

# FLIGHT TICKET OR ZOOM MEETING? ACADEMIC STAFF MOBILITY IN “OLD” AND “NEW NORMALITY”<sup>\*\*</sup>

Received: 29. 1. 2023.

Accepted: 11. 8. 2023.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30924/mjcmi.28.2.13>

Preliminary communication

UDC 378-051:378.018.5

**ABSTRACT** International mobility has become an integral part of academic staff activities at higher education institutions (HEIs). In the context of globalisation and internationalisation, it plays a key role in both individual academic career and HEI performance. However, research on the motivation of academic staff to engage in international mobility, especially short-term mobility, remains modest. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant changes in international academic mobility organisation, with virtual mobility becoming the new normal. Research on academic staff responses to this form of mobility is nascent, but no less relevant given the current spread of blended international mobility. Drawing from self-determination theory, this paper aims to identify what motivates academic staff to engage in short-term international academic mobility in the pre-pandemic (“old normality”) and pandemic (“new normality”) periods. The study builds on the findings of a longitudinal research during which 13 academic staff members from 12 different countries were interviewed twice: before and during the pandemic. Findings suggest that academic staff is primarily driven to engage in short-term international mobility by intrinsic motivation, namely the need for competence development during both physical (pre-pandemic) and virtual (pandemic) mobility, while the need for relatedness plays a more significant role in the international physical mobility. Organisational support is an equally important extrinsic motivator for both mobility types. This empirical study provides implications for the international academic mobility literature and HEI management on the enhancement of academic staff involvement in international academic staff mobility.

**KEYWORDS:** *short-term international academic mobility, motivation, higher education institutions, self-determination theory, COVID-19, pandemic.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

International academic mobility has become indispensable to contemporary higher education (HE) (Knight, 2003; Krause et al., 2015). The academic staff has been traveling since ancient times (Bauder, 2015; Reisberg & Rumbley, 2014; Richardson & Zikic, 2007), but it is only recently that international academic mobility has fully increased. Nowadays, internation-

al mobility, both for students and staff, is considered one of the key performance indicators of globalization, internationalization, and the development of the knowledge economy (Ackers, 2008). In the academic world, international travel is associated with producing and exchanging knowledge (Storme et al., 2013), and international experience is seen as a crucial characteristic of a competent scholar (Jepsen et al., 2014).

Despite its relevance, the international mobility

\* Jolanta Preidienė, ISM University of Management and Economics, Lithuania, e-mail: [jolanta.preidiene@stud.ism.lt](mailto:jolanta.preidiene@stud.ism.lt)

\*\* The author would like to thank all the interviewees who agreed to dedicate their time and share their experiences.

of academic staff, especially short-term mobility and its drivers, remains under-researched (Ackers, 2005a; Czaika & Toma, 2017; Edler et al., 2011; Kim & Locke, 2010; Storme et al., 2013). In addition, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has affected most human activities worldwide, with the experience in higher education being particularly devastating (Shrestha et al., 2020). Starting from March 2020, international physical mobility practically stopped for some time. Nevertheless, higher education institutions (HEIs) did not close down, and international academic mobility shifted to a different mode, i.e., virtual mobility. Instead of purchasing plane tickets as in the pre-pandemic times, the academic society moved to online platforms, which became a "new normality" (Tesar, 2020). Now that the pandemic is over in most countries, international mobility is taking place in both modes – physically and virtually.

In response to the call for studies on the motivation driving international academic mobility (Ackers, 2005b; Azoulay et al., 2017; Bauder et al., 2018; Czaika & Toma, 2017; Iglesias-Fernández et al., 2014; Netz & Jaksztat, 2017) and taking into consideration the challenges posed by the pandemic, this paper aims to reveal the motivation of academic staff for short-term international mobility in an ever-changing environment. Short-term mobility is defined in the literature as a period of less than one year (Hoffman, 2009). Still, in higher education institutions, it refers to the international mobility of up to one month, where the staff member retains their contractual or institutional status in the home country and institution (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2022). Therefore, this paper attempts to answer the following research question: What motivated academic staff to engage in short-term international mobility in the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods?

Prior research on the international mobility of academic staff draws on a variety of theoretical backgrounds to explain its drivers, such as human capital theory (Becker, 1964), economic productivity (supply-demand) or modern theory of labor market, the concept of path dependence (David, 1985), the perspective of social hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) or transnational capital (Leemann, 2010). However, these theories provide a systemic view of mobility motivation and examine only some specific parts. In this paper, we build on the self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and examine two types – intrinsic and extrinsic – of motivation for international academic mobility in two opposed conditions: physical mobility in the pre-pandemic period and virtual mobility during the pandemic.

A qualitative longitudinal study was conducted to uncover the motivation of academic staff for short-term international mobility. 13 academic staff from 12 countries in Europe and Asia were interviewed at two points: before and during the pandemic. The results of this study provide theoretical and practical contributions to the literature on the motivation of international academic staff to engage in short-term mobility under different external conditions. New approaches to the organization of international academic mobility can potentially support the development of sustainable international academic staff mobility.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. International academic staff mobility

The international mobility of academic staff is not a new phenomenon. International networks of scholars already existed in ancient Greece, were commonplace in the eighth-century Arab scientific community, at universities in medieval Europe, and in the era of colonialism, and are still relevant today (Bauder, 2015; Richardson & Zikic, 2007). It has been argued that globalization in recent decades has influenced labor mobility, including highly skilled workers, to such an extent that it has become the "age of mobility" (Halfacree, 2012; Rodriguez & Mearns, 2012).

