications. It also refers to a professional activity or a group of activities performed by members of a professional association having a name related to the particular profession.

¹¹ Ibid.

Another good initiative, which is in the initial phase, is the project of Vojvodina Government 'Right to First Chance',¹² which should start in January 2012. The Government has secured means to provide employment for one year for all PhDs on the territory of Vojvodina through scientific institutes, Novi Sad University and science centres. The planned gross salary amounts to 85,000 dinars a month. After one year of employment, these experts will present their results and the employers will mark their work. In case they are satisfied with the results, they will have the opportunity to file an application with the Vojvodina Government to be engaged in this way in the following period. Research profiles will be opened by this project, which will collect information about the interests and competences of experts. This project also includes returnees who obtained their degrees within the Bologna System. They will not be expected to wait for their foreign diplomas to be recognised, but they will be entitled to start employment immediately.

Finally, the activities of the Ministry of Religion and Diaspora focused on development of cooperation with students, experts and scientists from diaspora, as one of the methods to encourage return, should also be mentioned. Through diverse partnerships, the Ministry has organised the practical work for students from diaspora in domestic and other companies, state administration and local self-governments. It encourages investments of businesspeople from diaspora, starting small and medium enterprises. In 2011 the Ministry also organised a big conference which gathered medical experts from diaspora and Serbia in Vrnjacka Banja. Unfortunately, these activities are of small scale and short-term, in accordance with the available means.

If we observe institutional initiatives for supporting highly qualified returnees, the research finding stating that 96% of returnees who participated in our research claim that they were not given any institutional support during the return process seems rather accurate.

WHAT IS POSSIBLE TO DO WITHIN THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES?

The research conducted among the highly qualified returnees and the analysis of institutional answer to the challenges regarding return indicate that there is a potential of returnees for personal development, but also for the development of various areas in which they were educated and the society in general. However, it is insufficiently used for faster economic and social development of the country. Although the strategic framework does exist, what is missing is its operationalisation and implementation. Therefore, we suggest three initial concrete steps which will contribute to better use of the existing potentials of highly qualified returnees: 1) to make returnees visible, 2) to enable returnees to apply their knowledge, and 3) to send message to returnees that they are welcome.

STEP 1: TO MAKE RETURNEES VISIBLE

Highly skilled migrants have not been continuously tracked in Serbia. On the other hand, as well noticed by Zoran Stanojevic, editor of Radio Television Serbia 1 and moderator at the conference 'Return of the Highly Skilled to Western Balkans – brain gain or brain re-drain?', we are informed about the whereabouts of every football

¹² New activity of the Government of Vojvodina 'Right to first chance', Not any PhD without a job, Danas.rs, Author: R. D., 09/12/2011.

player abroad and we invite them to play for our national team. The same method should be applied for the most successful experts and scientists abroad. In accordance with the priorities of the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development, our scientists and researchers in the fields we wish to develop, who live abroad, should be identified and, as it is written in the Strategy, provided with working conditions, for “playing in national teams” – during one or more seasons. Just their identification and writing about them would lead to higher awareness of the resources which exist, but which are not used, and this could consequently lead to their engagement in Serbia.

At the same time, it is necessary to ensure systematic (regular and continuous) tracking of the mobility of students, professors and researchers from Serbia. The mobility of students is most easily tracked by the famous and so-called ‘ŠV’ forms, which students fill out every year during the procedure of enrolling a new student year. Inclusion of a couple of questions about mobility would not be expensive, and we would obtain a clear picture about the level and types of mobility among the students in Serbia. Tracking the mobility of professors and researchers could be done by the Ministry of Education and Science, which also collects data from the faculties and institutes about professors, research assistants and researchers, so the data on mobility would just be added to the existing database.

However, returnees in nongovernmental sector and industry still remain unidentified. With this in mind, there is a question of whether it is possible to create a database of highly skilled returnees, in accordance with the international standards on personal data protection and with precisely specified duties of database administrator and limited number of persons having access to this data, in compliance with the adopted rules for using the database. This kind of database would enable insight into the resources of returnees.

Determining the level of mobility of highly skilled persons from Serbia in general could be realised through the existing mechanisms – population census, Poll on Workforce, Poll on Living Standards, etc.

STEP 2: TO ENABLE RETURNEES TO IMPLEMENT THEIR KNOWLEDGE

Professional improvement and application of knowledge have been indicated as important motives for both leaving and returning to Serbia. Within the respective framework of mobile scientific community, the need for professional improvement and career development takes a ‘central/organising position’ which frames experience (Polovina, 2011). There are examples in the environment which point to the potential ways of encouraging implementation of knowledge of highly skilled returnees.

Through the project ‘Right to First Chance’, the Government of Vojvodina has shown one of the ways to enable application of knowledge acquired abroad – by offering the possibility to all PhDs on the territory of Vojvodina to be given employment for one year in order to show what they know, thus removing the obstacle of diploma recognition for those who obtained it abroad.

The second example for enabling the application of knowledge acquired abroad is Unity through Knowledge Fund, founded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport in Croatia in 2007, with the assistance of the World Bank loan. The Fund, in accordance with the motto ‘connectivity – cooperability – creativity’ aims at uniting Croatian scientific and expert potentials in the country and diaspora to build a society founded on knowledge. There are three programmes. The programme of scientific cooperation is intended for experienced scientists and includes two measures: one refers to financing projects which support cooperation of public scientific institutions and private sector with experts from abroad in order to facilitate transfer

of knowledge, technology, but also attracting funds, while the second measure refers to support to the return of experts to private or science sector in terms of financing salaries, equipment, laboratory and project team. These projects usually last for two or three years, in the amount of 200.000 euro. The other set of programmes is intended for young researchers and their return, but also for young researchers who obtained their PhD degrees in Croatia, and is directed at their development of individual research in cooperation with international institutions and private sector. The third programme implies support to the short-term mobility, up to six months, which enables stays at most reputable foreign institutions, as well as intersectoral mobility – mobility between private and public sector. Projects are selected through open calls, by unbiased and competitive process of assessment. Project evaluators are anonymous, internationally acknowledged experts. Thus, the conflict of interest is avoided, transparency of the process is achieved and the trust of the scientists is gained.

5.6 million euro were borrowed from the World Bank for financing the Fund's operations, out of which 5.1 million was distributed to end users and the rest (8-9%) was spent for operational expenses. This fact indicates that this is not an expensive measure, especially if we look into the Fund's results: 99 projects were financed and 557 scientists cooperated, including some from prestigious institutions such as Yale, Stanford, Harvard and similar, while 273 scientific works were published within 40 projects. Special support was offered to industry, which can be seen from the fact that 53 companies participated in the programme and businesspersons invested 800,000 euro, apart from 2.4 million euro invested by the Fund. The Fund attracted international means as well. International institutions invested 1.1 million euro. This Fund also attracted financing from the Scientific Framework Programme 7 (FP7) – 6 million euro, the amount higher than the World Bank loan. The success of this Fund is also reflected in the fact that within FP7 more projects supported by the Fund were approved than those supported at the national level - 28% compared to 15%, therefore, almost twice more.

Recognition of foreign documents on higher education for employment in Croatia sets an example of a simple way to organise this procedure so that it would not act as an obstacle to employment in public administration of state institutions and companies, in which the contribution of returnees would be most significant. In Croatia, ENIC/NARIC¹³ office is responsible for this procedure. It has seven employees, and it operates within the Agency for Science and Higher Education. The procedure consists of formal recognition of the value of the acquired qualifications, or knowledge and skills acquired by qualifications, without comparison of study programmes. Further to this, no academic degrees, or any kinds of titles are assigned. The criteria for recognition are clearly defined and transparent and can be found at Internet pages (www.azvo.hr). The principle of analogy is followed – once a higher education document acquired abroad is positively assessed, it is valid for all other cases of recognition of the same documents. Recognition procedure lasts 2 months and costs 60 euro.

¹³ ENIC network (European Network of National Information Centres) was founded by the Council of Europe and UNESCO for the purpose of academic mobility and better implementation of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the so-called Lisbon Convention). NARIC network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) was created upon the initiative of the European Commission, also with the aim of encouraging academic mobility and improving recognition of academic qualifications in EU Member States, European Economic Community and associated countries from Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus.

As for regulated professions, the procedure is more complex and it is presently realised through three different steps: professional recognition of qualifications, for which the Agency for Science and Higher Education is responsible, then recognition of specialisation/internship/professional exams, which is the responsibility of the ministries in charge, and finally issuing work permits for particular professions, for which authorised Chambers are in charge. However, based on the adopted Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (September 2009) ENIC/NARIC office became the contact point, offering information to citizens and other contact points in the states of EEP on recognition of educational qualifications and national legislature on regulated professions and working within this field of activities. It also keeps a database which includes the list of all regulated professions, all legal regulations, information on authorised entities and on procedures of recognition of educational qualifications, as well as data regarding all the initiated procedures of recognition in the Republic of Croatia.

These three examples may assist in operationalisation and implementation of goals and measures planned in strategic documents intended for attracting and supporting highly skilled returnees.

STEP 3: SEND MESSAGE TO RETURNEES THAT THEY ARE WELCOME

The preceding two steps will undoubtedly send message to returnees that they are welcome. However, real welcome requires systematic support to return by all key actors of the society – governmental sector, civil society, academic community, industry, media and public in general.

The example of such coordinated action and systematic approach is Albanian Brain Gain Programme. The Brain Gain Programme in Albania was developed by the state in cooperation with the UNDP Development Program in 2006. The programme is implemented by The Council of Ministries (Minister of Education is the national coordinator), while key state partners include the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Education (responsible for recognition of diplomas and educational reform), Ministry of Interior Affairs – Department for State Administration (authorised for employment of state officials) and Ministry of Exterior Affairs – Institute for Diaspora (responsible for promoting the culture in diaspora). It is planned for this programme to be transferred to the newly founded Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI). Together with the state bodies, international organisations and donors are included in the programme as well, offering financial support and support in preparation of legal documents and social policy papers. Universities, research centres, civil society organisations, private companies and employment companies are also involved in the programme. They all work together on the return of their experts and scientists to public administration, to faculties/institutes and to private sector. Key components of the programme include: 1) preparation of legal and strategic framework for inclusion of diaspora in Albanian development, 2) creation and maintenance of electronic database important for identification of key `players` in that process (scientists, experts, researchers), 3) development of measures to encourage return – prioritising in filling vacancies, financial rewards for titles – master and higher, favourable conditions for housing loans, and similar. The success of this programme is above all reflected in the decreased level of brain drain.

It is also important to develop a culture of mobility at the faculties, institutes, but also in state administration and institutions, through financial and institutional assistance in terms of supporting absence and introduction of conditions for mobility as criteria for advancement. From this viewpoint, the Ministry of Education and Science should grant scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad also for those who graduated in foreign countries, not just for

those who graduated from the state faculties in Serbia. The media has very important role in promoting mobility, return and returnees as potential for the development of entire society.

The third step requires systematic changes, and it is a lengthy process, but it could start with exchange of experiences with the key actors of the Brain Gain Programme in Albania, by identification of best practices and also obstacles on the road to developing systematic support to gaining knowledge from abroad. In addition, one of the authorised ministries could take responsibility for formal welcoming of returnees, for their recording, informing on return conditions, and for organising their gathering at least twice a year, listening to their needs and proposals not just for better reintegration but for social and economic development. Active role of returnees and other highly qualified migrants in the realisation of all steps is necessary. Experience of international organisations, such as International Office for Migration (IOM) which presently realises a programme of temporary and virtual return of our experts from abroad, and the World University Service Austria – WUS which was for ten years implementing the project of brain gain in the Western Balkans, may significantly contribute to the development of systematic support to highly skilled returnees.

By creating conditions for mobility and return of potential key players in the economic development and social changes we become a part of the European and global space, even before formal accession to the European Union.

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STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2015

Strategy and Action Plan for Migration Management

Strategy for Preserving and Strengthening Relations between the Motherland and Diaspora, and the Motherland and Serbs in the Region

Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2011-2017

Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2007-2012, and Action Plan

THE ROUND TABLE:

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS IN SERBIA



CONCLUSIONS

1. The first step that is necessary to undertake to address the issue of recognition of diplomas obtained abroad is the development and adoption of a new, comprehensive legal framework (Law) – that would prescribe new rules, responsibilities and procedures for the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad.
2. It is necessary to improve communication and coordination of state bodies and institutions in order to adopt and amend all necessary regulations, primarily the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and universities. Therefore, the establishment of an intersectoral working group of the RS Government is proposed, that would, upon the adoption of an action plan, work on the improvement of a comprehensive legal framework, harmonisation and adoption of all necessary regulations concerning recognition of foreign diplomas for employment, and that would be guided by the Ministry of Education and Science, as an authorized proponent under of the legislation (Law) on diploma recognition.
3. The new legal framework for the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad should be based on international and regional standards, which contain the following principles:
 - evaluation of outcomes, which implies that the process of recognition is carried out based on the acquired knowledge and qualifications, and not on the harmonisation of different university programmes with the emphasised protectionism

- transparency of the procedure, which includes clearly defined criteria for recognition, and enables monitoring of all stages of this process with the availability of information on progress
 - legal certainty and consistency, which implies the established administrative procedure of recognition, the right to appeal and the possibility for the administrative litigation by the applicant
 - analogy i.e. submitted applications related to the same or similar cases should be solved in the same manner
 - centralisation, i.e. the relocation of decision process from various faculties and universities to a single state agency (Ministry of Education and Science / ERIC NARIC office) with competences to uniformly perform recognitions and keep records on that.
4. When drafting the Law it is necessary to take into account the comparative experiences of other countries, especially those in Southeast Europe which have advanced in this process, and which in the past were faced with similar challenges facing Serbia today. From the experiences of other countries, all the positive aspects can be used and negative aspects avoided relating the reform that lies ahead.
5. The process of drafting the legal framework would have to be organised in a transparent and inclusive manner, with the involvement of civil society and professional and interested institutions and individuals. Public debate on all proposed solutions is necessary and civil society can provide significant support in its organisation. The public should be regularly and professionally informed and involved in the process, which would have an effect on the political will and greater flexibility of institutions in the approach to solving this problem.
6. It should be noted that parallel with this process, the preparation of the new National Qualifications Framework and the National Nomenclature of Professions is underway, which implies amendments to other laws and by-laws related to this issue.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Radio Beograd 2, Beskrajni plavi krug, 29/03/2012

Radio Beograd 1, Večeras zajedno, 01/11/2011

<http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Sta-da-se-radi/Gde-ljudi-koji-znaju-vise-vrede.sr.html>

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ONE OPTION FOR THE HUMAN CAPITAL IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:
RETURN OF HQ



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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge tends to migrate. The higher the educational attainment - the higher are the chances for some sort of (temporary, circular or permanent) international movement. It is empirically well established that highly educated individuals are more likely to migrate or to be involved in mobility schemes. Several comprehensive OECD studies on the PhD holders in OECD region for countries where data is available have clearly demonstrated that “PhD holders are indeed a highly mobile population since a large share of them lived abroad at the time of their education (prior or during doctoral studies) or afterwards during their professional life”. (Auriol, 2010, p.19).

The need to track career development of PhD holders comes from an insight that this population is and should be one of the fundamental carriers of development and economic growth based on knowledge. Consequently, the OECD together with UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Eurostat launched a joint project in 2004 with the aim to develop internationally applicable indicators for comparable purposes when the doctorate holders’ careers are concerned (OECD, 2010). Although the migration pattern of MA and BA holders is not extensively followed, they are undoubtedly significant human capital, particularly being much larger in size than PhD population.

In the case of BiH, the entire highly qualified population is significant, taking into account that according to the most recent Labor Force Survey BiH’s working age highly qualified population is estimated at 8.8% (BHAS 2011 p.32.), and the EU level of tertiary educational attainment at a significantly higher level 32% (EUROSTAT 2011).¹⁵ Considering the orientation to become a knowledge based society, BiH will need to boost the level of educational attainment amongst its citizens, or import it. Another option is to draw its highly qualified nationals from abroad back to the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the leading countries in the region of ex -Yugoslavia and even beyond, when it comes to the size of its Diaspora (1.6 million of migrants including those born in BiH (1,350,000) as well as second and third generations born abroad – an estimate given by the Diaspora Department within Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees data). Moreover, BiH has also been a prominent “exporter” of its highly educated workforce – thus experienced significant brain drain, particularly in the period from 1996 to 2000. Additionally, it is estimated that the current HQ BiH-citizens emigration level is at 23.9 % (World Bank, 2011). This issue is rarely and only sporadically discussed in the public policy domain, as well as in general public domain. It has been repeatedly accented that BiH is missing a strategic approach for brain gain which in regards to the knowledge based society is growing concern, especially when significantly more developed countries have established policies to supplement the lacking expertise by importing it. The recent migration trends due to economic crisis indicate a lower level of overall migration and increased emigration from host countries. However, the most affected migration profile is the low-skilled labor force, and thus the HQ are the least affected. United States, for example, records an increase of HQ immigrants (Papademetriou et al., 2010; Hu and Sumption 2011; Collet 2011; Fix et al., 2009). The EU is equally devising a more aggressive policy to attract the HQ individuals, with the adoption and implementation of the “Blue Card” rules (EC 2011). This, for BiH, suggests that migration trends will increase as the

¹⁵ The data presented here should be taken with reserve as it cannot be directly compared. The BiH LFS Survey indicates the level of educational attainment in BiH for the working age group - ages 15 +, while the EUROSTAT data for EU shows the proportion of the population aged 25 to 64.

countries open their doors for highly qualified labor force, and is expected to intensify with closer prospects of EU integrations, particularly with the aggressive EU attraction policies for HQ individuals. High quality and highly qualified human resources are at the top of the ladder on a country's development course, regarded as resources to carry the development.

BiH, furthermore, is missing a strategic orientation towards attracting its own HQ Diaspora that presents valuable human resource. Although there is no statistics on the educational attainment of this group, the size and the estimated migration trend of the HQ can serve as an important indicator. An option for BiH to address its development goals, particularly considering the weak economy and a still recovering research sector, is to draw its highly qualified nationals back to the country. Provided that at the moment there is no government supported policy, those highly qualified returnees, who have returned for diverse reasons may face difficulties integrating in the society and meaningfully contributing to its development. The HQ returnees, individuals who lived abroad (for different periods), earned their diplomas, acquired knowledge and professional experience elsewhere returned either spontaneously or mainly through foreign/internationally dedicated programs. This group position in present time of Bosnia and Herzegovina is what we want to discern and initially probe. In addition, by studying the same phenomena in four other countries from this region, this paper is supposed to contribute to a regional policy research effort. This is in order to establish what could be possible *policy options for better integration of these individual, better utilization of their knowledge and foreign earned networks for BiH development.*

So far, research on BiH Diaspora in general, but particularly research on the HQ-Diaspora and return to BiH, has been very limited, considering that during the war of 90's, over half of the population, 2.2 million according to the estimates, was displaced externally and internally (MHRR, 2012). In the immediate post war BiH the primary focus was the return of refugees and internally displaced person to their pre-war homes. Due to urgent matters of forced migration internally and the pressured repatriation from abroad, the focus of BiH authorities was on the more pressing and urgent matters of war migration and consequently the development potential of the BiH Diaspora was sidelined. Although majority left because of the war, those remaining in the host countries have, by and large, obtained some form of permanent residence there. This Paper looks at HQ BiH Diaspora and returnees as a source to improve the shortages highly qualified professions at the labor market and use this human capital in the overall development of the country.

Besides the recent IOM study To "BiH or Not to BiH" (IOM 2011), on return, possibility of return and contemporary dynamic of return, only few studies or reports have addressed this population. This IOM study and its empirical findings will also partially inform our analysis, discussion and conclusions. Primary data comes from a structured questionnaire (25 HQ returnees), a focus group and interviews with local stakeholders. Other sources include secondary literature analysis – studies, reports, laws, and other documents related to the position of this population.

The first part of this paper will set the frame for further analysis by providing an overview of current state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina when it comes to conceptualizing relations between migration and development. It will also provide an insight in the current status of mobility of the highly educated and corresponding "brain policies" in BiH.

The second part will explore the local context, especially with regard to the developments of higher education and research and labor market since these two sectors are of fundamental importance for the sustainable HQ return. An overarching perspective of human capital development will inform this part of discussion and help position HQ returnees in the broader BiH's socio-economic context.

The third part will present the findings pertaining to the HQ returnees' experiences in return and integration in the local settings. The results obtained through correspondence, have primarily been used to open some questions related to the integration of the HQ-Returnees and direct the further analysis of this paper, addressed in part four.

The fourth part will look at the issues of diploma recognition as one of the most prominent functional obstacles that HQ returnees in our sample have identified. It will outline the legal and systemic settings in which diploma recognition takes place and provide the overview of the stakeholders involved and finally attempt to detect shortcomings of the system which will be used as the basis for concluding remarks and recommendation pertaining to both the diploma recognition system and the more efficient management of human capital that HQ returnees pose.

BRAIN(S), MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Historically, movement of the people has been observed as a challenge but also as an opportunity for development. As the pendulum was moving from one side to another, so was the belief that this increasing dynamic could be controlled or at least channeled in desirable directions. After oscillating between pessimist and optimist approach for the time being theoretical consideration and practical efforts mainly rest on the optimist pole (De Haas, 2008). Regardless of the theoretical disputes on the way migration and development are connected – a dispute between optimistic and pessimistic view on the phenomena (De Haas, 2008), a fact remains that the very occurrence of these phenomena requires us to think not only what the reason and consequences are, but also how these processes could be modeled, controlled, predicted, and finally how to increase possible positive outcomes in terms of socio-economic development of one country or a region.

When migration and development are discussed together, one of the most common categories that has drawn attention is the size of remittances of a country's diaspora, or economic remittances to individuals and communities in home country. UNDP estimates that 500 million people receive remittances. Back in 2006 the World Bank estimated a \$ 199 billion of remittances through official channels, a rise of 107% since 2001 (World Bank, 2007). In the cases of underdeveloped countries that have large diaspora communities, remittances are used as an important contributor to the local economy (largely for day to day expenses as a helping factor and only sporadically in development).

Movements of people and the transfer of knowledge and skills - or the so-called Social Remittances are usually associated with brain migration, and have gained increasing attention as to the contribution to the countries development; however those are much harder to understand, measure and contain. Still, when various "brain" phenomena are considered the implicit subtext is again the increase in socio-economic development, or in other words correlation between highly skilled population and its position as the foundations for the development of human capital as a fundamental asset in the knowledge-based economy perspective.

