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SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION: EUROPEAN YOUTH'S PERCEPTION OF LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Abstract: *Youth school-to-work transition is a complex process, with many factors of influence. For a better understanding of this process, along with structural and institutional factors, research in this area should also pay attention to individual factors, as they play an important role in young people's decision-making process. Subordinated to this goal, this paper analyses young people's perceptions on job opportunities after finishing education as well as youth's main concerns about their first job. Moreover, we investigate the personal characteristics that make a young person more prone to worry about possible barriers or difficulties on entering the labour market.*

Keywords:*youth, labour market, school-to-work transition, logistic regression.*

JEL Classification: J13, J24, C25

Introduction

Young people have the ability to significantly influence the direction of European employment in the coming years. Their talent, energy and creativity can help the European Union to develop and to become more competitive. However, in 2015 in the European Union, nearly 6 million people under 25 years did not have jobs and about 7.5 million people were neither in employment, education nor training programs. The rate of youth unemployment in the EU is over 20%, almost 3 times higher than for those over 25 years. In some countries, more than half of young people who want to work can not find a job. These young people represent a huge untapped resource, which the European Union can not afford to squander.

Youth employment opportunities are essential for ensuring the return to sustainable development and economic growth in the European Union, therefore the need of understanding the transition from school to work is extremely important in designing appropriate policies.

Multiple research regarding the transition from school to work have paid special attention to national characteristics which determine a smooth entry into the labour market. Clearly, this entry is facilitated in times of economic prosperity when the jobs deficit is at its lowest level. Additional features of the education system and labour market have been put forward to explain this transition: for example, vocational training and apprenticeships – are able to efficiently match the educational skills with labour market requirements, or labour regulations – countries with lower level of employment protection provide more opportunities to young people (Ryan, 2001; Breen, 2005; Wolbers, 2007; Raffe, 2011, Mocanu et al, 2012).

These institutional and structural approaches of school-to-work transition do not consider the full range of determinants of a young person's decision making process regarding entering the labour market or opting for alternatives. Lent (2000) emphasizes the importance of personal and environmental characteristics, in addition to the economic context, claiming that career development is not only influenced by objective factors, but also by youth's perception of contextual factors. One of the factors that could prevent a smooth school –to-work transition is a young person's opinion regarding labour market opportunities, specifically if there are enough jobs available for young people. A study was conducted by Lent in 2002 on a group of US college students: when they were asked about potential barriers for a first job, they replied that the lack of labour market opportunities is the biggest impediment, above others such as lack of qualifications. Thus, the youth's perception that work opportunities are rather limited could hinder their decision to work by offering incentives to consider alternative, like pursuing another educational goal.

The human capital model proposed by Becker in 1962 assumes that differences in labour market enterances occur from educational and skill deficiencies, therefore people with more advanced skills benefit of higher rewards and better access. Regarding perceived employability of individuals, empirical studies have shown that the educated people tend to believe that their employment opportunities are significantly higher compared to those with lower levels of education (Berntson et al., 2006).

The signaling theory argues that the labour market depends on the exchange of information, "signals" sent by the employee to the employer (Spence, 1973). Examples of signals well described in the literature are gender and ethnic origin. Regarding gender disparities, women are still facing disadvantaged position in the labour market. Although in recent years more women have entered the labour market, they often face greater difficulties in finding their first job, earn less than men and are more likely to work part-time (OECD, 2012). Earnings differences between women and men exist in all Member States, regardless of the overall level of women employment, the welfare models or the equality legislation history (Vosko et al. 2009). Also, in many countries, the representation of women in management positions and entrepreneurship remains low (IMF, 2013). Research in social psychology has shown that women have internalized these disadvantages

and consider they would encounter greater barriers in career (Luzzo and McWirther, 2001).

Reeskens and van Oorschot (2012) analyzed the young people's perceptions of labour market integration and concluded that young women and those with a precarious financial situation have a rather pessimistic view on employment opportunities. They also noticed that young graduates of secondary education are less optimistic about getting a first job compared to those with primary level of education.

Another theoretical model addresses the influence of social networks on the individual's labour market outcomes (Granovetter, 1973). Empirical studies based on this model showed that social ties define a person's success on the labor market (Marsden and Gorman, 2001). Social ties, such as involvement in various associations, result in learning behavior rules that may be beneficial in the long run. Young people who can rely on social ties have internalized relevant norms and values as well as access to resources that facilitate entering the labour market (Granovetter, 2005). In these circumstances,one will expect that young people with a broad social network to be more optimistic about the first job opportunities.