Despite the many academics involved in international mobility, research still lacks a clear definition of this phenomenon (Teichler, 2015). To some extent, this conceptual ambiguity may be due to various modes of international mobility, which in turn are driven by different motivations of the participants (Reisberg & Rumbley, 2014). To provide more clarity, we first discuss the different modes and categorizations of international mobility of academic staff.

Traditionally, the mobility of international academic staff is considered the physical movement from one country or institution to another. Scholars attend international conferences, visit research partners abroad, and spend extended periods in other countries for research purposes (Teichler, 2015). The latest EU Erasmus+ program guide defines mobility as an individual's participation in learning and professional experience in another country, transnational initiatives, and other activities abroad (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2022).

In the literature on the international mobility of academic staff, a distinction is traditionally made between temporary and permanent as well as long-term and short-term mobility (Edler et al., 2011; Hoffman, 2009). However, Boring et al. (2015) argue that

a correct categorization of mobility is a distinction based on the duration of mobility, i.e., temporary vs. permanent, and the change of employer, i.e., self-initiated stays abroad (moving between employers) vs. other forms of mobility (without changing employers). Cradden (2007) distinguishes between four types of mobility: visits, exchanges, and sabbaticals; grants and fellowships; untenured employment; and tenured employment. Fernandez-Zubieta et al. (2015) propose a typology of mobility based on the changes it entails: educational mobility (especially in terms of student mobility), job-to-job mobility (change of employer), occupational mobility (change of professional status), prestige mobility (social mobility) and professional mobility (disciplinary mobility). Schiller & Diez (2012) propose three types of mobility: spatial mobility – mobility between different locations; career mobility – the progression of academic careers from doctoral student to full professorship; and institutional mobility – moving between positions at a university and industry. Based on policy discourse, technological support, and constraints, mobility has also been classified as accidental, forced, or negotiated (Ackers, 2008; Cantwell, 2011). Terms such as cross-boundary (Jöns, 2018) or transnational academic (Kim, 2009) mobility are also used concerning academic mobility, while Hoffman (2009) proposes two types of academic mobility: conventional, which refers to short-term exchanges and field trips, national career patterns and ICT-based mobility, and emerging, i.e., lateral, vertical and intergenerational mobility.

In this paper, we follow a broad approach to categorizing mobility, distinguishing between migration and temporary mobility and limiting this study to temporary mobility, which includes short-term visits and stays abroad (less than one month) followed by a return to the home country and employer.

## 2.2. International physical vs. virtual mobility

In the broadest sense, virtual mobility (VM) can be defined as “the collaborative communication between a faculty member and their counterparts mediated by a computer” (Van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2001, p. 1), where virtual refers to the technological dimension and mobility – to the aspect of collaboration (Rajagopal et al., 2020) and is no longer dependent on location (Schreurs & Verjans, 2006). Virtual mobility is not a recent phenomenon (O’Dowd R., 2011; Storme et al., 2013), but it was only after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that it became an inescapable reality in the international academic world (Marinoni et al., 2020), where virtually all traditional forms of academic collaboration – teaching, conferences, pro-

fessional meetings, etc. – have been transferred to the virtual format.

International virtual academic mobility refers to the activities that employees of a higher education institution in one country carry out online to transfer their knowledge and information to their colleagues or students in other countries without physically traveling to the receiving country (Rajagopal et al., 2020). In other words, it can be seen as using the ICT potential to gain international experience without leaving the home country or institution (Poulová et al., 2009). Since the launch of the new 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme, virtual mobility has become an integral part of the international mobility program (European Commission, 2021), with its virtual component being treated as part of blended international mobility, which includes elements of both physical and virtual mobility (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2022).

Virtual mobility has many advantages. It enables collaboration between people from different backgrounds and cultures without crossing borders (Poulová et al., 2009). Therefore, it offers universities direct access to international cooperation activities, regardless of the geographical distance, and at a lower cost. Virtual mobility is also seen as one of the supporting elements for environmental and climate protection, as it significantly reduces emissions. Despite the benefits, virtual mobility also has some negative aspects, such as insufficient interoperability between different communication platforms (Schreurs & Verjans, 2006), which was particularly common in the initial phase of the pandemic, lower quality of communication and fewer opportunities to build cultural capital (Marinoni et al., 2020; Talmage et al., 2022).

Despite the above-mentioned negative aspects, the pandemic period has shown undeniable advantages of virtual mobility. Therefore, virtual mobility will continue to be widespread, especially in combination with physical (in-person) activities and under the new name of blended mobility.

## 2.3. Self-determination theory

The self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) argues that human motivation is driven by an internal need for psychological growth, or intrinsic motivation (IM). SDT distinguishes three intrinsic psychological needs: the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), where autonomy is explained as a condition for the individual to engage with authenticity and vitality in activities that, in turn, lead to better performance (Deci et al., 2017), relatedness – as a need to feel belongingness and connectedness to others, and competence as a

feeling of efficacy in a particular social group (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT also argues that individuals driven by their inherent intrinsic motivation typically have higher levels of curiosity and interest and, thus, higher potential and satisfaction with the activities they pursue (Ryan et al., 2021).

In addition to intrinsic motivation, individuals are driven by extrinsic motives (Ryan et al., 2021), which are interrelated (Leung, 2019). Extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to the pursuit of an outcome, and the extent of this motivation depends on the level of autonomy – personal approval versus compliance with external rules (Ryan & Deci, 2000). EM is controlled, while IM is autonomous (Gagné & Forest, 2011). Various forms of extrinsic motivation can become important for increasing autonomous motivation (Deci et al., 2017), such as organizational support (Haines et al., 2008).

