

International Roundtable on

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

UNESCO-CEPES
The European Centre for *Higher Education*
Centre Européen pour l'Enseignement Supérieur
Bucharest, 18-19 June 2004

Romanians' email from abroad

A picture of the highly skilled labour migrations from Romania.

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As author of this paper, I need to acknowledge the readers that a publication of a shorter version of this article will be included in the UNESCO-CEPES Quarterly, HEE vol. 23 3 2004, ISSN 0379-7724 published by CARFAX. Also, the results of the conference "Brain Drain and the Academic and the Intellectual Labour Market in South East Europe" will be included subsequently in a book in the Unesco Studies in Higher Education series. This electronic format is limited distributed to the persons that helped me developing this study and no external circulation or publication is allowed. Quotations or references to this paper need to mention the UNESCO-CEPES Quarterly Journal.

For reasons due to the writing up limits and requirements, the information gathered was sometimes differently managed as from what was previously planned. Hope, though, this piece of work finds positive responses from its readers. I am sincerely very grateful to the great people that trusted me enough to share part of their life stories with me and thank them by heart.

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This paper is about the experience of labour migration among skilled Romanians, mainly Information Technology workers and highly qualified researchers. It is based on a questionnaire survey where, among other elements, we investigated on the pushing/pulling aspects of qualified migration and the strategies of labour migration. This is still a draft version, but nevertheless we thought it was worth to contribute to the Unesco/Cepes conference with this piece of work that analyzes the brain drain through the perspective and personal experience of its "brain" protagonists, going deep on the effective reasons of their migrating and their future perspectives. Some significant elements that emerged refer to the importance of electronic "transnationalism", the relatively limited and unlikely plan of a possible return of brains and a denounce of those immigration barriers and difficulties that were experienced. This

study is part of the author's Phd Research Project on the International Patterns of Migration: the recruitment strategies of Firms and the Aspirations and Migratory Projects of Highly Skilled Workers.

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§ Few theoretical and analytical traits on Brain Drain

The issue of *brain drain*, associated with international migration from the less developed to the more developed countries, has been and will continue to be debated for its implications on the social and economic development in the sending countries. While the literature tends to focus on the economic consequences, the impact of *brain drain* nevertheless goes beyond economics. It carries significant implications for the overall social and political developments of the countries of origin and it reveals trajectories of international – skilled – migration flows that, even if relatively small in numbers compared to larger labour migrations, follow the geographies and the features of modern globalized economies and societies.

The term "brain drain" indicates the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital, in particular the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries. As Beine (2003) accurately reports, first studies on skilled migration in the 1960s were more concentrated on the labour market consequences for the sending country, considering the demand side for emigrants as exogenous. Also, being education largely financed by public resources, the damages created in the sending countries referred to the misbalance between personal and public/social advantages (Bhagwati and Hamada, 1974).

An emblematic definition explaining that perspective reports that "the irony of international migration today is that ... many of the people who migrate legally from poor to richer lands are the very ones that Third World countries can least afford to lose: the highly educated and skilled. Since the great majority of these migrants move on a permanent basis, this perverse brain drain not only represents a loss of valuable human resources but could prove to be a serious constraint on the future economic progress of Third World nations" (Todaro, 1996: 119). International mobility of skilled workers was considered a zero-sum game (Beine, 2003) and we can find the same approach of considering just the negative consequences of brain drain during the 1970s¹.

In the 1990s, being the phenomenon still strong in its scale², the study of Brain Drain shifted its attention from the pushing factors and negative aspects of skilled migrations from developing countries to the current character of skilled migrations, being now "demand pull", due to the different immigration policies in the receiving countries and their matching labour market conditions and skill needs³. Many developed countries produced "quasi selective" immigration regulations⁴ that, as Beine

¹ In Bhagwati (1982) and Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) there are examples as the "tax on brains" (called "Bhagwati tax") that was planned to compensate the sending countries. Also, among the economic literature that came about in the 1970s it was examined that "in contrast to the case of foreign investment, where the gain from the international factor movement is divided by the two countries, the developed country gains now at the cost of those left behind in the less-developed country. The emigrants similarly are seen to gain at the sacrifice of those left behind" (Hamada, 1977, p. 20).

² In considering the magnitude that skilled migrations took lately, the International Labor Organization reports that, in 2001, 40% of Philippines' emigrants are college educated, that 12% of Uruguay's professionals and technicians live abroad, and that Mexico in 1990 was also the world's third largest exporter of tertiary educated migrants (Lowell and Findlay, 2001). Also, Saxenian (1999) reports that, in 1990, in Silicon Valley's immigrants accounted for 32% of scientific and engineering workforce, mostly from China (51%) and India (23%).

³ As Oukaed said "clearly, there are an array of policies that can offset possible adverse effects of skilled mobility and even leverage the flow into positive outcomes for source countries. A key element is improvement of the population's general level of education. Low levels of skills keep average labour productivity and wages low and therefore retard development. Long-term strategies to promote economic growth are needed to enable developing countries to retain and draw back their

(2003) clarifies, “combined with traditional self-selection effects on the supply side, lead to much higher migration rates among the highly educated, and increased international transfers of human capital from developing to developed countries. In other words, human capital is flowing to where it is already abundant (Easterly and Levine, 2001)”.

Brain Drain Balance Sheet: Sending Countries (Wickramasekara, 2002)

Positive effects	Negative effects
> Provides rewarding opportunities to educated workers not available at home.	< Net decrease in human capital stock, especially those with valuable professional experience
> Inflow of remittances and foreign exchange	< Reduced growth and productivity because of the lower stock of human capital
> Induced stimulus to investment in domestic education and individual human capital investments	< Fiscal loss of heavy investments in subsidized education
> Return of skilled persons increases local human capital, transfer of skills and links to foreign networks	< Remittances from skilled migration may taper off after some time.
> Technology transfer, investments and venture capital by diasporas	< Reduced quality of essential services of health and education
> Circulation of brains promotes integration into global markets (India, Taiwan, (China).	< Students educated at government expense or own resources in foreign countries imply further drain
> Short term movements of service providers (GATS Mode 4) generate benefits for both receiving and sending countries.	< Opportunities for short-term movement of natural persons is seriously constrained by immigration policies of developed countries.
> ICT allows countries to benefit from diasporas.	< Causes increasing disparities in incomes in country of origin

highly skilled and address the negative effects of the brain drain. Migrants themselves can play an important role through their remittances, diaspora networks, and own willingness to return – at least temporarily – to share their skills and contribute to economic progress. Finally, destination countries can facilitate the process through policies that promote circulation of highly skilled migrants” (2002: 1).

⁴ We just recall here some examples of immigration national regulations that some countries adopted in terms of the admission of immigrants according to their (high) level of skills. Australia, since 1984 officially privileged skilled workers, with the candidates selected according to their prospective “contribution to the Australian economy”. (i.e.: http://www.immi.gov.au/work/sponsored_skilled.htm). Canada, similarly, sustained the same admission criteria and, in 1997, 58% of total immigrants were entrepreneurs or specialists. The US system of quotas favouring immigrants with academic degrees and/or specific professional skills (H-1B visas) increased from 48,000 in 1989 to 116,000 in 1999, mostly with immigration from developing countries, especially from India (Lowell, 2000). In the EU countries there are some cases of quality-selective polices like in Germany, with its plans to recruit 10,000 specialists in information technology in 2000. In France, the Weil Report on Immigration of 1997 also recommended favouring the immigration of highly educated workers and Italy reserved 3000 extra quotas in 2001 for IT specialists. As we have seen, countries vary in their philosophies and strategies of managing migration.

Mechanisms and policy initiatives of countries can be classified into five groups (McLaughlan, Salt, 2002: 3).

- a) “Those countries where a comprehensive scheme exists such as the Green Card system in Germany and H1B visas in the USA, which are specifically aimed at attracting highly skilled migrants.
- b) Governments which have made minor positive changes to the existing work permit system to facilitate quicker access to the labour market for highly skilled personnel, for example the fast-track work visas for IT specialists in the Netherlands and the work authorization system in Ireland.
- c) Governments which have used exemptions from work permits or relaxation of work permit regulations to enable employers and foreign workers to gain casier access to the labour market, for example intra-company transfers in Ireland are exempt from work permit regulations and are exempt from a labour market test in the Netherlands.
- d) Tax incentives are used to reduce the tax burden, particularly in Nordic countries for high earning foreign workers. These tend to be long standing rather than recent introductions.
- e) Policies to encourage return migration of highly skilled, notably in Ireland.”

Sociological literature on the “diaspora externality” (Gaillard and Gaillard, 1997; Lowell and Findlay, 2001) and other recent literature (Mountford, 1997; Beine, Docquier and Rappaport, 2001) is more often proposing evidence of skilled mobility as a potential benefit for the country of origin. There are in fact the positive feedback effects made up by the remittances (Rapoport and Docquier, 2003), the trade networks (Gould, 1994; Rauch and Trindade, 2002) and the return migrations, bringing back new skills and experience (Domingues Dos Santos and Postel-Vinay, 2003). In addition, an interesting perspective of local economic development induced by skilled migration refers to the fostering of local human capital formation in the country of origin through a mirroring effect of the local population investing in its education. Migration could in fact encourage persons left home to accumulate skills and education degrees, empowering their human capital to help their migration opportunities and chances to move (Mountford, 1997; Stark et al., 1998, Vidal, 1998, Beine et al., 2001). As Beine notes, the idea that education investments are influenced by perspectives of migration may be found also in previous brain drain literature (McCulloch and Yellen, 1977). What is new is the introduction of uncertainty in the migration process, creating the possibility of a net gain for the source country where “the possibility of migration might induce potential migrants to make decisions to acquire education at home as a means for helping their chances of moving.” (Commander, 2004: 19). With respect to the labour market consequences in the sending country, skilled labour migration could affect local wages, by emulating higher wages in foreign countries (as an instrument of retention), by having unskilled wages following the growth of skilled wages and by reducing the levels of skilled unemployment (Commander, 2004). Empirical studies in this sense show how skilled migration could therefore be beneficial for sending countries⁵. Today sociological research on contemporary highly skilled migrations underlines how they are shaped and affected by globalization and its knowledge economy needs, making high the demand of high skilled workers (Sassen, 2000).

