Overview of Structure and Topics for Newsletter No. 3 – 30.05.2017

Editorial

Dear Readers,

This is the third Newsletter of the project YOUNG_ADULLLT with which we want to keep you informed about current events and outcomes of our project.

As you may already know, YOUNG_ADULLLT aims at critically analysing current developments of LLL policies in Europe in order to prevent ill-fitted policies from further exacerbating existing imbalances and disparities as well as at identifying best practices and patterns of coordinating policy-making at local/regional level.

Nowadays many young adults face difficulties in their transition from schooling to working life and a large number of them leave formal education either too early or lacking the necessary and adequate qualifications and skills to enter the labour market successfully. Against this background, YOUNG_ADULLLT focuses on Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies across Europe as they are aimed at creating economic growth and social inclusion especially for those groups in vulnerable positions. In particular, the main objective of the project is to yield insights into their implications as well as intended and unintended effects on young adult life courses.

For the last 12 months, we have made considerable progress in implementing our plans. Fifteen partner institutions from nine European countries, representing a variety of institutional and national contexts, have been working together in order to align the differences and elaborate a solid methodological ground for the national surveys. It has been challenging and enjoyable and we have happily created a strong research and operational alliance.

You can find more information about our consortium, work plan and progress, expected impact and current news at the project's website: www.young-adullt.eu.

Best regards from the YOUNG_ADULLLT dissemination and coordination team

Contact: info@young-adullt.eu
Website: www.young-adullt.eu

Newsletter No. 3 / June 2017

1. Project News

YOUNG_ADULLLT's FIRST YEAR

In February 2017, YOUNG_ADULLLT completed the first year of its project lifetime, thus achieving its *second Milestone*. Besides the launching and set-up of the project's infrastructure, the first year has been dedicated to establishing a sound research design – conceptually, theoretically and methodologically – by developing an analytical framework that guides the upcoming Work Packages in terms of overall research questions and hypotheses as well as contextualizing and reviewing the national and regional/local realities within the project.

The common document database, as a living research tool has been established on the shared server, allowed for a dynamic approach to the context the research object is embedded in WP 2. The aim has been to establish a common basis of contextual information necessary for assuring a differentiated and at the same time consistent understanding of the contextual conditions to achieve the research objectives in each research site or unit. To do so, the database is structured along four thematic aspects – Education/Training, Labour Market, Welfare State and Policy Frameworks – and includes different kinds of sources (descriptive and analytical) such as regulatory frameworks, national thematic reports, and statistical data/reports from public and private sources; the aim being to sharpen our understanding of the research object and go beyond typical classifications and regime typologies.

The set-up of the research design has been completed as we have reached Milestone 2 with a State-of-the-Art. The aim has been to conceptualise the research along the adopted theoretical perspectives and to outline methodological principles guiding the research process. As the project approaches the research object from a three-angled view – individual, structural and institutional – the three chosen theoretical perspectives allow us to focus each entry point respectively: *Cultural Political Economy* on LLL policies, *Life Course Research* on young adults, *Governance Perspective* on regional/local landscapes of policy-making.

By contextualising the national and regional/local research realities, numerous inter- and, most interestingly, intranational differences between the regional contexts become visible. By applying a multi-level mixed-method approach, we aim at understanding the embeddedness of LLL

policies in the local and regional frameworks of education, training and the labour and ultimately their impact on young adults.

The first major step towards a comparative analysis of LLL policies has been the preparation of a *International Report on LLL Policies* reviewing and analysing selected LLL policies within each regional/local context (WP 3). A brief presentation of initial findings can be found below.

Milestone 2 marks the completion of Work Package 3, setting the common basis for all Work Packages to come.

Current activities

On April 27th, 2017, YOUNG_ADULLLT team leaders convened in Brussels to take stock of the accomplishments and reflect on the project's progress. The *Review Meeting* included a full day of intensive work and discussions with Research Executive Agency (REA) representatives and two external reviewers, who provided valuable feedback to the research process and findings so far.

The lively discussions exemplified the project's innovative and productive research design, in particular as refers to the adopted research approach that focus on diverse functional regions across Europe, on a careful conceptualization of and focus on 'vulnerable' groups as well as the project's understanding of policy, inclusion and exclusion regarding the policy mapping and analysis.

One overall conclusion was that the project is fully established and well on its way in terms of set-up, design – regarding the integration of the empirical Work Packages with each other and the overall research framework – and well prepared for the upcoming fieldwork.