Building on SDT, this paper explores the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of academic staff to engage in short-term international mobility, namely physical mobility in the pre-pandemic period (“old normality”) and virtual mobility (“new normality”) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Research methodology

A qualitative longitudinal study based on semi-structured interviews was conducted to determine the motivation of academic staff to engage in short-term international mobility before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research method was chosen as it allows repeated measures to follow particular individuals and data changes over time (Caruana et al., 2015).

#### 3.2. Participants

Members of academic staff from various European and Asian countries were invited to participate in the study (Table 1) to gain insights into various cultural and academic experiences. 13 interviews were conducted during the pre-pandemic period and ten interviews during the pandemic. Three interviewees who had participated in the first round did not participate in the second round as they had left academia. This sample size is sufficient for developing a theory without testing it (Eisenhardt, 1989). In addition, data saturation was reached after eight interviews as responses began to be repeated.

One interviewee was promoted to associate professor, and one was appointed vice dean.

**TABLE 1.** Participants in the longitudinal study

Interview 1	Interview 2	Position	Country	Age	Tenure	Gender
I1-BP	I1-DP	Assistant professor	Belgium	37	8	Female
I2-BP	I2-DP	Assistant professor	Israel	46	10	Male
I3-BP	I3-DP	Associate professor / Professor	Turkey	34	5	Male
I4-BP	I4-DP	Assistant professor	Finland	46	17	Male
I5-BP	I5-DP	Associate professor / Professor	Slovenia	37	11	Male
I6-BP	I6-DP	Associate professor / Professor	Belarus	33	10	Female
I7-BP	I7-DP	Associate professor / Professor	India	39	11	Female
I8-BP	I8-DP	Assistant professor	Albania	36	8	Female
I10-BP	I10-DP	Associate professor / Professor	Ukraine	44	21	Female
I9-BP	I9-DP	Associate professor / Professor	Bulgaria	45	15	Female
I11-BP	-	Assistant professor	Georgia	27	3	Female
I12-BP	-	Associate professor / Professor	Japan	10	12	Male
I13-BP	-	Assistant professor	Albania	26	3	Female

**Notes:** BP – before the pandemic, DP – during the pandemic, age and tenure – at first interviews.

### 3.3. Data collection and analysis

The longitudinal data collection was carried out between 2017 and 2021. The first round of interviews was in-person at conferences and similar events before the pandemic. The second round of interviews with the same participants was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter interviews were conducted online via the MS Teams platform. All interviews were conducted in English, except with two participants who preferred to speak Russian in both rounds. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts in Russian were translated into English.

The interview guidelines consisted of questions aimed at determining the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to participate in international short-term mobility in the pre-pandemic (“old normality”) and pandemic (“new normality”) periods. The interview lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. The data were coded according to the methodology of Gioia et al. (2013). The first-order codes were grouped into the second-order codes and further into aggregated dimensions (Appendix 1). Coding was an iterative process based on inductive data analysis (Merriam, 2002). The aggregated codes were developed following the SDT theory.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. Intrinsic motivation for competence development

#### 4.1.1. In the pre-pandemic period

The study revealed several intrinsic and extrinsic drivers for short-term academic mobility. The data from the pre-pandemic interviews made it possible to identify several factors related to developing different competencies. Interviewees emphasized that they participated in international mobility to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Learning new things was identified as one of the most important drivers: “My motivation is to learn more, to know how the system works here at the university” (I11-BP), “I saw many different methods; I learned cardiological techniques” (I3-BP), “It broadens my (professional) horizons considerably” (I6-BP). General professional development was mentioned among other drivers of competence development:

*When people, colleagues meet, then it's also a possibility to develop our teaching, develop our, you know, curriculum, getting new ideas, sharing new ideas, and also eventually, it might be a possibility to develop joint projects, you know, re-*

*search and developments, all these types of issues (I4-BP).*

Academic staff mobility is very often linked to teaching assignments. For example, interviewees stated that the opportunity to develop their teaching skills motivated them to choose the path of international mobility:

*I enjoy working, you know, with international students. It's always a new, new situation for me as a teacher to work with new students, and I also enjoy, you know, seeing that talent in the classroom and then how we are able to work with that and develop our skills. I'm always interested to see them, you know, what the outcome is and what the students come up with; it can sometimes be really interesting ideas and solutions (I4-BP).*

*I can get the experience of local teachers and lecturers at this university to exchange materials, the textbooks they are teaching, and I'm teaching; in the world, education always needs to be updated. It's a kind of new method, new approaches, new technologies (I11-BP).*

Another important factor emphasized by the participants was the motivation to go abroad to improve their foreign language skills: “I'm going to try to teach in Spanish” (I1-BP), “To speak English abroad for a week” (I3-BP).

Research interests were mentioned as another factor motivating them to engage in international mobility – the willingness to meet potential research colleagues, work on joint publications, and thus increase research output in general: “If I go somewhere, I can do some research with my friends” (I3-BP), “Maybe we can cooperate in future and write articles” (I13-BP), “It will be great to link our research” (I8-BP).

Almost all interviewees mentioned personal competence development as a driver of international mobility: “I think that eventually the personal motivation is a very straightforward one” (I2-BP), “The development is for me personally” (I5-BP), “It really expands the personal horizons” (I6-BP), “It changes your perspective” (I7-BP), “It's not just the duty. It's a motivation of myself to bring to my university other contexts that might help the students, to my colleagues to go further with the development of our university” (I8-BP), “It's just to improve yourself” (I9-BP). The interviewees also mentioned pursuing personal challenges as a motivating factor: “I just wanted to challenge myself. For me, it was just a very nice possibility to step outside of my comfort zone” (I9-BP).