Studying brain drain needs actually to frame each case on the country specificity, to ground its effects, positive and negative consequences; it also needs a further specification of what “high skill” means and what it consists of, as the impacts vary a lot by the types of skills held by migrants (whether we are considering IT specialists, nurses, doctors, engineers or academics).

What this work intends to do is follow the suggestions of a recent roundtable discussion on high skilled migration that concluded that “while much is known about high-skilled migration and its effects on source countries, there is also a great deal yet to be learned in a dynamic environment” (Ouaked, 2002). Also, by using a micro sociological view pointing at the individuals level of analyses, this work underlines the most personal and human aspects of the phenomenon and aims to present some useful and unbiased perspectives.

§ Survey and methodology

This survey intended to gather deep information about the contemporary high skilled migrations of Romanians. In particular, we were interested in understanding (§) the *reasons* that make qualified workers decide to move and their migratory project; (§) the *strategies* used; (§) the *barriers* and obstacles faced in order to migrate (i.e. immigration polices) and the difficulties met in the destination countries (i.e. social integration, equity of salaries); (§) the *transnational connections* and networks (i.e.

⁵ Beine and others produced a very interesting “empirical evaluation of the growth effects of the brain drain for the source countries of migrants (...) and find empirical support for the “beneficial brain drain hypothesis” in a cross-section of 50 developing countries. At the country-level, /they) find that most countries combining low levels of human capital and low migration rates of skilled workers tend to be positively affected by the brain drain. By contrast, the brain drain appears to have negative growth effects in countries where the migration rate of the highly educated is above 20% and/or where the proportion of people with higher education is above 5%. While the number of winners is smaller, these include nearly 80% of the total population of the sample” (Beine, 2003: 3)

connections with other Romanians, remittances, means of information and contact); (§) an *evaluation* of their personal experience.

The **questionnaire** circulated mainly through the **internet** network of associations of Romanians abroad. There are in fact many websites to them dedicated: sites with practical issues and immigration information on the hosting country, sites to make Romanians abroad gather, discuss and exchange life and labour experiences, sites to keep up traditions and memories about Romania and others about religion. To spread the questionnaire among skilled Romanians, we decided to employ an *on line* snow ball technique (respondents often identified other friends/potential respondents) and the visibility of the questionnaire, openly posted on the net. As the target were in fact the skilled and highly qualified workers (mainly computer related and/or highly educated), the internet questionnaire distribution represented a direct and likely strategy to reach them. On the reliability of the answers, we doubt that risks on the authenticity of respondents could happen, due to the length of the questionnaire and the personal commitment it required

Computer and skilled scientists represent just a part of all emigrants, a relatively small and somehow interlinked community⁶. The **questionnaire results**, thought, are not a comprehensive and representative portrait of the whole Romanian skilled emigrants. Because marking out the precise number of all computer emigrants is not possible and this survey is just reaching a small part; because the on line questionnaire invitation can not reach and above all persuade them all; because the survey is based on the spontaneous international spreading network and not on a specific geographic concentration or selection.

Nevertheless, besides being each story a unique mishmash of **personal choices and chances**, meanings and experiences, there are also **common trajectories and migration patterns** that emerge: the labour search strategies, the reasons of emigrations, the transnational relations, the titles recognitions, the internationality of some professions, the presence of a potentially international labour market and the

⁶ Quantify the migrations of skilled workers from Romania represents a very hard and impossible task as different sources of information offer just some partial prospects and because brain drain is a volatile phenomenon to be numerically determined. The OIM estimates (on the bases of INSSE Romanian national statistics) that almost 300.000 Romanians permanently emigrated between 1990 and 1998. This seems to be an underestimated number – in fact up to 800.000 representing 3.5% of Romanian population (Nedelegu, 2001). Reliable data on skilled migrations are lacking. In Romania, between 1980-84, the volume and occupation of highly qualified workers represented 12,1% (16.000) of all emigrants, going mostly to Germany, Hungary and Israel (Straubhaar, 2000: 11). As reported in Martin and Straubhaar “Many of those emigrating are young and well educated, causing Romania to experience a brain drain. About half of the 5,000 graduates of Romanian universities in computer science emigrate each year, and a March 2001 poll found that 66% of Romanian students would emigrate if they could (...). The Government says that 80,000 Romanian professionals have emigrated since 1989, a result, it has been said, of “a good education system and a lousy economy” (2002: 81). Romanian employed highly skilled workforce in European Countries in 2001 represents 19% of all Romanians employed abroad (See annex table n. 7). Taken from the SOPEMI «Trends in International Migration – Continuous Reporting System » (ed. 1997 ; 1998), Nedelegu underlines “une croissance du nombre des émigrés jeunes (de 26 à 40 ans) et hautement qualifiés ainsi que la sous-estimation des flux migratoires, donnant pour exemple le cas de l’Allemagne (les données allemandes indiquent un flux de 380 milles immigrés en provenance de la Roumanie entre 1991 - 1995, pendant que le Ministère Roumain de l’Intérieur l’estime à 55 milles). (...) Il est connu que les données de migration sont toujours inexactes du côté du pays de départ. Ce fait se justifie car les statistiques d’émigration sont réalisées sur la base de déclarations personnelles. Ces différences pourraient s’expliquer également par un certain nombre de régulations sur place. D’où l’hypothèse qu’il existe des migrants qui profitent d’autres formes de mobilité, temporaire, de travail, d’étude ou même de tourisme, et qui décident de leur émigration définitive déjà à l’extérieur du pays. (...) Il semble que le nombre d’émigrations définitives s’est stabilisé autour de 20 milles personnes par an, mais ce sont les caractéristiques de la population concernée qui ont fortement changé; il s’agit des migrants de plus en plus jeunes et instruits” (2001 : 4).

possibility to pursue and develop in this way career perspectives. All these issues can in fact be interpreted in wider and more general terms, providing more knowledge on the brain drain phenomenon overall. Still, in fact, a relatively petite number of deep, articulated and rich individual contributions could be indicative and symptomatic. In this way, such piece of work provides a contribution to the public debate getting an insight on that **cosmopolitan transnational group** of highly mobile and qualified migrants.

Sketches of brains:

§ Characteristics of respondents

The questionnaire gathered 128 respondents (58% male and 42% female) from different countries (Europe: Finland, France, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Swiss, Hungary; USA, Canada, New Zeland and Japan). The age of respondents varies from 25 to 55 years. The average age of respondents is 33 years - most respondents are clustered in the cohort 30-34 years. Among all, 5 have the double citizenship (Canada, Usa and Europe); most of them are married (62%) and most have married a Romanian partner. Almost all respondents are Ortodox as far as their religion and their national-ethnic group of belonging is mostly Romanian. Respondents result overall young adults in the growing phase of their career development, with good average income and high standards of educations.

The respondents present high **levels of education**, all have a university degree, but there are variations both on the level of Education reached and on the country where it was obtained. There are is fact those who left with an undergrad degree - the reputation of Technical Romanian Universities is actually well known - plus some years of work experience as CV credit. This path is successful for Information technology (IT) workers in order to find a position abroad. Quite a few have Master degrees taken in Romania, probably for the more affordable costs of this level of Education in Romania compared to those abroad. Different is the path of education/migration for those with a superior level, phd studies, for whom studying abroad is the leading element that brings them to other countries. The quality of post grad education abroad results higher, the possibilities to cover parts of the expenses are provided by Universities and the value of a title obtained abroad, in prestigious institutions, can mean, in a foreign country and back in Romania, a good career investment. Studying abroad creates in fact the social and cultural integration dimensions and provides the educational credits (recognized abroad) that portray the decision to permanently settle abroad less hard and more likely.

Migrating to a foreign country happens for most IT workers as a labour decision, after graduating and getting a job experience in Romania, and with the goal of studying abroad, to pursue an international career and better education, for many researchers.

The Respondents Levels of Education

Education Degree	%
Undergrad in Ro	31%
Master in ro	22%
Master abroad	13%
Phd in Ro	6%
Phd abroad	28%

The survey originally started mainly concerning **IT workers occupations**, but it turned out that quite a few of them and besides them revealed also an ongoing Phd and/or a **University research** activity involvement. The trajectories and the work environment are in fact different for these two groups, but there are some common assumptions we can make: Universities/Research Activities and IT firms are

somehow an international and very open work environment to foreigners and they both require, in order to emigrate for that job, the presence of titles and high standard qualifications/experiences. They refer to a worldwide selection of applications, recruiting among the international offers and, in this way, inducing workers to be highly mobile in order to follow their job opportunities and career perspectives around.

Occupations of respondents are divided between IT specialists (computer programmers, system administrators, network analysts, IT engineers), research scientists (bioinformatics, research coordinators and fellows) and/or phd students (TLC and also other fields).

According to the **income issue**, one respondent was actually in a job search while some others did not answer as this could be a delicate question. The income amount need to be obviously weighed against the country cost of life and the salary average for the specific occupation. This is why we can not actually consider it as a strong point and a meaningful element of comparison. Also, some of the highest incomes belong to the older respondents, due to their longer career achievements in the IT field – although the highest one belongs to a woman, with work permit in the USA, employed as scientist researcher. Generally, apart Swiss, all European incomes are minor than the American ones. Phd and researchers vary their yearly income between 10.000-20.000\$ (with higher incomes in the USA up to 25/35.000\$). IT workers earn more, with the majority of incomes between 35.000 and 45.000 and a few higher cases (form 70.000 up to 150.000\$) mostly in the USA and Swiss.