Interestingly, in terms of direct financial transfer to the country of origin in the form of remittances, as it has been recently shown by de Haas (De Haas 2007) highly educated are on the lower side of the remittances spectrum – they remit less. One

of the reasons is that HQ more often migrate or move with their families who are on the other hand primary remittances receivers (ibid.). However, one important thing, which goes beyond absolute financial value of remitted money that we have to keep in mind when remittances are concerned – as Marita Eastmond puts it, is that they “are not simply money transfers from one place of the world to another. They affect social relations at both ends” (Eastmond 2006, p155).

In the case of BiH, remittances are among few dimensions that attract the attention of policy makers and are followed regularly. The official estimate, given by the World Bank on the share of remittances in the BiH national GDP is around 13 percent (World Bank, 2011), compared to Foreign Direct Investment Contribution to GDP at 1.4 percent in 2010 (FIPA, 2012), the Diaspora's economic contribution in the aftermath of the war remains significant for BiH.

In regard to Social Remittances there is no official data on the characteristics and size of the recent return of BiH citizens and their integration in the local community and market. Furthermore, there is no data on the potential and exact size of the HQ diaspora. Official statistics are missing and despite the fact that majority of brain drain occurred during or in the few years after the war in BiH, the World Bank estimates show that BiH is still in the drain phase with skilled migration amounting to 23.9 % (World Bank, 2011, p25). EUROSTAT data shows that, around 150,000 people from BiH entered and 70,000 left the EU area in the period 2000 – 2007 (EUROSTAT). Although, unfortunately, there is no data on the educational profile of this population we can rightfully assume, based on the previously given World Bank estimates, that a significant percentage of these migrants is highly educated.

It is also important here to note that it is hard to establish the exact size of BiH Diaspora, considering that once they obtain citizenships of the host country, their registration as immigrants is aborted, and with it any further attempt to follow the demographic structure of BiH Diaspora is impossible unless BiH establishes cooperation with the host countries. Since these issues are primarily regulated through bilateral agreements which are exclusive responsibility of the state at least formally while initiatives can come from other administrative levels. Further on, there are also some legal provisions that indirectly might have consequences on their status. One such provision is found in the BiH Law on Citizenship pertaining to the questions of dual citizenship. Following the BiH's constitutional provisions, article 17 of this law regulates conditions for having additional citizenship besides the citizenship of Bosnia and Herzegovina and stipulates that, unless the bilateral agreement with a particular county exists, BiH's citizens with citizenship of another country will be forced to choose between the two (or more). At the moment, this provision is put on hold until the end of 2012, and the only currently existing bilateral agreements on citizenship are with Serbia, Croatia and Sweden. Nevertheless, at the end of 2011, these provisions were put under scrutiny at the BiH's Constitutional Court who issued a ruling that these articles are unconstitutional and that should be changed immediately (Decision U/911).¹⁶ Unless this provision is changed, a big portion of BiH's citizens with dual citizenship, including returnees and those living outside the country will be put in a rather unfavorable position.

Locally, in policy terms, very little has been done to first probe the scope and dynamic of these population movements and then to develop measures in response and these processes remain at the bottom of public policy agenda. The fact is that comprehensive brain gain programs require significant financial resources. Further on, it has to be acknowledged, as it has been proposed by Daniel Logue that brain gain is a “wicked problem” - complex, multilevel and circular issue

¹⁶ Member of the BiH's presidency Bakir Izetbegovic is responsible for this initiative. In May 2011, he filed a complaint to a Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and asked for Court's opinion on the constitutional status of these provisions.

(and in principle unsolvable) with no straight forward solutions and as such requires a complementary policy response (Logue, 2009). The inherent dynamics among the highly qualified population is the propulsion toward mobility – for the purpose of diversification of experiences, professional and educational development, etc.

However, the fact is that the majority of BiH's public institutions have shown almost no interest in engaging with HQ diaspora through other forms of diaspora directed policies which do not require physical return. One important exception is again the Diaspora Department¹⁷ which is consistently trying to push this issue up on the public policy agenda – most recently in November 2011 they organized a regional conference on migration and development with a specific focus on the possibility of coordinated regional efforts. Even the universities show very limited interest in engaging in some sort of communication and exchange with BiH's HQ diaspora and are even somewhat suspicious to potential comers (Tanovic, Lamija, Roundtable Dec.12, Nikolic, Cosic, Mraovic 2011).

As it has been established previously, interest for any sort of cooperation is significantly larger among the diaspora itself and the general lack of interest among home institutions for initiatives from diaspora has a de-stimulating effect (Nikolic, Cosic, Mraovic, 2011). Outside the public institutions, limited but valuable results, primarily by IOM, UNDP and some other international organizations World University Service - WUS,¹⁸ have been achieved in partially reversing this continuous HQ human capital loss. Nevertheless, because of the previously explained policy treatment, besides the limited interest among universities, government and public institutions have shown almost no interest in continuing and taking over these projects (Nikolic, Cosic, and Mraovic 2010).

When it comes to the question of policy management of HQ return and returnees, policy horizon is even blurrier. No strategic framework either exclusively or at least to some extent, aims at this group and their integration in society. This population is predominantly institutionally disregarded and might even be a subject to certain social prejudices. This claim is supported by present research findings in which many respondents accented that they were treated as a direct competition to the local population– we will return to this issue later on. Moreover, due to differences in migration experiences, it is questionable if we are to speak about reintegration or a plain integration since many of the questioned returnees are young people who grew up in different cultural and social settings and it is more a question of their full integration.

SOME GOOD PRACTICES OF INTEGRATION

As it has been suggested, the institutional support for HQ returnees is seriously limited, and only few institutions actually recognize this population as potentially important. When it comes to a formal institutionally driven channel of support they are left to their own powers, personal contacts, networks, skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, there are some new conscious efforts at providing some sort of support through temporary mobility schemes. One innovative practice has been

¹⁷ BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees.

¹⁸ UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNV and IOM: - Youth Employability and Retention Project - YERP, IOM: Return of Qualified Nationals – RQN; Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals –TRLQN; Temporary and Virtual Return of Experts – MIDWEB; UNDP: Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals –TOKTEN; WUS: Brain Gain Project.

initiated by the MHRR (Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees) which offers informational support and most notably newly introduced, self initiated informal internship schemes within the ministry, which up to this point have included only a small number of internees. Although the principal target group is BiH origin foreign students and graduates, such practice might be further advanced to include also HQ returnees with no or little professional experience. Unfortunately, no other governmental or public institutions at any of the administrative levels are doing anything similar with either young diaspora members or this particular population of HQ returnees.

On the other side, few international organizations and local NGOs are putting some efforts in devising some sort of support for this population. International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been working with the HQ returnees for some time, and a part from their successful projects aiming at bringing HQ from BiH back home they are currently working on the development of the guidebook/manual for young returnees and potential returnees that would serve as the initial information source and aid their faster integration. Recently established local NGO "Our Perspective" (Nasa perspektiva), established by two HQ returnees, is one of only few NGOs that is attempting (with limited, mainly international donor assistance) to address some of the issues that this population is facing and to serve as a bridge with diaspora communities, returnees and the local population (Alijagic, Armin interview). "Academia" is another NGO working on providing assistance and information support using web based services and social networks. Other initiative has come from the HQ Diaspora itself: the Bosnian-Herzegovinian American Academy of Arts and Sciences (BHAAAS). BHAAAS is a well established association of HQ BiH citizens holding prestigious titles and positions in the United States. This association gathers around 200 PhD holders and was forced to register their branch in Sarajevo due to lack of consciousness to find partnership in BiH for their activities. This additionally illustrates the persistence of HQ BiH nationals to remain in touch with BiH bringing their knowledge and enthusiasm to BiH alone.

On the other side, some institutions, primarily educational, due to their specific features and services have been and are still achieving what could be called by-product or a collateral brain gain and circulation. This occurs indirectly, without preconceived brain gain objective. Two of such institutions are Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University in Sarajevo, primarily its joint degree programs with University of Bologna – the European regional Master in Democracy and Human Rights in Southeast Europe running from 2000. This program has a long standing brain gain effect, which was reconfirmed through the survey results, since one part of respondents returned and then remained in BiH, largely through this educational institution. In addition, this program also attracted many foreign born HQ who later remained and established their professional careers in BiH, alone the tutors within this institution from 2000 on have been nationals of different countries (besides ex-Yugoslavia countries also from US, Italy, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Poland). Although brain gain is not explicitly envisioned as a principal goal, the fact that it does happen through this program should turn attention to its particular characteristics which work in this direction and might serve as a model for other educational institutions.

Another institution through which this by-product gain is achieved is the American University in BiH which brought back and enabled top end integration in the labor market and further professional development for significant number of BiH origin graduates from US (Esmir Ganic, Roundtable Dec.12). It is worth noticing that Sarajevo Canton Strategy for the Development of High Education positions as one of its strategic objectives that next to stimulating mobility of students and academic workers particular attention should be put on involving more foreign

students and academic staff in the education process (Canton Sarajevo, 2010). This seems as an initial move toward some sort of (although non-explicitly formulated) brain gain/brain circulation policy within the Sarajevo University. Unfortunately even this initiative does not target HQ who have already returned.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SETTINGS: EDUCATION, LABOR MARKET AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Global development trends for some time now have moved from the classical view of development as determined primarily by one country material resources to a more anthropocentric approach. This concept, known as knowledge based economy marked the shift from “traditional production factors to creating, diffusing and exploiting new knowledge. OECD describes the knowledge economy as the economic activities and systems that are directly established in creation, circulation and application of the knowledge and information” (Chai-Kai Chen, 2008, p. 502 as cited in Rahimić Z. and A. Kožo, 2010). In particular, knowledge based economy is concerned with: knowledge production – the research and development of new knowledge, knowledge transmission – education, training and development of people and knowledge transfer – the diffusion of knowledge and innovation (Clarke, 2001, p. 189 as cited in Rahimić Z. and A. Kožo, 2010). Closely related concept - human capital enables us to determine interconnection between migration of HQ and the development envisioned in this way.

Human capital is defined as the overall amount of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that can be transformed into labor and create economic value. It encapsulates all skills acquired through professional engagement, informal training or formal education all of which add to the labor market value of the particular individual (Becker, 1993). It is hard to accurately and directly measure it (human capital) and is usually assessed through proximal indicators such as GDP, productivity and education related indicators (average duration of education, investments in the education etc.)

Migration and human capital are considered as closely related for some time now because of their inherent similarity – an underlying particular relationship between the individual and society. As Lucas points out “human capital formation is both a private and a social activity. Through their investments in human capital, individuals enhance their earning ability and contribute to the aggregate level of productivity. The formation of human capital is thus driven by individuals’ incentives and externalities within and across generations” (Vidal 1998, p.). Is this not the exact definition of the factors underling migration and its effects? Furthermore, countries are competing for the best and the brightest, and have established a very effective recruitment mechanisms for short supply vocations, in particular those that have higher education attainment – you can never have too much of a good thing.

HQ individuals (including the HQ returnees and HQ diaspora members) and the human capital they posses are determinants for development based on knowledge. Although some authors are insisting that “increase in human capital, as the key factor of economic growth, is an imperative for a country aiming at improving the speed of post-war recovery” (Oruc, 2011), when assessed against this background human capital development in BiH shows rather disappointing results. Unfortunately, very

little or zero progress in terms of human capital development has been observed in the past years (OECD, 2006; OECD, 2010), and the global economic trends leave little hope that things will significantly change for that matter.

Two basic preconditions for the development of economy based on knowledge are high quality education system (and a significant enrolment rate) and investments in research and development. When looking at these two elements in BiH results are rather disappointing.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Tertiary education in particular, as a prime producer of knowledge and highly qualified work force, deals with the whole spectrum of challenges especially since it is still undergoing (largely uncoordinated) large restructuring driven by the requirements of Bologna Declaration.

BiH signed the Bologna Declaration in 2003. A primary goal of the Bologna Declaration, besides the raising of overall quality of education in the European area, is to work toward creating common European educational area, first of all through the establishment of grading system - European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) that is supposed to allow maximum mobility across the area. All BiH universities started the implementation of the so-called first cycle of Bologna in 2006, and the ECTS system of measuring attainment was introduced in all new study programs (ETF, 2009), and although significant improvements have been made, according to some assessments, BiH is among the bottom performers in the European area when it comes to quality of high education and when all components of Bologna process are concerned (Federal Ministry of Education and Science 2009). Full implementation of these provisions surely has its consequences on both HQ diaspora and HQ returnees, especially if they intend to assume or continue education once they return.

Investments in research and development as a fundamental precondition for the development based on knowledge and the deployment of HQ human resources are again on the downside. Even the limited glance at budget shares for research and development at universities shows the existing status of science and knowledge. Advance research requires advance tools and resources, BiH spending on research is around 0.1 % of the GDP per capita, whereas the desired (EU) average is around 3% (Council of Ministers of BiH, 2009. p.23). In addition, large majority of research labs and institutes operating before the war is now dismantled or reduced in capacity and prospects for rebuilding research capacities any time soon are far from promising. In addition, again has to be said, another war consequence that seriously undermines both educational and research capacities and prospects is the loss of academia/research collaboration networks that existed and were responsible for advancing research in the ex-Yu territory.

LABOR MARKET

The second factor that formulates the coordinating system in which the return of the highly educated takes place is the labor market dynamic. Most recent Labor Force Survey (LFS) shows that the percentage of BiH population with tertiary education in the last two years have increased for less than 2% and this means that at the moment 8.8% of working age population have a university degree (including those with masters and doctorates). Although the increase has been recorded, this is still far below the EU average which is around 20% (BHAS, 2011). 26% of high school graduates enroll in the universities, but only around 10% out of this percentage manage to obtain their diplomas within the regular duration of the studies. These statistics indicate the shortage of the domestic HQ work force. HQ returnees, with their knowledge and skills are one of the resources that could supplement this shortage in particular since their engagement requires lesser both financial and management measures.

Overall participation of the highly educated population in the labor market is 17.4%. On the other hand there has been an increase in the unemployment of the highly educated population and its share in the overall unemployment at the moment is 8.3% (compared to 5.1% in 2009) (BHAS, 2011). This can presumably be contributed to the effects of the global economic crisis on the local labor market and might be rationales behind the noted sentiment “against” HQ returnees who are seen as potential competition.

The overall economic development and political environment for sure does not serve as a strong return motivating factor, and this is again where migration processes question this instrumental logic. Some recent analysis show that BH is among the last countries in macroeconomic performance and human capital in WB region (USAID 2011). Only Kosovo and Albania lag more in human capital and Serbia in macroeconomic performance. The economic recovery since the beginning of the economic withdrawal in 2010, due to the crisis effect has been minimal. Indicators show that the economic output in BiH has been lowered in a bigger proportion than the global average is although it went some percentages above the global average in the past 8 years, from 2002 to 2008 (ibid.).

Approximation of BiH’s need for highly qualified is hard to establish since employers are not legally obliged to report available vacancies to the employment agencies and the assessment is made through FBiH, RS and cantonal employment agencies registries. Available data on the structure of unemployed HQ individuals show that there is a significant need for engineering in information science, electronic, telecommunication, transport, geology and construction since very few of those professions are registered as unemployed (Labor and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010). People educated in pharmacy, law, economy, sales, IT experts, accountants and various other economy educational profile, as well as physicians and teachers are also among the most needed ones. One important feature that presumably partially favors HQ returnees is that employers very often look for other skills, such as IT literacy and the knowledge of one foreign language (mostly English). Furthermore, the request for the so-called “soft skills” is accentuated as something still insufficiently obtained through the BiH education system, which is again a factor that might represent additional chance for HQ returnees. (ibid, 2010)

Nevertheless, because of the lack of coordination and a discrepancy between labor market and educational policies many professions that are of highest demand and production rate are also among the biggest unemployed groups. These include persons educated in finance and economy, teachers and lawyers while engineers in mechanics and chemistry are the smallest unemployed groups (ibid., 2010). Unfortunately, in some of the sectors, especially in education and medical professions and social sciences, domestic statistics are longitudinally incomparable since certain classification fragmentation happened. In addition, because of the Bologna reform effects, new professions are emerging which are still dubiously classified (ibid., 2010).

Although some BiH policies are targeting at returnee population, these are primarily focused on internally displaced group, inexplicitly but in principle including also the HQ returnees from anywhere, and it is surely valuable but seriously questionable if

and how they actually affect this particular group.¹⁹ Although different strategic plans are in place, the institutions mandated for their implementation are lacking political and financial support, which seriously undermines the sustainability and the effects of these policy efforts, including both educational and employment policies (ETF 2009).

An ambitious project called Youth Employment and Retention Project was initiated in 2010 and has been jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNV, MDG-F and IOM. This project is trying to combine several components of migration and employment policies and the component focused on developing support for employment of young individuals – through strengthening capacities of employment agencies, it seeks to either control the brain drain or to offer systematic and controlled mobility options for young population in BiH (UNDP – 2009).

HQ return happens within the education system – labor market and there is no doubt that it is hardly straightforwardly simulative. However, migration and return often (and usually) avoid clear-cut laws of the logic. It invariably includes the emotional dimension which defies strict win-lose (or push-pull) calculus. From this point we shall proceed with actual experiences of the HQ returnees in adapting and integrating within these settings.

EMPIRICAL INDICATORS

The empirical research undertaken as a part of this study draw from two primary sources: the focus groups conducted in May 2011 and the questionnaire developed and designed exclusively for this research. The focus groups had two objectives. First, they were to be used as primary data on the experiences of HQ returnees in BiH and second, preliminary insights from the focus group were used to additionally inform the final design of the questionnaire.

Besides the inexistence of any official data regarding HQ returnees, official or any other institutional evidence (i.e. monitoring by higher education institutions, employment offices etc.), there were two additional challenges that affected the implementation of the devised methodology. The questionnaire and the pooling method most probably significantly affected the response rate. First of all the questionnaire required around 45 minutes to complete and the technical solutions required to be filled at once without the possibility for more than one answering session.

Second, the questionnaire was distributed among the respondents only after the initial identification of a potential respondent was already established and after his or her email was known to the researchers. This was also one of the technical requirements to exclude multiple entries and although it was useful for controlling it also prevented the “snowball” effect which might have resulted in a bigger and a more representative final sample.

The definition of the returnee we used for this study (apart from the high education attainment requirement) states that a returnee is a person who has returned to BiH after spending at least one year abroad.

¹⁹ Few employment policies at entity levels do target returnees in general and thus also highly qualified returnees, but these policies aim mainly at internally displaced persons. However, according to the areas targeted by these measures – agriculture, vocation and county side tourism and other SMEs, focus is on the sustainable return and are more of a social then development measures. On the state level around two millions KM were granted for these purposes in 2010, and another two in 2011. In FBiH, these measures include one-time financial support for employment of returnees for either employers (3,000 KM per person) or self-employed returnees (from 4,000 to 5,000 KM) with a provision that forbids their re-registration as unemployed at employment agencies for 12 months (ibid.). In 2010 RS Government initiated a very similar program targeting the employment of returnees as part of Republika Srpska development program, whose goal is to contribute to the further implementation of the Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, developing favorable conditions for returnees' self-employment, stimulation of employers and the economic sustainability of the return process. This program initially targeted 400 returnees: 200 self-employed returnees and 200 employer employment co-financing. Unfortunately, at the moment, there is no data on the actual effect of these financial instruments.

At the end we managed to identify 52 HQ returnees, out of which less than 50% responded (25 respondents). The overall sample (when focus groups and questionnaire are combined) was 34. The data is by no means representative, however presented alongside with the IOM findings from "To BiH or not to BiH", they provide similar results and trends. The results serve as an introductory to open some questions for future considering and future surveys. Additionally, because of the limitation of resources the research team was limited to secure other more effective means to surveys. Serious survey on this matter should be carried out in the entire region of the Western Balkans.

Gender distribution of the overall sample was symmetrical – 50% male and 50% female. Age average was 34 years. Unsurprisingly most of migration is actually a war migration 50% - individuals that left the country in the period 1992 – 1995. When return is considered no significant trends were noted; the time span covers the years 1996 to 2011. Half of the returnees stated that education was the primary reason for their leaving BiH. Most of them reside in Sarajevo, but there were also respondents that reside in Mostar, Zavidovici and Prozor. In addition to the small sample of respondents the survey did not manage to achieve territorial balance.

In the overall sample, 27 returnees acquired their (highest) education abroad. Another prominent reason stated by the respondents is the political climate which corresponds with finding that majority of emigration occurred during the war in BiH. Only two respondents left BiH after already acquiring tertiary education. None of the respondents were forced to return so we are speaking exclusively about the voluntary return. When reasons for return are considered the leading factors are the "desire to contribute to the development of the country", "to share and transfer knowledge", and "patriotism". IOM study reveals similar findings– "to help rebuild the country with knowledge and experience"- 43%. Furthermore the IOM study also shows that family and friends are amongst most prominent reasons for return 50%, which again indicates the more sentimental reasons that guided the decision to return.

When looking at the most prominent obstacles after the return, three factors share the first place, the general culture, working culture and the diploma recognition. Other prominent obstacles upon the return were: institutional acceptance (15 out of 25 respondents) and corruption in employment (13 out of 25 respondents) and 23 respondents said they did not receive any support from public institutions. Among those who did receive support universities are exclusively cited as institutions providing support.

Complex administrative and legal environment is clearly one of the obstacles for a returnee and even for a potential returnee; as one respondent clearly puts it:

"A lot of people that want to return (temporary or permanently) do not know who to turn to for information concerning their possible return. So basically, they are faced with obstacles even before even return."

In addition respondents and focus group participants reported something similar to the well known societal reflex against immigrants prominent in the traditional immigrant countries – the idea and a perception that "they are here to take our jobs". Although not qualifying as proper immigrants, highly-educated returnees sometimes are fronted with corresponding logic and are seen as intruders rather than potentially positive contributors.

Other talk about the reverse culture shock as one of the issues accompanying the return and the general perception among our respondents about the return varies from optimistic to the straight down pessimistic – “There’s no good side of the return, the decision to come back to my country was a disaster to me.” – which often is the reason for them to think of leaving again.

