

# **Staying or leaving Greece: The Young Scientists' view and dilemma**

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## **1. Abstract**

The paper deals with the emigration of young researchers in Greece. The basic assumption of this research is that the economic crisis and the unstable political and economic environment encourage more and more young Greek scientists to look for new perspectives of personal development and welfare abroad. At the same time, some of them are considering that they can have a safe and successful mainly professional future without having to leave Greece.

In Europe, with youth unemployment reaching 50.70 % in Greece in July 2014, 24.30% in Romania in June 2014 and 35.20 % in Portugal, 53.70 % in Spain and 22.50% in Bulgaria in September 2014, young scientists are not migrating anymore by choice, but out of necessity (Nedeljkovic, 2014). On the other hand the Global Migration Group (GMG, 2014:15), supports that decent work, economic growth and sustainable development that increase opportunities and social mobility for youth are critical to ensuring that migration is a matter of informed choice rather than necessity. Referring to Greece its common acceptable that Greece has a long history on migration, since it was a traditionally migration country, with the first wave of migration to take place the period 1890-1921 (Cholezas and Tsakloglou, 2008), to USA and Egypt, while the second one between 1950 – 1971 especially to former Soviet Union and East European countries, but also USA, Canada and Australia (Kostakis et al., 2009; Christopoulos et al., 2014). That period about 1, 2 million people left from the country. Last years and especially after 2008, Greece faced a new wave of migration. Unlike earlier waves of emigration, that were composed mostly of low-educated workers, the current emigrants are young scientists, talented Greeks and specialized human workforce (Labrianidis, 2014; Martiskova, 2013:8; Cavounidis, 2015), in the framework of general economic crisis to the country and the unstable political environment (Barnato, 2012:1; Labrianidis and Vogiatzis, 2012:1).

Following Laudel (2005) the question for international 'brain drain' has become a familiar feature in science policy for more than fifty years, with political and academic concern has usually

focused upon large groups defined them as 'highly-skilled workforce'. Focusing on OECD data (2013:4-5) 'brain drain' is particularly acute in small countries and island states in Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. On the other hand over the past ten years, the emigration of highly-skilled people has increased for some countries while decreased in others. While the absolute number of tertiary educated emigrants in OECD countries has increased for all countries of origin, in some cases the highly educated population in the country of origin rose faster than the number of the highly educated emigrants. This was the case for many countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which invested heavily in tertiary education in the past decade. In contrast, the emigration rate of highly educated persons from the Republic of Moldova, Zambia and Zimbabwe increased by more than 10 percentage points since 2000. This term was also coined by Royal Society to describe the outflow of scientists and technologists to USA and Canada in the 1950s and early 1960s (Foadi, 2006; Cervantes and Guellec, 2002; Boncea, 2014), that has evolved with the new phase of globalization (Chaichian, 2012). Several studies present brain drain phenomenon as the movement of highly skilled people from less to more developed countries offering better social and economic opportunities (Christopoulos et al., 2014; Chaichian, 2011; McDonald, 2000; Williams and Balaz, 2005; Boncea, 2014; Oamegbe and Beine, 2010; Levy, 2003). Particular interest present the study by Kourvetaris (1972) who argued that the analysis of the international mobility of scientists receives three different conceptual perspectives, the internationalist/cosmopolitan, the nationalist/local and finally the differential push-pull explanation of international brain drain. The *internationalist/cosmopolitan* approach suggested by Harry G. Johnson (see Adams, 1968) of London Scholl Economics and Political Science. This view recognizes the right of the individual scientist to freely choose his career and to pursue that right even if he has to leave his own country (according to the democratic ideology of the western world). Similar approach has been expressed by Tansel and Gungor (2003). On the other hand the *nationalist* approach suggested by Don Patinkin of Hebrew University (see Adams, 1968). This view sees the question of brain drain as a serious problem for the loser nation when some among those who migrate are the best of its scientists from which the actual professional and managerial leadership usually comes for the development of the nation. Finally, the so-called differential *push-pull* explanation offered by Enrique Otieza and Charles V. Kidd (Otieza, 1965:445-461; Kidd, 1968: 76-84; Adams, 1968:120-134). Following this explanation, the *push* factors are those that operate as centrifugal to many scientists and professionals in their effort to choose a career in their native countries (i.e. rigid bureaucracy structures, political instability, corruption, low salaries, lack of facilities, emphasis on ascriptive criteria and nepotism rather than criteria of meritocracy and achievement, lack of research facilities, human rights abuse, lack of autonomy, less quality of urban life, etc). On the other hand there are centripetal forces that operate to *pull* them toward countries where career prospects and opportunities for self development and advancement combined with better salaries, and research investments are brighter in both economic and intellectual terms combined with relative political stability but also rich scientific and cultural

tradition (Kourvetaris, 1972; Foadi, 2006; Kainth, 2009; Filler et al., 1996; World Migration, 2003; Ngoma and Ismail, 2013).

More specifically, this paper examines the views and dilemma of young researchers in Greece as regards the possibility to migrate abroad during the current economic crisis that has affected the country in the last 5 years. The aim of this paper is to detect the profile of those young scientists who are willing to emigrate as well of those that, at the opposite, are not willing to emigrate abroad. The main question is to examine what are the most important reasons that could be conduct high skills new citizens to leave their country? The study is based on an empirical research conducted on a sample of 409 young scientists from various scientific specialties (human, polytechnic, medical school etc) coming from university and technological institutes of the region of Thessaly in Greece. It appears that there is no significant difference as regards gender factor while at the opposite, the family's economic situation is obviously a discriminating parameter as well as the type of skills acquired by students during their university studies. It is also obvious that negative views concerning the political system are one of the main reasons for new scientists' emigration.

For this reason the investigation was carried out through the application of a questionnaire examining alternative reasons for emigration or not and using a 1-7 points Liker scale. In order to evaluate the impact of various situations and reasons conducting new researchers to immigrate or not, logistic model shave been implemented.

The added value of such an empirical study is important for the future of the country as it highlights the young population' perception as regards the future of the country, the main reasons that stimulate them for emigration as well as the problems arising in terms of political decisions and actions to tackle this phenomenon.