§ Reasons of emigration

The economic and sociological disciplines have broadly investigated the push/pull factors determining migrations, considering how the local conditions of deprivation and frustration can enforce the willingness to move away and how the appealing perspectives of a better life abroad can attract and people to leave. There are obviously main distinctions that we need to make when considering the traits of migrations⁷ and the low-high skills involved⁸. In the questionnaire, we wanted to investigate the main and side reasons that made skilled workers leave, the motivations that made them choose one country and not another, the means they used and the difficulties they came upon.

Considering the **principal cause of migration**, most respondents indicate reasons related to **job and career opportunities**⁹; these as the pulling factors attracting brains abroad for the future perspectives and economic conditions forecasted. This is confirmed also when considering the secondary reasons of migration, where many pointed out the higher salaries and the chances of career development.

Those indicating the improvement of the **quality of life**, a broad concept indeed, refer to the comparative evaluation of the living and working conditions in Romania and the more appealing possibilities offered abroad, not just thinking to the only sphere of career development, but in wider

⁷ We do not intend here to deal with the models and theories of migration, but we just mention that there are in fact different kinds of migrations as skilled and unskilled; forced and voluntary; individual, family, chained and networked migrations; regular and irregular; rural and urban; temporary and permanent; demand driven or supply driven and so on. In this circumstance, we are considering a case within the high skilled migration trends made up by specific professional instruments and conditions of migrations.

⁸ As in Todisco “The migrants’ plans differ substantially for the two types of migration. Mass migration involves people with a low-level of education and without specific qualifications, who move under the influence of *push* factors (escape from their present difficult situation). Rather than being attracted to the receiving country, they go there in search of any job, but with the hope of returning to their home country a few years later, although they can have no guarantee of this. In contrast, skilled migration is conditioned by the more attractive factors (the *pull* factors) and is more likely to be temporary. It involves people with high professional qualifications and working experience and the decision to migrate has been carefully calculated and thought out” (Todisco, 2003).

⁹ Summing up the answers: “More chances of Career development, Finding more interesting Jobs than in Romania, Getting an higher salary”.

terms of personal development and fulfilment. The higher salaries themselves do not explain migration, but the fact that, with such skills and education background in Romania, the life perspectives would not have been the same. As one respondent noted, in fact, *“It was not work itself that motivated me to emigrate, but a whole mix of a possible better life abroad with more interesting job perspectives and a quality of living that I could not find in Romania. I would not separate working from living abroad, they mingle with each other”*.

The reasons to migrate are a compound of micro and macro aspects that make persons evaluate their present social and political living environment and work perspectives. When the human costs of living are largely balanced by the advantages of the expected lifestyle and the personal and vocation accomplishment, than persons - in this case skilled workers - decide that the local labour offers abroad are a pull factor of attraction.

Those who left because of their studying abroad as first cause, also indicated as **second reason** the career development and the quality of life, as well as the cultural interest and travel experience. They in fact expressed how the “reason” of studying abroad is actually the *apparent* cause, while the *effective* one is a search for the better conditions and instruments to fulfil a satisfactory livelihood and job achievement. There are in addition some who left because of their partner’s moving (principally Romanian partner) and after they often enrolled in a study program abroad in order to be better included in the local labour market.

Among the other reasons there is also a moderate relevance for the cultural and travel experience, where the possibility to discover new countries with different cultures and places is combined with the more satisfying and rather preferable work environment.

“Travelling/working abroad is not at all a bad experience especially for people that lived in a close society and were always told what to do (the personal initiative was not really appreciated during the communist regime”.

This is actually one of the most pleasant aspect that all respondents pointed out from their migration experience. Meaningful are also the pushing frustration with Romania – its political and corrupted system and its lack of possibilities, combined with the pulling expectations and illusions of the western countries. This last point was in fact explained also through the difficulties, sometimes underestimated, that migrating implies. Interesting indeed is to note the small percentage of respondents that made reference to the Presence of relatives as affecting their migration trajectories. This is in fact a quite common pattern in migration where family/friends abroad represent a first human and practical help environment. Among respondents, and generally among skilled migrations, the destination is more job-offer driven than family-support driven.

Answers of Respondents

Main Reason of Migration		Other Reasons of Migration	
More chances of career development	36%	Higher salaries	44%
Improve quality of life	21%	Improve quality of life	42%
Study	16%	More chances of career development	40%
Partner Friend	12%	Adventure and travel experience	39%
Find more interesting jobs than in Romania	5%	Frustration with Romania	39%
Higher salaries	5%	Job search	32%
Make money abroad and return to Romania	4%	Find more interesting jobs than in Romania	26%
Cultural reasons and curiosity	1%	Cultural reasons and curiosity	26%
		Study	25%
		Expectations and illusions about the West	23%

	Political reasons	7%
	Follow a friend/partner	5%
	Presence of relatives abroad	4%
	Ethnic reasons	2%
	Religion	0%
	Other:	0%

The elements that influenced respondents to leave Romania is the possibility to find better and more adequate career perspectives and conditions – salaries, instruments, technologies and knowledge. The reasons related to the positive living and working environment constitute the general concept of quality of life. The emotional and psychological barriers were less relevant especially with the presence of a partner migrating, therefore making the experience and natural sense of loneliness less strong.

The factors determining the migration is therefore a mix of the pulling attraction of the economic and work conditions abroad and the rational consciousness that the same working fulfilment would not be possible in Romania.

§ To move or not to move? The migratory project

How previously planned is the decision to migrate and how does the initial ideas change overtime? This is actually a cross-skill question among studies on migration flows. Generally, besides those forced migrations of asylum seekers due to political reasons, the migration project changes on the way, usually starting with the idea of a temporary experience and than transforming into a long term, if not permanent choice of life. More than half respondents said they did not have a migratory project behind (65%), while others did (35%). For both of them, the main idea of migration they had was to have a **temporary, medium or longer time** experience abroad and than return while just some had the idea of **permanent** migration, where they “*wished to have an experience abroad and make it last for a very long time, also a lifetime*”. Majority of respondents definitely agreed that, whatever the idea was at first, “*now I can not see myself back in Romania anymore...My life is here*”.

This is facts contrast with the uttered intention of returning in Romania that most persons had or wished to have.

“I still feel my roots are there”; “ The culture of this country is much different than mine”

Such return, actually planned in mind, needs to meet some conditions that would make it possible, not just on an emotional basis.

“If I could get an income of 500 euros/month”; “ Maybe. If I find a more interesting or rewarding job (not necessarily in money)”; “ For the moment that is not an option. Maybe in the future when Romania will not be corrupted anymore and there will be more investments in research”.

The conditions and the work perspectives in Romania induce some respondents to picture their possible future once back.

“My migratory plan was on short-term and now is time to go back. I also think that I’ll have the opportunity to apply what I studied in the US”; “ Yes, because I can get there the same work and I can have there a better social live than abroad”.

Admitting that a **return** is not likely to happen is a very tough and touching consideration. Though, many are now involved in new life, persons are settling in new work and social contexts, getting used to different life standards and environments(even if this implies a difficult cultural and social adaptation). In addictions most of them expressed disenchantment on the future perspectives and changes in Romania.

“It would be very difficult to get used to Romanian context again”; “ No. Even during visits it is hard to accept (any more) the quality of life and the way people are treated there. Not to mention corruption and the way the justice (doesn't) work”; “ I don't see any good future for Romania and I cannot change it by myself”.

The possibility to move to another country is valued by respondents with *maybes* and *who knows*, depending on work chances and offers; it is not planned, but it's not excluded. More interestingly, those who are now living in overseas countries as Canada and USA would actually welcome a move closer to Europe, both for cultural reasons and for a geographical proximity to Romania.

When confronting this with the idea of the **future EU joining**, respondents express their wishes and perplexities: that Romania could not actually be ready for the EU enlargement in time and reach the European Standards; that the politicians might transform this through the corrupted mechanism of the state system or that such step will not actually change the situation effectively.

“Ro will be a small fish between sharks, the ro. will get a second hand population in their own country, like the south American one”.

“Romania will be in a tough situation both if it joins and if it doesn't. If it doesn't there probably won't be enough internal pressure for reform, which is why joining the EU is an advantage. However, when we join, we will be less competitive than the other EU countries, which will be a disadvantage. Currently almost 50% of Romania's population is engaged in subsistence agriculture and school drop out rates among this population are pretty high. We will have a large unskilled population that will mostly be drive out of agriculture once the big farming companies move in when we join the EU. The accession process does not really take into consideration the problems Romania will face when joining, and does not seem to make adjustments for a smoother integration, which would be beneficial for both the EU and Romania”.

Many academics and policy makers are in fact concerned with the future changes that the EU Enlargement will induct in terms of labour mobility. There are in fact different opinions in this regards, that masses of unskilled workers will spread around Europe or that nothing much of this will happen¹⁰. Respondents could be affected with a future advantage from their EU citizenship in order to change, improve or find their job in Europe (especially those who are overseas and wish to get closer to Romania), and in finally feeling more secure in their job search abroad, not depending always on a work permit visa. More than this, the EU enlargement is also considered as the chance to have Romania changed with an active economy, more job opportunities and social and political institutional reforms. In such perspective, they might consider a return. However appealing could this idea be, whether Romania in the EU will change in such a positive way or not, the whole process will be too long (and sometimes too far away) for the respondents to be positively and personally affected at that stage of their life.

“There will not be any labour mobility in the first 5-7 years after Romania joins, whenever that will be. Western Europe doesn't want competition from Eastern Europe and I am not even convinced it wants Eastern Europe integrated into the EU at all. They do it for external, political reasons more than they do it because they think this is right. And for myself – regarding to “migration”? – will not me in the near future”.

¹⁰ The widening of the Union will not have such a great and immediate effect on the freedom of movement of employees. The new situation basically will be comparable to the current situation whereby people from the future EU member states need to get a work permit to work in the EU. At the same time a 'preference rule' is put in place, which gives citizens of the new member states priority over people from non-EU countries. The regulations for the self-employed are less restrictive – people will be completely free to deliver services across the border as self-employed or as a company.