Although high majority of the surveyed sample is employed they all faced significant obstacles for finding a job. Among the employment obstacles four stand out as being most important: negative selection (88%), connections (84%), party affiliation (76%), and low respect for knowledge (62%). Employment rate established in our research differs significantly from the results found in the IOM study which is around 60 percent and again it might be attributed to the fact that it includes returnees regardless of their educational attainment. Our findings are closer to the percentage of unemployment among those with tertiary education (8.3%)

When finding a job is in question, being one of the fundamental prerequisites for lasting return, HQ returnees are usually faced with difficulties which are common to the local job market. These include corruption, political and personal nepotism, etc. Besides, what is usually lacking and what distinguish HQ returnees from the local highly qualified population is the loss of supportive social networks and a need to establish or fully rebuild once existing social relations (this of course depends on the nature of initial migration and the period that have passed until the return). In this sense, any future research has to take this into consideration since some of the respondents that did qualify within the sample were away for not more that 2 or 3 years, and had their friends and even jobs waiting for them, while others left in their early teens and returned as grownups, fully professionally and socially formed somewhere else.

The most prominent obstacles when returning, established in our sample, were general culture, working culture and diploma recognition. Even when combined with IOM results more than 50% of returnees mention diploma recognition as one of the important problems. Since first two are not something that is easily remediable through policy measures the following discussion will focus primary on the question of diploma recognition since it posits as one of the obstacles for finding a job (which corresponds with the educational attainment of a person) and for continuing education.

Price range for diploma recognition goes from 100 KM to 1,500 KM, and interestingly two respondents stated that financial burden was a reason why they did not go through the process of recognition. In our sample more than 50% of respondents went through and only three did not finish the process of diploma recognition and IOM results show that 44% of returnees attempted to recognize their diplomas, while only 15% actually managed to do this. Regardless of these differences both samples indicate that the process itself is serious problem citing it to be complicated, confusing, time consuming and expensive.

In terms of using potential of the HQ returnees the situation is far from being clear-cut. Not only are the public institutions unaware that clever inclusion of people educated abroad might represent a significant boost in different sector, the question remains, even if this awareness would exist, how and if this presumed knowledge might be directly deployed for any sort of developmental purposes and in that way justify some particular measures or financial expenditures.

DIPLOMAS FROM ABROAD

Two important dimensions of diploma recognition are symbolical – formal recognition of one’s value and social status through educational attainment, and practical – employment and further education possibility. It refers not only to BiH returnees but also for HQ foreigners interested in

deploying their knowledge locally and although significant progress has been made toward the increased usage of the Lisbon Convention principles, the fact that this has been observed as a problem by majority of HQ returnees requires attention.

In the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina school diplomas (including university diplomas) are considered to be public documents and as such are regulated by the Law on Public Documents in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette BiH 23/04). Provisions of this law are guaranteeing the validity of any public document issued in accordance with the law on the entire territory of BiH (art 4, par.1). This also should guarantee the validity of diplomas ones they are officially recognized by one of the institutions which have the mandate. This state level law is an important precondition for enabling full internal labor mobility. In addition, legal provision on recognition differs between two modes of recognition: for the purpose of employment and for the continuation of education and this fact has a consequence when the modality of procedure is in question which will be discussed later.

At the moment BiH has not signed any bilateral agreements which would allow direct recognition of qualification and thus by-pass the recognition process. One such agreement does exist, signed between the Republic of Srpska and Republic of Serbia, however since it is not regarded as a proper bilateral agreement, because state BiH is not the party; it has only limited legal effect (Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Documents and Regulation of the Status Issues of Students "Official Gazette of RS", No. 79/05) Pursuant to the interpretation of this agreement by the RS Ministry for Education and Culture diplomas acquired in Serbia are recognized directly for the purpose of continuing education while they still require going through recognition process if a person is looking for employment or for other professional purposes (Aksamija, Neven. interview sep, 1).

Pursuant to the Framework Law on the Higher Education, University diplomas acquired before April 27, 1992 within the territory of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia are recognized automatically and require no official recognition procedure (Vobornik, Slavenka. Interview, Sep 15). This implies that diplomas acquired after April 1992, have to be formally recognized. Although the changes in the education systems in the Yugoslavia successor countries have not been radical to the extent which would require thorough adaptation to the local system, this has to be measured in a wider political context (Vobornik, Slavenka. Interview, Sep 15). If considered outside this framework and if looked upon through some sort of regionally conscious perspective, direct recognition (under condition that the school/university is formally accredited in the country) would open up a space for mobility and transfer between these countries, formerly being part of the same country, at least.

On the other hand, two FBiH cantons with Croat majority have bypassed the need for regulating these issues through bilateral agreements by including legal provisions in local/cantonal laws on diploma recognition which guarantees direct recognition of diplomas obtained in the Republic of Croatia through simple administrative procedure (Law on Recognition and Equivalence of Educational Documents, art 11 "Official Gazette of the Canton", No. 11/06) or are fully equivalent with BiH diplomas (Law on Recognition and Equivalence of Foreign Educational Documents, art 28, "Official Gazette of the West Herzegovina County, No. 6/99)

BOX 1: Paradoxes of return and diploma recognition

X and Y work together; they are both originally from Livno, a small town in the northern Herzegovina in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both of them are veterinarians, at present working together in Sarajevo. Both of them have attended veterinarian faculty at the Sarajevo University, and they both left during their senior year to finish their education at foreign universities, X went to Zagreb and Y went to Belgrade. Since they were excellent students, they quickly managed to finish their studies and then they returned to Sarajevo. Next step before they would go to search for employment was to get their diplomas recognized by the official authorities in the country.

At this point the story diverges. X approached the University of Sarajevo and was told that the process will take some time and that will cost significant amount of money – around 1000 KM. Y on the other hand submitted his diploma for recognition in the Livno Canton, finished the necessary paperwork for half an hour, and paid an administrative tax of 3 KM. Few days later, while X was being transferred from one administrative unit to another, Y's father had picked up his fully recognized diploma, and so he was ready to apply for a job in his field. At the end X also got his diploma recognized and to put this behind him. You are wondering what happened?

THE RECOGNITION

Process of the high education diploma recognition in Bosnia and Herzegovina is decentralized and fragmented, separated jurisdictions following the complex and multileveled administrative structure of the country. There is only one institution functioning as a state level body called *Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education* (Centar za informiranje i priznavanje - CIP).²⁰ It has been established in 2007 in accordance with the Framework Law on the Higher Education. Legal and operating framework for CIP's work is the *Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*.²¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region in 2003 and the Convention entered into force in 2009.²²

The name of the institution however could be misleading since it does not have any direct power related to the recognition process itself (although the law establishing CIP states that one of its jurisdictions is also a diploma recognition without detailing on the substance of this feature, probably envisioning the role this institution could have in futures). Its main function, at this point, is contained in the first part of the name – Information, since it provides information, advices and recommendations regarding the status of foreign high education institutions and their programs as part of international network of Centers for Information – ENIC/NARIC for

²⁰ According to the Framework Law on the Higher Education in BiH CIP's mandate consists of: Providing information and recognition in the field of higher education; Coordination and the international exchange of academy staff, students and programs in the field of higher education; Representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in international projects in the field of higher education in line with its mandate; Providing information on the foreign higher education institutions for the higher education institutions in BiH regarding the recognition of degree and diplomas, as part of ENIC/NARIC network, for the purpose of continuing education at higher education institutions in BiH, and functions as a BiH's representing body in this network; It provides opinions and information on the foreign degrees and diplomas for the purpose of continuing education at high education institutions in BiH; It provides advices and information regarding questions from its jurisdiction to all parties with a lawful interest; In accordance with Lisbon Convention and its related documents it provides recommendations for Republika Srpska Ministry of education, cantonal ministries on education, and to the Brcko District on the recognition of diplomas acquired outside BiH for the purpose of employment, continuation of education and other rights related to the obtained degree. Framework Law on the Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina par III, art 44.

²¹ Framework Law on the Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina par III, art 44.

²² <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=165&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG>

lower-level bodies responsible for the actual recognition of diplomas. CIP has no actual jurisdiction over bodies responsible for recognition. It is recommended that these organs obtain opinions, recommendations and information from the Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, however they are not obliged to do so.²³

Actual recognition follows the constitutional division of jurisdiction over education, and is done on the level of cantons in FBiH and on the entity level in Republika Srpska, District Brčko (DB) to date does not carry out recognition itself, but this administrative level will be explained separately. Each administrative level has its own law on higher education and includes own procedures on diploma recognition or diploma “nostrification”. In addition to the respective education ministries on all levels, the universities have a jurisdiction to issue recognition or “nostrification”. This is a myriad of institutions within BiH involved in one process, including 12 ministries of education at least 8 universities (public universities). The guidelines as of who is involved in which case vary extremely (see box 1 for illustration). Therefore the confusion by the potential beneficiaries that is individuals with foreign earned diploma is self-evident.

Furthermore, all of the administrative levels, except Sarajevo Canton, have introduced to their procedures the clause, that the person applying for recognition of their diploma at this administrative level, has to be either resident within the territory of that administration, and or has grounded and provable reasons of their legal interest on that territory (i.e. employment within that territory or further education). (Dilber, Roundtable Dec.12).

Considering the above, District Bčko is the only administrative level that so far has not extended administration causing overlapping and repetitive functions, keeping in mind that once a recognition is carried out by any administrative level in BiH it is recognized on the whole territory of BiH. Despite this most Cantons and RS, except Sarajevo Canton, limit DB residents to apply for recognition, because of the aforementioned clauses relating to the residence or legal interest on the territory within their competency. Currently, individuals from DB mainly recognize their diplomas in Sarajevo Canton, as it is the only canton accepting inquiries from DB and or any other resident in BiH. Whether this will remain the case depends on the new Law on Higher Education of DB that is in drafting procedure.

According to CIP’s view and in line with the principles of Lisbon Convention biggest problem when diploma recognition is concerned is the fact that bodies responsible for recognition insist on applying the inherited concept, the so-called “nostrification”. Whereas the Lisbon Convention defines recognition as a simple procedure of issuing prove of the acquired educational attainment – based on the status of the institution which issued the diploma, nostrification insists on establishing full correlation between programs abroad and in home country. In this way, many of the diplomas acquired in some sort of interdisciplinary settings are usually very hard to recognize and often require either additional exams or are recognized only partially.

²³ Recommendations of criteria for evaluation of foreign education qualifications in the process of recognition for the purpose of employment and continuation of education, Official Gazette of BiH, issue 88/10 available at: http://www.cip.gov.ba/images/stories/preporuke_sluzbeni_glasnik_bih_88-10_26.10.2010.eng.pdf

Some of the problems concerning diploma recognition that are not easily solvable even through a full implementation of Lisbon Convention and in turn precisely because of the effects of this document come from the fact that often institutions that have issued particular diploma are not accredited in their home country. In this case there is nothing that CIP can do, since this is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the Lisbon Convention driven diploma recognition (Sorajic, Borko interview Nov. 9).

Another exemption that is not covered by the principles of the Lisbon Convention is the so-called regulated professions defined as “a professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which, the pursuit of which, or one of the modes of pursuit of which is subject, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to the possession of specific professional qualifications; in particular, the use of a professional title limited by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to holders of a given professional qualification shall constitute a mode of pursuit.” (DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC) Professions that fall into this category in BiH are: medicine, law, pedagogy and architecture. In such cases provisions of the Lisbon Convention are not applicable and diplomas are required to be validated in the “old school” way through nostrification.

CONCLUDING REMARKS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE ORIENTATIONS

Perhaps the most important lesson we learn, is that BiH as a country knows next to nothing about the potential of its diaspora, nor has it any knowledge on those that have returned. When everything previously said is taken into account the conclusion we have to draw is that it is necessary to work on spreading the understanding on the need to secure a sustainable strategic framework for returnees in general, in particular considering the BiH prospects toward the European Union integration BiH needs to be on a competitive level in the knowledge based society, and has to work on the development of its education, research and innovation to attract HQ human capital. As has been noted, currently the HQ group that is coming to BiH is the HQ Diaspora – returnees. Given the current global trends of “reversed” migration in the aftermath of the global recession the HQ citizens of BiH may consider returning if prospects for employment and recognition are offered.

With no strategic orientation toward Diaspora; with non-existent brain gain, brain circulation or any other “brain” policies for that matter, the opportunity to increase domestic human capital in the form of highly qualified returnees should be taken seriously. Rational is as follows: cost for educating this human capital have been covered by the host country (in most cases considering the younger generations BiH citizens), at the same time by achieving brain gain, the less likely is the threat of brain drain. The benefits outweigh the cost to attract already educated individuals and get brains from abroad to come back and contribute through their expertise, and transfer of know-how. It seems that, within the currently weak research and innovation sector which is necessary for brain gain, the diaspora is the only form of additional human capital that expresses high motivation to cooperate and contribute to development of BiH. Given this, several recommendations should be made.

AUTHORITIES NEED TO WORK ON ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND STATISTICAL SYSTEM.

In order to grasp the capacities and the potentials of the BiH citizens abroad, but more importantly the overall human capital in BiH, it is urgent that BiH authorities pay attention to enable effective information on demand and supply of HQ individuals, the labor market, as

well as monitoring mechanisms of migration that would provide reliable data on the movement of the HQ individuals and the demographic structure of BiH diaspora, as BiH migration are moving away from crisis management (after the war) to more economic migration, reliable data is important to review and predict future trends. This predisposes a coordination of institutions relevant to migration, education and economic development (labor market). In case of BiH it suffices to say that this involves a myriad of institutions on all government levels: state, entity, cantons. The coordination to develop reliable statistical data relevant to this field should be carried out by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BiH Statistical Agency (BHAS). BHAS has already developed and carried out some internationally standardized surveys like Labor Force Survey, the Households Survey etc., and has good relations with the EU and international statistical agencies that provide significant guidance on the methodologies. BiH furthermore needs to secure higher investment for these projects (up to date all surveys have been by and large supported by foreign donor funds).

As was stated, the OECD countries have already invested significant efforts to provide data on the HQ migration with a standardized methods and guidelines to monitor flows of the HQ individuals, in particular those that work in the Science and Technology sectors. Two surveys, alongside the LFS, are of significant importance to these issues: The Human Resources in Science and Technology (HRST) Survey and the Survey on the Careers of Doctorate Holders (CDH). HRST collects the data on the demand and supply of people with high qualifications in science and technology, which is important to policy makers to establish the market trends, shortages in supply of highly skilled individuals. The CDH statistics mainly focus on the doctorate holders, however the same methodology can be expanded and applied to other highly qualified people and levels (such as B.A. and M.A. holders). It is even recommended by OECD that developing countries consider the expanded version where non-doctorate holders might constitute a crucial part of the science and technology workforce, and are important for policy creation. Below is the OECD map that identifies what kind of information is important for an effective evidence based policy, and how to link the two.

Table 1: Linking policy and research questions to data needs

POLICY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES OF DATA NEEDS
ROLE IN INNOVATION, KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY What role do doctorate holders play in the innovation process as compared to other tertiary graduates, what is their productivity?	Doctorate holders by type of employment (research, nonresearch), sector (industry, government, higher education), field of research; data on scientific productivity of doctorate holders (publications, coauthorship, patents, citations).
LABOUR MARKET SUPPLY AND DEMAND Do we train too many or too few doctoral graduates? Are there mismatches on the labour market? Why do doctorate holders choose a research career in the public sector or one in the private sector or leave research?	Employment status broken down by age, gender, country of origin, sector of employment, occupation, field of study vs. field of research. Statistics on wages, type of contract, unemployment rates, job conditions in S&T occupations; data on perceptions of career opportunities in S&T in public versus private sector, satisfaction.
EDUCATION TO WORK	Time of transition to employment and post doctoral experience statistics.
MOBILITY How mobile are doctorate holders (among sectors and across countries)?	Mobility of doctorate holders between sectors (industry, government, higher education). Mobility of doctorate holders across countries: doctorate holders by country of birth, citizenship, residency status, type of visa. Data on permanent vs. non permanent, length of stay, returns to country of origin.

Establishing central register of recognized diplomas achieved abroad: Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (CIP) could aid the efforts on obtaining the information of inflow HQ individuals. CIP could take the form of some sort central register on all "imported knowledge" which could be used by public institutions, organizations, research institutions and individuals interested for different purposes. Only upon obtaining reliable data on the scope, dynamics and particular features of HQ return can a state develop effective policies. Special attention should be given to possibilities given by the modern technology and a way it could be used for deepening insight in determinants, dynamic, and consequences of HQ mobility in general.

Applying the positive practices of cooperation: Following the practice established within MHHR, other governmental institutions should follow this model and offer similar internship schemes. Ideally these schemes would be first formalized and then modeled and structured depending on the specific needs of a particular institution. In this way young members of BiH diaspora communities would be offered a chance to familiarize with the work of public institutions, and directly contribute to the work of a particular institution, and for sure in some cases, be the first step toward lasting return. In a similar way HQ returnees with no significant working experience would be given chance to gain some experience which would help them in easier transition to the labor market. Finally, such measures would demonstrate the orientation of a country toward its diaspora and HQ returnees and as such would have an additional dimension of strengthening connections. The BiH Consular departments should serve as a bridge between institutions and potential internees/returnees.

Reconstruct the regional cooperation: universities should engage in the reconstruction of the connections established during the Yugoslavia times among scientific institutions which are now almost entirely lost. Since majority of foreign knowledge in BiH comes from neighboring countries this is only one of the ways of engaging HQ returnees. The political atmosphere should rather focus on reinvigorating the ties as the geopolitical reality of this area should be accepted as a potential benefit to the countries of the region (language, culture). It is not only politically shortsighted, but also irresponsible not to look at furthering cooperation strategies that would be a benefit for all sides. If looked upon through knowledge based economy lenses, individual country knowledge base scarcity could be compensated through intensive knowledge exchange. There is no doubt that universities should work as first instances and flag carriers in this process. Cooperation is directly stimulated and the incentives are indisputable (there are different programs that are directly promoting and funding cooperation and regional cooperation – such as FP7). This is only one way to involve HQ in the local agenda. Additional gain achieved through this program is the institutional networking that goes beyond purely individual cooperation and is compensating local technical and infrastructural limitations through cooperation.

REMOVING OBSTACLES

Legal provisions relating to dual-citizenship of BiH Diaspora and returnees should be oriented towards ensuring that the BiH Diaspora retains their rights as citizens of the country. Forcing them to make a choice or even taking a decision on their behalf will consequently distance these citizens from the country, but also severely limit them from engaging with the country regardless of the good will. BiH Law on Citizenship pertaining to the questions of dual citizenship needs to be changed in accordance with the BiH's Constitutional Court ruling that these articles are unconstitutional and that should be changed immediately (Constitutional Court Decision U 9/11).

Framework provided by the Lisbon Convention should be fully implemented. This would not only enable faster and easier integration of HQ returnees but would also affect HQ immigrants who wish to either work or pursue education in BiH. The practice of nostrification should be decreased and eventually full transition to diploma recognition achieved. Envisioned state level law on diploma recognition has to fully standardize procedures and pricing schemes by simplifying procedures for the users and establishing a more effective way of communicating them, eventually this function should be considered to be transferred in the authority of Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education on the state level. This would help in intensifying both external and internal mobility of experts.

It is necessary to develop wide informational campaign whose goal would be to educate general public on the potentials this population potentially has. Demystification of the negative “social reflex” based on perceptions should be addressed. As has been demonstrated individuals with higher education, regardless of where it has been achieved, are to greatest percent employed and the situation with the returnees does not differ compared to non-returnees, both in terms of perceptions about employment methods, current political and economic environment and the opportunities that they have. Same agenda should also be communicated with the state institutions. This requires wide involvement of the media.

Adopting strategic frameworks and action plans to stimulate return from abroad: As it has been described financial support for IDP and refugee return is proportionally large, but in principle still primarily deals with reconstruction and securing basic living conditions. However the general objection is that the sustainability of the return has not been achieved. Within the more general return framework under Annex 7 of DPA specific instruments targeting contemporary HQ returnees should be established. These might include specific financial incentives for establishing businesses and employing persons. By making this move from socially driven return to a more development driven return, certain spill-over effect might be expected and could actually improve the sustainability of the return in general. This has to be considered as a part of a broader strategic framework for sustainable return, development of BiH’s human capital and on the migration and development nexus.

Another future orientation would be to investigate if recent global economic downfall is connected to the mobility patterns of HQ from BiH. At this point it remains a farfetched speculation since there is no data on the overall number of returnees as well as on the longitudinal dynamic of the HQ return. One of the possible interpretations is that the increase in the market share and increase in the HQ unemployment is a direct effect of the growing in scope HQ return. Nevertheless, this remains to be empirically proven – available data so far did not show increased return dynamics in past two years, and it might turn out that the determinants behind these developments are of a different nature. Still, the fact remains that the ongoing global economic crisis has only recently “hit” BiH while other countries, most notably developed economies have been experiencing the crisis effects for more than two years now. This fact might have played a “push factor” role and thus brought an increase of the return but as already mentioned throughout this paper the unavailability of data makes it hard to test the hypothesis.

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THE ROUND TABLE:

DOES BIH WANT EXPERTS?

FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF POTENTIALS OF THE HIGHLY EDUCATED RETURNEES WITHIN THE BRAIN GAIN PERSPECTIVE



CONCLUSIONS

1. Addressing these issues effectively requires wide involvement of stakeholders including governmental institutions, independent actors, research institutions and international organizations.
2. The role of media is critical when it comes to educating general public on the concepts, challenges and potentials of HQ migration and all future advocacy efforts should have a strong media component.
3. Universities need to get actively involved in both, research on the phenomena and in publicly disseminating the knowledge. In addition, it should have a greater role in advancing new and creative measures and policies in relation to HQ migration management.
4. Because it is not very likely to expect substantial state support in the near future especially in financial terms, fundamental requirements toward the governmental institutions regarding the reintegration of HQ returnees is to reduce obstacles for their more efficient societal integration, through legal and legislative improvements; diploma recognition being one of them.
5. In addition, there is a strong need to establish tools for monitoring migration of highly qualified individuals, in particular for those that are returning. Furthermore, monitoring would be more effective and it would provide for a more fruitful cooperation if the government established bilateral agreements with the reception countries to facilitate the migration of the HQ individuals. Currently no such

agreement exists, allowing for neighboring and European countries to attract individuals of professional backgrounds mostly needed in BiH without consideration as to the potential damage incurred.

6. Since HQ mobility has evolved over time showing features obviously connected with the global developments, it is necessary to develop suitable response. This can be achieved by creating innovative web-based tools and platforms. Importance of social media should also be seriously considered when developing comprehensive migration policy framework.
7. Strong interconnectedness between the questions of the overall high education system reform in BiH and the movement of HQ individuals indicate a need for a multi-level, multidisciplinary approach.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Portal of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, December 2, 2011.

