

2.7.1 Public policies encouraging return migration in Europe

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Following a brief international outlook, this paper takes stock of public policy interventions that respond to mobility flows within Europe and encourage return migration. As motivations for migration and repatriation as well as the characteristics of migrants and returning migrants are diverse, the objectives and tools of government interventions intending to influence these processes also vary. Policy interventions concentrate mainly

on the repatriation of highly qualified emigrants (*brain regain*) and aim to utilize the skills and experiences of returnees in promoting innovation-based economic development and competitiveness. Return programmes can either be focusing on the labour market only or have an integrated approach, involving multiple public policy areas. Table 2.7.1.1 summarises their main characteristics.

Table 2.7.1.1: Main types and characteristics of public policy programmes promoting return migration

	Reintegration (reactive intervention)	Promotion of return (active intervention)	Policies for retention of human capital (proactive)
Target group	Returned migrants	Potential returnees	Potential emigrants
Rationale	Minimizing social tensions and costs associated with return	Maximizing benefits of return migration (through the social-, economic-, demographic- and financial capital of the returnee)	Emigration prevention, loss minimisation
Purpose	Reintegration of returnees into society	Promotion of return migration and assistance with the process	Prevention of (skilled) worker outmigration
Place	Sending country	Receiving country	Sending country
Time	After return	Before/during return migration	Before emigration
Method	Information services, job placement, mentoring, training, entrepreneurship support, reduction of administrative burdens, recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, housing allowances and other temporary financial assistance	Training, support, consulting, practical information services (telephone, website), individual mentoring, PR-campaign, raising awareness of potential benefits of returning home	Through education and development policies, economic policy – not via administrative barriers

Source: Edited by author based on Kovács *et al.* (2014).

Beyond diaspora policies, there are many successful, complex return migration-repatriation initiatives in many countries around the world – for example in China, India and Taiwan (UNDP, 2007; Jonkers, 2008; Mészáros, 2010). Already in the 1960s, Taiwan and Korea tried to entice the return of its highly educated citizens who had embarked on international careers by offering excellent research opportunities, high salaries and other incentives. China has also been following this model for some time, in addition to the government's attempt to involve the diaspora community. For a long time India did not promote remittances at all, but nowadays it aims to encourage diaspora in-

vestment and return of its emigrants through the reduction of bureaucracy, business-friendly policies and by the liberalisation of exchange rates. At the same time Taiwan, concentrating on building relationships and promoting investments, created business and industrial parks, and sought to entice its researchers and engineers to return home with the lure of attractive jobs, as well as advanced infrastructure, housing, and schools (OECD, 2008). A number of other countries – for example, some South American and African countries – have long operated similar scholarship programmes and government programmes encouraging the return of their highly qualified citizens.

In comparison with these Asian and Latin American countries, Eastern European countries discovered the economic possibilities of return migration policies relatively late and utilised the potential of *brain regain* programmes to a lesser extent. Several migrant return initiatives have been launched in Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary

(Table 2.7.1.2). The majority of the programmes began 4–5 years following EU accession (Kaczmarczyk, 2013), even though in many of the affected countries massive outmigration had started years before.¹ This is all the more surprising as such programmes can be co-financed by the EU (European Return Fund, Cohesion Policy).²

1 Because they are relatively recent, but also for the absence of proper outcome indicators, it is not yet possible to measure their long-term impacts.

2 One of the reasons for this is the conflict between goals, principles and instruments at different levels

of government. At the EU level, the free movement of labour is one of the main pillars of the common market, as well as a common economic interest, while at the level of Member States this mobility has a range of negative consequences presented earlier, which might also differ across Member States.

