



**Bradramo - Brain Drain and Academic Mobility  
from Portugal to Europe**

(PTDC/IVC-PEC/5049/2012)

**COLEÇÃO WORKING PAPERS  
BRADRAMO**

**Working Paper 10 - General Conclusions**

Rui Gomes  
Luísa Cerdeira  
João Teixeira Lopes  
Henrique Vaz  
Rui Brites  
Belmiro Cabrito  
Maria de Lourdes Machado-Taylor  
Dulce Magalhães  
Tomás Patrocínio  
Paulo Peixoto  
Rafaela Ganga  
Sílvia Silva  
José Pedro Silva

**October, 2015**

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The executive summary highlights three dimensions of this report. The first dimension concerns the conceptual and analytical framework, and a brief characterisation is presented with a view to provide the right context for the project. The second dimension compiles the main results yielded by research. The third and briefer dimension summarises and lists impact indicators that add social value to the project, and enhance the scientific value demonstrated in the presented result indicators.

1. Portuguese emigration flows have intensified over the latest years. They have significantly grown since 2011. They involve an increasingly larger academically qualified population. People mainly travel to countries within the EU, with England and Germany showing the highest numbers of qualified Portuguese immigrants. Both the project and the report were structured based on these converging factors.

1.1. Emigration of high-skilled professionals from less developed countries to developed countries leaves the sending countries' economies with a reduced supply of skilled people in research, production, and in public and private services. The resulting brain drain would limit the use of educational investment in the sending countries, creating favourable conditions for their re-use by the more developed countries. Skilled emigration has been analysed according to two contrasting models: a) the model of the exodus that stresses the idea that more skilled individuals are forced to the exile, allowing them to get a job and a remuneration corresponding to their training; b) the model of the Diaspora that stresses the mutual benefits of intercultural exchanges opened by the circulation of academic, scientific and cultural cosmopolitan elites.

1.2. This research intended to test the comprehensive power of each of these theses referencing to the various types of mobility of highly qualified Portuguese professionals to Europe in the last decade. Although the existing statistics are poor on the methodology used and limited in its scope, it is recognized in international studies published over the past years that Portugal is one of the European countries where the drain is more accentuated in the last decade. Docquier & Marfouk (2007) estimated at 19.5% the proportion of workers with higher academic degree who emigrated in recent years.

1.3. However, these preliminary data leave many unresolved issues which we describe and analyse in this pioneering study in Portugal: 1) what are the modalities, causes and characteristics of brain drain over the past decade in Portugal? 2) which is the evolution of the stock and flows? 3) what are the forms of articulation between different modalities of the exodus of Portuguese skilled professionals and the process of international migration? 4) what are the forms of articulation between the brain drain and

the increasing flow of academic mobility? 5) what are the consequences for the scientific system and Portuguese higher education? 6) what is the impact in the emergence or reduction of scientific networks featuring Portuguese scientists?

1.4. The research strategy is suitable to the characteristics of an exploratory study that allows enunciating questions and hypotheses that can be studied in later steps of the research. Articulating an extensive research with an in-depth analysis we seek to identify the subjectivity of the direct actors of emigration in some of its main working contexts. We have proposed a mixed strategy which makes use of multilateral technical quantitative and qualitative data collection: a) the questionnaire surveys that aims to characterize the push and pull factors present in the decision to emigrate, as well as the effects of deskilling and reskilling resulting from migration; b) life stories and interviews with focus groups that will draft the life trajectories, the differential effects of socialization on the biographical dispositions and the strategies of improving the educational capital. Using a multiple case methodology we have described and compared the circumstances, the modalities and the characteristics of the mobility of four types of migration of high skilled Portuguese individuals in Europe: a) Migration to a European country for the exercise of professions in higher education or scientific systems; b) Long-term migration to a European country for work in primary or secondary segment of the employment system; c) European student mobility of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd cycle that leads to insert primary or secondary segments of the employment system of the receiving countries; d) Mobility and transient movement or commuting through European networks of science, production, services or culture.

1.5. Case studies of each of these groups tested the research hypotheses presented in the literature in a comparative way: a) the hypothesis of the brain drain; b) the hypothesis of beneficial brain drain; c) the hypothesis of the cross-fertilization of the elites; d) the hypothesis of brain circulation through networking; e) the hypothesis of latent brain drain due to mobility formation and training abroad.

2. The focus groups, the questionnaire-based surveys and the sociological portraits, carried out as they were in a sequence, allowed for a wide and dense reading of the approached phenomenon. The eclectic nature of the followed methodology was crucial to consolidate the obtained results.