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TRANSFORMING BRAIN GAIN FROM A CONCEPT TO A REAL GAIN



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INTRODUCTION

The migration of high skilled people from the Western Balkans has been a problem of the past two decades. Besides the awareness that there is huge outflow of educated people, the Balkan countries are not investing enough to track this group of people on their migration in the developed countries, or on their way back home.

The data that is currently available can be perceived as outdated because no relevant research according to the migration of this profile of people has been done lately. Regarding the presented evidence in the Migration Profile of Republic of Macedonia 2008 (2009) it is presumed that Macedonian citizens who are residing in other countries are highly educated, and that there is also significant number of them working in respected and well known universities and research centers. According to one study, Potential Intellectual Emigration from the Republic of Macedonia, at least 15 to 20 thousand highly educated persons reside outside the country. This represents more than 15% or 20% respectively, of the total number of persons at the age of 15 or more, with completed higher education in the country (Janeska, 2003, p. 65-80).

Unfortunately official state institutions still do not have this type of data. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the State Statistical Office, as relevant institutions regarding this type of data, were not able to provide such information so the number of highly educated citizens who have permanently left this country and the number of highly skilled returnees remains unknown.²⁵ On the other side, the universities which have signed contracts for student mobility and exchanges and are crucial actor for this issues also confirm the impression of the governmental institutions about the incomplete data (Ivanov, Bozinoska and Bozoviki, 2011). Even the Macedonian Migration Profile, issued in 2009 by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia assesses the data and sources regarding the emigration from Macedonia to other countries as incomplete.

The situation is the same when this process of migration goes in the opposite direction, i.e. if returnees decide to move back to their homeland. Having in mind that we lack official statistics on how many of them have emigrated abroad, we also miss official information regarding their return.

Before this process of moving back to the homelands starts to be a process of brain gain, some conditions have to be created and established. The state should be concerned about the migration of this highly educated category of people because they are perceived as a loss of educated human capital. Relevant policies should be adopted and implemented in order for this human capital to be transformed in a benefit for the country when they come back home. In a situation when such measures are missing this human capital can be easily transformed into brain waste, or it can be a question of migration to the developed countries again.

The paper "Transforming "Brain Gain" from a concept to a real gain" is part of the regional initiative on identifying the obstacles for reintegration of high-skilled returnees in the Western Balkans and proposing solution for systematical approach in overcoming them. It provides overview of the major challenges that the returnees

²⁵ Information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Macedonia (21.12.2011).

are facing in their process of reintegration in Macedonia. Besides the focus on the main socio-economic and cultural obstacles returnees are facing after their moving to their homeland, it reviews the current institutional and legal setup related to the field of research, analyzes the media attention to this problem, introduces the key stakeholders, and concludes with possible recommendations for solving these problems.

BASIC TERMS AND DEFINITION OF A RETURNEE

The paper accepts and uses the definition of “brain gain” as “actual gain of human capital from the migration of highly skilled individuals.”²⁶

“Brain drain” is often said to be a pejorative term, standing for the large-scale emigration of highly skilled and highly educated individuals who have obtained advanced education at a post-graduate level and work in the tertiary sector - scientists, engineers and researchers.²⁷

“Brain waste” in general, is a term that is used to refer to situations where the migration of highly skilled individuals leads to either brain overflow (too many highly skilled workers competing for a limited number of positions on the labor market where some of them are forced to accept positions for which they are overqualified) or simply a situation where, for instance, highly skilled returnees are not efficiently integrated in the labor market in the country of origin (they face objective barriers to pursuing a career according to their qualifications).²⁸

Since returnees were the focus of the research, below is the definition of a returnee that we used for the needs of this project. We define a returnee as a person that:

- Have spent more than one year abroad, and who is more than a year in the country of origin;
- Have minimum university degree, with a greater focus on post graduates (master students) and PhD students;
- Is employed in the following sectors:
 - 1) universities and scientific institutes;
 - 2) economic – state institutions;
 - 3) economic – private sector;
 - 4) state bodies – ministries;
 - 5) non-governmental sector – local and international; but unemployed;
- Comes back from developed countries: Western Europe, USA, Australia, and Canada.

METHODOLOGY

Since there is no concrete data on the number of returnees to Macedonia we experienced this as a major problem while designing the methodology. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used, such as: 1) Online polling, 2) Focus groups, 3) Interviews with stakeholders, 4) Legal framework analysis and 5) Media analysis.

1) ONLINE POLLING

The project itself was envisioned as one big regional research venture. A single online questionnaire was adopted as the major research tool and disseminated among targeted returnees in each country. Period of 6 months was estimated to be sufficient for targeting returnees and spreading the questionnaire among them.

²⁶ Vangeli Anastas, “No Country for Highly Skilled Returnees” in “Mobility and Emigration of Professionals, Personal and Social Gains and Losses”, eds. Polovina N., Pavlov T., (Belgrade, 2011), p. 82.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The questionnaire was composed of 78 questions, divided in the following categories:

- *Motivation and reasons to leave the country*
- *Their situation before they leave and after their return*
- *Problems regarding the culture, jobs, and reintegration issues in general*
- *Motivation to stay, or leave again.*

Snowball method was used as a principal technique for recruitment of the returnees for the online survey. This method was estimated to be the most adequate technique for involving more people from this category of citizens. At the end of the questionnaire all respondents had the opportunity to propose other returnees and involve them in this research.

In order to disseminate this questionnaire to the highest possible number of returnees we used address books of returnees from the scholarship programs and foreign centers that exist in Macedonia and alumni organizations, such as: *The Chevening program*, *The OSI alumni club*, contacts from the *German Academic Exchange Service-DAAD* and contacts from the *French Cultural Center* scholarships program.

Access to the questionnaire was given only to the returnees who had agreed to be involved in the survey and by this we were ensured that the gathered data was realistic and accurate, and what is most important that it corresponded with the returnees' reality and needs.

The findings presented in the following pages were gathered from the answers of 47 returnees. In total 120 returnees received the invitation to take part in this survey, but only 47 (39%) provided a positive feedback.

More than half of the respondents, 53.2% were male, and the rest of 46.8% were female. According to their age the oldest respondent was born in the sixties and the majority of them were born in the nineties. The age structure of the sample is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Age structure of the sample

Birth period	Percentage
1960-1969	2.1 %
1970-1979	8.5 %
1980-1989	36.2 %
1990-1999	53.2 %

Regarding their current recognized highest level of education the situation is as following:

Table 2: Highest level of education recognized upon returning to the country of origin

Level of education	Percentage
High school	4.3%
University	25,5%
Master	57,4%
Doctoral	12,8%

During the research it was estimated that it is easier for the students from the fields of humanities, arts, and social sciences to be enrolled in such programs compared to the students coming from technical or natural sciences.²⁹ This influences the structure of the returnees in Macedonia in general. The vast majority of the respondents, 87.2%, come from the field of social science. The rest of the percentage is approximately equally divided between arts, technical, natural and medical sciences. Only one third of the returnees (36.2%) that were involved in the research are currently unemployed, and the rest of them (63.8%) are employed, but more about their status of employment will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to the “Job and employment problems”.

2) FOCUS GROUPS WITH THE RETURNEES

Apart from the online research, we also conducted focus groups. In total we conducted two focus groups, targeting employed and unemployed returnees. Seven participants took part in the focus group with employed returnees, while the group with unemployed returnees was composed of six participants. The discussion was guided by a moderator who used a questionnaire designed specifically for the target groups. Two focus group meetings were held during the summer 2011. The returnees were asked about their profile of studies and country where they had resided, their experiences in the period of returning, and their current employment situation.

3) INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

In total, 10 interviews with governmental and nongovernmental actors were planned. We have succeeded to conduct interviews with 7 of them. Only few of the invited stakeholders were not in a position to answer to our questionnaires. Regarding governmental actors we managed to conduct interviews with officials from the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy did not respond to the sent questionnaire. As for the nongovernmental actors, we were mostly focused on the organizations actively involved in the fields of mobility, education and migration. In this course we conducted four interviews with influential organizations from the mentioned fields: International Organization for Migration, Erasmus Student Network Macedonia, MladInfo and the French Cultural Center from Skopje.

4) LEGAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

The question of “Brain Drain/ Gain” in Macedonia is partially regulated by several strategic documents that have been adopted in the past years. These documents and acts, and some amendments to the Law on Higher Education have made this field be more regulated, but unfortunately none of these documents is focusing only on the “Brain Drain/ Gain” issues.

For the needs of this paper we have also conducted a legal framework analysis which relays on the analysis of two strategic documents (Emigrational Profile of the Republic of Macedonia 2008 and Migration Policy Resolution of Republic of Macedonia 2009-2014) and the Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette No. 17/2011. We took in consideration these documents because besides their focus on other aspects on migration or education, the questions of “Brain Gain” are explicitly mentioned in them. These documents have transformed Macedonia from the land with no policies [...] and no signs of any measures planned for the future (Horvat, 2004) in to partially regulated country where some regulation exists, but more has to be done in order of their implementation.

²⁹ Interview with Antoaneta Ivanova, MladInfo.com (10.11.2011).

This paper also presents the implications that the current legal setup has on the work of several government and nongovernmental organizations, and the activities that have been done so far by some of the institutional stakeholders after the adoption of these documents.

The civil society is also presented as one important factor in creating such framework and therefore we have analyzed the CSO together with the government institutions and the existing legal framework in one section.

5) MEDIA ANALYSIS

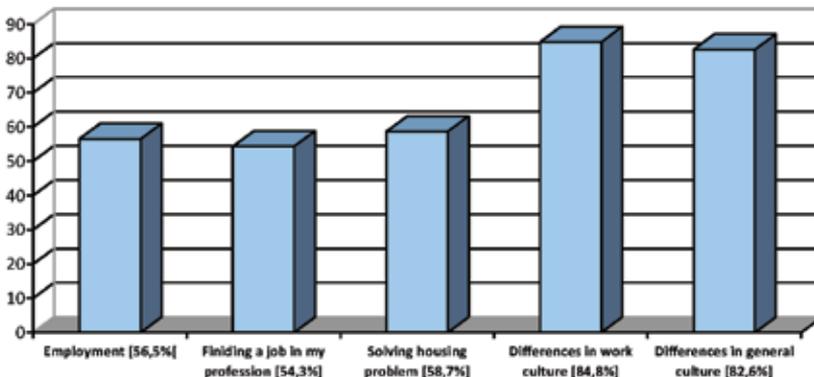
For assessing the media attention and the outreach that this problem can have by using the media we have conducted media clipping as a research tool. The media analysis was conducted by reviewing web content from all media reporting on brain drain/ gain. More than 20 articles from 20 different media were analyzed and one of the conclusions is that the most important national TV stations, newspapers and web portals have been reporting on this issue. The trend of reporting is presented in the chapter dedicated to the media treatment on Brain Gain / Drain in Macedonia. The clipping is composed of articles available online from the period 2006 (the oldest article that is presented) to 2012 (the last article found before we finished with the clipping). The following key words were used in the search process: *brain drain, brain gain, strategy for brain drain, highly educated youth, and highly educated returnees.*

HUGE GAP IN RELEVANT POLICIES FOR REINTEGRATION – OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The process of reintegration of returnees it is still left to be managed by the returnees only. This chapter presents the picture of how it is to be a returnee in Macedonia, what are the main difficulties, which are the most important institutions and what they are doing in order to create more supporting atmosphere for reintegration, what are the main problems while looking for job, and how the process of integration in general works seen from the perspective of a gap in relevant policies.

According to the findings from the research, the main challenges the returnees are facing after returning to the home country, and after they start their reintegration are of economic or cultural origin. From the Graph 1 presented below, it is obvious that out of 15 optional problems, the top difficulties for this group of people are: **differences in work culture and general culture, solving the housing problem, and finding a job, especially a job in the relevant profession.**

Graph 1: Main difficulties after returning home



In this direction, a returnee who was a part of the survey says: "I've survived a big cultural shock. I did not have the contacts like before and I really could not adapt to the local community and their behavior."

Other returnee that holds MA in History, Philology and Religion, has emphasized that beside the cultural shock, the professional shock was also there. "I was very disappointed from the fact that my profession here is abused for political purposes. I feel very sorry because here we are lacking funds for serious scientific research and development."

In order to present the research findings in relevance to the actual situation with the returnees, we have divided their problems in three main categories:

- a. Supportive mechanisms in general
- b. Job and employment problems
- c. Future plans – staying at home or moving abroad again?

SUPPORTIVE MECHANISMS ARE MISSING

In the process of reintegration, the supportive mechanisms have the key role. From the moment of making a decision to move to the homeland to the act of moving the returnees need to have more information about the current situation in their country, to be informed about the legal aspects of returning, have information about the labor market and in most cases to be informed for the procedure of diploma recognition. Not always they can address all these concerns to one body or institution, nor they can find one service that will provide all information that they are interested in before they come back to the native country and in the first period of reintegration. Our research has shown that there is only one "guidebook" so far, issued as a brochure, by the International Organization for Migration in 2005, aimed to provide orientation and valuable information for return and reintegration activities of the migrants in general, but unfortunately we did not find any follow-up or updated version of this publication.³⁰

This situation of not having mechanisms that will assist the returnees upon their return is raising the question of the treatment that they will have in the process of returning and after. The returnees are quite disappointed with the lack of supportive mechanisms upon their return. As they were explaining - no organization/ institution/ professional association contacted them or tried to integrate them in the existing structures"³¹

Regarding the survey results **some assistance from the official institutions has been provided only to 8.5% of the returnees** in the process of return, while **91.5% of them have never enjoyed this situation**. The percentage of provided assistance by non-formal institutions or organizations is also very low and it is a case only with several returnees who have been studying abroad and have been granted with a scholarship.

Paradoxically, vast majority of them were supported in the process of leaving the country and studying abroad – **81.4% studied abroad as scholarship grantees versus 18.6% not granted students**, but not after their return. The Table 3 gives overview of the reintegration process of those who had been granted scholarships.

³⁰ Return and reintegration to FYROM, IOM (2005).

³¹ Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03.05.2011).

Table 3: Did you have a scholarship and were you contacted by the scholarship granting organization after you had completed your education?

I did not have a scholarship – 18,6%	I did have a scholarship – 81,4%	
	They did not contact me	37,2%
	Yes, they checked whether I had returned	11,6%
	Yes, they checked how I got along after the return	16,3%
	Yes, they offered me a job	4,7%
	Yes, other	11,6%

Some of the foreign educational centers who are operating in Macedonia are trying to bridge the gap in the lack of official supportive mechanisms with their own activities, but unfortunately these efforts are related only to the returnees who have been a part of their scholarships program.

*The French Cultural Center from Skopje is trying to follow and assist their grantees as much as possible - "We are trying to keep the contact with them as much as we can while they are on their studies. When they are back, the FCC organizes non-formal meetings and we always invite them to the events organized by the Center."*³²

A better example of academic support can be observed in the case with the FOSIM scholarship program. This organization has already established alumni club where returnees are exchanging information and experiences. Some of them are integrated in alumni programs within the Foundation after their return. One returnee, who has completed a LLM in UK on a FOSIM scholarship, has witnessed that the Foundation makes efforts for bringing their grantees together and even offers some small grants for research projects they jointly propose.³³

The Government of Macedonia provides support only to the returnees who have been studying abroad as a part of the governmental scholarship program. Since it is a condition for these students to work within the government structures after finishing their studies, it is also a condition for the government to offer a job positions to the students, beneficiaries of this program. Besides the fact that they are obliged to return to Macedonia, their return, and the return of all interviewed returnees is in general assessed as a big disappointment. This was especially well explained by two of the focus group participants who had been recipients of a government scholarship with obligation to be employed by the Government upon their return:³⁴

"As scholarship recipients of a governmental scholarship, we have signed a contract by which we are obliged to work for the government upon our return. Unfortunately there is no concrete information which position will be given to us, neither official statement that says that we will be employed immediately after our return. At the same time we can't be employed in any other organization because we must be available for the positions that will be offered in the government."

³² Interview with Suzana Pesik, French Cultural Center Skopje (24.11.2011).

³³ Focus group with unemployed highly skilled returnees (06.05.2011).

³⁴ Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03.05.2011).

This situation has prevented this group of returnees from seeking other forms of employment since the contract they signed stipulates that they must be available for a position within the government for period of six months after their return. However, one of them has waited for one year before finally getting the promised employment, while the other one has not got it at all. There are also positive cases where students are employed immediately after their return, but no one provides a solution about mechanisms that should be established towards the students who are waiting to be employed.

Besides the fact that the issue of supportive mechanisms is mentioned and precisely explained in the Resolution for Migration Policies of Republic of Macedonia,³⁵ not much has been done so far. Specifically, in the chapter related to the measures targeting the Diaspora the priority is given to the following policies:

- Measures for facilitating the returning of the citizens who have regular stay abroad
- Introducing virtual programs for e-returning
- Creating policies for decreasing the intellectual migration (brain drain) and for returning of the high-skilled people from abroad (brain gain)
- Mitigating unfavorable implications from the intellectual migration

The International Organization for Migration has already established a program with a possibility for a **temporary placement for 10 qualified professionals from the Macedonian Diaspora** who live permanently in Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. The professionals are given an opportunity to **return in Macedonia for a short period of time to share their skills and expertise and contribute to the development of the country**. The temporary return assignments have an average duration of 2 months. But since the returnees that are target group of the IOM's project activities are returned on a temporary basis they are not subject to reintegration as they return after the termination of their assignment.³⁶

There is no data for other official projects mentioned in the Resolution. A positive spark is the latest initiative from the Ministry of Education and Science - creating a working group that will work on improving the position with the brain gain by proposing relevant policies that should be adopted and implemented by the Government in the nearest future. This initiative, however, is in the very early stage and so far only a working group has been formed.

JOB AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

Generally, **the employment is assessed to be the biggest setback for the returnees upon their return** since organizations/companies they have applied to have not seemed to value their qualifications and some even disqualified them as being of low quality.³⁷ These disqualifications are between the most frequent obstacles that the returnees face while looking for a job. Besides the **nepotism** which is recognized as the biggest difficulty in the process of looking for a job by 22.6% of the returnees, **the lack of interest for their diplomas** is the second problem on the list for 16.5% of interviewed returnees (see Table 4). From their perspective this is a very difficult situation because the majority of them expect to be very competitive in the labor market with their international educational background and skills gained abroad. Prior to their return, their expectations from the return were generally optimistic. They expected that organizations/companies will search for them and offer them jobs, but this is a case with only a few of the interviewed returnees. One of the returnees was explaining that:

³⁵ Migration Policy Resolution of Republic of Macedonia 2009-2014, Government of RM (2008).

³⁶ Interview with Sonja Bozinovska, International Organization for Migration (23.11.2011).

³⁷ Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03.05.2011).

“There is no transparent employment in both private and public sectors and at the same time the key to a job position is to be a member of a political party or to be well connected.”

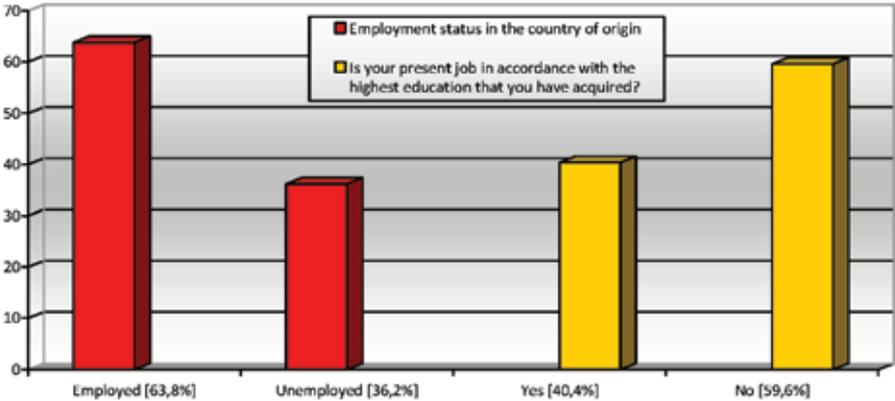
From their own experience the returnees were pointing out that even the lack of appropriate organizational behavior and professionalism of the institutions/ organizations can be quite disappointing. For example, almost none of them have a practice of responding to an application letter, whether it related to a job application or business collaboration. In addition, professional qualifications are undervalued and the emphasis is placed on who you know and how well you are connected.

Table 4: Did you have any difficulties while looking for job?

Yes, getting job through nepotism and connections	22,6%
Yes, lack of interest in my diploma and knowledge	16,5%
Yes, I was required to be a member of a political party	11,3%
Yes, my diploma and knowledge were underestimated	10,4%
Yes, negative selection	10,4%
Yes, I could not enter the existing clan/clans	10,4%
No	10,4%
Yes, I was deemed unfit because of my age	2,6%
Yes, I was deemed unfit because of my gender	0,9%
Yes, other	4,3%

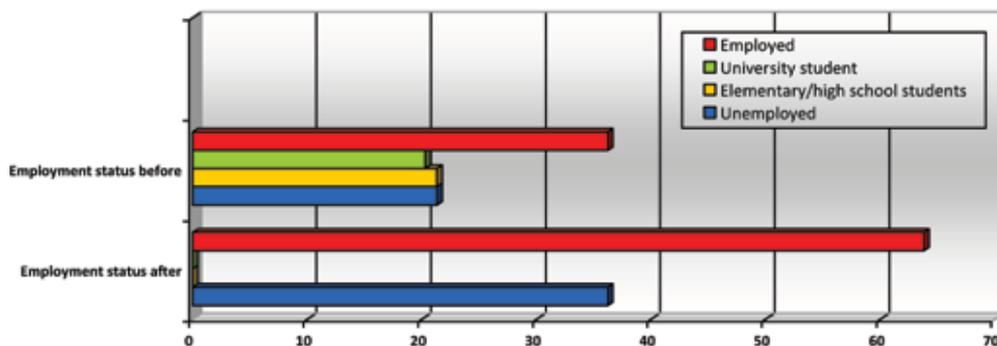
Only **one third of the returnees (36.2%)** involved in the research are currently **unemployed**, and the rest of them (**63.8%**) are **employed**. Besides the positive trend of their employment status, if we compare this figures to the relevance of their job with their educational background we can conclude that **unfortunately 59.6% of them are holding job position that does not match their education**, while less than half (40.4%) of the returnees are working in their field of specialization.

Graph 2: Comparison: Employment status with relevance of education and employment



However, their studies or specializations abroad have positive effects on their employment status. The **employment rate of this group increased** from 36.2% before they left to 63.8% after their studies abroad. The rest of the respondents had been unemployed (21.3%), students (21.2%) and elementary/high school students (21.3%) before they left the country.

