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EUROPEAN COUNTRY CLUSTERS OF TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Henna Isoniemi

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to perform a cross-country comparison of the transition-to-adulthood patterns and timings of young adults and analyse the relationship between these patterns and timings. Another aim is to gain new insight on late transitions and to clarify the concept of incomplete transitions affecting young Europeans' life courses. Based on these distinct points of view, the main goal is to construct transition-to-adulthood patterns describing the current situation in 20 European countries. Transition to adulthood has been widely discussed as a general subject, but there is a lack of systematic and comparative empirical research covering the combination of events constituting the transition-to-adulthood process. This study contributes to filling this gap. This is done by using two main data sets: the European Social Survey (ESS) data set (2006/2007) and the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) data set (2012). Cross-country statistical data have also been obtained from Eurostat, the OECD Family Database and the UNECE Statistical Database.

In general, the transition-to-adulthood process of all young adults involves leaving the parental home, entering the labour market, forming a partnership, and childbearing and childrearing. However, adult status can be achieved through a number of different routes, the duration of the voyage varies widely and transition paths are increasingly being replaced by de-standardised and prolonged ones which not only take longer to walk through but are also diversified and individualised. Late and incomplete transitions have also come to stay, and it may be time to question the role of demographic adulthood markers. It has already been suggested that the most important markers of adulthood are those that represent becoming independent from others and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient individual.

The results of this thesis show that there is variation between European countries in terms of young adults' transition processes, although similarities can also be observed. These differences between countries and between the clusters that have been created are not a surprise: despite the closeness and commonalities of the 20 European countries included in this study, their institutional arrangements, economies and cultures are diverse. There are also clear differences between the transition-to-adulthood clusters formed in this study and the groupings used in earlier studies. Country groupings used in previous studies are normally based on a welfare-regime-type model that clusters groups of countries according to a specific rationale. Ultimately, most of the results of this study indicate that this rationale does not provide the most suitable approach for building different transition-to-adulthood clusters or models. The results unambiguously show that the indicators the transition-to-adulthood classification is based on have an enormous impact on

transition-to-adulthood groupings. The indicators may even prove to be decisive. Nevertheless, the results of this study clearly indicate that it is difficult to produce credible and comprehensive generalizations about transition-to-adulthood patterns. The only exception is provided by the Nordic countries (with some minor exceptions): in spite of the approach used, young adults in these countries seem to follow quite similar transition patterns. Southern European Portugal and Eastern European Bulgaria also seem to have many similarities throughout the analyses of this study.

Since the differences between regions, and even between countries, are rather substantial, Europeans will almost certainly continue to follow divergent patterns in their transition-to-adulthood processes. Currently, young adults' transition processes are more challenging than before as they are being made in a social and economic context that is extremely insecure and unstable. The effects of the economic crisis, which began in 2008, have hit young Europeans particularly hard. This means that the management of transition-to-adulthood processes needs to be improved. At the European level, there are already many good practices to follow. European heterogeneity, however, makes it very challenging to propose common guidelines that could be applied in all countries.

Keywords: young adults, transitions, transition to adulthood, markers of adulthood, country clusters, comparative research

Tiivistelmä

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan eurooppalaisten nuorten aikuisten siirtymää aikuisuuteen. Aihetta lähestytään monesta eri näkökulmasta: työn empiriaosuuden alussa pohditaan, mitkä aikuistumiseen liitettävät demografiset siirtymät kuvastavat aikuisuutta, mitkä eivät. Analyysiä jatketaan tutkimalla, milloin nämä eri siirtymät ajallisesti tapahtuvat. Näiden tarkasteluiden jälkeen kartoitetaan, mikä yhteys siirtymien tärkeänä tai tarpeettomana pitämisellä on siihen, milloin siirtymät konkreettisesti tapahtuvat. Monien aiempien tutkimusten tapaan tässäkin tutkimuksessa osoitetaan, että useat siirtymät tapahtuvat verrattain myöhään. Siksi empiriaosuuden lopuksi tarkastelu keskittyy myöhäisiin sekä keskeneräisiin ja vaillinaisiin siirtymiin. Näitä eri näkökulmia käyttäen rakennetaan erilaisia aikuisuuteen siirtymisen maaryhmiä. Tutkimuksen empiirisinä aineistoina käytetään European Social Survey (ESS) -aineistoa vuosilta 2006 / 2007, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) -aineistoa vuodelta 2012 sekä tilastoaineistoja Eurostatilta, OECD:ltä ja UNECE:ltä eri vuosilta. Tutkimus käsittää 20 Euroopan maata.

Perinteisesti tarkasteltuna aikuistumiseen liitettäviä siirtymiä ovat muutto pois lapsuudenkodista, siirtyminen opinnoista työelämään, parisuhteen solmiminen ja lapsen hankkiminen. Nuorten elämänkulku on kuitenkin poikennut viime vuosina aikuistumisen perinteisestä mallista. Enää erilliset siirtymät eivät välttämättä tapahdu tietyn ikäisinä, tietyssä odotetussa, normien mukaisessa järjestyksessä, vaan aiempaan verrattuna myöhempään tai ne jäävät kokonaan toteutumatta. Siirtymä aikuisuuteen on nykyään monelle eurooppalaiselle nuorelle asteittain etenevä, yksilöllinen prosessi. Muutosten seurauksena on myös alettu pohtia, kuvastavatko perinteiset siirtymät enää nykytilannetta. Aikuisuuteen siirtymisen keskeisinä merkkeinä onkin esitetty olevan ennemmin esimerkiksi kyky huolehtia itsestään tai kyky tehdä itsenäisiä päätöksiä.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että siirtymä aikuisuuteen eroaa merkittävästi Euroopan maiden välillä, mutta tietyissä maissa näkemykset ja toimintatavat muistuttavat toisiaan. Näkökulmasta riippumatta yhteneväisiä piirteitä on havaittavissa vain Pohjoismaiden välillä (Suomi, Ruotsi, Norja, ja Tanska osassa analyyseistä). Tämän lisäksi portugalilaisten ja bulgarialaisten nuorten aikuisten ajatuksissa ja käyttäytymisessä on löydettävissä yhteneväisyyttä. Kuitenkaan ylipäänsä se, että maiden välillä ilmenee eroja ja se, että analyysien perusteella muodostetut maaryhmittymät eroavat toisistaan, ei ole yllätys. Eurooppa on edelleen hyvin heterogeeninen, eivätkä kansalliset erot ole kadonneet globalisaation myötä. Nuoren aikuisen aikuistumisen mahdollisuuksia ohjaavat kussakin maassa esimerkiksi institutionaaliset järjestelmät, hyvinvointivaltio, perhe, työmarkkinat ja koulutusjärjestelmä sekä kulttuuriset perinteet.

Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset eroavat selkeästi myös aiemmista tutkimustuloksista. Vertaileva tutkimus aihepiiristä on perinteisesti hyödyntänyt maaryhmittelyissään klassista hyvinvointiregiimiluokittelua. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat yksiselitteisesti, että kyseinen lähestymistapa ei ole käyttökelpoisin, kun tehdään vertailevaa aikuisuuteen siirtymisen tutkimusta. Käytetty näkökulma ja käytettävät indikaattorit määrittävät keskeisesti sen, miten maat ryhmittyvät toisiinsa.

Tutkimuksessa havaittavat erot eri maiden välillä antavat aiheen epäillä, että eurooppalaisten nuorten siirtymät aikuisuuteen olisivat jatkossakaan samanlaisia eri maissa. Aikuisuuden saavuttamisen haasteet ovat tällä hetkellä erityisen näkyvät, sillä vuonna 2008 alkanut taloudellinen taantuma iski erityisesti nuoriin – tietyissä maissa vieläpä erityisen voimakkaasti. Euroopan tasolla on kuitenkin monia hyviä käytäntöjä nuorten aikuisten aikuistumisen tueksi, mutta kuten todettu, yhteisten suuntaviivojen hahmottaminen tulee olemaan jatkossakin haastavaa.

Asiasanat: nuoret aikuiset, siirtymät, siirtymä aikuisuuteen, maaryhmittymät, vertaileva tutkimus

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I would like to dedicate this work to our son Joel. Thank you for being your own perfect self!

Turku, February 2017

Henna Isoniemi

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1 INTRODUCTION

Transition to adulthood is one of the key life stages when people need support from the social welfare system—in addition to or instead of markets or the family, depending on the society. The journey to adulthood that European 'twentysomethings' nowadays make is a fuzzy process marked by a series of demographic and role transition events. These events and their outcomes are often unpredictable and uncertain. While linear transitions, naturally, have never been the normality for all young people, transition paths are increasingly being replaced by de-standardised and prolonged ones which not only take longer to walk through but are also diversified and individualised. Currently, young adults' transition processes are even more challenging than before as they are being made in a social and economic context that is extremely insecure and unstable. The effects of the economic crisis, which began in 2008, have hit young Europeans particularly hard. Currently, young adults' transition processes are even more challenging than before as they are being made in a social and economic context that is extremely insecure and unstable. The effects of the economic crisis, which began in 2008, have hit young Europeans particularly hard. However, there are significant differences between countries and considerable geographical divergence across Europe. (E.g. Hamilton, Antonucci & Roberts 2014.) Naturally, these differences were already visible before the economic crisis. In other words, the crisis has not resulted in major changes, but in some countries the existing situation has been aggravated.

In general, the transition-to-adulthood process of all young adult involves leaving the parental home, entering the labour market, forming a partnership, and childbearing and childrearing (see also Anxo, Bosch & Rubery 2010). However, adult status can be achieved through a number of different routes and the duration of the voyage varies widely. Factors affecting the transition process include location, opportunities and constraints as well as the goals and hopes of individuals. The ultimate goal is becoming a *full* adult (the concept, see Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995, 130), and young adults are creating their own paths towards this goal.

Delineating adult status and determining when the transition is complete is difficult for several reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to define which transition events need to be experienced before adult status can be achieved. Residential independence has often been described as the most important marker of adulthood, and often as a

critical one (e.g. Stone, Berrington & Falkingham 2014, 259; Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1999), while others insist that the two key markers of young adults' transition to adulthood are education and work (e.g. Morena Mínguez, López Peláez & Sedago Sánchez-Cabezudo 2012, 28). Some see labour market transition as the most important marker because it enables economic independence (Laaksonen 2000; see also Knijn 2012, 9-10; Furstenberg, Kennedy, McCloyd, Rumbaut & Settersten 2003, 6). Radical interpretations suggest that the current generation of young adults has rejected demographic transition markers in favour of criteria that are distinctly *individualistic* (e.g. Arnett 1998, 296). Arnett (1998, 302) has claimed that the most important markers of adulthood are those that represent becoming independent from others (especially from parents) and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient individual.

Secondly, it is challenging to determine the age at which adulthood is reached (e.g. Fussell & Furstenberg 2008, 31). Based on earlier studies, three facts can be stated concerning the timing of transition to adulthood: a) Transition to adulthood now happens *late*. Young people leave their parental homes late (e.g. Crawford 2010; Isoniemi 2006; Billari 2004), people spend longer times in education (e.g. Fagan, Kanjuo-Mrčela & Norman 2012; Bynner 2009) and start their working careers at a later age (e.g. Corijn & Klijzing 2001), union formation is postponed (Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Liefbroer 2009) and having children is delayed (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008); b) Many transitions are *reversible*. Partners, jobs and places to stay, for instance, can be left and replaced (e.g. Biggart & Walther 2006; Flatau, James, Watson, Wood & Hendershott 2007); and c) The transition process is *protracted*. The time span between the first and the last transition is often rather long—if we believe that it is possible to define which events should be experienced in order to achieve adult status. This extension of transition processes has also raised the question of incomplete transitions.

From the point of view of social policy, protracted transition processes and late and incomplete transitions are highly relevant. The prolongation of the transition-to-adulthood process is often strongly criticised and seen as a negative, harmful and straining phenomenon both to society and to individuals[1]. The extended time spent

[1] Beaujot (2004, 10, 24, 35) has, however, pointed out that prolonged transition processes also have positive consequences: When people leave the parental home later, they are able to receive more transfers from their parents. The relationship between parents and children has also become less hierarchical and more democratic (Oinonen 2008, 27). Additionally, a longer education may make a person better prepared for the demands of the labour market, whereas having children later enables people to invest in themselves for longer and without the pressure of family obligations before investing in the next generation.

in education often means that entering the labour market is delayed. Many governments around Europe have attempted to shorten this transition process. In the United Kingdom and Germany, for instance, governments have placed limits on the time allowed for completing a degree to reduce study times, and the Finnish government is trying to get rid of gap years. (Mary 2012, 214–215.) Late entry into full-time work also means a delay in full-citizen participation. Hence, educational investments do not immediately result in taxpaying employees. (Knijn 2012.) Hendry and Kloep (2007, 77) have stated that it will "*cost Western societies dearly*" if many young adults do not become economically active in their first 30 years.

Extended education and the delayed transition to the labour market often hamper young adults' chances of starting an independent household. Extremely late nest-leaving is often considered to be a problem. When the question is discussed in the media—it is in fact quite a popular topic—the focus is always on the 'shocking' numbers of 30-year-olds living with their parents. Researchers have taken much the same approach by referring to delayed home-leaving as 'young adult syndrome' (or returning young adult syndrome) (Schnaiberg & Goldenberg 1989), calling young adults who live at the parental home in their late 20s and early 30s the 'generation nest' (Crawford 2010, 51), calling children who have once left the parental home and then returned 'boomerang children' (e.g. Moreno Mínguez et al. 2012, 80), and using titles such as "*Still in the Nest?*" (Cherlin, Scabini & Rossi 1997) and "*When are the children going to leave home!*" (Holdsworth 2005) in their studies. Late leaving naturally does have its own implications: union formation and childbearing, for instance, are often delayed and it might also be a burden to the parents of young adults.

Protracted family formation has negative consequences as delayed childbearing, for instance, contributes to low fertility. Low birth rates eventually lead to fewer people of working age and a smaller tax base for financing social security benefits. In addition, if fertility decisions are postponed too far, having the desired number of children may no longer be possible. Both of these factors naturally affect the replacement level. (E.g. Kneale & Joshi 2008.) Migration is often offered as a solution for improving the weakened dependency ratio: since most immigrants are young, it is typically assumed that migration has a direct and positive effect on the size of the working-age population. Nevertheless, as Bloom, Canning, Fink and Finlay (2009) have shown, the effect migration has on population levels and the working-age population is rather small. At the moment, it is hard to predict where the European immigration situation will lead as European countries have experienced significant immigration waves in 2015. However, immigration policies

have been significantly tightened across Europe, which will naturally impact migration in the future.

The challenges young adults in Europe are currently facing during their transition to adulthood are unprecedented. Some researchers (e.g. Taylor-Gooby 2004; Timonen 2004; Bonoli 2007) have used the term 'new social risks' to describe contemporary risk factors in people's lives. In the context of transition to adulthood and the current situation, these new social risks mainly concern the labour market questions and how young adults will manage to combine work and family life. Over the past decades, the labour market has seen a fundamental change: the link between education and employment has tightened, careers have become less stable, and high rates of unemployment are more common, for example. At the same time women's labour market participation has become widespread. This is naturally not a social risk per se, but it has created new problems and dilemmas, such as reconciling employment and care in order to avoid women's double burden and ensuring that childbearing is not a major financial risk. (E.g. Knijn 2012; Fagan et al. 2012.)

The current economic crisis has especially increased the vulnerability of unemployed young people. Even higher education does not protect young people from unemployment, but NEETs (people who are Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training) and young people with a migrant background are at the highest risk. Many young people struggle to find a job, which hinders their chances of starting an independent household and complicates their path towards independence. (E.g. European Commission 2015a; Eurofound 2015; Knijn 2012.) Due to this uncertainty, young adults have adopted various 'survival methods', such as step-by-step, trial-and-error and wait-and-see strategies: educational institutions can for instance be used as 'waiting rooms' until better labour market opportunities come along and instead of leaving the parental home to get married, young adults might take a step towards independence by living alone or with housemates or a partner. These survival methods allow the postponement of long-term commitments and self-binding decisions that are harder to reverse and which have far-reaching consequences, such as marriage. (E.g. Goldscheider, Thornton & Young-DeMarco 1993; Blossfeld 2000, 17; Billari & Liefbroer 2010, 63.) However, these strategies can only be utilised in some circumstances. Social norms, institutional settings and cultural heritage vary and set certain constraints.

When discussing modern transition-to-adulthood patterns, individualization theory plays an important part. It illustrates the trend towards greater complexity and diversity of life paths (Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Corijn 2001). Features including non-linearity and ambivalent and open-ended ongoing

processes, which have symbolised transition-to-adulthood processes for many decades, are also related to individualization (Beck 1992, xxii). Individualization has enabled young adults to plan their life without restrictions and without others making decisions for them. This has allowed individuals to choose a unique trajectory of life, but the outcomes resulting from this freedom vary. (Sørensen & Christiansen 2013, 41; Côté 2013, 323.) The situation can be highly stressful. Young people are decreasingly able to rely on collective patterns and orientations but instead have to make decisions themselves—despite having unequal access to resources and opportunities which could help them reach adulthood.

The purpose and structure of this study

The main aim of this study is to trace the current patterns of transition to adulthood followed by 18 to 34-year-old young adults in multiple European countries. Twenty countries are examined: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom[2]. These countries encompass both new and old EU Member States (and one non-EU state), and their institutional arrangements, cultural heterogeneity and economies vary a lot. The countries also have various social welfare arrangements in place to support transition to adulthood. Comparing countries with different welfare regimes, institutional settings and cultural patterns provides a good starting point for tracking different transition-to-adulthood patterns. The purpose is to crystallize the similarities and differences between the countries by forming clusters. Comparative transition-to-adulthood research is not a new phenomenon and neither is the deductive approach that earlier studies have mainly relied on. This study differs from earlier studies by adopting an inductive approach. Since the aim is to construct transition-to-adulthood clusters, an inductive method is appropriate: it makes it possible to examine the research phenomena from a different perspective and to develop typologies that have been derived based on observed facts.

The heterogeneity of European counties is a blessing for scholars interested in studying the transition to adulthood, but it also presents a challenge for researchers interested in the topic (see also Billari 2004, 33). Differing national paths are nothing new in comparative social policy, but they do complicate carrying

[2] The abbreviations for these countries are the following: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SL), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), and the United Kingdom (UK).

out plausible and convincing comparative research, particularly when as many as 20 countries are being examined. In the case of this study, the large amount of countries and in particular the fact that Eastern European countries are included can be seen as a real advantage. Most of the earlier comparative studies on transition to adulthood in Europe have only covered a small number of countries. In addition, the country selections have often been biased towards specific European countries (such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Sweden). (See e.g. Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 483, 495.)

Another asset related to this study is that it focuses on several events affecting the transition-to-adulthood process instead of analysing a single event. The transition process has seldom been investigated in a sufficiently holistic manner. Rather, the earlier research has largely focused on either the school-to-work-transition or family formation including leaving the parental home. In this study, all the demographic transitions, leaving the parental home, entering the labour market, forming a partnership and having a child for the first time, are taken into account. The scope of the study covers young adults' opinions concerning the most important markers of adulthood, the timing of these transition events and their interrelationship. European Social Survey (ESS) data and statistical data are used to analyse these aspects. Based on the results of the analyses, the countries included in this study are grouped into different country clusters. Another perspective is formulated based on the analyses of late and incomplete transitions. The purpose is to describe incomplete transitions, to find out how typical incomplete transitions are in different countries, and to analyse the different combinations of transition events and their prevalence. Also based on these analyses country clusters will be created. These analyses cover the same 20 countries, but they are based on data from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey. These three clusters will provide an interesting perspective on current discussion on transition-to-adulthood patterns in Europe.

The frameworks within which people make their life choices, such as the welfare state and public policies, affect transition-to-adulthood patterns and should therefore be looked at when reasons for cross-national variation are studied. These topics are discussed in chapter 3. Before that, chapter 2 examines the historical perspective and current situation of transition to adulthood. Chapter 4 examines the previous research relevant to this study. Chapter 5 presents the research questions and the data and methods used in detail. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 cover the empirical part of this study. Chapter 6 concentrates on the subjective markers of transition to adulthood: in section 6.1 the focus is on the most important transition markers and in section 6.2 the same subject is discussed but now considering the

number of important transition markers recognised by young adults. In chapter 7 the timings of different events (section 7.1) and the interrelationships of the subjective markers of transition to adulthood and their occurrence (section 7.2) are discussed. The last empirical chapter (chapter 8) concentrates on late and incomplete transitions: it begins by focusing on the prevalence of incomplete transitions (section 8.1) and continues by discussing the accumulation of incomplete transitions (section 8.2). Transition-to-adulthood clusters are created in all of the empirical chapters. The characteristics of the clusters are compared with earlier groupings in chapter 9. Finally, chapter 10 discusses the results of this study at a more general level.

2 MARKERS OF TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Transition to adulthood is often referred to as the "*early part of the life course when one leaves behind adolescence and gradually adopts a series of adult roles*" (Gauthier 2007a, 218). It is seen as a fundamental part of a biography that reflects the early experience of youth, entails marked changes for an individual, and shapes later life (Shanahan 2000, 668). It involves a new position in the social hierarchy as in this process young people move from one age stratum to another, give up one set of roles and take on a new one (Foner & Kertzer 1978, 1086).

In the past, it was common for individuals to be considered adults at a particular age or upon accomplishment of specified tasks. Age norms were mainly institutionalized, and age played a major part in determining a person's role in society. All transitions were shaped by cultural age systems, and privileges, rights and obligations were based on culturally shared age definitions. Age systems created predictable, socially recognized turning points. However, subgroups often had their own age systems in pluralistic societies. Hence, factors such as socioeconomic status and geographic region sometimes created variations in the definitions of age statuses and produced variations in life paths. (Hagestad & Neugarten 1985, 35, 38; Foner & Kertzer 1978, 1082-1086; Hogan & Astone 1986, 111.)

Nowadays, it is reasonable to claim that adult status is not reached by the age of eighteen or twenty-one, although these age limits are most often used to define adulthood in social policies and legislation in the Western world (Furstenberg, Rumbaut & Settersten 2008, 18). Different countries have differing official age thresholds (see Table 1), such as school-leaving age, employment age and the age of majority. When young people cross these thresholds, they can be seen to take a step towards adult status. In that way age is more than just a status to which certain rights and privileges are due; it is an important single sign for a series of transitions that mark the exit from a prior status and the following entry into a new status (Corijn 2001, 4). Nevertheless, it is not possible to explicitly define when a person can be called an adult or define specific age limits for adulthood as the whole process has become very individualised and fluid. Transition to adulthood has become fragmented, and a person can coexist in situations of 'youth-like' dependency and adult autonomy. Thus, a young person might find it difficult to decide whether he or she should be defined as a young person, an adult or a young adult. Certain statuses, such as marriage or parenthood, might position a person in

an adult role, but if these statuses have been reached early in a person's life course, the person may still consider himself/herself a young person. In many cases, young people simultaneously use several self-descriptions and define themselves as belonging to an 'in between' category. (Plug, Zeijl & du Bois-Reymond 2003, 130, 133; Walther 2006, 121; Furstenberg 2010.)

Table 1. Age thresholds* in specific European countries in 2013.

	Age of majority	Minimum age of marriage	School-leaving age	Employment age	Minimum age for sexual consent
Austria	18	18	15	15	14 or 16
Belgium	18	18	18	18	16
Bulgaria	18	18	16	16	14
Cyprus	18	18	15	15	16
Denmark	18	18	16	13	15
Estonia	18	18	15	18	14
Finland	18	18	16	14	16
France	18	18	16	16	15
Germany	18	18	18	15	14
Hungary	18	18	18	16	14
Ireland	18	18	16	15	17
Netherlands	18	18	18	16	16
Norway	18	18	16	15	16
Poland	18	18	15 or 16	15	15
Portugal	18	18	16	16	14
Slovakia	18	18	16	14	15
Slovenia	18	18	15	15	15
Spain	18	18	16	16	13
Sweden	18	18	16	16	15
UK	18	18	16	13	16

* There are several exceptions to these age thresholds. For more information, see OECD (2013).

Despite all the unpredictability related to transition to adulthood and the ambiguity related to the concept of 'adult', the transition process takes place at around the same time during a specific age range, albeit a rather wide one. In the majority of Western countries, most people below the age of sixteen live in their family of origin, attend school full-time, are not working and are unmarried and childless. After the age of thirty-five, few mature adults are still in school or live with their parents.

Instead, most have their own household, work part-time or full-time, are married and have at least one child. In this respect, people's lives are rather similar. However, between the ages of 18 and 35 the routes to adulthood vary in many respects: differences can be found between countries, cultures and men and women, for example. (Cook & Furstenberg 2002, 258, 287; Liefbroer 2009, 311-318.)

Lumping together around 18- to 35-year-olds and calling this age span adulthood and the individuals representing it young adults has created a need to construct new concepts. Arnett (1998; 2000) suggests that the years around 18–25 should be called 'emerging adulthood' and the life stages of one's 30s and early 40s 'young adulthood'. The increased complexity and ambiguity of youth and youth transitions in general have also called for new concepts. Post adolescence (e.g. Galland 2001; Buchmann 1989) and early adulthood (Furstenberg et al. 2003; Booth, Brown, Landale, Manning & McHale 2012) are among these new concepts.

Arnett's (1998; 2000; see also 2007) concept of emerging adulthood is probably the most used among these new concepts, but also the most controversial (e.g. Côté 2014; Côté & Bynner 2008; Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer & Erickson 2008; Bynner 2005; see also Côté 2013). According to Arnett, the period of emerging adulthood is theoretically and empirically distinct from adolescence and young adulthood. It is a transitional period leading to adulthood, and emerging adults reach adulthood at different points. Typical for emerging adults is that they regard themselves as being in between: they do not see themselves as adolescents, but many of them do not see themselves entirely as adults either. Arnett claims that the concept of emerging adulthood should be restricted to use in specific cultures and times instead of in specific countries. It exists only in cultures where the entry into adult roles and responsibilities has been postponed until well past the late teens. (Arnett 1998, 312–313; 2000, 469–478; 2004, 21–23.) Even though Arnett describes emerging adulthood as a heterogeneous phenomenon and states that there is little that is normative, the criticism towards his concept focuses on "*… failure to acknowledge research that shows that the experience of youth is increasingly divided and polarised between those who make 'fast-track' and 'slow-track' transitions to adulthood."* (Shildrick & MacDonald 2007, 599).

No matter which concept is used, young adults living through the transition process often compare their opportunities and expectations against the behaviour of their peer group in a particular culture. An idea of how life should be lived and awareness of the average ages at which specific transition events take place or of the common age ranges within which most young adults make the transitions constitute informal age expectations. Settersten (1998, 1376) labels these prescriptive and proscriptive age norms which refer to collective expectations

about when certain transitions should or should not occur. Based on these norms, young people obtain at least a vague sense of what is the 'right thing' and when is the 'right time' to do it. (Cf. Holdsworth & Morgan 2005, 6; Elder 1998, 6.) People whose actions are in accord with these presumptions are 'on time', whereas others may feel that they are 'early' or 'late'. Settersten (1998, 1376) calls these age norms optimal as they determine the 'best', 'ideal' or 'preferred' age to experience specific life transitions. Those who do not abide by the timing norms could have difficulties in adjusting to the situation. (Mortimer, Oesterle & Krüger 2005, 176.)

Arnett and Fishel (2013) have pointed out that most young adults are in no hurry to reach adult status and that they have mixed feelings about reaching adulthood[3]. Based on the interviews of young European women, Mary (2012, 240–241) has observed that the 20s are determined as "*a stage of experimentation*", but that at the age of 30 one should have settled down and started to act like an adult: one should already have a acquired a stable job, established a career and started a family. The age of 30 is, hence, seen as a strict age limit. However, some of the young adults interviewed by Arnett (2004, 218–219) described having reached adulthood "*for the most part*", while others said that they would never fully reach adulthood and did not even want to do so. These comments by young adults confirm the perception that it is difficult to define when 'the real' adulthood begins based on age or the clear-cut achievement of adult statuses. A young person may reach adult status early in one domain and later in other domains (Hendry & Kloep 2007, 74 As Jones (2002) suggests, young people may use a fast or a slow track in their transition-to-adulthood process. Those who use the latter may be doomed to be the ones making late transitions. In general, when transition events happen late, some transitions may not be experienced at all. Thus, late and incomplete transitions are closely connected. Nevertheless, it is also possible that only one or two transition events are delayed and that others happen 'on time'.

If it is challenging to define the age at which a person can be called an adult or define any age limits for adulthood, it has also become increasingly difficult to determine the social *markers* around which adulthood is constructed. There is great variation in the number of events that are considered markers of transition to adulthood. Transition-to-adulthood research has traditionally distinguished three, five, six or even eight separate,

[3] One of the key features of transition to adulthood is often said to be its slowness. Increasing numbers of young people make slow-track transitions through longer-term participation in further and higher education. Focusing just on the United Kingdom, MacDonald (2011, 430) noticed that nowadays only a minority of young adults makes quicker transitions to the labour market, to independent living and to parenthood and, in doing so, faces greater risks of unemployment, homelessness and poverty.

though related, transition phases. Researchers (e.g. Jones 1995, 21) who only separate three different transition phases conclude them to be a) the transition from education into the labour market, b) the transition from childhood home to marital home, and c) the transition from being a child to being a parent. However, the most typical approach is probably the one where five different transition phases are identified. The 'Big 5' of adulthood comprises finishing school, entering the labour market, leaving the parental home, forming a partnership and having a child (e.g. Shanahan et al. 2008, 225; Furstenberg 2013, 30; Shanahan 2000). When researchers have examined more than five markers, it has normally meant that forming a partnership has been divided into the first cohabitation and the first marriage (e.g. Pfeiffer & Nowak 2001) and that even the first sexual intercourse and the first regular partnership have been seen as essential transition markers (Corijn 1996 in Billari 2001, 120).

2.1 Traditional markers of transition to adulthood

The focus of transition to adulthood remained role-related long into the 20th century: work and marriage were seen as relevant markers for young men and marriage and motherhood for young women. It was typical that nearly everyone got married and the majority did so between the ages of 20 and 30. Women often got married one to two years earlier than men due to the common age difference of young spouses. (Hullen 2000, 1.) A man's ability to support his wife and family was the central requirement for marriage, and a woman's mission was to take prime responsibility for the children (Liefbroer 2009, 321). This arrangement embodied the hierarchical male breadwinner / female homemaker family model. An indissoluble marriage was the mark of full adulthood, 'a definitive step to adulthood' (Furlong & Cartmel 2007, 65) for both sexes and the event that completed the social identity of individuals. (Arnett 1998, 300; Rotundo 1993, 114–115.) Entry into the adult role was a short period of transition in which new positions and roles were assumed. Young people overcame this period by gaining economic autonomy through integration into the labour force and by obtaining emotional independence through the formation of their own families (Buchmann 1989, 83; Mayer & Schwarz 1989, 145). The departure from the parental home, however, often had to be synchronized with the needs of ageing parents, especially in agricultural societies. Thus, transition to adulthood was linked to the status and needs of one's family. Unmarried children who stayed in their parental home were expected to be net contributors to the household division of labour. (Höhn & Mackensen 1989, 10.)

Nevertheless, there was significant geographical variance in the transition behaviour of European young adults until the middle of the 20th century. East-west

and north-south divides are often distinguished. One well-known imaginary line is *the Hajnal line* (Billari 2004, 22; see also Hajnal 1969, 101–103) that connects Trieste in Italy and St. Petersburg in Russia. Relatively late marriage and a significant proportion of people who never married were typical west of this line. East of the line, marriage took place earlier based on the mean ages of spouses and was more universal. The difference was significant particularly in the case of women: in the Western European pattern, or the European pattern as Hajnal (1969) called it, unmarried life was accepted as a normal, but perhaps exceptional, alternative for adult women, whereas in Eastern Europe this alternative hardly existed for women. However, significant variations have also been determined within the regions: economic, demographic and cultural factors determined family and household systems just as they do today. (Billari 2004, 22–23.)

Marriage and parenthood (family) gradually began to lose their role as the main indicators of adulthood in the transition debate. Many researchers (e.g. Shanahan 2000, 669; Kiernan 1986, 178) have stated that transition to adulthood has become especially diversified since the 1960s, or at least since the early 1970s, when the second demographic transition, the SDT[4] (van de Kaa 2002; Lesthaeghe 2010), started to show its first signs. Young adults' changing attitudes and value orientations concerning family and their increased individual autonomy in making family formation decisions were seen to affect the entire process of family formation. The emergence of postponement of both first marriage and fertility, high prevalence of non-marital fertility, multitude of living arrangements other than marriage (such as premarital cohabitation and other independent and looser living arrangements), and high rates of union disruption were signs of changed behaviours.[5] (Lesthaeghe 2010, 4–5; see also Axinn & Barber 1997, 607; van de Kaa 2002; Billari 2004, 24.) These

[4] The basic idea behind the SDT is that industrialised countries reached a new stage in their demographic development in the 1960s. At first, Lesthaeghe and van de Kaa considered that the 1973 oil crisis and the recession followed by it enhanced changes in demographic development. The roots of the changes were registered, however, in the shift in values that had occurred in the 1960s. (Surkyn & Lesthaeghe 2004, 47, 76.)

[5] Until the 1990s the SDT was mainly a Northern and Western European phenomenon, but after that the situation changed. Gradually Southern, and also Central and Eastern (formerly communist) Europeans (the CEE countries) showed signs of new behaviour. Jemna (2012, 2, 10), however, states that the demographic situation of the CEE countries after 1990 not only represents a continuation of the demographic trends of a previous period but also verifies a certain stability (with some variations only in the first five years after 1990). On the whole, most European countries follow a similar trajectory of family change but are in different stages of the transition process. A uniform pattern in union formation and entry into parenthood is still missing. (Surkyn & Lesthaeghe 2004, 47–48; Lesthaeghe 2010; Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 491; Billari & Wilson 2001, 6–7.)

changes were connected to increased participation in education, increased female involvement in waged employment, the increase and rapid spread of cohabitation and consensual unions, and the availability of modern contraception which reduced the number of marriages forced or necessitated because of an unplanned pregnancy. (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008, 113; Bumpass 1995, 6; Bumpass & Lu 2000, 29; see also Axinn & Barber 1997, 595.) Little by little, marriage was less likely to be defined as a parenting union and more likely to be defined as an intimate relationship between two persons. As a result, parenthood was no longer seen as an essential criterion for adulthood. (E.g. Arnett 2001, 135.) Transition to adulthood became a gradual process and was no longer symbolically attached to specific events to the same extent as it had been in the past.

In the latter part of the 20th century, transition to adulthood was generally seen as a more differentiated, extended and challenging process than before. The process was also considered prolonged and less linear in shape. More heterogeneous behaviour was allowed and many studies used a series of interrelated transition events, the 'Big 5' of adulthood, to describe the transition process. Nevertheless, in many societies, normative, expected and appropriate sequences of transition events were present. In most of Europe, the sequence of events consisted of the following stages: school leaving, entering the labour force, independent living, getting married, and having the first child (Rindfuss, Swicegood & Rosenfeld 1987, 786). In the Eastern European countries, the standard 'socialist' trajectory (finishing education—employment—marriage—leaving the parental home—childbearing) was still followed (Tomanović & Ignjatović 2006, 57).