Next Steps

The next steps include the implementation of the fieldwork during summer 2017 as well as the Third Consortium Meeting in Granada, Spain, at the end of June 2017. The meeting will focus on the empirical Work Packages (WPs 4 to 7) and include workshops and panel sessions to probe and test the collected data

across the national and regional/local realities. The aim is to gain a as close understanding of the different contexts as possible for the analysis within the national and international reports. Moreover, the general assembly will include the first meeting of the European Advisory Board (EAB), constituted by one member of each National Advisory Board (NAB).

2. Mapping Lifelong Learning Policies Across Europe

First Findings from YOUNG_ADULLT's International Report on Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies

Juan Felipe Carrillo Gáfaro & Hans-Georg Kotthoff, University of Education Freiburg

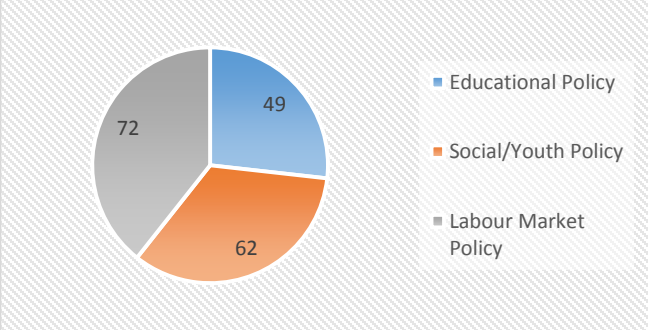
In April 2017, we published the final version of the *International Report on LLL policies and inclusion in education and work.* This publication being part of one of the major tasks of Work Package (WP) 3 and the ongoing YOUNG_ADULLLT projects which runs through to 2019. The main objective of this report is to compare and synthesize, from an analytical point of view, the nine national reports on LLL policies presented by the project partners. This is the result of a team task that reflects both the activities carried out by the participating project members in nine different countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Scotland) during the last year and, in particular, by those participating researchers who had the opportunity to discuss and analyse the international report on several occasions with fellow participating teams, i.e. those from the University of Education, Freiburg and the University of Münster in Germany and the University of Tampere, Finland. The report outlines the common issues and differences across the regions and nations in Europe, highlighting the tensions and challenges in implementing LLL policies across the different levels and looking into their (potential) impact on different target groups. In addition, it re-formulates and specifies the main research questions, which had been developed prior to the launching of the research project and which will also guide the analysis in the following WPs, which have already taken up their work or are about to start, as part of the ongoing study.

What is LLL and what are LLL Policies?

This is perhaps one of the most important questions that arises from the international report as a result of the comparative analyses between the LLL policies in different countries. In order to respond, it was necessary to analyse the differences that currently exist between two visions of LLL: The first one is focused on promoting a series of values strictly related to the personal

development of human beings (and their relationship with the principle of equal opportunity and democratisation), while the second vision is more centred on LLL's contribution to economic growth and market competitiveness. The international report shows that today the tendency is to adhere to the latter vison in order to be ready to fulfil the needs of the labour market. This leaves the impression that something important has been lost in the way LLL policies have been handled and developed after the economic crisis of 2012.

In the same way that there is a debate about different visions of LLL, we also discovered somewhat contrary to expectation, LLL policies do not predominantly originate in the educational policy sector. Thus, as can be seen in the following pie chart, from the, in total, 183 LLL policies that were mapped across Europe in the participating countries, only 49 were initiated in the educational policy (EP) sector, while the majority were developed in the labour market policy (LMP) sector and in the in the social/youth policy (SYP) sector.



Graph 1: Distribution of LLL Policies, Source: YOUNG_ADULLLT Project.

The distribution of LLL policies across these different policy sectors, along with differences in terms of orientations, time horizons and preferred views of problems and associated solutions did not only complicate the identification of LLL policies, but are bound to bringing about tensions and contradictions in the process of implementation and to leading to a variety of (intended and unintended) effects, which did not always necessarily benefit the main target group of this study, i.e. the young adults. Thus, our comparative study of the national reports led us not only to confirm how complex this identification of LLL policies is, but also that their implementation at the national, regional and local level is in many cases not always sufficiently articulated to meet the needs of young adults. The international report clearly identifies this problem; however, the analysis of this issue needs to be deepened in other future stages of the project.

Common Issues and Differences

Apart from the different versions of LLL and the involvement of different policy sectors, which we observed in almost all participating countries in this study, there are other common issues

between LLL policies at European level. The international report identifies three issues that are essential to understanding the current situation of LLL policies in the participating countries:

- Firstly, there seems to be a tendency that LLL policies are more likely to define standardized rather than de-standardized life courses and that the majority of LLL policies are still referring to the model or the 'belief' that there is a 'normal' trajectory in life to follow without noticing that this model is becoming obsolete.
- Secondly, to really understand LLL policies and LLL of young adults we must take into account cultural differences at both national and regional level.
- Thirdly, the cross-national analyses show clearly that European Social Fund policies have an overarching significance and that without them, in some regions, there would be very little LLL policy activities at all.