Because young people's perceptions about labour market opportunities influence school to work transition through the decision process, we analyse in this paper the level of confidence youth have in finding a job after finishing education, as well as their main concerns about the first job. Using the appropriate econometric methods, we investigate the individual factors that influence youth's opinion regarding employability after graduation. Also, we determine the characteristics of young people who are worried about not finding a long term contract, about not having the right skills to be hired, about having to move to find a job or about the level of salary, identifying vulnerable groups according to their main concern.

Data description

The data used in this study come from the Flash Eurobarometer 408 - *Education, job prospects and volunteering of the European Youth*, a survey applied in December 2014 to European Union Member States' residents, aged 15 to 30 years, with an average sample size per country of 500 respondents.

The questionnaire covers, among others, topics regarding confidence of job prospects; main concerns regarding the job prospects; youth's participation in cultural, political, local development or sport activities; involvement in voluntary activities, as well as socio-demographic indicators: age, gender, household size, residence area, education, and employment status.

Figure 1 indicates that young people from European Union countries are rather confident in their employment opportunities and believe in a smooth school-to-work transition: in most countries, over 80% of the respondents think they will easily find a job after graduation.

An alarming situation is observed in Greece, Spain and Cyprus, as youth seem to be discouraged and concerned about the future: most respondents are not confident that they will have the opportunity to enter the labour market after finishing education. In Greece, the proportion of confident young people is only 32.3%, in Spain 37.2% and in Cyprus 48.6%.

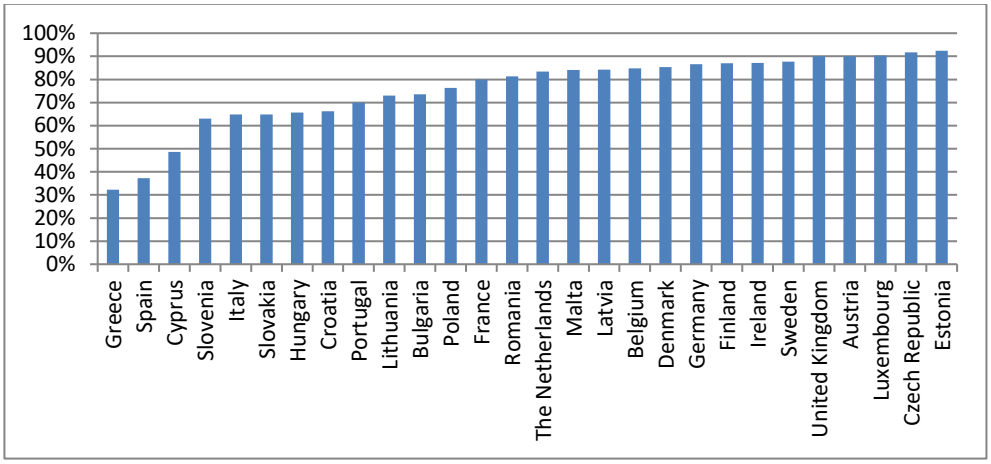

Figure1.The share of young people from EU countries who are confident of finding a job after finishing education

Regarding gender differences, in average, young men are more confident (83% believe they will find a job after leaving school) compared to young women (only 73.6% are optimistic). An interesting aspect is that only in Slovakia and Portugal young women are more optimistic than men, while in France there is no difference between men and women in this regard. In Romania and Lithuania we found the most pronounced difference, 21 percentage points in favour of men, indicating that young women from these countries perceive their labour market integration as being a difficult process.

For a more detailed characterization of youth's opinion regarding labour market opportunities after finishing education, the analysis was extended by age groups: 15-19 years, 20-24 years and 25-30 years. There is a lack of uniformity in this regard in the European Union: although in 15 Member States we found only little differences between the age groups, for the other countries we identified two opposite patterns:

- Countries where young people become more pessimistic as they age regarding their chances of employment after graduation (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, Cyprus, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania). For example, in Luxembourg, in the 15-19 years age group only 8% of the respondents are not confident in their job prospects, whereas this share increases to 40% for the 25-30 years age group;

- Countries where the number of confident young people increases with age (Italy, United Kingdom, Latvia, Lithuania, and Malta). Moreover, in Italy, United Kingdom, Latvia, and Malta, all the respondents aged 25 to 30 years are confident of finding a job after finishing education.

