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“Connecting the scientific diaspora of the Republic of Moldova to the scientific and economic development of the home country”

Findings of the Moldovan Scientific Diaspora

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Project objectives

Addressing brain drain from the Republic of Moldova capitalising on scientific diasporas' resources

- Outline the parameters of the Moldovan scientific diaspora
- Capture the main determinants of their transnational cooperation and potential return to the home country



Main research questions

Scientists abroad can stay interconnected and contribute
How to encourage their diaspora interventions?

- What are the **conditions and experiences** of skilled Moldovans in destination countries?
- What are **their profiles and the resources** they offer?
- What **type of links** they maintain with Moldova?
- Which **factors affect their contributions** to Moldova?
- Which are the **necessary settings and conditions** enabling an impact?

Survey on skilled Moldovans abroad

- Target group: “*members of the Moldovan scientific diaspora*”
- **Operational definition:** *scientists, researchers and skilled professionals originated from MD living abroad, as well as postgraduate students (MA and Ph.D.); in any disciplines and professional areas/sectors*
- **Sample:** 197 on-line survey respondents
- 27 qualitative **face-to-face interviews**

Main observations

1. Description of the sample
2. Migration drivers and living conditions in the host countries
3. Transnational cooperation links and contributions to development
4. Perception of opportunities in Moldova and return plans
5. Conclusions



1. Description of the sample

Individual profile of respondents

Age, gender and family

- 70% are 35 years old or younger
- 58% women – 42% men
- 50% married
- 40% have children

