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# NEGOTIATE

Overcoming early job-insecurity in Europe

NEGOTIATE – Negotiating early job-insecurity and labour market exclusion in Europe  
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*The Bulgarian team at ISSK-BAS*

# **An Interview Study of Early Job Insecurity and Consequences for the Transition to Adulthood**

## **Abstract**

The transition to adulthood is a process which poses various hardships to young people and in which they need to take significant decisions about their future life. When this process coincides with economic and financial crisis, with political and labour market transformation, the situation of the youth is further hampered.

Against this background, the present report focuses on the job insecurity among the youth in Europe and investigates its consequences for the transition to adulthood. It uses information from 209 life course interviews from seven European countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom). Drawing on these data, it has elaborated several patterns of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope for exercising active agency in relation to education, occupation/employment and family formation. We have differentiated between two groups of patterns – of realized and of impossible agency. In the group of patterns of realized agency, we included the following patterns of realized interactions with institutions and individuals: self-relying agency, institutionally-enabled agency, informally-enabled agency and social commitment-enabled agency. In the group of patterns of impossible agency, we classified: disoriented and unmotivated agency, hampered agency, and blocked agency.

This report also explores the main aspects of marginalization and social exclusion which deteriorate young people's scope for exercising active agency (and resilience) in the process of negotiating labour market situation and transition to adulthood. These aspects are analysed at three levels – micro, meso and macro. Thus, at micro level we focus on the low educational and occupational level, the lack of material resources, low autonomy and deteriorated mental/physical well-being. At meso level, we pay attention to the limited or restricted social capital, the limited institutional and NGO support and the insufficient regional and local opportunities. At macro level, we discuss the insufficient or ineffective policies related to education, employment and family.

This report also analyzes mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes. More specifically, it discusses several situations which provoke considerable difficulties for women seeking satisfying employment, such as: motherhood (early motherhood and single mothers), care work and the need for work life balance, subjective perceptions of the interviewed on the

scarring signals on the side of the employers and discrimination, based on gender and ethnicity as well as the chances for upward social mobility from a generational and gender perspective. The report results have clear policy implications. First, it points to the need for elaborating policies – both at local and national level – that directly or indirectly have a positive effect on the capabilities sets of young people with respect to three interrelated dimensions of capabilities related to work, education and autonomy. Second, it suggests that multiple exclusion, resulting from deprivation based on gender, ethnic origin, and class, be taken into account when assessing the effect of youth policies at European, national and local level. Finally, it proposes that socially-responsible business, which is engaged not only in charity but in the formation of the labour potential of employees, should be highlighted and motivated to continue its commitment.

## **Introduction**

Job security in Europe has been put under threat, especially since the economic crisis of 2008. Young people have been one of the groups most affected by it, especially those with low levels of education and those living in areas with low economic development. To address this problem, various initiatives have been introduced, aimed at reducing youth unemployment (e.g. Youth Guarantee). However, the magnitude of the problem continues to be alarmingly high. Thus, unemployment rates among young people are double, or even more than double, the average for all ages (Eurostat, 2017). Combating youth unemployment is an important issue, due to its short and long-term consequences for various aspects of the lives of young people.

Against this background, the present report analyzes the effects of early job insecurity on youth's transition to adulthood. More concretely, it tries to answer three research questions:

- 1) What are the patterns of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope of exercising active agency with regard to their decisions on education, employment and family formation?
- 2) How does the process of marginalization and social exclusion of young people unfold and what are its aspects?
- 3) What are the mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes?

By addressing the above questions in a comparative perspective and using a unique data set of 209 life-course interviews as an empirical basis, the report contributes to previous research on transitions of young people to adulthood and on school-to-work transitions (e.g. Shanahan, 2000; Furlong, 2009; Otto, 2012, 2014, 2015; Knijn, 2012; Kogan et al., 2011), some of which have a strong justice focus built on the capability approach and are sensitive to various aspects of vulnerability among the group of young people. Each research question is answered in a separate section of the report.

The analysis is based on data from the semi-structured life-course interviews with women and men belonging to three birth cohorts (1950-55, 1970-75 and 1990-95) in seven EU countries: Bulgaria (BG), the Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (GER), Greece (GR), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), and the United Kingdom (UK). The fieldwork was conducted between May 2016 and November 2016. All interviewees had experienced unemployment or

job insecurity<sup>1</sup> by the time they were 25 years of age. The interview guide was thematically organized and its main questions refer to the transition from school to unemployment, the effects of unemployment on the interviewee's life situation, the opportunity for being active during unemployment, and the support the interviewees have received from family, non-governmental organizations and the government. A transcript in the national language and a synopsis in English was made for each interview. In addition, national summaries by each research team were prepared. (The methodology is described in detail in Tolgensbakk, Vedeler & Hvinden, 2017)<sup>2</sup>. We have collected rich, extensive and heterogenic data. However, two main problems necessitate caution when making comparisons between countries and cohorts. First, the data are qualitative and approximately 30 interviews have been conducted in each country. Second, although the national samples have some common characteristics (e.g. the samples are gender balanced), they differ significantly in relation to ethnic composition, age, place of residence and health status of the interviewees. Thus, the Bulgarian and Czech samples include large proportions of representatives of ethnic minorities (in the Czech sample, 11 out of 33 interviewees are Roma, whereas in the UK case, only three interviewees are from ethnic minority groups); in both the Norwegian and the UK samples, there are nine interviewees with disabilities, whereas in the Czech sample, there are only two, and the German case does not include any disabled people; the Norwegian sample includes only six people living in villages and small towns, but in the sample from the Czech Republic, there are 12 such interviewees. The three cohorts are also unevenly represented, as the oldest cohort has only one representative among the interviewees in the Czech Republic, three in Bulgaria, five in the UK, five in Norway and ten in Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion of early job insecurity is beyond the scope of this report. We accept it as a predetermined in the criteria for recruitment of the interviewees. For more details on the concept of early job insecurity and early employment insecurity see in Karamessini et al. (2016) and Abebe et al. (2016).

<sup>2</sup> In order to respect the anonymity of the interviewees, the interviews are cited with abbreviation, for instance: BG01 1990-95 F, which indicates the country, number of the interview, the birth cohort of the interviewee, and their gender, or pseudonyms are used.

# **1. Patterns of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope for exercising active agency on the pathway to adulthood**

## **1.1. Theoretical considerations**

Conceptually, the report draws on theoretical underpinnings of the capability approach. As regards our analysis, it is important to emphasize that, in the capability approach perspective, living is seen as a combination of various “doings and beings” (called “functionings”), while quality of life (well-being) is assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings (Sen, 1993: 31). Capabilities and functionings supply two different perspectives in which a person's position in a social arrangement can be judged: (1) the freedom to achieve, and (2) the actual achievement.

The capability approach views people, even poor individuals, as active agents (Alkire, 2009). The concept of *agency* implies a certain space of freedom within which people can act. In contrast to capability, which refers to the opportunity aspect of freedom, agency “relates to personal process freedoms” (Alkire, Qizilbash, & Comim, 2008: 4). Agency takes into account the active role which people might have in shaping their own destiny and the society in which they live. Given this, the agent as such “is someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well” (Sen, 1999: 19). It is related to the ability to pursue and realize goals that someone values and has reason to value (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009: 31, 37). However, the ability to pursue valued goals need not be only to the person's own advantage. Agency can be *self-regarding* but also *other-regarding* (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009: 76-79). Similarly, two aspects of agency can also be distinguished with regard to well-being: *freedom* and *achievement*. Whereas “agency freedom” is related to the “freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce” (Sen, 1992: 57), the achievement of a person's agency “refers to the realization of goals and values she has reason to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being” (Ibid: 56).

In fact, precisely by taking note of agency achievements or agency freedom, the capability approach shifts the focus away from seeing a person as just a vehicle of well-being, ignoring the importance of the person's own judgments and priorities, with which the agency concerns are linked (Sen, 2009: 288). Such an understanding of agency stresses people's active role and their capacity to change and transform reality in accordance with their

conception of the good, once this conception has passed a reasoned scrutiny. Overall, agency implies the active role of people in all spheres of life, including work. Thus, a person may act to mitigate early job insecurity in general and to influence their job prospects and negotiating working conditions in particular. However, although agency implies a certain measure of individual responsibility, it does not lead to the trap of blaming the victim, given that agency, in the capability perspective, acknowledges human diversity and the wide range of factors which enable, or constrain, a person's ability to exercise their agency in practice/reality. This implies that different people have different capacities to transform their resources into real agency or outcomes.

In order to understand people's agency, we need to know more about the context and structures people are embedded in. In this regard, we rely on the heuristic potential of the concept of *conversion factors*. They include a wide range of factors influencing how a person can be, or is, free to convert the characteristics of the good or service into freedom or achievement. Different authors propose different classifications of conversion factors (Sen, 1999: 70-71, Robeyns, 2005; Crocker & Robeyns, 2009). We accept the classification of conversion factors according to the level at which they operate: *micro*, *meso* or *macro level* (see Dingeldey et al., 2015: 9).

In this report, active agency is "seen as mediating processes (mechanisms) between initial conditions (structures) and outcomes" (Dingeldey et al., 2015: 15) and is considered to be a constitutive element of social resilience<sup>3</sup>, the latter being understood at individual level as related to the "[o]ppportunity to acquire a feeling of well-being, ability to cope with adverse circumstances and realise valued and meaningful achievements in the short and long term" (Dingeldey et al., 2015: 13). As such, active agency refers to the interactions with others (institutions and people) and concrete actions undertaken by young people faced with job insecurity. The actions may include, for example, continuing or leaving education, changing jobs, pursuing mobility to other locations or countries, becoming active in organizations or groups for young people out of work, change in aspirations for job quality and wages, or engagement in the informal economy.

More specifically, we define *active agency as the mediating processes (interaction with others) through which young people convert available resources (initial conditions) into*

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<sup>3</sup>The concept of resilience is very important from a life-course perspective as it shows the individuals' capacity, through their agency, to surmount the influences of institutional and structural factors.

*new prospects and scope for real choice with regard to education, occupation-employment<sup>4</sup> and family formation. Each mediating process could include, and result in, different actions/agency achievements (e.g. continuing education, pursuing mobility, accepting any type of job, starting a business of one's own, etc.).*

Taking into account of people's personal characteristics, the environment they live in, and their active agency, allows assessment of the *capability sets* of young people. In order to transform a capability set into achievement of well-being<sup>5</sup>, an act of choosing is necessary.

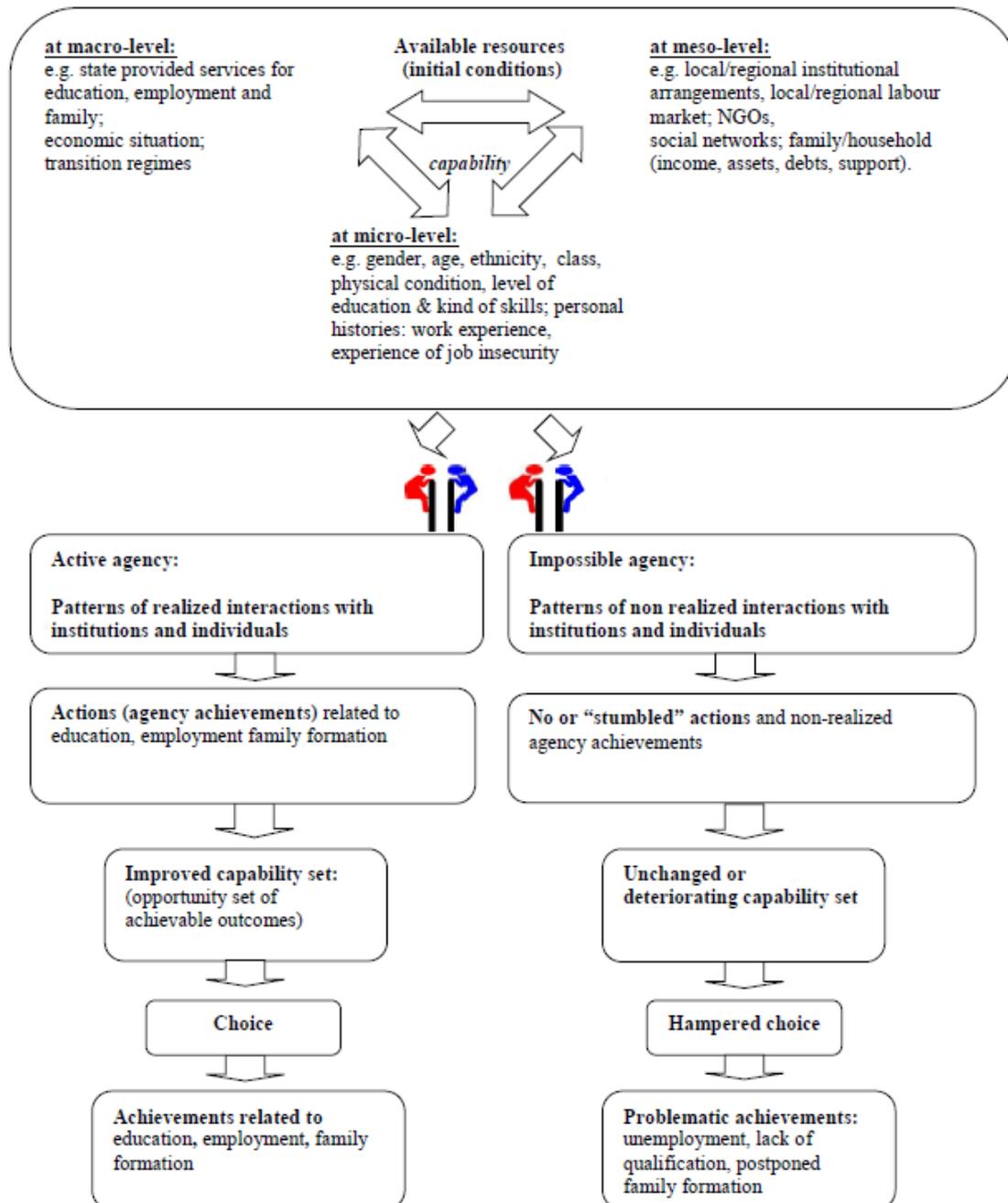
We refer to achievements in three dimensions of well-being – education, occupation/employment and family formation, insofar as these represent main markers in the transition to adulthood (see Shanahan, 2000). These achievements may differ in relation to young people's goals and the particular things they value. Thus, for example, a young unemployed engineer may manage to find a job in construction and may value starting employment and thus improving their financial situation. However, they would achieve better life prospects by finding a job that corresponds to their education and what they value. Or a young unemployed may want to continue their education and start a training course, but the course might prove to be of poor quality or not what they aimed for; or there might not be available courses of the kind they desire in the settlement where they live; thus, at the end of this training, the persons might have achieved a certain qualification, but the things learned might be of low value for them and insufficient for overcoming the situation of early job insecurity. Thus, we do not exclude situations where, despite people's adopting various actions to improve their labour market position, education and family situation, these actions might not be enough to enhance their well-being in all three of its dimensions.