It was not only the sequence of different transition events that was normatively described, but age norms or social time, the ordering of life events and social roles by age-linked expectations, options and sanctions, were also often perceived. Elder (1994) states that there were socially prescribed but informal schedules for an appropriate time for the completion of schooling, for leaving home and achieving economic independence, and for marriage and the bearing of children. It was generally presumed that these different transitions provided a high predictability and were to be passed in a predetermined order. An individual left full-time schooling before entering the labour force and adopting adult family roles (Marini 1984, 63). In practise, this happened rarely and a number of distinctions in timing and ordering within and between social groups have been identified (Buchmann 1989, 83). Once an individual had experienced all the transitions, the transition process was regarded as complete (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 482). However, cases of incomplete transitions were, and still are, often observed in a society: a man and wife could remain childless but still be recognized as adults, for instance. As a result

of the existence of several different paths to adulthood, it became more challenging to define the point in life or the combination of statuses which made a young person an adult. Being an adult was no longer as straightforward as before. (Hendry & Kloep 2007, 74; see also Fussell & Furstenberg 2008, 31.)

Although variation began to arise in the sequences of different transition events, it was quite common for studies conducted in the latter half of the 20th century to ignore it and make simplified assumptions. The rising diversity of sequences in transition processes could clearly be seen in family formation, among other things, although there was (and still is) great variation by gender (e.g. Robette 2010, 94–95) and by country. The once normative path of direct marriage followed by the birth of the first child was increasingly being replaced by other paths. In some societies the sequence of cohabitation—marriage—childbearing became the most common path, while in others the sequence of cohabitation—first or first and second birth—marriage was the most prevalent pattern. Many couples with children did not marry at all. The loosening tie between marriage and childbearing had, thus, decreased the number of shotgun marriages, but in some societies marriages under the pressure of pregnancy were (and still are) common. (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008, 113–114.) Another good example of diversified sequences, or more precisely of the fact that different transitions could no longer be assumed to hang together, was the behaviour related to leaving the parental home. Researchers were beginning to treat it as an event of interest in its own right and not necessarily something that happened as a result of other events, such as getting married, going to university or getting a job (Holdsworth & Morgan 2005, 1).

2.2 Markers of transition to adulthood: the new ones?

In recent years, changes in social norms related to marriage, childbearing, educational attainment and women's employment have been widely observed (e.g. Bures 2009, 579; Robette 2010, 95–96). An old or standard normative transition pattern has disappeared—or at least there is a greater normative tolerance to act as one chooses[6]. Lives of young people are in many cases made up of various paths to adulthood. Young adults have gained more control over the resources that allow them to choose the timing of their own transition events: the age at which each transition occurs and the duration between transition events. Transition as a whole has been considerably extended, and age-expectations, ill-timed or off-timed

[6] Every society naturally has a range of constraints that influence young adults' behaviour.

events and the order of specific transitions have largely lost their significance. Transition events are distributed over time, they occur in different orders and at different times for different individuals, they co-occur, and the duration of the intervals between them varies (see also Shanahan 2000, 667).

The entire role of traditional transition markers has in fact been questioned. Some markers have become reversible[7], and the same markers have been claimed to be irrelevant in the current circumstances[8]. One of the reversible transitions, leaving the parental home, was earlier seen as "…*the most straightforward of all migratory moves*", as Wall (1978, 181) concludes. Nowadays it can hardly be described as a straightforward one, but rather as a very gradual process that is rarely a one-off event in specific countries. Biggart and Walther (2006, 42), for example, describe it as a 'yo-yo-transition' made by boomerang children (Turcotte 2007; Flatau et al. 2007) as it has become more complex and reversible. Education is another reversible adult transition marker which can no longer be seen as a stage definitely preceding integration into the labour market. It is often more likely a continuous and prolonged process with withdrawals and returns. (Moreno Mínguez et al. 2012, 38.) Constantly increasing youth unemployment and spells of unemployment are also often pushing young adults to continue their education (see also Mills & Blossfeld 2005). Getting married is also one of the markers which can no longer be unambiguously described as permanent.

The meaning of transition markers is not the only aspect that has changed. New status combinations now exist (different markers happen at the same time) as people combine education with work and family roles and the former perception that parent and student were mutually exclusive roles has been discarded (Pallas 2003, 170; see also Rindfuss et al. 1987, 786). Entirely new transition markers have also been introduced as the variety of different living arrangements has seen a massive increase. In today's world, it is possible to live alone with housemates or apart together (LAT). Other alternatives include cohabiting with one's partner or spouse with or without a child or children and living in a lone parenthood or patchwork family. (Dorbritz 2008; see also e.g. Goldscheider et al. 1993.)

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[7] Reversible transitions are often described negatively but could also be seen as a positive 'role rehearsal' which permits individuals to spend a longer period of time learning new roles before making a definitive move. (Biggart & Walther 2006, 42; Flatau et al. 2007, 55.)

[8] Lowe, Dillon, Rhodes and Zwiebach (2013, 61-62) have pointed out that the way in which young adults describe the criteria of adulthood mainly depends on the way the question is asked.

It has become very difficult to present plausible generalizations of transition processes. There is a general agreement that the old or standard normative pattern of transition to adulthood has disappeared, but it is less clear what this pattern will be replaced by. Two ideas have been suggested. Firstly, the emergence of a new normative pattern has not happened because of the individual nature of the process. Secondly, some kind of new standard pattern will emerge but only after new demographic behaviours, such as non-traditional family formation, cohabitation and unmarried parenthood or living on one's own, have become widely accepted as part of transition to adulthood. (Liefbroer & Toulemon 2010, 55.) It is already possible to present convincing arguments supporting the fact that a period of non-marital cohabitation[9] (either preceding marriage or being an alternative to marriage) and having children in cohabiting unions can now be seen as normative behaviour amongst young adults, at least in some parts of Europe (see also Guzzo 2014; Settersten & Ray 2010). There are also other transition markers that are considered new. Stone and colleagues (2014), for example, have suggested that returning to the parental home after completion of higher education has become so normative that it could be seen as a transition marker. Changes in the context in which transition to adulthood at an individual level occurs are, thus, likely to force changes in the processes themselves.

While cohabitation has become increasingly common in all regions of Europe, there, indeed, are still marked geographic differences in cohabitation patterns. Table 2 indicates considerable cross-country diversity. In Scandinavian countries and in Estonia, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom the share of cohabiting people exceeds the share of married people. In other European countries marriage is still more common than cohabitation in the age group of 20- to 34-year-olds. There are also countries where the share of cohabiting people is

[9] Although the changed circumstances have been visible for decades, Nock (1995, 56) has pointed out that especially adolescents' views on cohabitation were tentative 20 years ago. According to Nock, the reason for this was that cohabitation was not institutionalized, but an 'incomplete institution'. It lacked a universal meaning among adults and a symbolic event such as a marriage ceremony to mark the beginning of the union. Later, other researchers (e.g. Rosina & Fraboni 2004, 151) have suggested that cohabitation can be seen as an expression of non-adjustable attitudes, or even as a protest against authority or a way of manifesting one's own freedom against traditions. In some societies, signs indicate that cohabitation represents a more open relationship where moral obligation might be missing. Hence, cohabiting people may be unfaithful because they "*don't have this wedding ring yet*" and when the attraction of the relationship ends, it is easy to just walk away from it. To maintain the vitality of the relationship, each of the partners should remain attractive to each other and avoid falling into routines. (Mynarska, Baranowska-Rataj & Matysiak 2014, 1118-1125.)

less than 10% (Poland, Slovakia, Cyprus and Slovenia), but one should notice that especially in Slovakia and Slovenia the share of married people is not notable either. Instead, many young adults are still living with their parents.

Table 2. Cohabiting or married? Distribution (%) of people aged 20 to 34[10] in households by partnership status in specific European countries, year 2011.

Country	Cohabiting	Married	Not living with a partner	Total, all		Living with at least one parent
AT	17	22	61	100		34
BE	16	29	55	100		31
BG	20	24	56	100		35
CY	9	33	58	100		38
DE	18	22	60	100		28
DK	29	22	49	100		11
EE	27	18	55	100		27
ES	16	22	62	100		45
FR	28	22	50	100		22
HU	17	22	61	100		42
NL	26	21	53	100		24
NO	23	19	58	100		26
PL	3	34	63	100		46
PT	16	29	55	100		42
SE	29	18	53	100		21
SK	4	16	80	100		62
SL	10	14	76	100		53
UK	22	22	56	100		25

Source: OECD Family Database 2016

There are many possible reasons for the increasing popularity of cohabitation (e.g. Sobotka & Toulemon 2008). One reliable explanation is the growing social

[10] It should be noted that the age range (20- to 34-year-olds) is rather wide. In addition, there is large variation in cohabitation patterns: a) young people can cohabit several times, b) cohabitation can be a prelude to marriage, and c) cohabitation can be an alternative to marriage (e.g. Heuveline & Timberlake 2004). Table 2 does not distinguish whether marriages are preceded by cohabitation or whether cohabitation may finally lead to marriage, for example. It has, however, been stated that in many countries "*among young adults, marriage seems to be less of a part of the cohabitation process even as cohabitation has become more strongly linked to the marriage process*" (Guzzo 2014, 826).

acceptance of the phenomenon. Previously, living together without being married could stigmatise young people in many of the post-socialist Eastern European countries and especially in Catholic countries, such as Poland, Slovakia and Ireland, but now attitudes have become less strict. In Spain, for example, the Catholic Church has lost its traditional power and its role as a provider of moral guidelines in family matters. However, illiberal views also continue to exist. Another explanation is related to the legal recognition of unmarried partnership: when couples can enjoy the benefits (legal and financial) of partnerships without marrying, they may be more likely to simply cohabit. (E.g. Mynarska et al. 2014, 1111.)

Billari and Liefbroer (2010, 70, 73) state that entry into a first union by cohabitation has become majority behaviour in many European countries but that no other convergence in demographic behaviour across Europe is visible. However, as Table 3 suggests, out-of-wedlock fertility has become increasingly common all over Europe and convergence between countries can clearly be detected. Nearly all of the countries included in the table have witnessed a sharp increase in non-marital fertility, and several countries have tripled or more than tripled the percentage of out-of-wedlock births since 1990. In the Scandinavian countries the rise in non-marital births began as early as in the 1970s, but in other countries this change is more clearly shown after 1980. In 1980, births outside marriage accounted for more than 10 per cent of all births in only nine countries out of 18, while in 2010 non-marital births accounted for less than 40 per cent of non-marital births in only six countries out of 20. The change is enormous. Table 3 also reveals that this process is not yet complete: when the years 2010 and 2013 are compared, the out-of-wedlock births have still been on the rise in all of the countries where the data is available. One should, however, notice that despite the common trend, the differences between some countries (for instance Cyprus and Poland versus Estonia and Slovenia) are significant (see also Kotowska 2012, 114-116).

Table 3. Proportion of births outside marriage in specific European countries, %.

Year / Country	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2014
AT	13	13	18	24	31	40	n/a
BE	2	3	4	12	28	46	n/a
BG	8	9	11	12	38	54	59
CY	n/a	0	1	1	2	15	n/a
DE	8	7	12	15	23	33	35
DK	8	11	33	46	45	47	53
EE	n/a	n/a	n/a	27	55	59	n/a
ES	2	1	4	10	18	36	43
FI	4	6	13	25	39	41	43
FR	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	44	55	n/a
HU	6	5	7	13	29	41	47
IE	2	3	6	15	32	34	n/a
NL	1	2	4	11	25	44	49
NO	4	7	15	39	50	55	56
PL	n/a	5	5	6	12	21	24
PT	10	7	9	15	22	41	49
SE	11	19	40	47	55	54	55
SK	5	6	6	8	18	33	39
SL	9	9	13	25	37	56	58
UK	5	8	12	28	40	47	n/a

Source: Eurostat 2016a

Cohabitation and out-of-wedlock fertility are naturally closely intertwined: the major increase in cohabitation affects the practice of having children outside of marriage. Greater cultural approval and better institutional support for children raised out of wedlock might also lead to a greater proportion of couples opting for cohabitation. Nowadays unmarried cohabitation is also publicly perceived as a childbearing institution (cf. Heuveline & Timberlake 2004). Furthermore, both of these family-related practices are remarkable social transformations and both indicate major institutional changes to the status quo. It is hard to believe that cohabitation and out-of-wedlock fertility are just temporary deviations which will be given up in the future in order to comply with more traditional norms.

3 IMPACTS INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURE HAVE ON TRANSITION-TO-ADULTHOOD PROCESSES

Three decades ago, Hogan and Astone (1986) stressed how institutional factors explained differences in transition to adulthood across different societies, among social strata within a society, and through historical time. Research since then has consolidated and expanded this view considerably, and the impact population-level cultural influences have on the process has become increasingly important. Today, researchers also commonly accept that there is multi-level interdependence between institutional, structural, political-economic and cultural context and individual action in terms of labour market participation, housing arrangements, family formation and fertility. (Knijn & Plantenga 2012, 203; Heinz, Huinink, Swader & Weymann 2009, 17.) Thus, social institutions—welfare regimes, educational institutions, labour and housing markets and family institutions—and cultural practices, ideologies, values and attitudes all shape young people's behaviour (e.g. Fussell & Gauthier 2008, 81). Different countries subsidize and regulate these institutions to different extents, which naturally affects young people's actions.

Depending on a country, transition to adulthood is shaped by slowly changing institutional factors (for example the welfare state) or by the structure of the economy, and by factors, or more precisely specific social and economic policies (for example family and housing policies), that change more quickly than institutions or structures. While institutional, structural and demographic terms are necessary for understanding variation in transition processes between countries, cultural factors, such as normative expectations and ideals on intergenerational relationships and family ties, are also at play. Norms and beliefs are linked in complex ways, not just to each other, but also to institutions, structures and demography (Cook & Furstenberg 2002, 260). The interaction between norms and institutions is visible in the way different age norms arise, for instance in response to institutional regulatory schemes. However, as norms are embedded in culture, changes occur slowly in response to changing institutional pressure[11]. (Mortimer et al. 2005, 177.) Furthermore, adulthood is also shaped by ideational factors (value orientations and attitudes, for instance) which might change faster than long-term cultural

[11] However, as the population that has adopted the new values grows, the share of the population exhibiting new behaviour is also likely to increase.

characteristics. All these factors are important and play a role in perceiving the differences between countries, but also in demonstrating the complex interaction between them. A single approach is in principle not sufficient for interpreting all the differences related to transition to adulthood. (Billari 2004, 20, 25.)

The overall economic contexts in which young people in Europe make their transitions to adulthood vary substantially. Figure 1 illustrates this by presenting the level of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in different countries: the GDP per capita in the richest country (Norway) is eleven times higher than that of the poorest country (Bulgaria). The poorest countries are located in Eastern and Southern Europe, and the diversity between different parts of Europe is enormous. In Eastern Europe, some countries are still undergoing transformations and restructuring, whereas Southern Europe was hit exceptionally hard by the current economic crisis. These issues have made the life of young people extremely challenging. (E.g. Knijn & Plantenga 2012, 202.) Economic context has a major effect on the options young people have in their transition processes. The economic context affects young people both directly (e.g. through employment) and indirectly (e.g. through transfers from family). (United Nations 2007.)

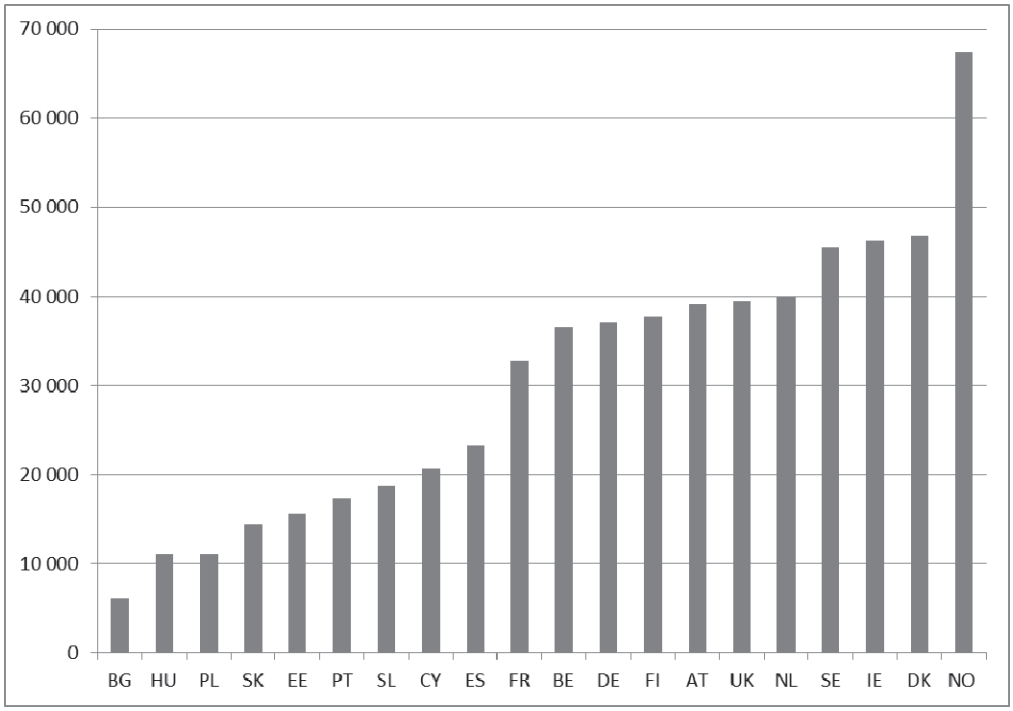

Figure 1. GDP per capita in specific European countries (current prices, in euros, year 2015).

Source: Eurostat 2016b.

3.1 Institutions influence on transition processes

Institutions influence transition processes and young people's behaviour by establishing a set of opportunities and constraints which young people take into account when choosing how to act. Institutional settings and social structures vary from one country to another as they are rooted in each country's history. This also means that they change slowly. The welfare regime naturally creates the framework within which young people can perform. How different *welfare states* perform—to what extent the state, the family and the market are regarded as the key actor—and what are the empirical consequences of various welfare state regimes on an individual level have been widely investigated (e.g. Pfau-Effinger 2005). For analytical comparison purposes it has proven to be useful to distinguish between a limited number of different types of welfare states. Esping-Andersen's (1990) theory of welfare regimes in which each regime has specific life-course consequences is probably the most widely used theory[12]. Each of the regimes has its own characteristics and aspects, and regimes differ in various respects including social stratification and the level of de-commodification (the extent to which individuals are independent of the market). Countries within Esping-Andersen's clusters also differ to some extent, and the varieties of welfare regimes may function differently at different stages of people's life cycles (Anxo et al. 2010, 7). Thus, each regime influences the lives of young people in different ways and may predict different life-course outcomes.

However, the explanatory power of institutional factors is not sufficient when cross-national variation in young adults' transition-to-adulthood processes and patterns are observed. At least two other angles need to be taken into account.

[12] Esping-Andersen (1990) originally identified three regime types: the social democratic, the liberal and the conservative type. Social democratic states emphasize universal access to benefits which are based on individual entitlement. State support is fairly generous. In the liberal regime benefits are mainly means-tested with modest levels and targeted only at those most in need. Liberal welfare states are characterized by a strong emphasis on free markets: the state will intervene primarily in the case of market failure. In the conservative regime the state has a reduced role while most of the benefits are insurance based. Family also plays a central role in supporting individuals. Esping-Andersen's typology, however, has been criticized (e.g. Leibfried 1992; Ferrera 1996) mostly because of its lack of a separate regime for Southern European countries. Another weakness of the typology is that it has overlooked a major provider of social welfare, the family (Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993; Trifiletti 1999). This weakness is closely related to the lack of a separate Southern European, or familistic, regime. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Central and Eastern European countries have, depending on the perspective of the study, either composed the fifth regime or fell into the liberal or residual regime (see more in Aidukaite 2004).

Firstly, at the level of political economics, transition to adulthood is influenced by specific social and economic policies which change more quickly than institutional factors. When institutional factors are used to explain national differences among European counties, four social and political systems are typically distinguished: (1) the nature of the educational system and its connection to the labour market, (2) labour market systems, (3) family systems and (4) housing systems (e.g. Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 488; Breen & Buchmann 2002, 290–294; see also Mills & Blossfeld 2005, 5–16; cf. Billari & Wilson 2001, 4). These systems provide various 'tools' for buffering the challenges young adults are facing in their transition processes (see Figure 2). However, it is sometimes difficult to say whether such policies are a result of the welfare state per se or a result of political choices which are constantly open for revision (Billari 2004, 21–22; Ward, Calers & Matsaganis 2006, 11). Furthermore, it is often difficult to isolate the impact of these policies from other determinants. Gauthier (2007b), for example, reviewed a large amount of literature concentrating on the impact family policy has on fertility and concluded that "*it is very difficult to accurately measure policies and to adequately model the various ways by which policies may impact fertility*" (p. 340).

Secondly, welfare state regimes, institutions, social and economic policies and culture are highly interrelated. For example, institutional constraints in housing, education or in the labour market exist in different societies, but these constraints are culturally determined. Still, the way in which cultural[13] differences affect the young adults' transition behaviour—or more generally, cross-national differences in welfare state analyses—is often ignored, or at least considered a more marginal issue in comparative research (Pfau-Effinger 2005, 3). It is, nevertheless, generally assumed that cultural membership affects expectations and decisions and that culture enables or restricts choices regarding young adults' transition to adulthood. Hence, young adults living in different countries and facing similar economic circumstances may behave differently according to what is usual in their setting (Iacovou 2002, 67–68).

[13] In this study, culture is defined in accordance with the description of Cook and Furstenberg (2002, 260): "Culture is understood in the weak sense that stresses explanatory concepts that are traditionally treated as neither structural, institutional, nor demographic. Behavioural norms, ways of thinking and feeling, and ways of shared self-expression play central roles in such theories of culture, as do contemporaneous forces that transmit messages about what to expect and value and historical factors that describe how the cultural meanings evolved. Norms, beliefs, meanings, and feelings are linked in complex ways, not just to each other, but also to demography, institutions, and structures. So, culture can never be totally separated from these other social forces."

Culture, structures and welfare regimes

Education systems	Employment systems	Family systems	Housing systems

Examples of tools institutions provide for buffering the challenges young adults are facing:

Availability of grant systems and (subsidised) loans, supporting lifelong learning	Employment stability or security, flexibility, reconciliation of employment and family policies	Availability of family allowances, leaves and services, flexibility, reconciliation of family and employment policies	Availability of affordable housing, housing allowance system

Figure 2. The interplay between institutions, social and economic policies, and culture impacting young adults' transition to adulthood.

Figure 2 illustrates how different social and political systems are needed to ease young adults' transition to adulthood, but it also emphasises how welfare regimes and culture both have their own impact on the process. How these different institutional tools function and how they manage to facilitate the social risks young adults are confronting in their transition processes differ between countries. Each of these social and political systems has their own relevance in young adults transition-to-adulthood processes as the systems set certain rules and constraints and provide young adults with specific incentives for their decisions (see e.g. Regini 2000, 8).

The social risks young adults are confronting are mainly connected to employment and family policies, and especially in Southern and Eastern Europe, to housing policies. During the last decades, the labour market has changed in a fundamental way. The link between education and employment has tightened, employment careers have become less stable and high rates of unemployment are more common, for example. The increase in precarious work mirrors the change as well; continuous, full-time work with one employer has become less common. Instead,

non-standard employment characterised by part-time employment, fixed-term work, temporary work and lower wages is now the reality for many people. At the same time women's labour market participation has become widespread. This is naturally not a social risk per se, but it has created new problems and dilemmas. These are mostly connected to reconciling employment with care in order to avoid women's double-burden, but other issues are also involved, such as ensuring that childbearing is possible without a great financial risk. The gendered perspective also arises when precarious work issues are discussed: women suffer from precarious work more often than men. (E.g. Helve 2013; Knijn 2012; Fagan et al. 2012.) These questions naturally intertwine with other questions concerning housing systems and family systems. Various social and political systems affecting transition to adulthood will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Education systems

The growing importance of knowledge-led economies has placed higher education at the centre of national agendas. Higher education institutions are increasingly viewed by policy makers as 'economic engines'. (E.g. Sursock & Smidt 2010.) In the Europe 2020 initiative, some of the common goals of the European Union are to improve the quality of education, to reduce school drop-out rates below 10% and to ensure that at least 40% of 30- to 34-year-olds complete third-level education[14] (European Commission 2015b).

Despite various initiatives, there are significant differences between European countries when young adults' educational attainment is examined. Some of these differences are visible in Table 4. In addition, there are major differences in how easy it is to access higher education and receive financial support, and entrance exams, tuition fees and the availability of study grants vary significantly. Different channels of financial support, including study grants or allowances, (subsidised)

[14] The targets might be realistic in some European countries, but it is debatable to set them as a common European goal. The fact that many of the initiatives are based on an oversimplified assumption of minimal national differences has often been criticised. As a result, the common EU target has been transposed into national targets, but even these targets are sometimes questionable. In Spain, for example, the school drop-out rate was 31.2% in 2010 but the national target for 2020 has been set to 15%. In Slovakia, the share of 30- to 34-year-olds who had completed third-level education was only 17.6% in 2010, but the national target for 2020 has been set to 40%. In some cases, however, countries have voluntarily set national targets that are more ambitious than those set by EU officials. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2 in the Appendices.)

loans, tax benefits for student's parents and family allowances, are available in different countries. These forms of support can be anything from generous, limited and highly insufficient to practically non-existent. (Eurydice 2012, 94–100; Mills & Blossfeld 2005, 11–12.)

Table 4. Educational attainment of 25- to 34-year-olds in specific European countries, %, year 2013.

Country	*AT*	*BE*	*DE*	*DK*	*EE*	*ES*	*FI*	*FR*	*HU*	*IE*	*NL*	*NO*	*PL*	*PT*	*SE*	*SK*	*SL*	*UK*
Below upper secondary	11	18	13	18	12	35	9	15	13	13	15	18	6	39	9	6	6	14
Upper secondary	64	39	57	41	44	24	51	41	56	36	42	36	52	31	47	64	57	38
Tertiary	25	43	30	41	44	41	40	44	31	51	43	47	42	29	45	30	37	48

Source: OECD 2015.
Note: The upper secondary category includes post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Educational qualifications facilitate entering the labour market and reduce the risk of unemployment[15]. Those with only a basic level of education have the greatest challenges in their transition to the labour market and are also at the highest risk of precarious work. (E.g. Fagan et al. 2012, 132.) However, the economic recession and its slow recovery have had their effect on the labour market, and even a higher education does not guarantee a stable job or protect individuals against unemployment (or underemployment). Nevertheless, less-educated workers are in the most difficult situation: they not only get along worse than those with a higher education, but they are also doing worse than earlier generations did at their age. Diversity between different educational levels also exists when transition to permanent work is examined. People with a lower education have the smallest chance of rapidly achieving a permanent job, whereas secondary or tertiary education helps in making this transition and accelerates it. There are country-specific differences in which level of education (secondary or tertiary) provides the best chance of receiving a permanent job, and no universal conclusions concerning

[15] It has even be stated (e.g. Ranta 2013, 58; Sandefur et al. 2008, 293) that if a young person fails to attain a stable career and is therefore not able to build a financially stable household, the person's entire life could become unstable.

the whole of Europe can be drawn. (E.g. Murgia & Poggio 2014, 65–67; Erhel et al. 2010, 212.)

The rise in unemployment has greatly influenced young people's willingness to prolong their studies. This has led to a situation where many young adults choose to invest in education to enhance their chances of succeeding in the labour market[16]—in accordance with the education policy of the EU. In theory, extended education benefits young people as it permits a greater acquisition of human capital (Beaujot 2004, 3), but prolongation and extended education may also have its downsides. As MacDonald (2011, 429) states, "*One criticism of policies that encourage extended educational transitions is that they underestimate the problems of graduate unemployment and underemployment that now face advantaged middle-class young people*". It is indeed interesting and paradoxical that while the level of education achieved by young people has been rising, it has also become increasingly difficult to enter the labour market (see also Walther & Pohl 2005, 33).

One of the features of today's education systems is that learning occurs in many different sites and often alternates with employment[17]. Thus, students are often so-called non-traditional students. Formal schooling has become a recurring phase of the life course and informal schooling is even less contingent on age (Pallas 2003, 170). Educational decisions no longer have such far-reaching consequences on young people's social and professional statuses as they used to have as it is now easier to

[16] Young adults who, despite their efforts, fail to access further education and who are 'not in education, employment or training' (the NEET phenomenon) (e.g. Bynner 2013) are naturally in the worst situation. Although the NEET phenomenon is a serious problem around Europe, there are clear differences in the NEET rates of specific European countries. Based on Eurostat data (Eurostat 2016e), the NEET rate of young adults aged 20 to 34 was above 20% in five countries (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Cyprus, Spain and Ireland) in 2015. In Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and Finland the NEET rate ranged from 10 to 20%. In three countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), the NEET rate was around 10% or less.

[17] Although long periods spent in education are not appreciated in most societies and one of the main reasons for prolongation is generally said to be working while studying, it is not necessarily a bad idea to combine work with studies. Mary (2012, 214, 328–330), for example, compared Finnish and French female university students and noticed that Finnish women's integration into the labour market was faster and more relevant after graduation. According to Mary, this is due to the fact that Finnish young women acquire more professional work experience during the years they spend at university as they are a more often supporters of the 'school-and-work' model, whereas French young women typically follow the 'school-then-work' model. Mary ends up questioning *"…whether the ultimate goal is genuinely to protect young people from precarity, or simply to ensure that their transition to adulthood fits established norms, even at the price of a more hazardous integration into the labour market.*"

start new educational chapters. (Cf. Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995, 135.) These changes have prolonged the time spent studying, increased the amount of non-traditional students and made it harder to get a 'traditional' three or four-year degree. (See also Settersten & Ray 2010, 27.) This has also led to a situation where students increasingly often face financial strains. In many societies the increasing costs of education and the lack of grant and loan systems have meant that young people have had to rely heavily on family for financial support and that parents have had to bear most of the costs of educational expansion (Anxo et al. 2010, 14, 17, 22).

Recent changes in economic circumstances have had an effect on educational systems as well. At the macro level, responses to the economic crisis have been seen either as increased investment in higher education or severe cuts in expenditure. On the one hand, many countries have paid attention to re-education of its citizens in the time of labour market changes. In Ireland, for example, additional study places have been funded to upskill the unemployed and in Finland and in the United Kingdom new study places have been created in areas which are thought to be relevant for the future of the national economies. On the other hand, higher education institutions have reduced their staff and university fees have been increased. (Eurydice 2010, 43, 45.) In some cases, the economic downturn has turned the educational system into a reservoir or 'warehouse' for otherwise unemployed people. Many young people will rather adopt a student role than the role of an unemployed person. (Mills & Blossfeld 2005, 11.)

3.3 Employment systems

The process and functioning of the transition to workforce depends on how the institutions and education and work are organized and tied together within a state. Typically, it has been indicated that Europe's labour market entry systems could be divided into two broad categories: occupational (or qualification) spaces and organizational spaces[18]. The former refers to a system that provides standardized vocational qualifications achieved by combining theoretical learning

[18] Some researchers frame the dichotomy as an occupational labour market model (OLM) and an internal labour market model (ILM) (Gangl 2003), while others, concentrating more on educational perspective, as highly and weakly stratified educational systems (Allmendinger 1989). Besides this, Gangl (2003, 126) concludes that "*a trichotomy of European patterns of labour market entry might represent an adequate typology of respective cross-national differences*". Southern European countries Italy, Greece and Portugal form the first cluster, France, Belgium, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Spain the second cluster, and Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark the third cluster.

at school and practical job experience at the workplace. Labour market entrants typically undergo rather smooth school-to-work transition processes characterized by a close match between the entrant's skills and the demands of the job. This system provides employers with employees that have qualified labour market value from the very beginning of their career. The traditional apprenticeship (also called the dual system and typical of Germany, Austria and Switzerland), and the school-based vocational training (typical of Denmark and the Netherlands and to a lesser degree Sweden and Finland) are examples of this system[19]. The organizational spaces system (typical of the United Kingdom and Southern Europe, for example) relates to general education where vocational skills are not typically taught or are taught only at a very low level. Entry into the labour market is, thus, more gradual in nature, as skills needed in the labour market are achieved mainly via work experience and depend on the activity of the employer. (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 489; Breen & Buchmann 2002, 292; Gangl 2003, 107-110.) In both cases the majority of young people will probably make a rather smooth transition to working life if the demand for labour outstrips supply. By contrast, in countries where the number of young workers available exceeds the number of positions on offer, transitions to work will probably cause difficulties. (See also MacDonald & Marsh 2001, 388.)

Nevertheless, it is not just the labour market entry processes that count: labour market regulations and especially the labour market entrants' position in relation to established workers also play an important role. According to the insider-outsider theory (Lindbeck & Snower 1988), employed workers are insiders and, thus, eligible to negotiate wages, for example. Outsiders, such as labour market entrants and unemployed workers, have no role in this process. They also have the worst employment protection, which refers to the legislation on hiring and firing employees. Employment protection legislation varies from country to country. On the one hand, strongly deregulated labour markets, such as the United Kingdom, provide rather easy access to jobs but have relatively little protection against dismissal and other job uncertainties. Labour market entry happens early, but deregulated labour markets mean low wages, irregular work experience and a sequence of stopgap jobs as well as high unemployment among

[19] However, there have been signs of a so-called internship generation is being formed. In spite of extensive work experience, young adults might still face problems in attaining secure employment. It has become ever more common that young adults must perform at least one internship before finding employment after graduation. Internships appear to have become one of the waiting stages for those who are unable to find suitable employment or for those who seek to improve their chances of finding a good job. (United Nations 2007, 209.)

young adults. Regarding job quality, jobs offered are often non-standard and have a lower occupational status. On the other hand, the strictest labour markets with very stringent protection for insiders found in Southern Europe are characterised by difficult access to the labour market, prolonged time spent looking for a stable job, and high unemployment risks at the beginning of careers. These labour markets undermine the opportunities of young adults to obtain a stable labour market position. In addition, access to employment is highly dependent on family and kinship connections. Job quality in the first significant job is, however, often higher than in countries with less protected labour markets. (Wolbers 2007b, 190–191; Anxo et al. 2010, 19; Gangl 2003, 127; Moreno-Minguez et al. 2012, 36.)

What all European countries have in common is that employment has become more difficult to achieve and maintain. If young adults succeed in entering the labour market in the first place, they are typically faced by employment instability, non-standard jobs, flexibility demands from employers and transitions from one job to another. In addition, the first jobs are often lower-skilled and in fields not related to the degree young person have completed. These features are a risk to 'not-NEET' or 'not-troubled' (Hamilton et al. 2014, 3) young adults with a higher or lower education degree and not just to young adults with no education[20]. However, the level of education a young adult has achieved is an important differentiating factor, and as Figure 3 illustrates, it has a clear impact on employment. The employment rate of young adults with tertiary education is higher than the employment rate of any other educational level in every country included in the figure. The largest differences between countries were found in the group of 20- to 34-year-old young adults whose highest degree was an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary degree: while between 72% and 76% of young people in this age group were employed in the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom in 2015, only around 35% of young people were employed in Spain in the same year[21].

[20] The jobs in general, not just the first jobs, for lower educated people are more often lower paid, menial and routine (e.g. Aronson 2008).

