

# ATUMUN SOMMERCAMP

2021

*United Nations Economic and Social  
Council*



**Study Guide** for the topic of

*Combating the issue of Brain Drain in LEDCS*

# The Economic and Social Council

Topic: *Combating the issue of “brain drain” in LEDCs*

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## Personal Introduction

Hello dear delegates! This is your study guide, a chance for you to learn as much as possible about the debate that is instored for you in the MUN conference on the ATU Sommercamp. You'll be debating in *the Economic and Social Council* on the topic of *Brain Drain*. We hope that you will find the study guide helpful and that you are as excited for ATUMUN as we are. If you have any questions regarding the committee, the topic or a similar matter, feel free to contact us. We are looking forward to meeting you all and to an interesting debate!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at: [kristian.possum@gmail.com](mailto:kristian.possum@gmail.com) and [mathias.sejerkilde@gmail.com](mailto:mathias.sejerkilde@gmail.com).

**Sincerely from your Committee Directors,**

Mathias Sejerkilde and Kristian Dahlmann Oddershede

## 1. ECOSOC

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It was established in 1945 as one of the six main organs in the UN by the UN Charter. There are currently 54 countries represented in the council per 2021, 15 of which will be represented at this conference.

## 2. Definition of key terms

**Emigration:** the act of leaving one's country of birth with the intent of settling elsewhere.

**Human capital:** knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience possessed by a group of people affecting their productive capacity.

**Brain drain:** the emigration of highly trained, qualified or skilled people from a particular country to another; either for better pay, equipment, political stability or living conditions, thereby decreasing the human capital of the country which people emigrate from.

**Brain gain:** when foreign professionals are moving to a country for better opportunities and conditions, thereby increasing the human capital of the receiving country.

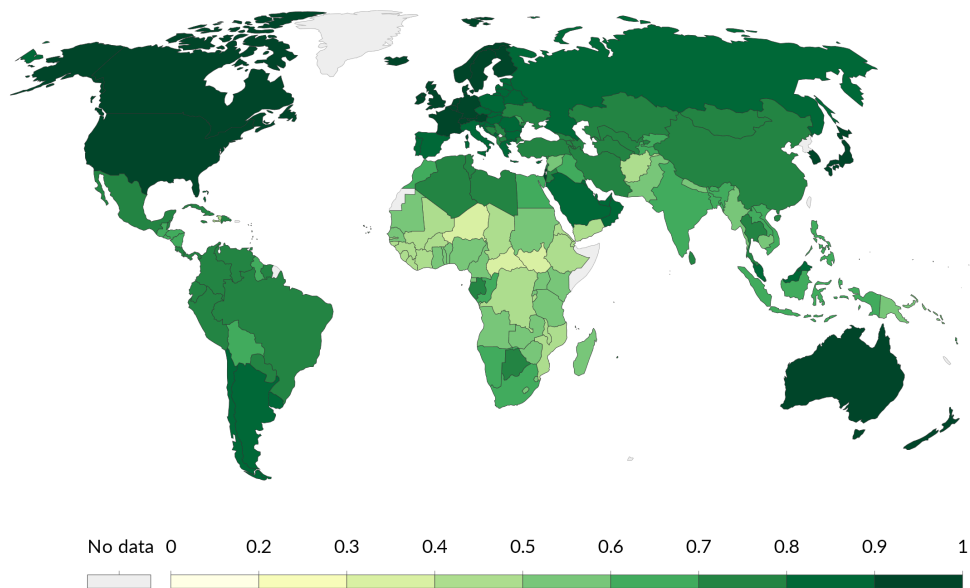
**Reverse brain drain:** form of brain drain where professionals move from a more developed country to a less developed country. These migrants may accumulate experience and improve skills abroad that can be useful in their country of birth.

**Ratio of physicians:** the number of inhabitants in a country per physician (medical doctor). 1:500 means one physician per 500 inhabitants.

**LEDC:** Less Economically Developed Country; (a.k.a. developing country); this term indicates a country showing either a poverty level of income, a high rate of population increase, a substantial portion of workers employed in agriculture or unemployed, and/or a low portion of adult literacy. There is not a direct measurement for when a country is an LEDC, but more than half the countries of the world are widely considered LEDCs.

**MEDC:** More Economically Developed Country; (a.k.a. developed country); whose countries whose economy is characterized by large industrial service sectors and advanced technological infrastructures.

