

REPORT

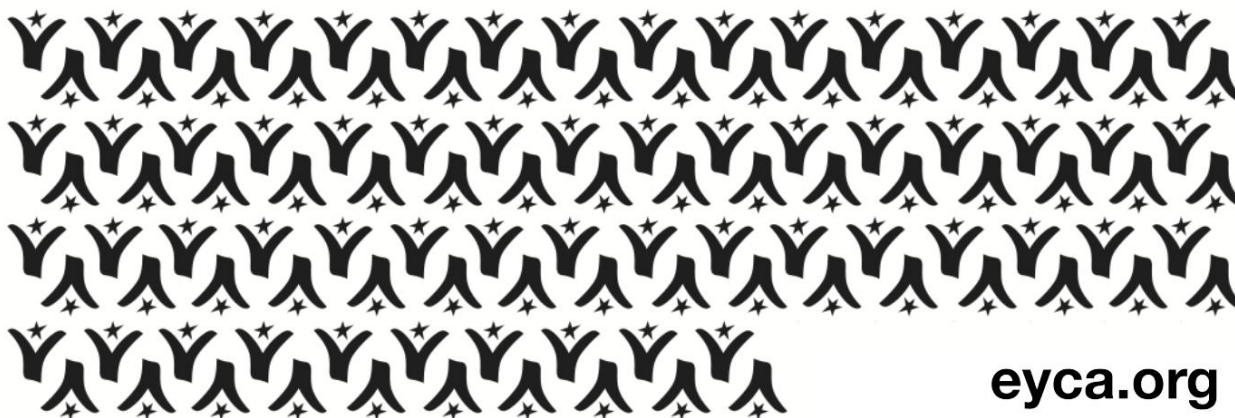
BRAIN DRAIN OR BRAIN GAIN?

**Seminar on the role of the European Youth Card
in providing opportunities for young people
at home and abroad**

**28 – 30 October 2018
Zagreb, Croatia**

**Seminar of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card
and the European Youth Card Association (EYCA)**

**In the framework of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe (18 May - 21 November 2018)**



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CONTEXT

Introduction

The Seminar *Brain Drain or Brain Gain?* took place in Zagreb, Croatia, on 28-30 October 2018 as part of the programme of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (18 May - 21 November 2018).

Three partners joined forces for its implementation: The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card of the Council of Europe (Croatia is part of the Partial Agreement), the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and its Croatian member organisation, as well as the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia.

About the organisers

The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card is a programme of the Council of Europe introduced in 1991 with the aim to support the development of the European Youth Card project across Europe, for the benefit of all young people. Through the European Youth Card, young people have facilitated access to mobility opportunities, as well as products and services necessary for their personal and cultural development.

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) brings together around 40 youth card organisations in 36 European countries and is the Partial Agreement's statutory partner. The EYCA vision is a Europe where all young people are mobile and active (socially, culturally, educationally and economically). The EYCA mission to deliver quality Youth Card services and contribute to better policy on youth mobility and active citizenship. Today, over six million young people benefit from Youth Card opportunities.

The Croatian Youth Hostel Association (CYHA) is the EYCA member organisation in Croatia. CYHA is a non-profit organisation supporting youth mobility. It offers discount cards, hostel services and opportunities for everyone between 14 and 29 to become a volunteer.

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia performs since 2016 administrative and professional tasks related to demography, social welfare institutions, the care and protection of children and families, youth, persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, refugees, asylum seekers and professional activities related to foster care and adoption, among others. It is one of the national partners in the implementation of the Croatian Chairmanship programme.

About the Croatian Chairmanship

Since its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe, an international organisation of 47 member states, is the continent's leading institution for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Croatia became a full member of the Council of Europe on 6 November 1996. For the first time since it became a member of the Council of Europe, Croatia assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from May to November 2018.

Croatia has established the following topics as the priorities of its Chairmanship:

- the fight against corruption;
- the efficient protection of rights of national minorities and vulnerable groups;
- decentralisation in the context of strengthening of local government and self-government;
- the protection of cultural heritage and cultural routes.