With regard to the permit situation, for the first two years after accession, the current member states will admit employees from the future member states under their own national rules, rather than under community rules on free movement. After these first two years, the situation will be evaluated, but it is only after seven years that Member States will no longer be required to have work permits. On the other hand, if an EU citizen decides to try his or her luck in one of the new countries, it is very likely that they will not be able to move freely to the new countries, as the future member states have the option of applying equivalent restrictions to those countries which place restrictions against them.

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/enlargement_en.htm)

Next generations will be affected by major changes in terms of better labour conditions, increase in industrial production, a more efficient agriculture, an impulse to the local economy. The generation of respondents, by that time, will be too consolidated in the career development and settling abroad. The most realistic impact on their lives is recognized in an easier EU tourist/travelling than a labour mobility: *“Maybe it will make easier obtaining a permanent position abroad. For sure it will make travelling easier. If the standard of living improves, I will move back, because I have nothing in Canada to keep me here. But I doubted it”*.

§ Factors influencing the decision to migrate

As Iqbal expresses “despite the attraction of better economic opportunities, migration in general is “costly” in both monetary and psychological terms. Relocation in a distant country with alien traditions, language, and culture presents the newcomer with the risk of being excluded from the main stream. [Young skilled emigrants] are at a stage in their lives when they can move without the burden of many family responsibilities. Also, there has been an important attitude shift across generations. In this era of globalization and economic opportunism, many younger people are willing or even eager to relocate in another country” (2000). What we intended to examine is how factors like the disappointment with the Romanian-local conditions and the perspectives abroad of an upward career explain, enough and tout court, the labour migration of respondents. Therefore, we intend here to evaluate to what extent the **contextual elements and conditions** (i.e. the different immigration systems, the previous experiences abroad, the presence of relatives or other connections abroad) interfere positively or negatively on migration plans. As we analyzed before, the presence of **relatives abroad** seem not to be influencing much the decision to migrate. Half respondents do not have relatives abroad, other half do. And among the latter, almost none was living in the same country with them. Maybe, those with relatives already abroad might be more acquainted with the idea of migration and familiar with the issues and difficulties to this related. This might sound strange, but it actually tells us that, in skilled migrations, is more job opportunities, availability of positions, country (work) reputation that make potential migrants go to a country/city or another. The chain of migration and the family network seem not to interfere and affect this case that results as more an individualistic flows of migrations¹¹. Even if the sample is too small, the migration trends are all metropolitan geographies as respondents live all in big/metropolitan if not capital cities, centres of global economy and knowledge industry (Sassen 2000; Castells 1996).

The **previous experiences of temporary mobility** can influence on the development of an interest in the external and international labour market or on the knowledge of other possible social and working environments abroad. Half respondents in fact lived in other countries before their actual foreign residence, almost all in western European countries for temporary working or study reasons, and mostly for a period time of 2-5 years.

Considering the **previous work activity** and how this could represent a launching pad for a decision and chance to migrate, we find that most IT specialists worked for Romanian firms for a period of almost 1-3 years; some worked for foreign firms, but did not undertook their international labour mobility through them. Other IT specialists, and with them researchers and PhD students, worked in public research institutes for 2-4 years. The previous work activities in Romania were in fact a needed step in order gain useful work experience and credibility to enter the international labour market competition. The difference in the career and mobility plans between IT specialists and

¹¹ Chain migration refers to the way an initial migration is followed by others from the same family, community or village, sometime leading to a partial recreation of the home community in the new country (Price 1963; Reyneri 1979). Migration studies have recently considered the role of migrant networks that provide help with work, housing and other needs on arrival (Boyd 1989; Portes 1998). These personal, family and community links are considered as ‘social capital’ for migrants (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119).

PhD/researchers could refer to their age of migrations: we see that IT specialists more likely migrate in the range of age 23-27 years while PhD students and researcher leave between 26-30 years.

Back to the IT workers and experiences, as we mentioned, few of them worked in Romania for **foreign IT companies**. We intended to test the hypothesis and understand how such working environment can influence the chances and projects of international labour mobility. This is indeed true in two opposite ways: working in a Foreign Firm can help supporting or creating the conditions to migrate (providing a professional international network, giving a qualified experience recognized abroad, creating the conditions for a higher labour mobility, training on western or foreign working patterns and routines). But also, on the other side, if the working conditions (i.e. the salary and the personal satisfaction) offered in Romania result more advantageous than the local working standards, this can be a mechanism of retention of human resources.

“Working for a foreign firm in Romania means a better pay and work conditions, therefore a better job, but also it gives the worker more experience and confidence and at least he has to learn a foreign language and the way a foreign company works. It improves his resume (CV) which gives him a better chance of finding some work abroad”.

“The experience after working with foreigners in a foreign company is helpful, especially in IT and engineering in general. For those who only produce T-shirts and shoes for Italian companies in Romania there no additional chance”.

“Working for a foreign IT firm gives both options to the workers, allowing them to chose what they think is better I had a good job in Romania. It gave me the opportunity to work in other countries and continents”.

“For sure they may have more chances to migrate, but they may loose some willingness to do it, as they are better paid. An important aspect is to be also correctly informed about the reality of working in most western country”.

Working in outsourcing for a foreign IT company refers to the delocalization of some segments of the IT production in order to take advantage of a qualified and cost competitive local skilled labour force. Such way of working is actually defined “**brains without bodies**”, as the products of such brains, working in a distance, go through the internet cables directly to the core of the foreign IT business abroad, a form of virtual labour mobility.

“Yes, my experience was particular to that company, it was a great environment but the owner was kinda cheap”.

“I was treated very nicely in the Romanian company I worked for 2 years and a half while doing my studies, I learnt a lot and had a great working atmosphere with an open-minded, supporting manager”.

“In one firm we were working as niggers - under the control of the foreign company. The advantage - big salary”.

“I did work for a German company in Romania. I liked it, the experience was very good, my English improved, I got the chance to visit Germany”.

“I consider that working for a foreign IT firm in Romania can help one to find a [another] good job as long as that was a useful working experience”.

§ Labour Recruitment and international Job Searching

With the questionnaire we intended to study different aspects of migrations of high skilled people. This is why the section related to the job search abroad was very central, while we will here provide just a few brief traits of it.

Considering the **strategies** employed to find a job abroad, we can identify mainly two different ways. Researchers basically resorted to **personal or professional networks** in order to find a position available abroad. Phd's mostly proceeded through the internet in order to gather information and proceed with their spontaneous candidature. Basically all IT specialists made use of the **job internet search** and international announcements on websites. Only a few resorted to work agencies. The two job environments show how differently the recruitment and the job placement works. It is anyhow interesting to highlight the importance of **internet** as spreading information worldwide about firms, positions available and procedures and as a mean of connection to get a job. As a general comment, respondents concluded that their job search was apparently quite an **easy process** (besides the work permit problems that some faced in terms of procedures).

The reasons behind the choice of a particular country of destination are influenced by the immigration issues: *“Less barriers than in other countries; I choose Canada for its immigration policy and the city because of the university and the associated PhD program that I did here”, the quality of life “Climate, life standards; During the last years, it was rated as one of the first three 'most livable' cities, not much industry hence less pollution, great surroundings”* and for work reasons: *“Career. And Money, of course; I didn't choose, I accepted the first offer - just to leave from Romania”*.

The **obstacles** they overall faced in their emigration experience refer to different kinds of problems. In travelling and moving across countries (European and other extra European ones) most respondents identified their main barriers in the **procedures** connected to the immigration permits: this refers to the often humiliating treatment and the slowness that people have to face in embassies in order to get a visa to go aboard; mortifying attitudes from officers at the borders check, also concerned with stereotypes and reputations about *“Romanians”*; technical problems related to obtain or renew visa cards.

“My husband was in Finland for three months alone and I could not join him because I did not get a visa”; “Italy Embassy in Bucharest, treated like a morron when requiring a visa as an invited researcher; also problems when applying for visa extension in Italy (they adjusted after contacted by influent persons from my University). Croatia, treated like a potential infractor; Hungary, treated like a drug dealer; this was while I was transiting in my way to France or Italy, by train”;

“ Obtaining a visa. Always a stressful, sometimes humiliating process. For example: it took 4 months to get a visa for Denmark as a visiting researcher”. “The fact that I need a visa and that obtaining it was usually not a transparent process, but one that humiliated the visa applicant was a major barrier. The most humiliating experience was having to stay in line for three days and three nights (in freezing winter time) just to enter the Italian consulate”.

Such barriers refer to those temporary visits and tourist vacations that require a visa to enter a country. The problem actually is in Romania where **foreign embassies** seem to act with too discretionarily and regardless of professional and functioning standards. With the forecasted EU joining of Romania, the disappearing of such tourist and transit barriers were all pointed out as one of the most influencing and important changes¹².

Few denounced problems with obtaining their **work permits** to go abroad, usually cared directly by the firms hiring, and mainly due to length and bureaucracy of procedures. The obstacles in this sense are encountered in the job search phase, as it becomes difficult *“finding a company to make work permit”*

¹² See note n. 10 for EU Enlargement labour mobility changes.

as not all firms are willing to enter the work permit procedures for the costs required, the time consuming and the possibility to face administrative problems.

Few people mentioned problems related to the **degrees and titles**, *“it's hard to get the first job in your field, since you are requested to have North American work experience”*. Most did not have obstacles to have their degree recognized or have their experience filling the gap: *“It's somehow difficult to find out a qualified job if you're not local. But this is until you starting to have an experience here, you know, references, that it's somehow difficult to find out a qualified job if you're not local. But this is until you starting to have an experience here, you know, references”*.

More important is the issue related to the status of foreign worker with his/her limited **sets of rights** of mobility and job search in the local labour market. This implies being sometimes in a weaker position due to the lack of a permanent/green card permit that reduces the freedom of changing job and employer: *“I lost a very good job in UK few years ago: a Chinese with work permit get it, I lost it because I didn't had the work permit”*.