Figure 1 presents, in a more systematic way, our theoretical understanding of active agency.

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<sup>4</sup>In fact, the choice of occupation is a long-term process, which starts in many cases with the choice of education. In the following part, the report refers to employment, because we see it as a broader term.

<sup>5</sup> Although well-being is widely studied concept the question of how it should be defined still remains largely unresolved (Dodge et al., 2012). There is consensus only about its multidimensionality. However, the literature largely diverges on the number of dimensions well-being includes (eg. Alkire, 2015; OECD, 2015; Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2010).



**Figure 1: A static representation of a person's agency.**

In the next section, we will apply these theoretical considerations in the discussion of the life-course interviews with young people. We will focus on the patterns of active agency that young people adopt to improve their well-being in relation to education, employment and family formation.

## **1.2. Patterns of exercising active agency (and resilience) on the pathway to adulthood**

It is believed that agency can only be defined in relation to goals (Alkire, 2009). However, we believe it can also be defined in relation to the mediating processes through which young people advance the realization of their goals. Thus, given the importance of resources/initial conditions and their role for mediating the scope of active agency of the young people who have experienced early job insecurity, and the extent to which they have managed to convert the resources/initial conditions they had into agency achievements, we introduce two main criteria for identifying different patterns of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope for exercising active agency (and resilience) on the pathway to adulthood:

- 1) *Whether, and how, the young people's resources/initial conditions were converted into agency achievements and the young peoples' goals were (or were not) realized in new prospects with regard to education, employment and family formation.*
- 2) *What are the essential mechanisms by which agency is possible in the situation of early job insecurity?*

We use the above theoretical considerations and these two criteria as the analytical prism for reading and analyzing the life-course interviews. Thereby, we reveal several patterns (mechanisms) *of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope for exercising active agency*. More specifically, within the two groups of patterns – of realized and of impossible (not realized) agency – we identified the following different patterns.

### **Active agency: Patterns of realized interactions with institutions and individuals**

- Self-relying agency
- Institutionally-enabled agency:
  - State institutions
  - NGOs
- Informally-enabled agency:
  - family and relatives
  - friends and networks
- Social commitment-enabled agency

Each one of the patterns of active agency leads to, and is realized through, different actions, such as continuing or leaving education, pursuing mobility, accepting any type of job, etc.

### **Impossible agency: Patterns of non-realized interactions with institutions and individuals**

- Disoriented and unmotivated agency
- Hampered agency
- Blocked agency

The identified patterns should be treated as *ideal types in the Weberian sense*. They are *patterns of active agency*, and *not the most common ways of actions*. The patterns focus on the essential mechanisms through which agency is made (im)possible in the situation of early job insecurity. They are constructed out of certain elements of the life-courses of our interviewees, but are not entirely encompassed in any of our interview cases. It is also important to emphasize that we study agency in relation to three different spheres – education, employment and family formation – and within a longer span of young people’s life-course. That is why, in most of our cases/interviews, two or more mechanisms co-exist and interact with one another within a single sphere, but also across spheres. Last but not least, it is also possible that, in different stages of a single life-course, one pattern may be followed by another.

Below, we provide a short description of the identified patterns and use them as an analytical instrument to describe and understand the scope of active agency of young people in the situation of early job insecurity.

## **1.2.1. Patterns of realized agency**

### **1.2.1.1. Self-relying agency**

This pattern refers to young people in a situation of early job insecurity who manage to convert their initial conditions by undertaking different actions, relying mainly on themselves and not on support from state institution or informal circles. They succeed in widening their capability set and, based on it, achieving improved prospects for education, employment and family formation. This pattern of active agency is realized mainly with regard to improving education and employment, and only to a limited extent to family formation.

#### ***Education:***

The interviewee developed a kind of “life plan”, which she subsequently implemented. She did practical training (in Spain) and worked illegally, which was primarily arranged by friends and acquaintances. She applied for an international scholarship in order to train for a foreign language correspondent. She acquired qualifications in the field of adult education and worked in this area for many years as a freelancer. Later on, she acquired qualifications in the field of integration pedagogy and worked for many years at a job centre in the employment service for unemployment benefit II recipients: *“Well, the central consequence was that being unemployed was a chance for me to get some orientation and, well, maybe show myself.”* (GER U66-1 1950-55 F)

#### ***Employment:***

The interviewee was aware he would not be able to work as an artist (which was his specialty in upper secondary education), but continued to seek employment in this field: *“Roughly, I knew I would never be an artist, but at least be close to it.”* His first job was as a graphic designer. There he worked for less than a month without a labour contract. Then followed several periods of unemployment and employment for a few months in different companies. During the period of unemployment and job insecurity, the interviewee contacted employers from a local jewelry company by himself. ... There being no need for workers at the moment, he received a negative response from the employer and the interviewee was forced to continue seeking employment elsewhere. ... He said he had a plan how to escape unemployment and job insecurity ... : *“So I stopped looking for work and I said, ‘I’ll do the work, I will create it’. So far, I like that. I simply create it myself.”* (BG 20 1990-95 M)

***Family:***

The interviewee completed upper secondary school and then went abroad to work as an au pair for one year. She remained abroad for an extra year with her boyfriend; both of them were unemployed and without money at that time. Upon returning to Norway, she managed to move away from home, but was not able to secure any job. Although her parents did not have many resources, they told her to come to them if she found herself in a difficult situation – but she has tried not to rely on them. She has had to borrow money on a few occasions, but has always paid it back. The interviewee takes great pride in having been able to be independent. . . She now holds a BA, and has relevant work. The interviewee states that she finds the youth of today too pampered – she says that to struggle a bit builds character and motivation: “*The State should be a security net, not a caregiver!*” (NO 18 1970-75 F)

**1.2.1.2. Institutionally-enabled agency**

This pattern refers to young people who, in a situation of early job insecurity, manage to convert their conditions by undertaking different actions with the decisive support of different institutions, such as state employment agencies and NGOs. They succeed in negotiating institutional support and taking advantage of it. Thus, they manage to widen their capability set and, based on this, to achieve improved prospects in relation to education, employment and family formation. This pattern of active agency is realized mainly with regard to improving employment, and only to a limited extent to education and family formation.

○ **State institutions**

The state employment agencies and labour offices are the main state institutions legally obliged to support young people during unemployment by ensuring them different benefits (unemployment benefits, maternity and childcare allowances, health insurance and social insurance, social assistance) but also by providing information and guidance and offering trainings and jobs. The institutional support from state institutions can thus widen young people’s scope for agency in two ways: by helping them cope with financial problems during unemployment and by providing them with various choices for actions related to training and employment.

***Education:***

Although the interviewee found unemployment benefits to be small and inadequate - “*with this money one can’t live...with a child*” – she managed to take advantage of her contacts

with the labour office and welfare services: *“The official was pleasant and informed me about the possibilities I had....she also accompanied me to the judiciary proceedings where the alimony on my son was tackled”*. She is satisfied that labour office employees have always acted fairly and helped her to look for a suitable (not just any) job. She thinks that the people in the Labour Office did what they could for her. She realizes that they offered her adequate job positions and that she would not have succeeded if they had offered her better jobs, with higher qualification requirements. Although she regrets having taken a bartender course and wishes she had taken an English course or IT course instead, she perceives it as something positive that the Labour Office is paying for these courses and giving people the opportunity to learn new things. (CZ 17 1990-95 F)

***Employment:***

The parents of a young Greek man could not help him to find a new job after the closure of the family business because they did not have enough contacts. He searched alone through newspapers and turned to the Public Employment Agency (OAED). He received unemployment benefits twice. Moreover, he has a very good opinion of OAED because he found his present job through them. He has never asked for help from any other organisation: *“They helped me a lot to find what I was searching for [OAED]. The lady was very helpful. She made great efforts. She searched continuously to find new positions for me; I was often going to appointments she had arranged for me. She offered me many.”* (GR 05 1990-95 M)

***Family:***

As a person with moderate disability, the interviewee used to benefit from the welfare system considerably. For some time while she was employed, she was entitled to social allowance, which made her independent and non-reliant on her parents. She also received some social scholarships and disability allowance. As her social security was coming to an end, she registered as unemployed at the District Employment Office and became entitled to unemployment allowance: *“I know that my situation is better than that of many of my peers who work under junk contracts - civil contracts, to put it politely. They can't count on what I can. Thanks to my disability certificate, I work under an employment contract, since it is only under this condition that my vocation can be subsidized.”* (PL 10 1990-95 F)

○ **NGO**

NGOs appear as an important institutional actor for the youngest cohort, born in the 1990s. In taking part in activities and programs organized by NGOs, young people in a situation of early job insecurity manage to widen their capability set not only by acquiring new

knowledge and experience but also by changing their values, goals and life orientations. Young people's interactions with NGOs improve the scope of their agency mainly because young people thus become involved in meaningful and socially-sensitive activities and build a capacity for agency that is not only *self-regarding* but also *other-regarding*.

***Education:***

One of the organizations of which he is a member hired him under a trainee program for young people over a period of six months; he assessed this support as very significant for him with regard to his professional orientation: "*Well, while I worked in the NGO, I communicated with people as an educator and it gave me some confidence that I can do this, that I can work with children so as to have some influence on young people and ... little by little I started ... [and acquired confidence?] Yes.*" Another NGO, which mostly functions as a special interest club, also gave him support, engaging him to teach painting to children on a voluntary basis – his payment was in the form of donations from parents. (BG 21 1990-95 M)

***Employment:***

A young man from the Czech Republic left home without finishing secondary school because of a family and personal crisis. He spent about 4 years without looking for a job, living as a squatter or renting a dwelling together with friends, and thus accumulated debts. He did not register at the Employment Office and did not receive any financial, or other, support. An NGO provided him with a temporary job and helped him to plan paying off his debts. He identifies with this NGO highly and is committed to the work he is doing (work with children and youths, their families, mostly Roma). The agency he achieved has enlarged the young man's self-confidence and aspirations – he now plans to go on to upper secondary education and then to university. (CZ 01 1990-95 M)

**1.2.1.3. Informally-enabled agency**

In a situation of early job insecurity, interactions with informal circles – family, relatives, friends and social networks – are very important mechanisms through which young people try to overcome crisis situations (both material/financial and psychological) and to convert their available resources into new prospects with regard to education, choice of occupation and family formation. The functioning of this pattern is determined by the fact that it is based on informal, intimate and highly emotional interactions. Thus, when young people have reliable and strong connections with their informal circles they can rely on them multiple times and in different situations. This widens young people's scope for agency and provides a safety net to protect them from negative consequences of early job insecurity. Conversely,

young people who have broken their relations with their families and friends risk “falling into a vacuum” and giving up when interactions with official institutions turn out to be ineffective and/or counterproductive (see Hampered agency). This pattern of active agency runs through all spheres: it occurs with regard to education, employment and family formation.