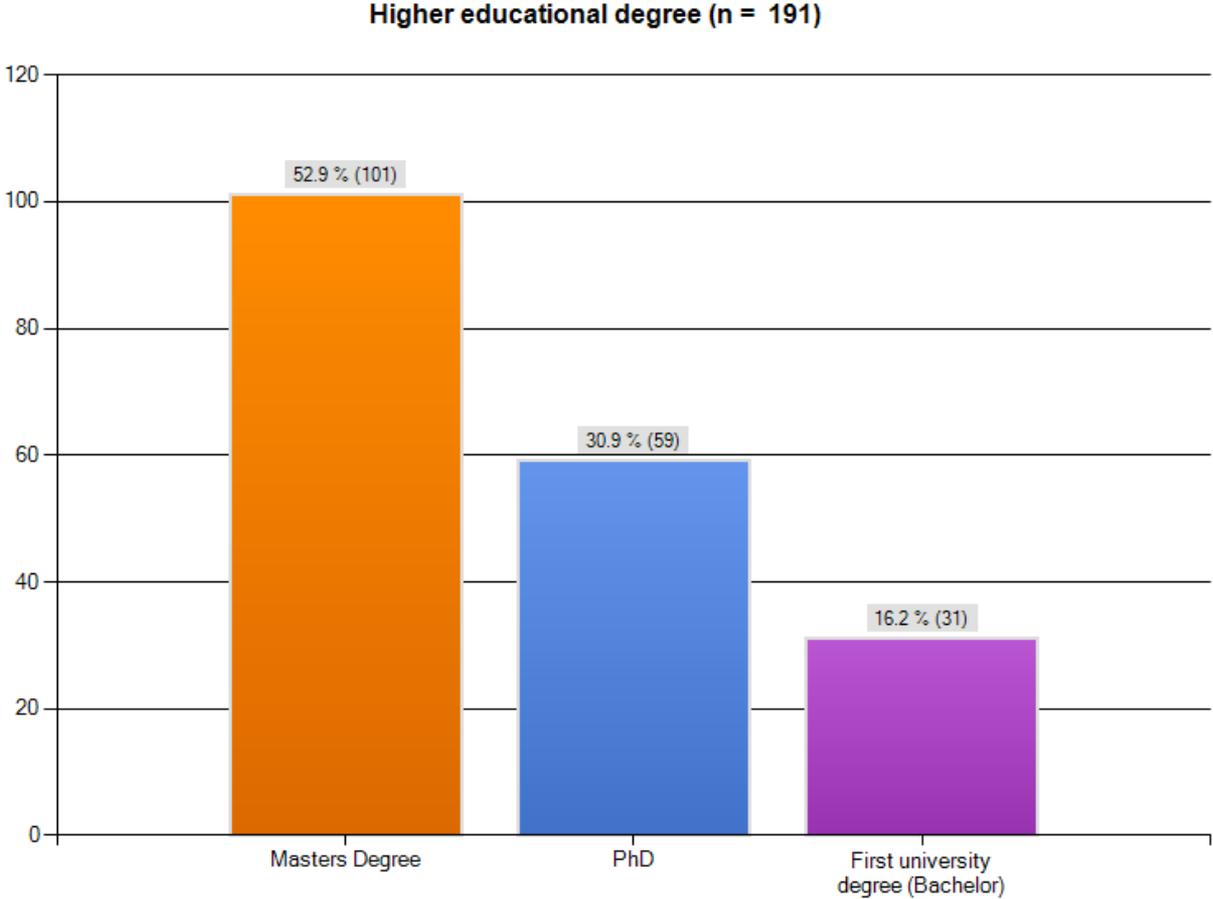
Education level

- 52 % hold a Master's degree
- 31 % hold a PhD
- 16% hold a Bachelor's degree

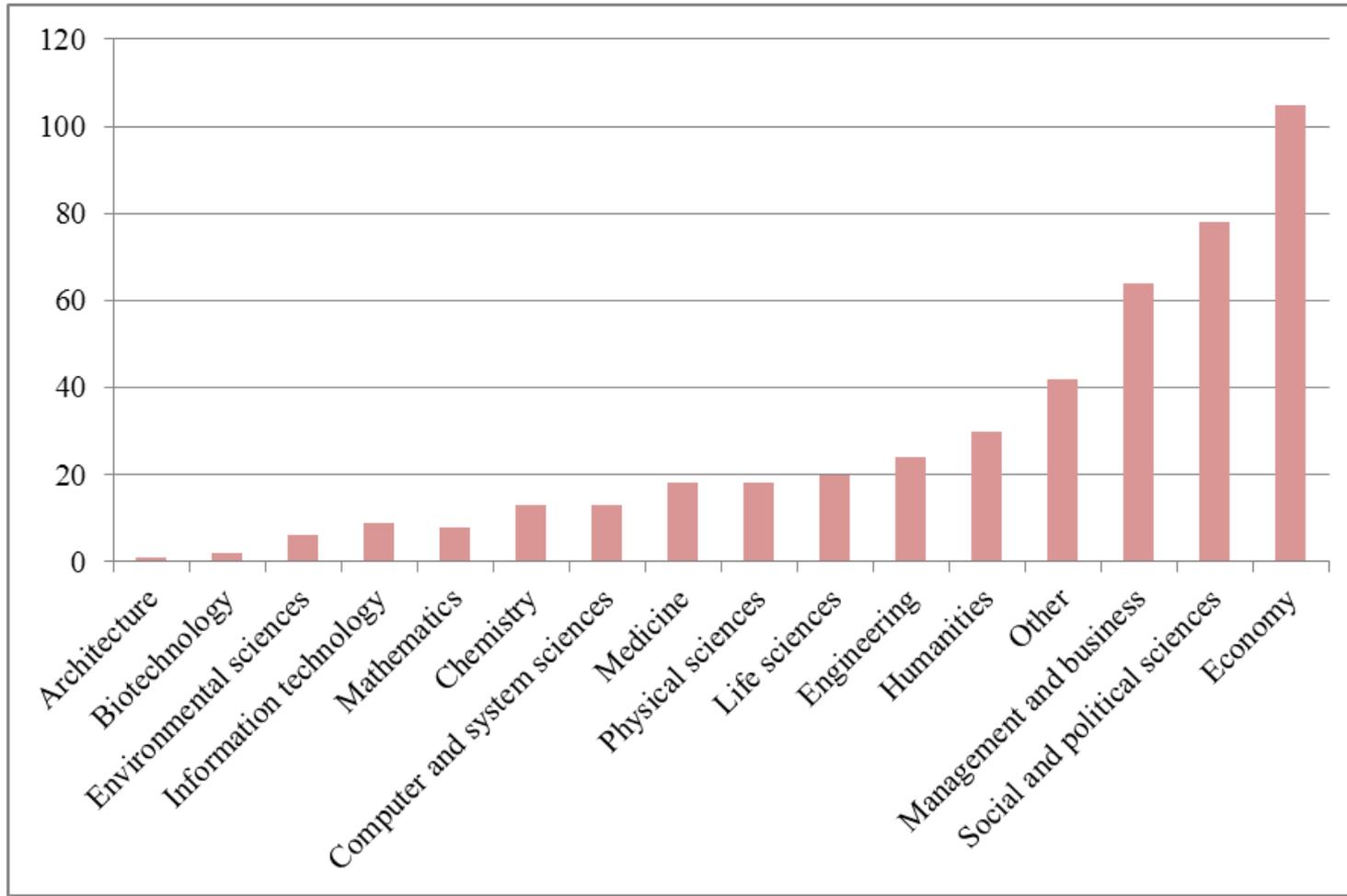
Disciplines of academic degrees held

- Mostly in: economics, social and political sciences and management and business