Graph 3: Employment status before and after comparison



As a result of the problems mentioned above and the general problem of the unemployment rate in Macedonia, which is 30.9%,³⁸ part of the returnees emphasizes they were forced to settle down for lower paying jobs, positions which are below their qualifications, etc.³⁹ This raises the question of **brain waste** which according to the presented data is a **potential problem for 59.6% of the employed returnees**.

Consequently, the expectations for their professional realization and the realization of their potentials at their current positions are neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Very small percentage, 14.9, say that they are in a position to fully develop themselves with their current job position, contrasted to the same percentage of the returnees who think they can fully develop their skills. Their potentials can be largely developed for 29.8%, to some extent for 21.3% and just a little for 19.1%. In general, almost a half (44.7%), think that there is positive climate for development of their potentials at their current job (see Table 5).

Table 5: To what extent can you develop your potentials at your current job?

Not at all	14,9%
A little	19,1%
To some extent	21,3%
Largely	29,8%
Fully	14,9%

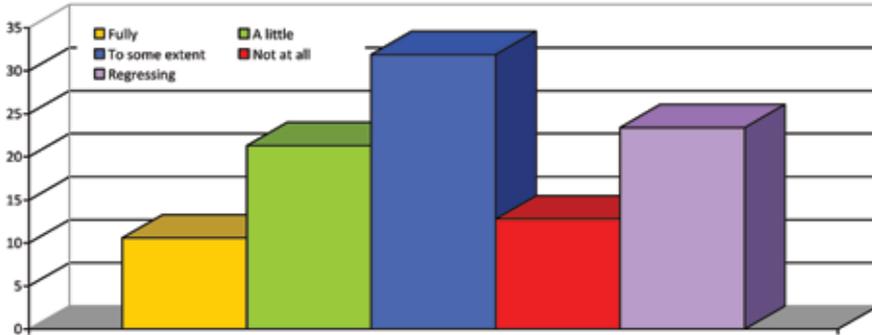
Opening their own business was perceived as a possibility for better usage of their potentials, but considering the unfavorable business climate this was not considered as an effective option. This situation also influences their career and professional development. In regards to the question – *Do you believe you are advancing professionally in your country of origin?*, **only 10.6% of the returnees say that they are fully advancing**, as opposed to **23.4% of them who believe that they are actually regressing**. Advancing to some extent is an option for 31.9%, a little advancing is a situation with 21.3%, while the rest of 12.8% claimed that they are not advancing

³⁸ State Statistical Office, Republic of Macedonia, http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/english/glavna_eng.asp (accessed February 5, 2012).

³⁹ Data from the focus group with employed returnees.

at all. This is somewhat contradictory to the abovementioned finding that almost 45% believe the job offers them possibility to develop their potentials. However, it can be explained with the fact that the respondents do not necessarily think about developing their potentials in relation to their career, but perhaps consider the possibility of developing other skills (e.g. team work, organizational skills, etc.)

Graph 4: Do you believe you are advancing professionally in your country of origin?

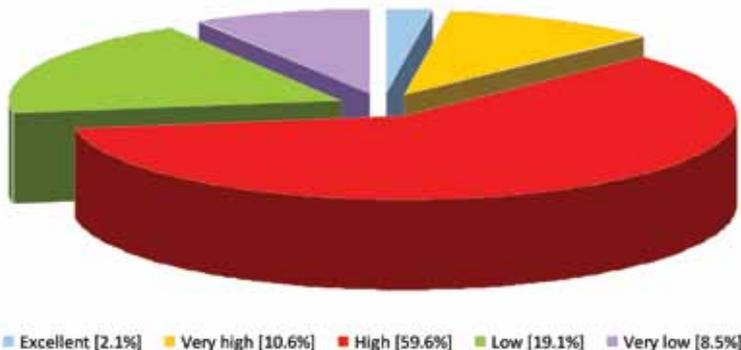


"In my opinion the institutions here are not very interested in using the potentials of the highly skilled returnees [...] and instead of giving them opportunities for professional development these people are facing only disappointments and are thinking of moving aboard again."⁴⁰

Administration, NGO sector and scientific and academic institutes are the top three fields where the returnees usually work. 63.8% of the employed returnees work within these three sectors. The academic/scientific institutes employ 14.9%, the state administration 19.1% and the NGO sector also 19.1% of them. Only 8.5% reported to work in a private company and very small percentage of 2.1% are self-employed, indicating that the entrepreneurship is not considered as a viable option for the vast majority of returnees.

Regarding to the socio-economic status of the returnees, majority of them **59.6% are enjoying high socio-economic status.** The rest of them, as it is presented in the pie chart, are rating their status as excellent (2.1%), very high (10.6%), low (19.1%) and very low (8.6%).

Graph 5: How do you generally rate your present socio-economic status?



⁴⁰ Survey respondent.

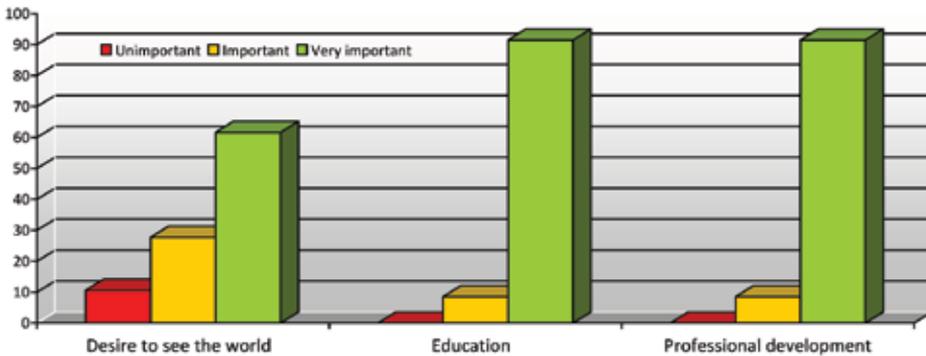
Overall, the returnees have a good socio-economic status and half believe to be in a position to develop their potentials at their current jobs, but still have concerns about the possibilities for professional advancement. This situation can be due to the high unemployment rate, on one hand, and the high number of university and post-university graduates and the inability of the economy to absorb all of them, on the other. Hence, returnees, aware of the unfavorable employment situation in the country are settling for jobs which cannot respond to their ambitions for professional advancement, but are instead trying to find other development possibilities within their job.

STAYING AT HOME OR MOVING ABROAD AGAIN? DILEMMA FOR HALF OF THE RETURNEEES.

“Of 29% of Macedonians with a desire to leave, a quarter had concrete plans to migrate. In other countries of the WB, the percentage of people with concrete migration plans did not exceed 20% of those eager to leave”⁴¹

While staying abroad the returnees are very motivated to move back to their native country and to contribute to the development of the society and share their knowledge. The questions of education and development are also among the main reasons for going abroad. Just for illustration, the **most important reasons for going abroad were “education”** (marked as important reason by 91.5% of the returnees) and **“possibility for professional development”** (with the same percentage). The fact that education is very strong motivator for this category of people, especially when they are students, is also confirmed by another study where career development in general and professional specialization are underlined as the most important reasons for 79.1% of the interviewed students (Besic, 2009).

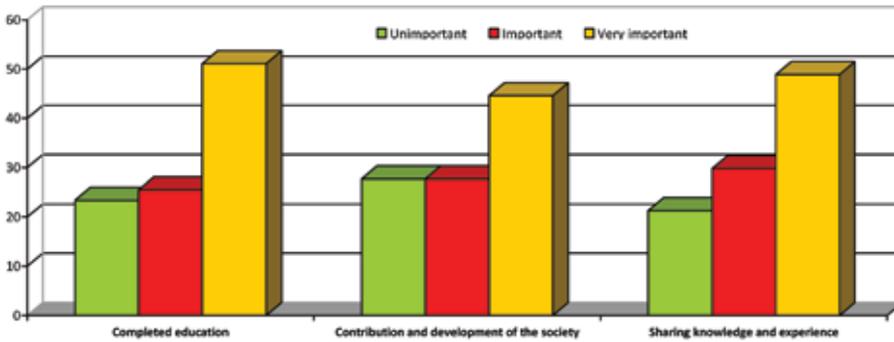
Graph 6: Top 3 important reasons for going abroad for the first time



Given their choices for leaving, and after years of education and gaining knowledge and experience, the education remains to be among the leading causes in their rating of **important reasons for returning home**. “Completed education” is the number one reason for return in 51.1% of the cases. Reasons related to empowering the society and sharing knowledge and experience are just behind the main reason. It is obvious that after returning home, highly educated returnees are more than willing to share their new gained knowledge and give their contribution to the overall societal progress. The “transfer and sharing of knowledge” is the second main reason for returning for 48.9%, and “contribution to changes and development of the society” is thirdly ranked reason for returning home in 44.7% of the cases.

⁴¹ Balkan Monitor, Gallup (2009) p. 34.

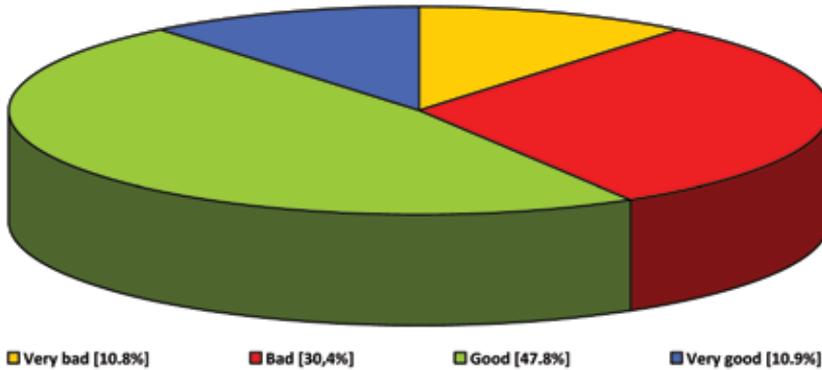
Graph 7: Top 3 reasons for returning home



The decision for returning to the homeland is generally assessed as a good decision (47.8%), while one third of the returnees (30.4%) agree that returning home was a bad decision. Disappointments were usually reinforced by the employers, lack of professionalism, lack of opportunities for professional development, as well as the culture in general.⁴² For example, one of the participants emphasized that while in Macedonia; she does not have access to the professional journals and hence cannot keep up with the novelties from her field.

The decision to return to the country of origin was assessed as very bad for 10.8%, and as very good for very similar percentage of 10.9. Unfortunately, no one has marked this decision as an excellent move (Graph 8).

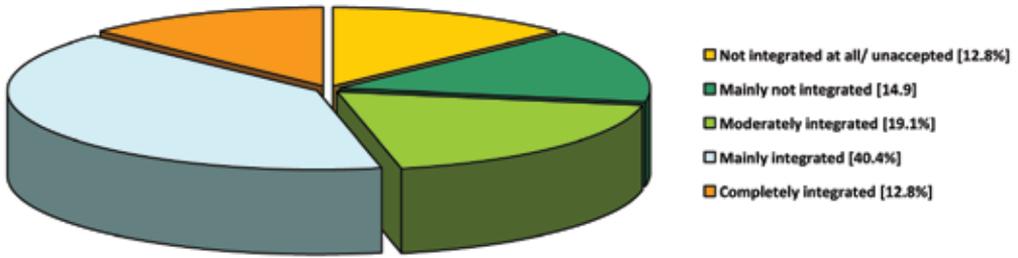
Graph 8: How would you assess your decision to return to the country of origin?



The social integration of the returnees looks like the smoothest activity in their reintegration process. However, the reintegration in the community can still be a problem for some of the returnees and affects their integration in the rest of the fields where they should reintegrate. With regards to the question – To what extent do you feel integrated in your homeland, accepted by the community? – Majority, or 53.2% have positive answer of being mainly or fully integrated, while the rest 46.5% consider themselves to be moderately integrated or not integrated at all. The answers to this question are presented in Graph 9.

⁴² Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03/05/2011).

Graph 9: To what extent do you feel integrated in your homeland, accepted by community?



As a reflection to what was already presented, the returnees are rather divided in their plans for the future. It can be observed as a negative aspect the fact that majority of them (53.2%) are pretty convinced in their idea to spend their future in a foreign country. Their negative experience in providing supportive mechanisms and proper employment, and cultural differences to some point, are main factors leading to this position. Regardless of their motivation, either wishing to continue their education and professional development, or being challenged by some job offer, 21.3 of them have envisioned their future in some of the countries where they used to live, and 31.9% of them in a foreign country where they have not lived. The rest, 44.7% would stay in their current place of residence, and only 2.1% of the returnees would move to some other place in the country.

Table 6: Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Foreign country		Native country	
53,2 %=	In some of the countries I used to live	In my current place of residence	=46,8%
	21,3%	44,7%	
	In a foreign country in which I have not lived	In some other place in the country	
	31,9%	2,1%	

The situation for intellectual migration was detected as alarming in particular with the young academic staff and researchers. According to this survey, 14.9% of the returnees are employed in some academic/scientific institution. In a research done in 2003 (Janeska, 2003) one third from this category of employees say that they are thinking, or already have plans, to leave the country.

DIFFERENT ATTITUDES REGARDING THE DIPLOMA VALIDATION PROCEDURE

The procedure of diploma recognition has been systematically changed in the past years. From a procedure described as "insufficient and long"⁴³ now this procedure is very clearly explained in the new Law on Higher Education (Chapter 12th).

A returnee that was a part of this survey describes the procedure of diploma validation as:

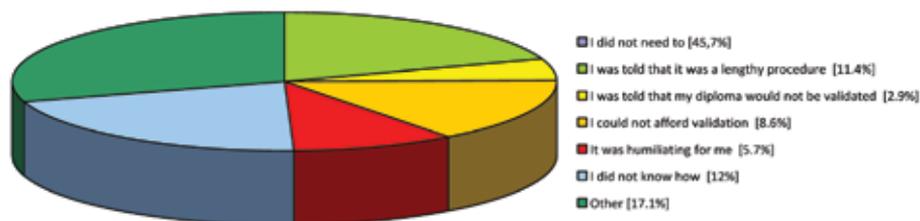
⁴³ Center for Research and Policy Making, To study abroad or not? The problem of recognition of diplomas issued by foreign universities, (Skopje, 2006).

“Lengthy, inefficient, unclear, and non-transparent process in 2000. Very positive changes were made in 2007 regarding to the procedure of validation of my MBA diploma.”

The experiences of returnees from this research related to the procedure of diploma recognition are varied, but in general, according to the data from the research very small percentage of them have started the procedure of diploma recognition. The diploma validation was one of the **difficulties for 38.3%** of the returnees while for somewhat more than half (**59.6%**), this procedure has not caused any difficulties.

Interestingly, only **38.29% have applied for diploma validation**. Graph 10 gives the information why the returnees have not applied for diploma validation.

Graph 10: Reasons for not applying for diploma validation



The procedure of diploma recognition is obligatory only for the employees in the public sector and it is optional for the workers in the private sector or civil society. Regarding their experience it has to be underlined that the returnees who have started the recognition procedure have done that in different periods and different rules have been applied.

In the case of Macedonia the fact that it is a centralized procedure that can only be undertaken by the official ministry body within the Ministry of Education and Science is perceived as positive. The new Law on Higher Education in Macedonia provides additional options that are simplifying this procedure. If you have a diploma from the **top 500** universities ranked by the Institute for Education from the Jiao Tong University from Shanghai, the procedure for validation of that diploma will **last for 8 working days**. This procedure should be finished in 20 days if the diploma is not from the best 500 universities in the world.⁴⁴ The candidates with degrees from the universities that are not on the top 500 list will be asked to **submit 15 documents, including their diploma**, in order to get a diploma validation.⁴⁵

Within this Ministry a separate department is specifically obligated to deal with the diploma recognition. Besides the official procedure, this department produces data on the number of returnees and most popular destinations for Macedonian students, as well as the fields of studies.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education validated **1,351 diplomas** from universities from abroad. Unfortunately, from the data presented below it is not clear which returnees are of Macedonian origin because the validation procedure can also be applied to foreign citizens with diplomas earned abroad. The Ministry still does not separate the results regarding to the applicants nationality/origin.

⁴⁴ Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette No. 17/2011, article 159.

⁴⁵ Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette No. 17/2011, article 161b.

Table 7: Overview of validated high universities diplomas by country for the period from 01/01 to 31/12/2010

Country	Social sciences	Humanities	Mathematics and natural sciences	Medicine	Bio technical sciences	Total by country
Albania	29	9	12	38	3	91
Bulgaria	204	50	63	152	16	485
Turkey	42	1	21	3	1	69
Greece	41		5			46
Kosovo	182	13	26	44	1	266
Italy	22	2	4	3	1	32
Netherlands	11	1	1		1	14
Serbia	42	11	16	13	4	86
Romania	13	2		1		16
Great Britain	19		5	2		26
Croatia	9	1	4	1	1	16
Germany	8	3	3	2		16
France	10		1	3	1	15
USA	40	1	8	2		51
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16					16
Ukraine	25	1	1			27
Others						
Total by science	765	101	185	271	29	1351

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

Besides the official procedure of diploma validation, the procedure for recognition of diplomas earned from student mobility programs remains unclear. Students that have been part of these programs say that they lack the information where they can solve this problem and that their diplomas are not always recognized by domestic universities. Since the Erasmus mobility and exchange programs are still fresh for the students from Macedonia the problem of recognizing the credits from students exchange is still not very prevalent. However, the universities should take in consideration these diplomas too and the issuing of the diploma supplement.⁴⁶

IF YOU ARE NOT IN THE MEDIA YOUR PROBLEM DOES NOT EXIST

In general the media in Macedonia do not always provide enough information about the issue of brain drain/gain. As a main conclusion from the media analysis is that the **local media are reporting about the brain drain/gain, returnees and reintegration only occasionally**. The table below shows that the **media attention** related to this issue is generated **usually when some public event or new research from this field is being actualized**. These cases, no matter how frequent, are usually very well covered and might be observed as evidence that the media are paying attention to the issue. However, events or papers relating this issue are not very frequent among the public so additional research efforts by the journalists can be very helpful in actualizing this problem in general.

⁴⁶ Interview with representatives from Erasmus Student Network (11.15.2011).

Depending on the period and the nature of the news, the media in general have been reporting on various aspects related the brain drain and brain gain. Our research noticed a huge gap in the reporting period about this issue between the year 2004 and 2010. This may indicate that either a small number of activities have been carried out in this period, or they have not been promoted in the media. Table 8 presents what has been the most attractive to the media from this field in the past years. Please note that other media channels (not shown in the table) have been also reporting about the presented news in the table.

Table 8: Brain gain/drain news in a time-line as presented in the media

Year/ period	Media	Headline	News
2004	Radio Free Europe	Presented the first National Strategy for Youth ⁴⁷	The problem is briefly mentioned as a part of the National Strategy for youth.
2010	Deutsche Welle	In the foreign countries appreciated, at home underestimated ⁴⁸	Couples of highly educated returnees employed in popular worldwide companies are sharing their successful story from abroad, and the problems that they are facing in Macedonia.
2010	Sitel TV	No strategy for brain drain ⁴⁹	Very briefly this article is focusing on the lack of the official legal framework that will prevent the brain drain from Macedonia.
2011	Alfa TV	The brain drain causes millions of euro losses from the Macedonian gross national product ⁵⁰	The article argues about the losses that are caused on the gross national product from the brain drain.
2011	Idi Vidi	Round table aimed to propose potential solutions for preventing of the brain drain ⁵¹	This article is covering the round table organized by CRPM and is focused on the lack of official data about how many highly educated people are living abroad and their problems in Macedonia.
2012	Dnevnik	Educated abroad, waiting for employment at home ⁵²	The article is presenting the main findings from a research, focusing on the employment situation of returnees.

⁴⁷ Radio Free Europe, "Presented the first National Strategy for Youth" <http://origin.makdenes.org/content/article/1473428.html> (assessed January 21, 2012).

⁴⁸ Deutsche Welle, "In the foreign countries appreciated, at home underestimated" http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5411273,00.html?maca=maz-rss-maz-pol_makedonija_timemk-4727-xml-mrss (assessed Januari 21, 2012).

⁴⁹ Sitel TV, "No strategy for Brain Drain" <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/nema-strategija-za-odlivot-na-mozoci> (assessed Januari 21, 2012).

⁵⁰ Alfa TV, "The brain drain causes millions of euro losses from the Macedonian gross national product" <http://vesti.alfa.mk/default.aspx?mld=37&egld=7&eventId=39118> (assessed Januari 21, 2012).

⁵¹ Idi Vidi "Round table aimed to propose potential solutions for preventing of the brain drain " <http://www.idividi.com.mk/vesti/makedonija/592462/index.htm> (assessed January 21, 2012).

⁵² Dnevnik, "Educated abroad, waiting for employment at home" <http://dnevnik.com.mk/?fitemID=A9E0B5439AF6C640B24F23A454A1DF87> (assessed January 21, 2012)b.

We have found out that the media reporting on this issue can sometimes be very confusing for the audience. The interpretation of the information is very individual and depends on the individual beliefs and opinions of the journalist toward this issue. In some of the analyzed media coverage, journalists had interviews with returnees usually employed in the government bodies, pointing them as proof that in Macedonia there are conditions for their successful reintegration and professional career. Mixing the definition of brain gain and misinterpreting the term “reintegration policies” in cases like the one that we have mentioned can very easily confuse the audience.

In other article by Deutsche Welle, one returnee, civil servant, claims that “Macedonia is a country with the methods and opportunity for reintegration [...] if there is interest of returnees to live again in their country”. Not always the individual successful cases can be presented as representative ones. Answering the same question, 91.5% of the respondents from our survey say that the official institutions do not provide any type of assistance in their process of reintegration.

Poor economic conditions are the most common problem as a motivation for the youth to leave the country according to the analysis of the media reporting. As expected, well paid jobs should motivate the majority of returnees to come back to their native country.

LINKING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES WITH THE ROLE OF THE CRUCIAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THIS FIELD

Several stakeholders were identified as a crucial in the process of the reintegration of the returnees. All of them are more or less related to various periods of the life of the returnees, before they leave, while they reside in the foreign countries and in the process of return. In order to have a clear overview of the stakeholders, they can be easily categorized in the following order:⁵³ a) governmental and public institutions; b) institutions of higher education and research institutions; c) international organizations working in the country; d) civil society actors and e) business sector. However, this paper will not analyze each category separately but will provide brief information about the activities taken by the most active ministries and the ones that have filled out our questionnaires.