○ **Family and relatives**

Family and relatives can widen young people’s scope for agency in a situation of unemployment and life uncertainty in various ways: by ensuring their sustenance and thus freeing them from the burden of “how to survive without any money” (offering a home for free and financial support), by providing emotional support and advice, and by seeking and finding job and training offers. Thus, the family turns out to be the main safety net and a main source of social resilience for these youths. Due to periods of early job insecurity, or when they lack financial resources, many young people postpone leaving home.

***Education:***

After raising two of her children, this woman decided to continue her education in a direction other than economics, which she had studied in high school, enrolled in higher education in the capital city, and is currently studying pedagogy as an extramural student. When she failed to enroll in higher education immediately after completing highschool, and being out of the labor market and starting to look for work, she began to despair and no longer had such a strong desire to study at university. Thanks to the support given to her by the family, the interviewee "gathered strength" and began to study in higher education. (BG 03 1990-95 F)

***Employment:***

A Greek man received both financial and psychological support from his family during periods of precarity and unemployment. Before he went to Germany, he had been receiving a monthly allowance from his parents while living with his grandmother (except for the six months he spent in Athens). In Germany, he found jobs mainly through his family network, but also through other Greek migrants: “*I found this job [in a large pharmaceutical industry] through Greeks who were working there and who told me that they were hiring workers. That’s how I got in. The second time I went there [the first was in 1968 and the second in 1974 after doing his military service] a teacher mediated, he wrote a letter, and I went, but they put me in another job, where I couldn’t make it, I stayed maximum two months. I couldn’t, I didn’t like it. Afterwards, I found a job where my dad was working, in a tyre factory.*” (GR 01 1950-55 M)

***Family:***

For a Czech woman, transition to parenthood and early unemployment occurred simultaneously. She moved out with her son when he was one year old because she wanted to have her own space and make her own decisions with regard to raising her son. However, she found she was unable to do it without financial support from her parents: *“I could not cover [the expenses for] my own place” (she means without her parents’ financial support)*. When she moved out from her parents, she started to receive housing allowance, but this financial support was not sufficient. Again, she had to rely on her family: *“If my parents did not help me (financially), I would be doing really badly...They support me a lot. They take care of my son at weekends, when I am attending school...they are supporting us financially...”* (CZ 18 1990-95 F)

○ **Social networks and friends**

Young people’s social capital – their social networks – is an important factor, which can positively influence their scope of agency in a situation of early job insecurity in various ways: by motivating young people to act, by orienting their actions, and by supporting young people both financially and emotionally during their actions. The wider the social network of a young person, the greater the possibility it will enlarge their scope for action and opportunities for choice. However, social networks can mediate involvement of young people not only in socially-relevant and personality-developing actions but also towards unsocial and risky behavior.

***Education:***

Both parents of the interviewed German woman died in a car accident shortly after her birth. She was sent to a children's home. She met two women who had obtained a higher secondary school certificate with a focus on social careers and so she decided to do the same. She went to school again, where she was supported by her teacher. Thanks to contacts from her social environment, she obtained the option of childcare vocational training, which she successfully completed after three years. After her boyfriend left her, she settled in Bremen and soon got in contact with the local left-wing radicals: *“Between the age of 18 and 25, my group was very important to me, well, my clique.”* Then she was unemployed for three years; however, today she does not look back on that time as a stage of unemployment. She was totally focused on her peer group ... Later she studied arts after passing a university entrance exam. She has worked as an art teacher for ten years and is now a freelance artist. It is important

that, neither at school nor during the vocational training nor while obtaining social assistance did she receive any additional support for professional integration. Eventually, she received professional orientation through her social environment, which gradually led her to work and later to study. (GER U66-10 1950-55 F)

***Employment:***

The interviewee has found almost all her jobs through contacts. It was not very hard for her since, for her age, she has relatively rich work experience in sales: *“As I told you before, my social network offered me a job without even saying anything. For example, I found my first job through a family friend. We were discussing the fact that I was looking for a job. He knew someone who was looking for an employee and he thought of me. After that, I found my next job through a newspaper [ad]. The third was again through a recommendation by a contact of mine.”* (GR 05 1990-95 F)

***Family:***

The father of a Czech woman wanted her to graduate from a school where she could pass the school graduation exam (“maturita”) and that is why she started to attend business school. But she found the school too demanding – she quit it and began studying in a vocational school; but her father was mad at her. As a result of psychological terror, being kicked out of the apartment, the woman had a breakdown and was hospitalised in a psychiatric clinic. ... She managed to undertake some actions thanks to interactions with her friends: *“My friends are helping me a lot...when there is a free position they let me know... they find me some part-time jobs...the psychological support is so important...I am lucky to have so many friends”*. The situation also changed her friendships: *“I filtered my true friends...the ones that invited me for a beer and didn’t want me to pay them back ... gave me some money...and were friends of mine even when I was totally broke ... we would hang out somewhere where we didn’t have to pay.”* (CZ 20 1990-95 F)

**1.2.1.4. Social commitment-enabled agency – volunteering**

This pattern refers to young people who, in a situation of early job insecurity, manage to enhance their capability set by engaging as volunteers in causes and activities. Being a process of involvement in activities without pay, volunteering is a transformative and empowering experience. People cannot be forced to volunteer – they become volunteers of their own free will and are committed only to activities they view as meaningful. Volunteering empowers people by increasing their experience, knowledge, confidence and

social capital<sup>6</sup>. But initially, it is “*just a place to be*” (NO 12 1990-95 M), a way “*to come out of my shell*”. (UK 25 1990-95 M)

***Education:***

The interviewee does not believe that education received in school is the only important thing; what is important for him is to try new activities and learn on-the-job - he was a chef, a restorer, has worked as a volunteer with children, as an educator dealing with music as a hobby. The aim is: “... *to enrich my general qualification.*” In each exercised profession, he finds a positive effect - the “*new skills*”. (BG 21 1990-95 M)

***Employment:***

Jesse lost a job at 19. He was suffering depression, mood swings and fatigue and was diagnosed and medicated for a chemical imbalance. For a four-year period, he was on and off medication and was a Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimant three or four times. He was smoking marijuana heavily and in and out of about 10 casual jobs, which he took to pay for his habit. None of his jobs lasted for more than three months. A life-changing experience for Jesse was his work as a volunteer in an HIV-testing clinic in Kenya, for women who had been raped: “*I can’t remember a day out there that I didn’t start crying at some point. It was really quite shocking.*” This experience transformed his beliefs and changed him completely. (UK 24 1990-95 M)

***Family:***

A Norwegian man has a psychosocial disability in the spectrum of autism. He finished upper secondary school and was able to get into higher education. However, this proved too difficult for him, mainly because of his problems with social interaction. He dropped out and since then has been unemployed, with shorter or longer periods under various labour market measures. He has been active in trying to find (volunteer) organizations where he could obtain help and support ... He has been part of a Social media group discussing his special variety of problem – that is how he met his girlfriend. He has been a regular at a resource centre for people who have experienced mental health problems: “*I found it myself. While I was still at the art college, I started hanging out at a place targeted at people with severe learning disabilities. That way I had someone to talk to. And then I asked if they knew of somewhere that would suit me. Where I could get some help. Just a place to be.*” (NO 12 1990-95 M)

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<sup>6</sup> Eg. UK 25 1990-95 M, UK 26 1990-95 M.

Table 1 presents, in a systematic way, different agency achievements in the spheres of education, employment and family formation, and the well-being achievements in which they may result.

**Table 1: Agency and well-being achievements in education, employment and family formation**

<b>Sphere of well-being</b>	<b>Type of actions/ agency achievements</b>	<b>Well-being achievements</b>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Going back to school to finish interrupted educational programme/degree</li> <li>- Enrolling in /completing an educational degree higher than that already completed</li> <li>- Enrolling in /completing a specialty other than that already completed</li> <li>- Enrolling in /completing a certified vocational program/courses</li> <li>- Enrolling in /completing courses for acquiring transferable skills (language, computer, etc.)</li> <li>- Taking a loan for completing the desired educational level or specialty</li> <li>- Work-place learning with in-company trainer/mentor</li> <li>- Purposeful informal learning (e.g. to learn a language)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving knowledge, skills and self-concept</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting into contact with the state employment agency and compliance with its rules/requirements</li> <li>- Active search for advertisements through different channels</li> <li>- Setting up a business of one's own</li> <li>- Approaching employers directly</li> <li>- Sending CV and requests to employers</li> <li>- Turning to the court in cases of unfair employers</li> <li>- Migration: internal (to another city in the home country); external (to another country)</li> <li>- Searching for a job in the shadow economy</li> <li>- Volunteering</li> <li>- Involvement in apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting a part-time job</li> <li>- Accepting a job without a contract</li> <li>- Accepting a stable job which does not correspond to one's level of education or to one's field of education</li> <li>- Accepting a stable job which corresponds to one's level of education or to one's field of education</li> <li>- Being employed in a meaningful job</li> </ul>
<b>Family formation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leaving the parental home</li> <li>- Building own family</li> <li>- Having children</li> <li>- Living financially on one's own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having an independent life, achieving emancipation from parents</li> </ul>

### **1.2.2. Patterns of impossible agency**

These patterns refer to young people who are not able to convert their initial conditions into improved prospects in relation to education, employment and family formation. Their scope of action is very limited, either because they do not have clear goals or due to other constraints outside of their control. Thus, their attempts for action are constrained, and even when they undertake some actions, these actions are somehow disoriented, do not contribute to widening their capability sets, and do not improve their well-being in any of the three aspects considered in this report: education, employment and family formation.

#### **1.2.2.1. Disoriented and unmotivated agency**

The main characteristic of this pattern of agency is that the young people are not able to formulate clear goals they value pursuing. This pattern seems to be widely spread across the young people who experience early job insecurity. For instance, many of the German interviewees did not really have an idea what they wanted to do after school<sup>7</sup> or they had unrealistic ideas for their future, such as becoming an actress or a fashion model<sup>8</sup>. A lot of young people broke off their vocational training<sup>9</sup> or cancelled employment contracts after completing the vocational training<sup>10</sup> because they felt that that was not the right path for them. The degree of life orientation of some of the interviewees from the Czech Republic was low when they were young<sup>11</sup>. In many cases, they were not informed about the real conditions in the professions they chose and their attitude towards the prospective job changed even during their studies (CZ17 1990-95 F). Overall, the actions the young people undertake are few and lacking in clear orientation. In this case, young people mostly suffer from lack of (career) advice to make their goals clearer or more realistic and help them envisage new prospects.

#### ***Education:***

Jade maintains that at school there was no direction given, nobody nurtured her, encouraged her or identified any talents that she may have had. Because of this lack of direction in her early teenage years, Jade has been always searching for something she was good at. Despite there being evidence that she is good at being a teaching assistant, this early lack of confidence has remained with her. Jade explained that having no direction early on had a negative effect on her life: *“Oh, it’s been terrible really. I don’t know. If you’re younger and*

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. GER U26-7 1990-95 M, GER U26-9 1990-95 F, GER U46-3 1970-75 F, GER U66-3 1950-55 M.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. GER U26-8 1990-95 F, GER U26-9 1990-95 F.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. GER U26-1 1990-95 M, GER U26-2 1990-95 F.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. GER U26-4 1990-95 M, GER U26-5 1990-95 F.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. CZ 02 1990-95 F, CZ12 1990-95 M, CZ14 1990-95 M.

*you get directed or given more direction into things that you are capable of and that you like and that you're interested in, then you're going to end up doing something that you like. Paid well or not, it doesn't matter, as long as you enjoy something.*"(UK 10 1970-75 F)

***Employment:***

During her period of unemployment, Kylie said that she "*still didn't have a clear path*". She claimed JSA, reporting to the Job Centre, but found that positions of interest often required degrees. As a young person who completed sixth form education and gained four "A" levels without a desire to proceed academically, Kylie was focused on support mechanisms for post-18 vocational routes. She felt that there was little appropriate training to increase employability or help in finding jobs. The interviewee said that career advice had been limited and biased towards university entrance, saying, "*There was no other option, no other support any other way...going to university was the answer*". She felt that there should be a specialist agency supporting labour market entry that could advise on training and work experience to support the development of CVs that would interest employers (UK 23 1990-95 F).

