

STUDY MIGRATION PHENOMENON IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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Abstract

International student migration is one of the main factors of the internationalization of higher education institutions. This phenomenon is not new in Romania, a country that before 1989 was one of the top destination countries for students looking for a career in medicine, technology and engineering. Today, this phenomenon can be seen as a vector of social, economic, and in the context of the recent elections, political change.

The Romanian revolution and the admission of Romania to the European Union have caused major changes to the international student mobility phenomenon. Countries participating in exchange programs appear, either as destination countries for mobile students or as source countries for this segment of the population, only a few countries meet standards for being both source and destination for international students. Romania has reversed its role from being primarily a destination country to a source country in the post-Communist period; young Romanians choose to complete their education in countries that have more mature educational systems and offer funding and labor integration opportunities, superior to the ones offered by the Romanian educational system. By contrast, fewer EU students are choosing to study in the Romanian higher education system.

Romanian educational policies reform and the adherence to the Bologna system were a major challenge for Romanias; the alignment to European standards in particular was not an easy task, but today, Romania, has four universities in top 700 universities of the world. Undoubtedly, student mobility, through the transfer of ideas and culture is a positive enterprise for populations; however these benefits are lost if migration is overwhelmingly outbound.

The aim of this paper is to offer a wide perspective and some possible explanations of this phenomenon, using the data from the Romanian Institute for Statistics and the European Commission official statistics. The absence of data in this field makes the phenomenon hard to follow across time, but some patterns do stand out when it comes to the selection of the destination countries. By better understanding these processes, we can ensure that countries like Romania enjoy the opportunities offered by the hard-earned Europeanization of education and student mobility.

Keywords: Study mobility, Educational policies, Study migration patterns