[21] Obviously, the same effect could be observed when unemployment rates are investigated. In 2015 and the age group of 25- to 29-year-olds, for example, the unemployment rate in Belgium was 26.6% when the level of educational attainment was the lowest (levels 0-2) compared with 12.2% when educational attainment was at the levels 3-4 and only 6.5% when the level of educational attainment was the highest (levels 5-8). In Ireland the effect was even stronger; there the unemployment rates were 35.7%, 16.1% and 8.0%, respectively. (Eurostat 2016f.)

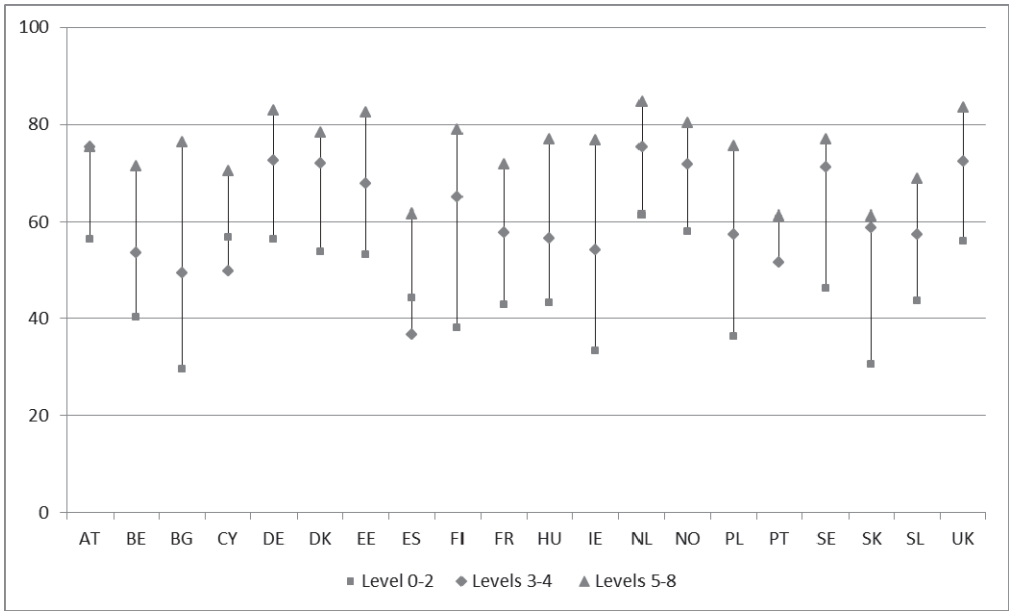

Figure 3. Employment rates of young adults aged 20–29 by highest education level, selected countries, %, year 2015.

* Levels 0-2 mean "less than primary, primary or lower secondary education; levels 3-4 mean "upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education"; and levels 5-8 mean "tertiary education". The reliability of the Austrian, Irish and Polish figures at the levels 0-2 are low.
Source: Eurostat 2016c.

The worsening situation of young people in Europe has also become a political question. Different strategies and initiatives launched by the European Union, such as the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU Youth Strategy and the Youth Guarantee all highlight labour market questions from the perspective of young people. Youth on Move, one of the flagship initiatives of Europe 2020, emphasises that the transition to the labour market needs to be radically improved and that the high unemployment rate needs to be reduced. The initiative also attempts to promote "*lifelong learning in line with labour market needs, …and to improve the employment situation of young people, by presenting a framework of policy priorities for action at national and EU level to reduce youth unemployment by facilitating the transition from school to work and reducing labour market segmentation*". (Eurostat 2015a.)

3.4 Family systems

When looking at the European statistics, a common trend towards increasing age of childbearing and decreasing fertility could be noticed. These trends correspond to late exit from the parental home, prolonged education and weakened employment opportunities. Dominant cultural models of the family, that is, ideas about the gender division of labour within the family and in the family-employment relationship, differ to a substantial degree within Europe (Leira 2002; Pfau-Effinger 2004). Pfau-Effinger (2006, 145), for instance, distinguishes three different family models, all representing different components of employment strategies within a couple: a) The dual breadwinner / external care model in which both women and men participate in paid employment rather equally. This model exists mainly in the Scandinavian and in some of the Eastern European countries; b) The male breadwinner / female part-time care provider model representing the model where the man is a full-time and the woman a part-time (especially after childbearing). This model predominates in some of the Central and Western European countries; and c) The dual breadwinner / dual care provider model in which both parents are involved in paid work (mainly on a part-time basis) and in unpaid work. In practice, this last model hardly exists. The existing provider model combined with family arrangements (subsidies family leaves and child care facilities) offers the opportunities or constraints that may look very different in different countries.

The number of dual breadwinner[22] households has risen across Europe as two incomes are more often needed for a decent standard of living, especially in families with children (e.g. Airio 2008). Thus, women's incomes also play an important role in family finances. Although women's participation in the labour market has risen dramatically and the traditional division of labour has changed so that Esping-Andersen (2002, 88), for example, has argued that the masculinisation of the female life course has brought about the model of adult worker which has replaced the more traditional male breadwinner model, women still seem to take care of the majority of care responsibilities. Taylor-Gooby (2004, 15) concludes that in most welfare states *women* have already been recognised as members of the paid labour force but *mothers* who participate in paid and unpaid work still often lack support. In many cases, paid work is now distributed more evenly in households, but the division of domestic chores has remained the same (e.g. Pascall & Lewis 2004, 383; see also Lewis 1992) making it challenging to combine motherhood and child rearing with paid work.

[22] Or at least one-and-half earner families.

This gendered perspective might have an effect on women's stable integration into the labour force. In the long run, it definitely means that there is more discontinuity in women's work biographies. The dilemma can be solved in several different ways: some prioritise their career and delay starting a family, some (women) decide to stop working and stay at home in order to raise their family, and some decide to carry on working but change their career prospects by working part-time or seeking only lower-level jobs. Some young women might even aim for more modest professional goals to simplify the potential demands of their career. (Mary 2012, 241, 246.)

In order to support the reconciliation of maternity and paid employment, family policies should offer the right to paid leave and after that the affordable child care facilities. Indeed, childcare support and parental leave arrangements have been improved in a number of countries[23] (e.g. Moss 2015). For instance, in many countries, there has been a trend towards requiring children to start education at a younger age, and pre-school attendance has also been made compulsory (Eurostat 2015b, 108). However, major variations can still be found in the practices used and the values appreciated in different countries. The rapid change in female labour market participation has driven many welfare states into the difficulties as welfare institutions have had little time to catch up this new social reality. Timonen (2004, 84) calls the Nordic countries pioneers in the area of work-life balance and the employment of women. Countries in Southern and Eastern Europe can be seen to be at the other extreme as the opportunities related to combining work and childcare are often underdeveloped there (e.g. Plantenga & Remery 2009). In Slovakia, for instance, childcare services for children under the age of 3 are lacking, and the view that a mother should take care of children until they are 3 years old is common (Potančokova, Vaňo, Pilinská & Jurčová 2008, 1003). Measures for promoting the balance between family life and working life are clearly needed.

3.5 Housing systems

Lately, young Europeans have had difficulties in accessing the housing market. There has been limited availability of suitable housing, both in private and public rented sectors, and buying a home has been out of reach for most young people. (Gentile 2016, 243.) Specific policies related to housing systems, such as housing

[23] However, in Finland, for instance, institutionally supported child home care allowances targeted at parents staying at home to look after children under the age of 3 are mainly used by women[23]. (See e.g. Repo 2010.)

subsidies and flexible mortgages, have, however, clearly modified the opportunities young adults face in their transition processes. In countries where housing subsidies are available, young adults make their transition to independent living at an earlier stage in life. In contrast, high house prices and scarcity of rented and/or socially rented houses or houses suitable for single people are often given as reasons that postpone young adults' decisions to leave home, as Iacovou (1998, 32; see also Santoro 2006, 158; Wolbers 2007a, 499–500; Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995, 139) has pointed out.

The dominance of property ownership in the housing market and restricted rental markets may force young adults to stay at their parental home until their financial resources are adequate for paying a mortgage (Kohler, Billari & Ortega 2002, 656)—especially during a financial crisis. There are also countries like Spain where 'the culture of homeownership' has long been a cultural norm for independent living (Moreno Mínguez 2016, 178–179). Indeed, there are significant differences in the home ownership rates of European countries (see also Table 5). In all of the Eastern European countries except Slovenia the home ownership rate is above 80%, while in Germany it is around 50%, for instance (Eurostat 2016d). If there is a shortage of cheap housing, even educated and married couples may live with their parents for some time before establishing a separate household (Babb, Butcher, Church & Zealey 2006). This is often the case in many Eastern European countries (Dykstra, van den Broek, Muresan, Haragus, Haragus, Abramowska-Kmon & Kotowska 2013; see also Iacovou & Skew 2010). In addition, people living in Eastern part of Europe live more often in overcrowded dwellings than people in the EU on average (Pittini, Ghekière, Dijol & Kiss 2015, 20).

Table 5. Distribution of population, aged 25 to 54-year-olds by tenure status, %, 2014.

Country	*AT*	*BE*	*BG*	*CY*	*DE*	*DK*	*EE*	*ES*	*FI*	*FR*	*HU*	*IE*	*NL*	*NO*	*PL*	*PT*	*SE*	*SK*	*SL*	*UK*
Owner	64.3	74.2	82.0	80.1	47.3	63.3	80.5	81.4	71.3	61.8	86.7	72.7	70.9	86.2	82.1	76.0	73.2	89.3	76.0	67.9
Tenant	35.7	25.8	18.0	19.9	52.7	36.7	19.5	18.6	28.7	38.2	13.3	27.3	29.1	13.8	17.9	24.0	26.8	10.7	24.0	32.1

Source: Eurostat 2016d.

Combined with unclear future prospects, the lack of financial resources can hinder young people from establishing a household and living independently as employment opportunities increasingly dictate young people's living arrangements and residential independence. In the worst cases, high accommodation costs may even jeopardise employment opportunities as young (educated) people are generally more likely to find work in urban areas. These areas are also the places with the most expensive accommodation where the lack of affordable housing may complicate access to work. (Mary 2012, 34, 84–85.)

As early as 40 years ago, Wilensky (1975, 7) stated that "*the idea that the government should ensure access to decent housing for everyone is widespread in rich countries, although it may be the least fulfilled of welfare-state promises*". The following examples around Europe validate that this perception still holds (see also Drobnič & Knijn 2012, 90). In Sweden, students, for instance, are entitled to fairly generous financial assistance which eases the forming of one's own household, and the government also supports student housing (Anxo 2010, 111). According to Stropnik and Šircelj (2008), Slovenia's housing market offers gloomy prospects for young people by providing a "*high price of housing, long waiting list for non-profit housing, insufficient availability of favourable housing loans, poor development of the private rental sector, insufficient availability of student housing and an absence of the third or co-operative sector*" (p. 1038). The housing situation in Hungary, which is described by Spéder, Kapitány and Neumann (2010, 188–190), is also problematic for young people: around 90% of all housing units are privately owned and the tradition of renting a flat is practically non-existent. Additionally, the economic downturn has made it difficult to afford purchasing a home. Financial difficulties have also weakened the emancipation of young Spaniards. In the past, because of the strong cultural preference for homeownership, it was typical that young Spanish people left their parental home for a home they owned rather than renting a home from a landlord. In recent years, this has become a challenge even though house prices have fallen. Today's young adults face severe difficulties in obtaining mortgages. (Moreno Mínguez 2016; Delgado, Meil & Zamora López 2008, 1090.)

4 CROSS-EUROPEAN RESEARCH ON TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Europe forms a scientifically interesting base for the comparative study of transition to adulthood. European countries, even those belonging to the European Union, show substantial heterogeneity; they differ largely in their histories, economies, institutional arrangements and cultural heterogeneity (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011). Despite that, previous comparative studies have approached transition to adulthood by grouping countries into homogenous categories. There are also several other consistencies between the studies.

When the transition-to-adulthood theme is examined in general, most comparative research adopts a life-course approach. Indeed, several life-course concepts—transition[24], timing, synchronization, sequencing of events[25], and so on—have been used to assess transition to adulthood. Analytically, the life-course perspective examines the transitions, in other words the processes by which individuals make their transitions from one stage to the next, such as leaving the parental home, getting married or becoming parents, rather than these stages themselves. (Höhn & Mackensen 1989, 9–10.) Another popular approach involves comparing birth cohorts, i.e. groups of people born during the same year. This facet allows researchers to reveal social changes since cohorts link age and historical time. (E.g. Elder, Kirkpatrick Johnson & Crosnoe 2003, 9.) Many analyses have also examined men and women as separate groups.

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[24] A transition refers to a discrete life change or event within a trajectory which gives it distinctive meaning and form (Elder 1998; Macmillan 2005; Schoon & Schulenberg 2013). Transitions can be viewed as age appropriate, but they can also violate culturally defined normative social timetables by occurring too early or too late (Hagestad & Neugarten 1985). An off-age transition could be, for instance, leaving home at a very young age or not leaving home at all. Transitions are always embedded in time, and there is time-dependent probability, normally called 'risk', of making the transition for those in a 'risk set' (e.g. young adults in their twenties belong to the risk set for getting married). Transitions often involve future-planning, but also have an interdependence with the past. All transitions are always affected by their historical context and subject to the opportunities and constraints related to social structure and culture (Elder 1998, 2).

[25] "*Timing refers to the age at which transitions happen. Synchronization implies to the extent to which the occurrence of two events is associated and sequencing points the ordering of events in a trajectory*". (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 483.)

At the European level, studies in this area have often examined a single country or a small group of diverse countries. In most cases, the countries have been from Western Europe, but recently Eastern European transformation societies have also been included in some studies. As the analyses have expanded from national case studies to a wider range of countries, it has become possible to identify transition regimes. Indeed, some previous efforts have been made to create transition-to-adulthood clusters or models (see Table 6). This has been enabled by recent, large-scale international and comparative data sets, such as the European Union Labour Force Survey[26] (EU-LFS), the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS), the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Many of these data sets also include data on Eastern European countries. To date, the main methods used in transition-to-adulthood studies have been descriptive. In the case of explanatory comparative research, the most popular approach has been to use survival models, event history analyses and sequence analyses (e.g. Corijn & Klijzing 2001; Schizzerotto & Lucchini 2002). Macro-micro studies combining data from both of these analytical levels are still scarce.

Almost all previous studies discussing transition-to-adulthood patterns are based on existing groupings of European countries. A regime-type model that clusters groups of countries according to a specific rationale is often used. Many of the studies have been influenced by the classification Esping-Andersen (1990) proposed a couple of decades ago. In principle, Esping-Andersen's classification with three different welfare regimes (the social democratic regime, the conservative regime and the liberal regime) is an acceptable starting point for examining differences in young adults' transition-to-adulthood patterns as some of these patterns are undeniably linked to the welfare state.

Indeed, many researchers have taken advantage of this well-known classification. Mayer (2001; 2004), for example, used Esping-Andersen's classification as a basis but added Southern European welfare states to the mix, used a broader approach and clustered countries based on life-course outcomes. These outcomes also include some demographic transition markers. After reviewing a large number of studies on transition to adulthood in contemporary Europe, Buchmann and Kriesi (2011), too, reached the conclusion that using Esping-Andersen's classification as a

[26] The European Union Labour Force Survey and the European Social Survey both have ad hoc or rotating modules with themes relating to transition to adulthood. The former data set included an ad hoc module 'Transition from school to working life' in 2000 and the latter a rotating module 'Timing of Life' in 2006/2007.

starting point was a valid choice. Buchmann and Kriesi found some support for four basic transition patterns to adulthood, but stressed that "*a sizeable part of the empirical evidence does not square well with the four transition types*" (p. 492). Walther and Pohl (2005, 40–41) added a fifth regime to the widening categorization of Esping-Andersen: the transition regime(s) of post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. However, they noted that further comparative analysis was needed before including the regime in the transition model. It remains to be seen whether these countries can be embedded into existing regime types or whether new types need to be developed. According to Walther and Pohl, most countries have aimed to restructure towards the liberal or the employment-centred model since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, but some of the countries also have sub-protective structures.

Also mainly inspired by Esping-Andersen and his followers, especially Gallie and Paugam (2000, 3–7), Walther (2006, 124–129) created a model that distinguishes between four clusters of transition regimes. Walther states that in the case of youth transitions the concept of welfare regimes requires an extended perspective; especially structures of education and training and support for labour market entry need to be addressed. The first regime, the universalistic transition regime, consists of the Scandinavian countries. Comprehensive schooling and collective social responsibility for youth transitions are typical of this regime. The collective social responsibility manifests itself in the form of state-funded educational allowances to support periods in education or training. The second regime, the liberal transition regime in Anglo-Saxon countries, values individual rights and responsibilities. The post-compulsory stage of schooling offers flexible options, but requires young people to take responsibility for their life. In the case of failure, the social security level is low and limited in time. Thus, fast and straight labour market entrance and economic independence are the main goals. The third regime, the employment-centred transition regime in the continental countries, is characterised by a selective schooling system and standardised vocational training. Labour markets are divided into the secure core with generous compensation arrangements through social insurance and precarious peripheries with residual social assistance. The fourth regime, the sub-protective transition regime in Mediterranean countries does not provide choice, flexibility or security. The early school-leaving rate is high and vocational training is weakly developed. Young adults are often confronted with either insecure and informal work or even unemployment and limited social protection. Family and family support play an important role.

Moreno Mínguez and colleagues (2012) later found Walther's approach useful as it allowed them *"to contextualise the individual behaviour of young people in different national and institutional frameworks"* (p. 32). The grouping was based on the structure of the welfare state, education system and on different policies (employment, youth, social, family and gender), and four different transition regimes were presented: the Nordic transition regime, the Continental transition regime, the Anglo-Saxon transition regime and the Southern European transition regime. Geographical location was a significant factor in this model. Moreno Mínguez and colleagues also analysed young adults' attitudes towards events that have traditionally defined transition to adulthood and examined values young adults give to them. The transition events included in the study were leaving the parental home, starting to work, starting to cohabit or getting married, and having a child. Based on their analyses, the researchers built four clusters[27] to describe attitudinal differences.

In the work by Moreno Mínguez and colleagues (2012), the first cluster expressing de-standardised attitudes mitigates the importance of traditional transition markers and is characterised by unconventional attitudes. Around 40 percent of young adults living in Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden highlight these impressions as important transition markers. The second cluster focuses on individualistic attitudes. According to this perspective, the personal autonomy of young people is mainly achieved by having a full time job. These kinds of attitudes are typical especially in Sweden. The third cluster stresses the value of familistic attitudes: having a relationship with a partner or getting married and having children. Only every fifth young adult in France and Germany emphasises this aspect, while young adults living in the other countries give an even smaller role to family markers. The final cluster comprises standardised attitudes according to which traditional transition events are still supposed to happen in a certain sequence. This interpretation holds especially in France, Spain and Germany. These four clusters and the different attitudes they represent underline the heterogeneity that is present in Europe. There is only minor consensus on the events that define transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, Moreno Mínguez and colleagues conclude that there is a tendency towards the de-standardisation of attitudes.

[27] In their analyses, Moreno Mínguez and colleagues examined five European countries in more detail. These countries were France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. However, most of their research focused on a larger group of countries.

Vogel (2002) has also used different transition regimes in his analysis. He interprets transition regimes as *"major ideal typical routes to adulthood characterised by timing, sequence, and social background of young adults, using nations as units of observation"* and applies the concept by focusing on a *welfare mix* (p. 276–277). The starting point of Vogel's analyses was to utilise three clusters of nations: a Nordic cluster ('institutional welfare regime' with high employment rates and social expenditures but weak family ties); a Southern cluster ('family welfare regime' with low employment rates and lower social expenditures but strong family ties); and a Central European cluster ('mixed welfare regime' located somewhere between the two previously mentioned regimes). Vogel tests how the institutional configuration between the labour market, welfare state and family is displayed when three different indicators—one for each institution—are combined. The results confirm the validity of the three clusters, but some deviations and outliers were identified. Vogel also examines specific transitions-to-adulthood markers empirically. He validates the well-known pattern of early home leaving in the Nordic cluster and delayed exit from the parental home in the Southern cluster. The Central European cluster is in an intermediate position. Vogel clearly indicates that opportunities provided by the labour market and welfare provisions have a substantial impact on young adults' transition behaviour. If these opportunities are limited or non-existent, transition to adulthood may not be very successful.

Toulemon (2010) examines transition to adulthood in Europe and possible convergence in behavioural patterns between countries and bases his grouping of countries on the analysis by Billari and Liefbroer (2008). The grouping of twenty-one European countries is, once again, based on earlier studies and geography instead of specific analyses. The groups of countries are *South*, *East*, *German-speaking countries*, *West* and *North*. Ireland and Cyprus have been excluded from the analysis "*in order to keep as homogeneous groups as possible*" (p. 9). In his analyses, Toulemon concentrates on the gender and cohort differences that can be identified when the importance given to specific transition events in transition-to-adulthood processes is examined. He also analyses the sequences of transition events. In the discussion section Toulemon indicates that his grouping was partly arbitrary, but entitles this by stating that "*grouping is necessary to have a global overview of the trends all over the continent*" (p. 21). The results show that there are major differences in the sequence of transition events across Europe, and the same applies to gender differences.

Billari and Liefbroer (2010) have tested whether the transition-to-adulthood pattern described as 'early, contracted and simple' could nowadays be

characterised as 'late, protracted and complex'[28] and whether Europe is on its way towards a new pattern of transition to adulthood. They compared 26 European countries and examined whether the timings of transition events and their sequences have converged or diversified. The analyses were first performed separately for each country, but the results were later also presented as a kind of summary for four different regions of Europe. These regions were created simply by grouping countries by region of Europe: *North*, *West*, *South* and *East*[29]. This was an interesting choice due to major differences within the regions. The median ages of people experiencing different transition events, for instance, differed considerably within the regions. Despite this, Billari and Liefbroer concluded that a convergence pattern will manifest itself in the transition-to-adulthood behaviour of Europeans in the foreseeable future.

Like Toulemon (2010), Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013) also focus their analyses on the gender differences that can be identified when the perceptions concerning the importance of four social transition markers (leaving the parental home, having a full-time job, living with a partner or spouse and becoming a parent) are examined. In addition to this aspect, they examine the perceptions concerning the age at which adulthood is reached. Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten's (2013) study covers twenty-five European countries which have been grouped into six categories based on earlier research. These categories are Northern Europe, the British Isles, Continental Western Europe, Southern Europe, Eastern-Central Europe, and Eastern Europe. Unlike many other researchers, Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten have separated the British Isles from Continental Western Europe and Eastern-Central Europe from Eastern Europe. The aim of these actions was to take into consideration "*the typology of welfare regimes and the cultural proximity of nations*" (p. 7). However, the country grouping is still based on

[28] Until the latter part of the 20th century, transition-to-adulthood patterns were often characterized as *early* (most demographic transitions happened early during young adulthood), *contracted* (the time span within which different transition events occurred was rather limited) and *simple* (there were only a few events that typically happened in a specific order). In their article, Billari and Liefbroer tested whether transition patterns could nowadays be described as *late* (most demographic transitions happen late during young adulthood), *protracted* (the time span between the first and the last transition is rather long) and *complex* (quite a large number of events happen during young adulthood and some of these events are repetitive). (Billari & Liefbroer 2010, 60.)

[29] Billari and Liefbroer (2010) present the results for Switzerland in all of the tables, but when the groups of countries are introduced in the 'Data and methods' chapter, Switzerland is not mentioned. However, it can be assumed that Switzerland belongs to the Western region of Europe.

geography, as in many other studies[30]. The results of the study indicate that there are considerable differences across Europe when it comes to the significance of various transition markers. Diversity was also identified when the opinions of women and men were compared. However, some surprising similarities were also recognised: in some cases, employment was almost as important to women as to men. As for family events, traditionally seen as women's domain, partnering and parenting were sometimes as important to men as they were to women. Spéder and colleagues even conclude that partnering and parenting are "*now unisex organizers of the life course*" (p. 13, 21). A uniform pattern was also found when perceptions concerning the age of adulthood were observed: men reached adulthood later than women, and there was only moderate diversity between countries.

In addition to the general transition-to-adulthood theme, more detailed classifications have also been used to group countries. Iacovou (2002), for instance, bases her transition models on transitions related to living arrangements (the transition out of the parental home, the transition from single status to living with a partner and the transition from childlessness to parenthood) and compares 13 European countries and the United States. Also in this study, three regional and geographical patterns emerged in Europe: a Southern European cluster, a Northern European cluster and a Nordic cluster. Iacovou also attempted to find similarities between her groupings and Esping-Andersen's schema of welfare states. She managed to find some, but parallels were scarce.

Another more detailed perspective comes from the work of Reher (1998). He divides Europe based on different family patterns. According to Reher, family has significant impact on life-course transitions. Based on historical facts, he draws a line between a) the north and centre of Europe (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the UK, much of Germany and Austria (and the United States) and b) the Mediterranean region (Italy, Portugal and Spain). However, Reher points out that boundaries are often not crystal clear, that sub-regional differences exist and that there are many exceptions in both contexts. Family patterns in North-Western Europe are based on weak family ties, leaving home at an early age and getting married later in life. The

[30] According to Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013), hierarchical clustering was nevertheless performed on the countries. Four markers of adulthood were used as clustering variables and the perceptions of women and men were analysed separately. Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten state that "*the results were consistent across clustering methods and distance measures, and they correspond to the classification used in the present paper*" (p.23).

Southern European pattern is characterized by strong family ties. Transition-to-adulthood events, such as finding a stable job, moving to adequate housing, leaving the parental household and getting married, tend to be closely intertwined.

As said, in all of the comparative studies mentioned above, existing groupings of European countries have been used as a starting point. The only exception in this rather large group of studies is Chanvril and Le Hay's (2008) report. They have divided European countries into five groups based on young adults' perceptions on the most important markers of adulthood: leaving the parental home, getting a full-time job, living with a spouse or partner and becoming a mother or father. Chanvril and Le Hay also examine the perceptions of men and women separately. In their study, the first group is called '*Emploi prédominant',* the employment-centred group, and it comprises Belgium, France, Ireland, the UK, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. The second group, '*Parentalité prédominant'*, the parenthood-centred group, includes Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Portugal. The third group, '*Départ du domicile parental prédominant*', the group where leaving the parental home is essential, comprises Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands and Switzerland. The fourth and fifth groups are simply referred to as '*Cas particulier*', in other words special cases. The fourth group includes Austria and the fifth group Germany and Spain. In both of these groups, full-time employment is important, especially for men. What separates these two groups is that women living in Austria perceive leaving the parental home as an important event, whereas in Germany and Spain becoming a parent, the traditional domain of women, is more important. One of the most interesting results in Chanvril and Le Hay's (2008) report most definitely is that the same transition markers are considered important in different parts of Europe. The results also indicate that country differences go beyond welfare state classes and/or geographical divides (see also Spéder, Murinkó & Settersten 2013, 21).

Table 6. Summary of European transition-to-adulthood classifications.

Author(s)	The indicators the transition-to-adulthood classification is based on	Number of countries compared in the study	Transition-to-adulthood groupings					
Vogel (2002)	welfare production (labour market, welfare state, family)	15 countries	**Nordic** DK, FI, SE (NL)		**Central European** BE, DE, FR, LU, NO, UK (PT)	**Southern** ES, GR, IE, IT, PT		
Walther & Pohl (2005)	socio-economic and institutional shape	13 countries	**Universalistic** DK, SE	**Liberal** UK	**Employment-centred** AT	**Sub-protective** ES, GR, IT, PT	**Post-socialist countries** BG, PL, RO, SL, SK	
Walther (2006)	socio-economic and institutional shape	10 countries	**Universalistic** DK, SE	**Liberal** IE, UK	**Employment-centred** DE, FR, NL	**Sub-protective** ES, IT, PT		
Chanvril & Le Hay (2008)	attitudes towards most important transition markers * Note: AT is classified as one, DE and ES as another 'special cases'	22 countries	**Départ du domicile parental predominant** DK, FI, NL, NO, SE, CH		**Emploi predominant** BE, EE, FR, HU, IE, SL, SK, UK		**Parentalité predominant** BG, PL, PT, RU, UA	
Billari & Liefbroer (2010)	geography	26 countries	**North** DK, FI, NO, SE		**West** AT, BE, DE, FR, IE, NL, UK	**South** CY, ES, IT, PT	**East** BG, EE, HU, LV, PL, RO, RU, SL, SK, UA	

Toulemon (2010)	geography	21 countries	**Nordic** DK, FI, NO, SE	**West** BE, FR, NL, UK	**German-speaking** AT, CH, DE	**South** ES, PT	**East** BG, EE, HU, PL, RU, SL, SK, UA	
Moreno Mínguez, López Peláez & Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo (2012)	attitudes towards most important transition markers	5 countries	**Individualistic attitudes** SE	**De-standardised attitudes** ES, NL, (SE)	**Standardised attitudes** DE, FR, ES	**Familist attitudes** DE, FR		
Spéder, Murinkó & Settersten (2013)	geography, welfare regimes and cultural proximity	25 countries	**Northern Europe** DK, FI, NO, SE	**British Isles** IE, UK	**Continental Western Europe** AT, BE, CH, DE, FR, NL	**Southern Europe** CY, ES, PT	**Eastern-Central Europe** HU, PL, SL, SK	**Eastern Europe** BG, EE, LV, RO, RU, UA
Reher (1998)	European family patterns	15 countries	**North and centre** DK, IS, NO, SE, BE, FR, IE, LU, NL, UK; much of DE and AT			**Mediterra-nean** ES, IT, PT		
Iacovou (2002)	living arrangements	13 European countries (+ US)	**Nordic** DK, FI, NL		**Northern** AT, BE, DE, FR, UK	**Southern** ES, GR, IE, IT, PT		

As Table 6 describes, there have been several attempts to capture the similarities or dissimilarities of transition-to-adulthood processes in different countries. *The starting point* of almost all previous comparative studies discussing transition-to-adulthood patterns has been to utilise existing groupings of European countries. A regime-type model that clusters groups of countries according to a specific rationale is often used. Thus, most previous studies group countries based on geography and/or welfare regimes and therefore most of the clustering of countries also resemble each other. The names of the clusters are based on geography or derived from the classification created by Esping-Andersen (1990) or from classifications by scholars who have later challenged Esping-Andersen's work (for an overview, see e.g. Arts & Gelissen 2002). Only the report by Chanvril and Le Hay adopts a different approach.

However, when previous studies on transition to adulthood are examined, it is important to bear in mind that categorising European countries into different clusters has not been the main purpose in most of the studies. The approach earlier studies have widely used is then deductive. Country clusters have been used to categorise numerous countries before the empirical analyses have been carried out. In other words, grouping the countries has been used as a tool for reducing the number of objects to be examined: it has been easier to examine a smaller number of clusters than a larger number of individual countries. Thus, the country clusters have been a means to an end and not an end in itself. The empirical analyses have then dealt with other questions relevant to transition-to-adulthood research. Despite this, if the regime-type model is used to cluster countries in transition-to-adulthood research, attention should be paid to justifying the country groupings and discussing their homogeneity. Are the clusters genuinely homogenous when the diversity of the wider contexts of transitions and transition policies are taken into consideration? It often seems that traditional classifications (e.g. the one by Esping-Andersen) are taken for granted without questioning their suitability for transition-to-adulthood research.

What has been missing from the earlier studies is an analytical discussion concerning the choices made. Discussions concerning the suitability of the country clusters used have been limited, even in cases where analyses have revealed rather large variation *within* clusters. Transition-to-adulthood regimes often include a number of differing welfare states, and indeed, many comparative studies have pointed out the persistent heterogeneity of European countries in terms of transition to adulthood—as well as in terms of social context and essential policy areas (e.g. Fussell & Gauthier 2008). Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013) have rightly noted that differences between European

countries go beyond welfare state regimes and suggest that despite individualization and globalization persistent value orientation and religious beliefs might maintain differences. Some researchers (e.g. Billari & Liefbroer 2010) have argued that a more homogenous transition-to-adulthood pattern might be emerging, but that European countries are still in different phases of this demographic transformation. The aim of this study is to offer a fresh view on transition-to-adulthood classifications and create country clusters that are based on a thorough analysis. The next chapter will present the research design and describe the selected approach in detail.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to perform a cross-country comparison of the transition-to-adulthood patterns and timings of young adults and analyse the relationship between these patterns and timings. Another aim is to gain new insight on late transitions and to clarify the concept of incomplete transitions affecting young Europeans' life courses. Based on these distinct points of view, the main goal is to construct transition-to-adulthood clusters describing the current situation in Europe. Transition to adulthood has been widely discussed as a general subject, but there is a lack of systematic and comparative empirical research covering the combination of events constituting the transition-to-adulthood process. When previous research has used a comparative perspective, it has been based on existing country groupings developed for other purposes. This study contributes to filling these gaps by focusing on several events affecting the transition-to-adulthood process instead of analysing a single event, by comparing a wide range of countries, and by creating country clusters that are based on a thorough analysis. This combination of approaches provides a novel perspective on transition-to-adulthood research.

Europe provides an interesting setting for the comparative study of transition to adulthood. European societies show substantial heterogeneity in institutional arrangements, cultural heritage and economic life. This is why the social indicators related to transition to adulthood also differ to a significant extent (Fernández Cordón 1997, 582) and make Europe a challenging research area. In order to be able to describe European transition-to-adulthood patterns as comprehensively as possible, the number of countries included in this study has been kept as high as possible while taking into account the limits set by the selected data sources. Every effort has been made to maximise the comparability of the results and, thus, only those European countries which are present in all the data sources have been included in the study.

The empirical part of this study will cover 20 European countries: Norway and nineteen European Union member states. The countries under examination are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. They represent a wide array of social, economic and political systems and welfare and family traditions.

One should also noticed that this study focuses on national comparisons, but transition-to-adulthood patterns also vary within countries, for instance along urban-rural, north-south and east-west axes. Other sources of variation typically include the level of education, social class, gender, religious beliefs and generation. As these matters are not taken into account in this study, making extensive generalizations based on the national comparisons should be avoided.

This study compares countries that provide young people with very different circumstances for their transition to adulthood. Comparing cases that are as diverse as possible is justified: it makes it possible to trace similar processes (transition to adulthood) which do not (necessarily) originate from the same premises (e.g. the reasons for leaving home or postponing childbearing differ) but which will lead to a similar outcome (becoming an adult). It is also possible for transition processes to remain incomplete. This means that only some of the transition events related to transition to adulthood are fulfilled. A person can be considered an adult despite an incomplete transition process. Differing processes can therefore also lead to a similar outcome in this case.

In this thesis, the term 'young adults' refers to 18- to 34-year-olds. According to Rindfuss (1991, 494, 496) "*young adult years could also be called demographically dense … because more demographic action occurs during these years than during any other stage in the life course*". Indeed, during these years young people may be students, job seekers, employees or unemployed. They may live with their parents, live independently or cohabit, and they may or may not have children. They may also be anything from single or married to divorced or widowed. As it is impossible to select one factor to characterise transition to adulthood in all situations (Choroszewicz & Wolff 2010), it is also difficult to provide an explicit definition of a young adult.