### **1.2.2.2. Hampered agency**

The main characteristic of this type of agency is that it is limited due to the scarring and discrimination effect resulting from having children, age, lack of working experience or relevant education. The scarring effect is so strong that it constrains one's scope of action and people do not have sufficient capacity to deal with it. However, agency can also be hampered by personal problems, family troubles or the inefficiency of state institutions. Thus, some of the interviewees from Germany did not find a job after school due to early (single) motherhood<sup>12</sup>, the use of drugs (GER U46-1 1970-75 M), truancy (GER U26-8 1990-95 F), permanent conflicts with their superior (GER U46-5 1970-75 M), juvenile delinquency/gangs of youths<sup>13</sup>, etc. Although many young people find support and stimulus for action in their families, for some of them this support can limit and threaten their scope for agency, for instance, when parents are unemployed, when there are conflicts between parents and children, when parents get divorced<sup>14</sup>, or when parents force their children into professions the children dislike. In a number of cases, the capacity of state institutions to empower young people to act and to widen their capability set turns out to be problematic. Many young people assess the institutional support supplied by the employment offices as low, not suitable, not

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. GR04 1970-75 F, GER U26-9 1990-95 F, GER U46-3 1970-75 F, GER U46-8 1970-75 F.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. GER U26-6 1990-95 M, GER U46-1 1970-75 M, GER U66-10 1950-55 F.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. GER U26-3 1990-95 M, GER U26-5 1990-95 F, GER U26-9 1990-95 F, GER U66-7 1950-55 M.

topical, or even counterproductive<sup>15</sup>. In particular, job counseling and remedial classes are viewed as unhelpful, and the jobs offered are assessed as not providing sustainability (*“In general, it [state] does not help young people. . . , because, for instance, they hire them for six months or less”*, BG 07 1990-95 F). The difficulty of getting suitable qualifications and jobs from the employment office obliges young people to organize the desired education programs by themselves or to turn for support to their family members and social networks (BG 07 1990-95 F). Thus, it becomes clear that, when young people are confronted with the ineffectiveness of one mechanism to convert their available resources into new life prospects, they may start looking for another. Last but not least, agency can be hampered by factors at macro-level related to the economic situation of the country, such as economic downturns (*“In the 90s everything was collapsing. [...] One day I went to work and everything there was closed, with a padlock. [...] my maternity leave was never paid.”* PL 18 1970-75 F) and the 2008 financial crisis: (*“I mean, the financial crisis drowned us, I mean, from 2008 until now I haven’t been able to find work and there are no jobs. Before, it was much better ... (thinks about it), each season I worked as a lumberjack, I told you, I could make 1000, 1,500 leva for the season. And 1,500 leva was good money, enough to make a living, but today I hardly make 700 leva. After 2008, everything was cut short and life has become much more expensive. Whatever you buy, whatever you do, everything is expensive.”* (BG 16 1990-95 M)) According to a man from Greece: *“This crisis has left us unemployed and it has substantially ruined everything that workers had claimed for so many years, i.e. a basic wage, some rights stemming from the years of experience, everything has been abolished now.”* (GR 02 1970-75 M)

### ***Education:***

The interviewee finished primary school at age 15 and, due to family commitments, was not able to continue his education: *“Someone had to give up further education and work, in order to be able to take care of the family.”* Twice he made unsuccessful attempts to restart education in a vocational school: *“I was in each vocational school for one year. Something always got in the way of completing it.”* The interviewee’s father was a renovator of monuments. He wanted to continue education and work in his father’s profession, but, according to him, in those days it was not formally possible: *“I wanted to be a conservator, but ... There was no longer that type of schools or courses”*. (PL 01 1950-55 M)

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. GER U26-3 1990-95 M, GER U26-6 1990-95 M, GER U46-2 1970-75 F, GER U46-6 1970-75 F, GER U46-10 1970-75 M, GER U66-10 1950-55 F.

***Employment:***

The interviewee grew up in a very deprived neighborhood of Berlin and came into contact with highly-delinquent youth groups, which he joined through lack of alternatives. He sold and consumed illicit drugs. After excessively violent behaviour under the influence of drugs, he was put into a forensic facility for attempted manslaughter. There, his reference caregiver supported him, so that he could start new vocational training as a carpenter. This vocational training had a stabilizing effect, but, as it was completed in Niedersachsen, it was not legally recognized in Bremen. Because of this, a renewed destabilization occurred. At this stage, the use of drugs increased again: *“Well, while I was temporarily unemployed I always went to the unemployment agency and told them to give me a possibility. But they always said no, you are a drug addict and if you start vocational training now you will fail at it. . . Well I had chances, as I said the doors were all open. But I messed it up due to the drugs and criminality.”* (GER U46-1 1970-75 M)

***Family:***

The interviewee believes that a professional and financial situation is crucial for family formation: *“We avoid having children. Because, OK, the first marriage did not last and ... we split in 2006; in 2008, this whole thing with the crisis started, and you think, I was lucky that I separated, what could I have done, and you start thinking like that. Now you might think about it, but when you are 43, will the kid call you father or grandfather? I mean, you think about it, if this thing is to happen, it should happen when you are 20-25, when you start being independent, go and buy a house, not being like that and spending all your salary on rent. Then problems begin, fighting etc., so the financial issue is, for better or for worse, the basic factor in a relationship; no matter how much love there is, because you cannot eat love, and a kid does not need only love, it needs the other things.”* (GR 02 1970-75 M)

Table 2 presents, in a systematic way, the main factors that hindered young people’s agency in the three spheres of well-being – education, employment and family formation.

**Table 2: Factors hindering young people’s agency in education, employment and family formation at micro-, meso- and macro-level.**

<b>Sphere of well-being</b>	<b>Micro-level</b>	<b>Meso-level (institutional)</b>	<b>Macro-level (national)</b>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of required level of completed education</li> <li>- Insufficient learning skills/abilities</li> <li>- Lack of motivation and self-confidence</li> <li>- Family problems and responsibilities</li> <li>- Health problems</li> <li>- Juvenile delinquency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ineffectiveness and low quality of training and educational programmes for the unemployed</li> <li>- Underdeveloped practices of workplace learning at enterprises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of correspondence between the education system and the labour market</li> <li>- Lack of well-developed system for validation of non-formal and informal learning</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of required education</li> <li>- Lack of required professional skills</li> <li>- Family problems</li> <li>- Health problems</li> <li>- Juvenile delinquency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ineffective employment services at enterprises, not leading to stable employment</li> <li>- Discrimination policies at enterprises (based on age, motherhood, ethnicity disability, lack of experience)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restructuring of economic sectors</li> <li>- Financial crisis</li> <li>- National labour market policies</li> <li>- Migration policies</li> <li>- Outsourcing policies</li> </ul>
<b>Family formation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being unemployed</li> <li>- Financial problems</li> <li>- Health problems</li> <li>- Juvenile delinquency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of affordable childcare provision in one’s place of residence</li> <li>- Insufficient supply or lack of jobs with flexible working time in one’s place of residence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient and/or ineffective state family policies, especially regarding childcare and benefits for mothers</li> <li>- Legal framework regarding binding the right to social security benefits with living at the parental home</li> <li>- Undeveloped system for credits with a preference for young families</li> </ul>

It should be emphasized that these factors influence young people’s agency in country-specific ways. Thus, although it is obvious that when unemployment hits young Norwegians and English, leaving the childhood home is put on hold for longer than originally planned; being adult in Norway and the UK is closely linked to forming a separate household, and

moving away from home is a priority even when finances are tight<sup>16</sup>. None of the Norwegian interviewees narrates postponing family formation (having children or getting married) because of unemployment. In addition, the Norwegian interviewees generally do not speak of young children or other care responsibilities as a hindrance to their participation in the labour market. Similarly, most interviewees in the UK did not feel that unemployment and low-paid jobs in their youth stopped them from leaving their parents' home or forming families. The data also suggest that there might be differences in the way these factors influence agency of young people belonging to different generations, place of residence and sex.

### **1.2.2.3. Blocked agency**

Blocked agency refers to a situation of unemployment that absolutely “paralyzes” and dispirits the young persons. They fall into a prolonged period of despair and depression without being able to undertake any actions to improve their situation. The young people feel helpless to overcome the situation of early job insecurity, and every failure to do so further demotivates them. A hurdle arises at every step of their actions and of achieving their goal. This pattern often goes hand-in-hand with deteriorated mental well-being or health problems<sup>17</sup>. In the Norwegian material, the interviewees tie the constraints on active agency mainly to health issues and to the lack of appropriate services from the Norwegian labor and welfare administration (NAV). Thus, most of these people suffer foremost the lack of psychological/medical support.

#### ***Education:***

The interviewee graduated from a vocational school for the profession of turner. He got a job in the profession immediately after finishing school. He worked there for two years but quit due to poor health: “*The doctor told me that if I continued to work in my profession, my heart wouldn't stand it.*” In the period of unemployment, he wanted to retrain, but there was no possibility. He appreciates the value of education and regrets that he failed to gain additional skills. (PL 27 1970-75 M)

#### ***Employment:***

The interviewee went into the army immediately after finishing school. After that, he enrolled at a private vocational school for forepersons in construction. Due to high unemployment in this sector, he decided to attend another vocational school, for security agents. He started

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. NO 03 1990-95 M, NO 18 1970-75 F.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. GER U26-2 1990-95 F, GER U46-3 1970-75 F, GER U46-8 1970-75 F, GER U66-8 1950-55 M.

working directly in a security agency but, after a month, he had a serious accident when driving back home from work. He is single and hopes to get married and have children. His life has completely changed after the accident. He has been out of work for a year now and is trying to recover. The doctor's advice is that he should not work. (GR 04 1990-95 M)

***Family:***

The interviewee comes from a wealthy home. The divorce of her parents weighed down on her immensely. She moved in with her then partner and did not finish her A-levels. She successfully completed vocational training for office administrators. However, she became aware during her training that she did not want to work in this field. Since then she has been looking for a job that would involve creative, social and artisanal activities ... She used the past years of job insecurity to begin psychotherapy and, little by little, to solve her family problems. Previously, she suffered from depression, which became more intense due to the perceived societal pressure. She describes additional problems related to drug consumption – but she has surmounted them now. Nevertheless, she has difficulties applying for a job, mostly because she is afraid she would need to explain her interrupted employment biography. The interviewee does not receive any support from the employment office. If anything, she is very frustrated because her repeated wishes are not taken into consideration. ... She was often very sick and suffered from depression and psychological problems due to her stressful family situation as well as problematic drug consumption. These conditions were exacerbated by the changing job situation. (GER U26-5 1990-95 F)

### **1.3. Conclusions**

The identified patterns of active and impossible agency cannot be reduced to the narratives about the short and long-term consequences of early job insecurity; they rather reflect a particular way of interaction of young people with the existing opportunity structures across seven European countries. We acknowledge that, in reality, they interact across different dimensions of well-being, reinforcing or constraining one another, and that there may be multiple coexisting patterns at a certain stage of people's lives. Last but not least, they may occur in various sequences. The analysis of the life-course interviews clearly shows that the patterns of agency of young people in a situation of early job insecurity are *embedded into national and institutional contexts*. Thus, for example, we found many cases of social-commitment-enabled agency (volunteering) in Norway and the UK and rare cases in the other countries studied. At the same time, our analysis shows that in all post-communist countries and in Greece, family and relatives, social networks and friends, prove to be of crucial

importance for overcoming early job insecurity. Regarding generational differences we found more examples of social commitment-enabled agency in the young and mid-cohort in comparison to the old one. The patterns of family and relatives and informally-enabled agency seem to be equally represented among all cohorts. Last but not least, the cases of disoriented agency are more common in the youngest cohort. Further research is needed to explain the revealed differences between countries and cohorts with regard to the identified patterns of active agency. It is worth exploring the heuristic potential in this respect of some country typologies, e.g. welfare regimes and youth transition regimes.

## **2. Aspects of marginalization and social exclusion of young people**

Within the patterns of impossible agency, the interactions of young people in a situation of early job insecurity with institutions and other people are very limited or nonexistent; young people are not able to negotiate their way of living/working and to avoid the most adverse consequences of this insecurity. The impossibility of active agency not only does not stimulate the development of young people's capability sets but also usually leads to its deterioration. In turn, this leads to deprivation in young people's living situation and well-being, and their expulsion to the periphery of society, i.e. their marginalization and social exclusion.

In our further analysis, we will use the following two concepts, often employed interchangeably (Jacobi, Edmiston & Ziegler, 2017) – marginalization and social exclusion. Some authors find differences between them that indicate the concepts are not fully identical. Both concepts reflect dynamic and multi-dimensional processes, but the concept of marginalization is rather viewed as an intermediate position between complete integration and social exclusion, and describes the risk of social exclusion in different dimensions (Julkunen, 2009). For instance, as Jacobi et al. (2017) point out, young unemployed people are in a marginalized position, but may or may not be excluded from the labour market. In this report, we see marginalization as a process in which young people's active agency is deteriorated by various factors and where its dimensions might lead to social exclusion. In other words, we see social exclusion as being the result of the young people's impossibility to achieve interaction with institutions or with other people; the impossibility to do things that a person defines as valuable for them and that they want to do. Understanding social exclusion in this way does not mean that we take it as a static situation. It is liable to change over time (Ohlsson, 2007).

Unemployment and insecurity at the start of the work career creates conditions for marginalization and risk of social exclusion of young people. Further on, we will focus on some aspects of marginalization revealed in the interviews. We have not aimed at an exhaustive description of all dimensions of marginalization connected with social exclusion, but focus on those that directly or indirectly concern the interviewees' experiences relative to their integration in the labour market and their transition to adulthood during periods of long-term unemployment and insecurity. The analysis of the interviews is again at three levels – micro, meso and macro (see Table 3); this is in order to interpret, in addition to the different

aspects of marginalization and social exclusion, the different manifestations of these at several levels – individual, institutional (regional), and at the level of society as a whole.