When European youth were asked about the problems they think will encounter in getting a job, 30.8% said that they are concerned about not finding a stable job or a long term contract, 16.3% are worried about the level of salary, 16.3% believe they will have to move in order to find a job, and 13.7% of the respondents fear that the skills and knowledge acquired during school will not be sufficient or will not match those required on the labour market. However, 22.9% of young Europeans have no concern regarding labour market integration after finishing education (figure 2).

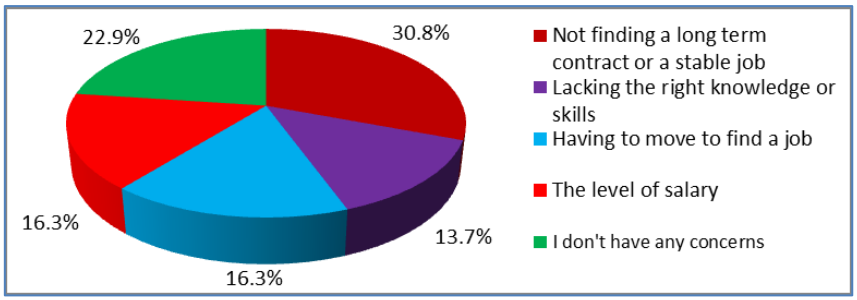

Figure 2.Main concerns of the European Union youth regarding the first job after finishing education

Figure 3 summarizes youth's main concerns from each European Union Member State regarding labour market integration after completing education. In most EU countries, young people are first of all worried that they will *not find a long-term contract or a stable job*. This concern has been selected by the majority of young people from Italy (54.4%), Croatia (45.7%), the Netherlands (45%), Spain (44.5%), Cyprus (39.4%), Slovenia (39.2%), Greece (38.6%), Luxembourg (38.3%), Finland (37.8%), Portugal (34.9%), Belgium (34.9%), France (34.6%), UK (31.3%), Poland (31.3%), Sweden (29%) and Czech Republic (23.2%).

Another important concern among young Europeans is *the level of salary*, selected as main problem in getting a job by most of the interviewed persons from Latvia (42.5%), Bulgaria (37.7%), Romania (31.3%), Malta (27%) and Lithuania (25.8%).

In Lithuania, 25.8% of young people included in the analysis said they worry about *the lack of necessary knowledge or skills*, the only EU country where this reason has been considered of primary importance by more than 20% of those surveyed.

Young people from Ireland (35.6%) and Slovakia (30%) are mainly concerned that*they have to move to find a job*.

The EU countries where most young people are confident in a smooth school to work transition and have no concerns regarding their first job after graduation are Estonia (42.4%), Denmark (31.8%), Germany (30.9 %), Austria (29.5%) and Hungary (28.7%). Also in Finland, an important proportion (32.5% of the respondents) chose this alternative, although the majority of young people are worried about the lack of stable jobs.