### 3. Introduction



*Figure 1: World map representing Human Development Index (HDI) categories*

**The issue of brain drain**, which is becoming increasingly alarming, occurs because of different factors such as unstable political conditions, reservation system (which consists in the facilitation of people belonging to higher classes in education, jobs and promotions), low standards of living, poor health conditions and lack of good employment opportunities or facilities.

The migration of a country's human capital, which may have otherwise benefited their country of birth and contributed to its economy and improvement, results in major problems such as loss of talent and quality, political disturbances, large financial losses, lack of healthcare capacity (especially in the case of migration of doctors and engineers). Consequently, it increases the imbalance in the economic and social prospects of the different countries around the world: the already rich and developed nations grow richer while the underdeveloped ones stay poor. Brain drain is an issue for a majority of countries, but the LEDCs are suffering the most. The LEDCs are lowest in the Human Development Index (HDI) as well as in other measurements such as employment opportunities; which leads to a tremendous human capital flight to the MEDCs. Furthermore, the LEDCs are in a necessary process of growth, which is undeniably inhibited by brain drain. Therefore, combating the issue of brain drain in the LEDCs is of the utmost importance.

#### 4. Background information

Human capital flight (an early expression for brain drain) first emerged as a major public concern in the 1940s, when high numbers of European experts emigrated to the USA and UK.

In 1972, about 6% of the world's physicians (140.000) were located outside their home country, mainly in the USA, UK and Canada.

In 1979, the World Health Organization (WHO) carried out a detailed 40-country report on the magnitude and flow of international migration by health professionals. According to this report, nearly 90% of all emigrants were moving to five countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, UK and USA.

In 2000, about 175 million people had been living abroad for more than a year: about 65 million of them were economically active.

However, the lack of reliability of data and the problem of distinguishing 'permanent' migrants from 'temporary' ones still exist, and brain drain is only more common than ever. At present, countries such as India, Pakistan and Russia are suffering from this problem and losing their human capital extremely rapidly. As a matter of fact, India is currently deprived of around 3 percent of its skilled professionals (including teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists etc.) to developed nations like the USA.

Young, educated, healthy individuals are most likely to pursue higher education and economic improvements abroad. Most doctors obtain specialized qualifications during their stay in the host country. Half of the foreign-born graduate students in France, UK and USA do not return to their home country after having completed their studies. In 1995, in fact, of all the doctoral graduates in science and engineering in the USA who came from India, 79 % decided to remain in the USA. Similarly for graduates who were born in China 88% decided to stay in the USA.

In most cases, the "donor" country is not only decreasing its investment in education in the medical field, but also experiencing great losses in numbers of professionals to offer health care. In fact, as a country loses its talents, its progress slows down due to the lack of the highly skilled workforce, which has left the nation. For example, the ratio of physicians to patients in India is 1:2083 compared to the USA where the ratio is 1:500.

LEDCs suffer the most from this issue and, therefore, their development is hindered. The brain drain statistics for the world's LEDCs are severe: among their citizens with a university-level education, about one in five leaves their own country to seek employment elsewhere. Whereas in the MEDCs, the same proportion is one out of 25. For example, according to the African Union, every year about 70,000 of its skilled professionals and experts leave Africa, as the continent is only able to create about 3 million jobs per year.

## 5. Major countries involved

The following are examples of some LEDCs where brain drain has a catastrophic effect;

**Nigeria:** Nigeria is struggling with brain drain, which causes a conspicuous number of trained and skillful personnel, especially in the medical field, to leave the country. In fact, the development in the medical sector has further lowered the physician-patient ratio in Nigeria from 1:4000 to 1:5000. In comparison, the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended ratio is about 1:600.

**Kenya:** Kenya is suffering, as other LEDCs, from the migration of intellectuals. The push factors which have led to the exile or flight of writers, activists and other professionals are political instability, corruption, lack of security due to organized gangs and violence, poor working conditions, low salaries, and few opportunities of employment. Nowadays, around 51% of the country's physicians have migrated to more appealing countries.

**Ethiopia:** Ethiopia represents one of the most serious examples of countries suffering from brain drain, despite its huge number of experts, in particular in the medical field. Recently, a research presented to the National Symposium on Ethiopian Diasporas revealed that 75% of its experts have been fleeing to other countries during the past 10 years, leaving behind too few scientists, doctors, and engineers to fill the available positions.