Educational level

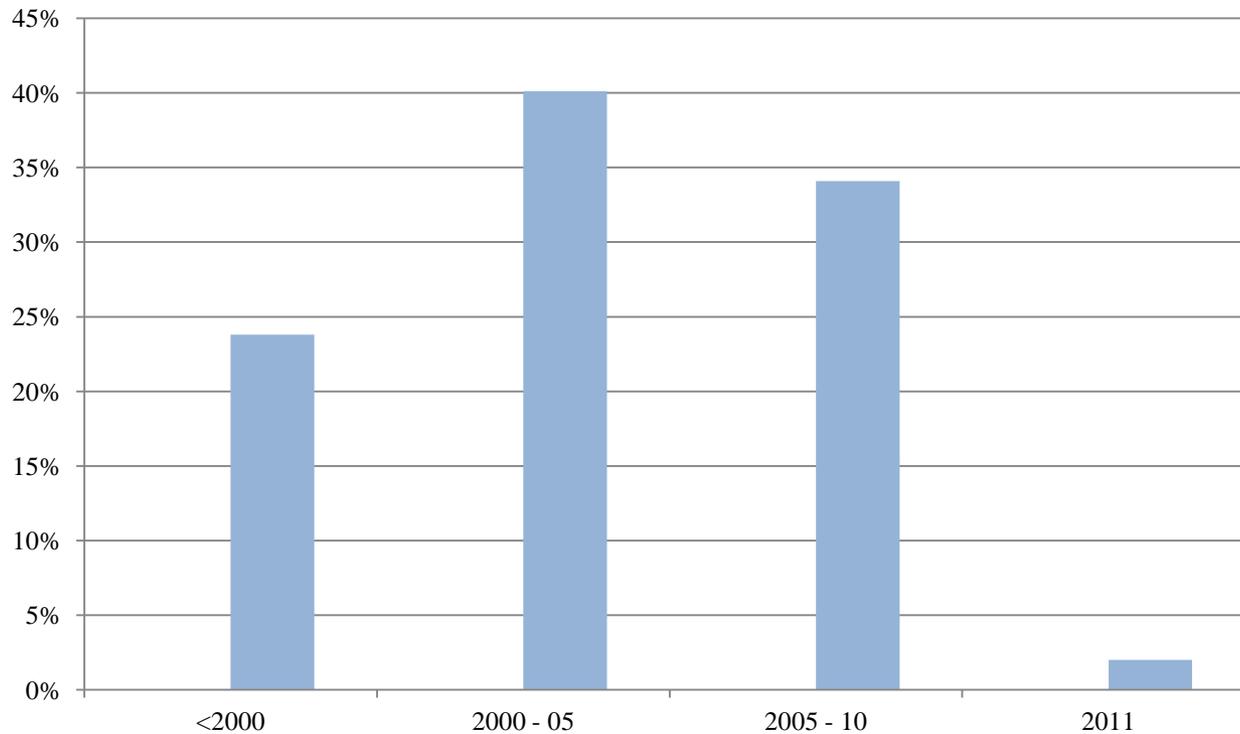


Disciplines of academic degrees held

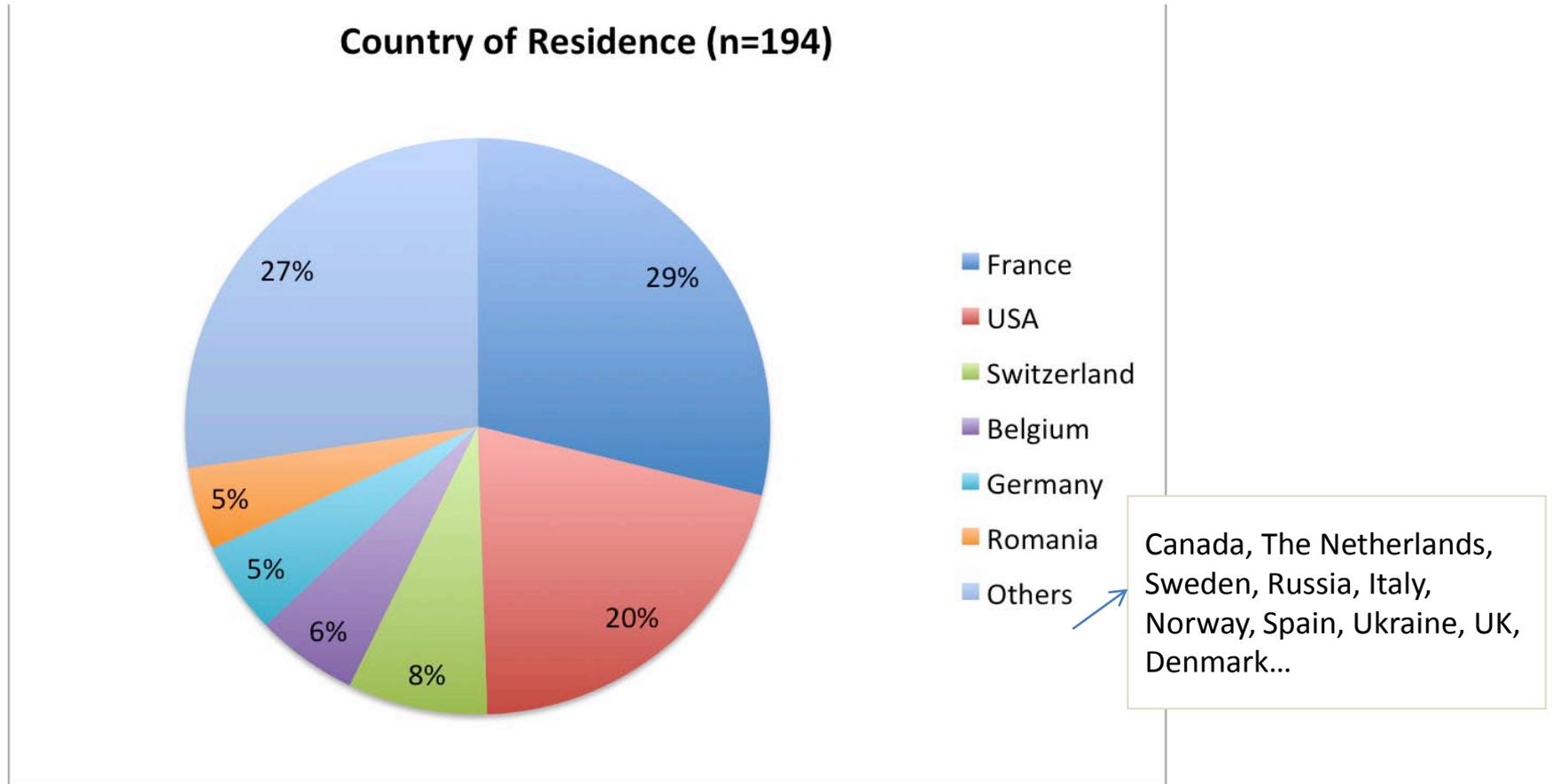


Year of departure

- 40% left Moldova between 2000 and 2005
- 34% left between 2005 and 2010
- 25% left before 2000



