



Transforming brain drain into brain circulation in South Eastern Europe

Since the 1960s South-Eastern Europe (SEE) faces the challenge of the permanent leave of high skilled and educated people due to numerous reasons, such as poor investments in research, low academic freedom, violation of human rights, bad governmental state, etc., also known as the concept of brain drain. Unfortunately the situation is not improving in the recent years. The situation has not improved throughout years, leading to more and more young people leaving their countries in search for better education or job opportunities. Students from the SEE recognize that, in most countries, no efficient policies are yet in place to combat brain drain, and there is usually little data available to the public on this matter. In addition, Western European countries are implementing strong internationalization policies resulting in attracting SEE students and contributing to the brain drain.

Most of the countries cannot overcome the difficulties of the brain drain, especially Albania and Romania whose brain drain has gained a momentum in the average number of the young people leaving the country. Other countries, such as Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro also experience similar problems. Students in these counties are mostly unaware of the effort their governments are investing into improving these issues or they consider them ineffective.

Student representatives cannot rely on the data on brain drain as it is lacking and the SEE governments do not prioritize this topic enough. The result is a progressive drop in the total number of students enrolled at the higher education institutions (HEI) creating additional problems for the entire academic society of SEE.

ESU firmly believes that brain drain should be addressed, not only at the national level in SEE, but also on the European level, due to HEIs competing over the students instead of cooperating in the effort to improve the quality of education within European Higher Education Area. This topic should be discussed broadly at all HEIs to raise awareness and introduce effective measures to tackle it. Policy making bodies, HEIs and student representatives must cooperate in order to create policies on tackling brain drain. They should document and track the impact of brain drain on the national level and the effectiveness of the established policies to assure the progressive mitigation of it. Conversion from brain drain to brain circulation is highly encouraged. ESU recognizes this as one of the key



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commitments SEE governments will have to make to assure the sustainability of higher education in their countries.

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The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 46 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.