**Table 3: Aspects of marginalization and social exclusion at micro-, meso- and macro-level**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Aspects of marginalization</b>
Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low educational and occupational level</li> <li>- Lack of material resources (life in poverty)</li> <li>- Low autonomy</li> <li>- Deteriorated mental/physical well-being</li> </ul>
Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited or restricted social capital (to a marginalized community/neighborhood)</li> <li>- Limited institutional and NGO support</li> <li>- Insufficient regional and local opportunities</li> </ul>
Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient or ineffective employment policies</li> </ul>

## **2.1. Micro level**

### **2.1.1. Low educational and occupational level**

A low educational level, or none at all, is one of the basic aspects of marginalization, which creates higher risk for exclusion from the labour market.

In the Norwegian interviews, as researchers indicate, to not have finished upper secondary school is a big hindrance to labour market entry. In Germany, it is very difficult for young people without a school diploma, or only a lower secondary one, to find a job or a vocational training contract. Many of the interviewed Bulgarians (12 out of 30 interviewees) have basic or lower education (ISCED 0-2). This not only makes it difficult for youths to integrate into the labour market but also places them in lower positions there. Such is the case of one Bulgarian interviewee (BG 16 1990-95 M), who left school at the age of 8-9 years. The lack of education proved a serious obstacle to finding well-paid and stable employment. He found short-term precarious employment, without any protection of his labour rights – for instance, as a lumberjack. He is currently picking mushrooms and has no work contract and no employer.

An interviewee from the Czech Republic, who only completed primary school, is in a similar situation. After school, for a period of three years, he had taken short-term temporary jobs as an unskilled worker: “...*these were just temporary jobs...just to keep myself alive...*” The lack

of education forces him to accept just any work, even low-paid and involving bad working conditions: “...without school it is bad, I have to take any kind of a job.” (CZ 03 1990-95 M)  
Young people with secondary education also have difficulties finding work in Bulgaria:

*“I tried to find work in Sliven for maybe a year, but here, with a language high school [diploma], without higher education, it is completely absurd to find anything at all...”*  
(BG 11 1970-75 F)

As the German researchers note, many young people in Germany break off their vocational training or cancel employment contracts after completing vocational training, because they feel that that is not the right path for them. Consequently, it becomes more difficult to find a new job because of discontinuities and gaps in their CVs. Furthermore, some young people in Germany who obtained a school certificate have very low skills, especially in the German language or in mathematics. Employment offices and companies regard them as unable to start vocational training.

The quality of education obtained also has an impact on labour market integration. The interviewed youths express their disappointment with the quality of the education they have received, which in their view deprives them of the possibility of finding a good job. Thus, in the UK, the young people interviewed reported that vocational education courses or apprenticeships let them down. Josh was only allowed to watch, and received no hands-on training; he said, “*I have to be doing something, so it was just incredibly boring*” (UK 25 1990-95 M). Some of the participants in the interviews in the UK, as researchers indicate, tried to enrol back in education after a period of unemployment or precariousness. However, they often had to face failure. The feeling of not being fit for traditional/academic education, as the UK researchers note, is expressed by young people with learning disabilities, but also by other young people who did not consider themselves as “book learners”.

In Bulgaria, youths also shared they had encountered outdated teaching methods and knowledge in university:

*“nowadays... in general, here in Bulgaria the education simply isn’t worth it in my opinion”* (BG 14 1990-95 F).

Youths in Poland were also concerned that the knowledge obtained even in technical school does not permit them to find a job; they assess it as completely useless and impractical:

*“I was hoping that, after secondary technical school, I would have obtained more knowledge, more skills. Actually, I’ve learned much more working from time to time. I learned nothing there besides a few terms [...], which I don’t remember anymore. It was only preparation for an examination, to pass it and gain a certificate” (PL 06 1990-95 M).*

The narratives of the interviewees also highlight the lack of professional orientation in school graduates as another problem for labour integration. Researchers from Norway describe the lives of most of the interviewees from that country as “messy lives”, and this may be applied to interviewees from the other countries as well:

*“My problem is that I don’t actually know where I want to go and what I want. I don’t know in which sector” (GER 07 1990-95 M).*

We see a lack of action planning for future development among most of the interviewed youths. This, combined with unfavourable conditions at micro, meso, and macro level, and the lack of active agency, increases the risk of marginalization and social exclusion.

Previous studies have shown that the family environment, especially the parents’ education level, also has an impact on the educational achievements of youths (Hadjivassiliou, Sala & Speckesser, 2015). The study by A. Peruzzi (2013), which takes a longitudinal perspective based on life-stages, shows how educational deprivation accumulates over time (as result of economic deprivation and family-related socio-demographic risk factors). A low education level, as Peruzzi has demonstrated, has a direct or indirect influence over various aspects of social exclusion. Due to the multidimensional nature of the phenomena of marginalization and social exclusion, low positions in one aspect lead to similarly low positioning in others. A vicious circle arises: the lack of education leads to low-qualified and low-paid work for youths, and the lack of family resources, the low education level of the parents, the difficulties the latter likewise had in finding steady jobs under conditions of social transformation, all these lead to weak support for young people as regards continuation of, or return to, education.

### 2.1.2. Lack of material resources

Economic deprivation is a pivotal aspect of marginalization and social exclusion. Unemployment, especially lasting more than a year, leads to lack of money for basic needs such as food, clothes, and housing. In the interviews, interviewees indicate lack of money as the basic negative consequence of unemployment and job insecurity. There is evident a variety of degrees of economic deprivation felt by the different interviewees and in the different countries, as well as different people in the same country. Interviewees from Norway and the UK indicate, to a lesser degree, the lack of money and poverty as a consequence of unemployment, but point out other consequences, such as the feeling of precarity and asenseoflackofself-worthandself-esteem. Poverty is often mentioned as a condition in the lives of unemployed people in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Greece.

The lack of income creates great problems, particularly for people with children. Material deprivation is especially severe when unemployment and insecurity is combined with a minority ethnic origin, with early childbirth or with single parenthood.

*“...It is not enough for clothes, shoes; we need to buy schoolbooks for the children... we cannot carry out repairs on the house. Our roof is leaking, the children want a new computer, or for us to buy them something and we cannot afford it... You can't make repairs, the roof is leaking, it's not easy. It might fall any moment.” (BG 13 1970-75 F)*

The lack of regular income also involves the risk of becoming indebted and falling into the hands of usurers/criminals. People find themselves in a vicious circle from which they cannot escape, and the less they have, the deeper they fall into debt and aggravate their situation.

*“As the most serious long-term consequence, she perceives onerous loans that she had to take out. She will have to pay off the debts over the next few years instead of saving for something else and building something.” (CZ 22 1990-95 F)*

The support that youths receive, or do not receive, from their parents also influences the degree of their economic deprivation and poverty. As other studies have also shown, (Ayllon, 2014), this support varies from country to country. In cases where young people were supported financially and morally by their parents after finishing their education, the interviewees talk about a feeling of insecurity, about limited financial possibilities, but not about being deprived of food and a home. However, the situation is different for youths from

poor families and those whose parents are unemployed. Other studies have shown that the concentration of joblessness within households has implications for the level of poverty experience by unemployed youth (de Graaf-Zijl & Nolan, 2011). In similar cases, it is often evident that people are not only deprived of food, clothes, or heating, but that young people are also forced to leave school and work in order to help out their parents.

*“I worked primarily because I had to help my folks out. Because there are six children in the family and I had to help them somehow.” (BG 26 1990-95 F)*

### **2.1.3. Low autonomy**

Autonomy has different dimensions: financial autonomy, leaving the parental home, and psychological independence. The interviewees in most countries shared that the insecurity in which they were living, and unemployment, influenced their decisions with regard to living independently. The young men shared that they would like to live independently, outside the parental home, but in most countries, the lack of money prevents them from doing so. This obstacle is felt even more strongly as regards creating a family of one’s own.

*“Earning a minimum wage, paying for everything by yourself, you won’t be able to save money, for example to start a family and have a baby. Furthermore, the beginning is always the hardest part.” (PL 03 1990-95 F)*

Seeking suitable work and realization, the youngest interviewees are postponing their separation from the parental home, even in Norway, where being adult is closely linked to forming a separate household. In the UK, most of the interviewees did move out from their parental house.

In studying the consequences of unemployment for youth autonomy in Europe and the Ukraine, researchers from the EXCEPT project (Baranowska-Rataj et al., 2016) found that unemployment has a negative impact on the possibilities of youths to live outside the parental home. Their study registered considerable differences across countries, due to differences as regards the two basic factors supporting autonomy: family support and the welfare system. The analysis of EXCEPT project researchers indicates that among youth living apart from their parents (age 16-24), the proportion of fully autonomous individuals ranges from about 30% in Greece to almost 70% in the Netherlands, and the proportion of individuals who are

non-autonomous, because they live in a family at risk of poverty, is more or less stable across countries - about 20-30% (Baranowska-Rataj et al., 2016: 8).

The impossibility of being financially autonomous becomes a cause of depression and mental discomfort:

*"To me it is already embarrassing that my father, who is 85 years old, supports me and feeds me, it's just, it's a disgrace, a shame, it crushes me."* (BG 09 1970-75 M).

This shows, once again, the multi-dimensional character of marginalization and social exclusion; the lack of resources leads to social exclusion, to low self-esteem, and to reduced social contacts.

#### **2.1.4. Deteriorated mental/physical well-being**

There is ample literature devoted to the correlation between unemployment and health (physical and mental). Our observations are in line with other studies, which have shown that unemployment increases susceptibility to illness, mental stress, depression, and decreases life satisfaction and self-esteem (Borrero, 1980; Jackson & Warr, 1987; Goldsmith, Veum & Darity, 1996; Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Drydakis, 2014). While most studies on the connection between unemployment and well-being are focused on people of prime age, the researchers from NEGOTIATE project (Buttler et al., 2016) and EXCEPT project (Athanasziades et al., 2016) focus on individuals at the beginning of their professional careers and reveal a strong association between employment and well-being (Buttler et al., 2016; Athanasziades et al., 2016). In their study, the authors show the importance that the non-financial aspects of unemployment has for the state of young people. The deteriorated mental and physical state that the interviewees talk about in connection with the experience of unemployment and insecurity raises the risk of marginalization and social exclusion.

Long-term unemployment and the related lack of financial resources have an impact, according to the interviewees, on their physical and mental health. On the one hand, the interviewees, for instance in Bulgaria, talk about limited access to health services due to lack of health insurance and the money needed for medical examinations:

*"Well, there was one time, I remember, I had to go to a dentist. You know, you go somewhere, you have a toothache and you go to this dentist, but like, everyone wants money to treat you,*

*and so, if you do not have the money, do not have such funds, then you just sit at home in pain.” (BG 16 1990-96 M)*

On the other hand, youths shared about health problems such as feelings of anxiety, insecurity, tension, loss of confidence, depressive states, and changeable emotional states. Young people said that unemployment, constant refusals to hire them, had an impact on their self-esteem and led to a feeling of despair.

*“Of course, being unemployed, you know, that eats into your self-esteem and confidence.” (UK 14 1970-75 M)*

Continuous unemployment and deprivation makes the interviewees think about suicide, and in some cases leads to actual attempts:

*“Hungry all day long, and he [her husband] took acid... yes, he was in a very bad state... in “-- “[an emergency hospital in the capital city] without my knowing... he had drunk... still, it’s a good thing we found out in time, and he was there for a month... at least they saved his life... his organs were burnt, but they fixed him... it passed...” (BG 02 1970-75 F)*

All this indicates the need for psychological and health counseling, for a general look at the situation of exclusion in connection with the various negative consequences it has for young people.

## **2.2. Meso level**

### **2.2.1. Limited or restricted social capital**

The family background of young people exerts an important influence on the capabilities they have at the transition to adulthood. Previous studies have shown a substantial intergenerational correlation in unemployment (Ekhaugen, 2009; Headey & Verick, 2006) and increasingly polarized trajectories affected by family legacies, especially salient among the younger generations today (O’Reilly et al., 2015).

An individual’s high-quality social ties have a significant role with regard to their integration into society. According to the interviewees, long-term unemployment leads to loss of social contacts, constraints on, or complete lack of, going to the cinema, eating establishments, theatres, or concerts:

*“If her friends went to a pub she had to say no because of the money ...it was not a good feeling... ‘I knew that if I went for a beer with my friends and spent 100 Czech korunas I was going to eat only rice for the next 2 days’.” (CZ 20 1990-95 F)*

Restriction on social contacts also includes difficulties in creating an intimate tie, which has consequences in terms of postponing the creation of a family. The interviewees say:

*“When I was a little girl, I wanted to have my own family at a young age. Now I’m not even thinking about it. Because if you don’t have a stable job you shouldn’t have children who would suffer.” (GR 01 1990-95 F)*

Relations with parents are also important. Their support, both financial and moral, decreases the risk of social exclusion of youths. On the contrary, for those who have no such support, social integration becomes increasingly difficult. With regard to employment, this factor is connected to transmission of resources and social capital. In most of the German cases, as researchers indicate, help from families and friends proved more valuable than the support coming from the state. In some cases, the parents not only supply help in the form of social capital but directly finance the ventures of the young person, whereby they are able to start a business of their own. A young man from Bulgaria (BG 20 1990-95 M) not only lives with his parents but, thanks to a loan they took out for him, was able to open a workshop of his own, where he works at present.

