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The Up hot
EURO CRISIS

More Greeks Looking to Work Abroad, Search Engines Suggest

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Whatever is decided during this weekend's negotiations between Greece and its creditors, Greek workers are planning their own kind of exit. At least, that's the message that comes from analyzing their online job search behavior.

Over the past couple of weeks, the share of online job searches in Greece that are directed abroad has more than doubled. This analysis comes from Tara Sinclair, the chief economist at Indeed, an online job search engine. (Full disclosure: I recently gave a paid speech at an Indeed conference.) She has analyzed the numbers on the types of jobs that Greek workers have been looking for, day by day over the past two months. Through May and most of June, about one in six job searches were directed outside Greece.

Then as bailout talks between Greece and their eurozone creditors broke down and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called a surprise referendum, the share of outbound searches more than doubled. On the most recent day for which data are available — the day of that referendum — foreign destinations

accounted for 37 percent of all online job searches in Greece.

Ms. Sinclair's analysis of the exact search terms used suggests that many of those looking to exit are high-skill workers, such as dentists, engineers and those with technical computing skills. The most popular destination is Britain, which is due to hold its own referendum on whether to exit the European Union in coming years.

It is not yet clear what these numbers portend. A sustained brain drain would most likely further undermine the weak productivity of the Greek economy. And a declining domestic work force would mean fewer taxpayers trying to shoulder the nation's already enormous fiscal burden. But given the extraordinary upheaval in Greece during the past few weeks and the uncertainty of agreement with the E.U., it is impossible to know if the sharp increase in foreign job searches will continue.

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