Aim of the Seminar

The Seminar aimed to explore the brain drain – brain gain phenomenon and the role which the European Youth Card could play in this respect, notably by providing opportunities for young people at home and abroad.

Objectives of the Seminar

- To explore brain drain, brain gain and other related emerging concepts (e.g. brain circulation), their causes, consequences, current forms and implications;
- To explore the role of the European Youth Card in providing opportunities for young people at home and abroad by:
 - supporting their economic autonomy and active participation, notably through social entrepreneurship;
 - maintaining links with their country of origin;
 - supporting their social inclusion in the host countries;
- To explore the possible role of the European Youth Card in favouring a win-win situation for all stakeholders (country of origin, host country, potential employers, young people themselves).

The seminar resulted in a number of practical recommendations for EYCA member organisations, and possibly for policy-makers, in order to help them to define efficient policy responses and use the opportunities offered by the European Youth Card.

Profile of the participants

This one-day-and-a-half seminar was open to up to 80 participants with expertise in youth affairs/youth mobility, social issues, migration, labour/employment and economic development issues, including:

- Governmental representatives of the Council of Europe member states¹;
- Researchers;
- EYCA member organisations, partners and networks;
- International organisations;
- Youth organisations and civil society organisations.

¹ Priority was given to governmental representatives of the Partial Agreement: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Switzerland.

INPUTS, PRESENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All presentations can be downloaded from: <https://goo.gl/rRhLkD>

The first day of the seminar was dedicated to providing an overview of the phenomena of brain drain and skills development, by inviting a variety of keynote speakers – from researchers and youth workers to business sector representatives and entrepreneurs – to offer their perspective.

Welcome

The seminar was opened by Mr Ivica Bošnjak, Assistant Minister, Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Republic of Croatia. Mr Bošnjak welcomed participants and spoke about the relevance of the topic of brain drain and brain gain for Croatia.

His intervention was followed by Ms Natalja Turenne – Council of Europe representative - who presented the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the European Youth Card. The key takeaway of Ms Turenne's intervention was the importance of mainstreaming youth mobility at the policy level.

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) was introduced in detail by its director, Mr Manel Sanchez.

Exploring brain drain (reasons, consequences, current forms and aspects)

The session aimed to explore the causes and effects of the brain drain phenomenon, with two researchers presenting their work. The first intervention introduced the audience to the situation in Croatia while the second intervention gave a broader perspective about the European context.

Ms Lucev shared recent studies made on brain drain in Croatia and highlighted the main reasons for young people leaving, staying and returning to the country. Some of the main reasons cited include the desire to experience and learn something new, better economic situation and working conditions, access to education, etc.

To complement with a broader perspective at the European level, Mr Konstantinos Stergiou – member of the Pool of European Youth Researchers - spoke about the links between youth work, social entrepreneurship and the brain drain phenomenon. He gave a European perspective and set the context for the debate over the next day and a half. His presentation can be found here at <https://goo.gl/GCmwUG>

Mr Stergiou shared basic and important concepts to understand the phenomena such as migration and brain drain. He also underlined the main push-and-pull factors that influence a young person's decision to migrate, especially the situation of youth unemployment in several European countries. As for the role of youth work, he highlighted the need to foster cross-

sectorial cooperation to find solutions. He noted that the European Youth Card can play a major role in facilitating synergies across sectors, considering the vast range of partners it enlists.

The audience had the possibility to share their remarks and questions after both presentations. An interesting point shared by several participants was the need to look at this phenomenon from a new and European perspective, as mobility is a key element of the European project and its success and that it should be promoted.

Changing the narrative: from brain drain to brain gain in practice

In the following session, the panellists discussed the importance of finding practical, community-based solutions and involving all stakeholders in changing the narrative. The main takeaway of the discussion was that young people need to be engaged in policy making at the national level in order to feel listened to and empowered to be agents of change in their countries.