The scope of the activities that the official governmental institutions should undertake is given in the National Resolution on Migration. “In the resolution, the institutions pointed as responsible for the measures of mapping the diaspora, creating databases of separate categories (especially for the highly skilled) are the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Emigration Agency**; for the measures for enhancing brain circulation the responsible institutions are the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**; for the measures on the improvement of the returning procedures the responsible institutions are the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**; for the measures for the establishment of the virtual programs for returning, or return through ICT the responsible institutions are the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy**; and for the creation of policies that would reduce brain drain and initiate brain gain the responsible institutions are the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy.**”⁵⁴

⁵³ Vangeli Anastas, “No Country for Highly Skilled Returnees” in “Mobility and Emigration of Professionals, Personal and Social Gains and Losses”, eds. Polovina N., Pavlov T., (Belgrade, 2011), p. 90s.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** can take the leading role in creating supportive mechanisms and policies for successful reintegration of the returnees and involve the diaspora as an important actor in creating databases as it is envisioned in the National Resolution. However, besides the role that is given to this ministry in the Resolution, there is also awareness in this institution for the rest of the problems that the returnees are facing. In the interview with the representative from this institution it was mentioned that the employment has the crucial role for their successful reintegration and that it is the field where most of the activities should be made. *“They should be informed about the employment potentials and the economic situation of the country before they return. This should be done by giving them help and all necessary information for legal framework, related rules and laws, processes of investment, etc.”* Since the **Sector for Monitoring the National Priorities of the Republic of Macedonia** is working under this ministry some of the initial steps can be done through this sector or through the two existing units under this sector, the Diaspora Department and the Unit of Macedonian National Minority. Macedonian Diaspora has a well-developed network. The Diaspora Department already has a list with CSOs⁵⁵ registered in each country with Macedonian minority. This data can be very valuable when creating some potential data bases on migration and can solve problems regarding the statistics and introduce supportive mechanisms for the returnees while they are abroad.

A very positive example from the diaspora is the Serbian NGO City Club that operates in the United Kingdom. The main objective of this organization is to provide support to the Serbian population that live or study in the UK but in the same time to facilitate the process of reintegration of the Serbian returnees from United Kingdom to Serbia. Their idea was to bring to life an informal club that would gather young Serbian professionals that lived and worked in the UK. The Club started with a handful of members in the late nineties, but through word-of-mouth and website launches the Club today has close to 1,500 members. *“A significant number of our members are interested in living and working in Serbia or the region and we are trying to facilitate their needs in the best way we can, either through our contacts in Serbia’s private and public sector, counseling, or with practical advice, in particular regarding career choice. This is part of a bigger project related to ‘reversal of brain drain’ to Serbia.”*⁵⁶

The National Resolution is pointing the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy** as crucial actor for enhancing the brain circulation, creating measures for improving the return procedures, establishing virtual programs for returning and creating policies that will reduce the brain drain and initiate brain gain. This ministry is already involved in a project targeting temporary and virtual return of highly qualified professionals. The activities implemented by IOM in close cooperation with the MLSP related to the temporary and virtual return of qualified professionals are successful example of a brain gain through temporary return of these professionals and their engagement in the institutions or organizations where they can transfer their know-how and skills.⁵⁷ Unfortunately we did not succeed to get more information from this ministry about the other programs for which they are responsible within the National Resolution, since no response to our questionnaire was provided.

⁵⁵ Emigrational Profile of the Republic of Macedonia 2008 (2009).

⁵⁶ Interview with Natasha Kocis, representative of the Serbian City Club (17.02.2012).

⁵⁷ Interview with Sonja Bozinovska, International Organization for Migration (23.11.2011).

Other two very important stakeholders involved in the Resolution, but with expertise and instruments to create supportive mechanisms and successful policies for reintegration are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Since the **Ministry of Internal Affairs**, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have the jurisdiction to control the mobility and the residing of the foreigners and also some jurisdiction over the diaspora,⁵⁸ they are also in charge of controlling the mobility of domestic citizens. These ministries are in a favorable position to use their mechanisms in order to assist in creating some reliable data about the Macedonian citizens who are leaving this country for professional and educational development and are returning afterwards. Official data on the profile of the above mentioned citizens and returnees can be very helpful in mapping the returnees and their problems. This position was also recognized by representatives of youth organization working in the field of exchange and mobility. Representative from Mladi info argues that “definitely the Ministry of Internal Affairs is the institution which can easily create the data of mobility of these young people. The embassies can also contribute in creating such evidence and data. However, there should be some cross-sectoral responsibility and cooperation in creating evidence like this.” Unfortunately, none of these institutions can provide exact number of students currently studying abroad.

On the other hand, the **Ministry of Education** seems to be more reliable when talking about students exchange and mobility programs and scholarships. In the period between 2010 and 2011 this ministry administrated four calls for scholarships for studies at universities in some of the foreign countries.⁵⁹ These are for instance scholarships funded by the budget of the Ministry of Education and as is the case with the rest of the institutional scholarship programs, students are obligated to return and work in their native country after finishing their studies. Moreover, it is also administrating scholarships of other foreign ministries/universities that have signed contracts with the Ministry. The Ministry is also responsible for another very important issue regarding the returnees and that is the issue of diploma recognition.

Finally, this year on, the Ministry of Education will work on developing a strategy for brain gain. This strategy should be enforced from January 2013 and should offer concrete measures how the country can benefit from these highly skilled people and provide better conditions for their return and reintegration.⁶⁰

Other very helpful aspect of the reintegration can be also carried out by the already established **alumni clubs and international cultural centers** and communities that exist in Macedonia. Very often these organizations are perceived as the first hand assistance for the returnees. Daniela was on master studies in London, UK. After her return she started working within the Erasmus Student Network in Macedonia because she felt should would be more comfortable during the period of reintegration if she stayed in touch with the foreigners and the spirit of exchange.

“I’ve started working with ESN because the community there is more similar to my community in London. I could not easily reintegrate in my old-new community and activities like this one helped me a lot.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Migration Policy Resolution of Republic of Macedonia 2009-2014, Government of RM (2008).

⁵⁹ Information by the Ministry of Education (28.10.2011, Skopje).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Interview with representatives from Erasmus Student Network.

CONCLUSIONS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The presented research shows that the problems of reintegration are related to several state and non-state actors. Returnees are lacking institutional support, but at the same time they are satisfied with their socio-economic status. Majority of them are employed and have plans to stay in Macedonia. Their main disappointments are related to the general situation of the country development and the small chances to professionally advance in their career and work on their professional development. They are very motivated to contribute to the country development prior to return, but when they experience the local business climate, different culture and the problem with the lack of contacts they become very disappointed.

Since the concept of brain gain demands the country to be a beneficiary of the human capital that has left and now is back, the same concept is giving the framework for the main actors, where the state and institutional mechanisms are on the top of the hierarchy.

There is one strategic document focused on brain gain – the National Resolution for Migration. The competence is generally divided among two main ministries and their agencies. But in order to have more successful reintegration, concrete action plan should be adopted which will reinforce the implementation of the National Resolution by proposing measures that should be delivered by all relevant ministries, agencies and other non-formal stakeholders. Documents like this, and cross-sectoral government body that will be focused on the transformation of the process of return into a brain gain will be the main challenge that should be undertaken by the official authorities. This will also demand strengthening of the scientific skills and implementing new research activities and studies.

At the same time the processes of economic and social reintegration need to be facilitated. Returnees are hoping that the non-formal mechanisms can be very easily established by the alumni associations and the civil society through seminars, exchanges, non-formal gatherings, etc. The negative feedbacks they face in their process of looking for employment can be bridged by raising awareness of the public and the private sectors on the qualifications of the returnees and by strengthening the professional capacities and culture in the domestic organizations/institutions.

All these aspects of reintegration can be incorporated in an Action Plan for the National Resolution for Migration where activities concerning the brain gain will be also proposed and implemented. This Action Plan should be the key document for generating projects aimed at supporting and facilitating the reintegration of returnees and establishing strong relations between this group of people and the relevant institutions. A document like this should be the main challenge for all actors in the field of brain gain.

In order to make the process of reintegration less complicated, the recommendations from this study are related to the main stakeholders.

The following recommendations should help the key stakeholders make the reintegration process less painful and complicated.

Governmental institutions

- As the first step, the state should initiate creation of data regarding the intellectual mobility and migration, since data are the most important starting point for developing evidence based policies. This will help in targeting and solving the biggest problem for reaching highest level of brain gain. Such data will be very useful in tracking the mobility trends and will serve as a sampling tool for the future scientific research in this field. The data from the Ministry of Education regarding to the students beneficiaries of the scholarship and exchange programs, and the data from the diploma validation process should be filtered and used for creation of data. However, the most responsible ministries for this are the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The government should work on establishing one cross-sectoral body that will be responsible for implementation of wider brain grain strategy. This body should provide online services so the basic set of information from various sources can be accessed more easily by the returnees who are still residing abroad. The returnees have detected the following information as the most important that should be provided by such services: important law and legal procedures, diploma validation process, job market and contacts with the private sector, private profiles of returnees with CV and areas of interest, contacts with CSOs working in this field, alumni organizations and other resources.
- Government institutions should try to employ highly skilled returnees through transparent process and provide appropriate organizational culture within these institutions. Transparent and open approach should be demonstrated in the processes of employment in the government institutions in general, not only towards the government grantees.
- Official institutions should also work on reducing the cultural shock by supporting the civil society to work on this issue and by improving the conditions in the country in general.
- The quality of the education system must be improved and prepared to accept the highly skilled returnees in the system. The education system must improve the conditions and give more options for transferring and implementation of their knowledge. Improved working environment will also imply an opportunity for professional development.

Media

- Media should be used for raising awareness about the major challenges that returnees are facing, especially regarding to the perception and recognition of their skills, improving the professionalism and the advantages of this highly skilled group of people. They should report about this issue more often and publicly speak about the problems, but at the same time they should also promote successful stories of returnees. The presence of the media coverage targeting this issue should be changed from occasional to more frequent and it should be based on investigative journalism

Civil society

- Civil society organizations should moderate the communication between the scientific community and official institutions and struggle to advocate for this issue marked as a problem of high importance for the economy and the scientific community. They should take the leading role in advocating for new policies for reintegration of the returnees.
- Alumni centers, which are also considered to be civil society organizations, should expand their services and provide some additional assistance to returnees. Judging by the research

findings, the returnees are expecting bigger involvement of the alumni clubs in facilitating the reintegration specially in providing information regarding the legal procedures, job market and in establishing non-formal mechanisms for reintegration.

- CSOs registered within the diaspora should become more active and provide information and assistance to the students residing in the country where they are registered and operating.

Scientific community

- The academic community is expected to invigorate their engagement in producing relevant research and policy papers from this field and assist to the rest of the stakeholders in the creation of relevant policies for reintegration with their recommendations.
- Policies for engaging returnees as academic staff should also be created and allow them to work within the universities and research centers. Such programs can be temporary or long term activities regarding to the needs of the institutions. Highly skilled returnees must be accepted in the educational system and assist in improving the working and academic environment in Macedonia.

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THE ROUND TABLE:

BRAIN DRAIN, REINTEGRATION POLICIES AND NETWORKING SUPPORT FOR THE RETURNEES IN MACEDONIA



The idea of the national round table was to raise awareness about the brain drain/gain issues, to promote the preliminary results of the online survey for returnees and to advocate for future joint activities in this field. With the composition of the guests and their presentations we have sent strong message for the lack of activities (governmental and non-governmental) in this field.

Speakers at the round table were *Riste Zmejkoski*, as representative of the CRPM, *Hristina Chipuseva*, representative of SEEU, Project Brain drain and the role of the diaspora in promoting positive changes, *Sandra Anastasovska*, representative of Youth Educational Forum, *Dragan Atanasov*, representative of youth organization Creactive and *Borco Aleksov*, as a representative of the Ministry of Science and Education. Besides the official presentations of the speakers we screened Flash Mob showing the results that 45% of the youth in Macedonia want to leave the country. A fruitful debate followed after the main findings were presented.

The round table was visited by approximately more than 20 guests, including important stakeholders from this area, researchers, students, returnees and media. This event had satisfactory media outreach. It was covered by two national TV stations, two national daily papers, and couple of informative agencies.

General conclusions from the round table were that a leading government project in this field is needed as well as more sustainable projects/or policies; that there is a lack of statistics and almost no effort from the government in creating them; that returnees are very disappointed after coming back and that the question of brain waste is also one of the biggest problems.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Nova Makedonija, national newspaper, 2/11/ 2011

Dnevnik, national newspaper, 1/11/2011

Kapital, national newspaper, 2/11/2011

Web portal Kajgana.com

Radio Mof

Radio DW-Deutsche Welle World

Telma, national TV station, 1/11/2011

Alfa, national TV station, 1/11/2011

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REINTEGRATION OF HIGHLY SKILLED RETURNEES TO MONTENEGRO
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



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INTRODUCTION

Many highly skilled people from the Western Balkan countries emigrate to EU countries or the United States for different reasons: employment, further education, better living standards. According to the UNESCO report *Science, Technology and Economic Development in South-Eastern Europe*, some countries in the Western Balkan region, have lost almost 70% of their skilled professionals, due to external migration of highly qualified personnel. The report states that 79% of engineers, 81% of masters, and 75% of PhDs left Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1995. At the same time, Tirana University recorded a decrease in academic staff by 40%.⁶³ It is still unclear how many students study abroad or how many of them have stayed in the country of emigration. However, the survey conducted by the King Baudouin Foundations showed that very few Western Balkan students, only 26 of 2,137, who study abroad, want to come back to their home country (Besic, 2009). The economic and financial reasons which forced them to leave the country then, are still the most important cause of many young professionals to leave the Balkans. Many of them want to return, but their country of origin does not have policies to reintegrate them into the system and provide them with good living conditions. They have no guarantees, whatsoever.

Speaking of Montenegro, this is a country which was faced with the great migration problem twenty years ago, when many of the highly skilled people left the country in order to find better living conditions in the Western European countries (Besic, 2009). Based on the insight into literature dealing with migration of Montenegrin population, we can conclude that this is a theme still waiting to be explored. Scientific work (Glušćević, 2000, Pejović, 2003) from this area, which has been published up to now, certainly is the pioneer work in researching Montenegrin population migration and represents a solid foundation for future research.

EXISTING LEGAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR REINTEGRATION OF HIGHLY SKILLED RETURNEES

Since Montenegro's renewed independence in May 2006, several laws that regulate the field of migration have been passed: Law on State Border Control, Law on Asylum, Law on Central Register of Citizens, Law on Register of Temporary and Permanent Residence, Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, Law on Montenegrin Citizenship, Law on Personal ID Card, Law on Travel Documents, and Law on Data Protection. These legal frameworks have led to the development and popularisation of the migration issue in Montenegro, but not to the actual implementation and monitoring over the laws. There has not been a substantial practical experience in trying to establish a policy or at least a programme that would regulate and motivate highly skilled people to stay in the country.

The National Youth Action Plan of Montenegro, dealing with highly skilled individuals, was adopted by the Government in 2006. This Plan recognises the unemployment problem as one of the main reasons of the brain drain process, but there is no activity mentioned to improve an integration process of highly skilled returnees to Montenegro. Through Strategy of Science and Research Activities 2008-2016, the

⁶³ See <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/bs/features/setimes/articles/2007/06/25/reportage-01>

Ministry of Education and Science provided research practice for PhD students at the best European universities. But upon their return, the Ministry did not provide any mechanism to reintegrate those people to the institutions of the Government or to find them an appropriate job. It seems that it is cheaper to pay professors from the region to teach at the faculties at the University of Montenegro than to employ highly qualified people, and thus save money for the plane tickets, per diem etc... 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 PhDs employed at the University of Montenegro by offering them housing facilities. Some 134 apartments have been given to the PhD employees at the University of Montenegro.⁶⁴ The Ministry of Education and Sports of Montenegro is also in charge of launching programmes funded by the European Commission: Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS), Erasmus Programme, and Tempus. They provide students' mobility in the EU countries.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES ON REINTEGRATION OF HIGHLY SKILLED RETURNEES

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS OF MONTENEGRO

The responsible government institutions should be: 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 Internal Affairs and Public Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Human Resource Management Authority, Employment Office of Montenegro, Bureau for Scientific, Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation of Republic of Montenegro, Bureau for the Care of Refugees.

The Government of Montenegro adopted the Strategy for Integrated Migration Management in Montenegro 2008-2013 in 2008. One of the main aims of this Strategy was to provide conditions to reintegrate migrants to Montenegro. However, the Action Plan did not predict any activities for reintegration of highly skilled returnees. Probably one of the most important initiatives in this regard was started by Human Resource Management Authority in April 2010. This institution started gathering data on Montenegrin scientists working and living abroad, with specific aim of creating a single database. This is the first, but very important step in including these experts in local academic community. The Ministry of Science paid special attention to improving cooperation with Montenegrin researchers living and working abroad. During 2012, the Ministry will conduct an analytical study on the Montenegrin Diaspora, with the focus on how best to capitalise on the Diaspora for international opportunities for Montenegrin scholars and students. They will also organise one conference to discuss the findings of the study on the Montenegrin Diaspora. Linking foreign scientists with our scientists engaged in research in developed countries will greatly contribute to the development of science in Montenegro, is one of the conclusions at the Round table, organised by CEDEM within this project.⁶⁵

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

International organisations/ institutions active in this field are: International Organization for Migration IOM, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR, Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, U.S. Embassy in Podgorica.

⁶⁴ Data available at link <http://www.pobjeda.co.me/citanje.php?datum=2005-12-15&id=77689>

⁶⁵ Round table "The development of highly skilled returnees' reintegration policy in Montenegro", held in November 2011, in Podgorica, Montenegro

Institutions of high education should be key institutions in converting brain drain into brain gain: Faculty of Architecture, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Economy, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Political Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Law, Faculty for Teaching (in Albanian), Music Academy, University of Donja Gorica, Mediteran University.

There are no many current initiatives supported by either the University or the Government of Montenegro. The only initiatives in terms of brain gain are supported by international organisations, such as WUS Austria, European Commission, and Embassy of United States in Podgorica. During this research, only Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics,⁶⁶ Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and the “Rektorat”⁶⁷ accepted to help this project with their own material.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations motivated to support brain gain process in Montenegro are: Youth Initiative for Human Rights – YIHR, Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organizations – CRNVO, YCC Juventas, The Monitoring Centre – CEMI, Association of Youth with Disabilities Of Montenegro – UMHCG, Montenegrin Women’s Lobby, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Libertask, The Roma Scholarship Foundation – FSR, Centre for Civic Education – CGO.

Many of nongovernmental organisations are the first employers for highly skilled returnees, because they cannot find appropriate jobs at the institutions of the Government of Montenegro.

MEDIA

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 some contacted Mr. Batricevic directly. We can assume that highly skilled people who left the country and found appropriate jobs abroad are very interested in sharing their experience with young people in Montenegro, but they do not want to return to 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 any project regarding this issue. General impression is that key stakeholders recognise this issue as a key topic to solve the situation in terms of human resources in Montenegro. Stakeholders who are directly inflicted by the issue are not familiar with the European projects or any national programmes related to reintegration of highly skilled returnees.

EFFECTS OF EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

There is no novelty in saying that Montenegro lacks legislation when it comes to brain-gain issue. The only document dealing with some of its aspects in Montenegro is the National Youth Action Plan of Montenegro, brought by the Government in

⁶⁶ This help was coordinated by Predrag Stanic, Dean at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

⁶⁷ Rektorat is the highest academic official office of University of Montenegro

2006, as mentioned above. And again, although it points to the unemployment problem, this document does not give any recommendations for improvement of the current situation.

Since Montenegro expressed its aspirations to become a part of the European Union, and the European Commission decided to create special fund for bringing non-EU students to various European school during the year of 2000, student exchange programmes have become rather present in Montenegrin educational system.

CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies) first launched in 1993 and later joined by Montenegro and other Balkan countries, is a multilateral mobility programme between Central European educational institutions, with specific aim to strengthen bonds between Central European scholars, both in professional and personal sense.

The ERASMUS Programme is EU student exchange programme founded in 1987, which launches many different projects. This programme is highly recognised in the European scholar circles. However, not many Montenegrin students have heard of it. For example, CEDEM's research from 2009 has shown that 92.8 % students are not even informed on student exchange programmes. Only 1.9 % students at University of Montenegro have all the information on this programme (Besic, 2009). However, it looks like situation has improved lately.

There is also another programme of the European Commission – TEMPUS, which supports the modernisation of higher education and creates an area of cooperation in countries surrounding the EU through different regional projects.

And last but not the least, FORECAST undergraduate student exchange program, launched by U.S. Embassy to Montenegro in 2009, which provides scholarships for one academic year of undergraduate, non-degree study in the United States.

Even though these programmes create great opportunities for Montenegrin students, not many of them use them. Reasons are various and many: complicated procedures, lack of the sufficient help from University, fear that foreign diplomas would not be recognized, etc. Moreover, not even this area is spared from nepotism. It is not rarity to hear students complain that scholarships were awarded to friends and relatives of those working in public administration. Even if we neglect this fact, we are still faced with another issue. Students who have been awarded the scholarships for studying abroad do not express the desire to come back to Montenegro. With no strategy or action plan adopted to deal with this issue, there are no instruments which would help attract these students to return to native country. Even though the contract previously signed by the respective Ministry (Ministry of Education and Sports or Ministry of International Affairs and European Integration) and student contains a clause that scholarship user is obliged to come back after the scholarship period has expired and to work in the Ministry. However, this clause is not respected in practice. Nevertheless, there are several programmes, only supported by international organisations, which are potentially going to increase the number of people returning to the Balkan countries.⁶⁸

When it comes to the issue of employment, there are some initiatives trying to foster its treatment and emphasise its importance.

One of these programmes was initiated by the Employment Office of Montenegro. The so-called simulation programme is designed to serve as preparation for employment. The aim

⁶⁸ WUS Austria Brain Gain Program, UNESCO – Conference on launching the crosscutting Strategy of Science, technology and Innovation 2009-2015

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 specialisation). The highest number of participants in these programmes, around 60%, comes from the younger unemployed population, especially in the programmes dedicated to acquiring of computer and foreign language skills, etc. However, no emphasis has been put on returnees, whether highly or not educated at all.

The next initiative – *The Brain Gain Program* – was started by WUS Austria offices in the region. The programme included inviting professors from former Yugoslavia and Austria to teach as guest lecturers at universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Although fruitful initiative, which brought 33 experts to Montenegro, it could not attract Montenegrin experts living and working abroad to come back for good and further develop their careers here.

