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**Higher  
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in Europe**

In this issue:

**Brain Drain and the Academic and Intellectual Labour  
Market in South-East Europe**

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# Higher Education in Europe

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## From the Editors

‘Academic mobility’, ‘skilled migration’, ‘brain drain’, ‘brain circulation’: these are the bywords of intensifying, and increasingly fluid, patterns of international movement among the highly educated in the global era. This highly complex issue is of significant current interest, and has been featured earlier this year among others in a World Education Services symposium (Canada), a conference of the European University Association, and a UNESCO publication on Africa. It remains a most pressing one in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, where a cocktail of adverse circumstances in the past decade has propelled alarming numbers of highly skilled citizens, particularly young ones, out of country and into other, often distant regional labour markets.

In considering the genesis, mutations and implications of such brain drain – and the appellation is presumably justified, the flow from Central and Eastern Europe being large in volume and resolutely unidirectional – the range of perspectives and frameworks within which such phenomena may be contextualized renders the analytical experience akin to an intellectual game of ‘pin the tail on the donkey’: each blindfolded participant may alight on a different area, but the accuracy of attempt and the outline of the ‘animal’ remain shrouded in relative darkness.

Ours, then, is the attempt to construct here a composite representation. This issue of *Higher Education in Europe* introduces some of the facets of the brain drain phenomenon, with the added benefit of regional specificity. The focus is on South-East Europe in particular and the nine articles composing the Topic of this issue are drawn from among the papers presented at the International Round Table on Brain Drain and the Academic and Intellectual Labour Market in South-East Europe, held in Bucharest on 18 and 19 June 2004. The Round Table was organized by UNESCO-CEPES, with the support of KulturKontakt Austria (in conjunction with the Innovation Fund of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; its goal was to identify and analyse the current state of brain drain in the region, and assess some of the socio-economic and cultural developments affecting the intellectual labour market.

The Topic of the present issue is bounded at either end by two articles with a theoretical thrust, historical and contemporary, respectively. The first, by Bohdan Ja<sup>3</sup>owiecki and Grzegorz Gorzelak, provides an introduction to the theoretical context of brain drain since the 1970s, and indeed from ancient history. Brain drain, gain, and circulation are *vieux comme le monde*, as they rightly point out. The authors provide some thoughtful commentary on the more recent collapse of ‘real socialism’ as it relates to brain drain from the region of interest, and also offer some methodological suggestions to prospective researchers.

Most significantly, the authors draw attention to the emergence of *internal* brain drain as a rising concern, namely the domestic ‘drain’ of intellectuals out of academia and science and into other occupations altogether.

In the final article, anchoring the Topic, Anna Ferro presents a snapshot of Romanian skilled migrants abroad, which brings to life her overview of contemporary theory on brain drain and brain circulation. By contributing a personal, ‘micro’ perspective on the issues, Ferro’s study serves as a welcome counterpoint to the country studies presented in the body of the Topic. Consideration is given to a balanced judgment of outcomes, and the reader’s attention may be drawn to arguments in favour of the positive effects cited in both the literature and personal accounts. This article is also

an appropriate contribution in that, like a palate-cleansing sorbet, it brings the ‘main course’ of this issue to a relatively refreshing close.

Nevertheless, the contents of the Topic are unmistakably sobering, and the three articles presented draw the most worrying, if straightforward, picture of brain drain in South-East Europe: the cases of Albania, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro. In these countries the combination of restructuring, poverty, insecurity, and hopelessness has led to a virtual vacuum of human capital, in the form of successive migratory waves since the early 1990s.

Fatir Mema provides an overview of Albania, in which he considers the seemingly irreparable loss to the country implicit in the large-scale departures of its best and brightest; he posits that it will take another five to ten years before the disastrous effects of this trend can be fully felt or understood. In addition to emigration, the move away from academic and scientific research careers by young graduates as a whole in the country has weighty implications; Mema’s study leaves this question open-ended, particularly with regard to the future of Albania’s higher education system and scientific heritage.

In the case of Macedonia, the driving force of similar, deep structural problems can be observed. Margareta Nikolovska’s article also points to the role of higher education as a facilitator of brain drain, noting the increasing practice by young people of enrolling in Macedonian higher education as a means of optimizing their employment outcomes in a destination country. This theme is explored further by Gordana Zindovic’-Vukadinovic’ in her study on Serbia and Montenegro, in addition to her overview of the current adverse circumstances that inevitably foster a culture of flight. Zindovic’-Vukadinovic’’s article illustrates the tension between brain drain and higher education, pointing to both causes and effects of brain drain within Serbian higher education itself. The point is made that, in many ways, the destinies of brain drain and national systems of higher education are intertwined.