The fact that some youths receive material support from their parents does not necessarily lead to integration into the labour market and economic autonomy (O’Reilly et al., 2015: 7). But such support does enable youths to spend more time looking for the work they desire. Those who are deprived of this possibility are often forced to take any job – including low-paid, under bad working conditions, which does not protect them against marginalization. The importance of the social capital received from the network of family and friends becomes particularly important under conditions of crisis and high unemployment (Berloff, Modena & Villa, 2011). An interview from Bulgaria also shows the difficulties young people growing up outside a family environment later have as regards establishing social contacts that are supportive and useful when the youth is looking for long-term and satisfying employment.

Family and friendship ties have a significant influence on the social integration of young people in a negative aspect as well, when the circle of family or friends involves problems with alcohol, drugs, home violence, or divorce of parents. For instance, because of family

problems (divorce of the parents) a young man from Germany(GER 03 1990-95 M) left school at the age of 16 without any certificate and lived in sheltered housing under a supervisor.

### **2.2.2. Limited institutional and NGO support**

The aid offered by employment offices is often assessed by the interviewees as ineffective and inadequate. Young people from most of the countries share their disappointment with those services, because they have either not been offered jobs or the jobs offered are inappropriate, not matching the individual needs/desires, and are usually low-paid. In Germany, the institutional support by the employment offices is described as low or counterproductive. Job offers by the employment office in Germany are described as not suitable or not topical:

*“She gave me some stupid things to do. Collecting bottles in a disco. And I mean, I go there and tell her that I have a higher school certificate and that I had jobs and this and that. And first, one gets snarled at and after that she prints things” (GER 07 1990-95 M).*

Bulgarian interviewees look upon the employment office as the last resort for finding a job. In the Czech Republic, interviewees also found the positions offered to be unattractive and inadequate.

*“It happened to me a couple of times that I received a job offer for some steel company and it was stated there that it is a job for men only...three quarters of these job offers were useless for me...” (CZ 21 1990-95 F)*

Most of the interviewees in Norway used the employment service (NAV) to look for work. Some criticism was expressed that individual needs were not taken into account and that the system worked slowly:

*“The employment service helped me, but the system is slow. I had to meet lots of new social workers. Some were friendly, others were completely indifferent” (NO 09 1980-85 M).*

The interviewees in Norway mostly criticize shortcomings in the work of the services, but some admit their importance in seeking a job.

For the young people in the UK, as researchers indicate, getting unemployment benefits is mostly associated with dealing with a complicated system that is poorly-adapted to the changing situation of young people. For many of these people, “signing on” was a degrading experience, and they felt stigmatized in doing so.

*The government should “...try and make the Job Centre a bit more of a friendly place I suppose. Not stigmatise unemployment as this terrible, terrible thing. Encourage unemployed people to talk with other unemployed people. And paint a realistic picture of the actual statistics of unemployment. And make people be a bit more supportive to each other.” (UK 20 1970-75 M)*

Help from job centre Plus (UK Public Employment Service) in the UK is mostly considered useless amongst most of the young interviewees. The interviews show that in the case of people with learning disabilities, little attention is given to adapting to their mental health needs. The narratives of the UK interviewees show a lack of support for people with different health conditions, particularly at the institutional level, where professionals find it difficult to adapt adequately to people with special needs. This increases the risk of marginalization and social exclusion for disabled people. A Bulgarian interviewee (BG 06 1990-95 M) with mental problems is also unable to integrate into the labour market, since the state does not have adequate mechanisms to help him. Difficulties with labour market integration are also encountered by youths with mental and physical disabilities, and with drug problems:

*“Well, while I was temporarily unemployed I always went to the unemployment agency and told them to give me a possibility. But they always said no, you are a drug addict and if you start vocational training now you will fail at it”. (GER U46-01)*

The German researchers note that the institutional support by the employment offices for the interviewed young people with special problems is low. The interviewees from Norway and the UK more often view their difficulties as stemming from personal issues or problems of theirs rather than as the outcome of structural barriers.

In addition to state support (or the lack of it), religious institutions also have an influence on the situation of unemployed youths. Data from the interviews show that, in the UK,

volunteering plays an important role in time of unemployment in the lives of interviewees from all age cohorts. In Norway, there are likewise cases when volunteer organizations provide a way of finding meaning in life and feeling useful while unemployed, or for finding friends who are in a similar situation.

The situation is different in Bulgaria, where the support coming from voluntary or third sector organizations has less importance, and the interviewees very rarely talk about having received support from charity organizations (in a few cases, they mention receiving clothes for their children) or from religious institutions (moral support). The support coming from the third sector and the possibility of participating in volunteer activities decreases the risk of marginalization and social exclusion, because, as the researchers from the Brighton University team point out, “volunteering had boosted their motivation, feeling of self-worth, and provided them with support they needed to find a job or understanding what they wanted to do”.

### **2.2.3. Insufficient regional and local opportunities**

The interviews highlight the significance of place of residence as a factor creating difficulty in finding work and integration into the labour market. Significant for the degree of risk of social exclusion is living in poor, ghettoized neighbourhoods, which is the case for many interviewees of Roma origin (especially in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic). Such is the case of a young woman from the Czech Republic, who is in a poor housing situation, together with her extended family: She feels overwhelmed by living in such a demanding and hectic environment without having enough space to raise her son properly and to educate herself.

*“My son could not grow up in a comfortable environment, he could not have the absolute peace, the comfort ... it is different when you live alone and can devote time to a kid...and solve your own problems ... if you are living with 20 people you are forced to solve their problems even if you do not want to, because you live there and hear it” (CZ 2 1990-95 F).*

Under such conditions, poverty and marginalization is reproduced; the young people in the family remain without education because of poverty and/or lack of family support, but also by becoming discouraged that education might lead to an improvement of their situation.

The limited labour market or the weak development of small settlements deprive the youths who live there of a choice when starting their first employment. This leads them to look for job opportunities in the larger cities:

*“I am so glad to be in Brno, I would have no chance to get a job in Letomyšl (her birthplace)...the majority of people who went back there after university, they work in a factory...I really appreciate the kind of job I have here...”* (CZ 20 1990-95 F)

The impossibility of entering the labour market makes youths from small settlements leave and seek work in foreign countries. An exception in this respect are interviewees from Norway (none of the Norwegian interviewees had emigrated as a way of coping with their problems), Germany and the UK, where interviewees rarely consider such a possibility. Unlike them, youths from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, and Poland often mention this variant:

*“I have discussed with my parents that if there is no other solution in Greece and I stay unemployed again for 5 or 6 months I will leave the country. They don't like it, but...”* (GR 01 1990-95 F)

The striving for a better life in the context of restricted job opportunities in small cities makes young people, particularly young women, from small settlements vulnerable to *human trafficking*. Such is the case of a young woman, living in a small Bulgarian town, who left school at the age of 16 to marry and give birth to her first child. At the age of 21, she is a mother of two children and unemployed. The lack of employment and her desire for a better life motivated her (BG 08 1970-75 F) to put her trust in the promise of better work for a high salary in a foreign country. After going to that country, she found she had been deceived; she was forced to prostitute herself. Thanks to support from her parents and the intervention of state institutions, she was saved.

## **2.3. Macro level**

### **2.3.1. Insufficient or ineffective employment policies**

Most of the interviewees, especially those of the youngest generation, did not mention the economic crisis of 2008 as a major source of problems and cause of their unemployment. The

exception in this respect were youths from Greece, who testified to the strong impact of the economic and financial crisis in 2008-2009 and indicated it as a cause of high unemployment and other negative consequences:

*“The worst thing with the crisis is that people get very competitive over things that they shouldn't, there is saturation and everything collapses. We can't find our position in society because we have a wrong point of view based on wrong choices, especially in professional life. They are pushing children to follow specific professions, because these are supposed to give more money or give better social status. This is the worst thing, the frenzy that exists.”*  
(GR 03 1990-95 F)

The interviewees from post-socialist countries, especially in the two older age groups, talked about the difficulties they had had during the transition from planned to market economy. The wage gap grew considerably after the supported homogeneity of income was discontinued and many of the interviewees became unemployed. A woman from Bulgaria in the oldest age cohort shared about the hard period of the early 1990s that she and her family had experienced:

*"And then, already it [unemployment] pressed us against the wall, literally. Without even being able to take a deep breath. Right, we were in a very difficult position, because my daughter was a student then and the situation was really desperate. They came one after the other, those crises .... Not only financial ..., but mostly the financial crises of the state ... Everything just collapsed on our heads .... my daughter finished higher education with big difficulties ... we have no money to support her, we send her all we can and what we produce here - cheese, potatoes, everything.... even bread, right”* (BG 22 1950-55 F)

Some of the interviewees had not managed to overcome these difficulties and, at the time of the interview, had not found permanent work but were changing various temporary jobs, often without a work contract, which increases the risk of exclusion from the labour market.

Active labour market policies at national level are one of the basic ways to decrease the negative impact of economic and financial crises and to assist the social-economic integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market. The offered programs for subsidized employment, requalification courses, apprenticeship programs for youths are not always effective, according to the interviewees who have gone through such programs. Participation does not lead to an exit from the situation of insecurity, primarily because the programs are

short and wages are low, for instance, under apprenticeship programs. An interviewee from Norway was placed in a sort of apprenticeship at a library. However, she was not paid accordingly, but only with the small benefit coming from the state agency. During this period, she was in the paradoxical situation of working full-time but still having to go to the social security office to get a living income through emergency help:

*“I walked around at the library looking in the dustbins to find bottles [for container deposit money] to afford to buy food.” (NO 18 1970-75 F)*

The interviewees from Germany mostly assess the job counseling and the remedial classes given by the state employment institutions as unhelpful. Interviewees told the researchers that it was quite difficult to get suitable qualifications through the employment office and that they often had to organize the desired education program by themselves. In Poland, youths also shared their disappointment with the courses the state had offered:

*“I thought that if I was accepted for the internship, I could also be considered for employment. That seemed logical. It was a waste of time to sit there and learn stuff that will never be useful as they didn't plan to hire me.” (PL 02 1990-95 M)*

Low wages are one negative aspect that prevents youths from escaping the situation of marginalization. In a number of interviews in Bulgaria and Greece, interviewees mention that the wages they receive are not enough and do not provide the possibility of leading an independent life, much less creating and caring for a family of one's own. Even though they are employed, these people are at risk of marginalization and social exclusion. The risk of social exclusion is also high for youths who cannot find work in the formal sector of the economy and are inclined to work in the grey sector (without a contract); this phenomenon is especially common in countries with a great share of undeclared employment and incomes, such as Bulgaria, but illegal work has been noted to exist in Germany as well.

## **2.4. Conclusions**

Based on the interviews, it is possible to identify the aspects of marginalization: poverty and lack of income, life in poor neighbourhoods and neighborhoods providing limited opportunities for support and development, parents' unemployment, which is transmitted to the children, i.e. inherited poverty across generations, deteriorated health status of the family

members, limited access to health facilities, a low degree of autonomy, whether due to the need to support parents financially or through daily care, or due to the inability of young people to support themselves for lack of permanent employment. An extreme form of social marginalization is anomie, which emerges when young people have broken social contacts with the family, have not established supportive contacts with a wider circle of people who might orient them and support them in finding work, and receive little or no support from state institutions and civic organizations. These aspects of marginalization and social exclusion appear in the interviews in all seven countries and have a negative influence on the activity of young people, hampering or blocking the possibility of exercising active agency. At the same time, the lower the degree of agency of youths, the greater the probability of their social exclusion.

### **3. Mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes**

Previous studies (Buchmann & Charles, 1995; Kogan, Noelke & Gebel, 2011; Blossfeld, Skopek, Triventi & Buchholz, 2015; Roosalu & Hofäcker, 2016; Bieri et al., 2016) have demonstrated that gender is an important factor influencing the transition of young people from school to employment and to adulthood. The relevant literature has well described the negative effects of the education to employment transition among women. Five years after completing their formal education, only 25% of males have not gone on to employment, but the corresponding share is 50% among women. In the southern countries of Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Spain, the quick entry of women into employment is less pronounced compared with that of men (Brzinsky-Fay, 2015: 50). The cited analysis by Brzinsky-Fay was focused only on the West European countries; the present report aims to explicitly describe the mechanisms of gender exclusion and deprivation in countries with varying policies and cultures of combining work and family. Numerous studies have shown that caring for children and performing daily household chores are activities that have a strong statistical gender effect. It is mostly women that are occupied in such activities. This correlation of the impact of gender with respect to caring for children and the family is observable in different institutional contexts: in post-communist countries like Hungary and (in Southeast Europe) Bulgaria, in developed West European countries that have conservative childcare policies, such as Germany, and in countries with developed policies of support for raising small children, such as France (Hofäcker et al., 2013; Riebling et al., 2016).

