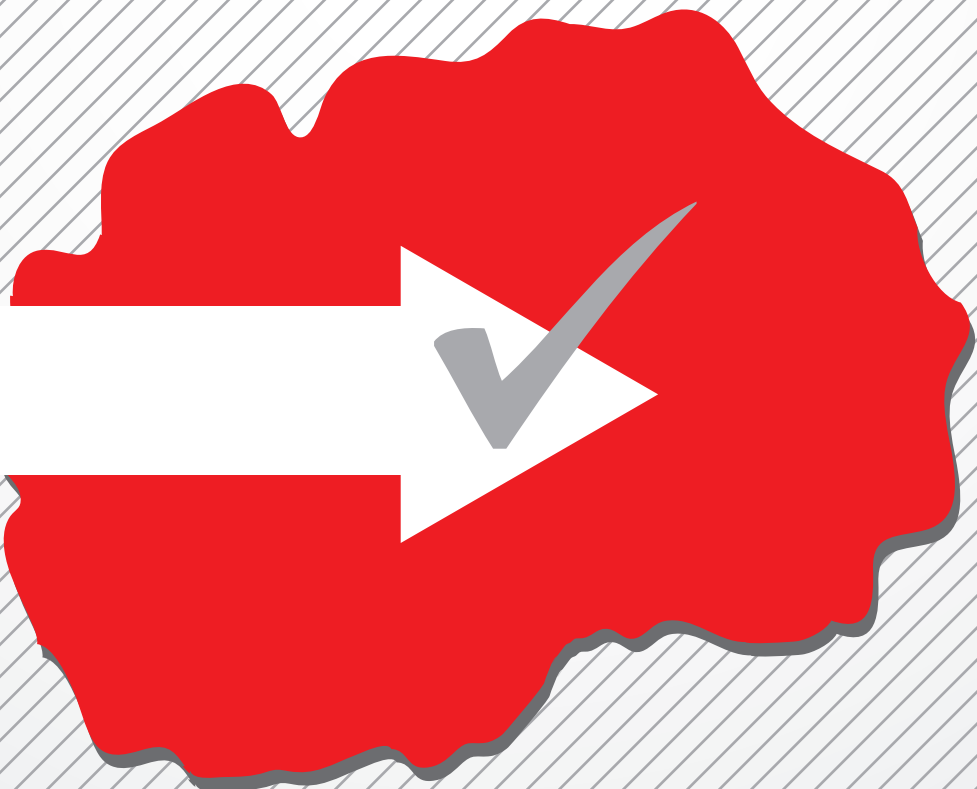


TRANSFORMING **BRAIN** **GAIN** FROM A CONCEPT TO A REAL GAIN

Improving the conditions for reintegration of the highly skilled returnees with functional policies for reintegration.





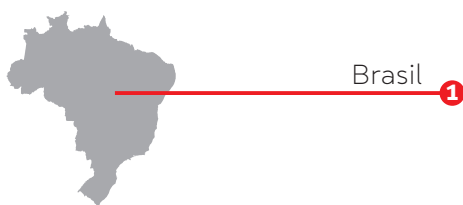


TRANSFORMING BRAIN GAIN FROM A CONCEPT TO A REAL GAIN

Improving the conditions for reintegration of the highly skilled returnees with functional policies for reintegration.

NUMBER OF RETURNEES PER COUNTRIES WERE THEY HAVE BEEN RESIDING [data taken from the survey sample]

Non-European countries where the
returnees included in the survey have
been studying/ working



Countries where only 1 from
the returnees included in the
survey have been studying/
working

Czech Republic **1**
Netherlands **1**
Ireland **1**
Cyprus **1**
Serbia **1**
Finland **1**
Denmark **1**
Russia **1**
Slovenia **1**

3

ESP

17

4

7

3

8

8

2

2

2

6

4

3

UK

FR

B

CH

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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 out-flow 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The data that is currently available can be perceived as outdated because no relevant research according to the migration of this profile of people has been done lately.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.¹ 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 are facing in their process of reintegration in Macedonia. Besides the focus on the main socioeconomic 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 TERM 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.”²

“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.³

“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 over-qualified) 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).⁴

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.