Although not strictly part of the South-East Europe region, Moldova is also represented here and presents somewhat of a variation on the themes introduced in the preceding three national case studies, in that the country features some noteworthy attempts at regulation. As Petru Gaçugas, explains, the Moldovan experience is now being characterized by involvement of, and agreements between, different parties in the brain circulation process. He cites several examples of negotiations between Moldova and various destination countries, principally to regulate labour migration – including the flow of skilled workers.

These four are followed by another three national case studies from the region, each relatively distinct in their theoretical offerings. The Romanian case study by Ioan Mihaşilescu speaks to the combination of entrepreneurial and intellectual interests among today’s Romanian higher education students, and to the interplay between such globalizing cultural tendencies and brain drain. New conceptions of cultural capital and its constituent parts animate a developing tension in Romania, between the negative notion of brain drain and the more positive ‘... trans-frontier mobility of diploma holders’. May the reader then choose between labels and constructs?

In her article on Bulgaria, Patricia Georgieva considers the pressure exerted on Bulgarian higher education by current economic and demographic trends including internal brain drain. She identifies consequences such as the drop in research degree completion rates, the ageing of the scientific community, and the decreasing numbers of academics underpinning the now common phenomenon of ‘travelling professors’ who hold multiple positions. Through alarming statistics such as a 28 percent decrease

in active research staff between 1997 and 2002, Georgieva also identifies internal brain as a significant threat to Bulgaria and indeed to the region as a whole.

Closing the national case studies, Pifat-Mrzljak *et al.* provide an equally thought-provoking overview of brain drain in the context of Croatia. Arguing that the effects of brain drain have been relatively moderate in their country, the authors focus on opportunities to contain, and even harness, the phenomenon. They consider the respective roles of the state, of Croatian universities, and of the aptly titled Croatian 'diasporic communities'. Equally welcome here, the authors also briefly consider the implications of the Bologna Process for their analysis. This essentially constructive perspective makes their study both a fitting conclusion to the national studies and an effective lead into the modern, and altogether positive, dimensions of brain circulation set forth by Anna Ferro.

Through consultation of the articles introduced above, certain trends emerge clearly, which the reader may wish to bear in mind for the sake of perspective. The first is that globalization exerts a centrifugal force of concentration, attracting particularity (including talent) to the places in which it can already be found; conversely, globalization also accelerates differentiation, for better or worse. Secondly and, as some of the papers imply, it is an oversimplification to suggest that links with the source country are lost or cut by the act of migration; this may hold true for our purposes, in that successful skilled migrants have clearly been shown over time – in other source countries at least, such as India, Mexico, China, and Ireland – to be open to the possibility of return and reinvestment. Might this return knowledge transfer in fact constitute a 'second movement', which may hopefully be observed in South-East Europe five to ten years from now? Third, the influence of enterprise and creativity in the world view of today's young graduates and intellectuals is notable. There appears to be a move away from traditional academic and research work by young graduates in the region, and the implications for the current and future prospects of higher education and science are significant. In this respect the growth of internal brain drain is as much about the rise of enterprise and mobility as guiding principles for the young as it is about the generally poor adaptive capacity of higher education systems.

More than ever, the papers presented in the Topic highlight the role of the academic and research communities as factors of change, conscious or not, in the 'transition' process.

In the Tribune section of this issue, two papers are presented; both address the challenges implicit in the regional integration of higher education. Svein Kyvik's paper, 'Structural Challenges in Higher Education Systems in Western Europe', provides an interesting typology of higher education systems. This study also illustrates the centrifugal and converging effect of globalizing forces, in that the trends across West European countries are remarkably similar: increasing numbers into 'non-university higher education', upgrading of the status of vocational programmes, and integration of small, specialized institutions.

The question of convergence is taken up again by Terence Karran, who sheds some light on its implementation with regard to assessment. Karran's article considers the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the current variance in interpretation when ECTS is applied across different national educational grading frameworks. Mindful of the many practical challenges inherent in the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Process, the author is careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water: he proposes instead a shift to criterion-referencing, which

would arguably align ECTS more effectively with the national systems it encompasses.

Last but not least, this issue of *Higher Education in Europe* features the engaging book reviewers it has become known for, led by the ever-elegant Eric Gilder along with contributions from Norman Fairclough and Laura Savage.

The next issue of *Higher Education in Europe* will address the thematic topic of 'Ethical and Moral Dimensions for Higher Education and Science'. Submissions on this topic are encouraged from researchers and practitioners alike, and will be welcomed by Dr Daniel Lincoln, the new UNESCO-CEPES Publications Editor, along with papers on the more general subjects featured in the Tribune.