

Brain drain and internationalisation: Can existing QA practices foster responsible internationalization and brain circulation in higher education?



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**Fighting for
students' rights
since 1982**

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A preliminary glossary

- **Brain Mobility (BM)**

Mobility of skilled individuals among jurisdictions, be they students, academics, or workers.

- **Brain Drain (BD)**

Permanent emigration of skilled persons from one jurisdiction to another.

- **Brain Circulation (BC)**

The possibility for developing countries to draw on the skills, know-how and other forms of experience gained by their migrants - whether they have returned to their country of origin or not - and members of their diaspora.

- **Brain Gain (BG)**

The benefit to a country as a result of the immigration of a highly-qualified person.

- **Brain Waste**

A state when a qualification, education or skills are not recognized.

Brain drain in scholarly literature

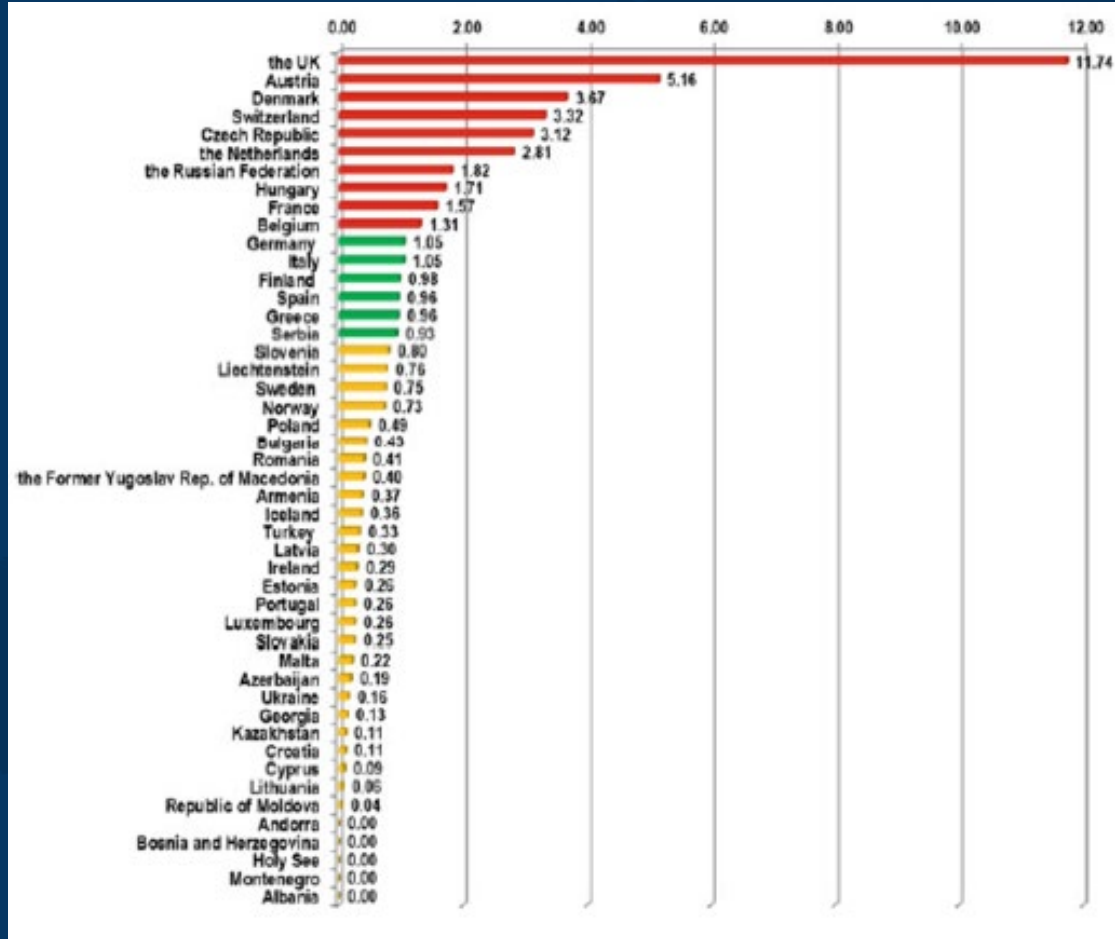
- BD is related to the economic inequalities within the **international division of labour**;
- **Technical push issues of BD**: immigration rules, taxation, science and technology policies, recognition of qualifications;
- **Structural push issues of BD**: cultural and societal factors, structure of education and academic careers, language, openness to foreigners;
- Effects: **fiscal loss of the investments in education**, reduced quality of services like health and education;
- **Policies to reduce BD**: investments in education, rapid economic growth, policies to attract inward student mobility, both international and local (even between cycles).

