

## Academic Mobility within EU as a Voluntary or a Necessary Move: The Case of German Academics in the UK

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**Abstract :** According to German national records and willingness to migrate surveys, emigration is much more attractive for better educated citizens employed in white-collar positions, with academics displaying the highest migration rate. The case study of academic migration from Germany is furthermore intriguing due to the country's financial power, competitive labour market and relatively good life-standards, working conditions and high wage rates. Investigation of such mobility challenges traditional economic view on migration, as it raises the question of why people chose to leave their highly-industrialized countries known for their high life-standards, stable political scene and prosperous economy. Within the regional domain, examining mobility of Germans contributes to the ongoing debate over the extent of influence of the EU mobility principle on migration decision. The latter is of particular interest, as it may shed the light on the extent to which it frames individual migration path, defines motivations and colours the experiences of migration action itself. The paper is based on the analysis of the migration decisions obtained through in-depth interviews with German academics employed in the UK. These retrospective interviews were conducted with German academics across selected universities in the UK, employed in a variety of academic fields, and different career stages. Interviews provide a detailed description of what motivated people to search for a post in another country, which attributes of such job are needed to be satisfied in order to facilitate migration, as well as general information on particularities of an academic career and institutions involved. In the course of the project, it became evident that although securing financial stability was non-negotiable factor in migration (e.g., work contract signed before relocation) non-pecuniary motivations played significant role as well. Migration narratives of this group - the highly skilled, whose human capital is transferable, and whose expertise is positively evaluated by countries, is mainly characterised by search for personal development and career advancement, rather than a direct increase in their income. Such records are also consistent in showing that in case of academics, scientific freedom and independence are the main attributes of a perfect job and are a substantial motivator. On the micro level, migration is rather depicted as an opportunistic action addressed in terms of voluntary and rather imposed decision. However, on the macro level, findings allow suggesting that such opportunities are rather an outcome embedded in the peculiarities of academia and its historical and structural developments. This, in turn, contributes significantly to emergence of a scene in which migration action takes place. The paper suggest further comparative research on the intersection of the macro and micro level, and in particular how both national academic institutions and the EU mobility principle shape migration of academics. In light of continuous attempts to make the European labour market more mobile and attractive such findings ought to have direct implications on policy.

**Keywords :** migration, EU, academics, highly skilled labour

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