The following is not the case of all respondents actually, but this experience is very important in revealing how migration normative and firms strategies can be effective in keeping migrants in a condition of instability and disadvantage:

“At the moment, in UK and Ireland, the work permit system is basically for companies, not for employees. When a company wants to hire a person from outside EU must first "advertise" the position internally with a government job agency for at least 6 weeks (must prove that wasn't able to find an EU person for that job). Afterwards the company must apply for a work permit for that person. From my experience very few company want to do this. And the ones that do it are not very good (the job, the pay are not desirable, they target specifically outside EU people - and expect to pay low salaries). When I left Romania I went to Ireland with such a company. I only worked for them for 3 months. At the time was easy for me to find another company because they didn't have the "6 weeks" rule yet. So I was able to start working immediately while waiting for the work permit. So one aspect of "taking advantage" is exemplified by these companies targeting people from outside EU.

The company I work now with is actually a good one but lately had some difficulties. I'm an important "piece" and I'm appreciated but I didn't get a salary raise for about three years (I worked for them in Ireland and I'm working not for them in UK). It's not because I'm Romanian, the financial situation of the company is not very good (some people were even made redundant one year ago). And now I don't see any improvement in the near future in the company's situation. So no improvement in my career or pay. Normally I would move to another company, for a much better pay and a better position. But I can't do this (I intend to become a permanent resident in the next few months and this will correct the situation) because of the work permit system. I'm kind of "trapped". While the company doesn't take advantage "voluntary" it certainly benefits from it”.

What is important of this case, which is not the common experience for all respondents thought, is the revealing mechanism of immigration laws where immigrants, even skilled ones, could find themselves trapped and dependent. Policies and regulations in fact affect migrant labour force making them more or less wanted and unwanted, fully eligible of local worker's rights or not. Respondents, in fact, admitted that when they obtained green card or a permanent residency permit they could finally freely explore the local labour market. If migration programs and regulations do actually influence persons trajectories and destinations of migration, due to the admissions criteria and entry quotas reserved to qualified workers (i.e. Canada, Australia or New Zeland have more welcoming programs compared to the difficulties to enter the US), than firms employing are, or could be, in the position of advantage on the employee.

“Working in Europe requires work visas which are difficult to obtain unless requested by the employer. Usually the employer wants you in his whereabouts. This may only happen if one already has a visa. Now there are "middlemen" companies that take care of all the paperwork, transport,

lodging and placement but they're expensive. Getting Canadian residence solved the problem... but in Canada”.

Such situation might then be mirrored in the **salary disparity** between Foreign/Romanians and indigenous workers. Respondents all declared they earn the fair amount of money, but they also agree on the possibility that firms pay them less because of their nationality. More than this, they agreed that, in order to migrate and get a job abroad, even skilled foreigners do accept this circumstance for a career investment.

“Some get less (especially before they have a valid experience in the new country). They are often being exploited. Because their employer knows very well that they have no choice”.

Besides this and a few small things, real **discrimination** is not denounced and the main problems of integration referred mostly to the everyday adaptation to the cultural differences and, in some cases, to language barriers (I.e.: Japanese, Finnish, Hungarian).

“The only discrimination I felt was during first encounters with some uneducated people due to their prejudices and ignorance”.

§ The Brain Drain: A mix of Recruitment, Remittances and Returns

Different are the **definitions** of brain drain phenomenon; according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica it refers to “the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another usually for better pay or living conditions”. More composite is the following definition, stating that “brain drain can occur if emigration of tertiary educated persons for permanent or long-stays abroad reaches significant levels and is not offset by the “feedback” effects of remittances, technology transfer, investments or trade. Brain drain most recognized blemish is that it reduces economic growth through unrecompensed investments in education and depletion of a source country’s human capital assets” (Lowell & Findlay, 2001: 6). As seen before, brain drain is therefore more than a simple oneway migration for it implies economic and social consequences that impact on the country of origin¹³. Brain drain happens when the local conditions do not accomplish the skilled workforce that is employed in an underpaid or undergraded occupation or does not meet the conditions for a professional growth and a personal fulfilment¹⁴. This is why the most common explanation from respondents is “**better brain drain than brain waste**”. In order to make their educational path and working potential be fruitfully develop, the decision to migrate becomes not a choice, but the only possibility.

¹³ On countries unbalanced powers and development perspectives in a more global scale Gençler (2003) says that “the effects of highly skilled people migration are not parallel on both sides economically and socially. The fact that humanity benefit from information and science is not true in terms of its effects on developing countries. Because it does not contribute to decrease the inequality between the nations. It can be stated that it contributes humanity in the field of health and makes man’s life easier. However, the income obtained by this is not distributed equally among men. Although there have been a noticeable, increase in the incomes of developing and developed countries. The difference between them have been greater. In 1950’s the income difference between developed and developing countries was twenty-three times, but it increased and become Sixty times greater in 1990. It can be concluded (...) that developed countries benefit from highly skilled human capital activity more effectively”.

¹⁴ A recent study on the “Education and occupational pathways of migrants in Italy” by E. Reyneri confirms this trend after a fieldwork research in north of Italy. Classifying skilled migrants according to the correspondence of their educational level and occupation in the labour market, the author calls the ‘upwardly mobile’ those with high educational level but low social status and the ‘privileged’ those with high educational attainment and high social status. “highly educated migrants are either unemployed or work in undeclared and occasional jobs to an extent even greater than poorly educated ones. The reason for this is that these immigrants find it more difficult to accept the disparity between their social status in the country of origin and the jobs that they are offered, in that they have to cope, in particular, with permanent but unskilled and onerous blue-collar jobs in small manufacturing firms in Northern and Central Italy” (2004: 1).

"I agree it is a loss, but it would be a bigger loss to stay in Romania if your potential there has no chance to develop."

Respondents were in fact pointing at brain drain as the natural consequence for a country that does not use its people's potentials and suppresses their **aspirations** of accomplishing a professional fulfilment.

"As long as the future is uncertain for the skilled people, they have to pursue their own dreams".

"Resources would be lost if they weren't used properly. how should I comment this? I can't be a patriot who gives up her dreams".

"Even if this can appear as an egoism, when I left Romania I said the first 36 years of my life was for them (communists) and the rest of my life is for me. So in this situation I can't reproach to anyone to do the same thing. The freedom of our choices is the most important in a life".

Other than that, brain drain is due to those local conditions that do not encourage the empowerment of people's best performances.

"It is very sad but unavoidable. Without the chance of living abroad many of these 'brains' would be wasted in misery and corruption, and morally destroyed. This is for many (e.g. mathematicians) the only chance for a decent life and career".

The **environment in Romania** is described with anger and disappointment as desolating: lacking of good jobs, but mostly offering a general environment that still suffers of the deficiencies of a post regime country.

"Unfortunately is a normal process, while in Romania there are no conditions for educated people to find suitable jobs. It is a pity, but may be the political class will start realizing and caring for our country, too".

"It's a normal consequence of the corruption, ignorance and lack of interest of the Romanian government. It's mostly the fault of the post '89 governments. Even if you have brain and the motivation to do something constructive in Romania you will have to give up your verticality and moral values to try and make something work thus, become corrupt. It's a normal consequence of the corruption, ignorance and lack of interest of the Romanian government. Even if you have brain and the motivation to do something constructive in Romania you will have to give up your verticality and moral values to try and make something work thus, become corrupt. (...) This comes on top of the fact that Romania lacks a legal and friendly framework to promote initiatives".

"Each parson maximizes his/her Utility, so if the Romanian Gov doesn't care about it, why should I pay taxes in Ro?".

The **polices** created by the government to stop the escaping flows of IT workers, offering fiscal advantages to firms that would employ them, are not actually rewarded with enthusiastic comments. None of respondents actually took into consideration the possibility (or had the chance) to take advantage of such retention polices.

"The failure of romanian politics in keeping the human resources. The "IT retention" program was a great idea with a lousy implementation. Valuable people are not rewarded. Instead, "non values" are promoted given that the recent "wealthy people" usually have little education".

Overall, respondents recognize brain drain as a natural and spontaneous factor ruling cycles of lives and nations richness, an osmosis of human capitals and resources, a somehow consecutive effect of globalization and an unrestrictedly process of labour force migration, opportunities and improvement search.

“When I moved from a village to a town for high school studies, that was a loss for the village? when I moved from a small town to the capital city to do my college studies it was a loss for that small city? so , when I moved from Bucharest to NYC was it indeed a loss and for whom, because for me it was a big gain? since it's about my pursuit of happiness how could be a lost for a community, whoever it be?”.

“However, is a natural demand and offer issue. Romania is a countryside of the world. It is normal for people to look for jobs outside the borders, as it is normal for countryside Romanians to look for jobs or "a new life" in Bucharest or Cluj-Napoca”.

“Brain drain is determined by a lack of need for brains (e.g. no big companies to require researchers and clever people). Foreign investors in Romania seek only average educated persons, clever enough to be thought how to do a certain thing and accept a low payment for that. Nobody ask for research or innovation, or at least this happens in telecom sector. They buy everything from Ericsson, so I had to come to Ericsson's home first, and then wait for some Romanian company to buy me :-)”.

Even when brain drain is seen as a negative loss for the country of origin and a difficult experience for its protagonists, a somehow **potential benefit** out of it is recognized in view of the good reputation that scientists and qualified and appreciated workers from Romania bring in most developed countries; in the **remittances** that provide families in Romania higher spending amounts of money and in the possibilities that brains who left could finally make a return, themselves vaguely included, with all the professional and knowledge capital they experienced abroad.

“The "brain drain" is a loss only at the first sight. In fact, the persons immigrating and finding a more promising career abroad, develop better their skills, become known and therefore do a service to the reputation of Romanian education. Plus, by sending money back home (some of them) or investing in business there, they actually help the economy better than they could before immigrating. Some people just get away from the country, but many bring back to the country the way of thinking/living/working, even if they do not return. Many still collaborate with companies home, or at least give advice”.