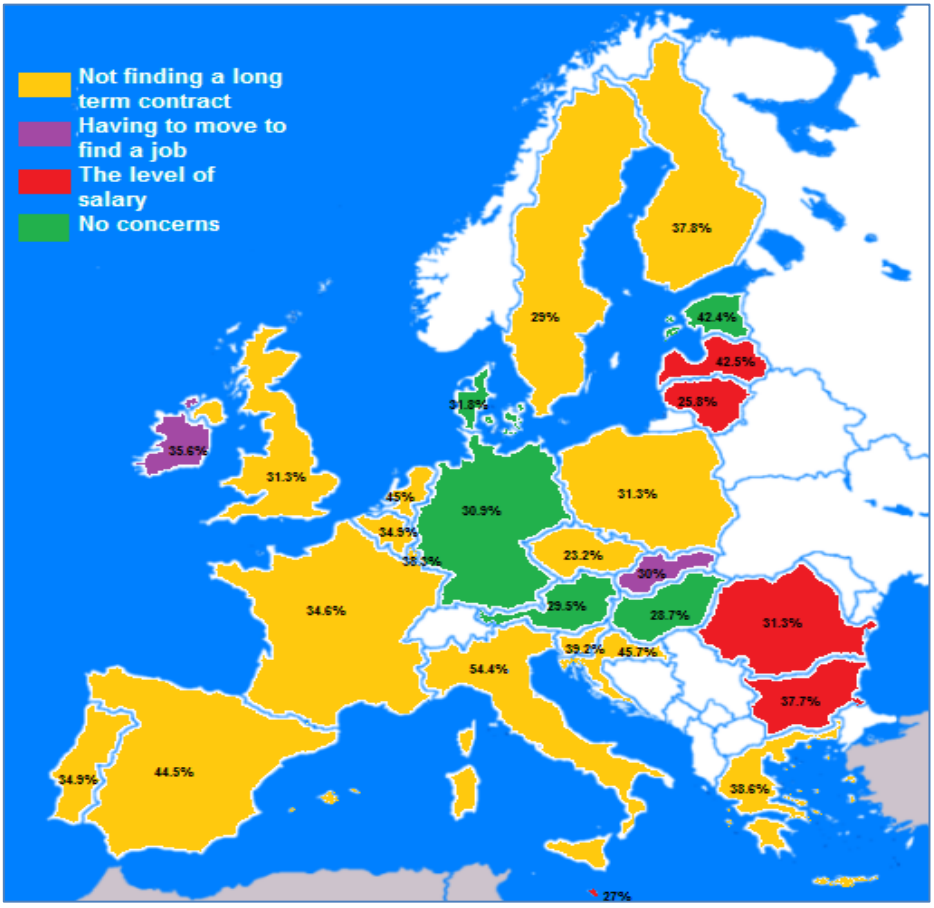

Figure 3.Youth opinion on the problems they will face in finding a job after graduation - the main concern

In order to study the personal factors influencing the youth's level of confidence regarding employability after completing education and to outline different profiles in line with youth's main concerns regarding their first job, we used appropriate quantitative methods: binomial logistic regression andmultinomial logistic regression models (Smeureanu and Ruxanda, 2013). A brief description of the theory underlying these models is presented in the next section.

Methodology – binomial and multinomial logistic regression

The binomial logistic regression model (commonly logistic regression) is used when the dependent variable $Y_i$can only take two values, usually represented by 1 (success) and 0 (failure). The statistical problem is the estimation and the inference of the link between the response probabilities$\pi_i = \Pr\{Y_i = 1\}$, $0 < \pi_i < 1$ and the vector of factorial variables X_i, where $i = 1,\ldots, k$ (Peracchi, 2001; McFadden, 1984).

The logistic regression model specifies the response probabilities as a function: $\pi_i = \pi(X_i)$. Because $0 < \pi_i < 1$, the function must take values in the interval (0, 1). The most commonly used functional form is logit:

$$\pi(x) = \Lambda(\alpha^T x), \qquad \text{with} \quad \Lambda(u) = e^u/(1+e^u)$$

Inverting the above relation, the logit model corresponds to the equality:

$$ln\frac{\pi(x)}{1-\pi(x)} = \alpha^T x$$

The logistic regression model estimation is based on the maximum likelihood function (MLE). The log-likelihood function can be written:

$L(\pi) = c + \sum_{i=1}^{n}[Y_i \ln \pi_i + (1 - Y_i)\ln(1 - \pi_i)]$,where *c* is a constant.

The model parameters can be estimated using the relation:

$$L'(\alpha) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{\partial L}{\partial \pi_i} h'_i(\alpha) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{H_i(\alpha)}{h_i(\alpha)[1-h_i(\alpha)]}[Y_i - h_i(\alpha)]X_i$$

where $h_i'(\alpha) = H_i(\alpha)\, X_i$ and $H_i(\alpha) = h_i(\alpha)[1 - h_i(\alpha)]$.

A maximum likelihood estimate of α - the parameters of the logistic regression model, is obtained by solving the equation $L'(\alpha) = 0$. This equation does not have a closed form solution therefore the use of numerical methods becomes necessary. Since the log-likelihood is a concave function, the Newton-Raphson method can be used, which consists of iterations of the form:

$$\alpha^{(r+1)} = \alpha^{(r)} - [I(\alpha^{(r)})]^{-1} L'(\alpha^{(r)}), \quad r = 1, 2, 3, \ldots..$$

In other words, the maximum likelihood estimation is an iterative algorithm used to determine the coefficients of the logistic regression model. In SPSS, the first step consists of setting arbitrary values for the model coefficients and determining the direction and the size of the modification in order to increase the log-likelihood (LL). The next steps consist in re-testing the residuals and re-estimating the log-likelihood. This process is repeated until no significant changes are made to LL (Popa, 2010).