2 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.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.



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.

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 of natural sciences.⁵This 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”.

5 Interview with Antoaneta Ivanova, MladiInfo.com (10.11.2011).

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, MladilInfo 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.

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*

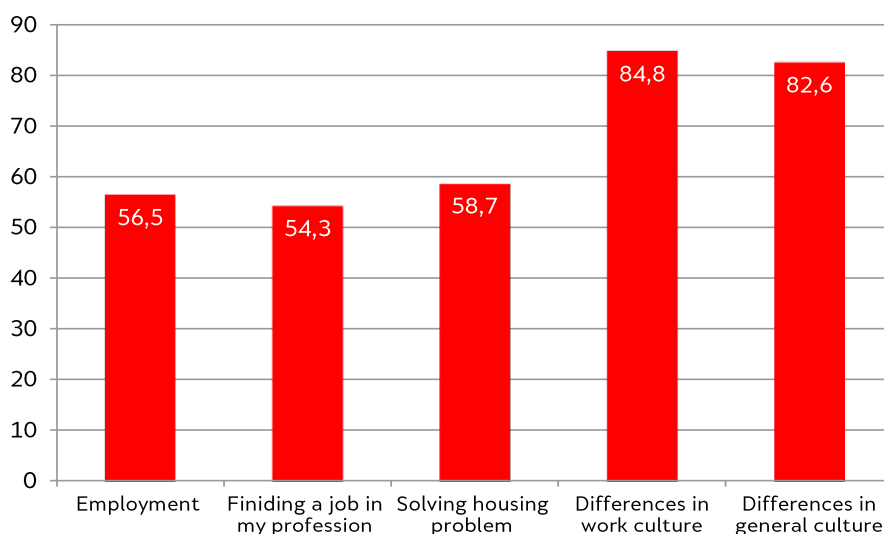
For assessing the media attention and the outreach that this problem can have by using the media we have conducted media clipping as a research tool. The media analysis was conducted by reviewing web content from all media reporting on brain drain/ gain. More than 20 articles from 20 different media 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.⁶

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“.⁷

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 schol-

6 Return and reintegration to FY ROM, IOM (2005).

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

arships.

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.”⁸

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.⁹

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:¹⁰

8 Interview with Suzana Pesik, French Cultural Center Skopje (24.11.2011).
9 Focus group with unemployed highly skilled returnees (06.05.2011).
10 Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03.05.2011).

“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.”

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,¹¹ 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.¹²

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.

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

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



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.¹³ 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:

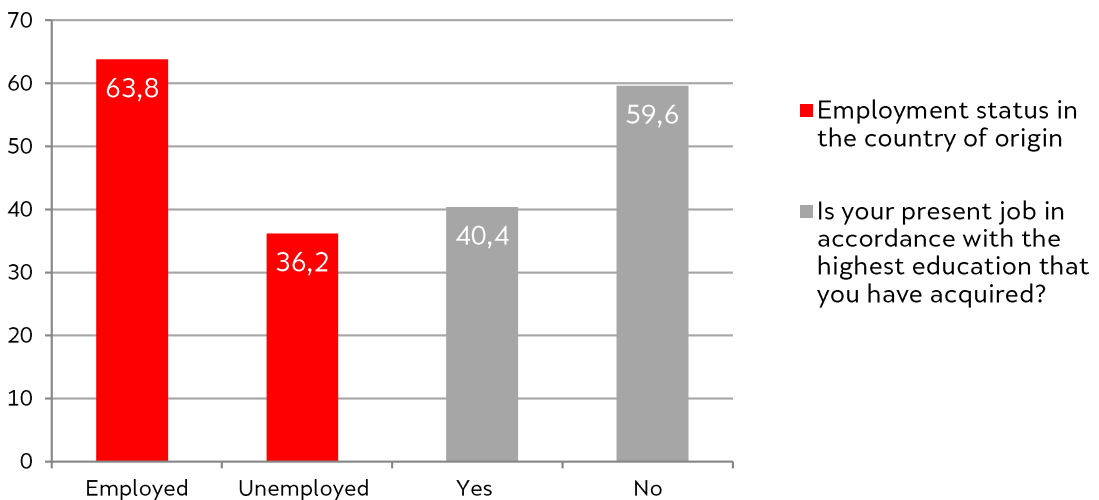
“There is no transparent employment in both private and public sectors and at the same time the key to a job position is to be a member of a political party or to be well connected.”