See more: <https://esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Brain-Drain-final-report-ESC41-Google-Docs.pdf>



Brain drain in the European Higher Education Area

- Red:** ratio unbalanced toward inflow (brain gain)
- Green:** balanced ratio (brain circulation)
- Yellow:** ratio unbalanced toward outflow (brain drain)



Intra-EHEA brain mobility in 2011, Source: Ferencz, 2015

Brain drain in the European Higher Education Area

- Division in status and rights between **EU vs. non-EU students**;
- Students from linguistically and culturally similar system tend to move to study in systems with **good education, lower tuition fees, less barriers at the entrance and more generous student welfare**;
- **After 2008 crisis**: student BD from South and East toward North and West Europe.

See more: Giousmpasoglou, C., Koniordos, S., Brain Drain in Higher Education in Europe: Current Trends and Future Perspectives, in Giousmpasoglou, C., Marinakou, V., Paliktzoglou, V., Brain Drain in Higher Education: The Case of the Southern European Countries and Ireland, Nova Science Publishers, 2017.



EU and BFUG positions on Brain Drain

- European Education Area first reference on student BD in the EU discourse;
- EU position = BFUG position: 'balanced mobility', meaning proportional incoming and outgoing mobility;
- 'Balanced mobility' period: 2007-2015;
- 'Upper hand' of the receiving countries in the discourse: reduce economic costs of the inflows

EU and BFUG positions on Brain Drain

- [Bucharest Communiqué \(2012\)](#): intergovernmental solution to excessive inflows;
- [Yerevan Communiqué \(2015\)](#): ‘portability of grants and loans’ approach was introduced = tax on sending countries = this approach has failed as it did not conform to the Bologna commitments, it was difficult to implement and it did not contribute to lowering the impact of brain drain.

EU and BFUG positions on Brain Drain

- Palliative approach penalising sending countries + non-bindingness of Bologna commitments = **failure**

Brain Circulation

- Term introduced in 1990s;
- Since the launch of Bologna declaration in 1999, **internationalisation** became one of the main focuses of HE;
- Relevant policy: [2015 European Agenda on Migration](#), Erasmus+ Programme- these policies further note the need for internationalisation in higher education through mobility schemes.
- One of the measures to assure brain circulation is the creation of the [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#).

Brain Circulation in numbers

- EMN Synthesis Report for the EMN Study 2018

Figure 3: Number of first residence permits issued to third-country nationals for study reasons (2017)