**Bangladesh:** Brain drain is becoming an increasingly alarming issue in Bangladesh. In fact, according to the statistics, 65% of the newly-graduates in the medical field seek jobs abroad causing the country to lose about 200 doctors per year. Moreover, a study carried out by the World Economic Forum revealed that, among people from 15 to 29 years old, more than 80% would prefer to migrate.

**Haiti:** One of the main reasons for brain drain in Haiti is the fact that foreign policies (such

as the twenty years abusive occupation by the US during the twentieth century) that were enforced placed the inhabitants' lives in danger. Due to a rising fear, professionals have been seeking better life conditions and workplaces in developed, or at least developing, countries. Human capital flight has affected both the political development and the economic development. On the political side, the policies and means needed by Haiti to tackle the problem do not exist yet, while as far as the economy is concerned, the output of human capital is not enough to sustain the lack of professionals who moved towards other countries. Education has been influenced by brain drain the same way it has caused it: through the absence of necessary educational resources.

## 6. UN's Previous Involvement

In the past decades, the United Nations have tackled the issue of brain drain in many ways.

UNOMOZ, which stands for United Nations Operations in Mozambique, is an example of the UN involvement. UNOMOZ was a UN peace mission in Mozambique in 1992. That year the UN Secretary General submitted to the SC (Security Council) a report aiming at guaranteeing security. As a consequence of the achieved security, many experts and highly qualified professionals decided to abort their plans to flee overseas.

The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee held its first session in 2004. It is formed by a body of independent professionals that monitors implementation aiming at safeguarding workers' rights from potential violation.



## 7. Possible solutions

It is important to understand the issue of brain drain and how it affects the world and global prosperity. Long-term solutions are needed to make an actual difference in the conditions of the LEDC nations.

### **Long term government intervention**

Government intervention could improve job prospects for highly educated youth in their country. New business sectors could be funded and encouraged by long term public-sector policies. Long term programs of intellectual exchange students and professionals between LEDCs and MEDCs, could be established by the governments, though it would need total approval by the country's political sector. Encouraging to reverse brain drain in MEDCs could also aid in preserving the LEDCs long-term stability of human capital and general vitality. This would result in increased technical and scientific knowledge in the country in general, helping develop a stronger nation.

However, government intervention is a financially expensive path, to increase the living conditions for highly trained, qualified, or skilled people, and decrease the sentiment for emigration.

Furthermore, it can be questioned to what degree governments should interfere in the individual's choice of education and employment. Though the degree of interference from a government can be discussed, no individual can be forced to take an education or live in one country instead of another.

### **International cooperation**

The usage of International Communication Technology (ICT) could be promoted in aspects of not only knowledge sharing, but also developing job-opportunities on long distance terms (something that the current COVID-19 era proved efficient all over the world). The affected countries could set up a network with emigrated men and women to prevent communication loss and help to regain contact, in hopes of receiving remittances for family members. Thereby, increasing the number of people who voluntarily return to their country of birth after ending their education. An international cooperation between the countries of origin and the countries of destination for the brain drain population, can limit the damage in the drained country.

## 8. Questions a resolution should answer

- How do we combat the issue of Brain Drain and minimize the problems arising in the LEDCs as a result of Brain Drain?
  - How to ensure that highly educated individuals **return to their countries** of birth after the end of their studies?
- Shall the MEDCs play an active role in the help of decreasing **Brain Drain** in the LEDCs, or is it up to LEDCs themselves to combat the issue?

*(The MEDCs who benefit from **Brain Gain**, lose some of their human capital when Brain Drain from the LEDCs are decreased, which should also be considered when answering the question above.)*

## Further reading

It is highly recommended that you complement this study guide with your own research. The following links are a few examples to get you started.

### **Brain drain in Africa;**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303984720\\_Brain\\_drain\\_in\\_less\\_developed\\_countries\\_Africa\\_in\\_focus/](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303984720_Brain_drain_in_less_developed_countries_Africa_in_focus/)

### **LDC; Least developed countries; the bottom of the LEDCs;**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Least\\_Developed\\_Countries/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Least_Developed_Countries/)

### **Can brain drain have a positive impact;**

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1275994/#!po=0.892857/>

### **Brain drain (Human capital flight) description;**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_capital\\_flight](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_capital_flight)

### **Committee of migrant workers;**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CMW/Pages/CMWIntro.aspx>