

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES OF STUDENT INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: EUROPEAN AND LATIN-AMERICAN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Antonio Mihi-Ramirez¹, Vilmante Kumpikaite²

¹University of Granada, Spain

²Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

crossref <http://dx.doi.org/10.5755/j01.em.18.2.4326>

Abstract

By means of a structured survey that analyses the attitudes of European and Latin-American students to migration and their comparison with the official international statistics, this research attempts to acquire better knowledge about of both economic and non-economic factors that determine features of student migration, i.e. their motivations to migrate abroad, duration and intention of a stay, reasons for selecting a country of migration and the main preferred countries for migration. The results have shown that 1) economic factors are the most important reasons in the case of academic migration, 2) the family is rather important to support these processes; therefore, the incomes per capita becomes the main indicator for this kind of migration, 3) scientific literature has confirmed that higher economic returns, associated with international studies, are highly valued by students, 4) students from Latin-America and Europe have similar preferences and attitudes to migration, but in the case of Latin-Americans culture, factors and the language are a bit more important than to Spaniards, 5) and regarding the destination, Spaniards prefer the United Kingdom and the United States, whereas Latin-Americans choose between the United States, Spain, Germany and Australia as host countries

Type of the article: Empirical study.

Keywords: International migration, economic factors of migration, international economics, migration flow of students.

JEL Classification: F22, F63, M00.

1. Introduction

The opportunity to increase students' benefits in an international framework has become a reality due to globalisation and integration processes (Akulavičius & Grundey, 2011; Semiv & Semiv, 2010). Because of the establishment of programmes by the EU and other international institutions as well as cooperation agreements concluded by individual universities, the number of foreign scholars from other universities is constantly increasing (Bermudez, 2010). This number probably embeds a growing number of future workers (Heid & Larch, 2012; Mixon, 1992).

The mobility of students provides an opportunity to improve their knowledge in other foreign educational institutions of a different country during their studies (Gürüz, 2008), enabling students to master different knowledge approaches that expand their horizons and improves their potential opportunities to get a future employment (Akulavičius & Grundey, 2011), especially in the time of economic downturn and higher international competition.

Furthermore, student mobility has been a top priority of international institutions (Akulavicius & Grundey, 2011; Semiv & Semiv, 2010) and many countries aim to attract international students because it entails different benefits such as extra income, higher labour market participation and economic growth (Hawthorne, 2010).

A traditionally close relation between Latin-American countries and Spain due to historical and social links and bilateral covenants (Reher & Requena, 2009) has existed. Several research

works confirmed this tendency as well as the significant migration between Latin-American countries and Spain (Bermudez, 2010; Reher & Requena, 2009; Rey & Cebrán, 2010). Besides, students as more potentially skilled and talented migrants also represent an important resource for national economies (Papademetriou *et al.* 2008; Stulgienė & Daunorienė, 2009).

Therefore *the research problem* is formulated by means of the following question, i.e. what factors lead towards the academic out-migration of Latin-American and Spanish students.

Considering the research problem, *the aim of the paper is twofold*: 1) to analyse the main factors that stimulate scholars to migrate to foreign countries; 2) to present survey results about trends of migration of Colombian and Spanish undergraduate students and compare them with the official international statistics.

The object of the article is the economic migration of students as future workers.

The research methods. The paper is based on results of a structured questionnaire and their comparison with the official statistics of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE).

The paper is composed of three sections, where section 1 analyses the scientific literature, section 2 overviews the methodology and discusses the results, and section 3 presents the main conclusions of their search.

2. Development of the Theoretical Background

The initiatives of European universities, agencies, scientific research and academic institutes to support the international mobility of students are currently growing, i.e., Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Leonardo da Vinci programme, Erasmus Mundus programme, and the like which allows a bigger number of scholars to study abroad (Akulavičius & Grundey, 2011) (see Figure 1).