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?

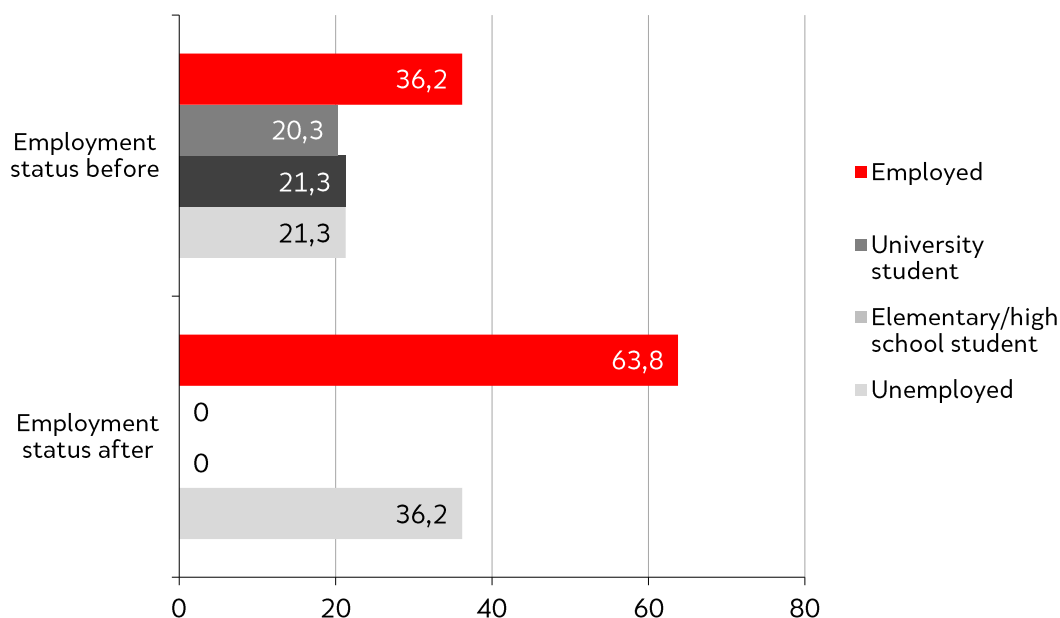
Yes, getting job through nepotism and connections	22,6%
Yes, lack of interest in my diploma and knowledge	16,5%
Yes, I was required to be a member of a political party	11,3%
Yes, my diploma and knowledge were underestimated	10,4%
Yes, negative selection	10,4%
Yes, I could not enter the existing clan/clans	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%,¹⁴ part of the returnees emphasizes they were forced to settle down for lower paying jobs, positions which are below their qualifications, etc.¹⁵ 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).

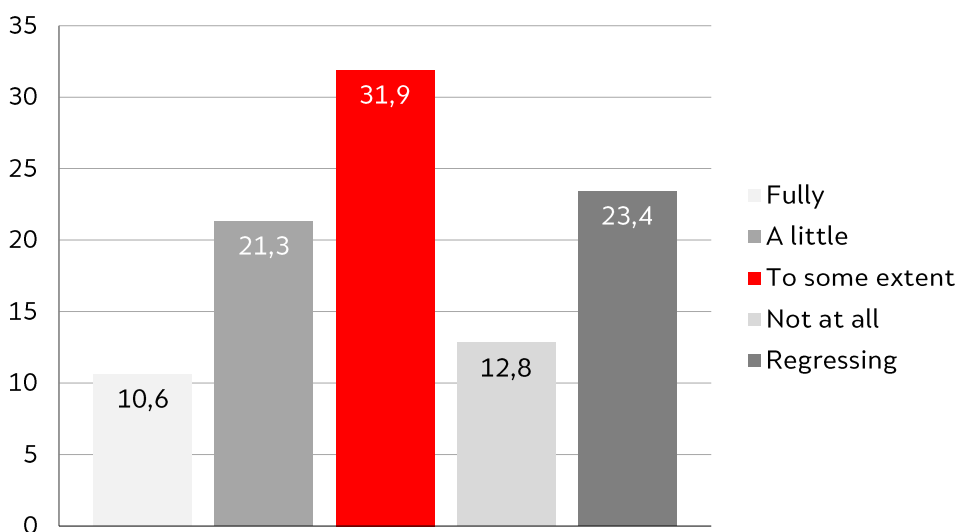
14 State Statistical Office, Republic of Macedonia, http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/english/glavna_eng.asp (accessed February 5, 2012)

