

Reducing academic air travel – Towards more effective virtual informal exchange and scientific networking

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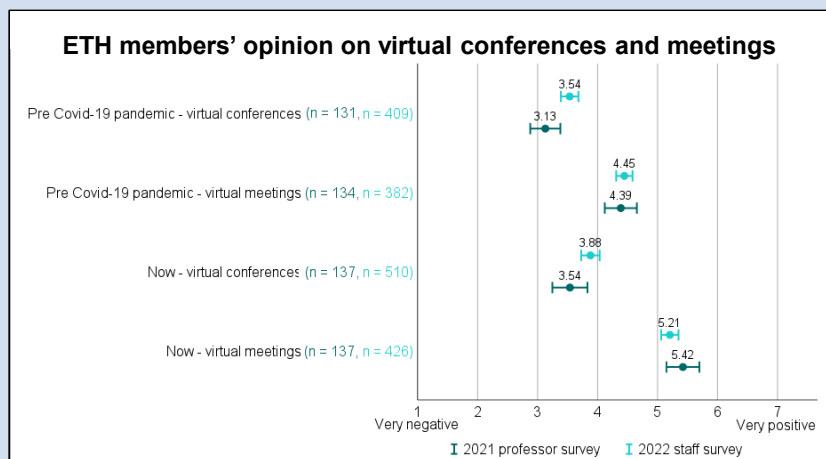
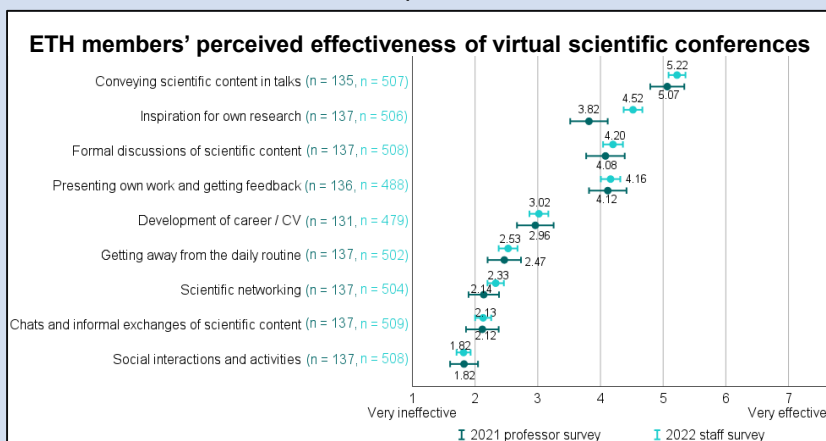
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Introduction

Studies show that researchers see a direct correlation between academic air travel and academic excellence^{1,2}. Therefore, academic air travel must be reduced without jeopardizing academic success. Virtual communication has been used as a substitute for air travel, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. However, researchers perceive current virtual communication as ineffective and unsuitable for informal exchange and scientific networking³. Thus, I analyze how novel practices can facilitate effective virtual informal exchange and scientific networking during conferences and beyond.

First Study – Background research at ETH Zurich

- Online survey of ETH professors (n = 140) in Aug./Sept. 2021 on air travel and virtual communication – response rate of 20%
- Online survey of ETH scientific staff (n = 600) in March 2022 on air travel survey and virtual communication conducted in collaboration with AVETH – response rate of 6.3%



Second Study – ongoing research

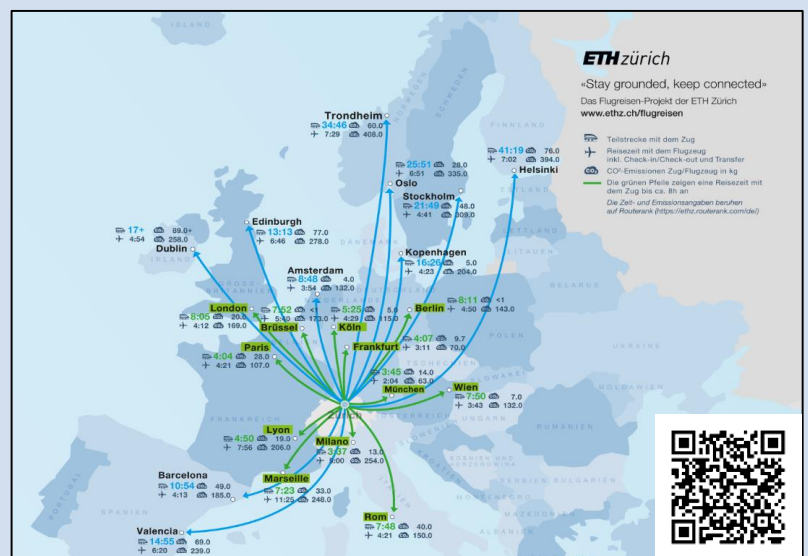
- Semi-structured interviews with virtual international conference organizers and participants
 - Researchers from different scientific fields
 - Researchers of different academic positions
- To examine which characteristics of current virtual conference formats & tools impede effective informal exchange / networking

Would you like to share your experience with organizing or participating in virtual conferences?

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Partner

ETH Zurich Air Travel Project “Stay Grounded, Keep Connected”



References

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2. Hopkins, D., Higham, J., Orchiston, C., & Duncan, T. (2019). Practising academic mobilities: Bodies, networks and institutional rhythms. *The Geographical Journal*, 185(4), 472–484. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12301>
3. Wenger, A. (2021). Air travel at ETH - Results from a survey among professors. <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000517746>