Through the *Strategy of Science and Research Activities* the Ministry of Science (current Ministry of Education and Sports) provided research practice for PhD students aged between 27 and 34 at one of the best European universities.⁶⁹ 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.

Data on the mobility on research activities of universities and institutes in 2010, prepared by the Ministry of Science, showed a very low mobility of researchers at longer intervals (more than 3 months). To compare the situation with EU standards, 33% of European PhD students in EU countries are very mobile at a long interval (more than 3 months) during their studies. During 2010, the data in Montenegro shows that: only 86 visits of local researchers to foreign research institutions, from 1 week to 3 months; only 16 visits of local researchers to foreign research institutions longer than 3 months; only 21 young researchers stay - staff (master's or doctoral students) longer than 1 month; and only 45 visits of foreign researchers in institutions of Montenegro.

Although no one could deny the changes and progress that Montenegro made in the years after regained its independence, it seems it actually "tricked" our participants to come back. Beside the fact that many have returned from family reasons and nostalgia, there is a great number of them who strongly believed things had changed, and thus, had great expectations. The Questionnaire shows that many of our returnees who returned after 2006, thought that situation in Montenegro was much better than it really was.⁷⁰

The situation they found was far from the politically and emotionally mature community which sees and recognises the need for reintegration of highly educated people coming from abroad. Neither the state administration nor the business sector embraced these people. On contrary, real problems were only to come.

⁶⁹ Strategy of Science and Research activities 2008-2016

⁷⁰ Ibid

KEY CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD

The first challenge that returnees face upon their return to Montenegro is the validation process. This process often lasts more than two months. Although the procedure may look simple, there have been cases with documents lost, processes delayed, etc.

However, since the validation process finishes sooner or later, there comes possibly the greatest challenge in Montenegro regarding brain gain issue, and it is the employment. Regarding the problem of unemployment (which remains the main problem of all of our returnees upon their return) each stakeholder considers nepotism to be the main obstacle in the recruitment process.

Furthermore, those returnees who have, after graduation, worked for more than a year abroad, are not allowed to take the state exam, which means they cannot apply for jobs in public administration. In other words, they are not eligible, since they do not meet all the requirements.

Respondents employed in the state administration perceive their chance to work there as a privilege, because the state administration provided them with support in further education. Returnees agree that ministries and other government institutions often award scholarships to their personnel or send them to several-month training abroad. However, since state does not have the Strategy on Reintegration of Returnees adopted, it does not motivate those who have been awarded with scholarships to stay and work in government institutions. Therefore, these young people want to come back to the country in which they have studied or find employment in civil society organisations.

Insufficiently developed managerial abilities of people in leadership positions in the state administration, as well as those of entire society, is what makes returnees even more unsatisfied. When asked if they have managed to apply their knowledge and experience in Montenegro, except those respondents closely tied to their professions, others have answered negatively.

Lack of business opportunities in the country leaves the impression that it is better to go abroad and work there even if the job does not match their profession. Financial reasons (which are connected with job recruitment process and the labour market supply) are the ones causing young people to leave the country in a pursuit for better opportunities. But also, these are the reasons preventing young students from studying abroad and forcing them to stay in the country of origin, even though they wish otherwise.

The Montenegrin government recognises the importance of improving the educational system and understands that it has to be a one of the government's priorities. However, the last CEDEM's research on public opinion shows the public trust in this system has dropped by 8.1%. According to this research, public trust in educational system was 66.8% in 2010, compared to 59.7% as it is now.⁷¹ What seems to be the cause of such drop was not specified. But it could be caused by shortcomings of the Bologna process (Montenegrin version of this process, to be precise) which are more evident each day. The Bologna process accelerates studying, but does not improve the quality of education. "Hyper production" of diplomas, whether at public or private universities, additionally overloads the already small Montenegrin labour market. Even though there are positive effects of increased number of people with college degree, we still have the problem with the small labour market, not capable to integrate all those seeking for job. With no compunction, we may conclude that we now have more highly educated population, but at the cost of quality.

⁷¹ Political Public Opinion, September 2011, available at http://www.cedem.me/fajlovi/attach_fajlovi/pdf/cedem_september2011-2011-10-4.pdf

Furthermore, since 2006, Montenegro has attracted companies from Russia and the former Soviet republics to come in the country. The businessmen usually arrive with their families. All of them need to obtain legal documents as foreigners and need to recognise their diplomas. This recognition is necessary in order to either be employed or continue studying. Many of these foreigners graduated from various private faculties in Russia and the former Soviet republics. Since the Office for International Cooperation within the Montenegrin Ministry of Education which recognises diplomas is overloaded with requests, they often do it without checking their relevance first.⁷² This almost random recognition also contributes to an increased number of highly educated people in Montenegro that do not have competitive knowledge and skills for the single EU labour market.

On the other hand, Montenegro still has a non-effective policy when it comes to attracting foreigners to study here. With unreasonably high tuition fees, Montenegrin universities are unattractive to foreigners, who rather choose some of European universities with lower fees and longer history. For example, the approximate scholarship fee in Montenegro is 1,500 Euros per year compared to Italian fees which are only 300 Euros.

Finally, the problem that pervades all of the above mentioned is the lack of data. No institution is specialised to gather data on Montenegrin citizens studying and working abroad, nor there are other institutions to which the Government has delegated this assignment. Without the database and people in it, no strategy could be directed towards the ones in need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Human Resources Management Authority should enhance the system for data collection of highly skilled returnees and construct a web presentation containing all their biographies;
- The Government should adopt the Strategy on reintegration of highly skilled returnees;
- The Ministry of Education and Sports, responsible for awarding scholarships, should provide the infiltration of scholars to the public administration system, once they return to Montenegro;
- The Employment Office should mediate within the process of recruiting the returnees, and cooperate with public institutions;
- The Employment Office should make contracts with private companies in order to provide working positions, or at least internships, for returnees.

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⁷² Questionnaire for highly qualified returnees, conducted in 2011.

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THE ROUND TABLE:

DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATION POLICIES FOR HIGHLY SKILLED RETURNEES IN MONTENEGRO



In order to introduce the key stakeholders in Montenegro with possibilities for improving reintegration of high-skilled returnees and regional cooperation in developing a single educational and research area, the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights organised the roundtable. It was a valuable opportunity for key stakeholders in Montenegro to meet and exchange views on current issues for successful reintegration of returnees and to meet with the results of previous research conducted in the country regarding this issue.

After the opening speech of Mr Nenad Koprivica, the first presenter was Mr Radomir Sekulovic, Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. He talked about the motives for migration of Montenegrin citizens in the past twenty years. Mr Sekulović introduced participants to data regarding Montenegrin Diaspora. However, the Ministry does not have reliable information on the exact number of data on Montenegrin citizens working and living abroad.

After the opening presentation, Ms Marija Cimbajevic, Project Coordinator, briefly introduced the participants with the results of this project - all the obstacles upon the return of highly skilled Montenegrins. In addition to the results of the project, Ms Cimbajević presented to the participants other studies conducted in Montenegro regarding mobility of highly educated citizens of Montenegro. The latest survey conducted in 2009 by Prof Milos Besic has shown that only 73.8% of students in Montenegro has never heard of Erasmus Mundus, the Mobility Students' Programme of European Commission. The representatives of the Ministry of Education and the University of Montenegro believe that the reason is students' indifference and ignorance of foreign languages.

During the discussion, Ms Biljana Misovic from the Ministry of Education and Sports confirmed that the reason for some of the results was the lack of students' interest. The Ministry of Education and Sports organises Infodani, the event where students can be introduced to all mobility programmes. However, the event is poorly visited. Although the official web presentation of Rector of Montenegro is full of information on the exchange of students, many of them remain uninformed, was confirmed Ms Emilia Rabrenovic from the Rectorate.

However, positive initiatives in resolving the problem of reintegration of highly skilled returnees in Montenegro already exist, but what is missing is a coordinated action of all key stakeholders – said Djuro Nikac, Associate Director of the Human Resources Management Authority of Montenegro. The participants agreed that one of the main obstacles is nepotism in the process of employment, which exists in all structures of society. Although the Law on Civil Servants recognises the merit system (employment and advancement on merit in the service), practice says otherwise. Returnees among the participants confirmed this thesis by their own experience.

At the end of the round table, the participants expressed satisfaction with the organisation and especially praised an interactive method of working, their active learning through the opportunity of asking questions and discussion with the presenters and other participants. They also pointed out that the knowledge they gained during the round table and networking with other representatives of the institution will be extremely useful in future work but also the understanding of the process of reintegration of migrants. Consequently, we need to point out the need for the organisation of seminars and workshops of this type because the representatives' institutions have no such opportunities in the regular activities in their work, to improve the situation in the area of reintegration of highly skilled returnees.

The round table met the expectations of participants. Its organisation has confirmed the importance of the additional aspect of education and networking among key actors in the field of employment, migration and education. The presence of electronic and print media at a round table also confirms the importance of the topic. Due to a large number of participants and presenters, we believe that this project should continue in the future.

MEDIA COVERAGE

CEDEM website

Analitika informative portal, 24/10/2011

BLERTA HOXHA AND BAISA SEFA⁷³

EUROPEAN MOVEMENT IN ALBANIA

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IS THE RETURN WORTH IT?

ON THE REINTEGRATION OF HIGH SKILLED RETURNEES IN ALBANIA



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INTRODUCTION

The potential of intellectuals bears crucial importance especially in transition countries. Although their economies become more and more open towards the world market, emigration particularly of the highly qualified people remains one of the early wounds of development.

Following the fall of the communist regime, Albania, as other countries of South Eastern Europe, has faced massive migration flows. Taking a look at different periods that correspond to important transition events, we notice that the amplitude of migration flows has varied. An extensive portion of individuals who left the country consisted of those who were considered the “brain” of society, qualified professionals. There are several complex reasons beyond economic ones that explain their migration propensity. Therefore, a common challenge of both Albanian state authorities and society remained the return of professionals in their home country as well as their effective reintegration into the social, economic and political environment.

This implies the process of adaption in the country of origin, so that the accumulated knowledge and experience from abroad would not only benefit individual progress but in the same time the progress of society and of the country in general.

Considering the contribution of high qualified professionals in consolidating democracy and building a modern society, this paper aims to shed light on some aspects of their reintegration in Albania. In this paper, concrete experiences of highly qualified professionals are analyzed and confronted with the views of a wide range of state and non-state actors engaged in their re-integration. The data obtained from the online questionnaire completed by 66 high qualified professionals that had studied abroad during the period August – November 2011 bring an added value to the paper by offering a comprehensive analysis regarding their reintegration in Albania.

The paper presents synthetically the brain drain phenomenon by identifying the policies encouraging the return and reintegration of the qualified professionals in their country of origin. Moreover, through qualitative and quantitative analysis the policy paper strives to shed light on the effectiveness of policies in place by suggesting a set of measures and advocacy instruments to improve the current situation. By identifying specific concerns of high skilled returnees EMA strives to encourage the public debate on how to make best use of the human capital through better structured and comprehensive policies.

RETROSPECTIVE OF THE BRAIN DRAIN PHENOMENON

The collapse of communism in Albania as in other countries of Southeast Europe was accompanied by large migratory waves. Significant part of the contingent who had left the country towards closer, European countries but also in America and Canada, were the high qualified professionals. For a small country such as Albania, migration of almost 40% of lecturers and researchers, of whom 66% hold PhD title,⁷⁴ was a significant brain drain. As a result Albania faced lack of professional and managerial capacity to be better oriented towards democratic processes that the country was experiencing in the early '90s.

⁷⁴ Tafaj, M., Considerations about Massive Brain Drain from Albania and Strategies attracting high qualified scientists, Tirana, 2005 quoted to EMA's policy paper “Brain Gain Policies and Their Impact on the European Integration Process of Albania: Challenges and Future Perspectives”, July 2010, pg 3.

Several reasons may explain the migration of the high skilled returnees during these years. They mainly relate to a poor market in terms of employment opportunities . In addition, the prevalence of clientelism and nepotism in an informal labor market, increase even more the tendency of high skilled professionals to live and work abroad. Following improvements in living conditions, after the year 2000 the propensity to migrate has marked decline compared with two waves of migration that Albania faced in periods of 1990-1993 and 1997-1999. Yet migration continues regularly, but mainly for study purposes with approximately 2,000 to 4,000 students each year who leave the country.

Acknowledging these dynamics on the one hand and the growing need for professionals in less developed fields within the country on the other one, the first initiatives with regard to supporting high skilled professionals to come back to Albania, were undertaken. In a situation when the country was undergoing a turbulent process of democratic transformation to reverse trends of brain drain to brain gain phenomenon seemed as urgent as visionary. In the attempt of drafting brain gain policies several initiatives were produced. To date, their effectiveness in practice has remained modest.

The brain drain phenomenon was first considered in the National Strategy for Migration in 2005. Until then brain gain instruments were implemented on ad hoc and sporadic bases. This is the case of donations by the Open Society Foundation for Albania (OSFA), which had a short-time effect, as well as the case of some changes in bylaws regulating recruitment in public administration where the master diploma was given priority (considering the limited number of master degrees offered by Albanian universities in those years, the master diploma was mainly obtained by studying abroad). These experimental initiatives looked mostly as isolated islands that were not able to provide continuity and were not combined with other relevant policies. Therefore, they could not produce sustainable results.

In 2006, the Brain Gain Programme, a joint initiative of the Albanian government and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established. It was designed to facilitate the reintegration of highly educated Albanians in the public administration and in the political economic development of the country. This was to be accomplished throughout two objectives: firstly, by providing a welcoming environment for those who return to Albania, and secondly, by creating the legal framework for the full integration of these persons in the public administration.

From a wider perspective, the goals of Brain Gain Programme consisted in:

1. Addressing the brain drain phenomenon at the level of central policy of the Albanian state by making it part of the public policy discourse;
2. Creating a good basis for the review of administrative and legislative measures to encourage the Brain Gain policy through instruments such as:
 - financial support
 - facilities in recruitment procedures in the public administration
 - incentives to be involved the work of research institutes, in excellence programs or in scientific cooperation programs.

Overall, this program marked a significant milestone in the foundation of the Brain Gain policy. Notwithstanding this, it remains an initiative with limited impact due to the relatively small number of beneficiaries and limited sources and competences available to it.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ UNDP Albania, *From brain drain to brain gain: mobilising Albania's skilled diaspora*, Tirana, April 2006, p 8.

In addition to the Brain Gain Programme, since 2010 the Ministry of Education and Science has applied the Excellence Fund,⁷⁷ a program which foresees scholarships for those residing in Albania admitted to the 15 top-rated education and research institutions of the world. The Fund provides support for all levels of education, from bachelor to postdoctoral studies as well as support for participation in international scientific competitions and publications.

Still today, the trend of studying abroad remains strong. This trend combined with the possibilities for finding a job in host countries, favored by the visa liberalization which potentially increases contact with the European labor market, still pose a danger of losing high skilled professionals. This danger is amplified if we refer to data issued by INSTAT where youth are considered amongst the layers of Albanian society that suffer most from unemployment. However the growing desire to return back to the home country⁷⁸ highlights some new problems that need to be addressed such as: How committed is the Albanian society to accept high qualified returnees? What kind of environment are they faced with during their return? And what should be done to encourage more high qualified professionals to choose Albania as their country of residence?

FROM EXPECTATIONS TO REALITY

The reality facing high-skilled returnees to reintegrate in Albania was analyzed by collecting their concrete experiences. These include the reasons that led them to leave, seek for qualifications abroad, reasons for building a career in Albania as well as plans for the future. Although it is accepted that in recent years Albania has been experiencing a wave of brain gain, assessing accurately the dynamics of this mobility remains difficult. In order to gain an insight of and analyze the brain-gain phenomenon, one has to face problems that stem from the roots of this process, starting determining the number of qualified Albanians abroad. Some return, but in fact, many are those who leave the country each year. The calculation of the number of citizens currently studying abroad, of those who have completed education and those who have returned to Albania still remains a challenge for Albanian state institutions. Difficulties in this regard, are to a certain extent related to the large number of countries in which Albanian students live. However, the main obstacle in determining the number of Albanian students abroad seems to be associated with the fact that such data are usually considered sensitive for embassies of various countries, and are not shared. Nevertheless, if Albanian authorities ensure data protection or if the institutions of foreign countries communicate at least the figures, without revealing the identity, there can be a possibility to achieve a rough estimation of this number. Statistical data on the number of Albanian students in countries such as Italy for example constantly circulate in national reports and media of this country. Therefore, the collection of these data by the Albanian authorities cannot be considered impossible – in particular considering the importance of these data in building policies that promote brain gain in Albania, as well as the efficiency of its contribution.

⁷⁷ European Movement Albania, Which role for Albanian universities in brain circulation? Tirana, October 2010, pg. 8 and website of the Ministry of Education and Science: <http://www.mash.gov.al/faqe.php?id1=2&id2=72> .

⁷⁸ Interview with Edlira Cepani, Director of Albanian Students Abroad Network, on 16 November 2011. According to the data that AS@N disposes, in 2008 there were approximately 45- 50 % of students that expressed their desire to return back to Albania after finishing their studies, a significant increase compared to a mere 5% willing to do so in 2003-2005.

By observing the experiences of high skilled returnees surveyed within this study, the impression that young Albanians increasingly leave the country mainly for study purposes, rather than for employment opportunities, finds sustainable grounds to be confirmed. The number of qualified persons abroad who choose to return has increased year by year. The main reasons for their decision to return to Albania are, among others, related to the completion of their studies (81%) and the desire to contribute to the changes and development of the society (71%).⁷⁹ Meanwhile, family reasons (70%) confidence that a job can be found more easily in the country of origin (56%) and the hardship in finding a job abroad (35%) remain relevant factors.

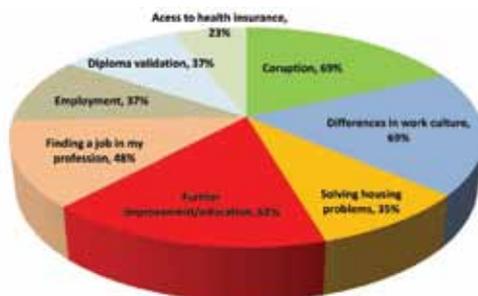
WHAT IS THE CLIMATE THAT HIGHLY QUALIFIED RETURNEES FACE IN ALBANIA?

Despite the desire of returning home, the Albanian youth face an uneasy transition after their return. Difficulties encountered are of bureaucratic or institutional nature, as well as social and cultural one. They do not constitute a surprise, but nevertheless remain worrying. It is significant that the most frequently mentioned difficulty faced by the respondents is related to differences in work culture (69%). This shows that, despite the belief that Albanian society has been much modernized in recent years, the gap with western societies still remains considerable.

Moreover, it is not surprising that corruption follows in the list of difficulties mentioned by the respondents - a phenomenon which has been reported for a very long time, but still remains un-addressed significantly, and continues to compromise career opportunities for many young people with potential. Other challenges faced by high skilled returnees are of a nature that could spur risk of "brain waste" or "brain re-drain". Among them, the most common are: the lack of perspective for further professional growth (62%), difficulties in finding a job appropriate to the qualifications received abroad (48%) and diploma recognition (42%). A discouraging factor is the recent removal of the financial bonus applied for administration employees with master's degree level, which, in many cases, affects negatively the interest of high skilled returnees for the public administration. The high skilled returnees are often negatively judged by the society on their decision to return, which is often considered a failure of their abroad perspective. Being unacquainted with the Albanian reality and the labor market in particular, represents another disadvantage for this group, which in some cases, makes them less preferred by the employer.

The abovementioned elements are indicators that Albania has not yet managed to offer a welcoming and competitive environment for the potential of the most qualified to fully unfold and develop to the benefit of individuals and the society.⁸⁰

Graf1: Difficulties met by high skilled returnees upon return in Albania



⁷⁹ The abovementioned data as well as those that follow in the paper refer to the online survey implemented in the period August – November 2011 with 66 high skilled returnees living in Albania for at least one year.

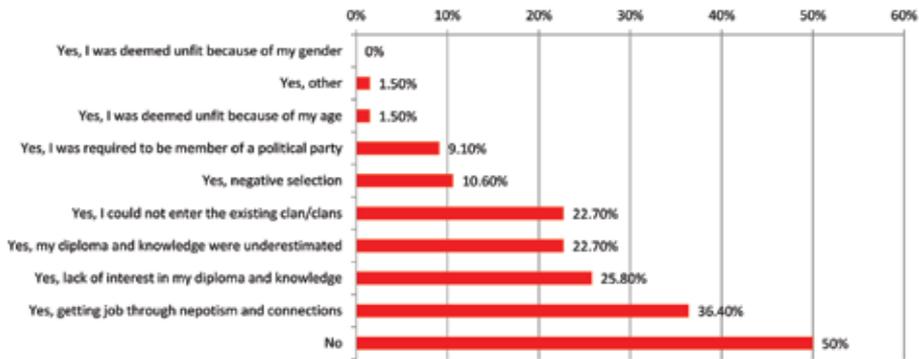
⁸⁰ European Movement Albania, Which role for Albanian universities in brain circulation? Tirana, October 2010, p. 10.

WEAK LINKS WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS

Another fact that emerges from the respondents' answers is the weak relationship with state institutions. The vast majority of the returnees (68%) state not to have received assistance from state institutions upon return, thus facing individually the difficulties in finding a job or other issues of reintegration in Albania. The only assistance provided is that from the Brain Gain Programme. Given the characteristics of the sample of respondents where persons belonging to the academic world and involved in the scheme of the abovementioned program are over-represented (for example compared to the number of returnees who have sought the recognition of diploma), the actual percentage of persons who have not received support from state institutions can be considered even higher.

In terms of employment of the qualified returnees, while results from surveys indicate an average period of job seeking of about 5 months, the main integration difficulties in the domestic labor market relate to nepotism prevalent in many sectors, lack of interest for the qualifications obtained abroad, but also the existence of closed circles of society and recruitment based on political affiliation in some sectors. However, the positive fact remains that half of those interviewed think that they did not encounter difficulties to be integrated in the Albanian labor market.