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

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 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.)

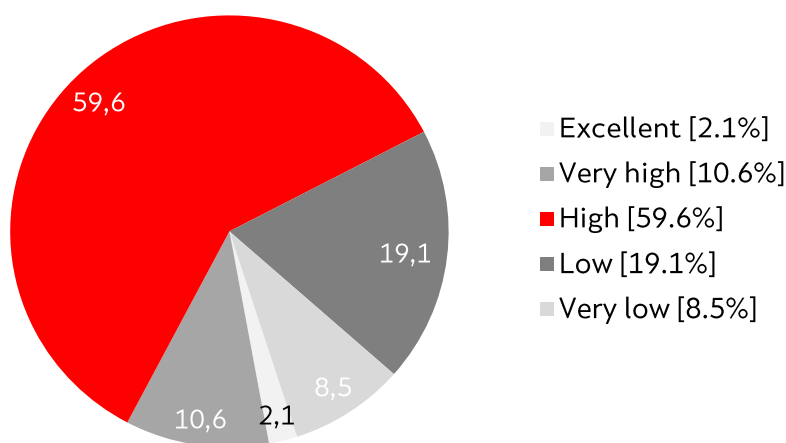
Graph 4: Do you believe you are advancing professionally in your country of origin?

"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."¹⁶


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 selfemployed, 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?



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.

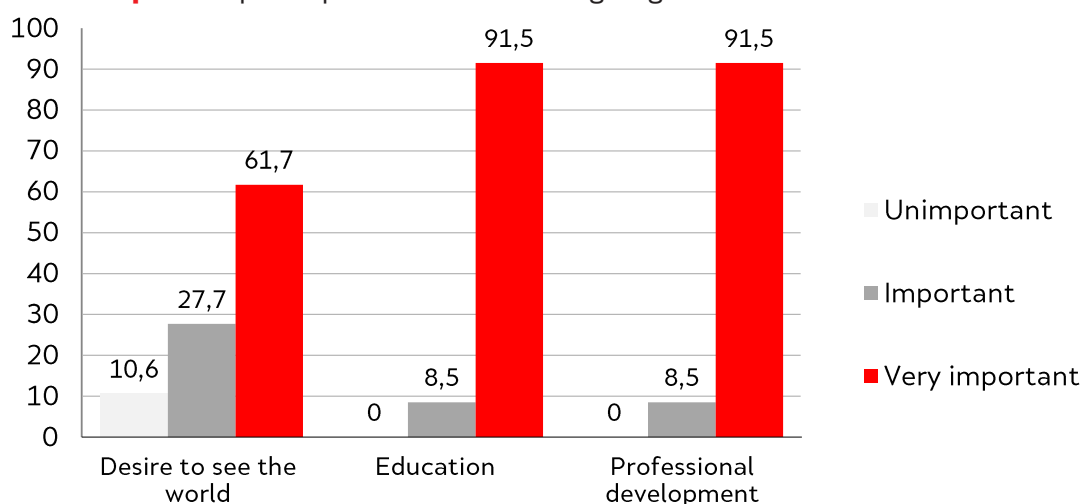


STAYING AT HOME OR MOVING ABROAD AGAIN? DILEMMA FOR HALF OF THE RETURNEES

“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”¹⁷

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).