The session featured as speaker Ms Tanja Herceg - President of the Advisory Board for Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia - who presented the Advisory Board and its role in youth policy and programming in Croatia. Unique to this body is the fact that it goes beyond youth policy, working together with various ministries in a trans-sectorial approach. Ms Herceg also spoke about the role of strong youth policies in preventing the brain-drain phenomenon.

Social entrepreneurship and the importance of finding local solutions for global issues was the next point on the agenda. Ms Roxana Bajenica from SMART Development Centre in Romania presented a series of good practice examples in developing entrepreneurship / start-up projects for diaspora, offering young Romanians abroad financial support and training to start a business at home. They provide intensive training programmes, incubators for start-ups and a non-refundable grant to start businesses at the local level.

Ms Desislava Karapchanska from Global Shapers Athens Hub presented their network and its impact at the local level. Global Shapers Athens Hub works to ensure that young people have access to training for skills and job placements within the business sector, and that the community is positively impacted. At Global Shapers, the focus is on the importance of addressing global issues with local resources and finding solutions within the communities. Ms Karapchanska presented in more detail the Regeneration programme that addressed the brain drain phenomenon by connecting young people and companies.

Social entrepreneurship: a response to brain drain?

The afternoon of the first day was dedicated to the business perspective and the importance of supporting innovation. Mr Jacques Spelkens from CSR Europe started by explaining the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and spoke about the changing economic context and how human capital is the most important resource for a company today. Mr Spelkens mentioned the new skills that large corporations are looking for and how many of these are actually acquired outside of formal education. He shared a good practice example of a company working to

develop the competences of migrants and supporting their inclusion in the host or home country. He also stressed the importance of engaging with the business sector when developing policies related to youth employment.

The afternoon was closed by presentations of good practice examples from Zagreb, Croatia. Ana Vlahov presented the Zagreb Innovation Centre (ZIC), which is an example of the engagement and role of a local authority in finding solutions to brain drain and in attracting and retaining talent. The seminar also offered the space for young innovators (Andrej Mrkonić and Luka Biondić & Ljubomir Lokin) based at ZIC to present their projects, but also to speak about their challenges, the importance of building communities of young entrepreneurs and to have policies and programmes that support them.

Exploring the role of the European Youth Card in providing opportunities for young people

The second day of the seminar was dedicated to good practice examples from EYCA member organisations on how the European Youth Card actively supports young people in their career development, both by preventing the brain drain phenomenon, but also by supporting young expats or migrants.

The three EYCA member organisations that presented good practice examples were:

- **Youth and Life Long Learning Foundation – Greece**
Mr Babis Papaioannou spoke about his organisation's work with companies and universities and presented in detail their E-shops initiative. These shops are mostly run by young people and they help to foster the local economy.
- **Mecenat – Sweden**
Mr Jonas Levin presented Mecenat - the leading student card in Sweden - its massive online presence and its ability to reach millions of young Swedes. Having built a close connection with student unions and universities, Mecenat is now introducing a new initiative aiming to create internships for students in companies, in order to help them launch their careers.
- **Carnet Jove Balearic Islands – Spain**
Mr Joan Ferrá presented the new youth policy programme of the Balearic Islands, a talent return plan and their ongoing internship programme. Running for three years, the programme offers traineeships in different areas including archaeology, communication, environment and social action to both local and migrant young people. Testimonials from Amet and Francisca, programme beneficiaries, were presented as examples of young people who have benefited from this initiative.

The day continued with group discussions in workshops looking in particular at:

1. What could be the role of the European Youth Card in keeping up links with the country of origin?

Recommendations:

- Use online tools such as newsletters to establish a connection between EYCA member organisations and young people as they move across Europe;
- Alumni network with a direct link with the universities;
- An information platform based on the EYCA website;
- A discount strategy for people returning home;
- Activate and cooperate with the NGO network in order to find and connect people;
- Job opportunities for young people offered by European Youth Card discount providers (companies).

