

AToM - Attitude Toward Moving: motivations and skills for working abroad

EMoCC, although an ERASMUS+ project led by UNICATT (Italy) and involving iriv (France), Hdba & Tür an Tür (Germany) and Esmovia (Spain), is not only an international partner exchange and training project. The call for the creation of innovative products of high quality drew the need to conduct scientific research, considering that in the past, the topic related to motivation and skills for work mobility abroad has been given very little attention.

For this reason, the project includes, from the very beginning, a study, called "AToM - Attitude Toward Moving," related to the reasons why people choose, or decide to exclude, the possibility of working abroad. This will initially help the partners design the two MOOCs aimed at training career counselors for international job mobility, and later will be an operational reference for them.

The qualitative research consisted of the collection of 160 interviews, 40 from each project partner country, with employees and self-employed people, workers sent abroad by their companies, people forced to relocate for political and economic reasons, and people who, on the other hand, have never considered the option of relocating for work mobility.

Interview analyses of all categories of people involved revealed an extremely large number of variables, which were subsequently grouped into the five areas described below.

Over the next few weeks, each area will be presented in detail with special articles that will be published as posts on LinkedIn and in the News section of www.emocc.eu.

- **Motivations:** groups the reasons why people decide to try a work experience abroad. These reasons can be multiple, such as the opportunity to improve personal skills, to have a very unique cultural experience, or to enhance a person's resume, they become the driving force that can push a person to undertake an experience abroad.
- **Skills:** concerns the soft skills that are most useful for those who intend to experience a work experience abroad that foster better adaptation in a different context from one's own. The main ones include the ability to challenge oneself in different contexts and cultures in order to overcome disturbing situation, to communicate effectively in foreign languages, to work in multicultural teams, and to solve problems in complex contexts. From a positive point of view, these skills may enhance the "mad skills" suggested in the past years by HRs meaning the ability to or having achieved exceptional thing.
- **Satisfaction:** measures the degree of satisfaction related to specific aspects that distinguish a work experience abroad, both for those who have already completed the experience and those who are currently doing it. These aspects relate to quality of life, career opportunities, and personal development.

- **Needs:** related to some external reasons people may consider moving abroad for work purposes, such as seeking new career opportunities, the need for greater financial stability, or dissatisfaction with their current job. For older high qualified workers, it may be a new start in their career.
- **Preconditions:** groups all those situations that depend or do not depend on the person's willingness to move but act as a driving force for a choice or non-choice of mobility. This category includes economic and emotional support from family, financial availability, or the course of study undertaken. The financial issue is both a threat (as you can't move abroad without money) and an opportunity (the challenge abroad is to open new ways, more financially rewarding)

In order to gain a better understanding of the areas found, the partners involved in the project who were interviewed were asked to describe what they learned and how they felt during the data collection in terms of emotions and in relation to categories found.



Dr. Bénédicte Halba reports:

“The categories of people who had a project of expatriation they couldn't achieve all belonged to an older generation, they were born (and youngsters) before the Erasmus program was launched in 1987. So many youngsters or young professionals I could interview had been involved in this “key program” of mobility in Europe, celebrated as the most successful initiative to enhance a European spirit. Many people I could interview had been in more than two countries thanks to this Eu program. A second main initiative, this time launched on a national level was the V.I.E or Volontariat International en Entreprise, created by Business France a public/private body meant to suggest a first professional experience abroad for young professionals on the basis of a selection of job offers ; it is an international mobility HR device secured by the French State that allows a company under French law to entrust a professional mission abroad, a French talent or a national of the European Economic Area, aged 18 to 28 at the beginning of the mission. The last category of interviewees belonged to people who were forced to leave their country- refugees or asylum seekers I could meet thanks to France Terre d'Asile a French NGO in charge of asylum in France, with a French public support. Their countries of origin reflect the international turmoil as you don't leave your country without being pushed by a main threat- war (Ukraine), natural disaster, authoritarian regime (Russia) or corrupted one (Perou). This is a main indicator of the international instability worldwide.

The skills people with an experience of mobility have acquired or developed clearly belonged to the 3 kinds of skills usually referred to: “hard skills” as you must justify a solid educative background for being recruited abroad ; “soft skills” as the first ones are obviously not enough when you have to adapt to a total new environment in a country you don't know with people who don't share the same professional or cultural background and in a position you also discover ; last but not least the “mad skills” were most appreciated and needed to succeed in an experience of mobility as you will have to overcome a series of main obstacles and barriers abroad ; no one is waiting for you. This is especially true for refugees and asylum seekers whom resilience is impressive.”