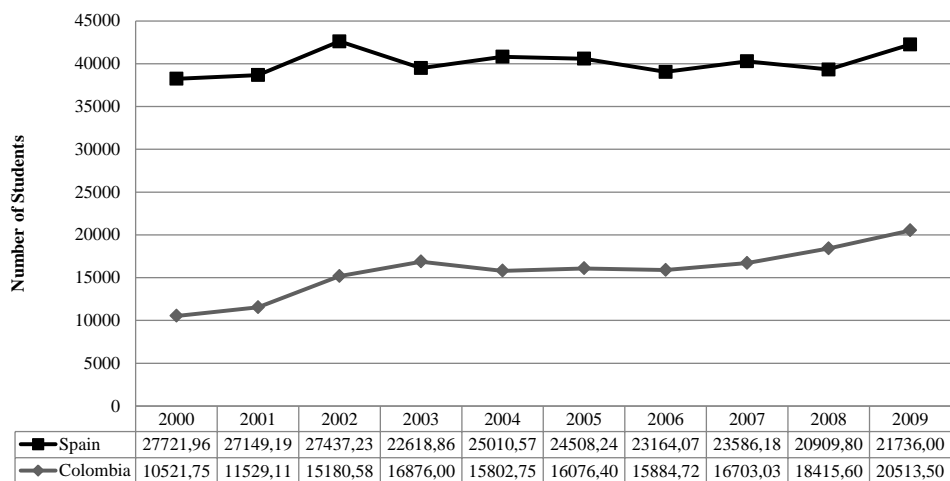


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of students abroad, OCDE, 2012¹

The migration flow between Latin-American countries and Spain, caused by academic reasons, developed during 80 year by means of programmes that aim to facilitate the cooperation in the context of the economic crisis in Latin-America (Rey & Cebrán, 2010). The migration flow has been steadily growing during the time of severe Spanish economic crisis too (Bermudez, 2010; Reher & Requena, 2009) (see Figure 2).

Several research works have confirmed the existence of interrelated factors that affect the decision of students to emigrate for academic purposes (Aceleanu, 2011; Čiarnienė & Kumpikaitė, 2009, 2011; Hawthorne, 2010; Kumpikaitė & Žickutė, 2012; Milson, 1992; Tuckman, 1970).

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD. (2012). Economic statistics

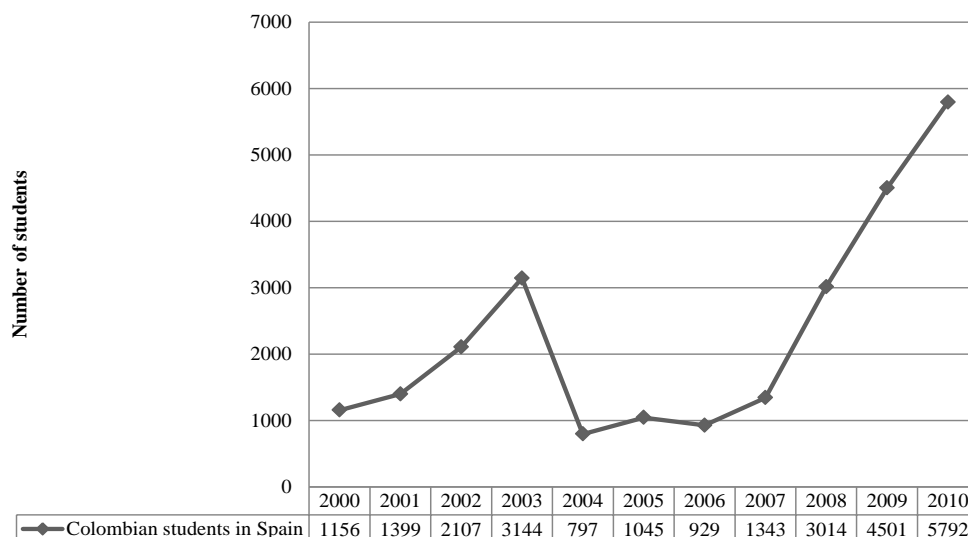


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of Colombian students in Spain, OCDE, 2012