The multinomial logistic regression model is a generalization of the binomial model, where the dependent variable *Y* can take more than two values, called response categories. We consider that $Y = j$ if the dependent variable falls in the j^{th}category, $j = 1, ..., J$. We focus on modelling the vector $Y = (Y_1,\ldots, Y_J)$, where $Y_j$indicate how many times the response variable took values in the j^{th} category(Peracchi, 2001; McFadden, 1984).

The log-likelihood for the multinomial model can be obtained using the multinomial distribution with index m and the parameters$\pi = (\pi_1, \dots, \pi_J)$, where $\pi_j = \Pr\{Y = j\}$, indicating the probability of the dependent variable to be in the j^{th} response category.

The probability function for the total distribution $M_J(m, \pi)$ is:

$$f(y, \pi) = \Pr\{Y = y\} = \exp\left(\sum_{j=1}^{J} y_j ln\pi_j + ln\frac{m!}{y_1! \dots y_J!}\right)$$

Since $\sum_{j=1}^{J} y_j = m$ and $\sum_{j=1}^{J} \pi_j = 1$, we can write:

$$\sum_{j=1}^{J} y_j ln\, \pi_j = \sum_{j=2}^{J} y_j ln\, \frac{\pi_j}{\pi_1} + m \ln \pi_1 = \sum_{j=2}^{J} y_j \theta_j - m\, ln\left(1 + \sum_{j=2}^{J} \exp \theta_j\right)$$

where$\theta_j = \ln(\pi_j/\pi_1)$ is the log-odds ratio for the j^{th} response category and $\pi_1 = \left(1 + \sum_{j=2}^{J} \exp \theta_j\right)^{-1}$. Thus, the probability function $f(y, \pi)$ is:

$$f(y_2, ..., y_j; \theta) = exp\left[\sum_{j=2}^{J} y_j \pi_j - b(\theta) + c\left(m, y_2, \dots, y_j\right)\right]$$

where$b(\theta)$ is the convex function $b(\theta) = m\, ln\left(1 + \sum_{j=2}^{J} \exp \theta_j\right)$, indicating that the multinomial distribution is a family of exponential models with *J-1* parameters.

The log-likelihood is:

$$L(\pi_1, \dots, \pi_n) = c + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{J} Y_{ij} \ln \pi_{ij}$$

and the differential of the log-likelihood has the form:

$$dL = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{J} \frac{Y_{ij}}{\pi_{ij}} d\, \pi_{ij} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{J} \frac{Y_{ij} - m_i \pi_{ij}}{\pi_{ij}} d\, \pi_{ij}$$

We can now write the derivatives of the log-likelihood with respect to π_{ij}

$$\frac{\partial L}{\partial \pi_{ij}} = \frac{Y_{ij} - m_i \pi_{ij}}{\pi_{ij}}$$

In terms of log-odds, we have:

$$L(\theta_1, \dots, \theta_n) = c + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left[\sum_{j=2}^{J} Y_{ij} \theta_{ij} - m_i \ln\left(1 + \sum_{j=2}^{J} exp\, \theta_{ij}\right)\right]$$

where $\theta_i = (\theta_{i1}, \dots, \theta_{iJ})$, and the derivatives are $\frac{\partial L}{\partial \theta_{ij}} = Y_{ij} - m_i \pi_{ij}$.

Using the multinomial logit, the model will have the following specification for the log-odds:

$$\theta_{ij} = ln\frac{\pi_{ij}}{\pi_{i1}} = \beta_j^T X_{ij}, \qquad j = 2, \dots, J$$

where X_{ij} is the vector of characteristics specific to the j^{th} response category as perceived by the i^{th} individual.

The maximum likelihood estimators of the model $\hat{\beta} = (\hat{\beta}_2, \dots, \hat{\beta}_J)$ are obtained using the relation:

$$\frac{\partial L}{\partial \beta_j} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} X_{ij}(Y_{ij} - m_i \pi_{ij}), \qquad j = 2, \dots, J$$

The results are usually used to determine the probability of choosing a response categoryfrom a set of *J* alternatives for an individual with the X_i known characteristics.