Kelsie Ann Kerwin said:

“My experience during the interview section of the research was one word to encapsulate it: intense. Every person has a story that is so complex, interesting, sad, funny. It made me realise how life changes so fast for people, and how there are also many components that can be applied across many people, that are factors that get them to move. Whether it be love, looking for a better job situation, needing to stay and help the family with the economic situation, wanting to see what the world is like. There are factors that are universal for people that either stimulate movement or hinder it. One of the parts that influenced me the most was interviewing the individuals that have seen themselves forced from their home country. These interviews were the most intense to have, as the stories were very sad and heartbreaking. These individuals have an inner strength that is so inspiring- they are able to keep themselves positive even after everything they have been through, something to admire honestly.

The scales that have been a result of this research, are so interesting and really great at understanding the profile of a person. These are very determinant in seeing what influences a person and can be used to help understand if someone is going to have more or less success in their mobility experience. Depending on their family situation, their values, their motivation and reason behind going somewhere else, their respect and interest for the new country and its' culture and language, one person can be more suited for a mobility experience than another person. This research is really helpful to work with this and help give insight into these questions.”



Anne Güller-Frey added:

“Every single interview was an exciting story for me and gave an insight into a phase of life of the people. It was interesting to find out how people open up and talk about the challenges, hurdles, expectations, etc. Many mentioned the aspect of curiosity about a new culture, about a new country. Changing things and seeing new landscapes, for the ambitious people a sense of progress and movement was essential. Not just about changing the physical environment, it was about the actual work they do and the responsibility they are given.

It was also interesting to learn how differently people prepare to make a decision about which way they use. (influenced by family, friends or not being influenced by others) Interviews with the target group "forced migration" have been the most challenging. Learning from the stories people have had to experience was not easy. The challenge was, when people talked about difficult and stressful situations to give enough space but also to find a good connection to continue the interview.

Regarding motivation and satisfaction areas: finding out how someone manages to be successful or how it defines for itself, on which factors it depends, on what satisfaction depends and how differently experience abroad is perceived and evaluated is an interesting result of the interviews. Also, what role does curiosity play, wanting to get to know something new - which was often cited as a motivation for making a certain decision. Increased motivation was due to the meaningfulness that professional mobility brings with it.”



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Teresa Rinaldi reports:

“Collecting the stories of the interviewees was an intense, rich journey that left me with a lot of insights. First of all, I realized that the motivations that drive a person to undertake a mobility choice have two types of drives: first, a departure from something unsatisfactory, and second, the ambition to achieve and be a better human being in every aspect. From forced people I learned and was so inspired to understand how despite all the difficulties the approach to life, the aspiration towards happiness, the resilience and the willing to fight until the end, sometimes without even knowing what the future would hold, grew. Many of them told me that they had become more reflective after the mobility choice, that they had discovered themselves capable of things they had never imagined, and I realized that without a strong drive for life, courage and a very strong ability to adapt, they had made certain choices that otherwise would not have been made. It was also interesting to discover that most people, independently from their age and professional position, chose to live a mobility experience abroad to improve skills in all aspects of life: from the professional to the human, often declaring a willingness to step out of a known comfort zone to go and discover themselves. Among those interviewed, there were those who understood the cultural limitations of their home country and replaced them with new learning in the host country, but there were also those who, thanks to this experience, were able to re-evaluate their own country in a different way, finding strengths they would not otherwise have discovered. In conclusion, I was intrigued by the interpretation of the role of the family in these choices: from a cultural point of view, Italians are often conditioned by the choices and impulses that the family imposes and in fact, while on the one hand the family has played the role of social and emotional support, on the other hand, especially for those who have not chosen to take this road towards mobility, it has become a reason for impediment even without objective problems. In conclusion, it was interesting to understand how regardless of the life stage, the most popular satisfaction among the interviewees was being able to achieve a balance between the social, relational and professional domains that allows for an equitable distribution of tasks and duties and allows space for strong bonds.”

© eMocc, April 2023 - This third issue was edited by dr Teresa Rinaldi for UCSC together with dr Bénédicte Halba for iriv, together with the contributions of Pr dr Peter Guggemos for HDBA, Pr dr Diego Boerchi for UCSC , Kelsie Ms Ann Kerwin for Esmovia and Mrs Anne Güller-Frey for Germany.