ACADEMIC STAFF MOBILITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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The Rationale for Academic Mobility

- Academic mobility is increasingly associated with excellence in teaching and research
  - Reliable knowledge in higher education “cannot be produced in local isolation but can only be obtained by an open and honest inquiry that is international in its scope” (Miller et al., 2011)
  - Academic mobility and international attractiveness are associated with excellence, the creation of dynamic international networks, improved knowledge and technology transfer, and improved productivity – all of which ultimately enhance economic and social welfare (Researchers’ Report, 2014)

- Global competition: World-class universities – and those aspiring to become ones – try to attract the ‘best and brightest’ academics – regardless of their nationality
Academic Mobility as the Objective of the EHEA

Bologna Declaration (1999)
One of the six core objectives is the “promotion of mobility“

Prague Communiqué (2001)
„the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff is of the utmost importance“

„Mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European higher Education Area. Ministers emphasise its importance for academic and cultural as well as political, social and economic spheres“

Bergen Communiqué (2005)
„Mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives“

London Communiqué (2007)
“Mobility (...) is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research (...)”

Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009)
“We believe that mobility (...) enhances the quality of programmes and excellence in research; it strengthens the academic and cultural internationalization of European higher education.”

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)
“We strive for open higher education systems and better balanced mobility in the EHEA.“
Research Questions

- Which factors influence the motivations of international academics to work at higher education institutions in CEE countries?

- Which obstacles to the mobility of international academics to CEE countries can be observed?

- Which strategies are pursued in CEE countries to attract international academics?
Methodology

Defining “international academic staff”

- Researchers and other academics with a third-country nationality AND
- Nationals, who have spent a significant amount of time working in academia abroad

Methods

- Document and website content analysis for analysis of mobility trends as well as national strategies, policy programmes, grants and schemes in the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Lithuania with regard to academic mobility 2009-2015
- Interviews with researchers and survey among HR managers at Czech universities as well as interviews with staff at Czech Euraxess centre (2009), interviews with Lithuanian Research Council, Ministry representatives and international academics (2015)
- Survey of Lithuanian academics working abroad (2013)
- Case study of Vilnius University- literature review, document analysis, website content analysis and interviews with international academics affiliated with VU (2015)
Academic Centres and Peripheries: issues of brain-drain and brain-gain (Altbach, 2004; Hughes, 2008; Scott, 2015)

- **Academic centres:**
  - Larger and wealthier
  - Use one of the major international languages (typically English)
  - Attract academic talent from the peripheries

- **Peripheries:**
  - Smaller, less wealthy academic systems
  - Less connected to academic centres
  - Lack of resources and infrastructure
  - Subject to brain-drain

- Brain-drain is more acute in times of economic crisis and austerity! (Leisyte, 2013)
Mobility Flows within the European Union (1)

Figure 53: Map of >3 month international mobility flows in post-PhD career stages within the EU

Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey (2012)
Mobility Flows within the European Union (2)

International PhD degree mobility of R1 and R2 researchers per country of destination

(Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey, 2012)
Why do Academics move? (Fernández-Zubieta et al., 2015)

- Traditional labour market mobility factors:
  - Wage related
  - Career related
  - Opportunity related (voluntarily or involuntarily)
  - Market related
  - Cost related
  - Family related

- Mobility factors distinctive of the academic profession:
  - Reputation of institution or department (oftentimes more important than salary!)
  - Degree of academic freedom
  - Time for research and teaching load
  - Access to tacit knowledge and new equipment
Academic Mobility in CEE countries

- Focus on short-term and outgoing mobility
- Very limited degrees of long-term/permanent incoming mobility
  - Internationalisation primarily understood as an “act of travelling to Western countries for educational or academic work opportunities” (Renc-Roe, 2011)
  - Limited English language competencies among older generations of academic staff (Leisyte, 2014)
  - Protectionism of smaller higher education systems (Leisyte, 2014)
  - Limited connectedness to Western scientific centres (Leisyte, 2014)

- Particular relevance of attracting international academic staff in some CEE countries (e.g. the Baltics):
  - Demographic change
  - Large numbers of institutions
  - Competition for limited resources
  - Attracting talent from abroad as a solution to deal with increasing competition
FINDINGS
Drivers of Outgoing Mobility in CEE Countries

Motivations of Lithuanians to go abroad for study/work

![Bar chart showing motivations for Lithuanians to go abroad](chart.png)

- Strengthen career profile
- Better higher education
- Better working conditions
- Professional networks
- Better career progression
- Better chances in other motivations

Academics and other researchers, N=127
Motivations for Staying Abroad vs. Returning

Importance of factors influencing the decisions of Lithuanians working abroad to stay abroad/return to Lithuania

Mean values on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a very high extent)
Comparison: Main motivations for academic mobility ...