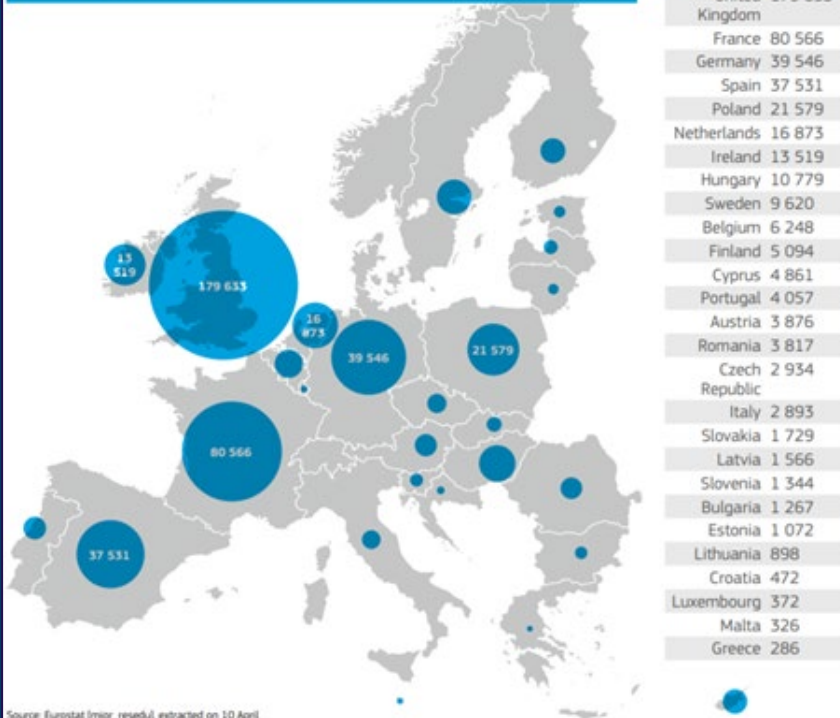
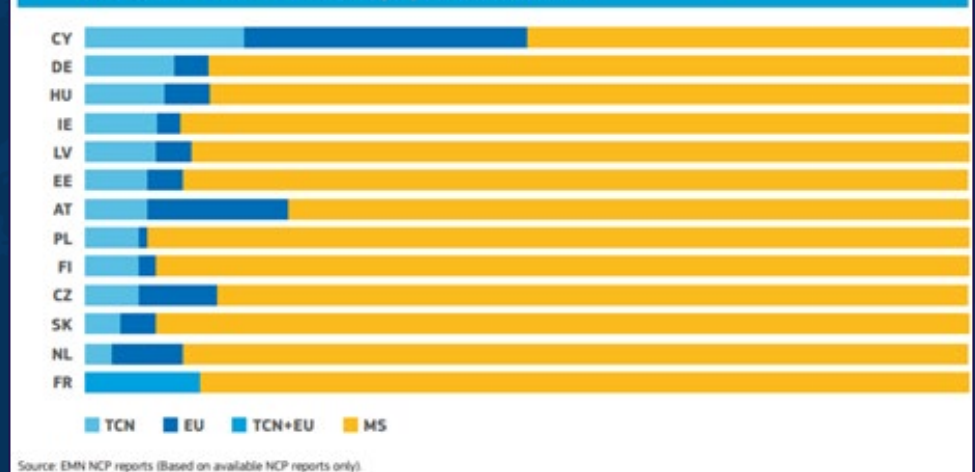


Figure 4: Proportion of international students among Member States' student population 2017



Brain Circulation in numbers

MAIN GOALS :

- Internationalisation in HE;
- Increased financing of HE;
- Contribution to the economic growth through producing highly skilled individuals;
- Tackling the needs and shortcomings in the labour market;
- Tackling demographic change.

DIFFICULTIES:

- Retention of students post-graduation is difficult;
- Insufficient offer of English- taught classes;
- Lengthy and slow HEI application process;
- Lengthy and slow application process for residence permits or visas;
- Lack of scholarship or (affordable) housing opportunities for international students;
- Inability to fully immerse in the culture of another country.

Internationalisation at HEIs

- Higher tuition fees for international students (even capped!)
- Career counselling and job- orientation services
- Bilateral and multilateral agreements -in support of Brain Mobility
- Mostly focused on enrollment and promotional procedures
- Lacking direct students` support services
- Good practices:
 - Malta, Spain and Czech Republic actively collaborate with immigration authorities
 - Additional financial support for vulnerable groups
 - Family reunification and family support for international students

Governmental measures:

- Removing restrictions in the labour market for international students

Connecting Brain Drain to QA

- Often national funding of HEIs is linked to the number of students, new and accredited programmes, as well as innovation and institutional success.
- QA involves constant quality enhancement, putting additional pressure on brain drain-affected countries to prove themselves against their past assessments.
- ESGs mention internationalisation as one of the growing areas of higher education.
- QA monitors the general quality of education, but it does not always strictly look at the sustainability of education.

National Brain Circulation

- South-North and East–West gradient
- Countries with the highest values of subjects' moves also have the highest number of frequent movers
- Number of moves per person is also connected to changes in subjects' lives
- Regional upgrading

INSUFFICIENT DATA!