The age range used to define young adults in this study (18–34) is wide, but today's young people typically encounter transition-to-adulthood markers between the ages of 18 and 34. These markers include finishing school, entering the labour market, leaving the parental home, forming a partnership and having a child (e.g. Shanahan et al. 2008, 225; Furstenberg 2013, 30; Shanahan 2000). At 18, the lower limit of the age range, young people do not typically regard themselves as adults but more as being on the threshold of making long-term decisions and commitments (see also Arnett 2000). This is, however, the age at which many of the transition events normally begin to take place and the age at which young adults are often considered to be of full legal age. The upper age limit was set at 34 mainly due to the increase in the length of time spent in education and in looking for a stable job, the trend towards later departure from one's parental home, and

the postponements occurring in family formation. In most cases, decisions concerning occupation and family life have been made by the age of 34. The same age range is widely used (e.g. Knijn 2012; Settersten, Furstenberg & Rumbaut 2008), but other ranges, such as 15 or 16 to 25 (e.g. Scarpetta, Sonnet & Manfredi 2010) or 18 to 30[31] (e.g. Rindfuss 1991, 494) have also appeared in research.

5.1 Research questions

This study aims to examine the following aspects of young Europeans' lives: a) the subjectively described importance given to different transition-to-adulthood markers, b) the objectively measured timings of these transitions, c) the interrelationship between the subjectively described transition markers and their actual occurrence, d) prevalence of late and incomplete transitions to adulthood, e) prevalence of accumulation of incomplete transitions to adulthood, and f) the different combinations of transition events happening late and their prevalence. The purpose is to build a set of European transition-to-adulthood patterns based on these aspects. These topics will shed light on the transition-to-adulthood process in 20 European countries and make it possible to track different transition-to-adulthood patterns in a different way.

In previous studies, analyses of transition to adulthood have tended to focus on single events rather than on the combination of events forming the transition-to-adulthood process. There are many studies on leaving the parental home (e.g. Iacovou 2011; Isoniemi 2009) or on living arrangements in general (e.g. Fokkema & Liefbroer 2008), the transition from school to work (e.g. Bynner 2013; Wyn & Woodman 2006), union formation (e.g. Drobnič & Knijn 2012) and transition to parenthood (e.g. Oinonen 2008; Kneale & Joshi 2008). These studies typically examine only one or just a few countries. Nevertheless, a single approach is in principle not sufficient for interpreting all the differences related to transition to adulthood (see also Billari 2004).

If a broader range of countries has been studied, research has largely focused on single events or combinations of finance-related events (e.g. Brzinsky-Fay 2007; Müller & Gangl 2003) or family-related events (e.g. Sobotka & Toulemon 2008; Perelli-Harris, Kreyenfeld, Sigle-Rushton, Keizer, Lappegård, Jasilioniene,

[31] Rindfuss (1991, 494) has claimed that the age 30 represents the end of the young adult years and that "*the 30th birthday is often a time for taking stock*". However, the timetable of adulthood has seen some changes since the publication of Rindfuss's work.

Berghammer & Di Giulio 2012; Forssén & Ritakallio 2006). Studies that have tried to systematically capture and summarise the cross-national similarities and differences of all these events are less common. These studies are listed in Table 6. Edited books (e.g. Knijn 2012; Settersten et al. 2008; Corijn & Klijzing 2001) which include comparative approaches also exist, but the number of countries examined is limited (often up to 10) or the books are mainly based on case studies of different European countries. Studies comparing entire transition-to-adulthood processes in multiple countries are scarce. One reason for this is the lack of comparative empirical data, and particularly the lack of data covering many countries. Because of these reasons, the transition process has seldom been examined in a sufficiently holistic manner (see e.g. Macmillan 2005).This study attempts to bridge this gap by examining four different aspects of transition to adulthood as described in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, this study will examine the subjective importance young adults give to four different transition events: leaving the parental home, getting a full-time job, living with a partner or spouse and becoming a mother or father. The purpose is to clarify which transition markers young Europeans perceive as salient and to consider the number of important transition markers recognised by young adults by using multi-country survey data, the ESS. The opinions of the respondents will be used to build country clusters that describe the important transition markers in different areas.

Secondly, the focus will move to the objectively measured timing of four different transitions. At first, the emphasis is simply on the timing of four transition events. Mean ages describing when different transitions take place in different countries, gathered from various statistical databases, are presented. These timings are used to examine the potential variation in the ages at which various steps towards adulthood take place[32]. This approach also makes possible to group countries. After this, the approach is broadened by examining the interrelationship of the values of the most important transition markers and the actual occurrence of the markers.

Thirdly, timings will be examined more closely by concentrating on 30- to 34-year-old young adults who still live with their parents, have only attained a basic education, do not live in a consensual union or do not have a child. In other words,

[32] As stated before (e.g. Biggart & Walther 2006; Moreno Mínguez et al. 2012), many transition events have become reversible and the ages at which specific events actually happen are hard to define. Leaving the parental home, for example, is often a very gradual process and in many countries rarely a one-off event. The same could be said of labour market transitions. Events related to education and labour market integration alternate in young people's lives and contain withdrawals and returns. These reversible transitions are, however, not included in the scope of this thesis.

the focus is on people who have not experienced specific transition events. The aim is to determine how typical late and incomplete transitions are in different countries. Based on this information, a third set of country clusters is created. These clusters reflect the presence of incomplete transitions. Another two aspects that will be examined when analysing delayed and incomplete transitions are a) the accumulation of incomplete transitions and b) whether specific combinations of transition events, such as family-related events, are more typically delayed than others and if country variation exists. To conduct these analyses, another set of multi-country survey data, EU-SILC from the year 2012, is used.

Fourthly, this study will track and identify relevant transition-to-adulthood patterns which describe the current environment for becoming an adult in Europe. These patterns will be comprised of the clusters of nations described above. Categorizing European countries into different clusters fulfils at least two purposes: it allows creating an overview by systematising a sample of countries and it provides a rationale to cluster seemingly similar countries and to analyse similarities and differences between these clusters. In this study, this categorization has been performed by using clusters instead of 20 separate countries. If need be, these clusters could be used as a framework for exploring specific cases. (Cf. Mayer 2005, 36; see also Walther & Pohl 2005, 134.)

5.2 Data, variables and methods used

It is often challenging to conduct comparable analyses because of the diverse and complex nature of data sets. Similarly to other comparative studies concerning transition to adulthood (e.g. Corijn & Klijzing 2001; Knijn 2012), this study also combines different types of quantitative information. The information has been gathered from several different sources, and information from different years has also been used. Thus, the situation is not ideal, but every attempt has been made to gain a comprehensive picture of transition to adulthood using the data available. Two main data sets are used in this study:

- the cross-sectional European Social Survey (ESS) data set, wave 3 (2006/2007), and
- the cross-sectional European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) data set (2012).

In addition to using these data sets, cross-country statistical data have also been obtained from other international sources:

- Eurostat,
- the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Family Database, and
- the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) Statistical Database.

Analyses based on ESS data include young adults between the ages of 18 and 34, whereas analyses based on EU-SILC data only include young adults between the ages of 30 and 34. All other statistical data covers people of all ages as separate information on different age groups was not available.

European Social Survey, ESS

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a biennial cross-sectional multi-country survey conducted since 2002. A total of 22 countries participated in the first survey in 2002, and in 2012 the survey covered 29 countries. The aim of ESS is to measure and explain trends in attitudes, beliefs and values across countries in Europe and its close neighbours. In order to achieve the best possible comparability among countries included in the survey, large efforts are devoted to guarantee a high level of data quality. These efforts include the central planning and supervision of questionnaire development, the translation of the questionnaire, and sample selection procedures. (European Social Survey 2015; Billari & Liefbroer 2010, 63.)

Each wave of the ESS consists of a core questionnaire with standard questions asked in every wave and additional, rotating modules which are prepared for each specific wave. In 2006/2007 (round 3), two modules were developed covering personal and social wellbeing and the organization of the life course in Europe. One of the rotating modules, 'The Timing of Life: The Organization of the Life course in Europe', comprised relevant questions for the purposes of this study. A standardized questionnaire including retrospective questions about timing and sequencing of life events, for instance occurrences of leaving home, employment and births, was used in all countries. As the same questions were asked in each country, the results are directly comparable.

The weakness of the ESS 2006/2007 survey, especially from the cultural perspective, is that Italy and Greece are not included in it. This is particularly problematic because Southern European countries are typically identified as the extreme cases in Europe when it comes to transition to adulthood. ESS was, however, the best available data set that included the most relevant questions for

the purposes of this thesis and for performing a comparative analysis between European countries. The fact that the results of the survey are directly comparable across countries was particularly important. The variation of response rates and the absolute number of respondents across countries are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Response rates and the absolute number of respondents (total and 18- to 34-year-olds) by country in 2006/2007 (ESS, round 3).

	Response rate, %	**Absolute number of respondents, total**	**Absolute number of respondents, 18- to 34-year-olds**
Austria	64.0	2 406	616
Belgium	61.0	1 798	414
Bulgaria	64.8	1 400	277
Cyprus	67.3	995	238
Denmark	50.8	1 505	280
Estonia	65.0	1 517	375
Finland	64.4	1 896	425
France	46.0	1 987	420
Germany	52.9	2 916	590
Hungary	66.0	1 516	307
Ireland	50.4	1 626	445
Netherlands	59.8	1 889	380
Norway	64.4	1 749	429
Poland	70.1	1 718	505
Portugal	72.7	2 220	474
Slovakia	73.2	1 766	554
Slovenia	64.9	1 474	352
Spain	66.2	1 876	528
Sweden	65.5	1 926	474
United Kingdom	52.1	2 293	500

Source: Matsuo, Symons, Beullens & Billiet 2009, 48; Author's calculations.

Variables and methods used in analyses based on ESS data

The respondents of the ESS survey were asked the following question:

To be considered an adult how important is it for a woman/man to have[33]

- *left the parental home (questions D20a and D20b)?*
- *a full-time job (questions D21a and D21b)?*
- *lived with a spouse or a partner (questions D22a and D22b)?*
- *become a mother or a father (questions D23a and D23b)?*[34]

The originally five-point (1 meaning "not at all important" and 5 meaning "very important") Likert-scale was recoded for the purposes of this study and only the answers "important" and "very important"[35] were used in the analysis. This made it possible to identify the respondents who thought that a specific event was relevant.

When this question battery is analysed, three things should be kept in mind. Firstly, both the opinions towards women and towards men are of interest in this study, but the same respondents did not answer for both sexes. Instead, a split ballot design was used, meaning that half of the randomly chosen respondents were asked about men and half about women[36]. (European Social Survey 2014.) Secondly, the question regarding living with a spouse or a partner as a marker of adulthood can be seen as an equivalent to forming a stable partnership—especially as informal cohabiting unions are nowadays often seen as a prelude or an alternative to marriage. Thirdly, only the answers of respondents aged 18–34 at the

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[33] The way this question is asked in the European Social Survey is *somehow* a combination of two dimensions: the definition people give on adulthood (individualistic indicator) is pooled with demographic markers (four different traditional markers) related to transition to adulthood. Settersten (2007, 260) describes this kind of interconnection well in his study arguing that *"Demographic realities and subjective worlds are also intimately connected – for example, demographic realities shape what it means to be an adult and the things that members of a nation or culture value, expect, or try to attain. The reverse is also true, as these subjective phenomena bubble up to affect demographic realities."*

[34] The fifth of 'Big 5', finishing school, was not questioned in ESS data. The reason why finishing school as a mark of adulthood was left unquestioned in ESS was schooling system's heterogeneity in Europe. Another reason might relate to the fact that according to many previous studies (e.g. Arnett 1997, 19-20) finishing education has simply lost its prominence in transition to adulthood process.

[35] These answers were merged with the 'important' category.

[36] Regarding questions on what defines an 'adult', there were no substantial differences between the answers of men and women (Toulemon 2010).

time of the survey have been analysed. People may interpret the question differently: some people may refer to their own experience, while others may use someone else's experience as a basis for their answer. Respondents who were 18 at the time of the survey may not have experienced specific transition events yet, for instance.

There are three main interests when ESS data is used: to determine which adulthood markers young adults in different European countries emphasise, to examine the number of important transition markers recognised by young adults and to build country clusters based on transition-to-adulthood markers. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) will be used to build the country clusters. Hierarchical cluster analysis is an exploratory tool that is useful when an inductive approach is used and when a small number of objects needs to be clustered (Metsämuuronen 2003, 725). It is a technique used to divide data objects into groups in such a way that objects, or in this case countries, in the same group are more similar or related to one another than objects in other groups. The technique allows users to pre-specify the number of clusters, but does not require them to do so. This is an advantage since cluster analyses are often exploratory. The limitation of this kind of grouping is that it neglects the heterogeneity within each country. (E.g. Ketchen & Shook 1996.) As the purpose of this study is to observe possible heterogeneity or homogeneity between countries, clustering provides a suitable methodological approach.

Hierarchical cluster analysis offers many alternatives for defining intergroup similarity. The most popular methods are a) single linkage which merges the similarities of the closest pair, b) complete linkage which merges the similarity of the furthest pair[37] and c) average linkage which takes into account the average similarity between groups and merges in each iteration the pair of clusters with the highest cohesion. The most suitable method largely depends on the data being analysed. If the clusters are clearly distinct, single linkage will be the method to use to get the most adequate results. Single linkage can, however, produce 'chaining' where a sequence of close, poorly separated but distinct observations are merged at an early stage. This may result in clusters which contain observations that are considerably dissimilar. In general, this chaining problem does not occur in complete linkage and average linkage, and average linkage is better suited for analysing outliers than complete linkage. It is often recommended that researchers

[37] Single linkage is also known as nearest neighbour clustering or minimum method and complete linkage as furthest neighbour clustering or maximum method (e.g. Bratchell 1989; Yim & Ramdeen 2015).

test different methods, compare the results and create the final clusters based on these tests. Due to the subjective nature of the method, it is not the most favourable approach, but similar shortcomings are also found in many other techniques. (E.g. Bratchell 1989, 115–117; Yim & Ramdeen 2015, 10–11.) For the purposes of this study, all three methods were tested. Average linkage was chosen because it proved to be the most explicit method[38].

The average linkage method and the other methods mentioned above progress through a series of steps by adding single elements to clusters[39]. Step one of the average linkage method involves defining the distance[40] between two clusters by determining the average distance between data points in the first cluster and data points in the second cluster. In step two of the process, and in each step after that, the two clusters that have the smallest average linkage distance will be combined. The process continues until, eventually, all objects have been grouped into one large cluster. The hierarchical clustering process can be represented as a tree diagram or dendrogram which provides an interpretable visualization of the data and a useful summarization tool. The agglomeration schedule, a table that details each step of the clustering procedure, might help in interpreting the dendrogram as it shows the coefficient values. (Yim & Ramdeen 2015, 13–15; Metsämuuronen 2003, 725–728; Ervasti 2003, 15–16; Ketchen & Shook 1996, 444–445.)

European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)

The second data[41] used as a data source in this study is the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) data set. The EU-SILC project was launched in 2004 in 13 EU Member States and in two other European countries[42]. EU25 (together with Iceland and Norway) coverage began in 2005. Bulgaria launched EU-SILC in 2006, while Romania, Switzerland and Turkey

[38] More detailed justifications concerning the choice of method are presented in the empirical sections of this dissertation (section 6.1 and section 8.1).
[39] This is also known as the agglomerative method.
[40] The distance between clusters is determined using the squared Euclidean distance.
[41] According to Eurostat (2014), "EU-SILC is based on the idea of a 'common framework' in contrast with the concept of a 'common survey'. The common framework is defined by harmonised lists of target primary (annual) and secondary (every four years or less frequently) variables, by a recommended design for implementing EU-SILC, by common requirements (for imputation, weighting, sampling errors calculation), common concepts (household and income) and classifications (ISCO, NACE, ISCED) aiming at maximising comparability of the information produced."
[42] The EU countries include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. The other two countries included in the survey are Iceland and Norway.

introduced the survey in 2007. EU-SILC's aim is to annually collect timely and comparable cross-sectional and longitudinal multidimensional micro-data on income, poverty, social exclusion and living conditions. The survey also provides information on the demographic and educational characteristics of the EU population. Similarly to the ESS survey, EU-SILC also consists of a core questionnaire with primary variables. Standard questions are asked in every wave at two different levels: the household level and the individual level. In addition, rotating modules, secondary variables, are collected for each specific wave. The same topic is repeated every five years or less frequently. (Eurostat 2015c.)

In this study, the cross-sectional data with primary variables from the year 2012 are used. In order to maximize the comparability of all the results in this study, the EU-SILC data used cover the same 20 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) as the other data and statistics used in this study. The variation of response rates and the absolute number of respondents across countries are presented in Table 8. Table 8 also illustrates the main advantage of the data: the number of cases in all countries is so high that it enables analyses even within small age groups, such as the age group including 30- to 34-year-olds.

EU-SILC was not devised for studying transition to adulthood. Thus, many background and socio-economic variables are missing. Although these limitations exist, the main advantages of using EU-SILC are that it comprises recent data on multiple European countries, including EU member states in the eastern part of Europe, and that it has a unique sample size. Furthermore, the data have been harmonized by national statistical offices and Eurostat in order to enhance comparability[43].

[43] In order to conduct a comparable analysis, it is essential to capture the same information across countries. Therefore, Eurostat requires all participating countries to follow common guidelines and use the same measured concepts and variables. However, data-collection modes differ among countries: in some countries the data are collected using telephone-interviews, whereas others use face-to-face interviews, mail surveys or web surveys. Further, there are also differences in how countries define sample persons. Most countries use household-based samples where sample persons are all those (over the national age threshold) living in a set of households at the time of the first wave of data collection. However, a minority of countries (Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Slovenia) use administrative registers as the basis for their surveys. In these countries, the initial sample is *one* of the individuals living in the household and the survey interview is carried out only with that sample person. For all other members of the household, defined as 'co-residents' of each the sample person, a large amount of data comes from the administrative registers. (Iacovou, Kaminska & Levy 2012.)

Table 8. Response rates and the absolute number of respondents (total, 18- to 34-year-olds and 30- to 34-year-olds) by country in 2012, EU-SILC data.

	Response rate, %	Absolute number of respondents, total	Absolute number of respondents, 18- to 34-year-olds	Absolute number of respondents, 30- to 34-year-olds
Austria	77.1	13 910	2 567	756
Belgium	59.5	13 951	2 785	867
Bulgaria	83.2	14 601	2 615	739
Cyprus	93.6	13 379	3 424	901
Denmark	42.2	13 352	1 962	508
Estonia	76.6	14 257	3 257	736
Finland	79.8	25 370	4 683	1 250
France	82.4	28 534	5 371	1 540
Germany	75.9	27 938	4 137	1 365
Hungary	88.8	28 427	6 067	1 757
Ireland	n/a	11 891	2 196	826
Netherlands	83.9	24 961	4 119	1 190
Norway	53.4	15 532	2 989	727
Poland	77.3	37 123	8 351	2 336
Portugal	93.8	15 965	2 745	809
Slovakia	91.2	15 463	4 334	1 014
Slovenia	76.6	28 064	6 846	1 887
Spain	77.2	33 573	6 297	1 993
Sweden	60.5	16 591	3 216	811
United Kingdom	62.8	23 420	4 261	1 466
Total		*416 302*	*82 222*	*23 478*

Variables and methods used in analyses based on EU-SILC data

When late and incomplete transitions were examined, only young adults aged 30 to 34 were included in the analyses. The selected transition events were dummy coded with 'have not experienced the transition' as zero and with 'have

experienced the transition' as one[44]. Further, while concentrating only on incomplete transitions, the analyses focused on 1) how many transition events 30- to 34-year-olds have experienced in each country (in other words, the accumulation of incomplete transitions was measured) and 2) what kind of combinations of experienced or not experienced transition events are most typical in each country.

The statements illustrating not experienced transitions and the variables used are the following:

- living with parents: the statement is assessed on the basis of the variables Father ID (RB220) and / or Mother ID (RB230)[45]. These variables enable analysis of the household composition;
- only basic education: the statement is based on the highest ISCED level attained (PE040) and describes the situation where the highest level attained is lower secondary education or lower;
- not living in a consensual union: the statement indicates that a young person does not live in the same household with his/her partner (PB200)[46];
- not having a child under 18 years: the statement is assessed on the basis of the variables Father ID (RB220), Mother ID (RB230) and Age at the date of the interview (RX010).

To get a more detailed picture, it would have been interesting to also examine 30- to 34-year-old young adults who were outside the labour markets. The EU-SILC data contains the question 'Self-defined current economic status' (that is, the person's own perception of his / her main activity, and thus, it differs, for example, from the definition used in the ILO). People who have answered to this question are either employed (working full- or part-time or self-employed working full- or part-time) or classified as 'being outside the labour market'. In the latter case they are unemployed; pupils, students, in further training or in unpaid work experience;

[44] The whole list of variables used and their values and labels are presented in Table 1 in the Appendices.

[45] Variables RB220 and RB230 include step, adoptive and foster fathers or mothers but exclude those living with other relatives (e.g. grandparents) (Choroszewicz & Wolff 2010, 10).

[46] For a young couple, living with parent(s) means that the couple lives with the parent(s) of one of the partners. This is not unusual in the eastern part of Europe (e.g. Dykstra et al. 2013).

in retirement or in early retirement or they have given up business; permanently disabled and/or unfit to work; in compulsory military or community service; fulfilling domestic tasks and care responsibilities; or in some other way inactive. When this question was examined in more detail, however, a gender-specific distribution was revealed. It appears that those outside the labour market are mainly women, and because of the age range (30- to 34-year-olds) these women are most likely fulfilling their care responsibilities[47]. In Austria, the share of female respondents was 84.4%, in Cyprus 61.1%, in the Netherlands 78.2%, and in Poland 73.2%, for instance.

Nevertheless, there are a few aspects that should be taken into consideration: Firstly, the 'not having a child' statement means that a person has never had a child. Secondly, the question concerning the level of education attained also describes the permanence perspective. A degree that has once been completed cannot be taken away. The other statements, living with parents and not living in a consensual union, include the possibility of transition reversals: young people might return to the parental home after living elsewhere and people may first live with a partner and then return to being single or living with their parents, for instance.

When EU-SILC data is used, the analyses only examine 30- to 34-year-old young adults. There are three main interests: to find out how typical incomplete transitions are in different countries; to create country clusters using hierarchical cluster analysis[48] and describe incomplete transitions; and to analyse the different combinations of transition events and their prevalence.

Statistics

The timing of four different transition events, the age at which young adults leave the parental home, the age at which they start their first job, the age at which they

[47] Although women's participation in the labour market has risen dramatically and the traditional division of labour has changed so that Esping-Andersen (2002, 88), for example, has argued that the masculinisation of the female life course has brought about the model of adult worker which has replaced the more traditional male breadwinner model, women still seem to take care of the majority of care responsibilities. In Finland, for instance, institutionally supported child home care allowances targeted at parents staying at home to look after children under the age of 3 are mainly used by women. (See e.g. Repo 2010.) This gendered perspective might have an effect on women's stable integration into the labour force. In the long run, it definitely means that there is more discontinuity in women's work biographies.

[48] The idea of the hierarchical cluster analysis was explained on the pages 69–70.

have their first child and the age at which they get married for the first time, will be determined based on the mean ages at which young adults experience these transitions. There are three matters that should be taken into account at this point. Firstly, the ages at which specific transition events happen are determined based on mean ages instead of median ages. This is dictated by necessity: it was not possible to obtain median statistics in any of the statistical databases. The disadvantage of using mean ages instead of median ages is that a single high or low value will have a significant impact on the mean age. Secondly, various statistical databases will be used since it was not possible to gain all the information needed from one database. Thus, the results will not be based on a single data source. Thirdly, one might question why statistical data has been used instead of microdata[49]. Indeed, it would have been logical to utilize the same microdata in the timing related analyses as in the other analyses included in this study, especially when the ESS 2006/2007 data set contains questions related to the timings of all the transition events examined in this thesis. There is also a question in the EU-SILC data set defining the age at which young people have begun their first regular job. However, the other age-specific questions concerning different transition events are missing from that data set.

The ESS questions concerning leaving the parental home, starting the first job, entering into a first union and becoming a parent were "*Have you ever been in paid employment or a paid apprenticeship of 20 hours or more per week for at least 3 months?", "Have you ever lived with any spouse or partner for three months or more?"* and *"Have you ever given birth to/fathered a child?*". If respondents answered 'yes' to these questions, the subsequent question was formulated "*In what year did you first…"* and for each of these events the year in which the events occurred was reported. The question concerning leaving the parental home had been formulated slightly differently ("*In what year, if ever, did you first leave the parental home, that is start living in separate accommodation from your parent(s) for 2 months or more?"*), but the same information was acquired. The problem with the ESS data concerning these questions is that there is a notable amount of missing cases. When the question concerning the age of leaving the parental home is examined, the results of Austria, for instance, includes 1 679 valid and 726

[49] It would have been possible to use the microdata of the Generations and Gender Survey for the purposes of this study. Its first wave (collected in different years between 2002 and 2013 depending on the country) contains 19 countries, but only 15 of them correspond to the countries included in this study. Its second wave (also collected in different years depending on the country) contains 12 countries and only six of them correspond to the countries included in this study. Therefore, the data would only have offered useful information about a limited number of countries.

missing cases. In the case of Slovakia, the answers to the question concerning the age at which young people have started their first full-time job includes 1 142 valid and 624 missing cases.

Furthermore, the mean ages in the ESS data are systematically lower than the mean ages recently released by statistical databases. This is because the ESS covers a wide range of cohorts from the early 20th century onwards while statistics from different databases give mean ages at which young women have their first child in a given year. According to the ESS, for example, the mean age at which young people have their first child is 25.9 years in Germany. According to the OECD Family Database, the estimated average age is 29.4.

Due to these discrepancies, the mean ages at which different transitions take place have been gathered from the following databases:

- *Mean age at which young adults leave the parental home*: Eurostat's (2016g) "estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household" statistics are used to determine the age at which young adults leave the parental home. This information is from the year 2015.
- *Mean age at which young adults start their first job*: The average age at which young people start their first job is a more problematic variable as none of the statistical databases collect information on first jobs. Therefore, statistical information on the "average age when leaving formal education by ISCED[50] 1997 level" (Eurostat 2016h) and the "average time between leaving formal education and starting the first job" (Eurostat 2016i) are used. The age at which young adults start their first full-time job is calculated based on these statistics. Both of these information are from the year 2009.
- *Mean age at which young <u>women</u> have their first child*: The timing of *motherhood* is best expressed by the mean age at first birth. In this case, the transition does not apply to all young adults, but only to young women. OECD Family Database (2016) collects appropriate statistic for the purposes of this study. This information is from the year 2014.

[50] ISCED is the abbreviation for The International Standard Classification of Education.

- *Mean age at which young adults get married*: Statistics on age at first marriage[51] are derived from UNECE (2016). This information is from the year 2012[52].

Statistical information is not only used to present the mean ages at which different transition events happen, but also to analyse the interrelationships of values (of the most important transition markers) given to different adulthood markers and the ages at which events actually occur. This is carried out by using scatterplots. A scatterplot is a graph which plots a score on one variable against a score on another. In spite of its simplicity, it visually indicates the type and strength of the relationship between two variables. In addition to this, it aids the interpretation of the correlation coefficient. (Field 2005, 113.) In each scatterplot, a correlation coefficient (r) and a squared correlation coefficient (or coefficient of determination) (R^2) are presented.

5.3 Summary of the research design

Figure 4 summarizes the research questions and the data and variables used and presents the structure of the empirical part of this study.

[51] Statistical information on the average ages, mean or median, of forming a stable partnership was not found. Nevertheless, "*to have lived with a spouse/partner"* could be seen consistent with forming a stable partnership—especially when informal cohabiting unions are nowadays seen as a prelude or, more and more often, an alternative to marriage. Statistical and comparable information on the average ages of people getting married for the first time could easily be found.

[52] The information from Ireland is from the year 2011, and France and the United Kingdom from the year 2010.

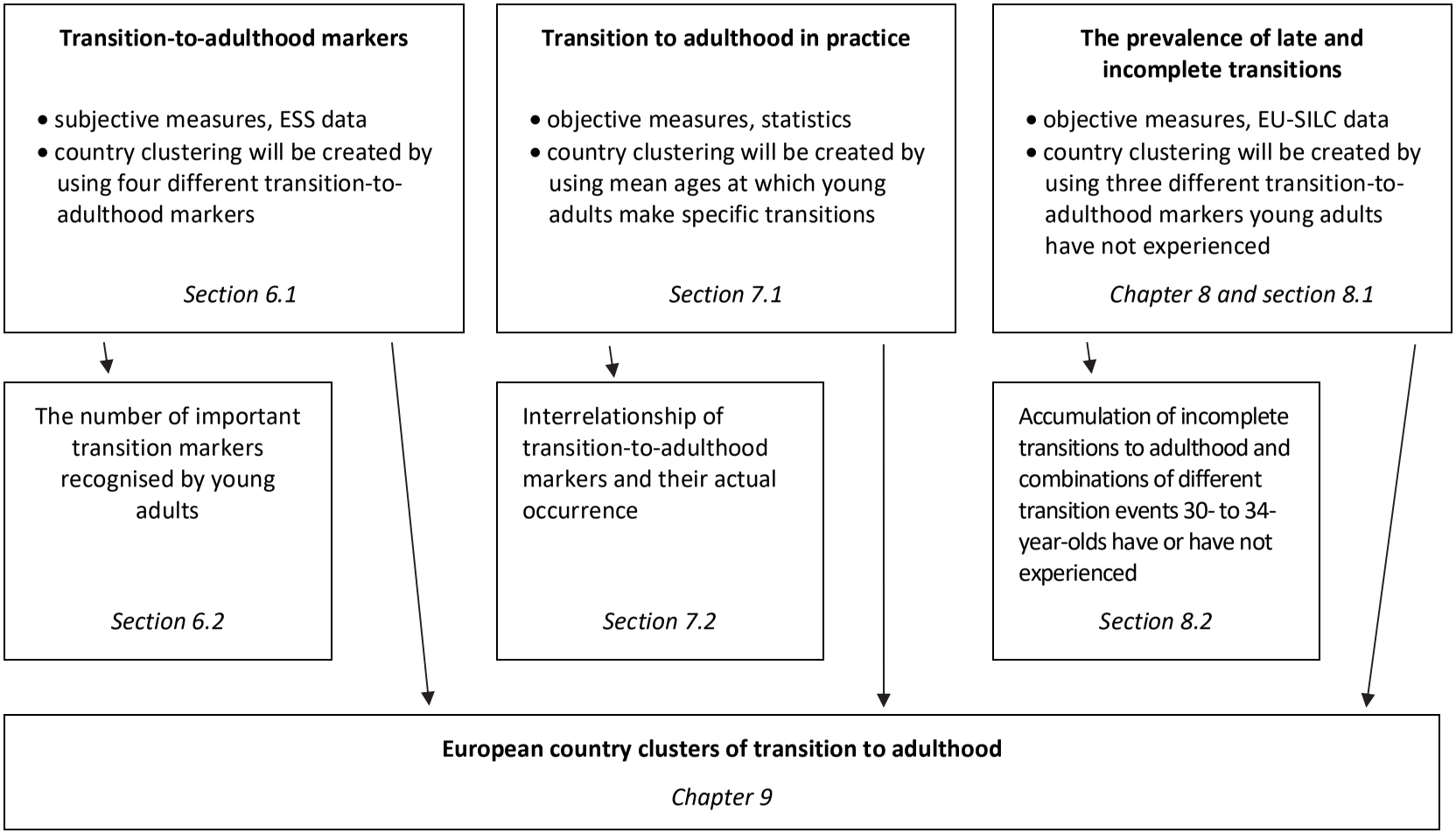

Figure 4. Research design: a cross-national study of transition to adulthood in 20 European countries.

6 COUNTRY CLUSTERS BASED ON IMPORTANT TRANSITION MARKERS

6.1 Country clusters from the perspective of important transition markers

In this study, the concept of transition-to-adulthood *clusters* is used to define similar and differing patterns that describe how young Europeans define and assess adulthood. In order to build these clusters, the differences and similarities observed among 20 European countries will next be discussed based on ESS data and the question "*To be considered an adult how important is it for a woman/man to have 1) left the parental home?, 2) a full-time job?, 3) lived with a spouse/partner?, and 4) become a mother/father?".* The idea is to quantify the importance of these four key markers in the process of transition to adulthood based on the responses of young adults.

Table 9 indicates which transition markers were emphasised in different European countries—leaving the parental home in Finland, having a first job in Ireland and becoming a mother or a father in Portugal, for instance. Based on young adults' opinions on what markers of adulthood they considered important, it was possible to create four different country clusters:

1) the independent living cluster,
2) the employment-centred cluster,
3) the individual independence cluster, and
4) the high requirements cluster.

This clustering was also verified by using hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA). For this analysis, the average linkage method yielded the most satisfactory result (see Figure 3 and Table 2 and Table 3 in the Appendices[53]).

[53] Both Table 2 and Table 3 in the Appendices show that there is an enormous jump in the coefficient values between stages 18 and 19. This can be seen extremely clearly in Table 3 (complete linkage). One could question why Bulgaria was not excluded from the analysis or why it did not form its own cluster. Cluster analysis is a data reduction method and, thus, clusters containing only one (or a few) observations are undesirable. In addition, the results in Table 9 (next page) support including Bulgaria in the high-requirements cluster.

Table 9. "To be considered an adult, how important is it for a woman/man to have…" Those young adults (18- to 34-year-olds) who answered 'important' or 'very important'*, (%).

		Left the parental home	A full-time job	Lived with a spouse/ partner	Become a mother/ father
The independent living cluster	FI	**56**	27	8	5
	NO	**51**	27	5	8
	NL	**38**	25	11	14
	SE	**43**	17	4	5
	mean	*47*	*24*	*7*	*8*
The employment- centred cluster	IE	30	**49**	11	12
	UK	29	**47**	9	14
	BE	29	**49**	14	22
	SL	30	**42**	19	22
	HU	19	**33**	13	13
	SK	17	**44**	17	19
	ES	26	**33**	16	23
	mean	*25.7*	*42.4*	*14.1*	*17.9*
The individual independence cluster	AT	48	**55**	22	19
	EE	45	**51**	23	29
	DE	**43**	38	24	32
	DK	**66**	35	18	34
	mean	*50.5*	*44.8*	*21.8*	*28.5*
The high requirements cluster	PL	28	**47**	37	45
	PT	32	49	46	**56**
	CY	42	**64**	43	53
	FR	47	**65**	30	46
	BG	33	**72**	53	65
	mean	*36.4*	*59.4*	*41.8*	*53*
	Total mean	*37.6*	*43.5*	*21.2*	*26.8*

* It is important to bear in mind that the way questions are asked in ESS does not necessarily reflect the respondents' own experiences. The same standards and frames are not necessarily applied to 'the other' (person, woman, man) as to oneself. (See also Shanahan et al. 2008, 230.)

Note: The highest values are shown in bold.

In order to be included in one of the clusters, a country must meet the following criteria: (1) at least one-third of the respondents[54] in a country indicate that a specific marker of adulthood is important and (2) at least one-third of the respondents in that country do not view any other marker as important. In other words, one marker should clearly rise above the others. These requirements hold well in the cases of the first two clusters, *the independent living* and *the employment-centred cluster*.