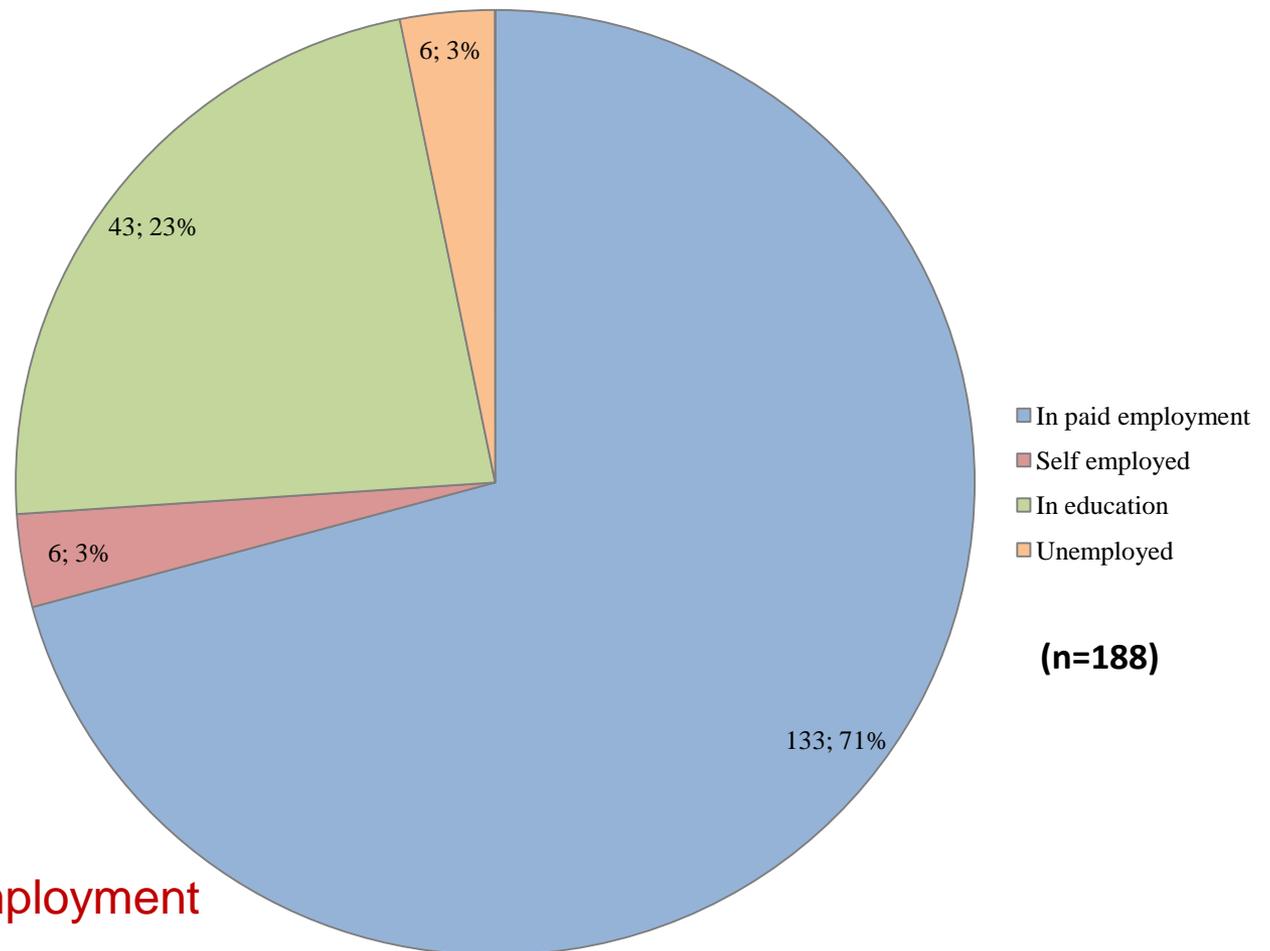
Country of residence



Opportunities on offer drive choice of destinations, and not a shared language, cultural or geographical proximity.

Choice is also based on the established contacts in the destination countries.

Main activity in the host country



Our sample:

- 71 % are in paid employment
- 23% are students
- 3 % are self-employed
- 3 % are unemployed

Residence status in destination country

Our sample:

- **55% have temporary residence status**
- 23 % hold permanent residence status
- 22 % have citizenship of their country of residence.

The predominance of **temporary residence permits** :

- could be explained by the **recent nature of emigration** from Moldova (mostly students and younger respondents)
- could also be linked to **strict migration policies** in destination countries

2. Migration drivers and living experiences in the host countries

Migration determinants

- **Push factors in MD** are stronger than pull factors abroad
- **Main migration driver is economic:** unfavorable environment, lack of professional opportunities & career prospects, low salaries, limited research infrastructure, low quality of life, etc.