One of the most interesting findings in the international report is the observation that although LLL policies in the participating countries are dealing with common issues, there are also striking differences between LLL policies. So what are the differences that exist between LLL policies within Europe? Here we looked at some aspects that need to be re-analyzed during the latter phases of this wider ongoing study in order to better understand their meaning at European level. This is the case with regard to the evaluation of LLL policies, which is not only highly heterogeneous, but also reveals some administrative and communicative deficiencies as well as a lack of involvement of the target groups of LLL policies. Two further findings are the differences that exist between centralised and decentralised systems, which affect the definition and implementation of LLL policies; and finally, the difficulty to analyse a target group of LLL policies, which is as broad as 'young adults'.

Same issue, different interpretations – lifelong learning differs across Europe

Tensions, Challenges and Potential Impact

The report shows that the before mentioned tensions between different visions of LLL, the fact that young people are themselves blamed for their failure to enter the labour market because they did not follow an "ideal" or "standard" life course or the cultural, political and economic

differences between countries present severe challenges to the development and implementation of LLL policies. One of these challenges is for example to successfully implement European LLL policies, which must pay attention to structural, political, cultural and economic conditions particularly in the different national, regional and local contexts. Another challenge is to recognize the crucial role of having effective partnerships and to share responsibilities when it comes to implementing the LLL policies.

Although the evaluation of the impact of LLL policies was not a cornerstone of the national reports, the international report has been successful in identifying the potential impact (both intended and unintended) of LLL policies in contemporary Europe. Firstly, one impact is the reduction of unemployment rates among young adults, which is strictly related to a vision of LLL according to which learners have to be prepared for the labour market. Secondly, LLL policies aim to improve educational opportunities for young adults, the realisation of which has been quite critically assessed in many national reports.

Where do we go from here?

As the YOUNG_ADULLLT project is still running for another two years, this international report provides the foundation not only for further analysis of LLL policies from a comparative perspective, but also for generating new questions which need to be answered within the near future of the project. Specifically, it provides insights for work in subsequent WPs; preliminary data for in depth work in WP7; a contextual basis for later international comparative analyses in WP 8; and finally input for a Policy Brief in WP 9.

3. A glance at young adult life courses

Young adults on the move: tracing trajectories under uncertainty

Sebastiano Benasso, University of Genoa

It is not easy being a young adult while planning your own future. On the one hand, life becomes more and more unpredictable as different demands on being constantly flexible have to be faced in in professional, personal and social life. On the other hand, the context around young adults changes constantly which not only forces them to repeatedly readapt their life plans, but also to keep their life choices as reversible as possible. Consequently, being a young adult now is contrary to the experience of their parental generation, and even more those before. While, in the past, some may have desired to escape a "designated" future, refusing an excess of control over their lives, now the "excess" of freedom in all respects poses new challenges. However, since opportunities arise partly from structural conditions and partly from unpredictable factors, adapting means finding a balance between the exploitation of available resources and the ability to quickly react to unforeseen opportunities. Thus, when young adults' life courses are analysed, different nuances are observed along the continuum between acted and forced choices, possibility and resignation, and between satisfaction and frustration. In addition, the fluctuation between these nuances often occurs in different phases of the same individual's life story. Middle and upper class young adults seem to be those who best cope with the possibility/necessity of revisiting "traditional" biographies, experimenting or passively adapting to a new multiplicity of professional, educational, relational and lifestyle choices. This is due to their age and social status: they live in between young and adult roles, and they have access to the cultural, social, symbolic and economic resources needed to experiment with "new" life courses. In a way, at least some of these young people are able to see the constraints in defining their personal horizons as an opportunity to define their life-plans. Accordingly, abandoning the (reassuring yet limiting) predictability of standardized biographies becomes a way to design more fulfilling life trajectories, especially in terms of awareness of one's life choices. Furthermore, the necessity to carry out

Life can feel like a constant race for young adults.

Choices, choices, choices: Life projects become crossroads as the transition into adulthood is less linear.

"real time" projects – renouncing mid- to long-term planning by focusing on the present – makes the transition to adulthood far less linear and stable. This concerns the sequence of significant experiences and "turning points" within biographies as well as the consistency between the investments (of time, effort, money ,etc.) made in the present and their barely predictable future yield.