Economics factors could be grouped into pull and push factors depending on the fact if they make the life and study conditions in the native country less attractive (considered as a push factor), or make the destination country more attractive (considered as a pull factor). This is related to the level of employment opportunities, expected benefits and living conditions (Čiarnienė & Kumpikaite, 2011; Faggian, McCann, & Sheppard, 2006; Kumpikaite & Žickutė, 2012; Mixon, 1992; Semiv & Semiv, 2010; Tuckman, 1970; Wilson, 2010) (see Table 1):

Table 1. Economic push and pull factors of migration

| Economic Pull factors | Economic Push factors |
|---|---|
| Larger differences in wage and income equality | Lower differences in wage and income inequality |
| Job creation and employment promotion | Lack of job creation and employment promotion |
| Lower tax system | Higher tax system |
| Employment opportunities | Lack of employment opportunities |
| Good expectations of benefits to achieve an education | Bad expectations of benefits to achieve an education |
| Higher future earnings from student migration | Lower future earnings from student migration |
| Shorter physical cost of mobility | Longer physical cost of mobility |
| Low consumer prices | High consumer prices |
| Higher level of the economic development of the country | Poor level of the economic development of the country |
| Proportional division of labour between sectors | Disproportional division of labour between sectors |
| Lower unemployment rate | Higher unemployment rate |
| Higher investment in science and education | Lower investment in science and education |
| Better living conditions | Bad living conditions |
| Lower tuition | Higher tuition |
| Chances to obtain extra income through an international education | Low probability to obtain extra income through an international education |
| Higher support of universities | Lower support of universities |
| Non-economic pull factors | Non-economic pull factors |
| Better weather | War or other armed conflicts |
| Language | Famine or drought |
| Political stability | Poverty |
| Education facilities | Political corruption |
| Medical facilities | Disagreement with politics |
| National prestige | Religious fundamentalism or religious intolerance |
| Better behaviour among people | Lack of various human rights |
| Family reasons | Natural disasters |
| Number of leisure, cultural activities and services available | Goal to spread one's culture and religion |
| Religious tolerance | Physical insecurity |

For example, the current increase of unemployment of graduates of tertiary studies in Europe because of the economic crisis could be considered as push factor that forces students to make decisions of continuing their studies in other countries (see Figure 3).

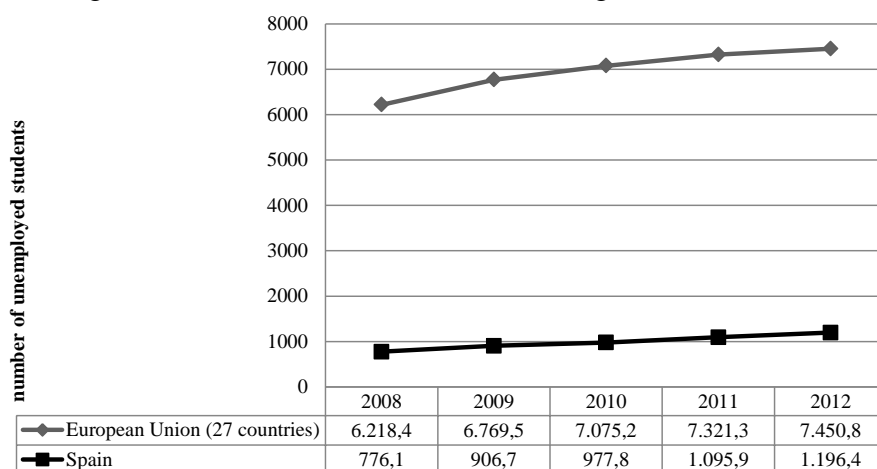


Figure 3. Evolution of unemployment in the tertiary studies, OCDE, 2012

The impact of these previous factors on the academic flow are analysed by means of a structured survey that allows comparing the attitude of Latin- American and Spanish students to migration. The attitudes are compared with the data provided by the official statistics of the OCDE.