Brain Drain chain reaction

- Highly-qualified people emigrate elsewhere, but their skills are still needed in their home country
- 'Sending' country thus tries to attract people from less-developed regions and become a receiving one = **brain drain chain reaction**
- Typically doctors and medical personnel



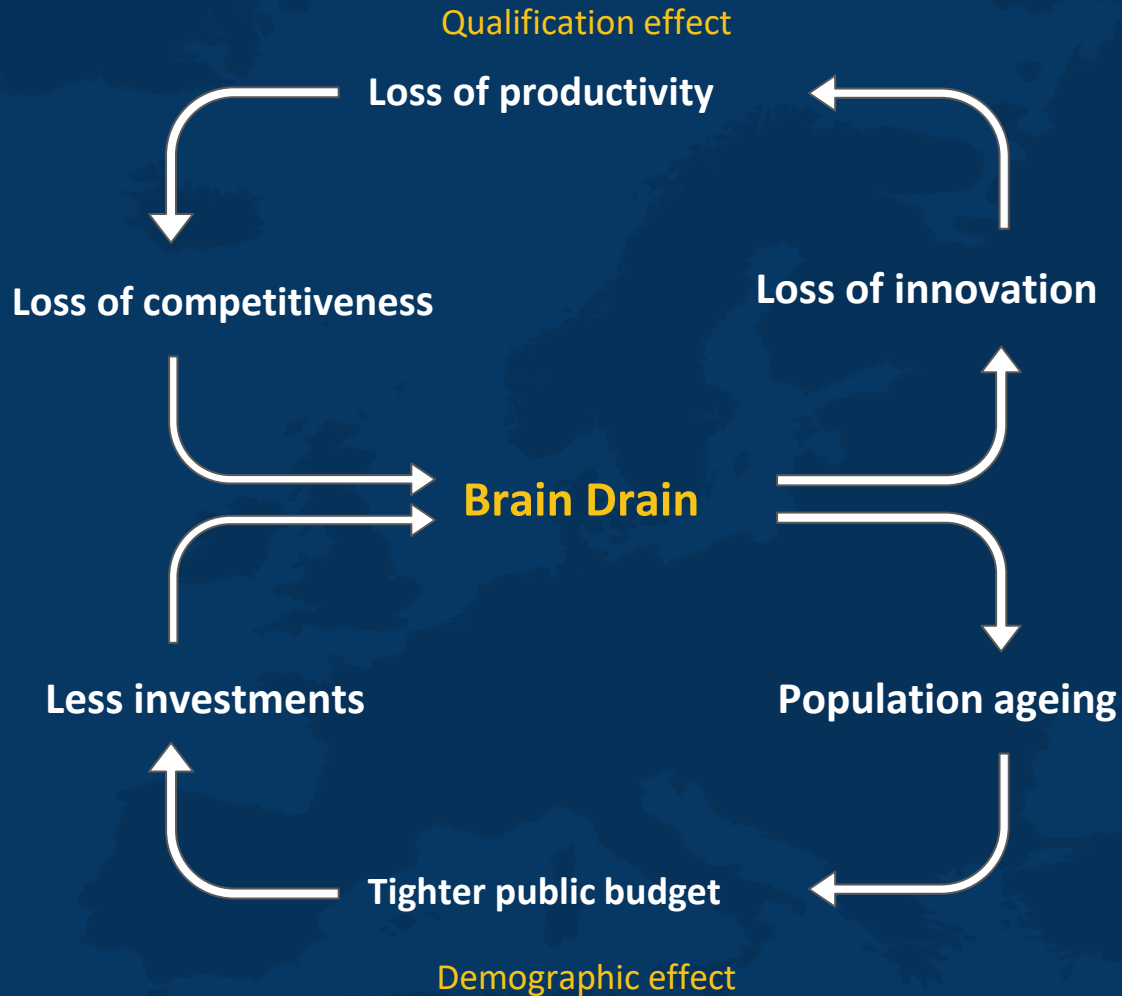
Continuing Brain Waste upon return

- Brain waste can occur even when people return to their home country
- Hardship in finding work in foreign destination leads to downgrade to low-skill, basic jobs
- People are disappointed, returning home
- But they struggle even at home, because they lack experience corresponding to their qualification **domestic** **Brain** **Waste**
- E.g. Polish workers in the Western Europe

