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Mobility as a challenge for academic teachers in transformation processes. An example of UWM experiences in Olsztyn

ABSTRACT

In the modern world, dominated by technology, changes are introduced to different aspects of life. Rapid and convenient access to information as well as boundless mobility opportunities to enhance the exchange of experiences, learning about other cultures, and making all those who want to be active participants of these changes become adjusted to the new situation. This also applies to academic staff, for whom global transformation is a chance, an opportunity, but also a demand for a constant development of their academic careers. One of key objectives of the educational policy is to develop scientists' intellectual potential. A clear measure of the implementation of the above assumptions are various initiatives aimed at removing barriers for the development of research careers and international / cross-border mobility. Year by year, the offer for scientific exchange is becoming more and more accessible and flexible owing to various scholarship projects. The aim of this study is to present the extent of international mobility on the example of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. The research involved analyses of the database stored at the UWM Centre of International Cooperation in Olsztyn.

Key words: academic career, international mobility, University of Olsztyn

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, when technology plays a crucial role, one may observe many changes in different aspects of life. There is easy and fast information flow and broad relocation potential, as well as support in the process of experience exchange, familiarisation with other cultures and turning those who are interested into active components of these changes. This situation is also connected with scientists, as the global and cultural transformation constitutes a chance and a possibility. In other words, an obligatory step in their careers.

One crucial aim of educational policies is the development of scientific and intellectual potential. Different kinds of initiatives, which aim at eliminating barriers connected with academic careers, international and extra-sectorial mobility of scientists, are a clear measure in the implementation of the above-mentioned goals. Each year, the travelling potential of the academic community is becoming easier and more available in many aspects. The aim of the research is to present the scale of international mobility, where the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn is taken as an example. The main method applied in the research was analysis of source documents retained in the Office of the International Cooperation at UWM in Olsztyn.

BASIC THEORETICAL ISSUES OF ACADEMIC MOBILITY

In a way of introduction, the terms of „mobility” and „academics” are worth considering. Mobility, with its wide range of meanings, can be defined as „freedom of movement of academics in other countries, sectors and faculties” (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2007, p. 4). In a personal aspect, it broadens knowledge and supports the development of scientists at each step of their academic careers.

A more specified term „academic” may be found in the European Document of the Scientist, in which this term is followed by a definition by Frascati Manual. According to it, people are considered to be scientists when they are professionals involved into creation of new knowledge, products,

processes, methods, systems and managing relevant projects. It is a term that possesses a wide range of meanings, as it comprises people occupationally engaged in research and development at every stage of their careers, regardless of the declared classification.

Scientists, according to the European Document of the Scientist, are professionals who are engaged in basic, applied and strategic research, experimental development, as well as in transferring knowledge (Sekcja 3, 2005).

There are the following types of scientists:

- 1) beginners- scientists in their first four years of scientific research, including periods of scientific training (an equivalent of full time employment).
- 2) experts- scientists with at least four-year-long experience in research after graduating from PhD studies and scientists with a PhD degree, regardless of the time they needed to attain the degree of PhD (Sekcja 3, 2005).

In Poland, academics/scientists are employed on grounds of Higher Education Law from 2005, according to which there are four types of scientists:

- scientific and didactic employees,
- didactic employees,
- scientific employees,
- librarians with a diploma and employees dealing scientific documentation and information (Art. 108, Ustawy z dnia 27 lipca 2005).

To gain scientific recognition on the international arena, the definition by the European Document of the Scientist is in force.

Taking into account mechanisms aiming at supporting mobility, we may distinguish:

- geographical mobility – across the country and abroad,
- sectorial mobility – mobility between disciplines, businesses and/or non- governmental organisations, governmental or international institutions,
- mobility from country to country that is connected with migrations (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2007, p. 4).

Mobility is measured as growth of scientific potential, and as such, it may be divided into the following:

- a) mobility connected with a degree, i.e. mobility of PhD students, PhD employees, post-doctoral degree scientists and professors;

- b) mobility connected with geography, i.e. mobility in the country and abroad; hence, returns and arrivals in Poland (foreigners' arrivals are included into this category);
- c) mobility connected with workplace, i.e. mobility between scientific units and sectoral mobility between science and economy;
- d) mobility connected with faculties, i.e. interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary mobility (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2007, pp. 4–5).

Since 2000, when European Research Space was created, several activities have been held to consolidate and describe the structure of European policies in research areas. Hence, promoting the mobility of students and academics has become a necessity to fulfil the objectives of the Declaration of Bologna and the Lisbon Strategy (Górniewicz, 2007, p. 151).