“It is always a loss for Romania, which spends money training good specialist, but they are also coming back with international working and life experience and their own capital. In some cases they will attract also investors. If they are breaking every contact to Romania and will not contribute to the country's development, than it is a loss for the country”.

“It is a temporary loss I think, as most of the people plan to return home when the situation will improve enough. Staying at home in the actual conditions means "brain loss". Also, a great part of the "brain drain" went (and goes) to other European countries and if Romania will join the EU, a good part of this people will of course return home”.

“I think this is not a complete loss because we improve ourselves as human beings through this cultural experience, and when our families visit us they see another way of life. (For them is also an interesting cultural experience.) Then, when they go back home, they are more motivated to change things to the better, to speak up for themselves. On the other hand our financial support is very important to them and the country (they buy houses, furniture, cars, renovate apartments, etc. which helps the local economy – it is like a foreign investment without need to return the money)”.

Considering the **remittances**¹⁵, the flow of money transmitted to families back home, almost 80% of respondents send money home, mostly every couple of months or just in some occasions. The size and amount of the remittances varies according to the income (and therefore to the country's average cost of life and the salaries) and to the possibilities of respondents. The money remitted yearly represents the 5-10% of the respondents income and it mostly consist of amounts between 200-1000 US \$. Those who send more money, up to 3.000 US \$ have obviously higher salaries and they often give money for some specific occasion as buy a house or do some reparations. The use of this money appear in fact to be mostly employed for daily expenses (food wise, clothing and health care) as a consumer improvement of the quality of life and for building, improving the house or buying land. Considering the mean of transferring money we can highlight that respondents make use of both formal and informal ways: when they visit the family in Romania they always give them money (but this happens less frequently) while more frequently they send money through friends hand-carriage. Among the formal ways, they also pointed out the quick money bank transfers (i.e. *West Bank*) and, in some cases, via internet-electronic transfers.

§ Is there any solution for the Brain Drain?

In the last section of the questionnaire we added a proposing open question to gather from respondents suggestions on how to deal with brain drain, not just comments or recriminations, but a quest for solutions¹⁶. And, as a circular movement, solutions refer to the very deep and problematic causes of this migration.

First and more urgent is a trustful change both in the political class and the regulating system of Romania. Fighting and defeating corruption is the most significant and important step, with all the political and symbolic meanings it contains.

"If one wants to stop this, the only solution would be to create a transparent government genuinely concerned about the Romanian people's welfare and genuinely interested in making their lives better".

"Elimination of corruption, the "old clique" and a renewed political class. A better administration, a "working" justice system, develop the economy and the social life".

"Solutions are not hard to find. Not having a solution is not a problem anymore. The problem is, who's going to implement the solution, who's going to follow up on the results, and who's going to obey the rules that are attached to that solution".

And for someone this could be a possible way:

"Change all the politics by permanent inspections of the EU officials. Every visit of these officials has to be transparent for all the Romanian medias and every report of them have to be short, efficient and public (not only on the internet of the EU Commission). Creating a national TV broadcast supported by the European Commission with transparency and investigation purpose. A Corp of European Policemen fighting against Corruption at ministers levels and the obligation for the Romanian Police to cooperate.

¹⁵ For a frame reference on Transnationalism see the paragraph "Standpoints on Transnational Migrations" where remittances are described with other practices of international connection among people and countries.

¹⁶ It is interesting to report the case of a person who refused to answer the questionnaire end explained the reasons behind with an hard-line and accusing attitude, somehow excessive and too subjective, but it still signifies a sense of affliction that might emerge among emigrants. *"But I am not gonna answer to your questions. Because I think that it is better not to give this kind of information; "information is power", and if someone will want to stop immigration, than he will have a great advantage using this "information". I think that immigration of romanian people is a very important process, so I will not help anybody to stop it".*

Increasing the salary of 10 % of the Justice personal selected for fight against corruption with European protection. The only change to made is to cut by electroshock the pyramidal system of the corruption”.

The EU is in fact considered a reference point that, especially in the forecasted **EU enlargement**, should promote and push economic and political reforms.

“Integrate Romania in EU and make the standard of living closer to Western countries. It worked for other Easter European emigrants, who left Canada.

Other than that, three ways of economic development reforms and polices suggestions were underlined. One is to provide opportunities and conditions for local skilled workers not to leave and help developing the economy (i.e. Retention Polices). One is to attract foreign investments and capitals and one is to attract back those who left the country, with incentives, higher salaries and a free market economy.

“Tempting offers and advantages (tax exemption, priority in job search) for new graduates to work in Romania. Advantageous offers for graduates of studies abroad to come back at the end of their studies. Encourage people to start their own business in Romania”.

“Government programs for development of IMM. Government programs for support of young entrepreneurs. Government programs for tax-reduction in critical domains (IT related, for example) ”.

“Recognition of the diploma/certificate gained aboard Better opportunities in labor market for those who studied abroad (often, people who come back in Romania are facing with the replay “You are over-qualified to this job,” no matter what the job is) ”.

“From underneath: strictly controlled credits to small enterprises. There is also an urgent need of capital, foreign money to be invested: hospitals, schools, streets are in desperate condition”.

“Adequate laws in order to attract the investors. And outsourcing it’s possibility”.

“Funding small research firms in high-tech and small companies to innovate in high-tech field”.

§ Standpoints on Transnational Migrations

We include here some other items related to the transnational relations and migrations, emerged from the questionnaire, interesting for further observations and remarks on the high skilled international mobility and that we consider useful elements for those studying such issues and for policy makers. We’ll here give a small conceptual framework to provide the critical instruments to better elaborate and understand our case of the highly skilled Romanians.

There are aspects that are related to contemporary migrations and that make them not just a one way flow of workers, but imply other dimensions and effects. As we previously considered, emigrants still have an impact towards countries of origins with their *remittances* that, for many developing countries as Pakistan, Bangladesh and many African countries, represent today crucial sources for local and community development, for direct investments in small business and training programs. An important aspect related to today migrations is **transnationalism**, which refers to the interconnectivity between people and places across the globe. Schiller (1992) defined transnationalism as the process where people establish and maintain sociocultural connections across geopolitical borders¹⁷. Overall,

¹⁷ Ulf Hannerz (1996) uses a basic definition of transnationalism considering it as any phenomenon that does not take place within the confines of a state. This is actually somehow a too broaden definition, but it helps because it is possible to compare transnational actors and practices from different scales and distributions. Alejandro Portes (1998) differently considers transnationalism as involving only occupations and activities requiring regular and intense contact between two or more nations. Transnationalism results from the circulation of people, ideas, practices, money, goods, and information

transnationalism is often accompanied by an incessant back and forth movement of people, facilitated by rapid transportation and communication systems (i.e.: airplanes, telephone, video, fax, e-mail and Internet) that have greatly reduced the time and cost of moving people, information, money and goods. Transnationalism is related to the diasporas of migrants and communities sharing different historical and contemporary conditions, characteristics, trajectories, experiences and meanings (Tölölyan 1996, Cohen 1997, van Hear 1998, Vertovec 1999). Another important feature of transnational social formations is referred to the structures or systems of relationships, *networks*, in line with Manuel Castells' (1996) analysis of the Information Age. New technologies are at the heart of today's transnational networks, according to Castells. The technologies do not altogether create new social patterns, but they certainly reinforce pre-existing ones. Dense and highly active networks spanning vast spaces are transforming many kinds of social, cultural, economic and political relationships. Another aspect is the cultural reproduction within transnationalism where different global media modes have an impact on the cultural reproduction of transnational communities. Gayatri Spivak describes '*the discourse of cultural specificity and difference, packaged for transnational consumption*' (1989: 276) through global technologies. Publishing and communications technologies make possible rapid and far-reaching forms of information dissemination, publicity and feedback, mobilization of support, enhancement of public participation and political organization and lobbying of intergovernmental organizations (Alger 1997; Castells 1997). Some analysts sustain that transnationalism changed people's relations to space, particularly by creating 'social fields' that connect and position some actors in more than one country (GlickSchiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc 1992; Castells 1996; Goldring 1998). Through the force and form of electronic mediation, between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods', new 'translocalities' emerged (Appadurai 1995; Goldring 1998; Smith 1998).

A first fact to confirm the importance of **modern technologies** and the international network is the way the questionnaire itself was proposed and passed by. It was in fact an on line questionnaire posted both on ethnic Romanians websites and among some IT computer websites. This in fact confirms both that the communities of migrants abroad make large use of Internet and that they also worked through their personal and social "on line" networks of Romanians aboard to spread it around.

All respondents make a large use of **internet**, for professional, but mostly for private reasons. When asked on the means used to keep in contact with the families in Romania, they all named internet, as first, and than phone calls. This in fact represents a reliable channel to maintain contacts with the family and the friends in Romania, or abroad. The internet represents also one of the most common **information** source in order to keep updated on what is happening in the motherland (not much with TV, radio, newspapers) together with information gathered from friends' recent visits in Romania.

Almost everyone is in contact with other **Romanians abroad** but, as we have previously underlined, the social or family networks abroad is plausibly dispersed among different countries. Most respondents in fact are in contact with other Romanians in their cities with whom they meet quite regularly once a week. The gatherings among Romanians concern in prevalence special or religious occasions, social meeting to keep up Romanian traditions and religious events but not occasions to work together. Those Romanians who create the ethnic local community of these social meeting are new friends met in the country of destination, very rarely old friends or even relatives.

(Goldring 1996). Many consider the main cause of transnationalism in the increasing globalization of capitalism that stimulated such technological advances and where the transnational movement of people is only one aspect in the worldwide exchange of capital, commodities, technology, information, ideology, and culture (Appadurai 1996; Basch et al. 1994; Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Hannerz 1996).

Respondents are lightly committed with **ethnic groups and associations abroad**, besides some cases of more active cultural or religious communities, while many are involved in **online groups** and discussion forums where they exchange information, problems and experiences.

