



Is youth mobility good?

What is the truth about youth mobility in Europe?

A Council of Europe and EYCA seminar for Permanent Representatives to Council of Europe
in Strasbourg
June 2014

Is youth mobility good?:
for young people?
for national economies?
for European well-being?

Youth mobility is generally viewed as a major positive force to create opportunities for intercultural learning for young people, and as a valuable support to help promote human rights, democracy and rule of law across Europe. Freedom to be mobile is one of the features of being European.

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest issues today for many national economies in Europe. Young people leaving in search of work and learning opportunities has become a familiar part of public policy conversations: youth mobility leading to longer-term youth migration. Influential commentators assert that “modern capitalism is unimaginable without physical mobility” Richard Sennett, Professor of Humanities at New York University.

Youth mobility is embedded in policy for the European Union. **Youth on the Move** is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on **education** and **employment** for young people in Europe and part of the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. At the same time EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn, clearly connects European investment in research and innovation to attempts to retain highly-specialised workers and to reversing the ‘brain drain’ which many parts of Europe are experiencing. ¹

Clearly what is a ‘brain drain’ for some can be simultaneously a ‘brain gain’ for others. Sociologist Dr. Ayhan Kaya of Bilgi University estimates “that up until recently 40,000 German citizens were coming to Turkey each year to live and that about three quarters of them being of Turkish descent. With only 30,000 Turks a year moving to Germany during this time the country was netting about 10,000 new residents, a huge shift from the post-war era when millions of Turks went to work in German factories.”² Aspirations of Scandinavian universities to attract more international students are highlighted by commentators. Maurits van Rooijen, rector of the London School of Business “Although the Scandinavian numbers suggest a positive trend, the reality is they are still many years away from being able to play in the premier league.”³

¹ EU Press release – 8 May 2014 - http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-538_en.htm

² Germany’s Brain Drain is Turkey’s Net Gain – Forbes by Damaso Reyes 3 December 2013

³ Brain Drain – a Recipe for Brain Gain, Society and Culture, Scienordic.com, 23 January 2013

Russia experiences youth migration to Europe in the west and to China in the east. But at the same time Russia receives more immigrants than any country in the world other than USA⁴.

So what is the truth about youth mobility in Europe?

Is everybody doing it? Not really. Recent EU data shows the following:

- 80% of the Europeans (EU 25)* live in the region in which they grew up
- 1.5% of the Europeans (EU 25) live in another country than their home country
- Only 25% of these people migrated for job reasons but 75% for private reasons - mainly love (30 %) and a better climate (24 %)
- 1% of the Europeans (EU 25) of employable age move each year for job reasons, whilst the same is true for 2.3% of the US-Americans and 2.1% of the Canadians

Sources: Eurostat 2006; EU Commission 2007; US Department of Labor 2002

* 25 countries of the European Union, without Romania and Bulgaria

There are many more questions about youth mobility:

- Are all young people able to be mobile, or only some?
- Is mobility better for young men than for young women?
- Is youth mobility really related to career enhancement or is it only a means to avoid downward social mobility?
- Does youth mobility reinforce social inequalities and social exclusion of the most vulnerable social groups?
- Does youth mobility prolong youth and make more difficult the transition to adulthood?

Council of Europe invites member governments to participate in a brief seminar to consider youth mobility. What should be governments' responsibility to promote and/or manage youth mobility? What should governments do to reduce the negative consequences of youth mobility?

The Council of Europe Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card delivers a work programme alongside the European Youth Card Association (EYCA). EYCA is an association of forty national organisations present in thirty-eight European countries and is responsible for carrying out the programme of activities for the Partial Agreement. EYCA vision is *a Europe where all young people are mobile and active*.

EYCA's mission is:

Member organisations working together to stimulate more young people to be socially, culturally, educationally and economically mobile by:

- ***delivering quality European Youth Card services***
- ***contributing to better policy on youth mobility and active citizenship***

This seminar will present Permanent Representatives of Member States to the Council of Europe with up-to-date research knowledge from experts, and will present one or two case studies of working on youth mobility from EYCA member organisations:

- Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation, Greece
- Polish Youth Projects Association
- Russian Union of Youth
- Young Scot, UK
- Agencia Catalana de la Joventut, Spain
- Evropski omladinski centar, Serbia

⁴ UN-DESA report September 2013