Table 2.7.1.2: Return, reintegration, and retention initiatives in Eastern Europe

Name	Country	Programme type	Main objective	Duration	Instruments/Outcomes
Guidance and Counselling for Migrants and Returnees	Transnational (6 EU Member States)	Re-employment, reintegration	Consulting, know-how and exchange of experience for returnees	2009–2011	Re-migration toolkit, online library creation, surveys. Seven meetings in the partner countries
Povroty.gov.pl Programme	Poland	Reintegration, Re-employment	Information provision, assistance with reintegration for Poles living abroad (primarily in the United Kingdom) with an intention of returning home	2008–	Website, Reintegration and re-employment of returnees, job placement, incentives for becoming entrepreneurs, tax incentives, reduction of bureaucratic restrictions. Combined with Polish Employment Service job recruitment portal since July 2011
“Masz Plan na powrót?” [Do you have a plan for return?]	Poland	reintegration	Provision of information for Poles abroad intending to return	2008–	Website, information campaign, job brokerage, promoting business start-up, tax breaks (!), elimination of bureaucratic barriers (recognition of qualifications, one-stop-shop administration, elimination of dual taxation), support for the reintegration of children – national programme, jointly coordinated by various government departments
Homing Plus Program	Poland	Encouraging return, re-employment, reintegration	Supporting the return of young Polish researchers (as well as doctoral students)	2010–	Max.80 thousand Polish zloty (cc.18500 EUR) research grant/year, 5,000 zloty (cc. 1170 EUR) monthly pay for researchers.
„Zostań w Polsce – swoim szefem!” (Be your own boss – stay in Poland!)	Poland – regional programme	Encouraging return	Supporting business start-up, self-employment of returnees	2010–	Warsaw (Mazowie region) –training, business plan preparation, 6-month financial incubation support: target group – primarily those aged over 45 years, women, and people being returned due to unemployment.
WracajDopolski.pl [ReturmoPoland.pl]	Poland Regional	Promotion of return	Encouraging the return of highly qualified Polish migrants (mainly from the UK)	2007–2011	Polish and British Chamber of Commerce

Name	Country	Programme type	Main objective	Duration	Instruments/Outcomes
“Return support”	Estonia	Promotion of return, reintegration	Financial assistance for Estonians returning from abroad after more than 10 years	2004	Up to 2,000EUR/person, very few people qualify due to strict eligibility criteria (36-242 people/year) – criteria: more than 10 years spent abroad, retained links, official registration.
“Talents back Home”	Estonia	Promotion of return, re-employment	Information service for young Estonians (students) living abroad intending to return home	2010–2012	Job brokerage, information campaign, website – operated by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, funded by the EU (ESF), following a successful campaign only 27 people returned home in the programme.
MEDIT	Romania	Promotion of return, re-employment	Information provision for Romanians living in Italy with the intention of returning home	2009–2011	Romanian Employment Service in partnership with the Italian counterpart, funded by the EU (ESF), information services, job brokerage
Romanian Office for Romanians Living Abroad	Romania	Diaspora policy, maintaining links	Preserving the identity of Romanians living abroad, links with the mother country	1995–	Language courses, Romanian school classes abroad, financial assistance for diaspora communities
Opening up opportunities for Returned Georgian Migrants	Czech Republic, Georgia	Reintegration, re-employment	Supporting return of Georgian migrants	2003–	Creation of an employment service and job brokerage centre in Tbilisi, assistance, information campaign in the Czech Republic
Migracia SK	Slovakia	Return, retention	Creation of policies to reduce “brain drain”, awareness raising	2009–	Website, organising the “Day of Slovaks Abroad” and conference, building relationships with Slovak organisations abroad
“Slovensko Calling”	Slovakia	Return, reintegration, re-employment	Information for Slovaks living abroad, encouraging return and re-employment	2009–	Job search website, media campaign, public debates, activities abroad, publication of a Guide for returning Slovaks.
Hungarian Academy of Science Momentum (Lendület) Programme	Hungary	Return, re-employment, retention	Encouraging the return and retention of outstanding Hungarian researchers and young talent from abroad, as well as attracting young researchers from abroad	2009–	Funding for researchers and research groups, initiation of quality research infrastructure in Hungary. 100+ research projects received funding prior to 2015, increasing resources – currently 400 mn HUF (1.3 mn EUR)/year budget
SROP Albert Szent-Györgyi Repatriation Scholarship	Hungary	Return, re-employment, retention	Encouraging the return of talented Hungarian researchers in the areas of natural, technical and life sciences, as well as mathematics	2013–2014	Funding of research centres and research groups for more experienced researchers.
Markusovszky Scholarship (Károly Than scholarship)	Hungary	Retention	Preventing the emigration of doctors and pharmacists	2011–	Gradually increasing resources (840 mn HUF – 2.73 mn EUR budget in 2016), fellowships for graduated resident specialists and pharmacists, a net grant of 100 thousand HUF – 325 EUR per month, eligibility criteria apply.
“Come Home Youth”	Hungary	Return, reintegration, re-employment	Encouraging the return of young Hungarians working in the United Kingdom	2015	100 mn HUF – 0.325 mn EUR, complex programme, website, telephone hotline, information campaign, counselling, training, job brokerage, housing assistance