At first glance, the forming of the third and fourth clusters seems problematic. In *the high requirements cluster,* one marker does rise above the others. This marker is having a full-time job[55]. However, the family markers 'to have lived with a spouse/partner' and 'to have become a mother/father' are also regarded as far more meaningful in this cluster than in any other cluster. Young adults in this cluster also find leaving the parental home quite an important marker. In *the individual independence cluster,* the rule of at least one-third[56] of the respondents in a country indicating a certain marker of adulthood as important holds. These markers, nevertheless, vary making either leaving the parental home or getting a full-time job the most meaningful marker. What most clearly distinguishes the individual independence cluster from the high requirements cluster is the importance family markers gain: family markers are far less meaningful in the individual independence cluster. Therefore, the name individual independence cluster is very apt.

In the first cluster, **the independent living cluster**, the Netherlands is grouped with the Nordic countries Finland, Norway and Sweden. To have left the parental home rises well above the other markers, and partnering and parenthood (family) are only given minor importance. According to Cook and Furstenberg (2002, 263), leaving the parental home is said to be one of the most visible symbols of adulthood. Hellevik (2004, 11) states that it can be seen as a focal adulthood marker in countries where lifelong cohabitation between generations is rare. For Buchmann and Kriesi (2011, 485), it is a marker that illustrates *social* independence. In the countries included in this cluster, childbearing traditionally happens late, despite the fact that many state-provided parental benefits and services are available, which mitigates the importance of parenthood as an

[54] Setting one-third as the boundary value was an arbitrary choice. In some cases, slightly more than one-third of the respondents and in other cases more than half of the respondents picked a specific marker to indicate adulthood.
[55] In Portugal it was becoming a mother or father.
[56] Also in this case more than half of the respondents typically picked a specific marker to indicate adulthood (with the exception of Germany).

adulthood marker. It is also typical to cohabit before settling down in these countries, so young people might not see living with a spouse or partner as a true marker of adulthood. The social meaning of marriage has also changed fundamentally in the countries belonging to the independent living cluster (e.g. Kotowska 2012; Knijn & Plantenga 2012).

In the countries included in the independent living cluster, leaving the parental home is financially possible also to those young people who are studying or outside the labour force due to allowances and other forms of support (e.g. Iacovou 2002, 65). Hence, young adults may live independently even when they are jobless or work part-time. In Finland, for instance, unemployed people can receive a basic or an earnings-related unemployment allowance. Students have access to study grants, housing supplements and government loans, which allow economic independence. Additionally, Finnish students often, and not only in less advantaged families, work part-time (e.g. Helve 2013). Indeed, entry into the labour market is for many young adults *a process* which for some begins well before they officially become economically active. Thus, having a full-time job is not necessarily a very meaningful marker of adulthood.

In the case of the independent living cluster, it is justified to ask what role the welfare state plays in explaining the home-leaving behaviour of young adults and its significant role as a marker of adulthood (see also Berthoud & Iacovou 2004, 14). Aassve and colleagues (2002) have compared the impact employment and financial situations—earnings, household income and welfare—have on young adults' decisions to leave their parents' home in countries with different welfare regimes and found significant differences. In Southern Europe employment and income were shown to be notable factors, whereas in continental European welfare states the meanings of these factors were more mixed: the effects were less marked and variations existed. In Liberal and Social Democratic welfare states the effect of employment and income appeared insignificant. In short, young adults' possibilities to leave the parental home depend on the functioning of the welfare state, employment, their earnings and the financial support given by family. Thus, slightly paradoxically, family-centred societies make it quite difficult to establish new families (see also Oinonen 2004, 120).

In the countries included in **the employment-centred cluster**, being considered an adult relies on having a full-time job, and opinions are mainly driven by economic factors. Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom, countries located geographically around Europe, belong to this cluster. The importance of the economic independence reached by paid employment has been seen in other transition studies as well (e.g. Oinonen 2004, 291; Furstenberg

et al. 2003, 6). Laaksonen (2000; see also Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995), for instance, states that the labour market transition has been marked as the most important transition as it constructs possibilities for economic independence: leaving the parental home and building a family. Its role is particularly important in societies where the influence of state policies and family support are limited. Recent changes in school-to-work transitions have, however, made the entire transition term questionable in this context because employment biographies are nowadays elusive for a large part of the population (Furlong & Cartmel 2007, 34–35).

In recent years, entering the labour market has been extremely hard in many European countries: it has been difficult to find a stable job or any job at all. Young adults who manage to enter the labour market often work in temporary positions, for fewer hours than they would like to, and in places where the required skills and the qualifications they have obtained do not match (Wolbers 2007a, 483; see also Oinonen 2004, 291). This is often all the employers offer. Additionally, the repeated renewing or 'chaining' of short-term employment contracts is a phenomenon that even well-educated people now have to encounter (Helve 2013, 121). Although the stepping-stone nature of these jobs might function in some cases, employers' reluctance to hire young adults on permanent contracts or on a full-time basis or offer them a decent wage could pose a real problem if young people are unable to move to more stable employment or better paid jobs (Quintini, Martin & Martin 2007, 9). Unstable work, however, may function differently for different people: it may serve as a bridge for those with a higher education but become a trap for those with a lower education. (Erhel, Lima & Nicole-Drancourt 2010, 212; Mills & Blossfeld 2005, 9.) The demands towards young employees force them to constantly adapt because being left outside the employment system could mean becoming permanently dependent of welfare support (Plantenga 2005, 303–304; Mayer 2005, 42).

It is interesting that at the time the data was collected and before the global economic crisis (2006), the youth unemployment rate was quite high in all the countries included in the employment-centred cluster apart from Ireland. The youth unemployment rate was 19.5% in Belgium, 19.1% in Hungary, 8.6% in Ireland, 26.6% in Slovakia, 13.7% in Slovenia, 18.0% in Spain, and 13.7% in the UK (Eurostat 2015d)[57]. Aronson's (2008, 78) claim that economic uncertainties have

[57] The economic crisis hit Spain and Ireland particularly hard. By 2011, youth unemployment had risen to 45.4% in Spain and to 29.1% in Ireland. By 2013, the figure for Spain was 54.6% (Eurostat 2015d.)

made career instability as well as low-wage jobs normative, may hold up. Young adults, however, tend to experience shorter (but more frequent) unemployment spells than other members of the labour force.

In general, young people's experiences of transitions to adulthood have moved away from traditional and also more or less away from normative expectations. In many of today's societies, normative tolerance allows people to act as they wish. Young adults have adopted individualized strategies for constructing their transition to adulthood and they combine and select milestone elements in varied ways. (See also Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995, 144.) Especially in the countries included in **the individual independence cluster** and **the high requirements cluster**, transition to adulthood is not really symbolically attached to any specific marker. It is more like a cluster of events that eventually turns young people into adults (see also Settersten 2007, 259). It seems that young adults in these countries view becoming an adult with ambivalence. There are, however, notable differences between and within these two clusters.

All four transition markers are seen as rather important markers of adulthood in the high requirements cluster, which includes Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Poland and Portugal. Having a full-time job (except in Portugal) is seen as an essential marker that rises above other markers, but so-called family markers (becoming a mother/father and to have lived with a spouse/partner) are also given high priority. Cultural factors undoubtedly contribute to these results, but religious beliefs and social norms might also play a role (see also Oinonen 2008, 18). In this cluster, around 50% of young adults view parenthood as an important marker of adulthood, and partnering is also seen as essential. Additionally, more than 30% of the respondents in each country (with the exception of Poland) picked leaving the parental home as an important marker—the share being in France as high as 47%.

The vital role family markers play in reflecting adulthood in these countries can at least partly be explained by religion. It is known that religion and religious values are likely to have an important effect on transition-to-adulthood processes, although the degree of secularisation in different countries varies and affects this link (e.g. Corijn & Klijzing 2001; see also Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1999, 200–201; Iacovou 2002, 64). In all of the countries included in the high requirements

cluster, Catholic or Orthodox tradition has a firm foothold[58] and religion might therefore have an impact on how young adults think and what kind of decisions they make in their transition-to-adulthood processes. Those who are more intensely religious and consider religion important in their lives may emphasize motherhood or fatherhood as a meaningful transition marker. (E.g. Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1999.) Moreover, in Bulgaria, Poland and France the mean age of women at the birth of their first child is currently the lowest in Europe (especially low in Bulgaria, 25.8 years) (OECD 2016). This was also the case in 2006. Therefore, it is understandable that having a child is an important marker of *adulthood* in these countries.

Similarly to the high requirements cluster, all four transition markers are also considered important in the individual independence cluster. This cluster includes Austria, Denmark, Estonia and Germany, countries located in Scandinavia, in Western Europe and in Eastern Europe. What separates the individual independence cluster from the high requirements cluster is that markers describing financial independence (leaving the parental home and getting a full-time job) are commonly cited as important. This may be due to the fact that in dual education systems (class-based and work-based training are provided in parallel), which are typical in German-speaking countries and also in Denmark, young people usually enter into an apprenticeship straight after the completion of compulsory education (Quintini et al. 2007, 12). Thus, the transition to a full-time job often takes place smoothly as young people's skills and their prospective job are a close match (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 489; see also Wolbers 2007b, 197) and youth unemployment is generally low. In this cluster, the important role of adulthood markers describing financial independence is easy to understand. Family-related markers are less important. This can be explained, at least partly, by the fact that religion has a smaller role in these countries, with the exception of Austria.

[58] Catholicism is the main religion in Poland (90%), Portugal (94%) and France (85%), whereas the Orthodox Church prevails in Cyprus (78%) and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Bulgaria (83%). The other strongly Catholic countries included in this study are Ireland (88%) and Spain (94%), which are both included in the employment-centred cluster. (Nationmaster 2013.) In these two countries motherhood/fatherhood is, surprisingly, an irrelevant transition marker. Cook and Furstenberg (2002, 261) have, however, stated that if a church influences people, it probably does so indirectly through a cultural heritage mechanism rather than directly through current religious beliefs and practices.

6.2 The number of important transition markers recognised by young adults

The previous section (section 6.1) identified four subjectively measured demographic transition markers that are often considered to characterise transition to adulthood. Four different country clusters were also built based on a hierarchical cluster analysis. Some cross-national consistencies could be identified in Europe when the importance of different demographic transition markers was examined. However, some researchers have questioned whether these traditional markers are still adequate for defining adulthood (see also e.g. Settersten, Ottusch & Schneider 2015, 5) and whether young people themselves find the 'Big 5' of adulthood or any traditional transition markers important when the achievement of adulthood is examined. Table 10 supports this view and indicates that there is major ambivalence concerning the markers that comprise adulthood.

Table 10. "To be considered an adult, how important is it for a woman/man to have…" Those young adults (18- to 34-year-olds) who have found one, two, three, four or none of the markers 'important' or 'very important', %.

	One marker	Two markers	Three markers	All four markers	None of the markers
FI	41	19	3	2	35
NO	36	20	3	1	40
SE	36	12	1	1	50
BE	33	17	10	4	36
DK	32	27	14	6	21
UK	32	16	5	4	43
NL	28	16	7	1	48
FR	27	26	17	14	16
SL	27	21	8	5	39
DE	26	25	14	5	30
IE	26	20	7	3	44
SK	26	15	8	4	47
AT	25	24	11	9	31
EE	25	23	11	10	31
HU	25	12	8	1	54
ES	22	14	6	8	50
PL	20	19	14	14	33
BG	17	23	31	16	13
PT	17	16	12	24	31
CY	15	18	19	24	24
Mean	*26.8*	*19.2*	*10.5*	*7.8*	*35.8*

Note: The 'One marker' column includes respondents who found only one transition marker important … the 'All four markers' column includes respondents who found all four transition markers important. The separate 'None of the markers' column includes respondents who did not find any of the transition markers important. The figures in the cells marked with grey are above the mean values.

There are four findings in Table 10 that need to be addressed[59]. All of these findings are related to the number of markers considered important in different countries and the connection between the number of markers and the clusters created in the previous section. The first finding reveals that there are nine countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France and Slovenia) where the share of 18- to 34-year-olds who found just one transition-to-adulthood marker important is above the mean value. These countries represent all the transition-to-adulthood clusters created in the previous section, but only the countries representing the independent living cluster (FI, NL, NO and SE) are all included in this group of nine. As the results of Table 10 indicate, one marker, in this case leaving the parental home, is clearly more important in the independent living cluster than any of the other markers.

The second finding concerns the results of the next two columns of Table 10: the share of young adults who have found two markers important and the share of young adults who have found three markers important is above the mean value in nine countries, but the countries are not the same in both cases. Two markers are particularly important in Norway, Denmark, France, Slovenia, Germany, Ireland, Austria, Estonia and Bulgaria. All the transition-to-adulthood clusters created in the previous section are represented in this group. A closer look at this group reveals that it includes all the countries belonging to the individual independence cluster (DK, DE, AT, EE). As the name of the cluster expresses, the young adults representing this cluster believe that two new roles have to be achieved before adult status can be reached: you should leave the parental home and start living independently and get a full-time job to become financially independent. Three markers are particularly important in countries representing the individual independence cluster (Denmark, Germany, Austria and Estonia) and the high requirements cluster (France, Poland, Bulgaria, Portugal and Cyprus). This, too, seems logical as in these clusters two or more transition markers were found meaningful. The results concerning Bulgaria and Cyprus are particularly interesting: in both of these countries, the share of young people who find three markers important is greater than the share of young people who find one marker or two markers important. In Bulgaria the share of young adults who found three transition-to-adulthood markers important is as high as 31%.

[59] It should be kept in mind that the results of Table 10 reflect the perceptions young people have concerning the markers of adulthood. The perceptions young people have and the lives they actually live may differ. (See also Spedér et al. 2015, 22.)

The third finding is that the share of young adults who found all four transition-to-adulthood markers important is above the mean value in all of the countries included in the high requirements cluster (FR, PL, BG, PT and CY) and, in addition, in Estonia, Austria and Spain. Cyprus and Portugal are perhaps the most interesting cases: in these two countries up to 24% of young adults find that being an adult requires the accumulation of different roles. As has been pointed out, it has become difficult to say at which point or through which combination of statuses young people reach adulthood (e.g. Fussell & Furstenberg 2008, 31). This is also evident when the results of Table 10 are interpreted. Hartmann and Swartz (2007, 260), for instance, have stated that young adults define adulthood in terms of an accumulation of roles rather than the achievement of a single marker. Cypriot young adults are perhaps textbook examples of this kind of thinking.

The fourth and perhaps the most intriguing observation that can be made based on Table 10 is that there are ten countries (Belgium, Slovenia, Norway, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Hungary) where the share of 18- to 34-year-olds who do not find any transition markers important is above the mean. In Sweden, Spain and Hungary the share is 50% or higher. These ten countries represent different welfare regimes and they are located in different parts of Europe, but they only belong to two of the country clusters created in the previous section: the employment-centred cluster (BE, SL, UK, IE, SK, ES and HU) and the independent living cluster (NO, NL and SE). At least two different explanations can be found for why traditional role transitions, leaving the parental home and starting a full-time job, have been abandoned in these countries. The first explanation is that today's young people are prone to think that choices are reversible: jobs and places to stay can be left and replaced (e.g. Arnett, Hendry, Kloep & Tanner 2011, 4). Thus, it is hard to define variables that occur only once in a young adult's life and are invariant thereafter. For these 'yo-yo' people it might be challenging to see specific role transitions as transition-to-adulthood markers. The second explanation is that young people in these countries might see becoming an adult as an individualistic process. In recent years, the concept of adulthood has often been characterised by individualistic traits (e.g. Arnett 2000). This contrasts with the normative life course pattern that evolved in earlier decades. Many role transitions that were considered important in the past may now be insignificant to young people.

Instead of concentrating on role transitions, many studies have explored young adults' definitions of adulthood through the endorsement of roles and experiences that people feel must be achieved before a person can be considered an adult (e.g. individualistic indicators, such as taking responsibility for one's actions, or norm

compliance, such as avoiding committing petty crimes) (e.g. Arnett 1997; 1998; 2000; see also Lowe et al. 2013). In many of these studies young people have been asked to rank different criteria that are important to becoming an adult[60]. Arnett has published a series of studies and provided a list of as many as 38 different criteria for determining adulthood[61]. In these studies, respondents have been asked to identify the criteria for adulthood for a hypothetical person. Arnett has consistently found that the criteria that young adults consider most important are not demographic transitions but those relating to establishing independence, such as making independent decisions, becoming financially independent and taking responsibility of one's self (see also Benson & Furstenberg 2007). In their qualitative study, Hartmann and Swartz (2007, 262) found that young adults discussed more abstract individualistic qualities and characteristics (independence and responsibility, for example) if structured interviews and checklists of specific adulthood markers were not used. Nevertheless, their respondents directly linked these abstract qualities and characteristics to social roles and the achievement of particular statuses.

As these differing approaches show, adulthood is a complex and multifaceted concept and it is challenging to reach a consensus on its exact definition. This study does not even try to provide an exhaustive definition of adulthood. A useful compromise is, however, provided by Shanahan and colleagues (2008): they confirm the importance of both traditional and 'new' individualistic markers when transition to adulthood is concerned and conclude that adult status is likely based on a combination of social roles and personal qualities. Settersten's (2007) thoughts on how different transitional markers have distinct meanings are also useful. He argues that individualistic markers might be more important for individuals, whereas demographic markers matter more to societies. In addition to demographic markers and individualistic indicators, transition to adulthood is also impacted by cultural patterns of behaviour and thoughts, and a large part of our behaviour is determined by what is culturally acceptable and common. These cultural traditions are often deeply rooted.

[60] The most quoted studies are the ones Arnett has conducted. Arnett published his first studies on the subject in the late 1990s.

[61] This kind of approach has been widely criticised. Lowe and colleagues (2013), for example, question the approach and point out that young adults might describe the criteria of adulthood differently if they are asked to provide a spontaneous answer instead of selecting an answer from a list of options.

7 COUNTRY CLUSTERS BASED ON THE TIMING OF DIFFERENT TRANSITIONS

7.1 The actual occurrences of four different transitions

The previous chapter showed that young adults in some European countries have common opinions concerning specific transition-to-adulthood markers. Based on these similarities, four different transition-to-adulthood clusters were created. According to previous studies, the *ages* at which different milestones of adulthood are experienced vary a lot. Europe appears to be heterogeneous in terms of the age of leaving the parental home (e.g. Choroszewicz & Wolff 2010; Billari 2004; Iacovou 2001), getting a first full-time job (e.g. Fagan et al. 2012), forming a stable partnership (e.g. Oinonen 2008) and becoming a mother or a father for the first time (e.g. Kotowska 2012; Fussell & Gauthier 2008). Therefore, this study will continue by presenting and examining *objectively* measured timings: the actual occurrences of four different transitions[62] that have been determined by using statistical information on the average ages[63] at which these specific transitions have taken place.

Instead of being a clear-cut event, transition to adulthood has become a process involving several steps distributed over time. The transition as a whole has been considerably extended, and age expectations, off-timed events and the order of specific transitions have in many cases lost their significance. Now, transition events can occur in different orders and at different times. They can also co-occur and the duration of the intervals between events may vary (Shanahan 2000, 667; see also Hogan & Astone 1986, 112–113). Young adults are also more prone to take

[62] Statistical information on the ages at which young people form a stable partnership was not available. A number of reasons could explain this, including the fact that a stable partnership may or may not be a legally recognised partnership and the methods used to compile statistics may differ in different countries. Nevertheless, as stated before, "*to have lived with a spouse/partner"* can be seen as the equivalent of forming a stable partnership. Statistical and comparable information on the average ages at first marriages could easily be found.

[63] The use of average ages brings with it the risk of oversimplification. Averages only give a rough idea of where the middle of the values might be and do not indicate how much variation there is in the data. Median ages may have provided a more useful tool, but statistical information on median ages was not available.

an early sabbatical to travel and experience life before settling down (Furstenberg et al. 2008, 17).

A weakening of the age-relatedness of events is clearly visible, and many young adults now *choose* the timing of their transition events (i.e. the age at which each transition occurs). It is no longer arguable to speak of 'on-time' transitions, which were earlier supported by institutional arrangements and culturally determined (see also Corijn 2001, 4). However, the timing of different transition events is still normatively prescribed at least within a specific time range, and the age at which transition events occur is to some extent constrained by both formal and informal social and cultural norms (see also e.g. Schizzerotto & Lucchini 2002, 3, 30–33; Oinonen 2008; 27; Hagestad & Neugarten 1985, 37, 41; cf. Arnett 1998, 297) and by biological maturation. Young people may thus obtain at least a vague sense of what is the 'right thing' to do and when is the 'right time' to do it. These ideas are often shared by peers who can also provide social support. (See also Holdsworth & Morgan 2005, 6; Elder 1998, 6; Cook & Furstenberg 2002, 258, 287; Liefbroer 2009, 311–318.) In addition, the timing when different transitions happen reflect how efficiently welfare state and family support assist the transition-to-adulthood process.

Table 11 presents the mean ages at which different transitions take place in European countries. There are marked differences in the timings of different transitions. Only one transition event, the age at which young adults start their first full-time job, is typical at specific ages. In all the other cases, there is an enormous amount of variation.

Table 11. Mean ages* at which different transitions take place.

		Age left parental home	Age started first job	Age first child was born	Age at first marriage
The early exit cluster	*SE*	19.7	21.8	29.2	34.7
	DK	21.1	23.4	29.2	33.5
	FI	21.9	23.2	28.6	32
	NO	n/a	23.2	29	32.5
	EE	23.6	21.6	26.6	29.8
	NL	23.7	23.1	29.5	31.8
	DE	23.8	n/a	29.4	32.1
	FR	23.9	21.2	28.3	30.9
	UK	24.4	20.8	28.6	31.1
	BE	25	22.2	28.6	30.8
	AT	25.5	21.2	28.9	31
The late exit cluster	*IE*	26.3	22.5	29.6	32.4
	HU	27.5	22.7	27.7	30.6
	SL	28.2	23.7	28.6	30
	PL	28.3	23.1	26.9	26.9
	CY	28.4	22.3	29.2	29.9
	BG	28.7	20.5	25.8	28.6
	PT	28.9	23	29.2	30.7
	ES	29	21.3	30.6	32.8
	SK	30.9	21.3	27	28.8
	Mean	*25.7*	*22.2*	*28.5*	*31*
	Range	*11.2*	*3.2*	*4.8*	*7.8*

* It would be tempting to arrange the mean ages in a sequence and interpret the results of Table 11 as standard sequences in actual life courses. This aggregation fallacy, which could be called a sequencing fallacy, is well known in the analysis of transition to adulthood. (Billari 2001, 124.) Based on Table 11, it would for instance seem that in *all* of the examined countries people get married after the birth of their first child (except in Poland, where these two transitions happen at the same time). Based on a few previous studies (e.g. Pfeiffer & Nowak 2001), this is not the case in most European countries. In some of the countries (e.g. Poland), out-of-wedlock childbearing is not normative, but in others (e.g. Finland and Sweden) normative constraints concerning marriage and parenthood have become unimportant and many births take place outside of marriage. In addition, the heterogeneity of sequences would be much larger than an analysis based only on mean ages and their sequences would suggest.

Note: The figures in the cells marked with grey are below the mean values.

There is major variation in the timing of the events, and the diversity of the durations and timings of different transitions is part of the pattern common in modern Europe. Indeed, the differences between countries indicate that the transition process is not as structured as before and that there is more freedom to make individual choices[64]. The greatest cross-national variation could be detected in the analysis of the timing of leaving the parental home. Table 11, however, reveals two strong geographical patterns related to the home-leaving age: 1) **the early exit pattern** (Scandinavian and Western European countries including Estonia and excluding Ireland) where the average age of leaving the parental home is below 26 years and 2**) the late exit pattern**[65] (Eastern and Southern European countries) where home-leaving happens in the late at the later part of 20s or the early 30s. Iacovou (2011, 2) has achieved similar results while studying home-leaving ages. Based on her findings, leaving the parental home takes place early in Scandinavian countries, relatively early in the other countries of North-Western Europe and late in many of the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe. Billari's (2004, 18) classification of the "earliest-early" pattern in Nordic countries, the "latest-late" pattern in Southern Europe and "in between" pattern in other European countries is only partially parallel with the patterns mentioned above.

There are, naturally, several alternative explanations for why young adults in different countries leave their parental homes at different times. One is related to the way in which living arrangements are organized during the time young adults attend higher education[66]: whether society encourages young people to leave their parental home and live in campus accommodation, whether socially rented houses are available, and whether society can offer the education within travelling distance from the family home and thus make it possible for young adults to co-reside with their parents for a longer period of time (Billari 2004, 21; see also Bernhardt, Gähler, & Goldscheider 2005; Flatau et al. 2007). Moreover, weak welfare states, difficulties in entering the labour market and the shortage of housing, for instance, are often given as reasons for not leaving the parental home, but strong family ties and family traditions also play a role (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008, 90–91; see also Reher 1998).

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[64] However, this freedom also brings with it uncertainty and unpredictability which many young people may find difficult to handle.

[65] In some other studies, this pattern has been referred to as 'partnering in a parental household' (e.g. Saraceno, Olagnero & Torrioni 2005).

[66] Although higher education does not concern all young people, the way it is organised in a country reflects some important relationships between education, housing and family policies (see also Billari, Philipov & Baizán 2001, 4).

A prolonged stay at the parental home can also be seen as a coping behaviour when young adults try to maximize their quality of life, but only if supportive family traditions exist (e.g. Vogel 2002; Furlong & Kelly 2005). Indeed, in some cases, staying at the parental home is considered more comfortable than living elsewhere. This might mean 'a quasi-independent' living arrangement where young people have privacy but also enjoy all the privileges their parents can offer. This kind of behaviour is sometimes encouraged by parents who enjoy having their children at home and are even willing to 'bribe' them into cohabitation (Manacorda & Moretti 2002). It is also possible that parents who are unwilling to let their adult children go begin to act as 'helicopter parents' (Newman 2012, 137). This might affect young adults' capability or interest to grow up, their cautiousness to make commitments, and their ability to take care of themselves. The negative impacts of staying 'too long' at the parental home may have its effect on household formations: the time at which young people leave their parents' home is a notable element in household formation rates and can impact the size and composition of families and households in a population (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 485; Kiernan 1989, 120). A study by Dalla Zuanna (2001) conducted on 20- to 30-year-olds indicates that the higher the proportion of young people living in the parental home, the lower the fertility. The prolonged stay at the parental home may also put financial and emotional pressure on middle-aged parents, particularly during financial crises and especially in those cases where young adults do not make a financial contribution to the household income (see also e.g. Settersten & Ray 2010, 20).

The process of leaving home is certainly often a financial risk for young adults. In many Western countries, youth unemployment has risen sharply in the last decades and the proportion of labour market entrants in flexible forms of employment (e.g. temporary contracts and part-time work) has increased. The one disadvantage that temporary or short-term contracts have is that they provide only limited access to the welfare benefits (e.g. Murgia & Poggio 2014, 62). All in all, employment insecurity, unemployment and flexible employment have made economic independence harder to achieve. This has raised uncertainty about young adults' ability and willingness to leave the parental home, in particular for individuals leaving to obtain independence (e.g. Isoniemi 2009). The situation could be as bad for couples, even married ones: economic restrictions, like limited renting sector or shortage of cheap housing, have often forced a reasonable share of young partners to remain in the parental home of either one even after a couple get married.

When the average age at which young people start their first job is examined, there is less cross-national variation than in the average age at which young people leave their parental home. All the countries are clustered between the ages of 20 and 24 (see Table 12). According to Ongaro (2001, 183), the more normative or institutionalised it is to experience a transition event at a specific age, the less age dispersion along the age axis can be observed. It is, however, hard to believe that entry into the labour market is normative and institutionalised all around Europe[67]. It is interesting that there is not much variation even between countries whose historical-cultural traditions and labour market climates are very distant. However, Corijn and Klijzing (2001, 327) have also come to a similar conclusion while investigating young adults' transition to adulthood in ten European countries: by the age of 25, most young people have at least some work experience.

Naturally, the average ages at which people start their first jobs do not tell us whether the jobs are 'career-like jobs' or just 'survival-jobs' (for the concepts, see Mortimer 2012, 30). Moreover, it can be problematic to accurately date the transition from student to employee. Many young adults who are students are also employed full-time. For those who combine work and education, it is often difficult to determine exactly when the transition from 'student worker' to 'real worker' occurs as the transition might take place over a number of years. A person might finish his or her education while working full-time and continue in the same job after graduation. (See also e.g. Beaujot 2004, 19–21.)

Table 12. Mean ages at which young adults start their first job.

Country	*BG*	*UK*	*FR*	*AT*	*SK*	*ES*	*EE*	*SE*	*BE*	*CY*	*IE*	*HU*	*PT*	*PL*	*NL*	*NO*	*FI*	*DK*	*SL*
Age	20.5	20.8	21.2	21.2	21.3	21.3	21.6	21.8	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.7	23	23.1	23.1	23.2	23.2	23.4	23.7

Note: Germany is not included in the table. The mean age of these mean ages (22.2) is the boundary limiting value.

[67] The age at which young adults start their first full-time job was calculated based on two different statistical information: the "average age when leaving formal education by ISCED 1997 level" (Eurostat 2016h) and the "average time between leaving formal education and starting the first job" (Eurostat 2016i).

Entry into the labour market—without emphasising too much the sequence of single event—happens for most European young adults (the Scandinavian youngsters are exceptions) while they are still living with their parents. Hence, the traditional pattern of entering the labour market before leaving the parental home is dominant in many countries. (See also Corijn & Klijzing 2001.) Finding a stable job might be a step towards gaining resources with which to live independently (Aassve et al. 2002; Mazzuco, Mencarini & Rettaroli 2006; Jacob & Kleinert 2008; see also Blossfeld 2000) and paid employment enables adolescents to establish their own households. Moreover, in many countries a stable job is a necessary requisite to form a family. The lack of suitable job compels young people to take on family responsibilities at a rather late age. Demands of being flexible in possible employer's eyes make it also more difficult to combine work and family life. (E.g. Santarelli & Cottone 2009, 3; Liefbroer 2009, 323.) From the financial point of view, this decision is rational but, additionally, in many cases inevitable.

Transitions to family roles have generally been delayed (e.g. Shanahan et al. 2008), but when childbearing is in question a specific geographical division can be identified, although the differences are not very dramatic. As Table 13 indicates, births on average take place earlier in the life course (at the age of 28.5 or earlier) in all the Eastern European countries included in this study (except Slovenia) and in France, whereas young women in other European countries become mothers rather late (at around the age of 30). Table 11 and Table 13 also reveal that staying at the parental home longer has an impact on the time at which young people have their first child (with some exceptions): the later a young person leaves the parental home, the earlier childbearing occurs. In some of the Eastern European countries, this may mean that partnering and childbearing take place at the parental home of either the bride or the groom.

The late childbearing has often explained by economic and social changes which have been a result of women's increasing economic independence (e.g. Kohler et al. 2002, 642). Indeed, the opportunities and constrains women confront in the labour markets in their reproductive ages have an influence on childbearing (see also Kotowska 2012, 119-126). Another explanation given as a reason for delayed parenthood, and also marriage, is a long period of cohabitation (e.g. Kneale & Joshi 2008; see also Oinonen 2008, 20). However, it is problematic to suggest a causal link between these. In those countries where cohabitation is common (such as Finland and Sweden), a growing number of children are born outside marriage to cohabiting parents. Thus, cohabitation does not in itself adequately explain why parenthood starts late. (Oinonen 2004, 294-295.)

Table 13. Mean ages at which young women have their first child.

Country	*BG*	*EE*	*PL*	*SK*	*HU*	*FR*	*SL*	*UK*	*BE*	*FI*	*AT*	*NO*	*CY*	*PT*	*DK*	*SE*	*DE*	*NL*	*IE*	*ES*
Age	25.8	26.6	26.9	27	27.7	28.3	28.6	28.6	28.6	28.6	28.9	29	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.4	29.5	29.6	30.6

Note: The mean age of these mean ages (28.5) is the boundary limiting value.

It is improbable that having children at an older age is just a temporary phenomenon. The gradual increase in motherhood even among 'thirty-somethings' over recent decades reflects changing opportunities for women (to higher education and occupational autonomy) and changing perceptions of their role in society. In the past, becoming a mother often meant withdrawing from the labour market. In today's world, women often delay motherhood in order to have more time to secure their career and then try to balance their domestic and work career. For societies, this means that they will have to accommodate older motherhood. (Esping-Andersen 2009, 86; Hoorens, Clift, Staetsky, Janta, Diepeveen, Morgan Jones & Grant 2011, 73.) Problems will arise, particularly from the perspective of the dependency ratio, if women are not able to combine work and family life. If this is the case, women may decide not to have children at all (Salin 2014, 17; Beaujot 2004, 23).

Although family formation has been postponed, it does not necessarily mean that young people are rejecting the family institution (Fussell & Gauthier 2008, 88) or, as the most pessimistic researchers have stated, that modern demography is destroying family solidarity and that families are in crisis (Steinbach 2012, 93). It seems that young adults in contemporary societies are either inclined to take their time before assuming either a parental or a conjugal role or, maybe more likely, that they just need more time to gain a job that is secure enough to form and support a family (Furstenberg 2010, 69). Decisions which are far-reaching and have irreversible outcomes, such as parenthood (Liefbroer 2009, 317, 325), are more likely to be delayed until a person can assume responsibility for the steps he or she is about to make. However, postponing parenthood too long might cause unwanted consequences, such as involuntary childlessness (e.g. Kneale & Joshi 2008), which is why this behaviour could be considered a problem.

Table 14. Mean ages at which young adults get married.

Country	*PL*	*BG*	*SK*	*EE*	*CY*	*SL*	*HU*	*PT*	*BE*	*FR*	*AT*	*UK*	*NL*	*FI*	*DE*	*IE*	*NO*	*ES*	*DK*	*SE*
Age	26.9	28.6	28.8	29.8	29.9	30	30.6	30.7	30.8	30.9	31	31.1	31.8	32	32.1	32.4	32.5	32.8	33.5	34.7

Note: The mean age of these mean ages (31) is the boundary limiting value.

Marriage and fertility decisions are no longer as closely intertwined as they used to be, and it seems that an increasing number of young adults has children out-of-wedlock (see also White 1999, 58). Both of these transition events happen late in the life course, but marriage generally takes place at a later stage in life than having children (see Table 14). However, there are differences between countries in these timings and remnants of the 'European marriage pattern' and the Hajnal line (Hajnal 1969, 101–103; see also Fussell & Gauthier 2008, 81) can still be detected. Marriages in the western part of Europe generally take place later than in the eastern part of Europe, although France and Belgium are exceptions to this rule. This means that young people who leave their parental home at a younger age get married later in life.

One should remember that postponing marriage decisions might have positive prospects: Kuperberg (2014), for instance, have noticed that the longer couples waited to make that first serious commitment, the better their chances for marital success. In addition, when the timing of marriages is discussed, various family models (including unmarried cohabitation, blended families and LAT relationships) and conjugal instability (including the decrease in marriages and the increase in voluntary singlehood) should be kept in mind—not forgetting that in some societies marriages even seem to be renounced (e.g. Corijn & Klijzing 2001, 323).