2. What could be the role of the European Youth Card in supporting social inclusion of young people in the host countries?

Recommendations:

- Creating an information network (e-mail, social media, radio & other channels) for cardholders in host countries:
 - helping them to contact local NGOs, youth information centres, Eurodesk points, local language cafés, etc.
 - helping them to find local activities or clubs according to their interests (hobbies);
- Create an app to find other cardholders in the area;
- EYCA member organisations should create a special English-language pack of discounts for incomers (culture, social life, etc.);
- Access to labour markets through information, guidance, internships, IT lessons (how to fill out an application);
- Distributing European Youth Cards for immigrant young people;
- Social inclusion programmes supported by the EYCA, in the country of origin.

3. What could be the role of the European Youth Card in supporting the economic autonomy and active participation of young people (notably through social entrepreneurship)?

Recommendations:

- At individual level: create a sense of belonging and trust among cardholders and between cardholders and EYCA and use the European Youth Card to link with other sectors and services;

- At organisational level: use the European Youth Card as a direct connection with young people and their needs, a platform to share good practices and build intercultural bridges and learning skills among young people;
- Regarding economic autonomy: provide regular support and create a network where you can find support and information;
- Regarding active participation: use the European Youth Card infrastructure to provide quality and reliable information, an easy connection with other young people, a network with possible partners, trainings, community work and identification with role models, thus encouraging youth participation through storytelling.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

An online evaluation form was distributed among participants and the results include:

- 62% of respondents rated the overall experience at the event with 5/5 and 38% with 4/5;
- 67% of respondents rated as 'excellent' the quality of information received during the seminar;
- 72% rated as 'excellent' the information received about the European Youth Card Association;
- Participants offered a higher rating to the presentations where practice was combined with research and to the presentations about practical examples;
- Participants appreciated the presence of examples of good practices from the local level, in Zagreb;
- 83% of participants rated as 'excellent' the quality of logistical aspects and communication with the organisers.

SEMINAR PROGRAMME

DAY 1 SUNDAY, 28 October 2018	
	Arrival of participants
20.30	Welcome dinner at the hotel

DAY 2 MONDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2018	
09.15 – 09.45	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ivica Bošnjak, Assistant Minister Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Republic of Croatia Natalja Turenne - Council of Europe Manel Sanchez - EYCA Director
09.45 – 10.15	Introduction to the seminar EYCA presentation
10.15 – 11.15	<p>Exploring brain drain (reasons, consequences, current forms and aspects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ivana Lucev - PhD, Head of Service for Migration, Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Republic of Croatia Konstantinos Stergiou – Pool of European Youth Researchers <p>Questions & Answers</p>
11.15 - 11.45	Coffee break
11.45 – 13.00	<p>Changing the narrative: from brain drain to brain gain in practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanja Herceg - President of the Advisory Board for Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia Roxana Bajanica – Development Centre SMART (Romania) Desislava Karapchanska – Global Shapers Athens Hub (Greece)
13.00 – 14.30	Lunch break
14.30 – 16.30	<p>Social entrepreneurship: a response to brain drain?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacques Spelkens – CSR Europe (Belgium) Ana Vlahov – Zagreb Innovation Centre Ltd. (Croatia) Andrej Mrkonić - CROCODER Luka Biondić and Ljubomir Lokin - 3D tech
16.30 – 17.00	Coffee break
17.00 – 18.30	Free time
19:00 – 22.00	Dinner

DAY 3 TUESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2018	
9.15 – 11.30	<p>Exploring the role of the European Youth Card in providing opportunities for young people</p> <p>Good practices from EYCA members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth and Life Long Learning Foundation – Greece ○ Mecenat - Sweden ○ Carnet Jove Balearic Islands - Spain <p>Group discussions</p>
11.30 - 11.45	Coffee break
11.45 - 13.00	<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the group discussions <p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ivica Bošnjak, Assistant Minister Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Republic of Croatia • Natalja Turenne – Council of Europe • Manel Sanchez - EYCA
13.00	Lunch