Source: Edited by the author on the basis of *Lados–Hegedüs* (2012), p. 517, *Kaczmarczyk* (2013), *Kaska* (2013), *OECD* (2013).

These initiatives have diverse objectives³ and target groups but for the most part they encourage the return of researchers, doctors, i.e. generally highly skilled individuals. However, they remain to be quite fragmented, have a strong labour market focus, and are less coordinated with other public policies. Thus, comprehensive, complex and well-resourced initiatives for return migration (perhaps with the exception of the Polish ‘Masz Plan na powrót’ complex programme) are still missing in Central and Eastern Europe. Regarding the territorial focus of these programmes, the majority of them focus on a single country while there are relatively few projects that cover two or more states,⁴ and there are hardly any EU-wide programmes (except the Marie Curie Programme). However, without the coordination of these interventions and their harmonisation with EU policies the true single European labour market cannot exist, even though that is an aim for increased EU competitiveness.

Unfortunately, information available to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of these programmes is rather unreliable. The raw figures on the number of returnees, which are often reported, do not reveal the effectiveness of the programmes because they lack either natural or artificial comparison (which would tell us what would have happened in the absence of the programme). We are

not aware of any rigorous, scientific evaluations on return migration policies in the region – although apart from the lack of data, the rather short time since these were launched in Central and Eastern Europe must also be noted.

However, the available figures suggest that the impact of Eastern European return migration policies remains, for the time being, rather marginal; these programmes can encourage the return, or prevent the emigration of, only a very small minority of skilled young adults (*Barcevičius et al.*, 2012, *OECD*, 2013).⁵ The effectiveness of these policy interventions is largely dependent on the general economic and social situation in the mother country,⁶ the characteristics of migrants and the migration pattern⁷ – reliable information and data on which is still very limited or missing. As member states have conflicting interests both with each other and with the European Economic Area, the EU-level coordination of these policies is imperative and should also take the perspective of the economic competitiveness of Europe into account. The creation of the common European Migration Policy has been overdue since the 2009 Lisbon summit, even though it would be important not only from current security policy perspectives but also to facilitate the better management of intra-EU mobility processes and their consequences.

3 Poland and Latvia launched these policies due to the labour market losses caused by massive outmigration, while Romania started trying to control the extent of emigration as a result of pressure from receiving country governments.

4 Examples for the latter are the bilateral “Opening Up Opportunities” Czech Republic – Georgia project, and the “Guidance and Counselling for Migrants and Returnees” transnational project implemented by Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

5 For example see Chapter 2.4 and *Varga* (2016) on the increase in the migration of Hungarian doctors after 2010.

6 To prevent emigration and facilitate remigration, the key issues in the sending countries would be general economic growth, social progress and the creation of a business-friendly environment. In Eastern Europe, in particular the reduction of the tax burden on employment related income, diminishing inactivity percentage, the reduction of red tape and bureaucracy, i.e. the

creation of a business- and investment-friendly environment would be important.

7 The case of Latvia illustrates that the emigration propensity of the highly skilled increases at times of economic decline and these people often do not wish to return. Therefore, it is not only difficult to encourage return migration, but also remittances as well as the extent of human capital transfer – one of the often cited positive effects of migration – are somewhat also uncertain. However, in Poland for example the return rate is relatively high, but returnees are more likely to become unemployed than those who stayed at home, which again does not constitute proper human capital transfer. Using data from Poland, Latvia, Hungary, and Romania *Barcevičius et al.* (2012) have found that foreign work experience was an advantage mainly for the highly educated following return. This highlights the importance of more detailed data on specific migration patterns (*OECD*, 2013).

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