To sum up, differences between countries were observed in all of the tables (Tables 11–14) presenting the mean ages at which specific transition events happen. There is a lot of variation in family-life transition events in different countries, while transitions related to working life are more explicit. While several studies (e.g. Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Liefbroer 2009; Flatau et al. 2007) indicate that transition to adulthood now happens much later than before and even the specific concepts such as 'latest-late'[68] have been developed, this latest-late behaviour cannot be

[68] 'Latest-late' describes the particular pattern where leaving the parental home, union formation and transition to parenthood all take place at a late stage in life (e.g. Billari 2004).

expanded to cover and to characterise all of Europe—at least not in the way Billari and his colleagues determined it. Billari (2004), however, later added that late transitions are not necessarily similar for all countries and for all events shaping transition to adulthood.

7.2 The interrelationship between subjectively described transition markers and their actual occurrence

This section discusses the interrelationship between subjectively described transition markers and their actual, objectively measured occurrence. The purpose is to determine whether the opinions of young adults actually reflect the way they behave. Cross-country correlations cannot be considered indications of cause-effect relationships, but they can be used to visually indicate the type and strength of relationships between two variables. Figures 5 a, b, c and d are, thus, used to illustrate the correlation between the average ages at which specific transition events happen and the subjective importance ratings young adults have given to four different transition events. Some assumptions are also made based on these figures.

As Figures 5 a, b, c and d illustrate, there is clearly a gap between opinions and actual behaviour in some cases. The correlation between leaving the parental home as an adulthood marker and the age at which this transition actually happens is rather substantial ($r = -.70$) and the squared correlation coefficient is also quite high ($R^2 = 0.4873$) (see Figure 5 a). As noted in section 6.1, leaving the parental home only appeared to be the most meaningful marker of adulthood in the independent living cluster (including Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) and in Denmark and Germany from the individual independence cluster. Based on the average ages of leaving the parental home, young adults in these countries also leave their parental home earlier than young adults in other countries. In these countries, leaving has been made financially possible even without a regular income or well-off parents (Oinonen 2004). In the Scandinavian welfare states, financial aid for students (study grants and loans) as well as student housing are available, starting wages in labour markets are in many cases higher than for example in Southern European countries, and in the cases of unemployment young people normally receive unemployment benefits (e.g. Smeeding & Ross Phillips 2002; Bernhardt et al. 2005, 100). This facilitates the transition to independent living. Cohabitation is also common in these countries, which reduces the costs of establishing an independent household and makes leaving the parental home easier.

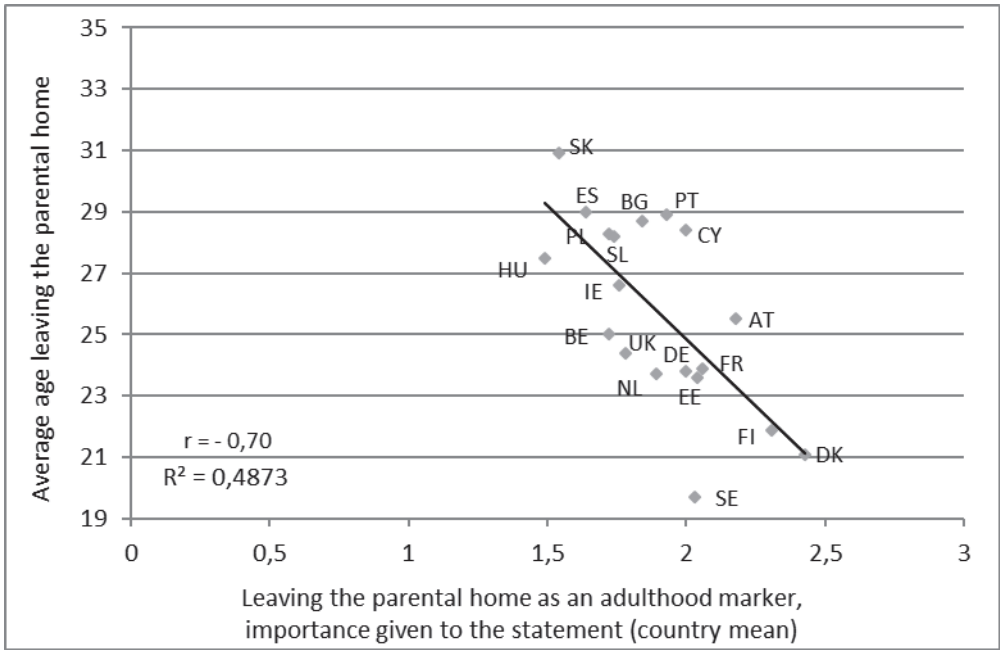

Figure 5a. The interrelationship of values given for leaving the parental home as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

Note: Norway is not included in the figure.

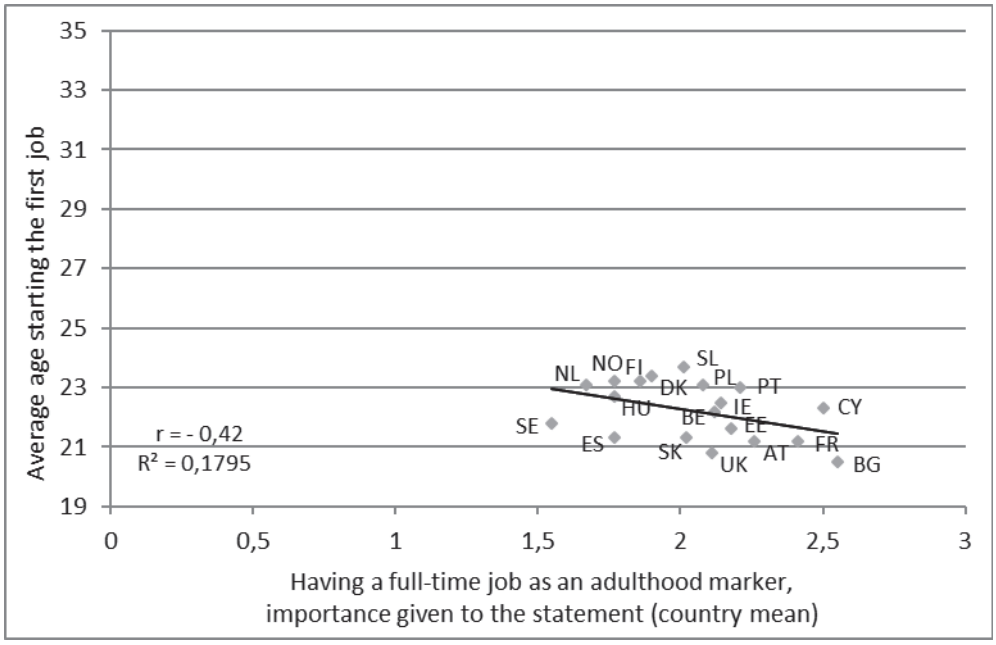

Figure 5b. The interrelationship of values given for getting a full-time job as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

Note: Germany is not included in the figure.

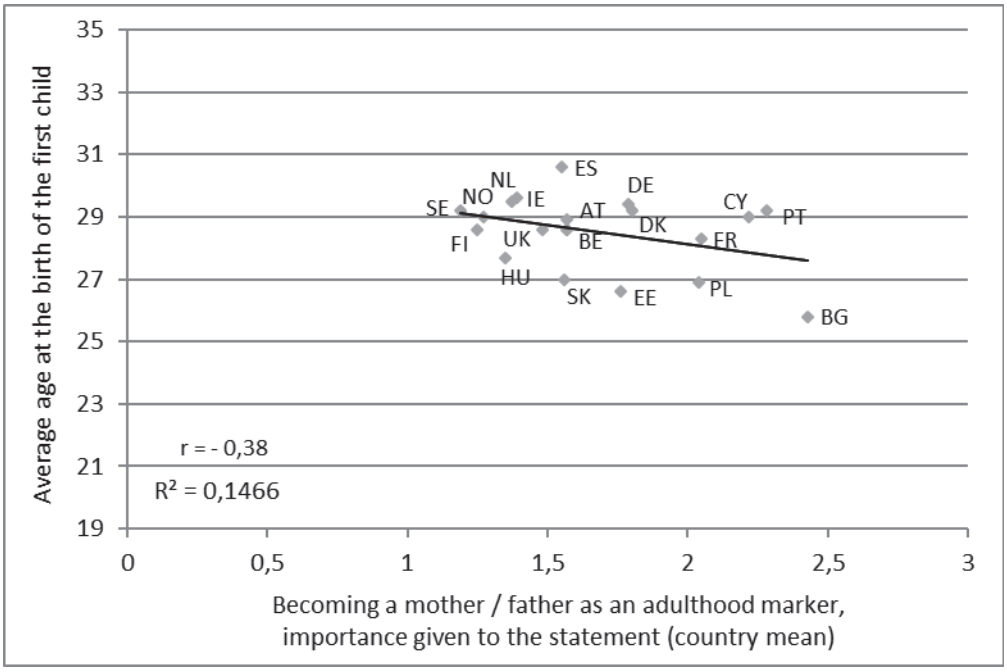

Figure 5c. The interrelationship of values given for becoming a parent as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

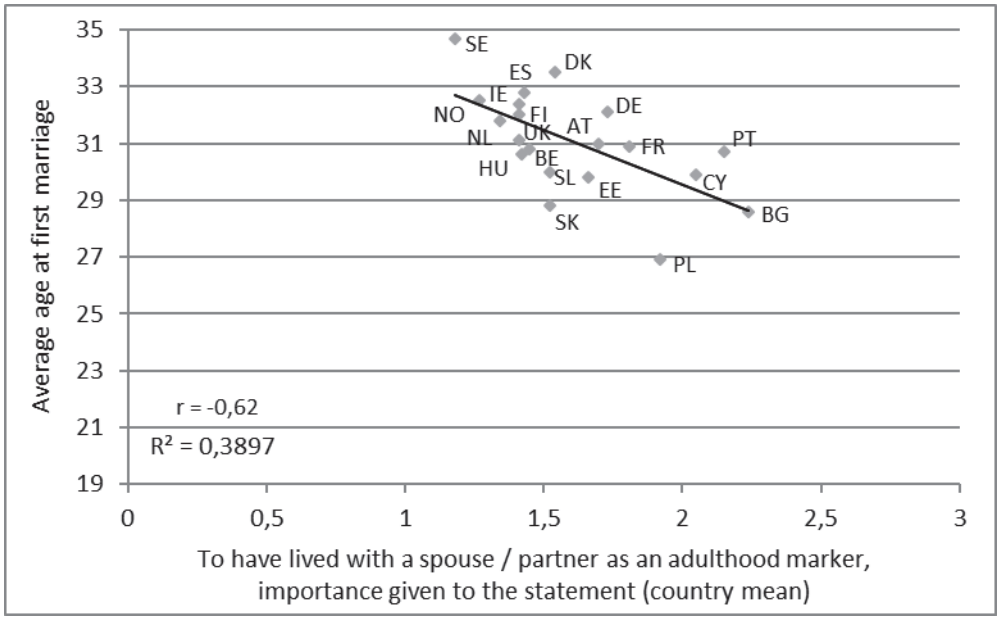

Figure 5d. The interrelationship of values given for living with a spouse/partner as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event (getting married).

Note: X-axis: young adults' (aged 18–34) opinion on specific transition event; Y-axis: average age at which the specific transition event takes place.

Leaving the parental home happens latest in Eastern European countries (except Estonia) and Southern European countries Spain and Portugal. Based on country mean values, (at least) in some of these countries leaving the parental home was only given a low score as an adulthood marker. Especially for some young adults living in Spain and Portugal, staying at the parental home can be considered a more comfortable alternative than living alone and the delayed transition is not simply the outcome of growing difficulties and constraints. Instead, non-transferable resources, such as washing, cooking, cleaning and often rent-free accommodation, might tie young adults to their parental homes (Flatau et al. 2007, 53, 55). Leaving the parental home is also delayed because young adults enjoy living "at the hotel of Mum and Dad" (Babb et al. 2006) and because housing costs have risen steeply (e.g. Waters, Carr & Kefalas 2011, 20). The classical push-pull model introduced by Lee (1966) revealed that the attractions of potential new living environments work together with the negative aspects of current living arrangements. This model helped to explain why some people move. To describe the current situation in these two Southern European countries, could Lee's push-pull model now be rewritten as the *'tie-estrange model'* where the attractions of current living environments (tie) work together with the negative aspects of potential new living arrangements (estrange)?

The high cost of housing and the housing shortage which has been exacerbated by privatisation offer a more plausible explanation for the behaviour of young adults in Eastern Europe. Impoverishment is one of the problems young adults are facing in their transitions processes. (Tomanović & Ignjatović 2006, 57.) Many young adults facing limited economic prospects are unemployed, and unemployment may raise uncertainty about young adults' ability to leave the parental home. Therefore, leaving the parental home may be delayed. Not being financially independent makes young adults residentially dependent, and multi-generational households are typical in some Eastern European countries—at least partly out of financial necessity. Co-residence might unify three or more generations of the same family under the same roof (Iacovou & Skew 2011). When it is typical that many generations live together, it is understandable that leaving the family home is not considered an important marker of adulthood and that it takes place at a later stage in life. In these circumstances, leaving the parental home is not an autonomous decision made by young adults but involves several actors: the individual, the parents, the potential partner and even the welfare state (Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1993; Jacob & Kleinert 2008). A young adult's *individual* transition can therefore be seen as a *family* transition (see also Höhn & Mackensen 1989, 10). Given that the link between generations and the need to receive help is very important in some countries, young adults making their choices

are assumed to (and have to) take the attitudes of their parents into account (Di Giulio & Rosina 2007, 445).

Getting a full-time job was seen as a focal adulthood marker in countries included in the employment-centred cluster, the high requirements cluster and the individual independence cluster[69]. As Figure 5b demonstrates[70], young people do start their working careers early around Europe, and only minor differences between countries exist. This even applies to differences between countries whose historical-cultural traditions and labour market climates differ significantly. As Mary (2012, 190) has pointed out, young people may not be seeking lifelong employment immediately after graduation. They may start their working career early, if they are lucky enough to find a job, but they do not expect to find a job for life.

Whether the opinions of young adults actually reflect their experiences has been questioned many times in this study. Examples of both situations where the opinions of young adults accurately reflect their behaviour and situations where there is an inconsistency between the opinions and behaviour of young adults can be found. In Sweden, young adults do not particularly value getting their first job as an adulthood marker, *but* on average this transition still happens early. In Scandinavian countries in general, learning and earning are often interrelated in young people's lives, often because of the necessity to finance their education. Therefore, young people enter the labour market before completing their education. This employment is often part-time and seasonal and may alternate with learning. This is perhaps one of the reasons why getting a job is not seen as an important marker of adulthood.

Bulgaria provides an opposite example. In Bulgaria, young adults do value getting their first job as an adulthood marker, *and* on average this transition happens early. In general, getting a job is often interpreted as a possibility to become financially independent (e.g. Ranta 2013). Paradoxically, however, many parents in Bulgaria are being called upon to provide financial assistance (see also e.g. Schoeni & Ross 2008). This even applies to situations of intergenerational cohabitation. Esping-Andersen (2009, 150), for example, calls this parent-child cohabitation an indicator of strong familialism, but in this case it might be more accurate to interpret the phenomenon simply as a financial necessity.

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[69] One reason why employment has become a central factor in the transition to adulthood can simply be that both marriage and childbearing have been postponed.

[70] The correlation between these two variables is $r = -0.42$. The squared correlation coefficient is rather insignificant ($R^2 = 0.1795$).

Getting a job often enables young adults to start a family (and leave the parental home) because of the financial resources it offers[71]. As Figure 5b indicates, the transition to working life happens early all around Europe, and as Figures 5c and 5d reveal, family transitions happen later, around the age of 30. Thus, it seems that financial independence and starting a family are not always very closely linked, contrary to what many previous studies have indicated (e.g. Knijn 2012; Corijn & Klijzing 2001). Scandinavian women offer a good example of this discrepancy: they start their working careers early and gender equality policies enable them to combine work and family life, but they do not start to build their families at a younger age than women in other countries. Additionally, it seems that all transition events are now disconnected from age[72] to some extent. What is perhaps even more interesting is that in some cases they also seem to be disconnected from each other. However, this is only a cautious assumption.

Figures 5 c and d show that in many countries family markers are not considered important markers of adulthood. The lowest correlation ($r = -0.38$) and squared correlation coefficient ($R^2 = 0.1466$) can be found in the data related to having one's first child (see Figure 5c). In the figure concerning first marriage, the values are moderate in size ($r = -0.62$; $R^2 = 0.3897$, see Figure 5d). Furstenberg and colleagues (2003, 7) have pointed out that young adults often see these family markers as 'life choices, not requirements'. Nowadays, many young adults go for other types of lifestyles and partnerships than marriage and have and raise their children out of wedlock, which naturally affects the roles partnership and family play as adulthood markers.

When Figures 5 a, b, c and d are examined, only one of the figures makes it possible to group countries based on their similar features. This grouping does not,

[71] However, especially in the current situation, achieving employment is not necessarily a sign of transition into a financially secure situation.
[72] Except the transition to the labour market.

however, remind the grouping made earlier in this study (see section 6.1)[73]. Instead, when the leaving-the-parental-home pattern is observed (see Figure 5a), a *geographical* variation can be identified. Neighbouring countries in Scandinavia share the same features: young adults move out of their parental homes at a relatively young age and also perceive leaving as a meaningful adulthood marker. Central Europeans (including Cyprus) leave around the age of 24–25 and also see leaving the parental home as a rather meaningful adulthood marker. Late leavers who have the lowest appreciation for this adulthood marker live in Eastern Europe and Portugal and Spain. Thus, even geographically and culturally more distant countries share some common features in the case of this transition event.

[73] This is clearly seen in Table 4 in Appendices where the countries are arranged in the transition clusters created in the section 6.1, and in Figures 4a, b, c and d in Appendices where the correlation between the average ages at which specific transition events happen and the subjective importance ratings young adults have given to four different transition events are examined. It appeared that in these analyses, the clustering created in the previous chapter seems uncertain to use as these examples reveal: the mean age of leaving the parental home was 24.4 in the United Kingdom and 30.9 in Slovakia, but according to the clustering these countries should both belong to the employment-centred cluster; the mean age of having the first child was 26.6 in Estonia and 29.4 in Germany, but according to the clustering these countries should both belong to the individual independence cluster; the mean age at which young adults get married was 26.9 in Poland and 30.9 in France, but according to the clustering these countries should both belong to the high requirements cluster. The most homogeneous behaviour could be found in countries belonging to the independent living cluster (Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden).

8 COUNTRY CLUSTERS BASED ON LATE AND INCOMPLETE TRANSITIONS

To be able to discuss late and incomplete transitions in this chapter, these two concepts first need to be defined. In this study, a *late* transition is a transition that is experienced between the ages of 30 and 34[74]. In order for a person to be experiencing a late transition he or she should live with his or her parents, not have more than a basic education, not live in a consensual union and/or not have a child. A person's transition to adulthood is defined as *incomplete* if any of the following criteria are met at the age of 34: a person lives at the parental home, does not have more than a basic education, does not live in a consensual union, or does not have a child.

The 'never been married' indicator has deliberately been excluded from the analyses presented in this chapter[75]. Instead, the 'not in a consensual union' event is used to describe the situation where a person has not lived with a partner. The question of marriage as an adulthood marker and as an essential transition event is interesting. As has been shown (see e.g. Arnett 1998), in many cases and in many countries (1) young adults do not consider marriage an important marker of adulthood, (2) marriage has lost its importance as the main destination after the departure from the childhood home, (3) marriage has been gradually replaced by cohabitation[76], (4) marriage no longer precedes becoming a parent, (5) marriage is often seen as irrelevant because cohabitation has replaced marriage as a stable

[74] To be consistent with the analyses in the other chapters of this study, the upper age limit needs to be the same.

[75] Table 5 in the Appendices indicates that in all of the countries investigated a considerable number of young adults between the ages of 30 and 34 have never been married (the smallest percentage (26%) is found in Poland and the largest (67%) in Slovenia, the mean value being 47.8%. Declining marriage rates and changes in family structure in general have been a known phenomenon for several decades. White (1999, 63) wrote about "a worldwide retreat from marriage" 15 years ago and hit the nail right on the head.

[76] However, in many countries many couples still view cohabitation as a step toward marriage, not a rebellion against it (e.g. Dominguez-Folgueras & Castro-Martin 2013, 425).

relationship for raising children, and (6) marriages are being postponed and cannot be considered the final event in transition-to-adulthood processes[77].

8.1 Country clusters from the perspective of incomplete transitions

Similarly to the analyses in chapter 6, the analyses in this chapter also begin by conducting a cluster analysis. The differences and similarities used to create the clusters are now determined using EU-SILC data. The target group being examined only includes 30- to 34-year-old young Europeans who have not experienced specific transition events. Before proceeding with the cluster analysis, the shares of 30- to 34-year-olds who have *not* experienced specific transition events are presented one transition event at a time. During the presentations, special attention is paid to mean values.

As table 15 reveals, there are notable differences between countries within the European zone. The most extreme example can be found when the differences of the shares of those young adults who still live with their parents are compared. The variation is enormous: in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands less than 5% of 30- to 34-year-olds still live at home, whereas in Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria the shares are close to 50%. In addition, the share of young adults living with their parents is above the mean value in all of the Eastern and Southern European countries included in this study. The reasons for this delayed behaviour relate to cultural preferences and currently also to economical necessities (e.g. Dykstra et al. 2013; Sobotka & Toulemon 2008). This is an interesting result as leaving the parental home is seen as an essential stepping stone towards adulthood in many studies (e.g. Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck & Park 2008; Holdsworth & Morgan 2005; Billari et al. 2001, 2-3).

[77] Perelli-Harris and colleagues (2012, 178) have even stated that "*direct marriage has become a relic of the past*". They, however, conclude that marriage as an institution is not disappearing, but the timing of getting married is being postponed.

Table 15. Share of 30- to 34-year-olds who have *not* experienced specific transition events, by country, %.

Lives with parents		Only a basic education attained		Not in a consensual union		Does not have a child	
BG	48	*PT*	51	*SL*	46	*ES*	61
SL	45	*ES*	35	*ES*	45	*SK*	51
SK	44	*BG*	24	*SK*	43	*DE*	50
PT	34	*EE*	18	*PT*	41	*SL*	50
ES	33	*CY*	16	*BG*	39	*CY*	49
PL	31	*BE*	14	*HU*	34	*PT*	48
HU	26	*HU*	14	*CY*	31	*AT*	46
EE	22	*NO*	13	*IE*	31	*BG*	44
CY	19	*IE*	12	*AT*	28	*HU*	42
IE	12	*NL*	11	*DE*	28	*UK*	41
AT	11	*AT*	10	*UK*	28	*NL*	40
BE	9	*FR*	8	*BE*	27	*BE*	39
DE	7	*SL*	8	*EE*	27	*DK*	38
FR	7	*UK*	8	*PL*	26	*FI*	38
UK	7	*DE*	7	*FR*	22	*FR*	37
FI	5	*FI*	7	*NL*	21	*IE*	37
DK	3	*PL*	7	*NO*	19	*NO*	35
NL	3	*DK*	6	*FI*	18	*PL*	34
NO	3	*SE*	6	*DK*	17	*EE*	30
SE	3	*SK*	4	*SE*	14	*SE*	30
mean	18.6	*mean*	14.0	*mean*	29.3	*mean*	42.0

Note: The figures in the cells marked with grey are above the mean values.

There are five other findings in Table 15 that need to be addressed. Two of them are related to family formation: Firstly, in all other Eastern and Southern European countries except Estonia and Poland, the share of young adults who are not in a consensual union is above the mean. As discussed earlier, relatively late marriage is still typical west of the *Hajnal line* (Hajnal 1969, 101–103). Could the 'European marriage pattern' thus be called the 'European cohabitation pattern'? West of the line, the share of people who are cohabiting in their early 30s (at the latest) is much higher than east of the line. Spain, Portugal and Ireland are, however, exceptions to this rule.

Secondly, examining the 'not having a child' indicator results in a striking finding. More than half of 30- to 34-year-olds in Slovenia, Germany, Slovakia and Spain do not have a child. However, it should be noted that the figures are high in all countries, the mean value being as high as 42%. The lowest shares are found in Estonia and Sweden (30% of 30- to 34-year-olds), but also in these countries one-third of young adults in their early 30s is childless. It is hard to identify any conventional family formation models.

Thirdly, there are five countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Cyprus, Portugal and Spain) where the share of 30- to 34-year-olds that has not experienced specific transitions is above the mean in the case of every single transition event. If the transition events are divided into family events and financial events, the picture that arises is the following: when only the family events are examined, later-than-average transitions are also experienced in Slovenia and Slovakia. When only the financial events are examined, protracted transitions are also experienced in Estonia. Fourthly, there are seven countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, the Netherland and the United Kingdom) which could be called 'achievers' as the share of 30- to 34-year-olds who have not experienced specific transitions is below the mean value in the case of every single transition event. Thus, a clear geographic and economic variation can be identified in both of these cases.

Fifthly, a considerably high share of young adults has attained only a basic education in two countries: Portugal (51%) and Spain (35%). This is an alarming result as (higher) education and appropriate qualifications play an important role in finding and maintaining a job. Currently, the level of educational attainment is below the OECD average in both countries: compared with other OECD countries, Portugal is lagging well behind and Spain is behind in the attainment rates of upper secondary and tertiary education (OECD 2015). In these two countries, the high proportion of young adults who has attained only a basic education reflects the national circumstances and corresponds to the overall low level of school attendance. Thus, making comparisons with other European countries is challenging. This is why the 'only a basic education attained' indicator will be excluded from the analyses presented in the next paragraphs. The other option would have been to completely exclude Portugal and Spain from the analyses, but this would have had a greater impact on the *country* comparisons.

The next table (Table 16) indicates the shares of 30- to 34-year-old young adults who have not experienced specific transition events. It illustrates remarkable differences between European countries and shows that late transition to adulthood takes place in various circumstances. Based on the data, three clusters could be distinguished. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) and the average linkage method were used to

verify the results of the clustering (see also Figure 5 and Table 6 and Table 7 in the Appendices):

1) the smooth transition cluster,
2) the in-between cluster, and
3) the troublesome cluster.

Table 16. Country clusters and shares of 30- to 34-year-olds who have *not* experienced specific transition events, %.

		Lives with parents	**Not in a consensual union**	**Does not have a child**
The smooth transition cluster	DK	3	17	38
	FI	5	18	38
	FR	7	22	37
	NL	3	21	40
	NO	3	19	35
	SE	3	14	30
	AT	11	28	46
	DE	7	28	50
	BE	9	27	39
	IE	12	31	37
	UK	7	28	41
	mean	*6.4*	*23*	*39.2*
The in-between cluster	CY	19	31	49
	HU	26	34	42
	EE	22	27	30
	PL	31	26	34
	mean	*24.5*	*29.5*	*38.8*
The troublesome cluster	SL	45	46	50
	SK	44	43	51
	BG	48	39	44
	PT	34	41	48
	ES	33	45	61
	mean	*40.8*	*42.8*	*50.8*

The first cluster includes Northern and Western European countries (Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom), the second cluster Southern European Cyprus and some Eastern European countries (Hungary, Estonia and Poland), and the third cluster the rest of the Eastern European countries (Slovenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria) and Southern European countries Portugal and Spain. In the majority of cases, the clusters are very distinct and the differences between them are clear, as the diversity of the mean values of different clusters demonstrates. This particularly applies when young adults who still live with their parents are examined. The mean value describing the share of young adults living with their parents is 40.8% in the troublesome cluster and only 6.4% in the smooth transition cluster. In addition to revealing a variety of interesting differences, the analysis identifies the same general pattern which has also been detected in the previous chapters of this study. This pattern concerns the 'not having a child' indicator and is explained in the next paragraphs.

In all of the countries examined, the high percentages of the 'not having a child' indicator reflect the general impression that if a specific transition event has not been experienced, it is most typically this family event. Postponing childbirth is not a new phenomenon, since the average age of European first-time mothers has been rising since the 1960s (OECD 2016) when the second demographic transition began to affect the average timing of family events, shifting them towards later ages (Beaujot 2004, 7). A wide array of explanations for this development has been proposed, but it is not possible to determine whether postponing childbirth is a result of prolonged education; increased labour force participation (especially women's); difficulties related to combining work with family life; the cost and availability of childcare; widespread unemployment which hinders the readiness to start a family; housing factors[78]; an intentional choice by partners; or a change in a social norm or life course dynamics (expectations, opportunities and values). (E.g. Hoorens et al. 2011, 73; Kohler et al. 2002, 642; Canning 2011, 355; Esping-Andersen 2009, 86; Beaujot 2004, 17.) It has also been suggested that women are now too 'selfish' to have children because of their career ambitions and that it might be challenging to fit children into busy lives (see also e.g. Douglass 2007, 102).

[78] Especially in Eastern European countries, low and decreasing fertility is linked to the unfavourable housing conditions, the standard of living, or more generally, to economic factors and uncertainty about the future (Stropnik & Šircelj 2008, 1040; Kotowska 2012, 119). In these countries, a full-time job might open the route to family formation (e.g. Oinonen 2008, 35).

The emergence of the latest-late pattern of transition to adulthood has been connected to lowest-low fertility (e.g. Billari & Kohler 2002; see also Dominguez-Folgueras & Castro-Martin 2013). According to this view, childbearing happens late and the total fertility rate (TFR) remains low, perhaps due to late childbearing. However, as Table 17 shows, fertility rates are low and well below the replacement level[79] in all the countries included in this study—regardless of the age at which young adults become parents. What is more, TFR is below 1.6 in more than half (11 out of 20) of the countries[80]. There is thus little evidence to support the view that the fertility rate is higher in those countries where the mean age of women at the birth of their first child is low.

Table 17. Total fertility rate, year 2014.

Country	*PT*	*PL*	*CY*	*ES*	*SK*	*HU*	*AT*	*DE*	*BG*	*EE*	*SL*	*DK*	*NL*	*FI*	*BE*	*NO*	*UK*	*SE*	*IE*	*FR*
	1.23	1.29	1.31	1.32	1.35	1.41	1.46	1.47	1.53	1.54	1.58	1.69	1.71	1.71	1.72	1.76	1.81	1.88	1.95	1.98

Note: The mean value, 1.59, is the boundary limiting value.
Source: OECD Family Database 2016.

The highest fertility level is found in Northern and Western European[81] countries. One way to interpret this is that fertility levels are positively correlated with female activity rates. Thus, family policies supporting the dual breadwinner model and/or measures that help people combine childrearing with employment (such as parental leaves, childcare and opportunities to reduce working hours when children are young) impact positively the fertility rate. In contrast, poor job opportunities for young adults and weak welfare arrangements supporting the reconciliation of family and work make couples postpone, limit or even forgo childbearing. These factors keep the fertility rate in Southern and Eastern European

[79] The replacement level is considered to be at 2.1.
[80] In comparison, TFR was below 1.98 in only four of these countries (Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Sweden) in 1970. At that time, the highest TFR could be found in Ireland (3.87). However, data concerning the year 1970 was not available for Cyprus and Estonia. (OECD Family Database 2016.)
[81] The fertility level is highest in France. According to one explanation, this is due to the higher fertility of French Muslims (Douglas 2007, 105).

countries at a low level. (See also Esping-Andersen 2009, 86; Hemerijck 2013, 64-66; Szelewa 2013; Vogel 2002, 292–297.)[82]

One should also take into account that postponement of childbirth may result in a discrepancy between the desired and actual number of children. Sobotka (2008, 63), for instance, has stated that in countries where the second demographic transition started to spread first (i.e. Northern and Western Europe) the gap between desired and eventually realised fertility is the most narrow. According to OECD Family Database statistics, 'the mean average ideal fertility' and 'the actual observed total fertility' rates were in 2011 in Sweden 2.41 vs. 1.90 and in Spain 2.11 vs. 1.34, respectively (OECD 2016). In that manner Sobotka's suggestion holds. In addition, the postponement of childbirth could have other undesired consequences, such as infertility. (E.g. Stropnik & Šircelj 2008.)

When it comes to the other two indicators, 'lives with parents' and 'not in a consensual union', the forming of the clusters is unproblematic. Firstly, **the smooth transition cluster** comprises a group of Northern and Western European countries (Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom). Specific to the countries included to this cluster is that living in the parental home in one's early 30s is rare if not non-existent (Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands). In the Northern European countries, the social support system helps young adults to establish a home of their own at an early age. The results of section 6.1 showed that leaving the parental home was the most meaningful marker of adulthood only in the independent living cluster (in Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) and in Denmark and Germany from the individual independence cluster. These are basically the same countries that form the smooth transition cluster. As mentioned earlier, even in these countries young people quite often return to their parental home at least once after moving out for the first time. Thus, leaving the parental home can be seen as a gradual process (e.g. Jones 1995; Biggart & Walther 2006). Nevertheless, by the age of 34, people in these countries have typically left the parental home for good.

[82] Another interesting link was also identified between fertility rate and cohabitation patterns: in countries where the total fertility rate is the highest (see Table 17), unmarried cohabitation is frequent (see also Table 2 in section 2.2). Smock (2000, 10) has concluded that the more cohabitation enters into "*the arena for reproduction*", the more likely it is to be a substitute for marriage. Therefore, marriage-based families do not guarantee that more children will be born, as the cases of Portugal, Poland and Cyprus show. In these countries, marriage is much more common than cohabitation (see Table 2 in section 2.2).

In the countries included in the smooth transition cluster, it is not only typical that leaving the parental home happens earlier than in other countries, but living as a couple in a consensual union is also fairly widespread. Raley (2001; see also e.g. Sobotka & Toulemon 2008), for instance, has stated that the role of cohabitation in a country progresses through stages: at first, cohabitation is marginal behaviour, then it becomes a more acceptable phase that precedes marriage, and finally it turns into a more widespread phenomenon that also lasts longer than before[83]. Table 16 indicates that especially the Scandinavian countries (and the Netherlands) show signs of entering this final stage. Childbearing also happens earlier than in the other clusters, which means that it is typical for cohabiting parents to have children. Therefore, cohabitation itself does not sufficiently explain why parenthood starts later in some countries, as previous studies have shown (e.g. Oinonen 2008, 20; Oinonen 2004, 294-295).

The increase in cohabitation is naturally closely tied to the growing social acceptance of the phenomenon. It is easy to understand the popularity of cohabitation: Firstly, it offers the opportunity for a 'trial marriage' or a 'trying-out period' which may or may not lead to marriage. Secondly, it can be seen as an alternative to marriage, missing only the legal marriage contract. Thirdly, cohabitation can be seen as a risk-management strategy in response to the rather high risk of divorce. (Mary 2012, 230; Hewitt 2006.) Rosina and Fraboni (2004, 151) have suggested that cohabitation can also be seen as an expression of non-adjustable attitudes or even as a protest against authority or a way of manifesting personal freedom in defiance of traditions.

The second cluster (comprising one Southern European country, Cyprus, and three Eastern European countries, Hungary, Estonia and Poland) is called **the in-between cluster** because the young people in the countries included in this cluster fall between the young people in other clusters. The shares of 30- to 34-year-olds that have not experienced transition events are not the highest or the lowest.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of this in-between cluster is how it stands out from the troublesome cluster. Both of these clusters contain countries from Eastern Europe, but their transition patterns seem very distinct. The differences are most apparent when the shares of young adults who live with their parents and

[83] Without longitudinal data, it is impossible to say whether the 30- to 34-year-olds who are cohabiting are living together for a short-term period before getting married or whether cohabiting is a substitute for marriage. In other words, it remains unclear if the purpose is just to live together for a while or to stay together permanently. (See also Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos 2015, 149.)

concomitant on that, young adults who are not in a consensual union are examined. In Poland, for instance, cohabitation is increasingly often a 'testing period' (Mynarska et al. 2014, 1125). Some studies (e.g. Douglass 2007, 105) have shown that also in post-socialist Eastern European countries many young adult couples move from dating to living together, which may or may not later lead to marriage. When other indicators are examined, the countries in the in-between cluster are closer to countries in Northern and Western Europe, particularly in relation to the childbearing.