- **Further training abroad** is a more recent determinant
- The **opportunities for professional and personal growth** rather than settlement in a specific geographical location is what spurs migration plans.

Migration determinants

Testimonies:

“I left to pursue my studies because of the weak career perspectives and my concerns about the future of my children”.

“Moving abroad was the only way to avoid brain waste at home. It is better to go to a new country to operate in the field of specialization instead of staying at home to lose the competencies”.

Migration determinants

- **Personal motivation** guides decisions of skilled Moldovans to emigrate in the first place.
- Skilled migration from Moldova may be seen as the **outcome of individual strategies** aimed at improving personal conditions at both a professional and a private level.
- **Family and social recognition** fuel their feeling of patriotism and their impetus to give something back to Moldova.

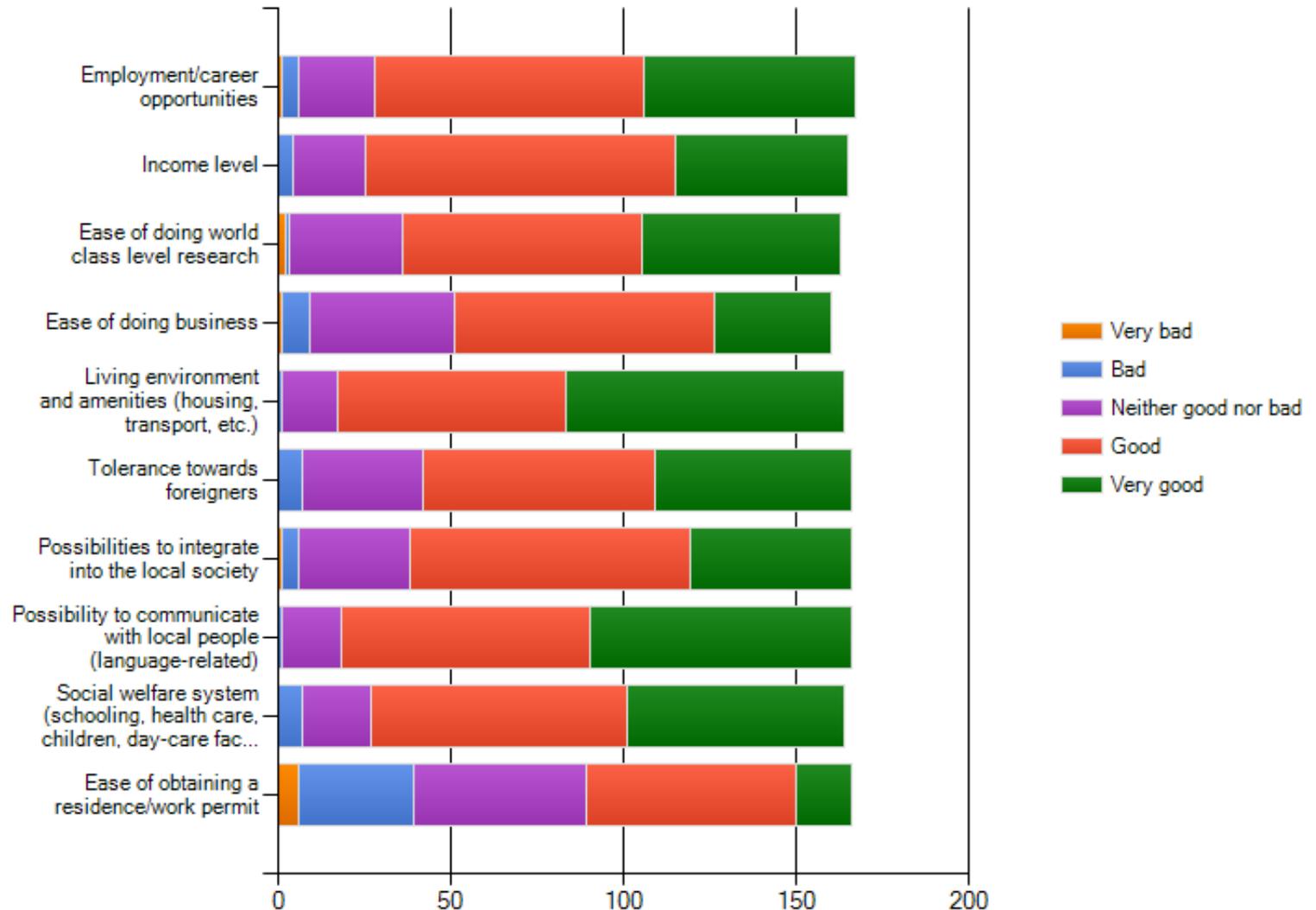
Perception of environment in host country