3. Methodology and Discussion

A structured questionnaire based on the research on the attitudes of Lithuanian students to migration, conducted by Čiarnienė & Kumpikaitė (2011) has been employed with a purpose to extend the scope and conclusions of the previous research. The results obtained have been compared with the official statistics, provided by the OCDE. Undergraduates students have been selected as a focus group since the migration of these students is highly age-concentrated and is more intensive in higher education (Wilson, 2010). The survey was conducted in October, 2012 and the questionnaires were sent to students in Colombia and Spain due to the historical cooperation and similarities between both countries, i.e. the common language and similar traditions (Reher & Requena, 2009). The survey was also conducted in the countries mentioned with a purpose of deepening the knowledge about differences of student perception. 500 students participated in the survey, and 50 per cent of the respondents study economics and management, 30 per cent are enrolled in tourism, 16 per cent study engineering, and 4 per cent are representatives of other specialties. The youngest participant was 17 years old, the oldest 41 years old. The average of the respondent's age was 20 years.

The results demonstrated that 82 per cent of the respondents had previous work experience and 30 per cent of the respondents were occupied during the survey period. The students who did not work (70 per cent) were supported by their parents and scholarships. Therefore the support of the family is very important, as the research, conducted by Čiarnienė & Kumpikaitė (2011) in Lithuania confirmed too. The incomes per capita represents a significant factor to find out possibilities and situation of academic migration (Tuckman, 1970).

Our results also confirmed that due to the factors mentioned above, the majority of the students have been abroad before (96 per cent). 80 per cent were in foreign countries during their holidays and 20 per cent were abroad during previous studies. Comparing this data with the Spanish data, more students that have been previously abroad to study in Spain, i.e. 40 per cent.

Regarding the reasons for academic migration, the predominant factor for the academic migration is based on economic reasons (see Figure 4).

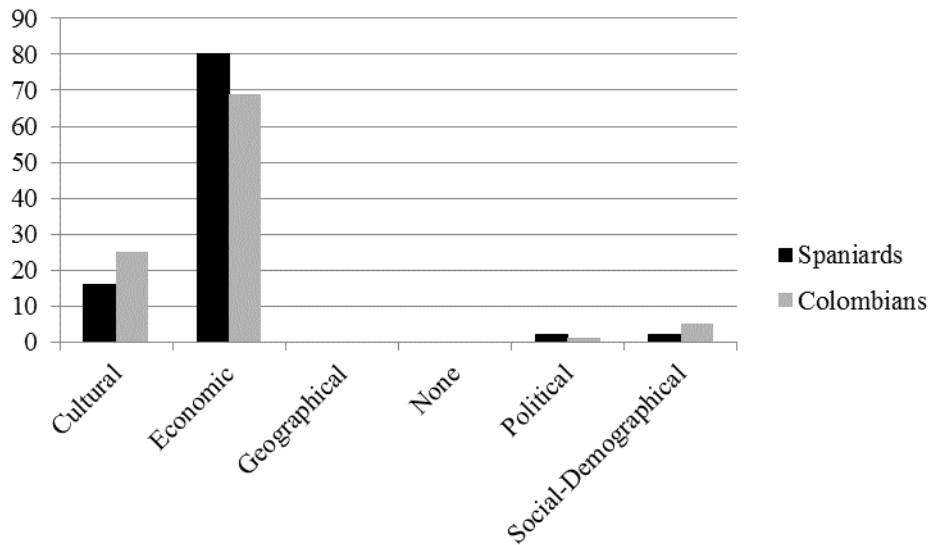


Figure 4. Reasons that would lead respondents to migrate, in per cent

Thus, it has confirmed the economic factors are the first reason to migrate as researches by Tuckman (1970) and Mixon (1992) addressed, such as: the per capita incomes, the future earnings and level of tuition; by Semiv & Semiv (2010): the future extra earning; by Faggian et al. (2006): the chance of getting a better first employment, higher local costs of living and tuition fees as factors that encourage students migration (see Figure 5).

The research has also indicated that in many cases migration decisions of the students are associated with economic reasons such as bigger salary expectations (70 per cent), more opportunities to get a better job (23 per cent), and lower living costs (7 per cent) as was pointed out by Čiarnienė & Kumpikaite (2011).