Thirdly, what clearly describes **the troublesome cluster** is living at the parental home. For many young adults in Slovenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria, but also in Portugal and Spain (see also e.g. Moreno Mínguez 2016), leaving the parental home really seems to be a very protracted process. The reasons for this co-residence are often associated with school, work or family decisions, but in post-socialist Eastern European countries it also indicates a cultural preference for household extension. In the current economic situation, this housing pattern is also often based on involuntary reasons: the financial uncertainty due to problems related to entering the labour market and the cost and availability of housing. (E.g. Sobotka & Toulemon 2008, 89.) Young adults, especially the poor, use household extension as an adaptive strategy, in other words, as an economic strategy, where kin may provide them with financial support (Ahmed & Emigh 2005). Paradoxically, while families are becoming increasingly de-standardized, fragile and vulnerable, they are also becoming ever more important to young adults' well-being (see also Oinonen 2008, 42).

From late exit follows late partnering, as is clearly seen in Table 16. But in the countries included in the troublesome cluster, young adults often form their *own family* while living at the parental home, as many young couples live with the parents of the bride or the groom even though they are married. Spéder and colleagues (2010, 189) have argued that the practice where young couples live in one of the parental households hinders the start of their independent life. Hence, these young adults somehow sway between autonomy and dependency and it could be said that they live in semi-dependency on their parents (see also Furlong & Cartmel 2007). Some studies have indicated that union formation increasingly begins in the form of cohabitation unions even in the countries of the troublesome cluster and that cohabitation can even be seen as an alternative to marriage (e.g.

Potančokova et al. 2008; Stropnik & Šircelj 2008)[84]. However, the duration of the cohabitation is often not very long. In Bulgaria, for example, it is common that young couples start to cohabit when the date of their marriage ceremony has been agreed on (Philipov & Jasilionione 2008, 2075).

8.2 Accumulation of incomplete transitions to adulthood

A single transition event might be pivotal when young people define their transition to adulthood, but the importance of different transitions varies (Hartmann & Swartz 2007). In general, however, a single transition event is not necessary or sufficient for the achievement of adult status, and the events should be examined as a whole (Hayford & Furstenberg 2008). In this study, the transition-to-adulthood process is defined as incomplete if any of the following criteria are met at the age of 34: a person lives at the parental home, a person does not live in a consensual union, or a person does not have a child.

Many studies have shown (e.g. Cook & Furstenberg 2002, 258, 287; Liefbroer 2009, 311–318) that routes to adulthood vary in many respects (between countries and cultures, for example) between the ages of 18 to 35. But after around the age of 35 people's lives are rather similar from the perspective of life-course transitions. Based on this information, it was logical to assume that there would be at least some convergence in the situations of 34-year-olds from different countries. However, the results in Table 18 reveal that there is a sharp divergence between European countries: in ten countries out of twenty, more than half of 30- to 34-year-olds have experienced all three transitions, while for example in Spain this has only happened to around every third person. There are major differences between countries.

[84] Philipov and Jasilioniene (2008, 2075) have pointed out that non-marital cohabitation existed in Central and Eastern European countries before the collapse of the Iron Curtain, but that it did not start to spread until the 1990s.

Table 18. Accumulation of transition events 30- to 34-year-old young adults have experienced, % (N).

Number of transitions experienced / Country	0	1	2	3	O-1		2-3	
SL (n=1887)	37	9	13	41	**46**	**SL**	54	SL
SK (n=1014)	34	10	16	40	**44**	**SK**	56	SK
ES (n=1993)	30	14	22	34	**44**	**ES**	56	ES
BG (n=739)	32	9	17	42	**41**	**BG**	59	BG
PT (n=809)	27	11	20	42	31	HU	62	PT
HU (n=1757)	20	11	20	49	30	CY	69	HU
CY (n=901)	17	13	23	47	28	PT	70	CY
PL (n=2336)	16	11	18	55	27	PL	73	PL
EE (n=736)	16	9	14	61	25	EE	75	DE
IE (n=826)	11	11	26	52	25	DE	75	EE
AT (n=756)	8	16	29	47	24	AT	76	AT
BE (n=867)	7	15	24	54	22	IE	78	BE
DE (n=1365)	6	19	29	46	22	BE	78	IE
UK (n=1466)	6	12	34	48	18	UK	**82**	**NL**
FR (n=1540)	6	12	22	60	18	FR	**82**	**FR**
FI (n=1250)	4	11	25	60	18	NL	**82**	**UK**
NL (n=1190)	3	15	25	57	17	NO	**83**	**NO**
NO (n=727)	3	14	21	62	15	FI	**85**	**FI**
DK (n=508)	3	12	25	60	15	DK	**85**	**DK**
SE (n=811)	3	9	21	67	12	SE	**88**	**SE**
Mean	14.5	12.2	22.2	51.2	26.1		73.4	

Note: Column 0 includes respondents who have not experienced any of the transition events … column 3 includes respondents who have experienced all three transition events. The separate column 0–1 includes respondents who have experienced zero or one of the transition events and the separate column 2–3 includes respondents who have experienced two or three of the transition events.

The most intriguing observation in Table 18 can be made in column 0 (zero transition events experienced): extremely protracted transitions could be identified in Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Bulgaria and Portugal, all being extremely prominent. These countries are included in the troublesome cluster built in last section. In this group of countries, which could be called 'the laggards', a notable share of young adults (Slovenia 37%, Slovakia 34%, Spain 30%, Bulgaria 32% and Portugal 27%,) have not experienced any of the three transition events. These young adults have clearly had difficulties in getting started in their lives[85]. It seems that many of these young adults are not yet autonomous or even semiautonomous, and by no means fully autonomous. There is a major gap between these countries and the Scandinavian and the Western European countries included in this study as this kind of behaviour is basically non-existent in Scandinavia and Western Europe (the share is less than 10% in all of these countries, except Ireland, where the share is 11%).

Remarkable differences between countries can also be noticed when the last two columns are lumped together (see column 2–3). This column represents the situation where all or almost all the transition events have been experienced and the transition has gone smoothly. Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands are the countries where at least 80% of 30–34-year-olds have performed their transition to adulthood and the process can be regarded as complete. 'The laggards' once again stand out from the rest of Europe: in all of these countries only around half of young adults (in Portugal the share is 62%) in their early 30s have experienced all the transition events. This is a significant part of the population. Nearly forty years ago, Coleman (see Shanahan 2000, 680) created 'the theory of the focal change', which maintained that it is easier to cope with one life event change at a time rather than managing them simultaneously. In other words, it is sometimes worth implementing role changes in stages in order to

[85] The concept 'quarterlife crisis' (see e.g. Arnett 2007, 70) has been developed to describe this challenging phase of the life course. To ease these turbulent years and to simplify constant pressure and problems (e.g. Mary 2012, 289), several handbooks and fictional novels discussing this topic have been published. On the back cover of their book, Robbins and Wilner (2001) sum up the quarterlife crisis as follows: "*While the midlife crisis has been thoroughly explored by experts, there is another landmine period in our adult development, called the quarterlife crisis, which can be just as devastating. When young adults emerge at graduation from almost two decades of schooling, during which each step to take is clearly marked, they encounter an overwhelming number of choices regarding their careers, finances, homes, and social networks. Confronted by an often shattering whirlwind of new responsibilities, new liberties, and new options, they feel helpless, panicked, indecisive, and apprehensive."*

ease the abruptness of transfers (see also Foner & Kertzer 1978). Some young adults might still use this strategy to handle uncertainties.

It is important to be aware of the challenges this postponement of transition events could cause. Some transitions, like living arrangements, belong to a group of transitions that are easy to postpone, but they may also lead to the postponement of long-term commitments and self-binding decisions, such as childbearing, that are harder to reverse and have far-reaching consequences. There also is a major risk that multiple disadvantages will accumulate. For example, if one or some of the events are increasingly delayed, it is possible that they will not be experienced at all. (E.g. Blossfeld 2000, 17; Billari & Liefbroer 2010, 63; see also Kotowska 2012, 104.)

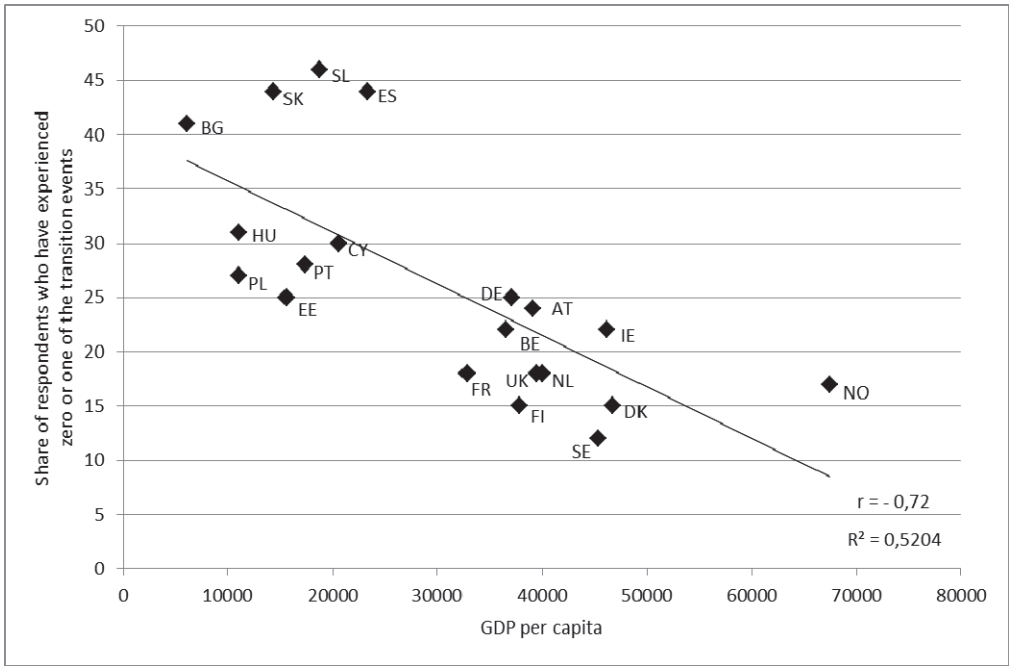

Figure 6. The interrelationship of the share of respondents who have experienced zero or one of the transition events and GDP per capita.

The economic context of a country has a major effect on the options young people have in their transition processes, and the contexts in which young people in Europe make their transitions to adulthood vary substantially. Figure 6 illustrates this by presenting the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in different countries and the share of respondents who have experienced zero or one of the transition events. The figure clearly shows that the economic (macro) aspect has an

impact on micro behaviour. The poorest countries are located in Eastern and Southern Europe, and in these countries the share of young adults with no transitions or only one transition is the highest. Young adults in these parts of Europe are more likely to suffer from not being able to start their own household, not being able to begin living independently or with a partner and not being able to become parents. These challenges sometimes make life extremely hard. (E.g. Knijn & Plantenga 2012.) The current economic crisis has worsened the situation, although it has not affected all countries equally. The crisis has, however, influenced the lives of young people across Europe.

In order to get a more detailed picture of incomplete transitions, the next table (see Table 19) concentrates on the combinations of different transition events 30- to 34-year-olds have or have not experienced. Only the combinations where n > 2 000 are included in the table. Table 19 presents a twofold typology, where both groups are characterized by a distinct combination of transition events[86]. Young adults in the first group (column I) have left the parental home, live in consensual union but do not have a child. The second group (column II) differs only slightly: it covers young adults who live independently, but do not live in a consensual union and do not have a child.

Based on the results presented in Table 19, young adults living in neighbouring countries in Scandinavia and in Western Europe have features in common as do Eastern and Southern Europeans with only some minor exceptions. Thus, geographically and culturally close countries share some common features. In the first and second groups (column I and column II), it can be seen that leaving the parental home and living with a partner or independently unite countries in Northern and Western Europe, while this pattern is practically non-existent in Eastern and Southern European countries[87] (see also e.g. Oinonen 2008). Thus, clear variation can be identified between geographical areas, so grouping countries by region of Europe is a natural choice (see also e.g. Toulemon 2010; Billari & Liefbroer 2010).

[86] Both columns contain both higher and lower percentages. If a percentage is below 10, the phenomenon can be said to be almost non-existent in the country in question.

[87] Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the popularity of cohabitation in many Eastern European countries after the Communist era (e.g. Oinonen 2008, 19).

Table 19. Combinations of different transition events 30- to 34-year-olds have or have not experienced, %.

COLUMN I		COLUMN II	
All others completed, but no child		Lives independently, but no cohab, no child	
DE	25	*DE*	18
UK	24	*NL*	15
DK	23	*AT*	15
AT	23	*BE*	13
FI	22	*NO*	13
NL	22	*FR*	12
CY	20	*DK*	12
SE	19	*CY*	12
NO	19	*UK*	11
ES	19	*FI*	11
BE	18	*ES*	11
FR	18	*IE*	10
IE	17	*SE*	8
HU	13	*HU*	8
PT	13	*PT*	7
PL	9	*SK*	6
SK	9	*EE*	6
EE	8	*SL*	5
SL	6	*PL*	4
BG	6	*BG*	3
mean	*16.7*	*mean*	*10.0*
n = 3 071		*n = 2 034*	

* The colour black indicates the smooth transition cluster (DK, FI, FR, NL, NO, SE, AT, DE, BE, IE and UK), the colour grey the in-between cluster (CY, HU, EE and PL), and the colour brown the troublesome cluster (SL, SK, BG, PT and ES).

When the 'not having a child' indicator is examined, Table 19 supports the general pattern that has also been visible in section 6.1 and section 7.1: having a child is not seen as an important marker of adulthood and it does not happen early in a person's life course. In the light of these results, it is interesting that Oinonen's (2004, 114) research on the changes in family life in Spain and Finland showed that couples are not considered complete families if they do not have a child. In addition, some researchers (e.g. Hobcraft & Kiernan 1995; Billari 2001; see also

Fussell & Gauthier 2008) have argued that 'a standard endpoint' of the transition to adulthood is when a person becomes a parent. The reasons for delaying childbearing include wanting "*to have lived in an independent household for some years; to have finished one's education; to have been employed for at least a year; to have lived with (or been married to) the partner of choice for some time and to have some travelling or other self-developing activities*" (Ravn 2005, 41). Indeed, gap year travel (GYT) experiences have become an increasingly important part of growing up for young adults. Travelling may be a way to postpone adult obligations and future commitments, but it may also provide a break from social pressures or provide an opportunity for self-development. (Johan 2009, 136–140.)

9 NEW TRANSITION-TO-ADULTHOOD PATTERNS

The previous empirical chapters have clearly shown that there is variation between European countries in terms of young adults' transition processes, although similarities can also be observed. These differences between countries and between the clusters that have been created are not a surprise: despite the closeness and commonalities of the 20 European countries included in this study, their institutional arrangements, economies and cultures are diverse. There are also clear differences between the transition-to-adulthood clusters formed in this study and the other groupings used in earlier studies (see Table 20 below and Table 6 in chapter 4)[88]. This can at least partly be explained by the use of different indicators.

It is also important to keep in mind that most previous studies have used country clusters as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. Thus, the transition-to-adulthood clusters have been used as independent variables to explain cross-national variations and not as dependent variables. Since country clusters have merely been used as a means to facilitate research, variation *within* clusters has not been examined or it has only been given a minor role. Another aspect that has not been critically analysed or justified in previous studies is the functionality or effectiveness of the clusters. In order to be able to carry out more fruitful empirical analyses, these issues should also be contemplated.

[88] In order to facilitate comparing different transition clusters, it would have been rewarding to place related transition clusters under one heading when possible. As the results show, however, different clusters do not always have enough in common to be placed in the same superordinate category.

Table 20. European transition-to-adulthood patterns.

The indicators the transition-to-adulthood classification is based on	**Transition-to-adulthood groupings**			
* most important transition markers	**Independent living** FI, NL, NO, SE	**Employment-centred** BE, ES, HU, IE, SK, SL, UK	**Individual independence** AT, DE, DK, EE	**High requirements** BG, CY, FR, PL, PT
* actual occurrences of transitions	**Early exit** AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, NL, NO, SE, UK	**Late exit** BG, CY, ES, HU, IE, PL, PT, SK, SL		
* experiences of incomplete transition	**Smooth transition countries** AT, BE, DE, DK, FI, FR, IE, NL, NO, SE, UK	**Countries in-between** CY, EE, HU, PL	**Troublesome countries** BG, SK, SL, ES, PT	

The clusters created in this study and their pureness can, naturally, be examined critically (cf. e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990). In the analysis based on the most important adulthood markers, for example, one or two clusters could be added to the existing classification by arguing that Denmark and Bulgaria should form their own clusters. Generally, clusters containing only one or a few observations are undesirable as that will instead of compressing the observations formulate to large numbers of clusters. Hence, the purpose of the whole analysis is defeated (e.g. Yim & Ramdeen 2015)[89]. In this thesis, for the sake of economy and to be able to see the forest rather than a myriad of unique trees, these two countries, Denmark and Bulgaria, were included in the clusters they resembled the most: Denmark in the individual independence cluster and Bulgaria in the high requirements cluster.

[89] That is not to say that single-item clusters are unacceptable. If a single-item cluster appears the reason(s) for that must be examined. It could indicate that a single-item cluster is completely different from the other observations of the sample, and in that case it is best left alone.

The results of the other cluster analysis based on incomplete transitions could also be interpreted differently: Spain could be separated from the rest of the troublesome cluster, and the in-between cluster could be split up so that Cyprus and Hungary comprised one cluster and Estonia and Poland another. In other words, it is possible to group countries in different manners. The idea is to find the cluster that best approximates each country. Some researchers have pointed out that grouping countries can even lead to interpreting data in a way that makes the results fit the created classification system and conceal the differences rather than explain them (cf. Arts & Gelissen 2002, 138-140; Walther & Pohl 2005, 39). In addition, the cluster to which a specific country belongs may change over time. Ultimately, transition-to-adulthood clusters are likely to reflect a mixture of different logics. However, one could draw the conclusion that the features of a specific country will resemble one of the clusters more closely than the other clusters.

The other critical aspect concerns the role of geography. Almost all previous studies discussing transition-to-adulthood patterns group countries simply based on region of Europe—the only exception being Chanvril and Le Hay's (2008) report. This is interesting, especially as Toulemon (2010) has stated that the "*geographical grouping seems arbitrary*" (p. 21). The classification used by Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013, 12–13) does indeed seem problematic. France and the Netherlands have, for instance, been included in the same group of countries (created based on geography) although having a full-time job is considered an important adulthood marker by 76.9% of women and 57.9% of men in France and only 35.9% of women and 19.4% of men in the Netherlands[90]. The same peculiarity occurs in the study by Billari and Liefbroer (2010). They begin their analyses by presenting the median ages of young people leaving the parental home. In the 1970-1979 birth cohort, for instance, the median age of women leaving the parental home is 20.5 years in Cyprus, 23.8 years in Portugal, 25.8 years in Spain and 26.9

[90] When the perceived importance of four markers of adulthood was analysed in the study of Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013, 10–13), France and the Netherlands were quite far apart not only when having a full-time job was examined but also when the other markers were compared. Furthermore, these two countries were not the only two countries placed in the same cluster despite their substantially differing results. In Poland, 50.0% of women and 48.1% of men perceived parenthood as an important adulthood marker, while the corresponding percentages in Hungary were 18.7% and 14.3%. These two countries were included in the same cluster.

years in Italy[91]. Despite these rather substantial differences, Billari and Liefbroer included these four countries in the same, Southern region of Europe and compared the region to three other regions of Europe. Based on these examples, it seems justified to ask that if even neighbouring countries do not share the same views on transition to adulthood, how likely it is that other, geographically and culturally more distant countries will do so.

Not surprisingly, the explanatory power of geography also varies in the analyses performed in this study. In the first cluster analysis based on young adults' opinions on the most important demographic markers of adulthood, there is some evidence of geographical disparity. The Nordic countries are the only countries that form a geographical cluster, and even this cluster includes the Netherlands[92], which is not geographically a Nordic country. Furthermore, Nordic country Denmark is not included in this cluster, although it could be seen to have a similar institutional context as the other Nordic countries. Geography does not play a role in forming of the other clusters.

Intriguingly, the Eastern European countries cannot be framed together but are grouped in three different clusters: the employment-centred cluster, the individual independence cluster and the high requirements cluster. The only aspect the countries have in common is that getting a full-time job is seen as an essential adulthood marker. No other connecting factors exist. Eastern European countries have not yet been systematically included in comparative transition-to-adulthood research (see also e.g. Walther 2006, 124), which is why it is challenging to compare the results of this study with previous studies. In studies that have included the Eastern European countries, or at least some of them, (Walther & Pohl 2005; Chanvril & Le Hay 2008; Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Toulemon 2010; Spéder, Murinkó & Settersten 2013) they have appeared to form a group of their own[93]. In some

[91] As in the case of Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten's (2013) study, also in Billari and Liefbroer's (2010) study the timings of other transition events showed rather large diversity. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for example, were all grouped in the Western region of Europe. In these countries, the lowest median age at first marriage for women belonging to the 1970–1979 cohort could be found in Austria (27.8 years), while the highest median age was found in the Netherlands (32.5 years). The most homogeneous behaviour could be found in countries belonging to the Northern region of Europe (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden).

[92] The Netherlands is classified as belonging to the Nordic cluster in other studies as well (e.g. Vogel 2002; Iacovou 2002).

[93] Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013) divided Eastern European countries into two groups: Eastern-Central Europe (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, Latvia, Russian Federation and Ukraine).

cases, the reasoning behind this classification has been debatable: Aassve, Cottini and Vitali (2013), for example, grouped the former communist countries together "*for presentational convenience, rather than suggesting that they are similar*" (p. 951). Grouping all Eastern European countries in the same cluster has also been the case in welfare regime studies (e.g. Arts & Gelissen 2002) and studies classifying family patterns (e.g. Oinonen 2008, 40).

The first cluster analysis in this study is based on ESS 2006/2007 data. Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten (2013), Toulemon (2010), Billari and Liefbroer (2010) and Chanvril and Le Hay (2008) have used the same data and some of the same variables used in this study. In all of these previous studies, multiple countries have been investigated and the main aim has been either to examine perceptions concerning the age of adulthood and the importance of different transition events (Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten), to explore transition to adulthood in Europe and possible convergence in behavioural patterns between countries (Toulemon) or to examine pathways to adulthood and patterns of transition to adulthood (Billari and Liefbroer). Despite the similarities, the groupings of the previous studies and the clusters formed in this study only overlap slightly. This is mainly explained by the fact that in Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten's, Toulemon's and Billari and Liefbroer's studies, countries are grouped simply by region of Europe and not based on a specific analysis.

Using a regional approach is an interesting choice as it has been stated (e.g. Bambra 2007, 1101) that the welfare regime type in which each country is included can vary substantially depending on which factors are used in regime construction. Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts (2014, 29–30) have also rightly pointed out that welfare regime analysis has some downsides when applied to young people. Firstly, the onset of the welfare regime analysis took place at a time when labour markets and income maintenance structures were more predictable. Today, the situation is quite different, and young people in particular have been affected by phenomena such as precarious work. Secondly, welfare regime analyses concentrate on the welfare state system. Young adults, however, make use of a special mix of formal and informal sources while moving between different forms of dependence on the state, the market and the family.

The report of Chanvril and Le Hay (2008) uses a strategy similar to the one used in this study and groups countries based on an analysis where a variable describing the most important transition markers—leaving the parental home, getting a full-time job, living with a spouse or partner and becoming a parent—is used. Chanvril and Le Hay form five separate country clusters where geography only plays a minor role. The Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland are grouped together,

but Western European countries are split into four separate clusters. The cluster including Ireland, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium emphasises employment and the cluster including the Netherlands and Switzerland (and the Scandinavian countries) emphasises independent living. Germany and Spain form the fourth cluster and Austria the fifth. Chanvril and Le Hay's clusters partly overlap the clusters created in this study: the *départ du domicile parental prédominant* cluster resembles the *independent living* cluster, the *emploi prédominant* cluster the *employment-centred* cluster and the *parentalité prédominant* cluster the *high requirements* cluster. However, differences can also be found between these two studies, partly due to a different country selection (the meaning of country selection, see e.g. Ebbinghaus 2012).

The impact of using different indicators was also clearly visible when the interrelationships between subjectively described transition markers and their actual, objectively measured occurrences were investigated. In chapter 7, the purpose was to determine a) the timing (i.e. mean ages describing when different transitions take place in different countries) of four transition events and b) whether the opinions of young adults actually reflect the way they behave. This approach also made it possible to group countries into clusters. Based on the results, the pattern of early exit, later childbearing and later marriages is visible in Scandinavian and Western European countries (including Estonia), while the opposite pattern (late exit, earlier childbearing and earlier marriages) is typical in Eastern and Southern European countries. A *geographical* variation could thus be identified when the mean ages at which different transitions take place were observed.

However, when the interrelationships of values given for certain adulthood markers and the actual occurrences of the events were analysed, the country grouping did not resemble the grouping created earlier in this study (see section 6.1). Rather, examples of situations where there was an inconsistency between the opinions and behaviour of young adults could be found. In France and Portugal, for instance, the mean age at which young people leave the parental home was 23.9 in France and 28.9 in Portugal, but according to the clustering these countries should both belong to the high requirements cluster. In the case of Estonia and Germany, the mean age at which young people had their first child was 26.6 in Estonia and 29.4 in Germany, but according to the clustering these countries should both belong to the individual independence cluster. The most homogeneous interrelationships could be found in countries belonging to the independent living cluster (Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden), but also in these countries the results were partly inconsistent. Whether the opinions of young adults actually reflect their experiences has been questioned several times in this study. Based on the

observations presented in this paragraph, it seems clear that some variation exists between opinions and reality.

In the second cluster analysis based on the share of 30 to 34-year-olds who have or have not experienced specific transition events, geography plays a slightly more important role in the grouping of the countries. A clear regional and geographical pattern emerged in Europe: Scandinavia and Western European countries form one geographical cluster. This grouping resembles the one Reher (1998) created while he investigated European family patterns, although the reasoning behind the clustering in these two studies only has some similarities. In this study, the smooth transition cluster (including Scandinavian and Western European countries) manifests a pattern of having left the parental home and living in a non-married cohabiting relationship. These features are also partly portrayed by Reher. However, apart from the cluster including Scandinavian and Western European countries, geography does not have a very significant role in grouping the countries. The Eastern European countries are split into two separate clusters: Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia together with Southern European Portugal and Spain comprise one and the rest of the Eastern European countries (Estonia, Hungary and Poland plus Southern European Cyprus) another. In all other previous studies (except Spéder, Murinkó and Settersten's (2013) study and Chanvril and Le Hay's (2008) report) the Eastern European countries have compose the cluster of their own.

Many earlier comparative transition studies have used Esping-Andersen's approach (which closely resembles the geographical divide) maintaining that "moder*n Western societies differ by type of welfare regime, each one associated with specific life course consequences*" (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, 488; see also Mayer 2001). Specific transition patterns can undeniably be linked to the welfare state and in some cases this approach can provide plausible results. The social democratic welfare regime, for instance, is oriented towards individuals, where family ties are weak. Leaving the parental home at an early age and non-traditional family formation are typical of these societies, and these actions are facilitated by active support from the state. Of the clusters created in this study, the independent living cluster can to some extent be seen as a representing the social democratic welfare regime. However, Denmark was not included in the independent living cluster, although it is also a social democratic welfare state. Interestingly, thus, fairly similar historical backgrounds and similar macro-level developments have created different outcomes. France and the high requirements cluster offer a good example of the fact that the opposite is also possible. Countries included in the high requirements

cluster have extremely different historical backgrounds, but different macro-level developments have still resulted in similar outcomes.

Ultimately, most of the results of this study indicate that the theory of welfare regimes, which is based on Esping-Andersen's (1990) seminal work, does not provide the most suitable approach for building different transition-to-adulthood clusters or models. In their review article on transition-to-adulthood studies in Europe, Buchmann and Kriesi (2011), too, come to the conclusion that empirical evidence concerning transition behaviour often does not match welfare regime models: differences can be found between social groups, for instance, both within[94] and between countries. Walther (2006, 124–125) also points out that applying a typology of welfare regimes to the comparisons of transition-to-adulthood contexts requires an extended perspective. Several alternative typologies are available and many of them include aspects, such as gender, that were not examined in Esping-Andersen's original typology. Some of the alternative typologies also contain a wider range of countries, which might facilitate making country comparisons. (E.g. Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Toulemon 2010.) The most radical researchers have questioned how comprehensively the welfare state can explain transition-to-adulthood behaviour as a whole. As Berthoud and Iacovou (2004, 14) put it, "*how far can these differences between countries be attributed to social policy—for example, on employment and housing—and how far might they be reduced if one common policy was to be used?*" (See also Aassve et al. 2002.)

In summary, the results of this study clearly indicate that it is difficult to produce credible and comprehensive generalizations about transition-to-adulthood patterns. It is not possible (and perhaps not even necessary) to treat young European people making their transition to adulthood as a homogeneous group—or even divide young Europeans into three or four separate, homogenous groups. The only exception is provided by the Nordic countries (including the Netherlands and excluding Denmark in 'the most important transition markers' analysis): in spite of the approach used, young adults in these geographically adjacent countries seem to follow quite similar transition patterns. Southern European Portugal and Eastern European Bulgaria also seem to have many similarities throughout the analyses of

[94] In addition, and similarly as Furstenberg (2013, 34) noted, when focusing timing of different transitions, there might be more state-level variation in one country than variation between two or more countries. For example, northern and southern France often appear to walk divergent paths, and the southern fringes of Spain or Portugal often show characteristics distinct from the northern parts of those same countries (see also Reher 1998, 203).

this study. In other words, countries may have a lot in common although they are not from the same geographical region.

The results unambiguously show that the indicators the transition-to-adulthood classification is based on have an enormous impact on transition-to-adulthood groupings. The indicators may even prove to be decisive. Therefore, it seems problematic that all previous studies have examined the transition process through a deductive approach: country groupings have been used to categorise countries before the empirical analyses have been carried out. In other words, grouping the countries has been used as a tool for reducing the number of objects to be examined. If the use of this approach continues in future studies and country clusters are used as a means to an end and not an end in itself, attention should be paid to justifying the country groupings and their suitability for transition-to-adulthood research. However, an inductive approach would provide a more convenient starting point for analyses, and future comparative research on transition to adulthood could benefit more from this approach. If an inductive method were to be used, the indicators and criteria for country groupings would be determined before carrying out any analyses. This would ensure that suitable clusters could be created. It would also offer a solid foundation for examining other questions relevant to transition-to-adulthood research.

Since the differences between regions, and even between countries, are rather substantial, Europeans will almost certainly continue to follow divergent patterns in their transition-to-adulthood processes. Young people's opinions towards transition-to-adulthood markers, the way they live their transition years, and the type of influence the society they live in and its cultural heritage have over their lives are essential to the transition process. Reher's (1998, 221) thoughts on the convergence of European family systems can also be seen to apply to transition to adulthood: "*No matter how nearly universal the factors of modernization may be, once they enter into contact with different historical, cultural, geographical, or social realities, the end result will necessarily be different in each context.*"

10 DISCUSSION

MacDonald (2011) has stated that "*Emphasising the new … catches academic attention more easily than does stress on the consistent and unchanging. 'The shock of the new' grabs more headlines than 'same as it ever was.'*" (p. 428). This phenomenon can also be identified in the way transition to adulthood is discussed in the media and in research. Although changes in transition to adulthood have been visible for a couple of decades, studies repetitively continue to compare and contrast modern transition patterns against the experiences of the baby boom generation (e.g. Côté & Bynner 2008, 253–254; see also Goodwin & O'Connor 2007) and suggest that some kind of a new change has taken place. It seems that today's young adults are trapped in the framework instituted by their parents or that they are being torn between the traditional patterns of their society and the more individualised present in which they live. Transition to adulthood in contemporary Europe is indisputably different from what it used to be a few decades ago. The process of aging and therefore the nature of life-course transitions are never exactly the same for any two cohorts. (Foner & Kertzer 1978, 1086; Smith 2008, 177.) This should be taken into account in transition-to-adulthood research.

When the transitions of young people today are measured using the standards of previous generations, it can easily seem that the entire transition process has been delayed, that it is happening in the wrong order, or even that it has failed (see also Wyn & Woodman 2006). Transition to adulthood is undeniably taking place at a rather late stage and all the major transitions to adulthood have on average been delayed, but these delays are not uniform across transitions or across individuals. According to official age thresholds, adult status is reached by the age of eighteen (age of majority), fifteen (school-leaving age) or even thirteen (minimum age for sexual consent) as these age limits are most often used to define adulthood in social policies or legislation (Furstenberg et al. 2008, 18). In reality, however, young adults often experience transition events much later: they may be closer to or even over the age of 30 as the results of this study have clearly shown. When all transition events are examined, family formation is typically the last event to take place.

This delayed transition process gives rise to at least two interesting perspectives (which has not yet straightforwardly discussed in this study). Firstly, if one uses the

official age thresholds and assumes that a person can be called an adult at around the age of 18, this means that in many European countries young adults live with their parents *and* are typically childless for at least one decade. Particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe, young adults often do not leave their parental home until they are in their late 20s or early 30s, and intergenerational cohabitations are rather typical. Esping-Andersen (2009, 150), for example, calls this parent-child cohabitation an indicator of strong familialism, but in these cases it might be more accurate to interpret the phenomenon simply as a financial necessity. In many Eastern and Southern European countries, childbearing also takes place very late when young adults are in their early 30s. This new way of behaving has made young adults more dependent on support from their parents and led to the overburdening of many families. Due to the European economic crisis, this has caused serious problems in underprivileged families, which have become increasingly fragile[95], but also in middle-class families. (Settersten 2007, 252.) Financial support from parents is also often needed to cover the increased costs of education due to the lack of grant and loan systems. Parents have, thus, had to bear most of the costs of educational expansion. (Anxo et al. 2010, 14, 17, 22.) It has even been stated that the current economic situation is likely to increase the importance of the parental home as an institution for young people to fall back on (Knijn & Plantenga 2012, 203).

Secondly, if parenthood takes place when young adults are in their early or even late 30s or if it does not take place at all, can it be considered an event representing transition to *adulthood*? Based on the results of this study, if a young adult has experienced all except one of the transition events related to adulthood, the missing transition event is typically becoming a parent. It seems rather questionable to state that people in their 30s should not be considered adults if they are not parents. (See also Settersten 2007, 259; Arnett 1997, 19.) If a couple decides not to have children at all, why should this decision prevent them from being defined as adults? Could the results of this study thus suggest that this traditional role may no longer be adequate for defining adulthood? The fact that parenthood now occurs much later in life and that a larger number of people remains childless by circumstance or choice seems to support this interpretation (see also Settersten, Ottusch & Schneider 2015, 5). What these changes will probably have an impact on, is the meaning of the term 'family' (see also Oinonen 2008, 27–28). According to research (e.g. Szelewa 2013), family is still at the top hierarchy of values, but as Giddens (1999, 18–19, 58) has appositely described, it

[95] These new risks and costs are clearly present in familistic and liberal welfare states, but also in other types of societies.

can be seen as a 'shell institution': family is still called family and thus the outer shell has remained, but inside the basic characters have changed.