Mobilization of migrants' resources depends on the environment they are exposed to in the host countries and on the opportunities that both the host and the home country have to offer.

- Most skilled Moldovans have a positive perception of the **environment and qualities offered by the host countries** (employment and career opportunities, wage levels, level of scientific research and infrastructure, living environment and amenities, etc).
- They believe they are **socially well integrated** in the host countries thanks to their proficiency in the local languages.

Perception of environment in host country

Given your experiences, how would you rate each of the following qualities in your current country of residence? (n=168)



Experiences in the host countries

- Skilled Moldovans rate their experience abroad as **positive** and they appreciate the opportunity for **advancement and growth** at both personal and professional levels.

Testimony:

“I obtained a scholarship after the completion of my studies in French at the State University of Moldova. In France I was able to obtain studies of a very good quality and acquire a very rich professional experience”.

3. Transnational cooperation links and contributions to development

Transnational links and contributions to development

- Skilled Moldovans are keen to promote **links with their home country**
- They have strong **aspirations to contribute to development in MD**
- They see their possible contributions through the following **channels of engagement**:
 - helping to improve the situation of the **families** left behind
 - Influencing people around them with new **ideas and behaviours**
 - implementing activities related to **knowledge and skills transfer**
 - promoting **financial transfers and investments**
 - **returning** to Moldova

Transnational links and contributions to development

Testimonies:

“When I return to Moldova during vacation I represent an example for the local population and I observe that I indirectly influence the mentality of my family and relatives.”

“If people return, Moldova can benefit from the exodus of qualified people. Return migrants can play an important role in development through their experience, knowledge and financial resources”.

Transnational cooperation activities and obstacles

Type of project	Description	Obstacles
Knowledge transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing knowledge of MD challenges through PhD topics chosen • Publishing scientific work in Moldova • Participating in seminars and/or conferences in MD 	Lack of funding; deficient infrastructure and equipment.
Academic exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in teaching activities and lectures • Temporary visits to academic institutions • Participating in the creation of academic programmes 	Lack of time; lack of funding; lack of recognition of diaspora.
Joint research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of MD partners in international research projects • Helping MD scientists to submit proposals for international research grants • Joint publications in collaboration with MD scientists 	Lack of funding; lack of interest to collaborate with the diaspora.
Investment & business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of foreign investments and business projects 	Lack of trust in Moldovan institutions; political instability.