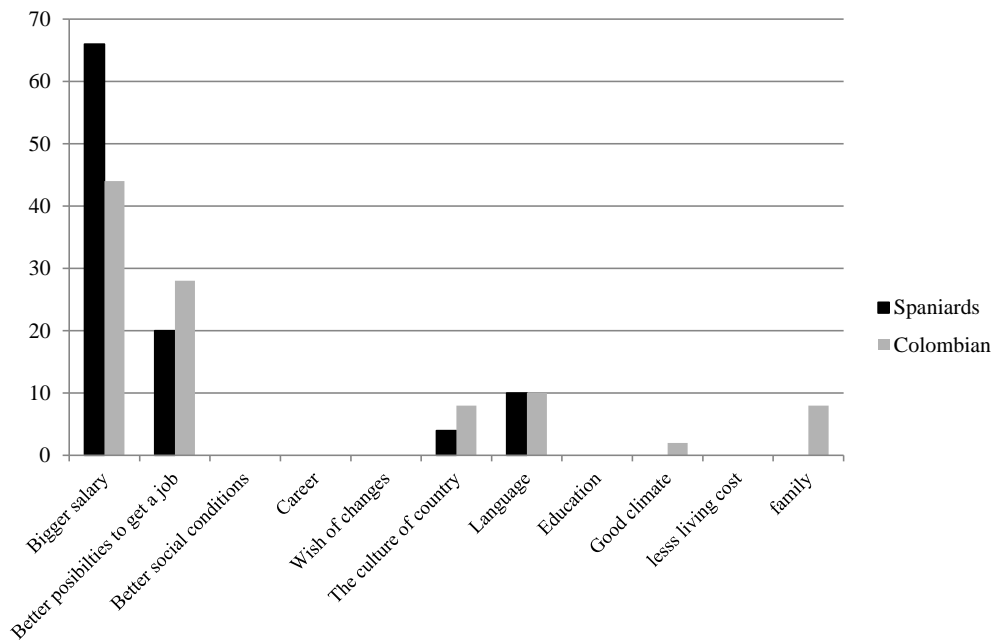
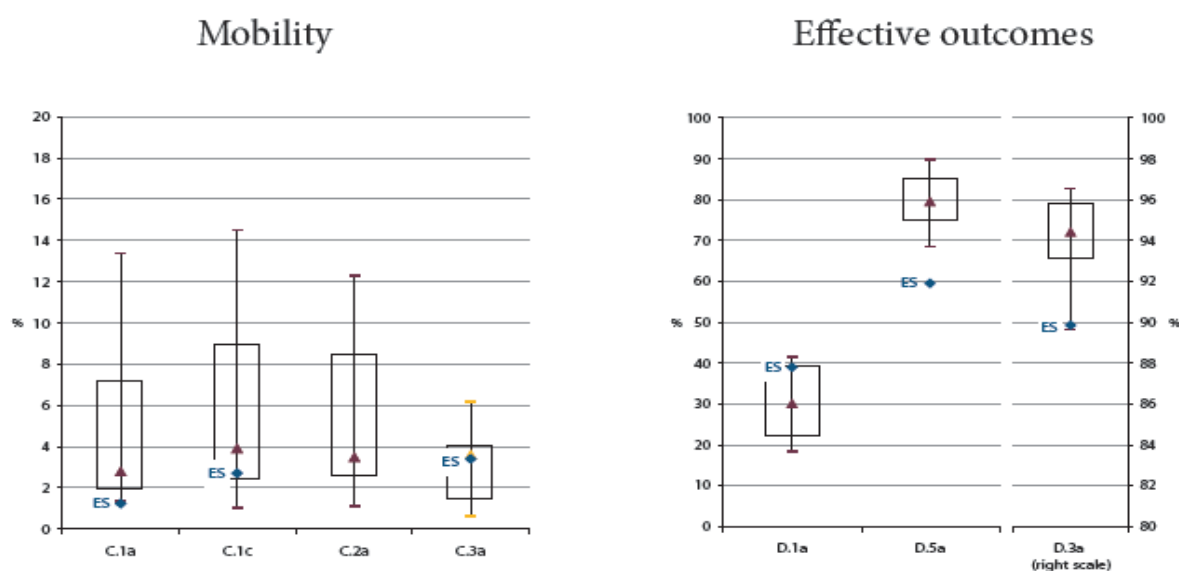


Figure 5. Reasons for selecting a country of migration, in per cent

This also confirms that higher economic returns are associated with scholars who studied abroad (Eurostat, 2012) (see Figure 6).



