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Abstract

The scientific brain drain issue in Italy has been attracting the public's attention since the 1990s. This article examines individual biographies to identify motives behind scientific mobility and how scientists interpret their experience. Drawing on 83 in-depth interviews conducted with Italian scientists working in Europe (mainly mathematicians, engineers and physicists), and on the results of a subsequent survey based on computer-assisted web interviewing (528 respondents), we find a complex mix of pull and push factors characterizing the scientists' reasons for going abroad; and most of our sample would not classify their experience in the brain drain category. We also discuss these scientists' professional and academic links with Italy, and their propensity to return. Our findings add complexity to the existing theory on brain drain and brain circulation.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)