The interviewees also mentioned the development of cultural competencies as a motivation to participate in international mobility. They mentioned their interest in traveling and getting to know foreign cultures:

*I like it. I should go to different geographical places; it's my interest. I enjoy seeing different types of human geography, climate, and everything like that. To see new historical places, to taste some delicious meals, and to see different areas of the world (I3-BP).*

The participants also mentioned their interest in getting to know new and even not-so-popular cultures, which offers the opportunity to gain new experiences, as the following quotes show: *"I would go to new places. If somebody invites me like, I just got an invitation from (...) for a keynote speech, and I was never at that conference and I will definitely go because it's something new" (I5-BP), "You will stand out from the rest because usually, you know, exchange professors would go to the US, Canada, UK, Australia" (I12-BP), "You get to know new things you can't experience in your country" (I13-BP).* A closely related driving force was the willingness to observe and experience cultural differences and thus become more multicultural and spread this among students:

*"The academics should be intercontinental; not just one area, all of the world is important for us, to see everything, to check everything that's happening in the world" (I3-BP), "I tried to make myself a multicultural person. I want students to do the same as what I did, to see the world and also to engage and see the other people's culture and try to bring them back" (I12-BP).*

#### 4.1.2. During the pandemic period

During the pandemic, most interviewees referred to the same or similar competence development areas, namely the development of professional knowledge and skills, teaching and foreign language competencies, and research development. Most of these motives were related to virtual mobility in the "new normality" period, i.e., they were related to the technological challenges that were unavoidable in virtual mobility: *"The main (motive) is to learn more about online, organising online events, internationalization; I would also like to find ways to make it more... interactive or, yeah... attractive" (I1-DP), "Special applications, that you install, that allows you to interact with individuals" (I2-DP), "We are now in another context, (...), we have other possibilities, digital skills that we can use" (I8-DP).*

Research remained an important driver; however, in contrast to the "old normality" period, the interviewees did not mention the preparation of joint publications as a driver of international mobility: *"The main motive is still gaining knowledge from the professionals, from people who you know do research and who can speak about topics which I follow" (I5-DP), "For me it is still relevant to exchange ideas and to fol-*

*low, to track advances in other people's research in the field" (I9-DP).*

The interviews conducted in the time of the pandemic showed that the development of personal competences continues to be an important driving force, as the following quotes show: *"I think there are also good things about it" (I1-DP), "Now I see that the combination like some hybrid things are just ok" (I5-DP), "I think that the online discussions could be fruitful enough, and helpful enough, and useful" (I9-DP).* On the other hand, the interviewees mentioned a whole range of factors that made virtual mobility unattractive or even demotivating, such as the change in communication, which they felt offered fewer opportunities and charm:

*"Psychologically, it's less attractive" (I2-DP), "In online conferences, it's really difficult to make contact with new people" (I3-DP), "Networking and stuff, and I would say that these are a bit limited now. This, which used to be my motive also, you know, it's now a bit limited. I preferred being in the real mobility at those times" (I5-DP), "Until now it was not full forms of communication, or discussion" (I6-DP).*

The interviews also showed that the intrinsic motivation for developing cultural competence, which was of great importance to the participants in the pre-pandemic period mobility, became insignificant during the pandemic: *"Geography is not important. I cannot feel the geography" (I3-DP).*

Despite the negative aspects of virtual or blended mobility, which were perceived as demotivating by the interviewees, they expressed their understanding of the need for flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances and faced up to the inevitable reality: *"It was basically a part of what I must do. I think that the pandemic did the change" (I2-DP), "It was just in case of the necessity" (I6-DP), "This situation showed us that we have to adapt, and we cannot be reticent, or we cannot be isolated. We are lucky because when other people cannot perform their job, because it is mostly related to their physical participation" (I8-DP).*

The interviewees' responses revealed their understanding of the changing external circumstances. During the pandemic, the interviewees strongly emphasized competence development; however, the willingness to develop only selected competencies was mentioned as a motive.

## 4.2. The need for relatedness

### 4.2.1. During the pre-pandemic period

The interviewees cited the opportunity to build relationships as another important reason for the international mobility of academic staff. The interviewees

cited several factors associated with maintaining existing relationships: "I would say like personal contacts, and some kind of personal trust, you know, with people which you cooperate for many years" (I5-BP). Building personal and institutional networks was mentioned as another relatedness motive. It included an interest in meeting new people and the opportunity to meet gurus in the field: "I enjoy (...) also meeting each time new colleagues, I'm able to create networks" (I4-BP), "When we were last at a conference in xxx, the Nobel laureate xxx spoke, then we had a round table with him. Well, it's, well, it's unique, it's unimaginable" (I6-BP), "Communication with other universities, other countries, other people, other teachers. So, it is very important to establish contacts" (I10-BP), "The exchange with other people, it's important" (I8-BP), "Networking is very important, always very important" (I11-BP). Network building was another factor that related to the development of institutional relationships, as the following quotes show: "I'm interested in, maybe managing a little bit international part or making contacts" (I1-BP), "I'm also able to promote relations between the two institutions, and also to develop (...) cooperation between our schools, international; I think it's also important to build these long-term relationships" (I4-BP).