Therefore, cooperation between universities, exchange of experiences and promotion of innovations have become important actions (Deklaracja Bolońska Szkolnictwo Wyższe w Europie, 19 czerwca 1999).

As a result of other legal regulations, new processes and procedures were established to help in career development. There is a need of “full acceptance of the value of all mobility types, which guarantees experience and career development” (Zalecenie Komisji z dnia 11 marca 2005 r. w sprawie Europejskiej Karty Naukowca, point 12).

As a part of the Lisbon Strategy, the creation of knowledge/technology-based societies is a crucial goal (Bis & Szewczak, 2007, pp. 11–12). In relation to higher education, this aim may be reached by surmounting administrative and legal obstacles which affect geographical and sectorial mobility. Another document, the Strategy of Education Development between 2007–2013 promotes academic mobility, demonstrates the importance of qualified staff and suitable quantities of academics, as well as emphasises the advantages of experiences from foreign countries and their economies (scholarships, grants in other research centres, staff exchange) (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu, 2005, p. 46).

The Europe 2020 Strategy is compatible with earlier strategies. One of its main priorities is to promote intelligent economic growth, i.e. economy development based on knowledge and innovations (smart growth). Among flagship initiatives, there are the following: improvement of higher education, its attractiveness and scores in the international arena and improvement of

quality at all levels of education in the EU. In consequence, these flagships aim at increasing mobility not only among students, but also among academics from the EU (*Strategia Europa 2020*).

The strategy of supporting the mobility of academics was initiated in Poland in 2004. For this purpose, Polish Range of Information Centres for Scientists, coordinated by the National Contact Centre of Research Programs in the EU, was created (Krajowy Punkt Kontaktowy Programów Badawczych UE). The 2006 analysis scrutinises the mobility of young Polish scientists, including range, frequency, dynamics, reasons and consequences of their migrations. Another document focuses on mechanisms of supporting the mobility of academics between education and economy in Poland. All previous research papers and establishments of scientific and technical politics were replaced by the Strategy of Scientific Development in Poland up to 2015, drawn up by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. There are four specific goals mentioned in this document, one of them being qualitative and quantitative improvement of the level of Polish teaching staff by promoting different kinds of trainings and grants (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, *Mobilność Naukowców w Polsce*, 2007, pp. 17–22).

The Strategy of Higher Education Development in Poland till 2020 also emphasises on academics mobility by establishing obligations of mobility in the employment policy (*Strategia rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce do 2020 roku – drugi wariant*, 2000, pp. 75–82).

These activities make mobility one of crucial factors in rapid scientific careers. As such, it should be conducive to:

- access to unique research equipment;
- participation in prestigious and international research projects;
- higher research level in the wake of international exchange of ideas and issues;
- familiarisation with new research institutions specialised in particular scientific subjects;
- relocation of the best international internships to domestic areas;
- increased significance of Polish science all around the world (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego *Mobilność naukowców w Polsce*, 2007, p. 104).

In the literature on the subject, we may find different problematic aspects of mobility. It may be domestic or international in character, the former referring to the mobility of native scientists between scientific institutions

within a given country, and the latter being defined as an element of international cooperation between academic and scientific institutions (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, *Mobilność naukowców w Polsce*, 2007, p.75). An example of this type of international mobility is The Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) established in 2000, where cooperation is based on exchanging experiences within the range of international cooperation management, higher education, and new technologies of managing in high schools and universities. Up to this point, it has attracted 31 members: scientific institutions from Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia and Poland. There are six *scientific* units from Poland in BSRUN: University of Warsaw, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Medical Academy of Gdańsk, the Gdańsk University of Technology, University of Lodz, University of Białystok. The last two became part of BSRUN in 2016¹.

When considering types of mobility concepts, we should take into account the offer of programmes supporting scientists' stays away from their main places of employment, implemented by means of various types of scholarships, such as:

- domestic; among them, there are programmes of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, as well as programmes of the Foundation in charge of Promotion of Polish Science;
- international and foreign; there are programmes of the European Commission (e.g. the 7th General Outline Programme 2017–2013), educational programmes “Lifelong Learning” (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig), Erasmus+ Programme (2014–2020); the European Union Programme Horizon 2020, or the Scholarship and Training Fund as part of the European Economic Area and Norwegian funds (2009–2014) (Fundusze norweskie i EOG (2009–2014)). The present offer of the European education programmes is published by the Foundation of the Development of Education System².