The international **network** of persons abroad is not much a pushing factor for the migratory chain from Romania, as previously noted. As to confirm this, many said that they were actually contacted and asked for help from people who wanted to migrate from Romania. What they did is basically provide information on the country, on the immigration system or other administrative issues *“Yes, by sending information, helping to prepare their CV's according to the requirements on the local job market and prepare for the language test”*. On the other side, they were rarely involved in the job search or emigration process. Just a few reported that *“I lobbied him to my boss in order that he gets the job”*, *“By recommending the person to a employer”*.

Transnationalism refers to migration as a multi-level process (demographic, political, economic, cultural, familial), involving various links between two or more settings. In our case, we noticed that some aspects appear to be stronger (i.e.: the global and dispersed diaspora, the international networks and connections, the online communications and information flows, the high mobility of the group). We are aware that we are here considering transnationalism for a particular case of migration of the highly skilled ones. In this sense we can understand how the **electronic instruments** can represent not just means of communication and international connectivity, but mostly spaces to enhance feelings of belonging to a community of “virtual” skilled expats, besides being migrant from Romanians. This represents what Arjun Appadurai (1995, p. 220) says as among transnational communities there are “new patriotisms” made by a mix of nationalism and politics and by that nostalgia involved from the dealings of exiles with their former homelands. Such transnational identity finds in the new means of communication both an instrument to support the diaspora of brains and also a background to reinforce the time and space dynamics of migrant identity.

§ Loss, payoff and break even

The experience of migration generates positive and negative facts and life changes. In the following we recall some of them that were provided as an evaluation on the personal experience and an advice for those who intend to pursue a migratory project.

The **positive elements** refer to the cultural and intercultural aspects, the experience of travelling and working in new environments and the personal life growth: *“Culturally enriching, mind-broadening. It represents a challenge to adapt to and be successful in a totally different environment. One's value being recognized; you learn how to face the pressure, and you learn a lot in short time”*.

Considering the work environment itself: *“Access to new technologies and professional possibilities, good working conditions, good salaries, Good benefits, social activities with co-workers”*.

In a broader sense, migrating make you *“realize that foreigners are not perfect, but they are better than us in some respects. Understand the notion of personal responsibility associated with initiative and with doing your job in general. adaptation to a more complex and challenging life”*.

The **negative side** of the experience, refers in fact to the bitterness of migrating. Not just because migrants are skilled and qualified workers, with probably more information and critical instruments to interpret and face their new life context, they could avoid the cultural and language adjustment, family and community loneliness, work and social integration.

“The obstacles are language skills; cultural differences; what you have to sacrifice being abroad, discrimination, difficulties in adjusting yourself in a foreign country; Life is tougher abroad. You're changing; Being a foreigner, not "belonging". Homesick; Isolation from family and friends and changes

in your traditional way of life; Missing Romanian traditions; The difficult process of obtaining and maintaining a working visa. In the US: work style is totally different than in Europe, (tougher) ”.

According to the respondents personal experiences, we gathered from them suggestions and advice addressed to those wishing to pursue a migratory decision abroad in order to take the best out of it.

“First of all: to have a work experience in Romania, if possible in more than one company, and to both Romania and foreign companies. This experience will be highly useful later, in different jobs research”.

“The lack of experience is a handicap. Not having “western” education may only be overcome by solid experience. The best student in a unknown university is equal with a “standard” student in a well known university. The work experience has the same importance as the studies. To get a higher level degree in Romania (MSc or PhD)”.

“The IT field is now affected from a big recession. To find a job abroad is much harder than for 4 years ago, so higher skills and working experience are requested and in many countries the native language speaking and writing is a must in order to get a job. It’s pretty hard now. The market was good, now it’s complicated. Suggestion: English plus another language, courage, and be good professionals! (And cheap, of course)”.

“Gather many opinions to make an informed decision, but decide yourself, and be consistent with your decision. Consider also the life quality in the place you are going to work, according to your personal preference (climate, people etc.). Don’t blindly pursue your career goals, thinking the rest will come naturally; think of your personal life at least as much as of your career”.

“Not to leave alone – marry first and take your spouse with you. Is hard being alone in a foreign country; The ability to understand foreign cultures, speak foreign languages, work in multi-cultural environments”.

§ Conclusion

Through this questionnaire we intended to investigate some aspects of the personal experiences of high skilled migrants: (§) the most leading reasons of their moving, (§) the difficulties that skilled workers encountered, (§) the likelihood of a return in Romania, (§) the transnational commitment and belonging and (§) an evaluation of their brain drain experience.

(§) The social variables present different factors that can be fairly conducted to the pull factors, a mix of immigration foreign polices, better career chances compared to the local work perspectives and quality of life. The attraction of a wide-ranging foreign environment where to find monetary, professional and personal fulfilment is accompanied by a disappointed vision of Romania: corruption, lack of occupational growth and professional perspectives.

(§) Leaving the motherland to settle and work abroad implies always problems for migrants. In our case, we can highlight emotional difficulties (being away from friends and family) and cultural problems of integration and adaptation in the receiving countries. Also, obstacles for temporary and mostly tourist mobility emerged with the immigration permits systems (limitations for extra European workers, some prejudiced attitudes and many administrative barriers). Migration polices revealed to be the pulling factor that attract workers through their admission programs (i.e. Australian and Canadian). On the other side, they reveal to become slippery conditions for foreign workers who, if not owning a permanent residency or green card, can fall into in a weak position in terms of labour negotiating power, being completely dependent on their employer’s work permit certification.

(§) The prospect of a return is perhaps more an emotional and nostalgic aspect. Many expressed their intention of coming back, and even invest in Romania. However, most recognized the benefits gained

abroad, the life settling and the contrast with the working conditions and career possibilities in front of the real (and disappointing) changes Romania, there diverging too much. Their work expertise and western lifestyle and socialization had changed them in a way that returns result very unlikely to happen.

(§) More interestingly, and a more reliable and advantageous possibility, the importance of establishing international networks and transnational relations helps to spread information, find jobs and promote business (with remittances and maybe attracting global investment). Skilled migrants could become pushers of a local development and improvement of the quality of life sending money and bringing ideas, proposals, connections and initiative.

Besides the issues considered in the questionnaire, a few observations emerged from the overall analyses of the respondent's experiences at two levels: one more at a *micro level* (§) (looking at the individual's side of migration), considering their experience into a wider generational and international trend. The other on the level of the brain drain phenomenon that is country crossing.

(§) Somehow the impression is that we are not just or specifically talking of brain drain, but also of brain circulation. This refers to the fact that brain mobility does not automatically translate always into brain drain, because of a back and forth movement of persons, skills and contributions that still maintain a link with the country of origin. In this sense, also, we need to consider how some professions could be classified as "highly mobile" for their nature. IT workers and researchers and academics, in fact, have a worldwide vision and perspective of their possible labour market, and the more work experiences they get abroad, the more their professional expertise and career development increase¹⁸. Overall, such professional categories and profiles of workers result deeply involved in "western and globalized" socialization and economic production (i.e. knowledge workers) that create a transnational and cosmopolite identity group. In this sense, we can highlight how the globalization process affects more largely some activities and professions, providing the conditions of a labour international mobility and determining the creation of a transnational global community and identity.

"Being an emigrant is quite a cross to bear. (...) When I am depressed I have the feeling that I do not belong anywhere anymore: Romania has changed so much that often I feel strange there, while here remains still a territory to be conquered. When I think positive I see myself a citizen of the world enriched by many cultural experiences".

(§) Also, we would comment in a *wider perspective* the brain drain phenomenon and the policy implication. In considering the cause of migration, it is clear that there are elements as the wage differential that will always play a role¹⁹. But there are also those factors that respondents identified as a better quality of life that money can't buy. A search for a positive working, political and social environment where to fulfil a life is in fact a quest that needs to be taken into consideration. And it is also true that best policy options from sending countries should regard a successful economic and social development depending on an optimal combination of Foreign Direct Investment, trade liberalisation, aid, remittances, return migration and improvements in governance. As Olesen (2002) suggests "only by looking from the macro perspective, can long-term solutions be found. And then the

¹⁸ Massey says "International migrants do not come from poor, isolated places that are disconnected from world markets, but from regions and nations that are undergoing rapid change and development as a result of their incorporation into global trade, information, and production networks. In the short run, *international migration does not stem from a lack of economic development, but from development itself*." (Massey 1998: 277).

¹⁹ "This process - "the migration hump" - only stops when the advantage of migrating is too small in terms of income differential between traditional pairs of sending and receiving countries" (Olesen, 2002: 14).

question can be asked: can sufficient political support be found to ensure the preconditions for rapid economic and social development, and the consequent decrease in migration in the medium and long term? These preconditions are: Vastly improved trading access to markets in the north, Vastly increased aid, Better utilisation of remittances, Consequent increased foreign direct investment". Nevertheless, an international attention on the immigration polices effects on labour integration (i.e. salary discrimination) and labour rights (labour mobility limited due to the dependence on the work permit) is similarly needed.

The brain drain is ultimately a composite phenomenon, including different aspects as well as typologies of skilled migrants and kinds of brain movement. Furthermore, returns, remittances and transnational actions represent a very meaningful and interesting aspect of skilled and contemporary migrations. Finally, the importance of online communities and communication is very relevant, but should not be separated by the investigation of the physical adaptation and labour integration in the receiving countries.

Overall, it was not aim of this work to sustain brain drain positive or negative aspects, but mostly to analyze it through the *perspective of those individual life stories involved*. For this reason we find in the committed assertion below a deeply and inspiring self observation and generational thinking on the experience of brain mobility.

"The brain drain appears as a very sad and unfair situation for the Romanian country. However, the political and economical circumstances are so hopeless that any lucid person can realise that nowadays Romania does not create conditions for a reasonable personal and professional accomplishment. The gap between salaries and prices, what the politicians promise and what they achieve, life quality in general, the weak professional perspectives and the moral atmosphere of a total disappointment make lots of young people want to go. It is far better a brain drain than a brain waste. In a broader sense, mobility is a key word in today's world. Losing ones national bonds, pride, ideals, roots, patriotic respect etc., is quite normal and natural. Times are changing, globalisation and uniformity are replacing in all forms and shapes the concept of national feeling. I think I am not mistaken if I say that around the world my generation) is singing in English, dancing Latin American, dressing Indian and China made clothing and eating in "multi-culti" restaurants. In such conditions the brain drain cannot be really stopped. It has never been, since after the WW II when it appeared".