Graf 2: Difficulties met while looking for a job

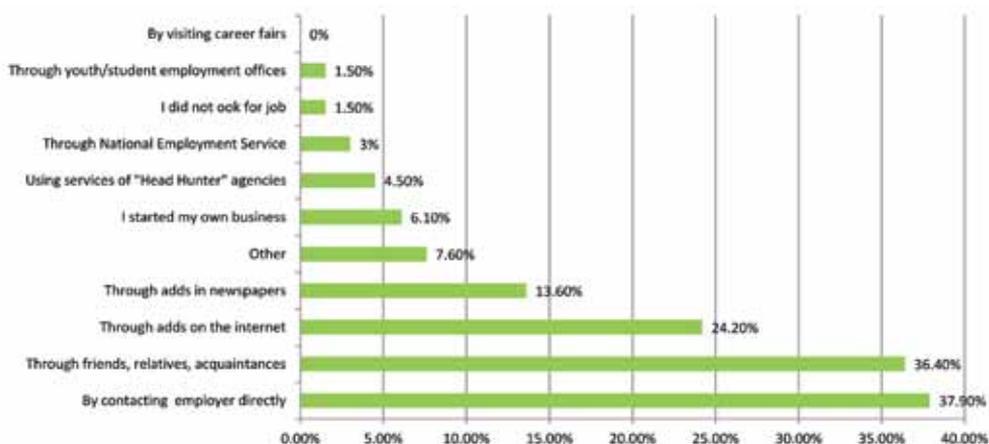


Regarding how highly qualified returnees have managed to secure a job, the surveyed data show a landscape as predictable as it is disturbing. There appears that even in the case of highly qualified returnees, "principles" of an informal and chaotic labor market are applied.

Informal ways of employment, for example by directly contacting the employer or the head of institution (37.9%) or through relatives and friends (36.4%) still dominate. While announcements on the internet or in newspapers seem to be useful to only about a third (1/3) of respondents altogether, the fact that state institutions such as employment offices or the Department of Public Administration remain unpopular as reference points for employment is concerning. These data reconfirm that the official channels of employment in the Albanian market remain weak, thus reducing the chances of transparent and competitive recruitment.

A barrier for integration remains the recruitment method in public administration which is often carried out through temporary contracts rather than through open competitions. Despite the issuing of a Prime Minister Order restricting the contract recruitment to a limit of 2.5%,⁸¹ in reality the figures remain many times higher.⁸² Certainly, this way of recruitment is an added obstacle to the integration of skilled returnees as well as to the strengthening of the state administration capacities through the absorption of the best elements in the market.

Graf 3: How did you find your job?



DIPLOMA RECOGNITION, ONLY IF NECESSARY

For many Albanian students who have studied abroad, the recognition of their diplomas remains a difficult and burdensome process. According to the Albanian Law on Higher Education,⁸³ persons who have obtained a foreign diploma and wish to pursue studies in a higher education institution in Albania or work in public administration must have their diplomas recognized. The institution in charge for official recognition of diplomas or certificates issued by foreign institutions is the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). It performs this task through the National Centre of Recognition of Diplomas and Information. This process starts with the submission of request and necessary documentation to the MES, which is followed by a verification procedure. Recognition of diploma is based inter alia on such criteria like: the level of study, duration of the program, credits, quality, profile of the study program, the nature of studies (the relationship between classes and research activities), etc.

Much more than being costly the recognition of diploma is a long procedure. Although significantly shortened compared to past years, it still takes on average 45 working days from the time when the folder is considered completed, except cases when additional documents are required. Generally, the procedure is perceived as an excessive bureaucratic burden which discourages about half of returnees to apply for. Despite progress made in recent years, problems most encountered relates with the length of proceedings, currently up to 5 months.

⁸¹ Prime Minister Order No. 174 dated 10.01.2010 "On some measures to improve the implementation of civil service legislation in line ministries and the Council of Ministers".

⁸² According to the 2010 Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission (pg. 38), temporary employment contracts in some ministries account for 40-45% of the staff (e.g. Ministry of Defense; of Health, etc).

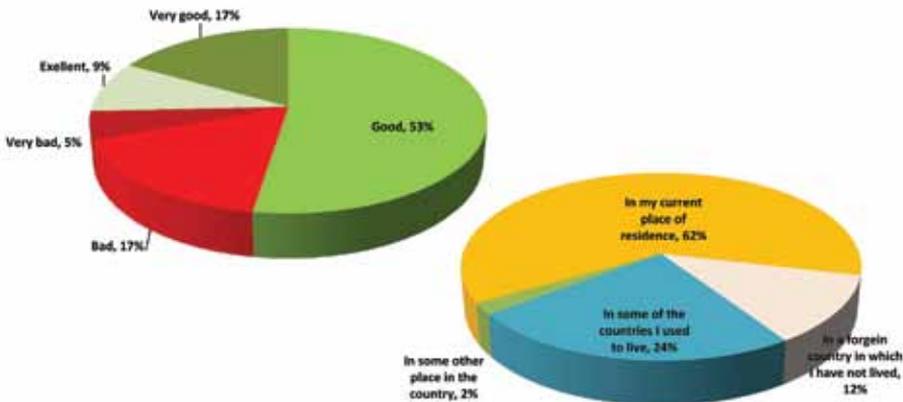
⁸³ Law No.9741, date 21.5.2007 "On higher education in the Republic of Albania" amended <http://www.uamd.edu.al/media/users/4/Ligji%20i%20Arsimit%20te%20larte%20i%20azhurnuar.pdf>

The procedure foreseen by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for the recognition of diplomas also presents problems of privacy and personal data protection, because of the requirement in the application form to provide user name and password to access the student’s personal page attributed by their universities.⁸⁴ These bureaucratic difficulties have caused that besides private companies also many private universities do not require to their staff the recognition of diplomas received abroad

To apply or not for diploma recognition is without any doubts at the discretion of each individual. However, the non-application of a large number of returnees creates more uncertainty to the state authorities about the human capital present in Albania and the most appropriate ways to integrate and engage it to the best interest of country’s development.

Despite difficulties encountered there is a strong desire to live and develop a professional career in Albania. The vast majority of high skilled returnees regard as good, very good and even excellent the decision to return (approx. 79%). In addition, most of them see themselves in Albania in five years time. It seems that a driving factor is also the approach of some foreign investors. Albania is seen as a country increasingly attractive, while investments augment the capacities of individuals within the country are increasing as well. Confidence in the Albanian market has been noticed, where in some occasions, companies are replacing expatriate staff with Albanian ones to cut costs, but also because now there is domestic professional staff fit to cover those positions.⁸⁵

Graf 4: How would you assess the decision to return? Where do you imagine yourself in 5 years time?



However, about one third of respondents that is pessimistic about the future of Albania must not be neglected. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that most of them (89%) maintain close ties with the country where they studied, a fact which potentially makes the decision to leave the country again much easier. Therefore, although the trend to return to Albania is reconfirmed, the authorities must be attentive about the risk of a brain re-drain, should a welcoming environment fail to be provided.

⁸⁴ See the webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science, <http://www.msh.gov.al/faqe.php?id1=2&id2=74>

⁸⁵ Interview with Pranvera Papamihali, Manager for Albania, Pedersen & Partners, November 4, 2011.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Albania is at a crucial stage of development of human capital. Thousands of people live and qualify in a context of high mobility within and outside the country. These years characterized by the increasing return of considerable numbers of people qualified abroad should serve to create a welcoming environment that provides development opportunities to them, thereby serving not only their individual interests, but the progress of society in general.

Now that the first experience of pilot programs and new initiatives for the reintegration of qualified returnees has been gained, it is time for more comprehensive and long-term policy in this regard.

The Brain Gain Programme but also initiatives such as the Excellence Fund constitute the first positive enterprises. However, in order for the return of qualified persons not to be a disappointment or “brain waste”, a more structured approach rather than abovementioned incentives is necessary. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, because the phenomenon of return of qualified persons is growing and in a few years it will concern thousands of Albanian citizens. Secondly, because the difficulties they face at return are complex and regard a spectrum of issues ranging from the modernization of society to the fight against corruption and building a meritocratic career systems in the public and private sector. Thirdly, the need for more comprehensive restrictions arises from the current limitations of the Brain Gain Programme, namely in resources and competences, as well as in the number of beneficiaries.

The human capital available today in Albania includes persons immediately needed by the labor market as well as many others overspecialized, perhaps beyond the development opportunities offered in many sectors in the country. Therefore, a more realistic and effective approach would be:

1. Gathering as soon as possible updated statistical data on Albanian citizens studying abroad, those who have graduated and those who have returned, thus allowing a realistic assessment of human capital present in the country and the one abroad, and as a result the design of efficient policies for their integration.
2. The evolution and further focus of the Brain Gain Programme on the most qualified and their integration into the academic world and research, mainly by promoting brain circulation and better engagement of the Diaspora. A more effective engagement of the Diaspora, not through the transfer of scientists in the country, but through their continuous contribution should go hand in hand with investment in research and initiatives to enhance quality in the academic world.
3. Dealing with broader aspects of reintegration of high skilled returnees in the framework of employment policies, considering the following options:
 - Foreseeing more concrete and well-studied measures for the reintegration of high skilled returnees in the National Strategy for Reintegration of Returnees 2010 – 2015 and in the Sectoral Employment Strategy 2007-2013;
 - Eventually designing a specific strategy for youth employment, with a particular aspect covering the reintegration of young people qualified abroad.
4. Addressing the problem of “internal brain drain”. In a context where 97% of skilled returnees are concentrated in Tirana, the other regions of the country face major difficulties to develop and inability to reduce the gap that separates them from the capital. Therefore special support schemes for local governments or local businesses are needed to promote the involvement of highly qualified returnees in different districts. This becomes even more a necessity given the increasing opportunities to compete at regional level for funding programs within the framework of European Union financial assistance (IPA).

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INTERVIEWS

- Interview with Belina Bedini, Head of International Relations & Projects’ Office “Aleksandër Moisiu” University, Durrës, 25 November 2011
- Interview with Bernard Zeneli, Manager of the Brain Gain Programme, Tirana, 11 October 2011
- Interview with Edlira Cepani, Director of the Albanian Students Abroad Network, Tirana, 16 November 2011
- Interview with Floreta Luli – Faber, Executive Director American Chamber of Commerce in Albania, Tirana, 24 November 2011
- Interview with Gent Borici, President of the Young Professionals Committee, American Chamber of Commerce, Tirana, 24 November 2011

Interview with Dr. Kosta Giakoumis, Deputy Rector Professor of Art History and World History, University of New York Tirana, Tirana, 4 December 2011

Interview with Mariel Mejdini, Director of Human resources Development and Management, Public Administration Department, Tirana, 2 November 2011

Interview with Pranvera Papamihali, Country Manager Albania, Pedersen & Partners, Tirana, 4 November 2011

Interview with Dr Saemira Pino, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, "Marin Barleti" University, Tirana, 16 November 2011

Interview with Silvana Banushi, Director of Migration, Return and Reintegration Policies, Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Tirana, 8 November 2011

WEBSITES

Brain Gain Programme: www.braingain.gov.al

Ministry of Education and Science: <http://www.mash.gov.al>

Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: <http://www.mpcs.gov.al>

UNDP Albania, Youth Employment and Migration: Reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks programme: <http://www.un.org.al/subindex.php?faqe=details&id=71>

National Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation: <http://www.akti.gov.al/Materiale/njoftime.html>

ANNEX

A total of 66 high skilled returnees that have answered the questionnaire in August November 2011 (have lived in Albania at return for at least 12 months).

Gender	55% women 45% men
Age	from 23 to 46 most of which between 25 and 30.
Reasons of first long stay abroad (important and very important)	1. Education (99%) 2. Possibility for professional improvement (95%) 3. Desire to see the world (82%) 4. Moral climate in Albania (79%)
Level of education before leaving the country	1. Incomplete elementary school (1.5%) 2. Elementary school (3%) 3. High school (57.6%) 4. University/academy (34.8%) 5. Master (3%) 6. PhD (0%)
Countries where returnees have lived (6 more frequent)	1. Italy 2. USA 3. United Kingdom 4. Holland 5. Hungary 6. Turkey
Average duration of stay abroad	5.5 years (mainly graduate and post graduate studies)
Highest level of education recognized abroad prior to the last return	University/Academy (21%) Master studies (54.5%) Doctoral studies (22.7%)
Employment status before return	Unemployed (15.2%) Student (39.4%) Employed (45.5%)
Duration of work experience abroad (average)	4.7 years
Did the job abroad match the qualifications?	Yes - 66.7% No - 33.3%
Year of return (years with higher flux)	a) 2007 (14%); b) 2008 (12%) c) 2009 (27%); d) 2010 (26%)
Reasons of return (important and very important)	1. I completed my education (81%) 2. Contribution to changes and development of society & Knowledge transfer and share (71%) 3. Family reasons (70%) 4. I believed I could find a job in the country of origin more easily (56%)

THE ROUND TABLE:

IS RETURNING TO ALBANIA WORTH IT?



The round table brought together around 50 participants, including representatives from state institutions, employment agencies and academia who discussed the problems faced by high skilled returnees during reintegration in their country of origin.

The guest speakers were: Mr. Përparim Kabo, Anthropologist, Mr. Bernard Zeneli, Programme Manager of 'Brain Gain' and Mrs. Silvana Banushi, Director of Migration, Return and Reintegration Policies, Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

The forum was opened by welcome speech of Executive Director of EMA, Mr. Gledis Gjipali, emphasizing the role of human capital in social, economic, and political development. In this respect, the return of attention to carefully analyzing different phenomena related with human capital takes a significant importance.

Mrs. Blerta Hoxha, policy researcher at EMA, presented the main findings of the survey carried out with the high skilled returnees, listed as below:

- It is reaffirmed the growing trend of high skilled professionals returning in Albania. Young Albanians mainly go abroad for study reasons, rather than employment ones. Family ties represent a strong incentive to return.
- However, the number of those leaving the country every year remains high. Consequently, it is hard to estimate the dynamics of both processes: brain drain and brain gain.
- Among difficulties high skilled returnees face during their integration in Albania, differences in the working culture and corruption are the most common ones.
- The desire to return shrinks because of weak links that returnees establish with the state institutions. Few are those who receive assistance from state institutions during the re integration process.
- The diploma validation is still perceived as a lengthy and bureaucratic procedure – best to avoid it if possible.

- Informal ways of employment are dominant, such as by contacting directly the employer (37.9%) or through relatives and friends connections (36.4%). State institutions continue to be unpopular as a reference point for employment. These data confirm that the official channels of employment in the Albanian market remain weak, reducing the opportunities for transparent and competitive recruitment.
- Albania is still threatened by the risk of “brain waste”. About 42% believe that their professional advancement is modest, or there is no advancement at all. Even though, most consider their decision to return as good or very good one (79%), the fact that 36% of high skilled returnees do not see themselves in Albania in the next five years is an issue of concern.

Based on the key findings of the survey and also at the assessment of current employment policies, Mrs. Hoxha pointed out that in order to make best use of the human capital, a more structured and long term approach for the reintegration of highly qualified returnees is needed.

The anthropologist Përparim Kabo, held a speech on “Brain Gain” as a phenomenon, reality and trend!” During his discussion, Mr. Kabo was particular focused on the ‘market of ideas” concept, the core of each is compounded by the competition of values and skills. Brain gain is an individual act but its coordination becomes a valuable asset for the whole society. According to Mr. Kabo, what actually prevents the development of the market of ideas in Albania is the commercialization of values, the political-party-fanaticism including clientelism and family nepotism. Albanian society suffers from the lack of circulation of elites which brings consequences for the development of the society in itself preventing in this way the usage of values brought even by the high skilled returnees. He tried to analyze this phenomenon in terms of a philosophical point of view using several metaphors which derive from reality as a need for better addressing this issue.

Mr. Bernard Zeneli, Program Manager of “Brain Gain”, presented a comprehensive overview of the program, its achievements and future challenges. Mr. Zeneli focused mainly on the innovations that the implementation of this program brought to the public debate, by introducing the concept of “Brain Gain” on public policy discourse and significant legislative changes that followed. However he mentioned that for a variety of reasons, mostly related to delays in disbursement of financial support or even lack of donors’ interest, a new phenomenon “Brain Gain fatigue” is emerging. Despite these problems, the case of Albania is inspiring other countries in the region to undertake such a program by serving as a positive example in the context of promoting brain gain policies.

Mrs. Silvana Banushi, representative of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, pointed out in a broader context the role of the institution that she represents in return and reintegration of all Albanian citizens who lived abroad. Mrs. Banushi stressed that due to the interventions’ nature and support that high skilled returnees need, problems of this category are less addressed in the National Strategy for Migration 2005-2010. However, currently the Ministry has set up a working group in charge of drafting the new Strategy on Migration and Development, which will pay a more attention in this regard. Mr. Banushi invited EMA and other actors of civil society to be involved in the drafting process in order to better address the problems associated with the brain gain and brain gain phenomena.

The round table was followed by an open discussion session where participants brought up personal experiences and discussed the promotion policies in the context of establishing a friendly and constructive environment based on meritocracy and professionalism.

MEDIA COVERAGE

BalkanInsight, 28.12.2011, Albania's Brain Gain Efforts Thwarted by Red Tape

Express, newspaper, 26.12.2011, Albania suffers from the brain drain

Tema, newspaper, 26.12.2011, Students graduated abroad: We can not stay in Albania

News Agency Alblink, 21.12.2011, EMA: Lack of elites' circulation

Lajmi i fundit, 21.12.2011, EMA's survey: Is returning to Albania worth it?

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

RETURN OF THE HIGHLY SKILLED IN THE WESTERN BALKANS BRAIN GAIN OR BRAIN RE-DRAIN?

BELGRADE, DECEMBER 15, 2011



Departure of highly qualified professionals from the Western Balkans is an unstoppable phenomenon that is the logical consequence of globalisation, exceptional offer of quality education and training abroad, contained in a number of programmes that encourage mobility of professionals.

Therefore, the focus of state policies in the region should be in finding ways to include highly qualified professions from the region in scientific, educational and development programmes in their countries of origin and jointly gather around the sphere of common interest aimed at the overall development of the region and its countries.

The conference identified two dimensions of relations between the states and their highly qualified diaspora: external and internal.

The **external dimension** implies a proactive role of the state by establishing contacts and cooperation with highly qualified professionals while they are abroad.

It is therefore necessary to establish a functional database of highly qualified professionals abroad:

- The database of highly qualified professionals must be the result of a planned approach, which implies a clear idea and a proposal to include highly educated professionals in specific projects (contact must always be done with a clear goal and a concrete proposal).
- The database must be designed in accordance with international standards on the protection of personal data with precise duties of database administrator and

limited circle of persons who have access to the database in line with the adopted regulation on the use of the database, except in the case when people themselves have made their contacts available to the public.

Communication with the highly qualified diaspora should also be carried out through *direct meetings and contacts*. The conference participants emphasised the example of Israel, which has special emissaries that work with its diaspora.

- In this context, a more proactive role of public authorities is required, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the network of diplomatic and consular missions, as well as other state agencies responsible for cooperation with diaspora (Serbia and Macedonia also have economic diplomats in charge of cooperation with economic institutions of the receiving country).
- Countries of the Western Balkans must have a clear *plan of communication and cooperation* with its highly qualified diaspora, and diplomatic and consular offices must have regular meetings and consultations with the scientific diaspora
- Communication with the highly skilled diaspora should be conducted in collaboration with *associations of highly skilled professionals from abroad* (such as the Serbian City Club in London), which can most effectively pass on relevant information from the state to the interested individuals abroad and vice versa, expectations, suggestions and interests of the highly skilled abroad to public bodies and other institutions

The conference also emphasised that the inclusion of highly educated professionals from abroad to the social spheres in the country does not always include physical return, but that in time of high-tech possibilities more efficient ways can be found to involve them in the social spheres.

The Western Balkan countries should jointly address the EU and insist that the issue of migration and development is important in the process of the EU accession, and that the departure of highly qualified professionals from the Western Balkans to the EU countries has an effect on the development and competitiveness of the countries of this region.

It is therefore essential that the countries of this region establish coordinated policies regarding the mobility of professionals, and with European partners to create an environment in which both destination countries and countries of origin could realise their interests and create new opportunities for the development of the countries of this region, as well as new opportunities for personal development of highly qualified professionals from the region

The **internal dimension** implies the establishment of a transparent and efficient system of involvement of returnees in the overall social relations in the country.

In order to build these relations it is essential to treat science as a development *rather than social category*.

- With a modest budget, but also with potential international financial instruments, the state must create conditions for scientific work and support to the best research projects. In this regard, providing favourable start-up loans, creating a guarantee fund to provide commercial loans for the development of science, are necessary in all countries of the region.

The conference particularly highlighted the importance of institutionalisation of relations between countries in the region and the highly skilled diaspora based on good practices in the region, as well as other countries in Europe and worldwide:

- It is necessary for all countries in the region to *establish offices/agencies* for cooperation with the highly skilled diaspora. The institutional position of the new entities must be high in the state hierarchy (at the cabinets of prime ministers or at entity governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina), in order to have efficient coordination and implementation from the highest government positions, as well as to create new policies regarding the involvement of highly skilled diaspora in the social spheres of countries of the region (using the positive experience of Albania).
- It is necessary for all countries in the region to create conditions and support research projects aimed at *connecting the scientific community / universities and the private sector in the country with the highly skilled diaspora*. Positive experiences of Croatia must be an example to all countries in the region. These experiences show all the cost-effectiveness of investments in these research projects, because they generate additional support from European and other funds intended for scientific development.
- The basic assumption for the success of these programmes is a meritocratic approach, i.e. support to the best projects, through an impartial, transparent project evaluation, which is achieved through the inclusion of international independent experts in the selection process, as well as through the creation of an institutional mechanism that excludes any potential conflict of interest.
- A prerequisite for the inclusion of highly qualified returnees in social spheres in countries of origin is the *elimination of bureaucratic barriers* to the recognition of diplomas and qualifications obtained abroad, through the adoption of an adequate legal framework, both in terms of continuing education and employment (Croatian example)

In order to create conditions for retaining highly educated people and, simultaneously, attracting such people from abroad to participate in development processes in countries of origin (temporary, virtual or permanent return) it is necessary to build good inter-agency cooperation within each of the Western Balkan country, with active participation of the academic sector, NGOs and international and intergovernmental organisations, which should be dealing with the issue of linking migration and development.

Both external and internal dimensions of state policies towards the highly skilled diaspora must be coordinated and simultaneously applied so that the countries of the region could respond to the challenges of globalisation and powerful knowledge market.

MEDIA COVERAGE:

Oko magazin, RTS national TV station, 22/9/2011

RTS, national TV station, 26/10/2011

Večeras zajedno, Radio Beograd I, 1/11/2011

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