

RES FORUM COMMENTARY ON

A potential **Paradigm Shift** in

GLOBAL MOBILITY?

THE IMPACT OF
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about fundamental change in societies all around the world, with everyone, all businesses and all industries affected.

One could argue that few industries were more heavily impacted than that of Global Mobility. Indeed, our industry was turned upside down, even rendered "finished" at the start of the pandemic. And yet, we have since risen, like a phoenix from the flames, emboldened and stronger than ever.

Despite the early pessimism, Global Mobility has gone from strength to strength since the pandemic first hit. So much so, we have been central to many of the changes that have happened across the business world. As organizations revolutionised their way of working, Global Mobility has created policies to enable a truly globalized and increasingly agile workforce. We have also been instrumental in creating virtual-first assignments that facilitate a more diverse and inclusive workforce by blending traditional policies with the specific needs of employees.

The challenges and resulting disruption brought on by the pandemic changed Global Mobility for the better, forever. In turn, Global Mobility has changed the world. The coming years and the advances that will no doubt follow will be fascinating to watch.

***THE PANDEMIC
CHANGED OUR INDUSTRY***

***OUR INDUSTRY
CHANGED THE WORLD***

GLOBAL MOBILITY LEADER,
TECHNOLOGY SECTOR



INTRODUCTION

Much has been said about the impact of Covid-19 on the Global Mobility industry. We should know, we've said a lot of it.

Four years after Covid-19 infected the world, we feel it's time to draw a line under this retrospective view of the pandemic, while acknowledging everything we've learned along the way. Working alongside GLOMO - Global Mobility of Employees, part of the EU's Horizon 2020 project, we were instrumental in creating a piece of research that seeks to do just that.

Including contributions from various CHROs representing DAX 40 and FTSE 100 companies, the research is steeped in academia. Early Stage Researcher, Rodrigo Mello took the lead, alongside Michael Dickmann and a brilliant team of collaborators and co-authors, under the guidance of Maike Andresen.

Published in the International Business Review, the research includes interviews with decision makers in 32 global companies, providing in-depth insight into the impact of covid-19 on Global Mobility and international and cross-border work.

As well as being a core part of the research process, we've gathered insight from some leading mobility professionals, from both sides of the industry. This document is an adjunct to the original paper and shares the thoughts of these friends and partners of the RES Forum.

It's fair to say that the pandemic completely changed the face of our industry. This research shows you how.

Read the research [here](#)

THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL MOBILITY

BASED ON PANDEMIC & PRE-PANDEMIC BEHAVIOURS

FRANCINE SMITH,
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Global Mobility has undergone significant disruption in recent years. As we reflect on the new post-pandemic era, organizations will surely face further unprecedented challenges and opportunities. This piece considers a few of those trends shaping the future landscape of global mobility, and the need for agility, continuous innovation, and resilience among those who work in this field.

Whilst the rapid pace of technology is driving advances in remote working, virtual collaboration tools, artificial intelligence, and employee tracking, there is a renewed focus on the employee experience and how to maximise technology to achieve this. The rise of remote work both internationally and domestically, has blurred the lines between local and global workplaces, allowing professionals to contribute and collaborate from anywhere in the world. However, this shift has also led to a broader re-evaluation of the traditional expatriate model, with Talent taking a leading role in working with global mobility to influence and expand the demographics of those



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considered for global assignment, as well as the types of assignment offered. There has been an increase in the number of permanent transfers offered by employers as organisations evolve their programmes and find ways to reduce costs and move their employees to their chosen host locations on a permanent basis.

As global mobility becomes integral to organizational success at all levels, the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace will continue. Organizations are looking to prioritise inclusivity in their global mobility programmes, ensuring equal opportunities for all employees regardless of nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or cultural background. Tailored support systems, mentorship, and inter-cultural training will be essential in creating environments where all employees and their accompanying families can thrive.

With global news very much in the headlines, the geo-political landscape surely also plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of global mobility. Increasingly complex international relations, trade tensions, and changing immigration policies have a direct impact on the movement of professionals across borders. Organizations must proactively adapt to these geopolitical shifts, developing agile strategies that mitigate risks and capitalise on emerging opportunities. Collaborative efforts between governments, businesses, and international organizations will be crucial in creating a conducive environment for global mobility to continue in the face of geopolitical instability.