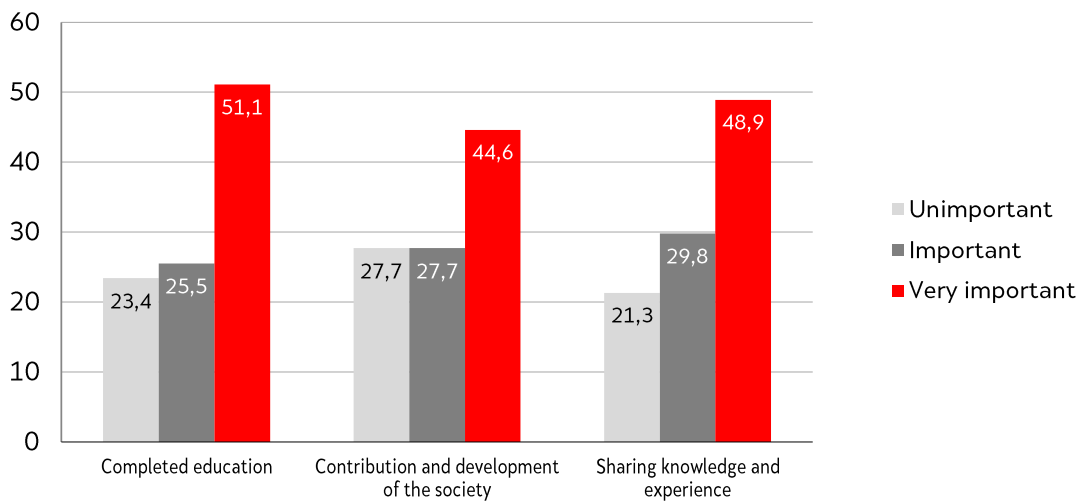
Graph 6: Top 3 important reasons for going abroad for the first time



17 Balkan Monitor, Gallup (2009) p.34

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.

Graph 7: Top 3 reasons for returning home

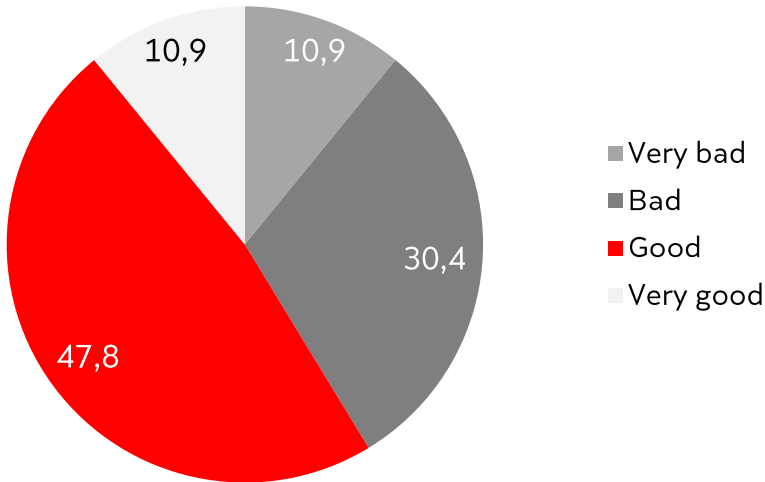


The decision for returning to the homeland is generally assessed as a good decision (47.8%), while one third of the returnees (30.4%) agree that returning home was a bad decision. Disappointments were usually reinforced by the employers, lack of professionalism, lack of opportunities for professional development, as well as the culture in general.¹⁸For 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).