Mobility is linked to economic cycle

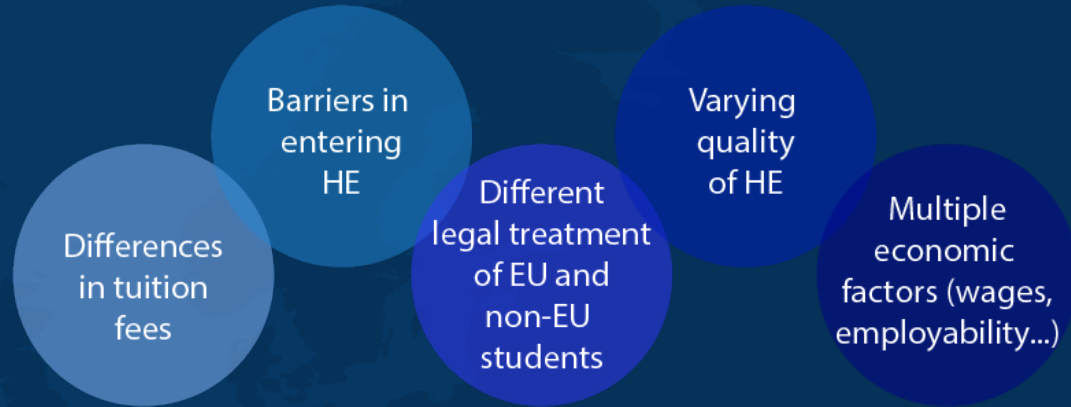
- Country can be a receiver in one period and a sender in the next one
- Evidence from Spain:
 - 1996-2006: Economic boom followed by BG
 - 2008-2014: Depression followed by BD
- However, both seem to be caused by the same people, **not nationals**

➔ There is a flexible social group that migrates based on current conditions

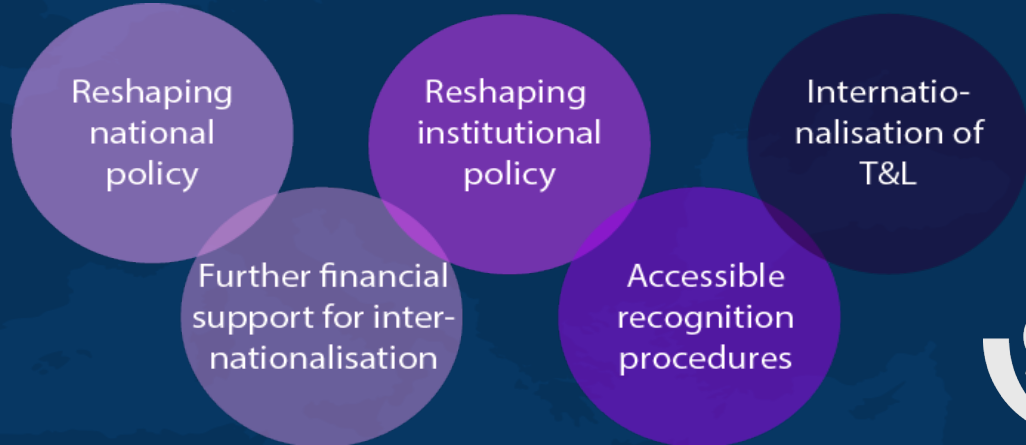


Conclusions

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO BD



KEY COMMITMENTS TO BC



Conclusions

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Increased competitiveness
=
diminished BD

Necessary to improve transparency & infrastructure

R&D investments create job opportunities

Support of increased funding of return grants

Redistribution of EU funds for BD is necessary

ESU'S PERSPECTIVE ON BD

Avoiding palliative & non-implementable solutions

Improvement of students' conditions & rights

Enhancement of the quality of education

Fostering internationalisation at all societal levels

Building synergies within EHEA and ERA

Discussion points

1. Can you name some factors contributing to BD, from your perspective?
2. How can you implement current QA policies or practices to monitor or even mitigate BD in your surroundings?
3. Are there any policies/ practices yet to be developed?

Think outside of the box! These factors can stem from policy, but they can be environmental, social, cultural (...) aspects of higher education.

Think of your past QA experiences and how the information you collect on the programmes/institutions could have been used to paint a picture of brain drain in that area/country.

Thank you for your attention!

If you have any proposals or comments you want to share with us, please send them to pegi.pavletic@esu-online.org!