Furthermore, the interviewees expressed that their motivation to communicate during the international visits made a significant contribution, as partnerships are based on lived relationships, as the following quote shows:

*I think that partnerships are partnerships only if you make them alive so that, you know, there are activities. Because, I mean, I don't think that it's, you know... Why would you have a partnership on paper if there's no activity going on? So, I think that, you know, when we visit each other's institutions, it's always a great possibility to make networks and then encourage other colleagues to go there (I4-BP).*

In general, the interviewees emphasized that their motivation to engage in international academic mobility was driven by the opportunities to maintain and develop relationships, including maintaining existing and building new personal and professional relationships.

#### 4.2.2. During the pandemic period

The pandemic introduced crucial changes regarding relatedness opportunities in the context of international mobility. As mobility shifted to the virtual world, the possibilities for establishing and maintaining relationships were fundamentally affected. During the pandemic, the interviewees referred to the same need for relatedness. Meeting up with old colleagues or the opportunity to meet interesting new people

remained one of the main priorities of virtual mobility activities: "It depends on the people that I meet. If they're interesting, or if they have the same idea on organizing something, then I try to make contact with them" (I1-DP). The interviewees expressed their willingness to expand international relations further: "I try to pay attention to those universities, which I visited, which I took any contacts before the pandemic" (I6-DP). One interviewee even pointed out an unexpectedly positive point about online communication – that it can even be a better way for shy people to talk to the authorities:

*I'm quite often shy to share my thoughts. It seems easier to ask questions, give ideas, and share your views online. You can see gurus (...), and they're very close, and you can see in a very, how to say - a very natural and usual manner, and you can have a discussion with them. I would never talk to those people in person because I would have been scared to talk with them (I9-DP).*

But even fully acknowledging the inescapable reality of pandemic restrictions, interviewees still recalled the advantages of physical meetings: "But I still think that meetings in person or face-to-face conferences enable you more time to, you know, to meet with people, to get to know new people and staff" (I5-DP). They recalled the importance of communication in fulfilling relationship needs but also acknowledged that the nature of communication has changed and a need for reconsidering communication means:

*People or the organizers should rethink the media (...) and maybe the structure of these sessions, whatever. If it's a conference or a mobility session or whatever and restructure it in terms of allowing time to interact. They need to embed a lot of parts into the changing dynamics or the changing structure of virtual meetings (I2-DP).*

The interviews during the pandemic confirmed a strong need for relatedness among the interviewees, which did not disappear during the pandemic. Nevertheless, there was a need for new forms of realizing these needs.

### 4.3. Extrinsic motivation: organizational support

#### 4.3.1. During the pre-pandemic period

The data revealed several drivers related to extrinsic motivation, with organizational aspects being the most important. The interviewees referred to encouragement from the administration, including the availability of information and mobility promotion, which greatly helped them in their mobility-related decisions, as illustrated by the following quotes: "Oh my God, I didn't know. I didn't know it existed. It was not very much promoted" (I1-BP), "It's something that's

very much like promoted, encouraged. Everybody who would like to go abroad or to have a possibility to go. In our institution, I think it's considered to be a very important part of everyone's tasks" (I4-BP), "I want to know everything clearly. There must be some serious reasons that guarantee me some kind of peace and good organization. I am not a risky visitor" (I6-BP). The interviewees acknowledged that their motivation for international academic mobility is linked to the strategies and policies of their institutions:

*I think it should at least go according to the needs and preferences of the Institute. If I'm driven out of personal motivations, then I think it's wrong. I think that there should be a combination between personal motivation and the needs of the institution. And if you can combine these two together, then it's great* (I2-BP).

The availability of financial support was mentioned as another important extrinsic mobility factor: "It's important that you have arranged payments and everything so that you're working for some money, that you're like, covered, you don't really spend a lot of money from your pocket, because you go to work" (I5-BP).

A few interviewees mentioned the opportunity to participate in events and the general reputation of the host as a motivation for international mobility, as the following quotes show: "It was interesting for me to see how certain events look like" (I9-BP) "I, of course, read how famous it <host institution> is, what it does, reviews about it. The authority of the university, its reputation in the country or in the region. It is very important for me" (I6-BP).

The results presented above show that institutional support, including all possible administrative and financial support, plays a major role in the mobility decisions of academic staff.

#### 4.3.2. During the pandemic period

As mentioned in the previous sections, the pandemic posed a challenge for all mobility stakeholders. In the interviews, the interviewees mentioned their heavy workload and the need to reorganize their schedules to cope with the challenges of virtual mobility, while the lack of support for this could even lead to a refusal to participate: "I can't find the right way to do live everyday assignment, to be focused on the conference" (I2-DP). Timely administrative support with knowledge of the changing possibilities can play a big role in decisions about virtual mobility: "I'm not quite sure how actively, for instance, our international partners have been organizing these types of virtual teacher exchanges. (There is) a lack of information on available virtual teacher exchanges" (I4-DP).

The interviewees' responses indicate that timely organizational support from higher education institutions is equally important for supporting academic staff in their decision-making and increasing motivation for international academic mobility. New external circumstances force institutions to make new quick decisions in the administrative support of international academic staff mobility, which is crucial for maintaining and further developing the internationalization of higher education.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper analyzed the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of academic staff for short-term international mobility during the pre-pandemic ("old normality") and pandemic ("new normality") periods. Recent years of the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the need for new approaches to the organization of international academic mobility and have challenged those involved in these processes to rethink current methods and seek new solutions for developing sustainable international academic mobility in an ever-changing environment.

