Problem analyses: Factors that intensify brain drain
Although the phenomenon of brain drain became well known in peripheral areas during the 1980’s, the significance of brain-drain increased recently due to a number of factors.
As a side effect of globalisation, there is a concentration of international enterprises in metropolitan areas leading to a migration of highly-qualified employers into these bigger cities. Efforts devised in the sixties and the seventies to stop brain drain failed in the last decade, notably the foundation of universities and schools to stimulate regional economy. The expected effect of university students remaining in the region after graduation never materialized. This knowledge infrastructure failed to lead to an expansion of the market for high-qualified employers. On the contrary: peripheral regions invested considerable funds in education but graduates left the regions taking the profit of the investment to metropolitan areas. The important underlying factors here are the attraction of metropolitan regions for young, highly educated people; particularly the so called weak settlement factors but also the availability of suitable jobs. A third factor is the new European labour market, where cross-border labour and housing mobility is becoming increasingly important. This cross border mobility could have important consequences for brain drain if there are differences in the average level of education in the cross border regions.

Brain gain factors
Apart from a growing importance of brain drain in European regions there is also evidence of the significance of brain gain processes in the economic development of peripheral regions. Two processes are of particular interest:
In the first instance, people from these peripheral regions go to the metropolitan areas, obtain high positions in the economy and use their possibilities to support their home regions. Such processes (people in the Diaspora helping their friends in peripheral regions) can be observed in the NWE-region and also in Switzerland.
In the second case, older highly educated people with good jobs in metropolitan areas go back to peripheral regions (sometimes because of the better environment). These people may have a very positive effect on the local economy as well as on the social network.

Factors in the peripheral regions in the project
These three regions share similar characteristics, which makes analyses of brain drain and brain gain in these regions and a the trans-national transfer of ideas and measures important:
- similarities in number of inhabitants: Twente region (ca. 600.000 inhabitants), the Westpfalz region (ca. 550.000 inhabitants) and the Zentralschweiz region (ca. 680.000 inhabitants).
- regional economies that depended in the past on a single economic activity: Twente (textile), Westpfalz (mining, heavy industry) and Zentralschweiz (agriculture) and have all witnessed a decline of these respective sectors;
- a regional institute for higher education, intended to contribute to the regional development of the region net migration rate of young, highly educated people leaving the region;
- in Twente and the West-Palz regions there is a growing labour and housing mobility with the cross-border regions (Germany and Luxembourg/ France respectively)
- attractive natural environments.
- a poor, often undeserved, reputation of weak settlement factors (with the exception of the recognition of the enjoyable natural green environment)
These similarities cause a relatively sizable production of human capital, combined with a sizable regional emigration of human capital.