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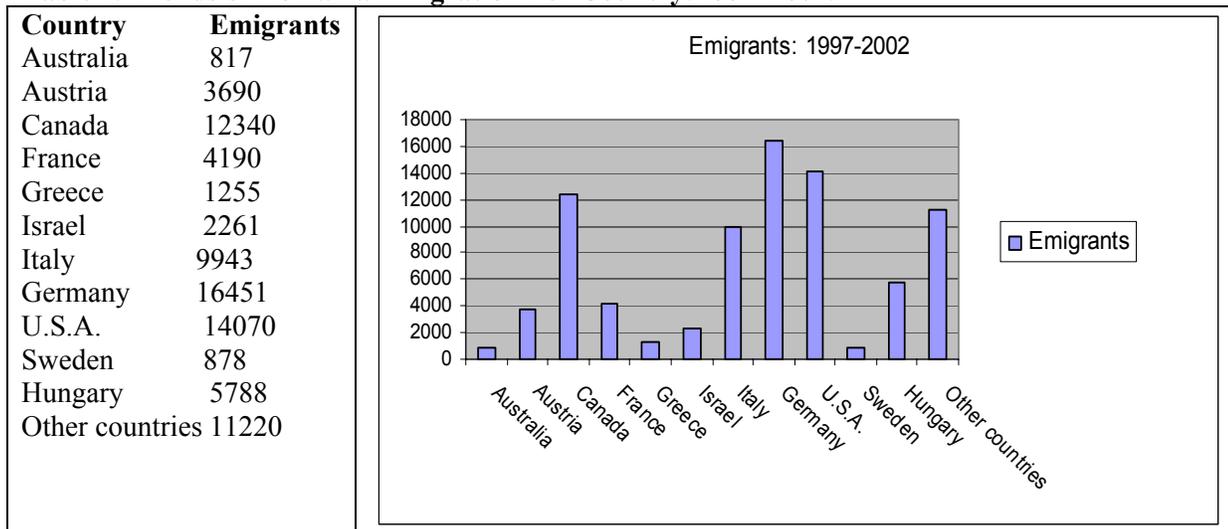
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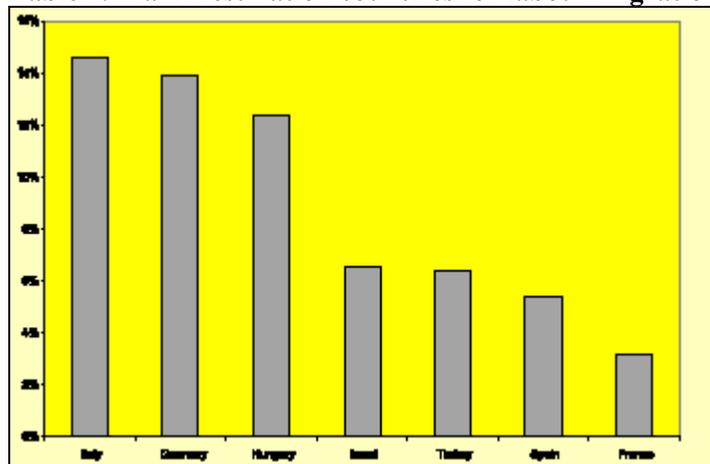
ANNEXES TABLES:

Table 1. Trends of Romania Emigration Per Country: 1997-2002.



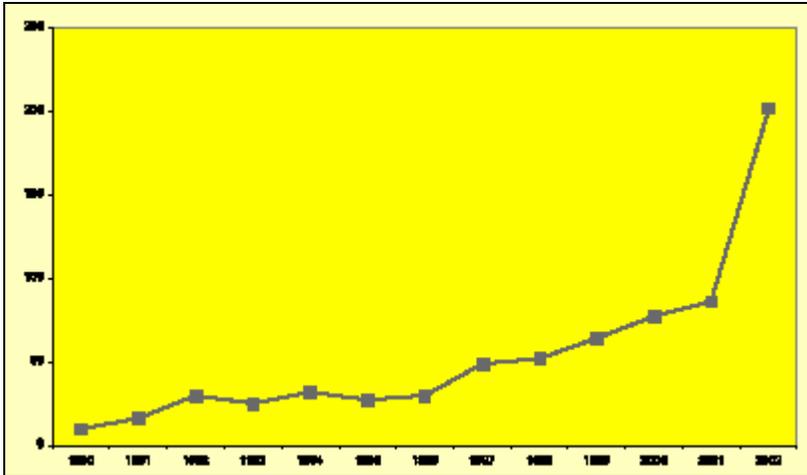
Source: INSSE Romanian National Statistics Institute

Table 2. Main Destination countries for labour migration



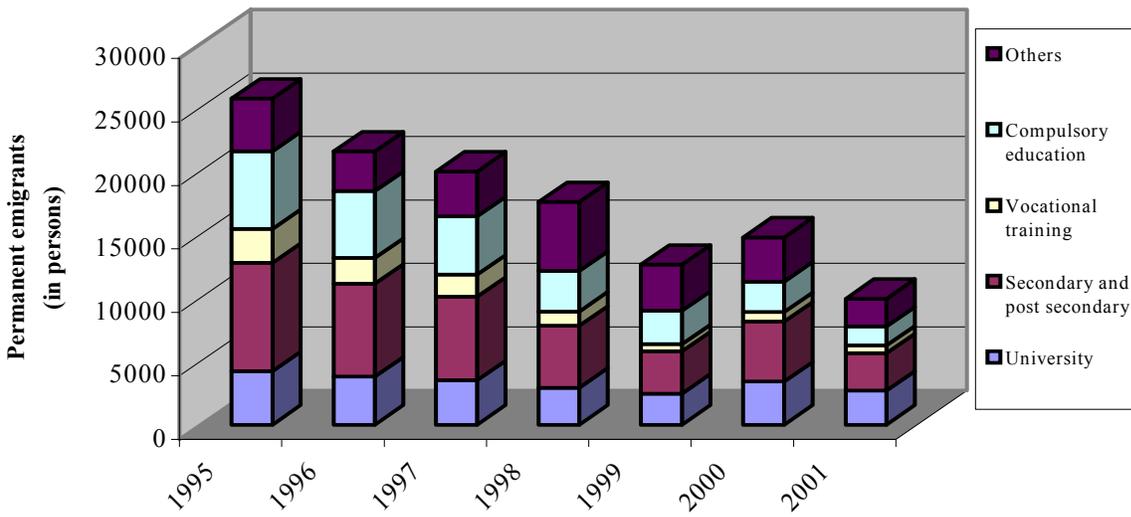
Source: Public Opinion Barometer, reported last destination of household member went abroad, from IOM-Romania 2003.

Table 3. Labour Migration 1990-2002



Source: Public Opinion Barometer, reported last destination of household member went abroad, from IOM-Romania 2003

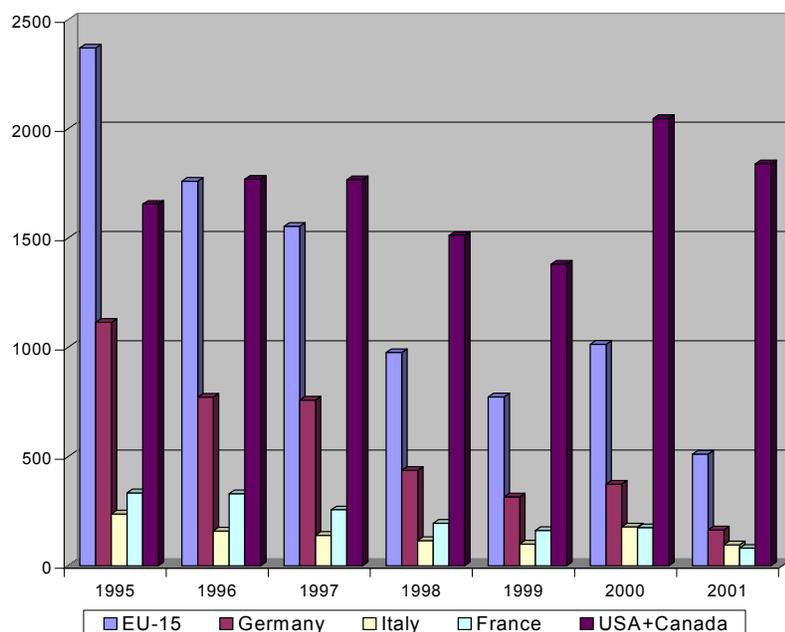
Table 4. Permanent emigrants by level of education (1995-2001)



Source: Phare Project RO 9907-02-01:Pre-Accession Impact Studies: Own presentation based on data computed by the National Institute for Statistics from administrative registers.

Table 5. Permanent emigrants from selective professions* by destinations

* the figures include following professions: engineers, architects, physicians and apothecary, teachers/professors, economists.



Source: Phare Project RO 9907-02-01:Pre-Accession Impact Studies, own calculation with data from the NIS and the MI

Table 6. Employment of Romanians in EU Countries by high skill level of education (2001).

Country of Destination	Ro. Emigrants	%
01.B	0.708	1%
03.D	4.804	6%
04.EL	0.177	0%
05.E	2.739	3%
06.F	1.509	2%
08.I	1.086	1%
09.L	0.143	0%
11.A	3.272	4%
14.S	0.368	0%
15.UK	1.212	1%
Total High Skill Workers Employed	16.018	19%
Total Ro. Workers Employed	83.120	100%

Source: Eurostat Data: Romanian Population in EU-countries for the year 2001, by ISCO2D:Occupation 2-digit, by NACE2D:Economic activity 2-digit and by ISCED1D:Educational level.