The results of this study also raise questions concerning the role of marriage as an adulthood marker. In the analyses concerning late and incomplete transitions, the transition event marriage was 'voluntarily' replaced by an indicator describing couples living together in an intimate partnership. This decision was made based on the results of chapter 6 and chapter 7 and the observations made in earlier studies. There are persuasive arguments that a period of non-marital cohabitation (either preceding marriage or being an alternative to marriage) can nowadays be seen as normative behaviour amongst young adults (see also Guzzo 2014; Settersten & Ray 2010; cf. Heinz et al. 2009, 19) in specific countries. Could cohabitation even replace marriage as an adulthood marker? To some extent, early marriages have undoubtedly been substituted by cohabitation. According to Kuperberg (2014), cohabitation has to some degree become a relationship that serves as an alternative to early marriage, although it has not entirely replaced it. Another marriage-related substitution can be identified when the earlier European marriage pattern is compared to the currently predominant pattern. In the past, the Hajnal line divided Europe, and two different European *marriage* patterns could be distinguished. Based on the results of this study, the same line still seems to exist, but the European marriage patterns should perhaps now be called European *cohabitation* patterns. Clear differences remain in the household structures of the two regions. It is much more common for people in their early 30s to be cohabiting west of the line[96] than east of the line.

The fact that transition-to-adulthood processes are nowadays often protracted has led to a situation where transition events no longer follow each other in a specific order. Instead, transition events are distributed over time, they occur in different orders and at different times for different individuals, and they co-occur (Shanahan 2000, 667). Transition reversals are, thus, also possible: young adults may, for instance, return to their parental home after a sequence of living elsewhere. In addition, young people may start on one path and then switch to another, which proves that many transition experiences are adaptable. (E.g. Furstenberg et al. 2008.) Moreover, varying trajectories across multiple transitions to adulthood have been observed: some young people achieve financial independence but postpone family formation, while others have children and relationships but a less established employment situation, for example. The reasons for these unfinished transition processes could be related to the fact that the transition events are still

[96] Spain, Portugal and Ireland are exceptions to this rule.

intertwined: although young adults enter the labour market rather early, labour market uncertainty binds a large number of marginally employed or unemployed young adults to their parental homes. As a result, union formation and childbearing are often delayed. Thus, if a young adult confronts difficulties when exiting a certain event, there tends to be an increased risk of troubled entry into another (Elder & O'Rand 2009, 437). In the worst case scenario, failure in one event may preclude the transition to another. Incomplete transition processes could lead to the accumulation of problems. It is important to be aware of the challenges these incomplete transition processes could cause. If one or some of the events are increasingly delayed, it is possible that they will not be experienced at all.

Nonetheless, institutional arrangements and social policy systems are in many societies still locked into traditional expectations. Therefore, supportive models do not always reflect the realities of the modern world and current patterns do not offer sufficient answers to present trends and circumstances. Rindfuss (1991) identified this problem over 20 years ago and stated the following: "*If disorder has no lasting effect, it is merely one of those interesting curiosities of life; but if it seems to be related to behaviour later in the life course, surely its causes and implications need to be examined*" (p. 503). Thus, it should not come as a surprise that rather than support the more traditional passage of full-time education followed by full-time work or leaving the parental home to get married, policies should recognize that young adults nowadays alternate between education and work experiences or between different living arrangements, for example, or simultaneously combine these experiences. Policies should also support combining education or work with family responsibilities, but this is rarely the case and the opportunities to combine work and childcare remain underdeveloped in many countries. (See also Chisholm & Hurrelmann 1995, 149; Plantenga 2005.) Naturally, work-family policies will only be successful if work is available in the first place.

If transitions to adulthood are not managed successfully, there will be social and economic costs to society and individuals. A high level of volatility may generate insecurity and conflict, and young people who fail the transition may encounter various risks, such as social exclusion or poverty. Nevertheless, the choices young people make affect not just their own lives, but also society as a whole.It has been stated (Knijn & Plantenga 2012, 203) that countries that adapt their social policy to the changing life styles of young Europeans will be better equipped to handle the challenges young people are facing. As transition to adulthood evolves, social institutions must also transform. Changes in institutional arrangements need to take people's changing life courses into account (see also Anxo et al. 2010, 7–8). The present system often fails to offer suitable solutions to improve young people's

situation as it is not adapted to current socio-economic dilemmas. Sometimes, the actions of individuals lead to changes in institutions. Coleman (1994, 8–9) has introduced a way to analyse the interaction between institutional context (macro level) and individuals' behaviour (micro level). In Coleman's boat, a macro-level phenomenon actuates specific actions by individuals which then result in another macro-level phenomenon. This kind of interlink can be discerned in labour market policies: in certain societies women's labour force participation, either part-time or full-time, has increased rapidly because of economic, social and cultural changes, and new legislation has had to be adopted with regard to these changes (see e.g. Liefbroer 2009).

Several studies (e.g. Beaujot 2004; Scarpetta et al. 2010) have discussed the changes needed to improve the management of transition-to-adulthood processes, the consequences of these changes, and even how they should be implemented. Despite the distinctiveness of traditions, culture and institutions in different countries, many policy-related principles can be extended to a wide range of countries. There are many good practices to follow: for example the dual system, typical in Germany and Austria, enables labour market entrants to undergo rather smooth school-to-work transition processes. For many, learning at work could provide a good alternative to formal education. To help young adults to start their independent living, Ireland and Spain, for example, have implemented programmes to offer empty homes owned by banks to social housing's purposes (Pittini et al. 2015). Creating a practical family policy could also benefit societies. Sweden, for instance, follows a modern family pattern with a high level of shared parental responsibility in matters related to both work and domestic life. In addition, labour force participation among mothers is rather high[97]. Sweden has perhaps managed to provide young adults with the support they need in the transition process of becoming a parent, while many other countries have not been as successful in performing the same task (Bonoli 2007).

The need for specific actions has also been recognised at the EU level. The European Commission's Europe 2020 initiative, Youth Strategy 2010–2018 and the Youth Guarantee are examples of Europe-wide projects. In all of these initiatives, the main focus is on education and employment: how to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the job market, how to reduce the level of early school leaving, how to raise the level of employment, or how to fight against youth unemployment. The ability to implement these actions varies

[97] This is usually linked with low birth rates, but interestingly, Sweden has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe (Goldscheider, Bernhardt & Brandén 2013).

from country to country, and welfare state structures also impact transition to adulthood.

Often, the problem is that the guidelines directing different countries are too general: they do not clearly define the content and meaning of public policies and they only present broad principles for policy implementations. The vague frameworks could be the result of European heterogeneity which makes it very challenging to propose common guidelines. Housing policy or housing markets are good examples of that. Housing markets are demanding in regional level not to mention national over international levels. Furthermore, the guidelines are sometimes slightly over-optimistic: In the Youth on the Move campaign belonging to the Europe 2020 initiative, for instance, the target is to provide *all* young people in Europe with the opportunity to study or work abroad by the year 2020. With regard to education, the Europe 2020 initiative also sets targets for school drop-out rate (less than 10%) and for the share of 30- to 34-year-olds who should have completed third-level education (at least 40%). The common EU target has, however, often been transposed into national targets because of differing circumstances. These targets, the common or the national ones, might be realistic in some European countries, but it is debatable to set them as a common European goal since some European states will have further to travel than others. It sometimes seems that there is a growing gap between the everyday life young adults lead and the institutions in which decisions concerning their present and future are made (see also e.g. Moreno Minguéz et al. 2012, 22).

* * *

This study has examined transition to adulthood at national level. As a whole, the results of the analyses performed in this study provide an overview of how transition-to-adulthood patterns vary across different social, cultural and economic contexts, which adulthood markers young Europeans find most important, when different transitions take place, and what are the specific features of incomplete transitions. The picture of transition-to-adulthood patterns in Europe has been painted with a broad brush, and many of the results have also raised new questions. What would the results show if gender, the level of education, social class or religious beliefs, for example, had been used as independent variables? What would the European transition-to-adulthood patterns look like if multi-level modelling had been used? This approach would also provide a tool for determining macro-level influences on transition to adulthood. What kind of an influence has

the European economic crisis, which began in 2008, had on young people? Has it widened the gap between those with more and those with fewer opportunities?

The new risks young adults are experiencing have become topical in public discussions and policy debates. In addition to new social risks, 'traditional' stratification markers, such as migrant status, also continue to affect young adults' transition-to-adulthood patterns (Drobnič & Knijn 2012, 80). It has been known for years that migration plays an important role in population trends. Although immigration has been a common phenomenon in Europe, or at least in parts of it, for several decades, the current migrant crisis has escalated the situation. How will this affect transition-to-adulthood patterns? Will our current knowledge of transition-to-adulthood patterns quickly become outdated due to major waves of migration? Only time and future research will tell.

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APPENDICES

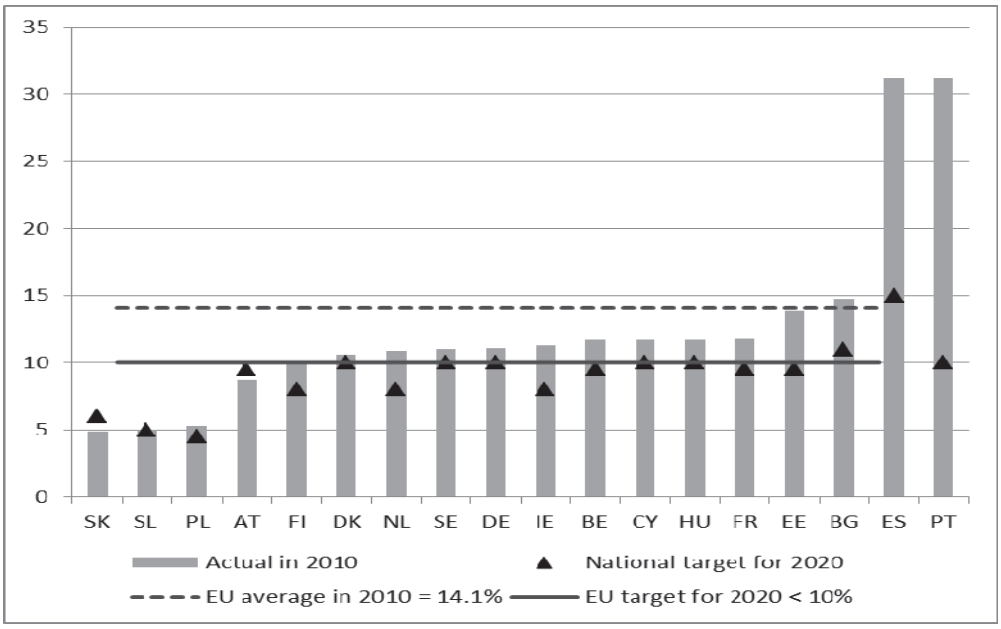

Figure 1. School drop-out rates
Source: Heuse & Zimmer 2011.

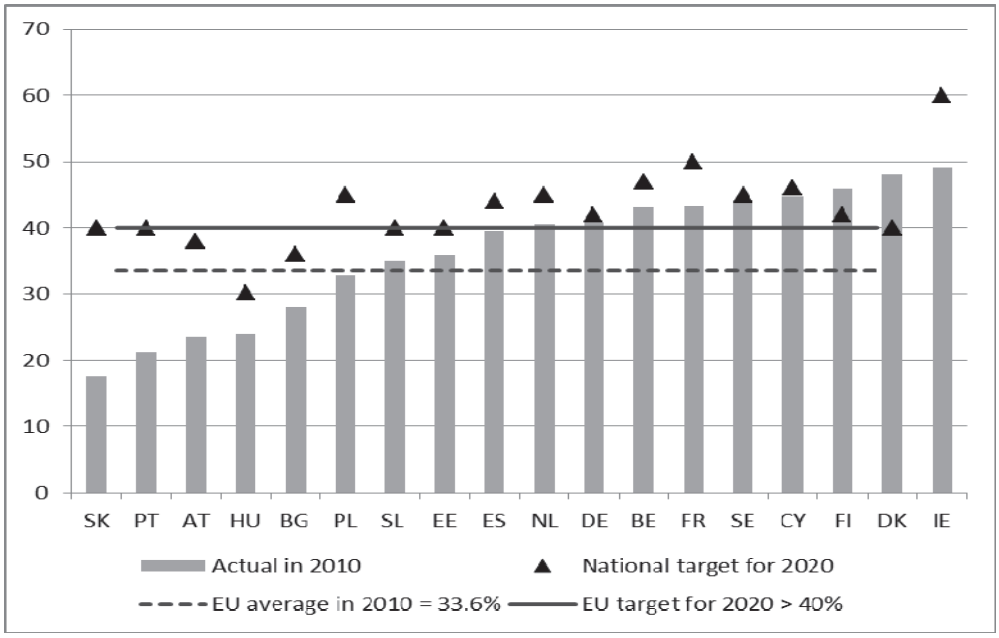

Figure 2. The proportion of people between 30 to 34 years old who have completed tertiary (or equivalent) education
Source: Heuse & Zimmer 2011.

Table 1. List of variables used and their values and labels, EU-SILC data 2012.

RB220 Father ID and / or RB230 Mother ID
PE040 Highest ISCED level attained
0) pre-primary education, 1) primary education, 2) lower secondary education, 3) (upper) secondary education, 4) post-secondary non-tertiary education and 5) first and second stage of tertiary education
PB200 Consensual union[98]
1 yes, on a legal basis, 2 yes, without a legal basis and 3 no
RX010 Age at the date of the interview

[98] Following EU-SILC definition, a consensual union with a legal basis means that the partners are spouse / husband or registered partners. A consensual union without a legal basis reflects the situation of people who are considered as "de facto" partners. (Choroszewicz & Wolff 2010, 11.)

Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

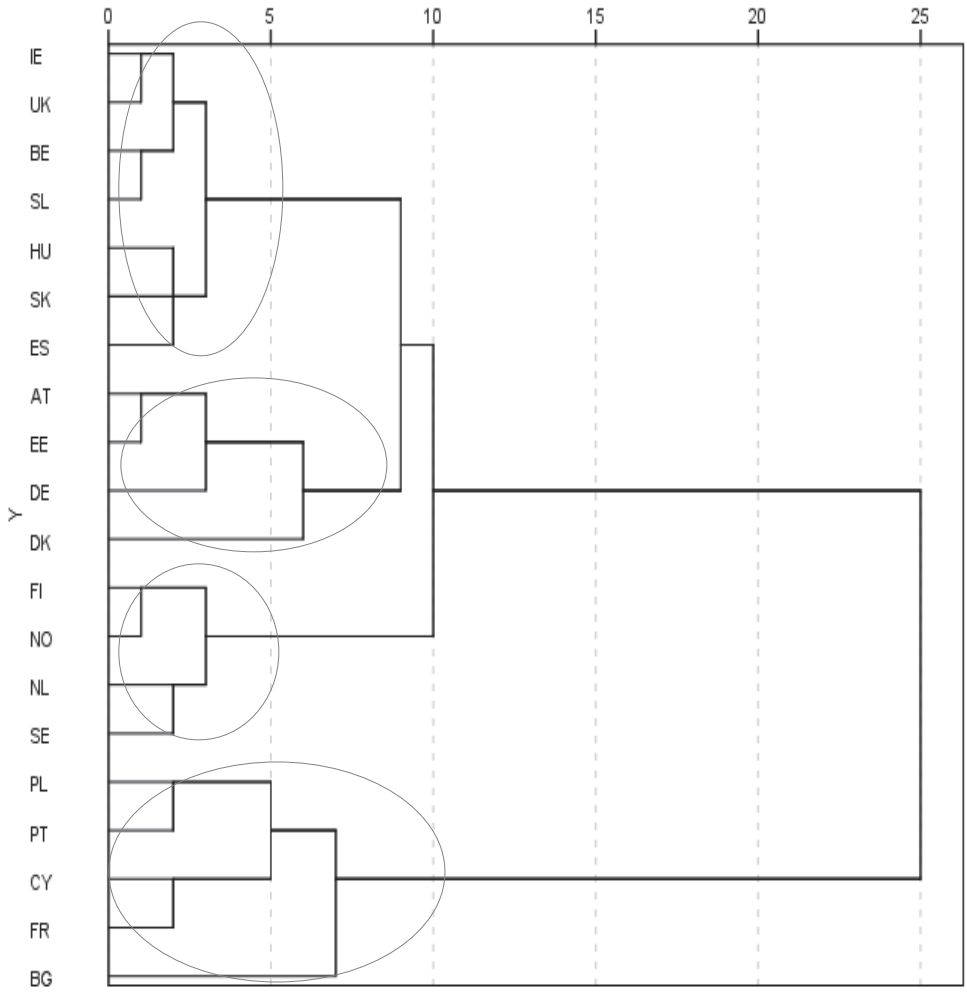

Figure 3. Transition to adulthood clusters based on subjective markers. Dendrogram using average linkage (between groups).

Table 2. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) based on important transition markers. Agglomeration Schedule, Average Linkage (Between Groups).

	Cluster Combined			Stage Cluster First Appears		
Stage	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Coefficients	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Next stage
1	8	11	15,800	0	0	5
2	1	3	44,110	0	0	11
3	5	10	77,740	0	0	5
4	12	17	127,990	0	0	13
5	5	8	149,620	3	1	12
6	7	9	164,560	0	0	7
7	6	7	193,560	0	6	12
8	2	4	197,000	0	0	11
9	19	20	227,690	0	0	14
10	14	18	250,730	0	0	14
11	1	2	276,905	2	8	18
12	5	6	286,720	5	7	17
13	12	15	323,125	4	0	15
14	14	19	611,680	10	9	16
15	12	16	741,247	13	0	17
16	13	14	860,710	0	14	19
17	5	12	1070,705	12	15	18
18	1	5	1199,607	11	17	19
19	1	13	3108,789	18	16	0

1=FI; 2=NL; 3=NO; 4=SE; 5=BE; 6=ES; 7=HU; 8=IE; 9=SK; 10=SL; 11=UK; 12=AT; 13=BG; 14=CY; 15=DE; 16=DK; 17=EE; 18=FR; 19=PL; 20=PT

Table 3. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) based on important transition markers. Agglomeration Schedule, Complete Linkage.

	Cluster Combined			Stage Cluster First Appears		
Stage	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Coefficients	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Next stage
1	8	11	15,800	0	0	8
2	1	5	44,110	0	0	11
3	5	10	77,740	0	0	8
4	12	17	127,990	0	0	13
5	7	9	164,560	0	0	7
6	2	4	197,000	0	0	11
7	6	7	218,580	0	5	12
8	5	8	220,440	3	1	12
9	19	20	227,690	0	0	14
10	14	18	250,730	0	0	14
11	1	2	403,080	2	6	17
12	5	6	437,490	8	7	17
13	12	15	468,700	4	0	15
14	14	19	818,300	10	9	16
15	12	16	930,610	13	0	18
16	13	14	1307,910	0	14	19
17	1	5	2026,290	11	12	18
18	1	12	2682,960	17	15	19
19	1	13	9064,030	18	16	0

1=FI; 2=NL; 3=NO; 4=SE; 5=BE; 6=ES; 7=HU; 8=IE; 9=SK; 10=SL; 11=UK; 12=AT; 13=BG; 14=CY; 15=DE; 16=DK; 17=EE; 18=FR; 19=PL; 20=PT

Table 4. Mean ages at which different transitions take place.

	Age left parental home	Age started first job	Age first child was born	Age at first marriage
FI	21.9	23.2	28.6	32
NO	n/a	23.2	29	32.5
NL	23.7	23.1	29.5	31.8
SE	19.7	21.8	29.2	34.7
mean	*21.8*	*22.8*	*29.1*	*32.8*
IE	26.3	22.5	29.6	32.4
UK	24.4	20.8	28.6	31.1
BE	25	22.2	28.6	30.8
SL	28.2	23.7	28.6	30
HU	27.5	22.7	27.7	30.6
SK	30.9	21.3	27	28.8
ES	29	21.3	30.6	32.8
mean	*27.3*	*22.1*	*28.7*	*30.9*
DE	23.8	n/a	29.4	32.1
AT	25.5	21.2	28.9	31
EE	23.6	21.6	26.6	29.8
DK	21.1	23.4	29.2	33.5
mean	*23.5*	*22.1*	*28.5*	*31.6*
PL	28.3	23.1	26.9	26.9
PT	28.9	23	29.2	30.7
CY	28.4	22.3	29.2	29.9
FR	23.9	21.2	28.3	30.9
BG	28.7	20.5	28.8	28.6
mean	*27.6*	*22*	*28.5*	*29.4*
Total mean	25.7	22.2	28.5	31

Note: The countries are arranged in the transition clusters created in the section 6.1.

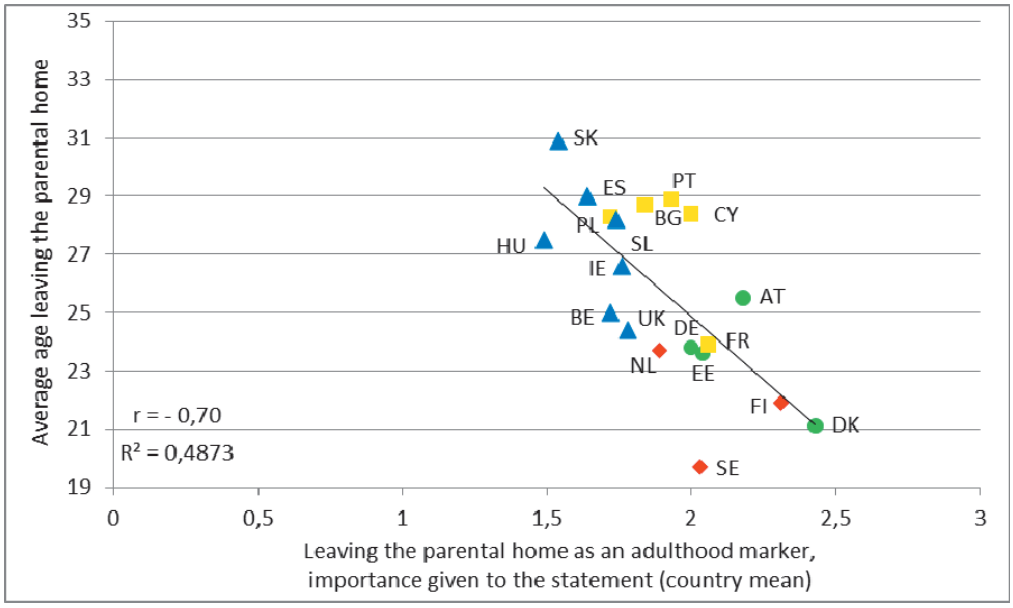

Figure 4a. The interrelationship of values given for leaving the parental home as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

Note: Norway is not included in the figure.

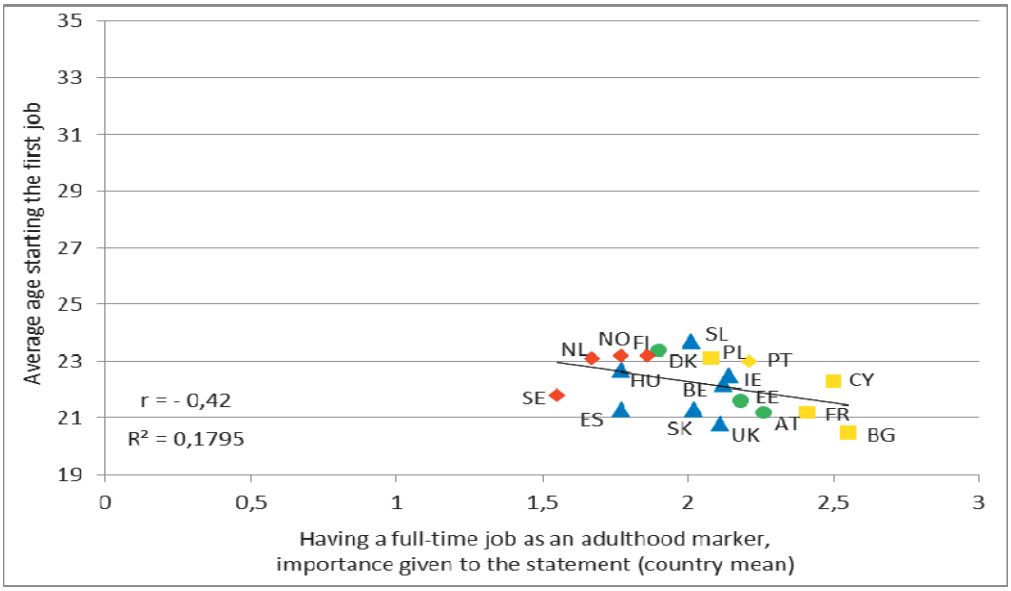

Figure 4b. The interrelationship of values given for getting a full-time job as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

Note: Germany is not included in the figure.

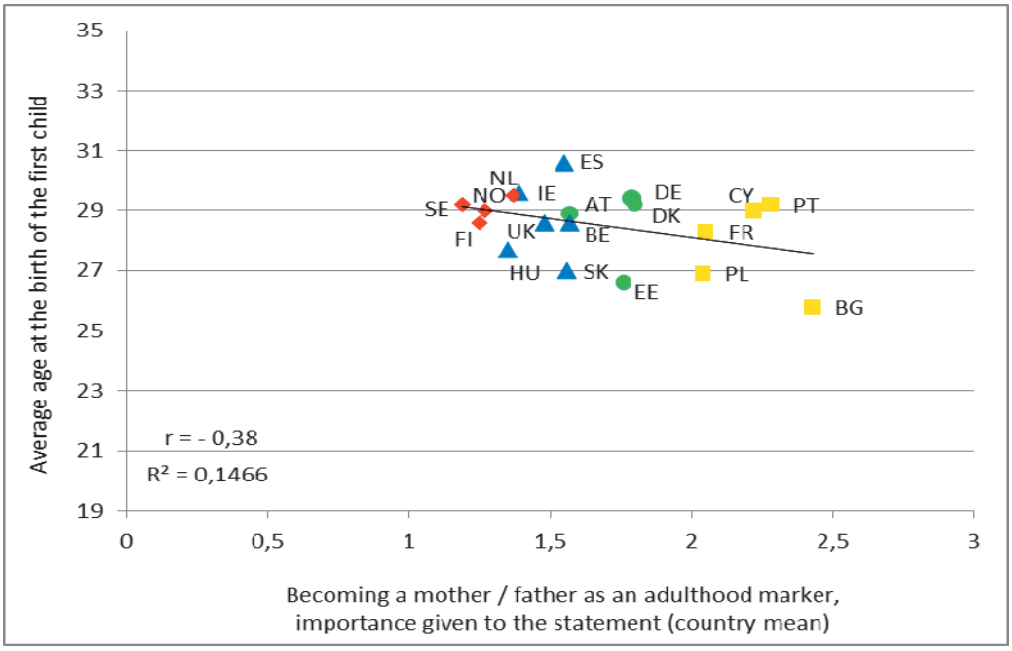

Figure 4c. The interrelationship of values given for becoming a parent as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

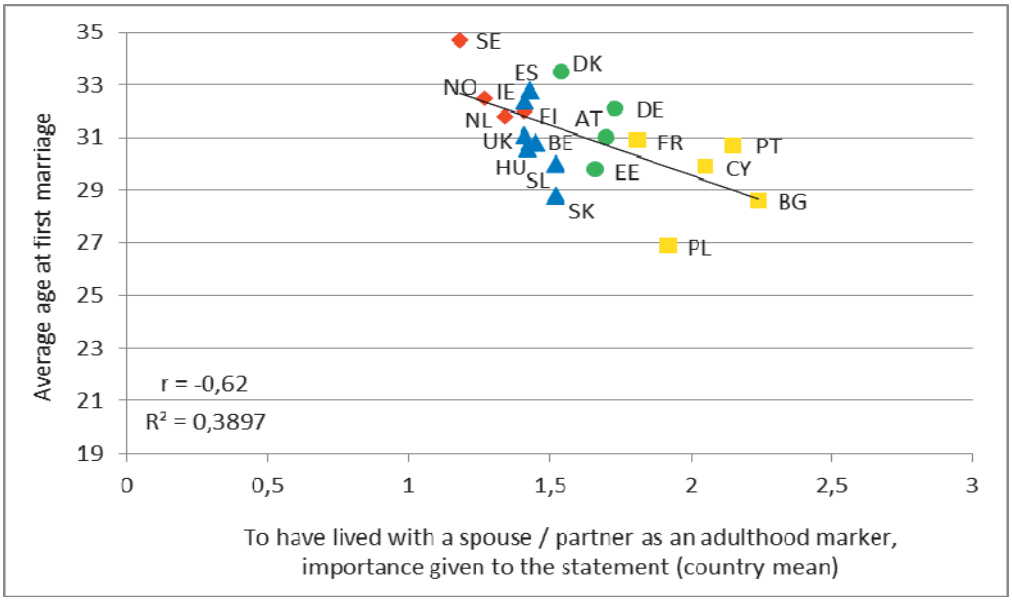

Figure 4d. The interrelationship of values given for living with a spouse/partner as an adulthood marker and the actual occurrence of the event.

Note: X-axis: young adults' (aged 18–34) opinion on specific transition event; Y-axis: average age at which the specific transition event takes place. The different symbols and colours refer to countries belonging to a specific transition cluster.

Table 5. Share of 30- to 34-year-olds who have never been married, by country, %

	Never been married
SL	67
EE	60
FR	58
ES	54
NO	52
BG	51
NL	51
BE	50
PT	49
HU	48
SE	48
AT	46
IE	45
SK	45
UK	45
DE	44
DK	44
FI	43
CY	30
PL	26
mean	47,8

Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

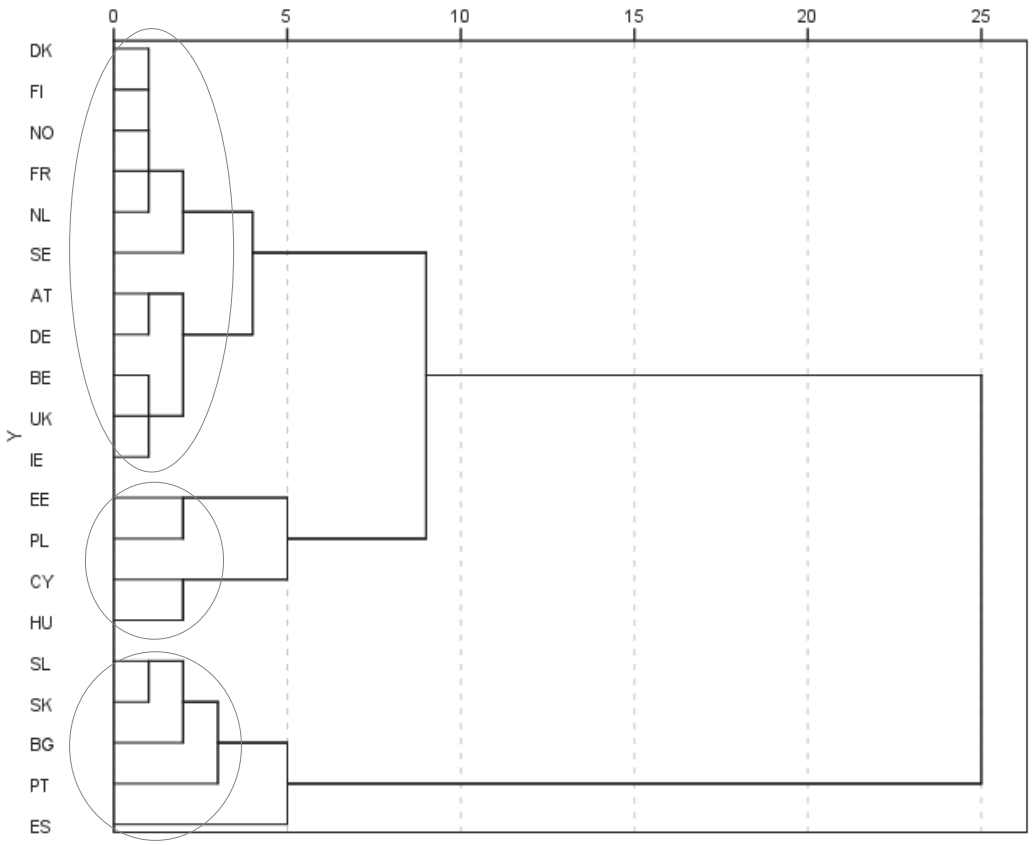

Figure 5. Transition to adulthood clusters based on *not experienced* transition events (at ages 30 to 34). Dendrogram using average linkage (between groups)

Table 6. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) based on late and incomplete transitions. Agglomeration Schedule, Average Linkage (Between Groups)

	Cluster Combined			Stage Cluster First Appears		
Stage	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Coefficients	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Next stage
1	5	7	2,863	0	0	4
2	16	17	6,782	0	0	9
3	2	20	8,360	0	0	8
4	5	13	11,493	1	0	5
5	5	8	24,577	4	0	6
6	5	12	25,188	5	0	12
7	1	9	26,928	0	0	11
8	2	11	37,478	3	0	11
9	3	16	82,070	0	2	14
10	6	14	88,576	0	0	16
11	1	2	90,476	7	8	15
12	5	19	95,247	6	0	15
13	4	10	105,657	0	0	16
14	3	15	161,877	9	0	17
15	1	5	207,907	11	12	18
16	4	6	289,592	13	10	18
17	3	18	294,209	14	0	19
18	1	4	523,897	15	16	19
19	1	3	1560,135	18	17	0

1=AT; 2=BE; 3=BG; 4=CY; 5=DK; 6=EE; 7=FI; 8=FR; 9=DE; 10=HU; 11=IE; 12=NL; 13=NO; 14=PL; 15=PT; 16=SL; 17=SK; 18=ES; 19=SE; 20=UK

Table 7. Hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) based on late and incomplete transitions. Agglomeration Schedule, Complete Linkage.

	Cluster Combined			Stage Cluster First Appears		
Stage	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Coefficients	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Next stage
1	5	7	2,863	0	0	4
2	16	17	6,782	0	0	9
3	2	20	8,360	0	0	8
4	5	13	11,787	1	0	7
5	8	12	26,350	0	0	7
6	1	9	26,928	0	0	13
7	5	8	33,924	4	5	12
8	2	11	47,529	3	0	13
9	3	16	85,540	0	2	16
10	6	14	88,576	0	0	15
11	4	10	105,657	0	0	15
12	5	19	158,162	7	0	17
13	1	2	178,709	6	8	17
14	15	18	190,350	0	0	16
15	4	6	393,223	11	10	18
16	3	15	521,787	9	14	19
17	1	5	604,439	13	12	18
18	1	4	1089,431	17	15	19
19	1	3	3157,602	18	16	0

1=AT; 2=BE; 3=BG; 4=CY; 5=DK; 6=EE; 7=FI; 8=FR; 9=DE; 10=HU; 11=IE; 12=NL; 13=NO; 14=PL; 15=PT; 16=SL; 17=SK; 18=ES; 19=SE; 20=UK