2.1. The research made to define the focus groups and the application of this technique allowed to unveil a strong presence of women in the Portuguese qualified emigration flows. It also allowed to detect a rejuvenation of the flows and a highly significant share of post-graduates. In this context, it is not surprising that predominant personal profiles correspond to single people with no children.

2.2. The initial approach applied via focus group showed that professional reasons were the motive that mostly contributed to the subjects' departure from Portugal. Additionally, it revealed a strong trend in those who left the country to be professionally integrated abroad in their area of study. Upskilling and highly significant perspectives of career advancement are part of that trend, in a clear contrast with the dominant general trend in the professional integration of European young people.

2.3. The lack of job opportunities in Portugal appeared right from the beginning as a clear push factor that motivated travelling abroad. As for pull factors, personal and family factors are less decisive than professional ones, although they may justify permanence in Portugal. In this context, the focus groups revealed a marked trend to live integration at the destination countries as part of long term permanence.

2.4. Mobility is in different senses a structuring and framing factor for the brain drain in Portugal, with three major characteristics: a) previous academic mobility experiences are a clear emigration structuring factor; b) those who leave detach themselves from the traditional emigrant stereotype and practices, and fit better into mobility structured identity profiles; c) the opportunities are highly dynamic, and circulation through different jobs and countries is a striking feature of the Portuguese qualified emigration flows.

2.5. In a country with a vast emigrant community, according to the 2011 Census, the Portuguese with higher education qualifications living in OECD countries accounted for around 10% of the total Portuguese immigrants in those countries. However, this group of qualified Portuguese reaches the highest growth rate in 10 years (87.5%). Countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany show much higher values for both indicators, over 20%.

2.6. The questionnaires applied to a non-probabilistic sample of 1011 individuals confirm and reinforce these trends. They further reveal that professional reasons can be seen as an immediate justification for departure: before migrating, 36% of the respondents had no job, whereas 92% are employed after migrating to their destination countries. Also note that, before the migratory experience, about 1/3 had no income in Portugal and another third had a net monthly income between 500 and 1.000 euros. When comparing this with the post-migratory situation, a huge difference is found, as a little more than 1/4 of the respondents have a net monthly salary of more than 3.000 euros in their host country and approximately the same proportion (also a little more than 1/4) earns between 2.000 and 3.000 euros (net monthly salary).

2.7. The sociological portraits confer density and put a face to these data. Besides the diversity of individual experiences, they show, among other things, cross-cutting regularities that are worth noting: the acknowledged quality of the academic education

received in Portugal and its importance to be integrated at the destination country; the lack of conditions and perspectives that might motivate returning to the original country, combined with personal expectations of long permanence at the destination countries; the refusal of the emigrant identity and the adoption of practices that reinforce the perception of returning as a little more than a mirage.

3. Additionally to the project's scientific impact, highlight goes to the project's broad social impact.

3.1. From a scientific point of view, the project indicators are still far from being complete, even though they are already quite relevant. After the publishing of the research outputs, the contacts established within the scope of the project led to a starting point. The research programme enabled the creation of a network that aims at using the project's theoretical and methodological procedures to develop a Europe-wide research project allowing: i) to comparatively study the 5 EU countries (Portugal, Greece, Spain, Ireland and Italy) that supply the largest qualified emigration flows in Europe; ii) to compare European policies regarding academic and professional mobility, in order to compare higher education and training policies in the 5 identified countries.

3.2. The project's social impact is reinforced as it contributes to the public debate on an extremely relevant topic in today's Portuguese society. The numerous references it has known in the written press, in the radio and on TV, the public debates organised based on the project's data, and the number and diversity of people who took part in public sessions (held in October 2015 in Coimbra, Lisbon and Oporto) related with the release of "Brain Drain – Portraits of the Portuguese qualified emigration", among other indicators, show the project's ability to impact beyond the scientific field. To such extent, the project has not yet produced its full effects in contributing to shape information and public policies in Portugal and in Europe, but further development and research are expected to leave a noticeable imprint. In the national scope, partnerships have already been established with Foundation Francisco Manuel dos Santos and the University of Coimbra for the creation of tools allowing to index all the Portuguese scientists in the diaspora within the next year.

4. Considering the theoretical hypothesis, the conclusion to be drawn is that this is a phenomenon of brain drain, rather than cross-fertilization of the elites. The flows tend to be strongly asymmetrical (with a negative balance between arrivals and departures), intense, permanent and long-termed. Transitory emigration is generally low, and formal and informal networks are residual. On the other hand, latent mobility works as a driving force for departure. Academic mobility experiences encourage the brain drain. Even those

who do not leave immediately after academic mobility show a strong latent predisposition to depart.