Analyses made in the framework of the present project NEGOTIATE, indicate that, among the socio-demographic factors contributing to a higher risk of unemployment or labour inactivity and having a statistically-significant effect are education level – both one's own and that of the parents, nationality and ethnicity; but together with these, the effect of gender is also significant (Karamessini et al., 2016: 28). Previous analyses, including past ones made in the framework of this project, have been based on quantitative methods, while the present analysis is based on in-depth interviews, a qualitative method for data collection. The interviews provide a more nuanced picture and make it possible to grasp concrete situations and difficulties occurring among young women seeking satisfying economic employment. The interviews will be analyzed in terms of the importance of gender within the concepts of capabilities, social resilience, coping capacities, and discrimination.

The initial assumption of the capability approach is that people are characterized by differences in talent but also by the fact that they live in societies and communities with

different traditions, social norms and customs, and these predetermine the difference in roles and responsibilities that men and women will have. In addition to the gender-specific norms, a country's specific public infrastructure relevant to raising children at preschool age is also important. The underdevelopment of family policies leads to dissimilar possibilities for realizing achievements, despite the similarity of the personal resources available to men and women (Robeyns, 2003: 63).

Using the concept of social resilience, we problematize the ways individuals cope with stigmatization and discrimination. We will analyze the individual's strategies for coping with situations that demean women, as well as the difficulties women encounter in the transition to paid employment, due to the impossibility of combining the care for children and family, and satisfying and secure employment. Women take different paths to cope with acts of discrimination, sexism and underestimation on the part of employers; these paths range from remaining silent about the stigmatizing facts to organized action to oppose such behaviour of employers (Lamont et al., 2014: 134). Further on in the interviews, we will trace which ways of coping are chosen by the interviewees in the seven countries.

In the course of the education-to-work transition, employers and staff recruitment officials play a key role. They are the ones who may potentially discriminate against young women with respect to hiring them for a certain position; for instance, against women with young children. On the contrary, women may be preferred for certain positions, based on the expectation that they are willing to accept lower-paid work. We will analyze the subjective feeling of being discriminated against at recruitment on the basis of personal characteristics: gender, ethnic origin, and family situation.

Certain specific situations will be analyzed, which are identified in literature as provoking considerable difficulties for women seeking satisfying employment:

- childbirth at an early age
- single parenthood
- caring for a family member
- exclusion based on ethnic origin and gender
- discrimination and scarring signals in women's biographies.

The interviews enable us to trace the comparison between the interviewees and their parents, respectively, the daughters and their mothers. The perspective on *subjective social mobility* allows us to obtain a better idea as to the actions of individuals, because it represents the way in which they experience their objective mobility and how they themselves define their class

position in society. This factor has an impact on their attitude to, and behaviour in, their surrounding society (Kelly & Kelly, 2009).

Of the 209 conducted interviews, the distribution by gender is approximately equal: 108 men and 101 women; respectively, the gender balance in the selection of interviewees has been maintained in all the countries, with some preponderance of interviewed men in Poland<sup>18</sup>. For the needs of the present analysis, only interviews with women are selected for discussion; this is due to the greater difficulties young women have compared with men (as described in literature) to settle in satisfactory economic employment.

### **3.1. Motherhood**

#### **3.1.1. Early motherhood**

Early motherhood is defined as that which occurs before completion of formal education and before beginning the first significant paid employment. The widest gulf in adult outcomes occurs for those who enter motherhood early (before age 23), though further reinforced for teenage motherhood for most adult outcomes (Hobcraft & Kiernan, 1999). According to Eurostat, in 2013, more than 127,000 births of first children in the EU were to women aged under 20 (teenage mothers).<sup>19</sup> The largest share of teenage childbirths was in Bulgaria, amounting to half the percentage in the UK, and the lowest share was in Norway and Greece. The risk of subsequent poverty and exclusion of mothers giving birth in their teens arises from their early interruption of education, from the impossibility of working and raising a child without the support of the extended family and/or inclusion in family policies at national and local level; thus, there is a considerable likelihood for such women and their children to live their lives in poverty.

For teenage mothers, low or incomplete formal education and the need to continue education is a significant challenge as regards seeking employment combined with caring for a child. Early childbirth leads to premature interruption of education and the risk of not being able to continue education at a later stage easily and without support. An interviewed woman expresses her willingness to get more years of education, including going on to higher education, but she has come up against a lack of understanding on the part of employers, who

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<sup>18</sup>Bulgaria n=30 (15 male, 15 female); Czech Republic n=33 (17 male, 16 female), Germany n=30 (15 male, 15 female); Greece n=33 (17 male, 16 female); Poland n=30 (18 male, 12 female); United Kingdom n=30 (15 male, 15 female); Norway n=23 (11 male, 12 female).

<sup>19</sup>Births below 20 in: Bulgaria 14.7%, United Kingdom 8.2%, Poland 7.4%, Czech Republic 4.7%, Germany 4.1%, Norway 3.3%, Greece 3.2%, Source: Eurostat 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>

are not prepared to take into consideration and reward this double effort. The same woman rejected the idea of labour mobility to a foreign country, as she was afraid she would not be able to cope:

*“My father works in Germany with my grandfather and my cousin, and I was offered a job, gardening. For € 1100 per month with social security benefits and all, but a high school diploma was required. I do not have one, so I could not go, and I said no”.*

She decided against labour emigration not only because of her lack of education, but also because she was uncertain she could cope: *“I don’t have the strength, the necessary support. Alone, I will not be able to handle all the responsibilities ...”* (BG 15 1990-95 F)

In addition to the interruption of education, early childbirth in her teens has led this young woman to lose confidence in herself, and to insecurity. What she undertook was to leave the city, where she lived with her partner, and try to start from the beginning on her own – she had lost her parental rights over the child in a lawsuit with the child’s father. Before the interview, the respondent expressly asked not to discuss the situation with her child, as well as issues concerning her partner and the reasons why the child was given to his custody. Reticence and the need to cope with a very difficult situation faced at a young age are extreme difficulties for the young woman.

Another interviewee completed 2 years of vocational high school by the age of 17, when she had her first child. She then completed her education and became a pastry chef. She was 18 when she started working in a large kitchen – she worked as pastry chef and her husband took care of their child. She liked her job very much and felt accepted, even though she is of Roma origin. She then became ill and had to leave her job. After two unsuccessful pregnancies she was looking for a job again. She wanted to work as a pastry chef again but could not find a job this way. Employers mostly refused her, mentioning their bad experience with the Roma. The interviewee has bad experience with the social services as well. She often felt discriminated against because of her Roma origin. Now she is satisfied with her social worker and gets along very well with her. (CZ 30 1970-75 F)

Early motherhood is indicated as involving a typical constellation of risks for young women in Germany as well. Early motherhood complicates the already-unfavorable conditions even for starting vocational training (especially through lower secondary education). One young woman has been writing applications for vocational training, but has usually been rejected. Among the reasons for this, she mentions her school qualification and her single parenthood.

In this life story, her parents' family is where the young woman finds support. She experienced alcoholism and violence on the part of her partner, so that her mother and stepfather took her (and her child) back to *(the place where she was born)*.... . Her mother supports her in caring for the child (foster placement). She also gives her money for cigarettes (GER U26-9 1990-95 F).

### **3.1.2. Single mothers**

Single mothers are often analyzed as a separate social category, because they are exposed to significant social risks. The incomplete family, consisting of a mother and child, is more exposed to the risks of unemployment and of living in poverty.

As a strategy for finding work, one young woman keeps silent about the fact that she is raising her child alone:

*“I never had a problem getting a job, but after giving birth to my son I realized that I had better not tell them about him during the job interview because, in this field, employers prefer somebody without a family.... In this field, they want people without a family...The second question during the job interview was always - who will take care of your child when he or she is sick?...I stopped saying that I had a son”* (CZ 22 1990-95 F).

The young woman bitterly shares that she had missed some of the important moments in her child's development because of her work. *“He started to talk and I had no idea when it happened”* (CZ 22 1990-95 F). Merging long shifts in a restaurant and the duties of a single mother proved incredibly difficult.

Another woman from the middle age cohort who had fallen into the situation of being a single parent after her divorce, and who was in an aggravated state of health, shared her feeling of being unsupported and her lack of self-confidence, saying, *“I didn't feel that anyone would want to take on a single mum”* (UK 12 1970-75 F). The interview illustrates the relationship of women to the labour market and their life-course in atypical working that supports a primary role as family carer. After marriage and motherhood, her unstable work pattern was a function of *“fitting in with her husband's hours”* and earning some extra money with no thoughts of a long-term career. The interviewee's subsequent unemployment coincided with the emotional trauma of divorce and losing her home, which impacted on her health, rendering her incapable of work for four years.

The role of the parents' family, from a financial aspect and in terms of physical assistance in rearing the children, is exceptionally important with regard to continuing education and finding a job:

*“If my parents did not help me (financially), I would be doing really bad ... They support me a lot. They take care of my son at weekends when I am attending school ... they are supporting us financially ...”* (CZ 18 1990-91 F)

The interviewed woman also mentioned receiving material support from her sisters: *“My sisters are supporting me, they have kids, so they are giving me their clothes and stuff”* (CZ 18 1990-91 F). The informal help coming from the family is a safety net for the young mother.

Without the support from the family, the state, the municipality, or civic organizations, single mothers find themselves at a dead end, in the impossibility of caring for their own children, of combining childcare with paid employment, or of leaving a violent partner. An extreme decision that some mothers in this situation of lack of support see as a solution is to give their child up for foster care or for adoption. This is certainly a very difficult situation and a hard choice to make for any parent.

### **3.2. Care work and the need for work life balance**

#### **3.2.1. Childcare as a limitation for women's employability**

The task of caring for young children of preschool age, ailing family members, or elderly parents is often assumed by the mothers and sisters in the family. Women more often adapt their job requirements – such as flexibility and remoteness so that the job may correspond to the necessity of caring for children or ailing family members in need of daily assistance (Shildrick et al., 2012). Inappropriate working hours, which are hard to combine with the working hours of childcare centres, are an obstacle not only for women with a low level of education but even for those with a high level, for instance, programmers, who avoid work in well-paid jobs because they would then need to work late (since the work is in teams in scattered locations); they prefer low-paid positions in the public sector, or in the administration, that provide better possibilities for combining paid employment with care for children and family (Stoilova, 2008). When the distance from home is seen as incompatible with caring for young children, the job offer is declined by women if other possibilities for

combining work and care are lacking. The decision whether to take up additional training is also taken in consideration of the spare time available from work. We see all these circumstances as barriers to satisfying paid employment for women. “Voluntary refusal” on the part of mothers with small children and who lack appropriate possibilities for raising their children, a lack that includes the excessively high price of services in childcare centres, are an obstacle to gender equality in many contemporary European societies.

One interviewed woman repeated several times how hard it was to find a job, since, having a son, she can only work part-time. This she perceives as the greatest consequence that could influence her employment situation for the next period. *“The kindergartens are open till 4 or 4:30, so the jobs are limited”* (CZ 18 1990-95 F). Some narratives tell of young women who are forced to accept undeclared work. A young woman in the Czech Republic stated in the interview that, until the time of her pregnancy, during maternity leave, and after it, she had been doing either unstable part-time jobs or undeclared work (CZ 22 1990-95 F).

Combining work and family is difficult for many women, not only in the youngest but also in the oldest generation of interviewed women. Despite the assistance that a young woman received from her husband’s family, combining work with care for her children proved very hard.

*“It was simply hard for me, after I married, it was hard for me. Until my children grew up, until I had reared them”* (BG 29 1950-55 F).

A woman in the oldest age cohort in the UK asked the rhetorical question, *“Does it make economic sense to go and work just to pay for childcare?”* (UK 03 1950-55 F)

When applying for work, the fact that a woman has a little child is an unfavourable signal in her case, in comparison with a man applying, but it draws distinctions between different women as well:

*“It’s harder. When you tell them you have a child, they don’t hire you. They hire those who don’t have children, so they can work. They say to themselves, she has a child, she will take sick leave, things like that, it’s hard to get a job when you have a child”* (BG 29 1950-55 F)

That is why the strategy women choose when looking for a job includes not mentioning facts about their family situation at the job interview. But, nevertheless, they still

have to combine the requirements of the job with the need to raise a child. Difficulties of work life balance (WLB) are a major obstacle for women with little children; in order to surmount it, well-developed national family policies are necessary, as well as a network of childcare centres at local level, which are financially accessible for the families and not least the existence of possibilities for flexible employment in companies. Here, the importance of community norms about the rearing of small children in childcare facilities instead of in the family also has to be considered.

### **3.2.2. Caring for ill family members**

Caring for ill family members is a burden with regard to full and regular employment. A woman from the middle age cohort in the UK was obliged to take care of her little sister when their mother died. She interrupted her education and became her sister's full-time carer. She wanted to work but found it difficult because of her childcare responsibilities.