Results

In the econometric analysis we used socio-demographic variables (gender, age, residence, family size), human capital specific variables (education level, experience with volunteering, involvement in certain organized activities), and variables that quantify youth's perception on labour market.

The dependent variable of the binomial logistic regression model is young people's confidence of finding a job after finishing education – a binary variable that takes the value *1*if the young respondent is "very confident" or "fairly confident" and the value *0* for "not very confident" or "not at all confident" response alternatives.

Gender is a dummy variable taking value *1* for a male respondent. In order to quantify the respondents' *age*, we used a categorical variable with values: *1* for the 15-19 years age group, *2* for the interval 20 to 24 years, and *3* for the age group 25 to 30 years. *Residence* is also a binary variable, where *1* indicates that the respondent lives in urban area. The household size (*family*) is a categorical variable defined as follows: *1* indicates a household with three or more members aged 15 or more, *2* means that the household comprises two members over 15 years, and *3* stands for a family with only one member aged 15 years or more.

Since young people included in the analysis are still studying, the education level of the respondent does not refer to the last school that he/she graduated but to the educational programme they are enrolled in at the moment of the interview. Five categories were considered: lower secondary level; upper secondary level, general education; upper secondary level, general vocational education and training including apprenticeships; post-secondary, non-higher education; and higher education.

In order to outline a more complete profile of young respondents, we included in the analysis a binary variable which quantifies if the respondent participated in any *voluntary activities* in the past 12 months. Also, we used dummy variables for identifying youth's participation in activities of any of the following *organizations*: sports club; cultural organization; political organization or political party; local organization aimed at improving local community; organization promoting human rights or global development.

The logistic regression model estimated for the EU countries led to the results in Table 1. The estimation was performed with SPSS statistical software

and although the model is a binomial logistic regression, we preferred using the command for multinomial regression as the explanatory variables are binary or categorical and this command facilitates the interpretation of the results by referring to a reference category.

Table 1.Logistic regression model estimation results for EU Member States

Variable		B	Exp(B)	Variable		B	Exp(B)
Gender	Female	-0.518*	0.596	Family	1 member 15+[1]	.	.
	Male[1]	.	.		2 members 15+	-0.227	0.797
Education	Lower secondary	-0.167	0.846		3 or more members 15+	-0.274*	0.76
	Upper secondary, general	-0.334*	0.716				
	Upper secondary, vocational	-0.292	0.747	Voluntary activity	No	-0.279	0.756
	Post-secondary	-0.118	0.889		Yes[1]	.	.
	Higher education[1]	.	.	Activities	Sports club[2]	-0.542*	0.582
Age	15-19 years	0.287*	1.332		Cultural org.[2]	0.193**	1.212
	20-24 years	-0.019	0.981		Political org.[2]	0.071	1.074
	25-30 years [1]	.	.		Local community org[2]	-0.168	0.845
Residence	Rural	0.052	1.053		Human rights or global dev. org[2]	-0.090	0.914
	Urban[1]	.	.	Intercept	constant	2.370*	-

[1]The reference category
[2]The reference category is youth involvement in these types of activities
** Statistically significant at α=0.05*
*** Statistically significant at α=0.1*

The results indicated that it is less likely for a young woman to have confidence in job opportunities after finishing education: young males were 1.68 times more likely to be confident that they will find a job after graduation, compared to females in the age group 15-30 years.

Regarding education, statistically significant results were only obtained for the category corresponding to general upper secondary education versus higher education – the reference category. It seems like young people who follow a general profile high school are less confident that they will find a job after finishing education compared to the respondents enrolled in higher education. The latter have a 1.4 times higher probability of being confident in a smooth school to work transition than young people in general high schools.

Age also proved to be an important factor in shaping the profile of a young European confident in the labour market opportunities. The results indicated that adolescents (those aged 15 to 19 years) are more optimistic than young adults (25-

30 years), having a 1.3 times higher chance to be placed in the groupof "believers". For the 20-24 years age group the results were not statistically significant.

The young person's household size influences how he/she perceives the labour market integration. Those belonging to big families, with 3 or more members aged 15 orover, are less confident about job prospects compared to young people fromfamilies with only one member aged 15 years or more.

Youth involvement in voluntary activities proved not to be a statistically significant factor in the estimated model, as well as youth participation in activities of political organizations, local organizations aimed at improving the local community or those promoting human rights or global development.