This study makes some important contributions to the literature on academic mobility, particularly to research on academics' motivation to participate in short-term international mobility. The research findings are consistent with the theories of economic productivity, human capital, social capital, and symbolic capital, which provide some explanations of the motivators of international academic mobility. This study extends the existing knowledge with new data on the motivation of academics under changing conditions and provides new insights into the role of technology. It provides insights into the motivation of academic staff to engage in international physical and virtual mobility and recommendations for the organization of mobility after the pandemic.

In line with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), two types of mobility drivers – intrinsic and extrinsic – play an important role in the international mobility of university staff. The findings suggest that intrinsic motivation for competence development prevailed in international physical and virtual mobility, although the pandemic limited the opportunity to develop cultural capital. The relatedness motive played a more important role in international physical mobility – the "old normality" – and was not motivating during the pandemic. The limited motivation for developing joint publications could presumably be related to the limited possibilities for the relatedness motive.

The extrinsic motivation for mobility, driven by



and linked to institutional and national policies, can also encourage and support commitment to international mobility. As one of the key extrinsic drivers for international mobility of academic staff, organizational support is an equally important extrinsic driver for mobility in traditional and extreme circumstances, e.g., in a pandemic or the ‘new normality’ when virtual mobility takes the most important place.

It is important to discuss separately the intrinsic motivation of academic staff for accumulating cultural capital. The intercultural dimension is an inseparable part of international higher education: *“Internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”* (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Cultural motives are frequently mentioned in the international mobility literature. For example, Cradden (2007) identified sociocultural motives in his categorization of international academic mobility, while Thorn (2009) highlighted the importance of cultural opportunities as one of the most important motives for mobility-related decisions. Cultural and traveling opportunities were also mentioned by other researchers (Froese, 2012; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007). This research has shown that the development of cultural capital predominated as a driving force in the pre-pandemic period, while it became less important in the pandemic period. This supports previous assumptions that technologies create greater emotional distance via virtual interactions (Caligiuri et al., 2020). It is, therefore, important to examine international academic staff’s categories of motivation in more detail.

To our knowledge, this study is one of the first exploratory longitudinal studies that aim to compare the motivation for international academic mobility under different circumstances: before the pandemic (“old normality”) and during the pandemic (“new normality”). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the instability of the external environment, especially concerning international activities. Further insights are therefore needed to understand the phenomenon of international mobility motivation in a changing environment.

The results of this longitudinal study also offer some practical implications for management. Higher education institutions can use them as guidelines for improving the mobility of their academic staff in an ever-changing environment. First, institutions could work on promoting the international mobility of academic staff, as this was identified as an important driver of extrinsic motivation of academic staff in their international mobility decisions. This also un-

derlines the importance of a strategic approach to international academic mobility as a very important part of the internationalization of HEIs. At an operational level, institutions should pay more attention to the dissemination of information and the provision of mobility support for sending and receiving HEIs. Second, a better understanding of the motivation for international academic mobility can help shape the future mobility choices of academic staff in an ever-changing environment and, therefore, requires the development of better policies and procedures.

## 6. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. First, the interviewees were invited from different HEIs and different European and Asian countries to reveal possible differences arising from institutional and national policies. However, this limits the generalisability of the results. Future studies should, therefore, build on a larger number of interviewees from the same country and focus on factors such as personal experience, the field of teaching or research, HEI type, country, etc. Previous studies have shown that these factors can influence the motivation for international mobility.

This research was limited to academic staff. Administrative staff play a very important role in the overall performance of higher education institutions; therefore, knowledge of their internationalization processes is important for institutional growth. Future studies should, therefore, also include non-academic staff.

The experience of the pandemic is still very recent, so it isn’t easy to generalize about it yet. The global pandemic has only just shrunk but has not completely disappeared. Therefore, continuing this research is necessary to confirm the initial findings and identify new potential factors. Furthermore, no one can guarantee that the COVID-19 pandemic was the world’s last global challenge. Therefore, it is very important to draw possible lessons from the current situation that can help be better prepared for unforeseen circumstances. Further expansion of this research, including quantitative methods, can be very helpful.