... to institutions world-wide (INOMICS, 2015)

- Research environment (support, resources, and infrastructure)
- Academic freedom, flexibility, and independence
- Location and reputation of institution
- Salary and funding opportunities
- Low teaching load

... to institutions in CEE countries

- Personal reasons
- Family related reasons
- General- or research interest in the country and its language, culture, and history
- Wish to experience and establish something new
- Career opportunities (only if significantly less favourable conditions compared to home)
Main Barriers to Academic Staff Mobility in LT, EST, CZ

- Level of income (very low compared to other EU countries and the US)
- Lack of career opportunities
- Complicated immigration and bureaucratic procedures
- Language barriers
- Limited availability of research funding
- Lack of transparancy and openness of recruitment processes
Examples of Barriers to Mobility to CEE countries (1): salaries

Remuneration of researchers – Gross annual salary of professors in 2011 (MORE2)

- Czech Republic: \(28\,840\) € average
- Estonia: \(30\,000\) € average
- Lithuania: \(14\,578\) € max. base (+bonuses/salary from ext. funded projects)
- European Union: \(44\,068\) € average
- EU-15: \(54\,068\) € average
- EU-12 (CEE): \(28\,067\) € average
Examples of Barriers to Mobility to CEE countries (2)

- **Lack of transparency and openness of recruitment and hiring procedures**
  - Dissatisfaction with publicity and international visibility of job vacancies – especially in Lithuania
  - High degrees of academic inbreeding:
    
    It is “*a closed system –which means it is normal to study in the same place and country and to stay there*” (interview senior researcher CZ)

- **Language barriers**
  - Contracts and other documents at university available only in national language
  - Laws on local language to be obligatory and primary language in higher education
Development of the share of international academic staff from 2004 (EU-accession) to 2011

Researchers with a foreign citizenship (hc) as share of total research personnel (hc) (in %)

*no data available for CZ in 2004 and 2007-10
Source: Eurostat
Coping Strategies in LT, EST, CZ

- **Social security and immigration procedures**
  - Obstacles still present with regard to the comparability of pension systems
  - Visa: Scientific Visa and European Blue Card schemes implemented and amendments to immigration law made – yet, procedures are still complicated in all countries

- **Internationally visible recruitment via Euraxess-offices and use of Euraxess job portal**
  - Important role of Euraxess for attracting international academics in Czech Republic and Estonia
  - Non-functional in Lithuania

- **National grant programmes and schemes for mobility**
  - Main focus on short-term mobility and creating incentives for citizens from abroad to return to their home country

- **National strategies, targets, and standards**
  - Estonia: Requirement of certain standards that facilitate the hiring of international academic staff at public universities (*Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia’s Higher Education Institutions*)
Coping Strategies: Examples of institutional practices (Vilnius University)

- Public-private partnerships (e.g. joint-research centers) that can offer more favourable employment conditions, e.g.
  - Higher salaries
  - Higher degrees of academic freedom
  - Lower teaching loads

- Alternative forms of brain- and knowledge circulation:
  - Research collaborations
  - Short-term visits
  - Appointment of guest professors from foreign countries
Conclusions

- CEE countries witness low levels of mobility – especially long-term or permanent incoming academic staff mobility
- In contrast to many other destinations, motivations for academics to move to CEE countries are mainly personal or family related
- Research collaborations as well as hiring and integration of international academic staff are highly dependent on personal relationships
- Countries with clear, national strategies and quantitative targets tend to perform better in attracting academic talent from abroad (e.g. Estonia compared to Lithuania)
- In the Czech Republic and Lithuania, we see a gap between rhetorics/formulation of strategies and actual implementation
Policy implications

- A policy mix, encompassing **transparent recruitment, financial incentives, less bureaucratic visa and research funding procedures as well as legal and language support**, is necessary

- A coordinated interplay of more favourable **national framework conditions and institutional practices** is extremely important
References

Thank you for your attention!