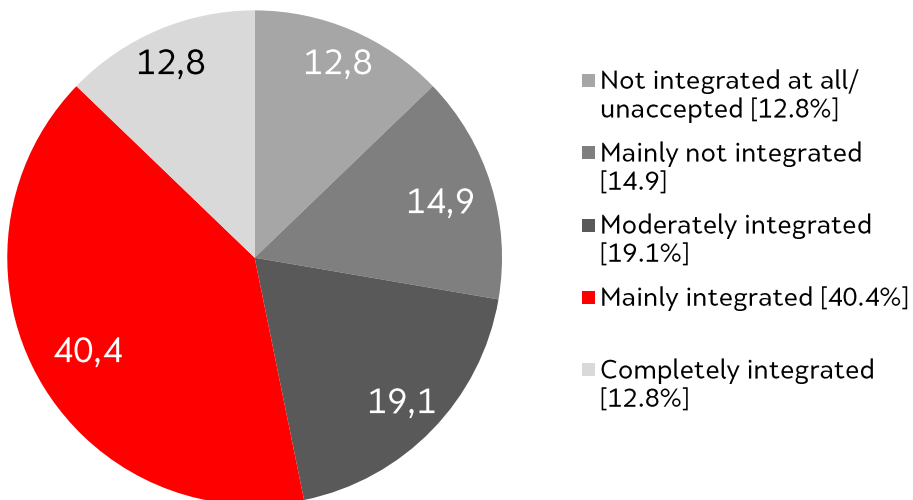
18 Focus group with employed highly skilled returnees (03/05/2011).

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 the irreintegration 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.

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 countriesI 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

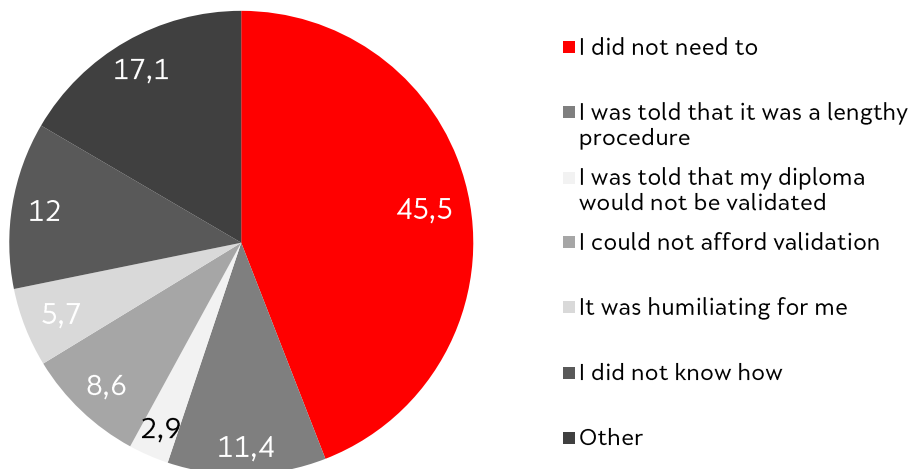
The procedure of diploma recognition has been systematically changed in the past years. From a procedure described as “insufficient and long”⁴³ now this procedure is very clearly explained in the new Law on Higher Education (Chapter 12th).

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

“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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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 bellow 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.

Table 7: Overview of validated high universities diplomas by country for the period from 01.01.2010 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

19 Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette No. 17/2011, article 159.
20 Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette No. 17/2011, article 161b.

Country	Social sciences	Humanities	Mathematics and natural sciences	Medicine	Bio technical sciences	Total by country
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.²¹

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

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.

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 ²⁰	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 ²¹	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 ²²	Very briefly this article is focusing on the lack of the official legal framework that will prevent the brain drain from Macedonia.

Year/ period	Media	Headline	News
2011	Alfa TV	The brain drain causes millions of euros losses from the Macedonian gross national product ²³	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 ²⁴	This article is covering the round table organized by CRPM and it's focusing on the lack of official data about how many highly educated people are living abroad and what are their problems in Macedonia.
2012	Dnevnik	Educated abroad, waiting for employment at home ²⁵	The article is presenting the main findings from a research, focusing on the employment situation of the returnees.

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.

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

23 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).

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

25 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).

26 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).

27 nevnik, “Educated abroad, waiting for employment at home” <http://dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=A9E0B5439AF6C640B24F23A454A1DF87> (assessed January 21, 2012)b.



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 re-integration 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:²⁸a) 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**.”²⁹

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.

28 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.

29 Ibid.

“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 CSOs³⁰ 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.”³¹

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.³²

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.

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

31 Interview with Natasha Kocsis, representative of the Serbian City Club (17.02.2012).

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



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 gain 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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