C.1a: Number of students studying abroad in Europe, as a percentage of all students enrolled, ISCED 5A & 6, 2006

C.1c: Number of students from abroad, as a percentage of all students enrolled, ISCED 5A & 6, 2006

C.2a: Percentage of graduates from abroad, ISCED 5A & 6, 2006

C.3a: Students having been enrolled abroad, with parents having a low educational level, ISCED 5A, 2006

D.1a: Percentage of persons aged from 25 to 34 with tertiary education (ISCED 5-6), 2007

D.5a: Proportion of people aged from 25 to 34 with tertiary education (ISCED 5-6) and employed in ISCO 1 and 2 (legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals), or in ISCO 3 (technicians and associate professionals), 2007

D.3a (right scale): Percentage of economically active tertiary education graduates (ISCED 5-6) aged from 20 to 34 in employment, 2003-2007 accumulated

Figure 6. Economic returns associated with scholars who studied abroad, in per cent

Cultural factors could be related with secondary reasons for migration, especially when studying the case of students from Colombia (figure 4). Their decisions are also related to the language, as it was indicated by the research of Tuckman (1970) and Wilson (2010).

Additionally, the results have demonstrated that the student would like to stay abroad for a duration of 1 to 3 years (63 per cent), or up to 6 months (34 per cent). Whereas 3 per cent of the respondents would like to leave their country forever. The longer duration of the stay abroad differs from the research, carried out by Ciarnienė & Kumpikaite in 2011 and was up to 1 year, due to the persistence of the last economic crisis. Moreover, 1 semester is the typical duration of Erasmus stay in Europe, and the duration from 1 to 3 years is probably related to tertiary studies.

Finally the results that regard favourite destination places have revealed that, Spanish respondents prefer the United Kingdom and the United States as the main destinations, meanwhile Colombian students prefer the United States as the first place and Germany and Australia as second destinations. Yet, the official statistics indicates Spain to be the second destination place of Colombian students, (Figure 7 and Table 2). The rest of destination places would be the same (Table 2).