4. Perception of opportunities in Moldova and return plans

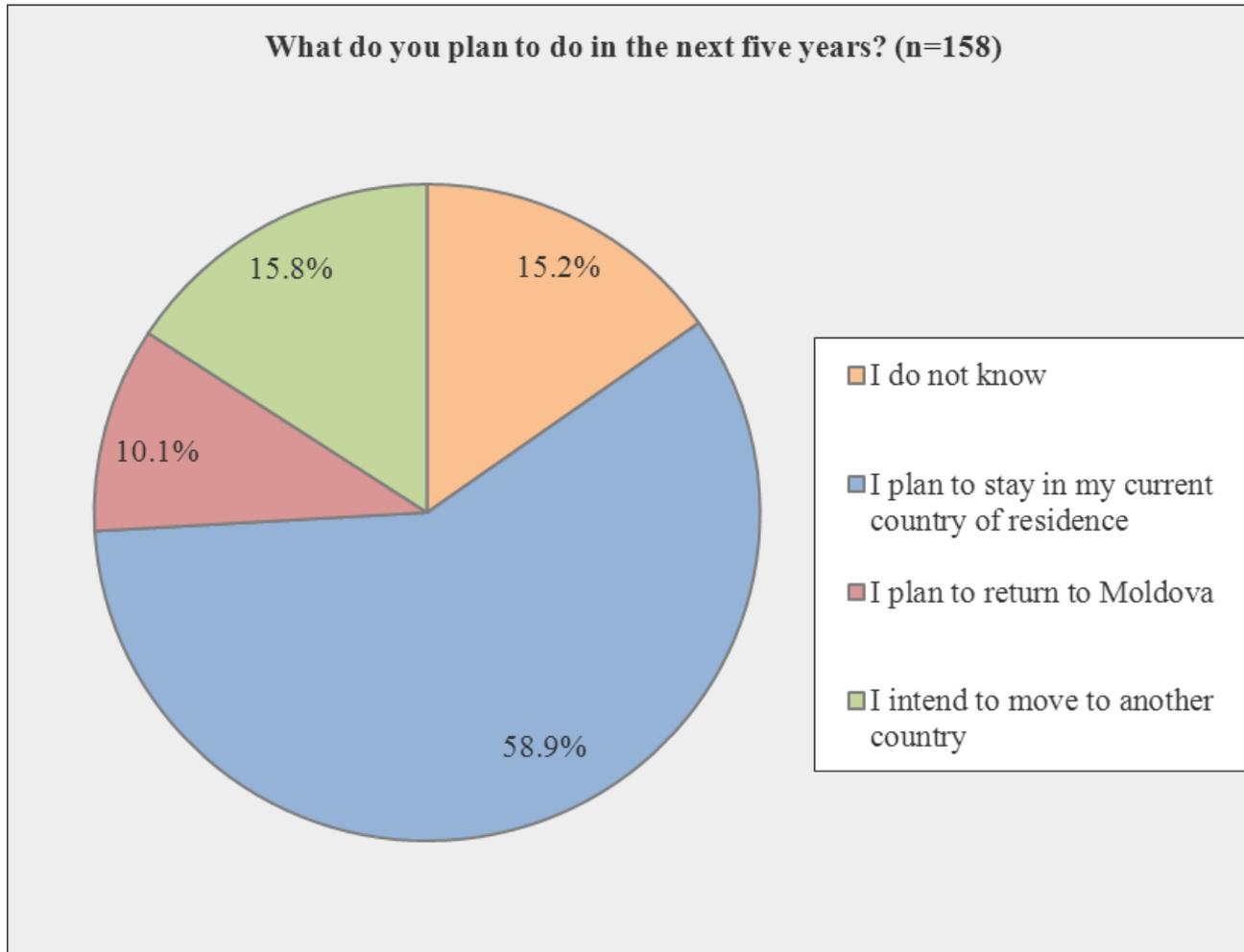
Perception of opportunities and return plans

- **Accessible opportunities** and perceptions of the country environment influence migration projects and mobility plans.
- Return intentions of skilled Moldovans (and their actual return) may increase if they feel assured that Moldova can provide them an **enabling environment** for employment and career prospects.

Testimony:

“It is the lack of possibilities to apply the scientific potential what makes people leave, and return can only be beneficial if migrants can apply their knowledge and skills back in the Moldovan context”.

