

" Challenges and opportunities of scientific diaspora engagement:
evidence from the Republic of Moldova "

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Abstract

This study examines the scientific diaspora option within the migration and development nexus in the context of skilled migration from the Republic of Moldova. Migration has been a significant component of the transition process in Eastern Europe and Moldova is one of the countries that has been most affected by the emigration of its labor force as a consequence of economic crisis and political uncertainties. The country has experienced particularly large-scale emigration of scientists and skilled professionals, who leave in search of better opportunities abroad. Based on primary information collected through an on-line survey and complementary interviews, this study offers an empirical analysis of skilled Moldovans abroad and the determinants of their engagement in transnational cooperation and their potential return to the home country. The analysis shows how mobilizing the resources of skilled migrants and their mobility plans depend on the environment to which they are exposed in the host countries, and on the opportunities that the home country has to offer. While skilled Moldovans see their experience abroad in a positive light, they maintain strong links with Moldova and are interested in engaging in development activities there. Activities related to the transfer of knowledge and skills, academic exchanges, joint research, investment links and physical return are some of the ways through which they see themselves making a contribution. Even though skilled Moldovans may continue to emigrate, there are signs of intentions to return, especially among students. However, they are skeptical about Moldova being able to provide a trustworthy and reliable environment that can offer them career prospects. The policy options for Moldova show that there is a need to provide systematic institutional support in order to encourage skilled migrants to engage in transnational cooperation, as well as a need for considerable improvements to local conditions and the structural situation to ensure benefits.

Keywords: scientific diasporas, skilled migration, transnationalism, development, Moldova.