*"I wanted to provide for my little sister. Well, I wanted to work but, obviously, having a baby in tow, it's hard to do. She was there constantly. My nanny only had her if I had to go to a dentist appointment or something. She didn't help me like that. I had her 24/7, so it was kind of hard for me to go and do that"* (UK 18 1970-75 F)

An interviewed woman from the middle generation in Bulgaria, who lives in a small city, had not gone on to higher education, not through any lack of personal motivation but because of insufficient financial resources and having to care for her relatives (BG 05 1970-75 F). A young woman from Greece, from the youngest generation indicated that she chose her profession, and gave over her income, in order to support her household financially, since her parents received disability pensions that were insufficient for their needs (GR 03 1990-95 F). The presence of a sick or elderly family member restricts the possibilities of labour mobility; as a result, women seek work near their home. For instance, work in tourism proved impossible, because employees there must work late hours and at times have to sleep away from home; caring for an elderly mother excludes such opportunities for the women in Bulgaria from the middle generation (BG 05 1970-75 F).

An interview with a woman from Norway may be interpreted as traditional female gender roles forming complicating factors in the life story. The prime example of this is the interviewee (NO 13 1950-55 F), who has been in a destructive and violent relationship with her husband, going with him to Spain and putting her own career and educational possibilities

on hold, resulting in severe scarring and present caring responsibilities for the now-disabled husband.

Women who take care of an ailing relative at home are able to combine care with satisfying employment and personal growth only if they can rely on sufficient assistance and support from society (ambulatory and social services) or from the extended family. Otherwise, they remain with the status of helpless victims of the circumstances of life and their potential for agency is very limited.

### **3.3. Scarring signals and discrimination**

#### **3.3.1. Discrimination based on gender and ethnicity**

Intersectionality between gender, ethnicity and class tends to burden agency very strongly. The Roma ethnic group is problematized in interviews in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. In Bulgaria, ethnic origin is the third greatest cause of discrimination objectively, judging by the number of filed complaints with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination<sup>20</sup> – the personal status is in first place and disabilities in second.

A woman from the young age group, coming from an averagely well-to-do Roma family and living in a small city near the capital of Bulgaria, who cannot be visibly recognized as a Roma and identified with the Roma ethnic group, in answer to the interview question as to whether her being a Roma was ever an obstacle for her finding a job, categorically declared that ethnic origin had never been an obstacle for her with regard to what she wanted to do in life. The girl's strategy for dealing with the possibility of negative attitudes was not to identify with her ethnic group. She had done this successfully because of her developed social skills; she had completed secondary and had started higher education, which she had interrupted because she was now looking for a better and more useful specialty in which to study. She is self-confident and independent; her parents support her decision to study and to choose in life (BG 14 1990-95 F). In the family, her mother is the main motivator for both the children – son and daughter – to be independent and obtain a higher level of education than most young Roma in Bulgaria.

A young Roma woman from the Czech Republic feels she belongs among “the socially weak groups of the population”. This is the official label used by the public administration when they speak about social assistance recipients. Her mother had been in a similar situation when young. She reflects the difficulty of social mobility due to being Roma (ethnic issue) and due

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<sup>20</sup>See <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/publi4en-registyr>

to the social environment in which she lives (CZ 2 1990-95 F). The woman shares that she accepts just any job in order to get the money she needs to raise her child. She looked for a job mainly after the parental leave expired, through the Internet and contacts of family members. She was, in fact, forced to take any available job (no choices). For example, she would walk four kilometers to her workplace and back (not having money for public transport (CZ 2 1990-95 F).

Ethnic origin, in these cases, is surmounted through strategies of keeping silent about it and seeking work where no personal meeting with the employers or interview is required. In cases where the family helps out the young women, motivates them to get more education, the negative effects can be overcome in individual ways. In the opposite case, when women do not get support from their family, identifying with the ethnic group, support from NGOs, and inclusion in special educational programs are preconditions for an equal start in life.

### **3.3.2. Scarring signals**

Interviews from Germany, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Poland contain reflections on the role of employers in individual biographies that carry potentially scarring effects at recruitment. In Greece and Bulgaria, the lack of practical experience is mentioned as a scarring signal.

Lack of education, but also student status, are perceived by employers as scarring signals, which may become an obstacle to the hiring of young people. Employers viewed it as a scarring signal when a young woman, having interrupted her education because of childbirth, wished to continue her education and combine it with paid employment:

*“You're still in school, in your CV you wrote that you are still in school and the job will interfere with your education” (BG 15 1990-95 F).*

Employers require a completed educational degree:

*“I have looked for jobs in many places but no one will take you without education, they either want you to have education or experience, even for menial jobs ... you know, even to be a hand in a warehouse. And also, you know, without education you do not have enough motivation or self-esteem. You have to have some certainty and that's why education [is important]. That's how I see it” (BG 15 1990-95 F)*

A young woman in Greece was willing to work without remuneration in order to obtain practical experience:

*“on the Greek labour market, a lot of young people who need work experience might become victims of exploitation and abuse by employers” (GR 2 1990-95 F).*

Scarring signals (smaller job opportunities as a result of an unstable career/gaps in the CV) are mentioned, as well as cases of discrimination in the sphere of trade and technical drawing in Germany. The biographical interviews show the presence of women's strategy of overcoming job insecurity by not mentioning the stigmatizing facts and circumstances. A higher level of education is a way to avoid the negative effects accumulated by the incidence of more than one trait leading to exclusion. However, this would still not be enough if professional qualification and experience have not been obtained from secondary education. Premature interruption of education, leaving people with only a completed primary education, involves a risk of poverty and exclusion for young people in Bulgaria. When employers have a sufficient number of candidates for job openings, the risk of gender-based and ethnicity-based discrimination increases.

### **3.4. Social Mobility**

Some of the youngest interviewed women assess themselves as being in a lower social position than their mothers. The causes of this are that their mothers created a family at an earlier age and had security in the form of a guaranteed permanent work contract and wages, things that are hard to achieve nowadays by young people with secondary or lower education. In the youngest generation of women, there are also examples of upward mobility, when the daughters have received a higher level of education than their mothers and, in this case, they value the individual achievement. Respondent assesses her professional position as higher than the professional position of her mother.

*"My professional standing is higher, because of higher education. My mom tells me that she is working hard because she didn't learn and we, her children, we need to invest in education."*

Respondent estimates that her current and future economic position will be maintained in the medium. *I know that when I finish school, I will not make (much) money as a doctor, but I will not earn the lowest national [salary].* Mother of the respondent lived in the family home and set up her own family before the age of 25. *My aim is to advance in the social hierarchy. I'm a bit higher than in the middle.* (PL 15 1990-95 F).

In the middle generation of women, interviewees comparing themselves with their mothers show a higher subjective assessment, based on their higher level of education, their capacity to cope with the challenges of labour insecurity by themselves, and on the need for qualities such as flexibility and adaptability, which the middle generation of women esteem they possess and use to cope successfully with insecurity by themselves. In Germany, the middle generation of women assess themselves higher than their mothers because they have advanced to greater independence and more satisfying employment; but women in the youngest generation feel more insecure. All women of the middle cohort in Germany describe an upward mobility. The background for this is often that their mothers did not work. The mother was employed in the field of home economics. However, without any formal qualification. Her mother did not resume working after having a child, which the respondent cannot understand. She attributes her mother the scale value of 2 to 3 and herself an 8. In contrast to her parents, she makes considerably more money“ (GER U46-2 1970-75 F). In contrast with this, the men of the middle cohort indicate a small downward mobility. A factor explaining this could be that the fathers of the men of the middle cohort never experienced unemployment.

### **3.5. Conclusions**

*Early births lead to insecurity* and risks through the interruption and prolongation of education. Especially for single parents, the lack of institutional support leads to extreme job insecurity and to difficulties in raising children. Lack of support for young mothers is indicated in interviews from Bulgaria and Germany. In the Czech Republic and Poland, institutional support is assessed to be rather inadequate.

*Caring for others* leads to labour market insecurity and is a basic factor of exclusion of women from satisfying, stable and well-paid employment, when additional institutional or private support is not available. Work-family balance for mothers leads to labour market insecurity, as noted in interviews from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, the UK, and Greece. Only the Norwegian interviewees do not generally speak about young children or other care responsibilities as a hindrance to their participation in the labour market.

The specific difficulties facing young women as compared with men, and multiple exclusion resulting from deprivation based on gender, ethnic origin, and class, should be taken into account when assessing the effects of policies at European, national and local levels.

## **Concluding remarks and policy implications**

This report demonstrates that it is reasonable and appropriate to focus both on the institutionally-related factors, and on the characteristics of youths, so as to demonstrate that the significance of resources and services derives not only from the individual but also from the socially and institutionally-embedded capabilities of young persons to convert those capabilities into valued states and actions. Drawing on the summaries of 209 life-course interviews of young people from three birth-cohorts (1950-55, 1970-75 and 1990-95) who experienced early job insecurity before the age of 25 from seven European countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom), we have elaborated several patterns (mechanisms) of the effects of the situation of early job insecurity on young people's scope for exercising active agency in relation to education, occupation/employment and family formation. We have also outlined the aspects of marginalization and social exclusion of young people experiencing early job insecurity, and have revealed the mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes.

Our analysis points to the restlessness of young people, and the various strategies they pursued to advance their education, improve their employment situation and start an independent life. Young people's capacity for active agency forms their *capacity for social resilience* as the latter is understood here as "a process and not only a static outcome or absolute end-point" which has both individual and societal aspects (Dingeldey et al., 2015: 12-13). Early job insecurity turns out to be a serious predicament – and even a "blocker" – for the scope of active agency and resilience of people. Although our main focus was on the agency achievements, in many cases they were not enough to improve people's life situation and, more importantly, to enable people to acquire a feeling of well-being and realize valued and meaningful achievements in relation to education, employment and family formation. However, we believe the reasons why certain agency achievements do not lead to well-being achievements is a matter for further research. The analysis of the patterns of active agency has demonstrated that young people can hardly get out of the vicious circle in which they are placed and feel at risk of labour market exclusion. Even when young people improve their employment situation by finding a job, it is not always the job they have reason to value. This also applies to the choice of education – even in cases where people manage to continue their education, it is not always the education they valued pursuing. However, the extent of these trends in different countries and cohorts should be further tested.

Regarding social resilience at societal level, our study raises an important policy question: How to empower people to interact and negotiate with different institutions in such a way that they might be able, more successfully, to convert available resources (initial conditions) (*which are highly constrained in periods of early job insecurity*) into new prospects and scope for real choice with regard to education, employment and family formation? Our study also points to the need for elaborating policies – both at local and national level – that directly or indirectly have a positive effect on the capabilities sets of young people with respect to three interrelated dimensions of capabilities: *Being able to work*, i.e. to choose a personally-valued professional life and to securely access the labour market; *Being able to become educated*, i.e. to choose a personally-valued educational career at any stage of their lives; and *Being able to live independently*, i.e. to choose a valued life. In this way, young people would be empowered to function as active and fully-participating citizens who are able to make autonomous decisions about their lives and to participate in building the new situations they have to face in the transition to adulthood.

Taking into account the specific difficulties young women have compared with men, and the *gender aspects* of early employment insecurity, is necessary in view of the specific cultural norms that determine the connection of women with unpaid labour and with care for children, elderly and ailing persons. Due to lack of work-family policies at national level and alack of childcare centres and daycare centres for ailing and elderly family members, women often become victims of the family and of circumstances. The focus in literature is put on three important policies in the gender perspective: 1) violence rooted in gender inequalities (domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking of women), 2) policies regulating the intimate or private sphere: divorces, marriages, reproduction rights, 3) policies in the sphere of employment – taxation policies, combining work and family, gender-based differences in pay and equal treatment (Lombardo & Agustin, 2011). The interviews demonstrate the importance of designing policies for all of these three areas.

*Ethnic origin* is also a challenge to young people and holds risks of their being marginalized and even falling into social anomie. When people lack the necessary education, because they live in the neighbourhood of other poor and unemployed families, in enclaves and ghettos of poverty, then in order to escape from poverty and insecurity, they require the support of institutions and civic organizations at national and local level, which could help individuals in their effort to lead decent lives but could also motivate them and orient those who are discouraged, or have fallen under the influence of criminal groups, or have adopted destructive behaviour. Ethnic origin has been analyzed in the interviews mainly in terms of

the negative meaning of Roma origin for the integration of young people into education, employment and life in society. However, ethnicity is also important for European policies in view of the size of the migrant wave and the problems of integrating second-generation migrants. Multiple exclusion, resulting from deprivation based on gender, ethnic origin, or class, should be taken into account when assessing the effect of youth policies at European, national and local level.

*Employers* are an important party in the public dialogue regarding young people and their integration into satisfying employment, their emancipation from their parents' generation, and their autonomy. Decent pay, equal treatment, possibilities for additional training and flexible employment corresponding to individual and family needs, fall under the responsibility of employers. Socially-responsible business engaged not only in charity but in the formation of the labour potential of employees, should be highlighted and motivated to continue its commitment.

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