¹ <http://www.bsrn.org/members> [viewed on 5.02.2016]

² <http://www.frse.org.pl/programy-frse> [viewed on 5.02.2016]

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The University of Warmia and Mazury has been supporting the relocation of students and academic scientists since 1999 when the university was founded. Taking into account the documents from The Office of International Cooperation in Olsztyn, it can be noticed that this relocation is mainly connected with geographic mobility. Though, we focus here on international mobility. As the result of the above discussed issues, analysing the range and dynamics of academic mobility seems to be an important aspect and must be taken into consideration. Therefore, departures from and arrivals in Poland will be discussed in the article.

The numbers of departures of scientists from UWM between 2010 and 2015 have been presented in the analysis of international mobility. The scale of those departures and reasons of the mobility are listed in the chart below.

TABLE 1. Types of mobility of academic scientists from UWM in Olsztyn between 2010–2015

Ordinal number	Academic year	Form				Total
		Conferences	Internships	International Project	Others	
1.	2010/11	–	–	–	–	791
2.	2011/12	482	175	145	47	849
3.	2012/13	390	180	50	103	723
4.	2013/14	456	173	266	81	976
5.	2014/15	480	232	230	78	1020

Source: author's calculations based on data from Biuro ds. Współpracy Międzynarodowej. Mobilność pracowników UWM w Olsztynie w latach 2010–2015.

Regardless of the type, international mobility of academics from UWM shows a rising tendency. In comparison with the academic year 2010/ 2011, there were 200 scientific trips more in the academic year 2014/2015. The most popular types of departures were short trips to conferences and scientific congresses. Also, scientists benefited from didactic and scientific internships which lasted from a few days to a few weeks. The most expensive and the longest type of trips is participation of dormitories in varied international projects.

There are not only conferences, trainings and scientific research included but long-term visits as well. There are other types of mobility: lectures, consultations, trips connected with establishing international cooperation, trips as counsellors of student groups, and finally, recruitment trips. The main participant in this type of mobility is the Faculty of Medical Science, i.e. scientists from the faculty recruited great numbers of foreign students from Sweden and Saudi Arabia as a result of direct recruitment (Biuro ds. Współpracy Międzynarodowej. Stan studentów obcokrajowców UWM w Olsztynie w 2013 i 2014 r.).

Among leading faculties involved in academic mobility there are: Faculty of Humanities (118 trips in the academic year 2014/15), Faculty of Geodesy, Geospatial and Civil Engineering (95 trips), Faculty of Social Sciences (91 trips). Considering the academic calendar, the biggest number of trips were organised in September, as it is a month which is meant to encourage to academic mobility (Biuro ds. Współpracy Międzynarodowej. Wyjazdy zagraniczne pracowników UWM w Olsztynie w roku akademickim 2014/15).

Taking into account the type of geographic mobility, arrivals of foreigners at UWM in Olsztyn are worth considering, including scientists-guests and foreign students.

Between 2010 and 2014, the university in Olsztyn was visited by 2201 foreign guests. In the academic year 2010/ 2011, there were mainly Ukrainians, Germans and Russians among 237 foreign visitors. In the following year, the university was visited by 560 persons, mainly from Russia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Germany. In the academic year 2013/ 2014, there were 452 guests representing 34 countries. Generally, visitors came from Russia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Germany and the USA in that period.

In the academic year 2014/ 2015, the university was visited by 597 foreign guests, mainly from Kazakhstan, Russia, Germany and Ukraine (Biuro ds. Współpracy Międzynarodowej. Mobilność pracowników UWM w Olsztynie w latach 2010/11–2014/15).

International mobility is confirmed by the participation of foreign students in the structure of UWM in Olsztyn. Starting from the academic year 2010/ 2011, the number of foreign students increased twice, from 106 students in 2010/ 2011 up to 212 in 2014/ 2015. A detailed list of foreign students from different countries between 2012 and 2015 is presented in the table below.