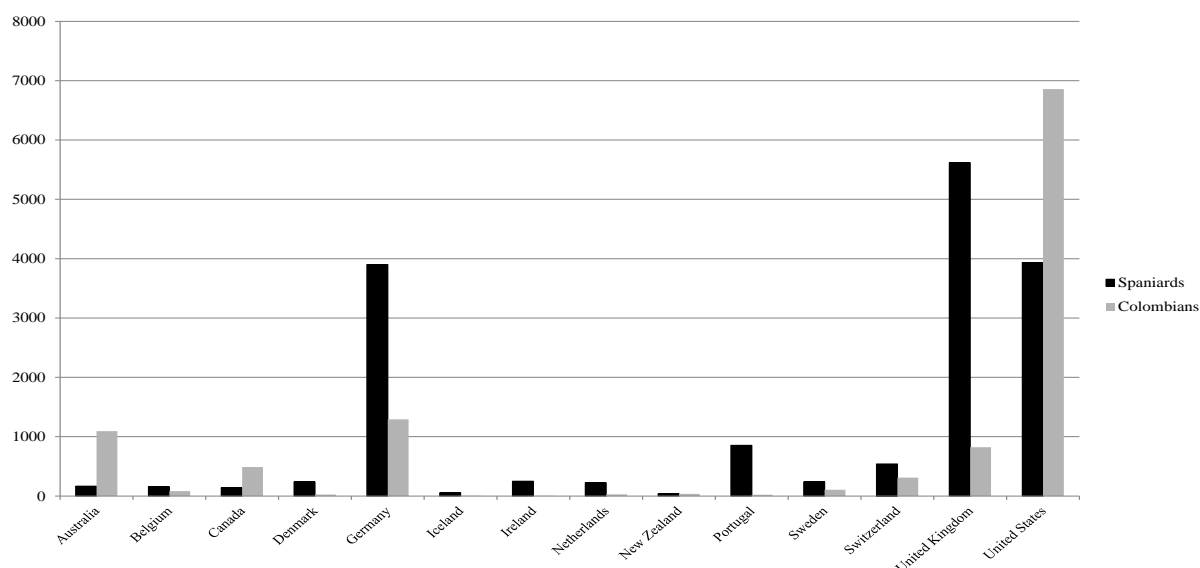


Figure 7. The main countries for migration in 2010, OECD (2012)

Table 2. The main countries for migration

| Spaniards and Colombian students enrolled abroad | 2010 | | 2009 | | 2008 | | 2007 | | 2006 | |
|--|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Spaniards | Colombians | Spaniards | Colombians | Spaniards | Colombians | Spaniards | Colombians | Spaniards | Colombians |
| Australia | 165 | 1094 | 139 | 901 | 130 | 740 | 127 | 623 | 111 | 518 |
| Belgium | 157 | 81 | 114 | 42 | 6 | 2 | 84 | 24 | 31 | 22 |
| Canada | 141 | 489 | 132 | 615 | 123 | 588 | 117 | 600 | 213 | 435 |
| Denmark | 239 | 24 | 165 | 15 | 46 | 9 | 350 | 6 | 333 | 12 |
| Germany | 3902 | 1 292 | 3657 | 1 191 | 3522 | 1 074 | - | - | - | - |
| Iceland | 53 | 5 | 41 | 5 | 29 | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Ireland | 249 | 4 | 195 | 9 | 187 | 6 | - | - | - | - |
| The Netherlands | 223 | 29 | 251 | 23 | 240 | 18 | 262 | 21 | 236 | 49 |
| New Zealand | 37 | 37 | 32 | 31 | 33 | 21 | 24 | 13 | 16 | 19 |
| Portugal | 855 | 22 | 450 | 19 | 437 | 9 | - | - | - | 0 |
| Sweden | 238 | 106 | 214 | 91 | 142 | 59 | 912 | 6 | 898 | 5 |
| Switzerland | 541 | 310 | 476 | 292 | 441 | 275 | - | - | - | - |
| The United Kingdom | 5617 | 823 | 5689 | 692 | 5739 | 556 | 6352 | 550 | 6224 | 484 |
| The United States | 3936 | 6859 | 3786 | 6898 | 3664 | 6669 | 3654 | 6899 | 3578 | 7078 |

Source: OECD, 2012

4. Conclusions

The article has analysed the attitude and impact of European and Latin-American students on their decision to get an international education and improve their future opportunities in the framework of a growing educational integration, where the mobility of students is considered to be the main priority for international institutions and many countries.

The study has re-examined the previous research works related to the factors that encourage undergraduate students to migrate across countries (the research by Ciarnienė & Kumpikaitė (2011), Faggian et al. (2006), Hawthorne (2010), Mixon (1992), Semiv & Semiv (2010) and Tuckman (1970)). The article has focused on Colombia and Spain due to historical and social links over the time.

The empirical contrast of students’ attitudes and the main factors of migration have been analysed by means of the structured survey and the comparison of the data obtained during the

study with the official international statistics. The study has aimed at reaching deeper knowledge about what factors, i.e. economic and non-economic, determine features of student migration, i.e. their motivations to migrate abroad, duration and intention of the stay abroad, reasons for selecting the country of migration, and the main preferred countries for migration.

The results have revealed that the economic factors are the most important reasons in cases of academic migration, especially the income per capita, since the family is very important to support these processes. Possible the future earnings, associated with international studies, becomes another significant factor because they imply higher economic returns, as confirmed by scientific literature, i.e. (Mixon, 1992; Tuckman, 1970).

