



Free movement of people – Opportunities and challenges –

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As we all know, at the heart of the European Union there are four key principles, which constitute many opportunities for Member States and their citizens, but they also mean a wide range of challenges too.

Brain drain: a one way ticket?

The right to freedom of movement has brought many opportunities for people across Europe. EU citizens are entitled to look for a job in another EU country, qualifications are universally acknowledged across Europe and so on. Thus, people living abroad bring important economic gains to both receiving

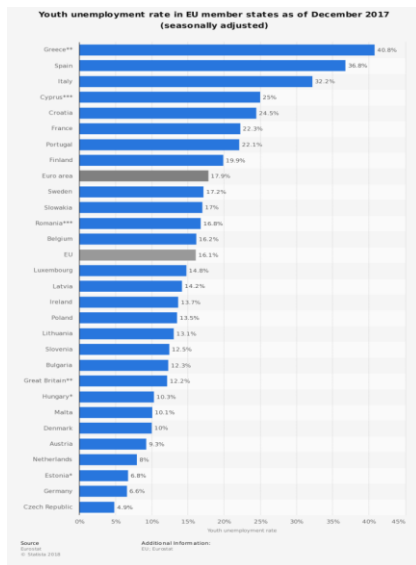


and sending regions. But only if well-tailored policies are employed to tackle challenges posed by the free movement of people across national borders.

But what if domestic policies fail to deal with the situation? This is what we refer to as the the brain drain phenomenon, the so called “one way ticket”, which constitutes a real problem in Eastern European countries.

The role of local and regional authorities

Local and regional authorities have a key role in reducing the migration of young people. They must ensure equal opportunities, promote social integration and they must improve the youth’s competitiveness on the labour market:



For example, LRAs have competencies:

- To ensure equal opportunities for young people in small or isolated communities;
- To promote professional training initiatives related to regional characteristics and specific skills;
- To collaborate with private stakeholders , who are aware of the needs of their target group of young people and turn them into opportunities for future employability;

LRAs also have attributions in finding local solutions that help make the given region more competitive.

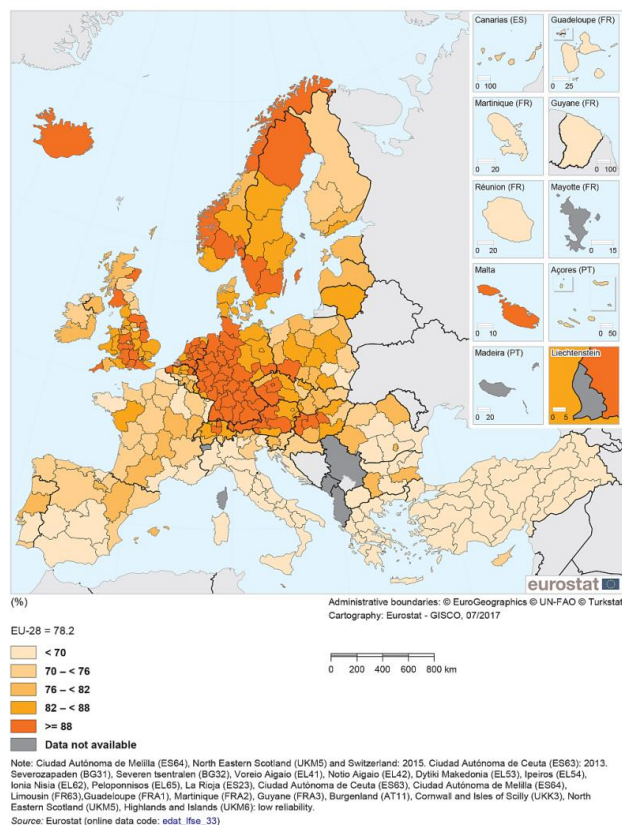
Development of the education system

Although many positive measures have been taken in the field of education development, it still faces serious shortcomings in the effective use of available resources.

The employment rate of higher education and vocational graduates in the EU has not fully recovered after the 2008 financial crisis. The EU needs to identify, develop and support areas, which represent the key element of development.

At the same time we need to take into consideration that every country and region has its own specific features. Huge differences can be observed not only among Member States, but also

Employment rate of recent graduates aged 20–34 with at least an upper secondary level of educational attainment (ISCED levels 3–8), by NUTS 2 regions, 2016 (%)





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among regions. In this regard, the EU policies should put more emphasis on regional differences - in particular on less developed regions - when it comes to the development of educational strategies.

An effective educational system has to provide access to quality education for all young people. It must foster acquisition of key competences - regardless of student's social and economic status.

Furthermore, regional higher education institutions should be supported more. The idea of civic universities can only be realized if the Union provides the necessary measures and aids the economic development of the given region. And here I would like to emphasize how important it is to continuously consult with local and regional authorities regarding their higher education policies.

I also want to stress the important role of education in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting interculturalism.

In this regard every effort should be made to prevent limitations to on access education, be they economic, ethnic, linguistic or any other type of restrictions. Everybody - including newcomers as well as traditional national minorities – should enjoy the same rights to education.

We are all aware of the fact that there are still measures that restrict the access of minority students to mother tongue education at all levels. Therefore, such initiative, as for example the Minority Safepack are fundamental in maintaining national identity and also cultural diversity.

Stimulating resettlement

Regarding the migration of young people, it is very important to promote the possibility of returning to their region of origin. Young people should be encouraged to use the knowledge gained through mobility programs at home, because a competitive region presupposes competitive professionals.

In this regard, local and regional authorities have a key role in motivating skilled people to return to their home country with specific measures.



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They should focus on:

- create a fund to stimulate the resettlement of people working abroad. Therefore, we should check whether for example the Erasmus programme would allow the setting up of such a fund.

- create a PLATFORM for the young, where they can find all the necessary INFORMATION and POSSIBILITIES in one place, for example:

- COURSES, TRAINING for all ages at the appropriate level
- ALTERNATIVE career paths, so that young people do not have to leave and work abroad
- MOTIVATION TO STAY or RETURN – presenting good examples and practices

In order to tackle challenges to free movement of people across national borders, there is a need to develop an effective education and employment strategy in Europe.

It is crucial to synchronize not only the activity of different decision making bodies in Europe, but also in what concerns the policies of Member States.

As the rapporteur of the CoR on *the European Cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)* and *Modernising school and higher education* I have several discussions with MP Ms. Andrea Bocskor, MP Ms. Krystina Lybacka and Commissioner Tibor Navracsics about the future of the EU's Youth Strategy and modernising education system and in particular, about measures at regional and local level, where I have also emphasized the above listed principles and priorities.

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