## REFERENCES

- 194
1. Ackers, L. (2005a). Moving people and knowledge: Scientific mobility in the European Union. *International Migration*, 43(5), 99–131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00343.x>
  2. Ackers, L. (2005b). Promoting scientific mobility and balance growth in the European research area. *Innovation*, 18(3), 301–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610500186680>
  3. Ackers, L. (2008). Internationalisation, mobility and metrics: A new form of indirect discrimination? *Minerva*, 46(4), 411–435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-008-9110-2>
  4. Azoulay, P., Ganguli, I., & Graff Zivin, J. (2017). The mobility of elite life scientists: Professional and personal determinants. *Research Policy*, 46(3), 573–590. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2017.01.002>
  5. Bauder, H. (2015). The international mobility of academics: A labour market perspective. *International Migration*, 53(1), 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2012.00783.x>
  6. Bauder, H., Lujan, O., & Hannan, C. A. (2018). Internationally mobile academics: Hierarchies, hegemony, and the geo-scientific imagination. *Geoforum*, 89(September 2017), 52–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.01.004>
  7. Becker, G. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. New York National Bureau of Economic Research.
  8. Boring, P., Flanagan, K., Gagliardi, D., Kaloudis, A., & Karakasidou, A. (2015). International mobility: Findings from a survey of researchers in the EU. *SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY*, 42(6), 811–826. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scv006>
  9. Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
  10. Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A., & Zimmermann, A. (2020). International HRM insights for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for future research and practice. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 51(5), 697–713. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-020-00335-9>
  11. Cantwell, B. (2011). Transnational Mobility and International Academic Employment: Gatekeeping in an Academic Competition Arena. *Minerva*, 49(4), 425–445. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-011-9181-3>
  12. Caruana, E. J., Roman, M., Hernández-sánchez, J., & Solli, P. (2015). *Longitudinal studies*. 7(V), 537–540. <https://doi.org/10.3978/j.issn.2072-1439.2015.10.63>
  13. Cradden, C. (2007). *Constructing Paths to Staff Mobility in the European Higher Education Area: from Individual to Institutional Responsibility*. January. [http://old.ei-ie.org/highereducation/file/\(2007\)ConstructingPathsToStaffMobilityintheEuropeanHigherEducationAreaen.pdf](http://old.ei-ie.org/highereducation/file/(2007)ConstructingPathsToStaffMobilityintheEuropeanHigherEducationAreaen.pdf)
  14. Czaika, M., & Toma, S. (2017). International academic mobility across space and time: The case of Indian academics. *Population, Space and Place*, 23(8). <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2069>
  15. David, P. A. (1985). Clio and the Economics of QWERTY. *The American Economic Review*, 75(2), 332–337.
  16. Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-Determination Theory in Work Organizations: The State of a Science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4(March), 19–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113108>
  17. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
  18. Edler, J., Fier, H., & Grimpe, C. (2011). International scientist mobility and the locus of knowledge and technology transfer. *Research Policy*, 40(6), 791–805. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2011.03.003>
  19. Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4308385>
  20. *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*. (2022).
  21. European Commission. (2021). *2021 annual work programme "Erasmus+": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport*. March.
  22. Fernandez-Zubieta, A., Geuna, A., & Lawson, C. (2015). *What do We Know of the Mobility of Research Scientists and of its Impact on Scientific Production*.
  23. Froese, F. J. (2012). Motivation and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates: the case of expatriate academics in South Korea. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(6), 1095–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.561220>
  24. Gagné, M., & Forest, J. (2011). *The Study of Compensation Systems Through the Lens of Self-Determination Theory: Reconciling 35 Years of Debate* Marylène Gagné, Jacques Forest *Série Scientifique Scientifique Series*.
  25. Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1549089112473153>

- org/10.1177/1094428112452151
26. Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
  27. Haines, V. Y., Saba, T., & Choquette, E. (2008). Intrinsic motivation for an international assignment. *International Journal of Manpower*, 29(5), 443–461. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437720810888571>
  28. Halfacree, K. (2012). Heterolocal Identities? Counter-Urbanisation, Second Homes, and Rural Consumption in the Era of Mobilities. *Population, Space and Place*, 18(2), 209–224.
  29. Hoffman, D. M. (2009). Changing academic mobility patterns and international migration: What will academic mobility mean in the 21st century? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(3), 347–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315308321374>
  30. Iglesias-Fernández, C., Llorente-heras, R., & Dueñas-Fernández, D. (2014). International mobility of Spanish doctorate-holders: What determinants matters? *Cuadernos de Economía*, 29–44.
  31. Jepsen, D. M., Sun, J. J.-M., Budhwar, P. S., Kliche, U.-C., Krausert, A., Raghuram, S., & Valcour, M. (2014). International academic careers: personal reflections. In *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* (Vol. 25, Issue 10, pp. 1309–1326). Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.870307>
  32. Jöns, H. (2018). Boundary-crossing academic mobilities in glocal knowledge economies: new research agendas based on triadic thought. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 16(2), 151–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1413977>
  33. Kim, T. (2009). Transnational academic mobility, internationalization and interculturality in higher education. *Intercultural Education*, 20(5), 395–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980903371241>
  34. Kim, T., & Locke, W. (2010). *Transnational academic mobility and the academic profession* (pp. 27–34). Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, The Open University, London. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/21282/>
  35. Knight, J. (2003). Updating the Definition of Internationalisation. *International Higher Education*, 33, 2–3.
  36. Krause, K.-L., Coates, H., & James, R. (2015). Monitoring the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Are there Useful Quantitative Performance Indicators? *International Relations*, 233–253.
  37. Leemann, R. J. (2010). Gender inequalities in transnational academic mobility and the ideal type of academic entrepreneur. *Discourse*, 31(5), 609–625. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2010.516942>
  38. Leung, L. S. K. (2019). *What Are Basic Human Needs ? A Challenge to the Self-Determination Theory in the SST Context*. 958–976. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2019.107063>
  39. Marinoni, G., Land, H. V., & Jensen, T. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on higher education around the world. In *IAU Global Survey Report*. [https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau\\_covid19\\_and\\_he\\_survey\\_report\\_final\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf)
  40. Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Introduction to Qualitative Research*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
  41. Netz, N., & Jaksztat, S. (2017). Explaining Scientists' Plans for International Mobility from a Life Course Perspective. *Research in Higher Education*, 58(5), 497–519. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11662-016-9438-7>
  42. O'Dowd R. (2011). Virtual academic mobility: Online preparation and support for the intercultural experience. In F. Dervin (Ed.), *Analysing the consequences of academic mobility and migration* (pp. 97–114). New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
  43. Poulová, P., Černá, M., & Svobodová, L. (2009). *University Network – Efficiency of Virtual Mobility 2 Mobility and Higher Education 3 Virtual Mobility in the Czech Republic*.
  44. Rajagopal, K., Firssova, O., Op, I., Beeck, D., & Stappen, E. Van Der. (2020). Learner skills in open virtual mobility. *Research in Learning Technology*, 28, 1–18.
  45. Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2014). Redefining Academic Mobility: From the Pursuit of Scholarship to the Pursuit of Revenue. In R. Maldonado-Maldonado, A., Bassett (Ed.), *The Forefront of International Higher Education. Higher Education Dynamics* (Vol. 42). Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7085-0\\_8](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7085-0_8)
  46. Richardson, Julia, & McKenna, S. (2003). International experience and academic careers: What do academics have to say? *Personnel Review*, 32(6), 774–795. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480310498710>
  47. Richardson, Julia, & Zikic, J. (2007). The darker side of an international academic career. *Career Development International*, 12(2), 164–186. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430710733640>
  48. Rodriguez, J. K., & Mearns, L. (2012). Problematising the interplay between employment relations, migration and mobility. *Employee Relations*, 34(6), 580–593.
  49. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). *Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being*. 55(1), 68–78.

50. Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., Vansteenkiste, M., & Soenens, B. (2021). Building a Science of Motivated Persons: Self-determination Theory's Empirical Approach to Human Experience and the Regulation of Behavior. *Motivation Science*, 7(2), 97–110. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000194>
51. Schiller, D., & Diez, J. R. (2012). The Impact of Academic Mobility on the Creation of Localized Intangible Assets. *Regional Studies*, 1319–1332.
52. Schreurs, B., & Verjans, S. (2006). *Towards sustainable virtual mobility in higher education institutions*. January.
53. Shrestha, N., Shad, M. Y., Ulvi, O., Khan, M. H., Karamehic-Muratovic, A., Nguyen, U. S. D. T., Baghbanzadeh, M., Wardrup, R., Aghamohammadi, N., Cervantes, D., Nahiduzzaman, K. M., Zaki, R. A., & Haque, U. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on globalization. *One Health*, 11, 100180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.onehlt.2020.100180>
54. Storme, T., Beaverstock, J. V., Derrudder, B., Faulconbridge, J. R., & Witlox, F. (2013). How to cope with mobility expectations in academia: Individual travel strategies of tenured academics at Ghent University, Flanders. *Research in Transportation Business and Management*, 9, 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2013.05.004>
55. Talmage, C. A., Allgood, B., Ashdown, B. K., Brennan, A., Hill, S., Trevan, E., & Waugh, J. (2022). Tethering Natural Capital and Cultural Capital for a More Sustainable Post-COVID-19 World. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, 5(3), 657–678. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-021-00151-5>
56. Teichler, U. (2015). Academic mobility and migration: What we know and what we do not know. *European Review*, 23, S6–S37. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000787>
57. Tesar, M. (2020). Towards a Post-Covid-19 'New Normality?': Physical and Social Distancing, the Move to Online and Higher Education. *Policy Futures in Education*, 18(5), 556–559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210320935671>
58. Thorn, K. (2009). The relative importance of motives for international self-initiated mobility. *Career Development International*, 14(5), 441–464. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430910989843>
59. Van de Bunt-Kokhuis, S. G. M. (2001). Academic Pilgrims: Faculty Mobility in the Virtual World. *On the Horizon*, 9(1), 1–6. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdf-plus/10.1108/10748120110803626>

## AVIONSKA KARTA ILI ZOOM SASTANAK?

## MOBILNOST AKADEMSKOG OSOBLJA U "STAROJ" I "NOVOJ NORMALNOSTI"

## SAŽETAK

Međunarodna mobilnost postala je sastavni dio aktivnosti akademskog osoblja na visokoobrazovnim ustanovama (VEU). U kontekstu globalizacije i internacionalizacije, ona igra ključnu ulogu u razvoju individualne akademske karijere i učinku VEU. Međutim, istraživanja o motivaciji akademskog osoblja za sudjelovanje u međunarodnoj mobilnosti, posebno kratkotrajnoj mobilnosti, još su skromna. Nadalje, pandemija COVID-19 unijela je značajne promjene u organizaciju međunarodne akademske mobilnosti, pri čemu virtualna mobilnost postaje nova norma. Istraživanja o odgovorima akademskog osoblja na ovaj oblik mobilnosti su u početnim fazama, ali nisu ništa manje relevantna s obzirom na trenutno širenje mješovite međunarodne mobilnosti. Temeljeći se na teoriji samoodređenja, ovaj rad ima za cilj identificirati što motivira akademsko osoblje za sudjelovanje u kratkotrajnoj međunarodnoj akademskoj mobilnosti u razdoblju prije pandemije ("stara normalnost") i tijekom pandemije ("nova normalnost"). Studija se temelji na rezultatima longitudinalnog istraživanja tijekom kojeg su dva puta intervjuirana 13 članova akademskog osoblja iz 12 različitih zemalja: prije i tijekom pandemije. Rezultati sugeriraju da je akademsko osoblje primarno motivirano za sudjelovanje u kratkotrajnoj međunarodnoj mobilnosti intrinzičnom motivacijom, naime potrebom za razvojem kompetencija tijekom fizičke (prije pandemije) i virtualne (tijekom pandemije) mobilnosti, dok potreba za povezanošću igra značajniju ulogu u međunarodnoj fizičkoj mobilnosti. Organizacijska podrška jednako je važan ekstrinzični motivator za oba tipa mobilnosti. Ovo empirijsko istraživanje pruža implikacije za literaturu o međunarodnoj akademskoj mobilnosti i upravljanje VEU u pogledu poboljšanja sudjelovanja akademskog osoblja u međunarodnoj mobilnosti akademskog osoblja.

197

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** *kratkotrajna međunarodna akademska mobilnost, motivacija, visokoobrazovne ustanove, teorija samoodređenja, COVID-19, pandemija.*

**APPENDIX: Coding categories of the international academic mobility motivators**