Young people who are active members of a sports club are more optimistic compared to those who do not practice sports in an organized manner, resulting in a 1.7 times greater likelihood that a young member of a sports organization to be confident of finding work after graduation. On the other hand, young people involved in activities of cultural organizations are rather skeptical that they could easily be employed after finishing school compared to those not involved in such organizations.

The multinomial logistic regression modelwas designed according to youth's main concerns regarding labour market integration.Thus, the dependent variable is defined according to the following response categories:

1. Not finding a long term contract or a stable job
2. Lacking the right knowledge or skills
3. Having to move to find a job
4. The level of salary
5. No cause for concern (reference category)

The explanatory variables included in the model are similar to those used and described in the logistic regression model: gender, age, education level, residence, family size, participation in voluntary activities, involvement in certain types of activities: sports club, cultural organization, political organization, local organization aimed at improving local community, organization promoting human rights or global development.

The multinomial regression model estimation results are shown in Table 2, which presents only the statistically significant variables.Theresults interpretation is easy and intuitive as for each analysed problem the reference category is "no concern", thus giving the possibility to identify the individual characteristicsthat make youth prone to worry forone of the considered reasons.

Regarding the first identified problem,*lack of long term labour contracts or stable jobs*, we see that women are more concerned about this issue than men, the results indicating a 1.9 times higher probability for a woman to be concerned about job stability compared to a man from the analysed age group (15-30 years). Compared to young people enrolled in a higher education program, youth with a lower secondary education level are less likely to worry about not finding a long term contract, whereas young people attending a post-secondary school have 1.31

times higher chance to consider this issue an important concern in getting a job. The results also indicate that a young person aged between 20 and 24 years has a 1.29 times higher probability to worry about not finding a stable job compared to a young adult (25-30 years).Regarding the youth's involvement in various activities, it appears that members of organizations aimed at improving the local community and those promoting human rights and global development are more likely to worry that they will not find a long term contract or a stable job after finishing education, compared to those not involved in such activities.

The lack of right knowledge or skills is a concern rather for women than men, gender disparities being manifested by a 1.64 times higher probability for females to worry about not acquiring the appropriate knowledge and skills in school. Obviously, this concern, by its nature, requires the investigation of young people's education. Thus, we see that youth attending a general profile high school are more likely to be concern that their skills will not match those demanded by employers, compared to young people enrolled in higher education. For the other considered levels of education the coefficients were not statistically significant. Also, in this case, age has no significant influence. An interesting fact is that young people actively involved in organizations promoting human rights and global development have higher chances to be concerned that what they learned in school does not match labour market demand compared to those who do not participate in such activities. This result could indicate that youth involvement in organized activities implies a better connection with the economic environement, leading to a better understanding of inconsistencies between certain knowledge and skills acquired through formal education and the employers'requirements.

Another important concern is the need for young Europeans *to move in order to find a job*. The econometric model led to very good results for this response category, most of the analysed variables being statistically significant. Once again, young females are more prone to worry about having to change their residence after graduation in order to find a job, compared to men. Regarding education, the results indicated that youth attending lower secondary education, as well as those attending upper secondary vocational education, are less likely to be concerned about this issue, compared to students in higher education. This is not surprising, because often highly educated young graduates migrate to developed urban centers in order to meet the companies that provide the opportunity to work in a certain field or at certain skill and remuneration level, these specialised jobs not being available in any area. Age was found to be an important factor of influence, the youth's concern about needing to move to find a job getting milder as they get older. Compared with young adults (25-30 years), adolescents have a 1.87 times greater chance to worry that they will not find work around home, while young people from the 20-24 agegroup are 1.6 times more likely to worry for this reason. Not least, the youth involvement in organizations aimed at improving the local community increases the likelihood to worry about needing to relocate to find a job. Again, a better anchorage in reality makes young people more pragmatic: by

knowing the problems their community is facing, they are more aware of the risks and difficulties they will encounter in getting a job after finishing education.

The last option included in the analysis refers to young people's concern about *the level of salary*at their first job after finishing education. The results of the regression model indicated that age, gender and level of education have no statistically significant influence on the European youth's perception regarding salary level as a barrier to labour market entry. On the other hand, the involvement in organised activities has an important impact on youth's opinion. Young people who are members of a sports club are less likely to worry about the salary level obtained after graduation, while young people actively involved in organizations promoting human rights or global development have a 1.7 times higher chance to consider the remuneration an impediment to optimal transition from school to work.