However, what strikes me the most is how many organizations are now choosing to take a breath and look to see how others are responding to these challenges by seeking guidance on policy benchmarking, best practice, and consultancy to future-proof their global mobility programmes. While maintaining cost efficiency of assignments is, typically, a business objective, balancing this with compliance and ensuring the inclusion of competitive assignment benefits is also important to making a successful assignment proposition.



THE CONTINUED EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL MOBILITY

GLOBAL MOBILITY LEADER, TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

I find one of the important attributes of the RES Forum is its involvement in academic studies and commentary on Global Mobility. Central to this is the access they provide to thought leaders and researchers such as Michael Dickmann, Benjamin Bader and Rodrigo Mello.

This article and its associated research give us important insights into how global mobility is evolving and how this has speeded up as a result of the pandemic.

Global Mobility leadership and specialists have been piecing together a broader view of the interdependencies we now face in terms of meeting post-pandemic employee expectations on location-agnostic work arrangements. We have also been gathering insight into the added complexities (human and regulatory) of running cross-border mobility programs, while managing costs in a more challenging economic environment.

THE CONTINUED EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL MOBILITY

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Just as there has been increased social acceptance and familiarity with remote work, there has also been increased acceptance that contact between clients and vendors need not be in person. This reduced expectation for face-to-face meetings will widen the pool of talent available to attend those meetings. This means that, whilst we will see less business travel, some key personnel may relocate or take long-term assignments to a time zone that will facilitate their attendance at virtual meetings during regular (or at least daytime) business hours.

The difficulties faced by assignees and their families during the pandemic has highlighted the remaining role for human interaction and reassurance amongst all the self-service portals and chatbots. So, notwithstanding the investment in technology to assist in program management and service delivery, a need for personalised assignee reassurance will continue.

Following the drop in assignments during the pandemic it will make those who have been on assignment more valuable. The experience and soft skills that come from an international assignment is a valuable commodity and there may be a diminishing pool of talent with this characteristic, at least until assignment volumes return. So, those companies who are better able to plan for employee retention and proactively cherish those employees will enjoy a distinct competitive advantage.

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As part of Gallagher Multinational Benefits and HR Consulting, our Global Mobility advisory teams are specialists, who can help clients translate intent into practice, by simplifying the complex, fast moving, costly and time-consuming world of Global Mobility. We work with our clients to identify opportunities for implementing the most practical approach for their company when redefining and developing agile strategies.

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IPM Global is a boutique professional services firm providing expertise and industry-leading solutions for the management of your cross-border workforce. Our focus is on high touch service, supported by leading edge technology, and developing long term client and supplier relationships (over more than 25 years). We work in an open and transparent way offering exceptional value for money. Our team has in depth knowledge and experience in all aspects of the Global Mobility function. We will support you in identifying and implementing your Strategic challenges, with innovative solutions that give you competitive advantage.

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We support companies and their employees during the entire process of relocation. Our aspiration: a first-class customer experience. Our promise: the perfect interaction of intuitive, efficient technology, personal support and flexible service selection. Whether via our app or our platform, we find the best consultant for your employees. At the same time, we provide our GM clients with an updated overview of employee relocation status and other useful data. People are at the centre of all our actions – we focus on fairness towards customers, employees and partners. This is how we set a new standard in the people mobility industry.

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The RES Forum has the tools, knowledge and community to help mobility professionals keep pace with changes in the industry, and help the industry keep pace with the needs of mobility professionals.

Through research, analytics, eLearning, events, and policy templates & consultancy, we provide support and guidance to help mobility professionals navigate the ever-changing GM landscape.

We enjoy the exhaustive knowledge of our consultants, academics, Strategic Advisory Board and Technical Partners, as well as our international community of senior in-house HR and GM professionals, which includes 1,000 members in over 45 countries.

In conversation with leaders and experts from across the industry, our academics study the most pressing topics within the world of GM and cross-border working. Then we share their collective insight to provide clarity, tools and advice to help our members through the many challenges they face.

The RES Forum is an independent organization. We are not influenced by external parties or third-party vendors.

*WITH THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED THEIR INSIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE.
WITHOUT YOU, THIS REPORT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.*