As secondary reasons would be associated with cultural factors and the language, especially when studying the case of students from Colombia.

Regarding the main destinations, the official statistics and the respondents have pointed out that students from Spain traditionally prefer the United Kingdom and the United States as the main destinations, meanwhile Colombians select the United States as the first place of their destination and Spain as the second possible destination place. Yet, the choice to select Germany and Australia as important destinations is growing.

The results obtained are important for scientific reasons due to the confirmation of the results gained during the previous research and studies, and due to the fact that several specific economic and non-economic factors have been grouped as pull and push factors. Moreover, the results of the study has revealed the main motivation for migration of students. Is the results that have been obtained during the research are also important for scholars when taking into consideration the growing international competition and mobility. Governments and international institutions might also benefit from the research due to the benefits that the international migration entails. Thus, the governments and international institutions should design policies, which take into account the analysed factors that affect academic migration, in order to improve conditions and attractiveness to international students because the migration embeds several benefits, such as extra income, higher labour market participation and economic growth. This research has shown that scholars who study abroad will obtain higher economic returns and potential benefits, thus it is important to pay attention to the analysed factors and find destinations with better conditions.

References

- Aceleanu, M.I. (2011). Indicators of migration and their relevance to employment and quality of life analysis. Romania's situation. *Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 6, 31-42.
- Akulavicius, M. & Grundey, D. (2011). Managing Mobility Opportunities for Doctoral Students: the Case of Lithuania. *Economics & Sociology*, 4(2), 98-111.
- Bermudez, A. (2010). The transnational political practices of Colombians in Spain and the United Kingdom: politics 'here' and 'there'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(1), 75-91.
- Čiarnienė, R., Kumpikaitė, V. & Taraskevicius, A. (2009). Influence of Macroeconomic indicators on Migration Process: Theoretical and Practical Aspects. *Economics and Management*, 14, 553-559.
- Čiarnienė, R. & Kumpikaitė, K. (2011). International Labour Migration: Students Viewpoint. *Inžinerine Ekonomika-Engineering Economics*, 22(5), 527-533 d.o.i. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5755/j01.ee.22.5.971>
- European Commission. (2012). Eurostat. Statistical books .The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe. Retrieved from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/KS-78-09-653-EN.pdf>
- Faggian, A., McCann, P. & Sheppard, S. (2006). An analysis of ethnic differences in UK graduate migration behaviour. *The Annals of Regional Science*, 40(2), 461-471. d.o.i. 10.1007/s00168-006-0061-y
- Heid, B. & Larch, M. (2012). Migration, Trade and Unemployment. *Economics: The Open-Access, Open-Assessment E-Journal* 6(4), 1-42. d.o.i. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5018/economics-ejournal.ja.2012-4>
- Gürüz, K. (2008). *Higher education and international student mobility in the global knowledge economy*. New York, State University of New York Press. d.o.i. 10.1057/ijea.2009.22

- Mixon, G. Jr. (1992). Factors Affecting College Student Migration across States. *International Journal of Manpower*, 13(1), 25 – 32. *d.o.i.* 10.1108/EUM0000000000900
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD. (2012). Economic statistics. Retrieved from <http://stats.oecd.org/>
- Papademetriou, D., Somerville, W. & Tanaka H. (2008). *Talent in the 21st Century Economy*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Rey, A. & Cebrán, M. (2010). Population replacement and migration in two Spanish regions during the Twentieth century. *Population-E*, 65(3), 481-498. *d.o.i.* 10.3917/pope.1003.0481
- Reher, D. & Requena, M. (2009). The National Immigrant Survey of Spain: A new data source for migration studies in Europe. *Demographic Research*, 20(12), 253-278. *d.o.i.* 10.4054/DemRes.2009.20.12
- Stulgienė, A. & Daunorienė, A. (2009). Influence of Migration on Equilibrium of Labour Force Market. *Economics and Management*, 14, 984-992
- Wilson, T. (2010). Model migration schedules incorporating student migration peaks. *Demographic Research*. 23(8), 191-222 *d.o.i.* 10.4054/DemRes.2010.23.8