Table 2.Multinomial logistic regression model estimation results for EU countries

Variabiles		Not finding a long term contract[1]		Lacking the right knowledge or skills[1]		Having to move to find a job[1]		The level of salary[1]	
		B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Gender	Female	0.646*	1.908	0.494*	1.639	0.479*	1.614	0.167	1.182
	Male[2]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Education	Lower secondary	-0.625*	0.536	0.007	1.007	-0.641*	0.527	-0.356	0.701
	Upper secondary, general	0.063	1.065	0.472*	1.603	-0.470	0.954	-0.036	0.965
	Upper secondary, vocational	-0.005	0.995	-0.211	0.810	-0.505*	0.603	-0.231	0.794
	Post-secondary	0.272**	1.312	0.047	1.048	-0.109	0.897	0.250	1.284
	Higher education[1]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Age	15-19 years	0.257	1.293	0.181	1.199	0.625*	1.868	0.281	1.325
	20-24 years	0.249**	1.283	0.276	1.318	0.470*	1.601	0.219	1.245
	25-30 years [2]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Activities	Sports club[3]	0.085	1.089	0.179	1.195	0.101	1.106	0.235*	1.265
	Local community[3]	-0.360*	0.698	-0.155	0.857	-0.324*	0.724	0.141	1.151
	Human rights or global develop. [3]	-0.369*	0.691	-0.378**	0.685	-0.048	0.953	-0.536*	0.585

[1] *The reference category is "No concern"*
[2]*The reference category*
[3]*The reference category is youth involvement in these types of activities*
** Statistically significant at α=0.05*
*** Statistically significant at α=0.1*

Conclusions

A young persons's decision to work is influenced by objective factors related to the socio-economic context and labour market situation, as well as

personal opinions which translate into perceived employability and perceived barriers in finding a job.

Analysing youth's confidence of finding a job after finishing education, we saw that most young Europeans believe in a smooth school-to-work transition, the percentage of those who are confident of finding work after graduation being78.3%, on average. However, in some countries young people are rather pessimistic. Greece and Spain stand out, with a share of 67.7%, and 62.8% respectively, of young people who are afraid of not having a place to work after completing their studies. This lack of confidence has demoralizing effects, leading on the long run to a decrease in young people's interest to persist in searching for a job. Moreover, young people who fail to find a job after graduation are facing a deterioration of their skills and knowledge as well as their employment prospects, which may ultimately lead to social exclusion.

The study of youth's main concerns regarding the first job led to the conclusion thatan important problem in the European Union is the perceived lack of long-term contracts or stable jobs. Although the European Union has paid increased attention to flexicurity, it seems that the security component is still not well implemented. Young people generally have a higher preference towards risk, but the recent economic crisis has led them to desire safer jobs.

The econometric analysis focused on determining the profile of vulnerablegroups among young Europeans. First of all, we notice the disadvantaged position of young women with respect to perceived employability. The results indicated that young women are far less confident of finding a job after finishing education compared to young men.Regardingfirst job barriers, for every analysed situation, young females were significantly more likely to worry about the considered reasonsthan men.Most of all, young women are seeking job stability: we found that females have a probability almost two times higher than males to be concerned about not finding a long term contract or a stable job. The gender gap is at its lowest level when it comes to remuneration: chances are only slightly higher for women to be more worried about this issue.

Regarding age, the results indicated that teenagers (15-19 years) are the vulnerable group, because they proved to be the most pessimistic about entering labour market after graduation and also more worried about the possible problems in getting their first job compared to young adults.

As expected, highly educated young Europeans have greater confidence in their chances of employment after finishing education. However, young people enrolled in higher education are more likely to be concern of not finding a long term contract or a stable job, as well as having to move in order to find a job. On the other hand, they have a lower probability to worry about not having the right knowledge or skills, indicating that students have confidence that higher education institutions prepare them properly for the labour market integration.

Social networks, represented in our analysis through youth involvement in various organizationshave a different effect than what we thought. Results indicated that young people involved in certain organizations are generally more

worried about the possible problems in getting the first job: lack of stable jobs, the need to move to find work, the wage level, or the lack of correlation between the knowledge and skills acquired in school and those required by employers. Although we expected to increase youth's confidence, social ties act in this case as an anchorage in the reality, making young people more aware of the difficulties they will face when entering labour market.

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