Human capital in European peripheral regions: Brain - Drain and Brain - Gain

Policies on brain drain

Many policies are related to the problem of brain drain and brain gain. For instance, every policy that makes a region more attractive to live in, will make a region a more attractive place for the highly educated to settle. In theory this can be everything ranging from infrastructure measures that increase mobility to other regions to efforts to improve housing, cultural, health and school facilities. Settlement factors for highly educated persons and settlement factors for organizations that need higher educated employees are strongly interrelated.

Secondly, any economic measures that stimulate the demand for higher educated persons are relevant. This will keep people in the region.

Selection of measures to evaluate and implement

Although it is clear that many policy measures would have an impact, the intention of the project is not to analyze or implement all measures that would contribute to the quality of life in a region or to it’s economic prosperity. We restrict ourselves in this project to measures that have an explicit aim or secondary goal to attract or keep human capital in the region. The criterion is if the designers of a measure explicitly introduced it with the aim to contribute an intended effect or side effect to the production and attraction of human capital.

We make an overlapping categorization of measures that stimulate the production of human capital, try to attract human capital or in some way (entrepreneurial or infrastructural) stimulate the funding or moving into the region of knowledge-intensive business.

Examples of measures to attract human capital in a region

Attracting human capital can be attained by either creating jobs for highly skilled workers or trying to fill vacancies with people from other regions. Drawing people to the region can be done by making the region more attractive for highly educated workers or facilitating the process of moving to the region.

Temporary Entrepreneurial Positions (TOP)

The TOP-program was initiated by the University of Twente in 1984. TOP supports employees, graduates and students in setting up their own companies; this is done by offering interest-free loans, technical facilities, housing, advice and courses. The arrangement’s goal is the transfer of scientific knowledge towards society and the strengthening of the regional economy of Twente. Each year about 15 to 20 people take part in the TOP-program. By 2000 219 companies had emerged from the TOP-program. It was estimated that these 219 TOP-companies offered employment to a total of 3134 employees. Over 78% of the companies at that time were still based in the Twente Region, offering employment to a substantial number of employees.

Career centre Twente

This is a cooperation between large employers in the region. The centre compiled (through national brain gain actions such as national radio commercials and advertisements) a database of more than 600 CV’s of highly educated people who showed serious interest in coming to work in the Twente region.

People who actually want to move are facilitated by house brokers, insurance companies, painters, child care, etc, to make a move to a job in the region as attractive as possible. The centre also tries to find a job for the partner in the region.

Royaal wonen

The realization and selling of high-quality housing facilities in areas all over Enschede.

Examples to facilitating business or people (entrepreneurial or infrastructural)

There are many traditional economic and infrastructural measures to stimulate the founding or attraction of business reaching from offering venture capital and advice to building business parks. In the brain project knowledge-intensive business are particularly interesting. Many regions already try to profit from the university through business and science parks.

Business and technology centre Twente (BTC-Twente). BTC-Twente was founded in 1981 and is situated at the Business and Science Park Enschede near the University of Twente. The purpose of BTC-Twente is to strengthen and support the high-tech enterprise in the Twente region. To obtain these goals, it tries to function more or less as an ’incubation centre’ at the Business and Science Park next to the University. It offers housing and support to young knowledge-intensive business. For that reason, it actively supports the start-up and growth of these innovative enterprises by creating an ’entrepreneur-friendly’ environment. About 70% of the companies are active in the technology sector.

Business angles

In the West Palz a network is created of experienced mangers (sometimes already retired) that can help starting businesses as senior coaches.

Examples of measures to stimulate the production of human capital in the region

The founding of institutes of higher education will not be enough to stimulate the production of human capital in a region.

Platform Enschede student city

This is an attempt by the municipality of Enschede together with the institutes for higher education (university, schools for higher professional education) to stimulate initiatives to promote Enschede as a place to study. This is done by proving information on all aspects of student life in Enschede and subsidizing (student)initiatives to make Enschede better known as a student city.

Regional part-time MBA Masterclass

An initiative for young executive professionals to participate in a regional course. In this MBA course students become familiar with other interesting organizations in the region, with the hope that they consider a career within the region.

Student mobility pass

An initiative that will be worked out in the brain drain project to provide a job database to students and a graduate database to employers in combination with internship possibilities. The underlying idea is to alert students to the possibilities of relevant work in the university region.