TABLE 2. Number of foreign students between 2012 and 2015

Ordinal number	Country of origin	Number of students			
		2012	2013	2014	2015
1.	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	61	67	26	25
2.	Armenia	1	1	2	1
3.	The Republic of Azerbaijan	1	1	-	-
4.	Belarus	12	9	9	11
5.	China	1	1	-	-
6.	Denmark	1	1	1	1
7.	France	1	1	1	1
8.	Spain	1	1	1	1
9.	Iraq	-	1	1	1
10.	Iran	1	1	1	1
11.	The Irish Republic	1	1	1	1
12.	The Republic of Yemen	2	2	2	1
13.	Canada	1	1	1	1
14.	The Republic of Korea	-	-	-	1
15.	The Republic of Lebanon	-	-	-	1
16.	Lithuania	7	7	4	4
17.	Latvia	-	1	1	2
18.	Mongolia	3	2	3	3
19.	Germany	4	3	13	17
20.	Nigeria	2	1	1	1
21.	Pakistan	-	-	-	1
22.	Russia	8	5	2	2
23.	The Republic of South Africa	1	1	1	1
24.	Romania	1	1	1	-
25.	Serbia	-	1	1	-
26.	Syria	-	1	-	-
27.	Sweden	30	70	108	105
28.	Taiwan	2	2	2	1
29.	Ukraine	11	18	15	12
30.	The USA	4	4	4	5
31.	The Great Britain	1	1	1	1
Total		159	206	215	212

Source: author's calculations based on data from Biuro ds. Współpracy a and Ma-
 zury in Olsztyn, following *The strategy of high education development in Poland to
 2020*, places more emphasis on academic mobility within the country and abroad.

It is expressed by one of five strategic aims of the approved *Programme of the development of the University of Warmia and Mazury between 2012 and 2020*. This goal should be understood as an “intensive development of high quality scientific research, mainly in the area of innovative economy, implemented by participation in domestic and European research and other activities” (Program rozwoju Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie w latach 2012–2020). Among eight crucial activity areas, there are: education and development of academic staff. Hence, the university supports scientists’ participation in domestic and international internships.

This is a way of promoting geographic mobility. In the area of developing scientific research, UWM supports mobility between sectors by means of academics’ cooperation with economic and regional authorities. Mobility from one country to another has been hardly described in the project (Program rozwoju Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie w latach 2012–2020), due to scarce popularity of mobility in Poland, where it is widely believed that “the best career is a career from the student to the professor at the same institution” (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, *Mobilność naukowców w Polsce*, 2007, p. 100).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The resource material connected geographic mobility and international one.
2. The mobility of academics from UWM shows an increasing tendency, as exemplified by both arrivals (foreigners) and departures (academics from UWM) The trips were organised by all 16 faculties. Scientists travelled to different countries. It is worth adding here that UWM belongs to BSRUN, thus, in 2014 35% of trips were to the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. The most popular destinations were the neighbouring countries: Germany³ and Lithuania, but there was also interest

³ Germany is a country which, besides Great Britain and France, has the largest scholarship offer for foreign scientists. Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego (2007), *Mobilność naukowców w Polsce. Raport opracowany przez Zespół Interdyscyplinarny do spraw mobilności*

in Scandinavian countries: Norway, Denmark and Sweden (Kosiba, Radziszewska, 5.02.2016).

3. Taking into account the types of trips, scientists preferred the following: conferences, symposiums, congresses, internships, international projects and other short term trips, e.g. tutorials.
4. As part of international mobility, the number of foreign visitors and students has increased. The scientific representatives from Kazakhstan, Russia and Germany have been the most numerous groups of visitors for the past 3 years, as well as students from Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Ukraine and Germany.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. One of important factors which influence the objectives of educational policies of the university is a solution which encourages academics to upgrade the level of human assets. Thus, as far as mobility is concerned, not only advantages of competence development or qualification improvement are worth promoting, but also values which help establish cooperation and trust.
2. It should be noticed that the increase of academic mobility at UWM in Olsztyn, mainly PhDs, to the countries of the Baltic Sea Region needs to be supported by initiatives which facilitate trips to foreign countries. Moreover, the financial potential and long-term internships abroad for female researchers, academics with families and those in specific life situations must be taken into consideration.
3. One of the ways of fruitful exchange between the countries of the Baltic Sea Region can be virtual mobility within the region. Of course, it must be remembered that this kind of mobility cannot replace direct contacts of academic staff.
4. To promote academic mobility not only in order to improve the effectiveness factor of education quality (Śliwerski, 2002, pp. 381–391),

- but also to promote the need of professional and personal development.
5. To encourage, by means of varied methods, to organising support for geographic, social- economic and professional mobility, which leads to the improvement of scientists' prosperity, as inhabitants of a particular area, as well as to their increased attractiveness in the global job market.
 6. To perceive the mobility of the whole academia, rather than of individual scientists, as a priority.

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