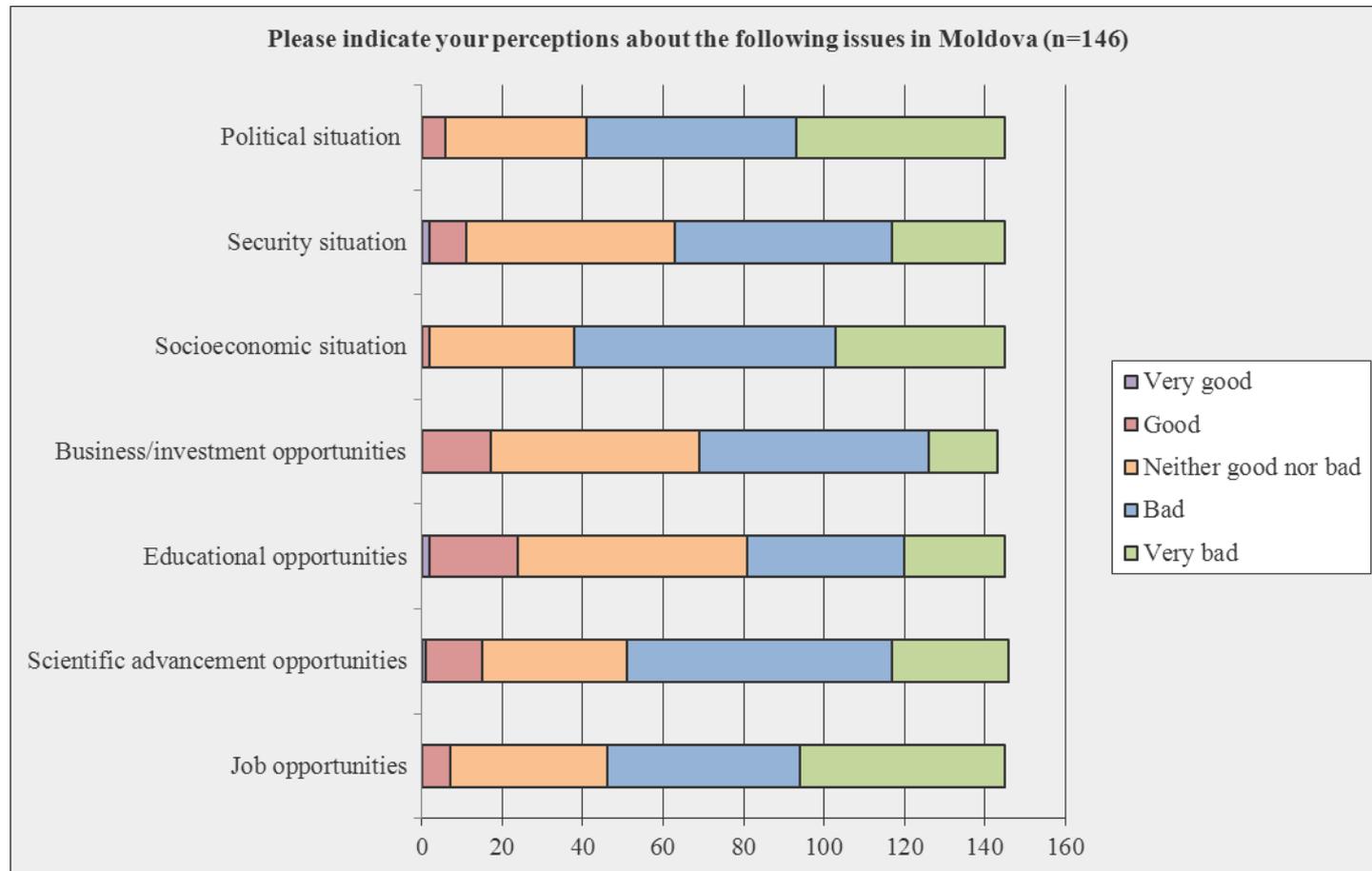
Reported plans for the next 5 years



59 % stay in their current country
10% return to MD

16 % move to another country,
15 % undecided & open to opportunities (in
Moldova or elsewhere).

Assessment of the environment and situation in MD



Skilled Moldovans have **more negative than positive** perceptions of the home country environment (the socioeconomic and political situation, job and career opportunities, scientific advancement opportunities).



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5. Conclusions

Conclusions on the scientific diaspora

- While skilled migration from MD is associated with choice, professional career and educational opportunities, it is mainly determined by **economic factors**, limited employment opportunities and career prospects.
- They become appreciated human resources in destination countries; they see their overseas accumulated experiences as positive (due to **personal and professional growth**).
- They keep in contact with MD and are interested in contributing to its **development**. They believe they can create benefits through their overseas activities and accumulated skills and knowledge.
- Their main **channels of development engagement** : helping their families left behind; transferring knowledge, skills, ideas; financial and investment activities; physical return.

Conclusions on the scientific diaspora

- Transnational cooperation projects of skilled Moldovans are **sporadic and individual** grounded on personal interest rather than collective organization.
- Mobilization of skilled Moldovan's resources (and their mobility plans) hinge on the **environment** they are exposed to, and on the **opportunities offered** in both host and home countries.
- **Return intentions** of skilled Moldovans may increase if they believe MD could provide an enabling socioeconomic environment with adequate employment and career prospects.

Policy recommendations (1/2)

- Support for organized collective action by Moldovans abroad needs to be ensured and complemented with institutional policies to engage diasporas.
- Schemes promoting return should focus on young Moldovans, especially those who have left their country to pursue higher education and who have shorter stays abroad.
- Policies should ensure appropriate conditions for a satisfactory reintegration of returnees into the labour market in concrete sectors that are useful for the local context.

Policy recommendations (2/2)

- A two-fold strategy should ensure effective use of knowledge and skills transferred from both returnees and from the diaspora and to generate benefits within the local socioeconomic context.
- Considerable improvements to the local structural situation are necessary such as:
 - the creation of conditions to provide good employment opportunities and career prospects
 - a formal commitment to sustained support for science, research and education
 - ensuring matches between higher education programmes and labour market needs

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More information at:

<http://cooperation.epfl.ch/ScientificDiasporas>

<http://international.asm.md/ds.html/>



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