As a result, youth no longer appears to be a "temporary stage" leading to an adult future, but a potentially permanent condition: becoming an adult becomes a goal hard to reach. Inevitably, the process of transition does not look the way it used to, and "new" biographies will necessarily absorb reversibility into their own structure, as the widespread metaphor of "yo-yo" transitions clearly exemplifies. Instead of following a pathway into adulthood, many young adults will repeat certain steps along the way or even skip them.

As mentioned above, as the outcome of this merging of different aspects such as uncertainty, risk, freedom of choice, prediction, initiative becomes increasingly a responsibility of the individual (or of the individuals and their networks), the possibility of experiencing fulfilling trajectories also depends on the subjective ability to transform limits into resources within a perspective that, in some ways, becomes similar to performance and edgework. "Edgework", refers to a whole set of social practices in which individuals willingly take a series of risks and symbolically play with them to experience particularly intense and augmented emotions. The metaphor of parkour and traceurs (the parkour practitioners) is particulary apt here to describe young adults that manage to adapt to the unpredictability of their context, even finding feelings of freedom in uncertainty. In fact, the co-creator of parkour as a physical practice, Sébastien Foucan, identifies the essential quality of a good traceur in his or her ability to be "as fluid as water" and explains that "the most important element is the harmony between you and the obstacles". Metaphorically speaking, Foucan's description of parkour as "the art of moving from point A to point B in a straight line [sic] overcoming urban architectures in the most fluid way as [sic] possible" could be considered analogous to the way in which people adapt to the context they find themselves in, for instance by defining their strategies in relation to the

Life as a parkour means being constantly on the move – jumping from one spot to another to overcome obstacles.

opportunities they encounter, mediating between their projects and their possible courses of action. Moreover, similarly to traceurs, young adults jump from one obstacle to the other; the aesthetic quality of their jump corresponds to their own expressive potential. Keeping this metaphor, traceurs' strategies could be juxtaposed to the extemporaneous and risky experiences of those who play the "balconing game," a practice in which the absence of strategies as well as the obliteration of possible outcomes embody an attitude defined by sociologists as "presentification" or "non-projectuality".

Metaphors aside, the line that divides acted and forced choices, rational strategies and compelled adaptations seems particularly thin. Undoubtedly, for young adults, the possibility to actually handle a fulfilling life trajectory still depends on "traditional" factors of inequality (social background, educational choices, available resources, and so on). However, what makes the difference is being able to at least imagine a future, even through the opacity of the present or, quoting the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, the capacity to aspire.

Life course – no future for doubt?!

4. From research to policy: understanding young adults structural context

The Legacy and Future in Social Policies for Young Adults

Jan Peter Ganter de Otero, University of Münster

In our attempt to understand LLL policies, we are constantly paying attention to the interplay between economy, society, labour market and education systems. By doing so, the project contributes to a better understanding of the structural relationships and functional match between education/training and other socioeconomic sectors.

More recently, an interesting study on the topic was published by the Bertelsmann Foundation in cooperation with Bernd Marin, professor at the European Bureau for Policy Consulting and Social Research in Vienna and Christian Keuschnigg, professor at the Economic Policy Center at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland). The *Social Inclusion Monitor Europe* (SIM Europe) project invited social policy experts from across Europe to participate in the survey *Reform Barometer 2016*. They were asked to assess the need for social reforms in their respective

country, to report on related governmental initiatives between July 2014 and January 2016, and to assess the (expected) effectiveness of these reforms with respect to 55 policy objectives. The Report presents the analyses of the replies from over 1,000 survey participants along five dimensions: Poverty Prevention, Equitable Education, Labour Market Access, Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination, and Health. By doing so, the study contributes to the social policy debate on the scope, impact, and source of governmental responses to challenges in and across these six important and pressing areas.

The Europe-wide survey shows that, according to national experts, the EU member states need reforms on social policies in different areas, but especially in the fields of education and migration. In general, the study delivered three main conclusions: First, educational reforms have been largely neglected. Only one-third of the reform need has been addressed across the EU on average (for example: according to the experts, governments in nine countries had given no thought at all to improving teaching quality). Second, governments have failed to address the integration of foreigners properly. Reform activity in this point was either rated as very low or expected to have negative effects. Italy was the only country given a positive score. Third, reducing economic inequality is among the most pressing challenges, yet poorly addressed. This concerns particularly the five largest EU member states:

Graph 2: Social Policy: Overall need for social policy reforms in EU member states, Source: SIM Europe Reform Barometer expert survey 2016, Bertelsman-Stiftung.

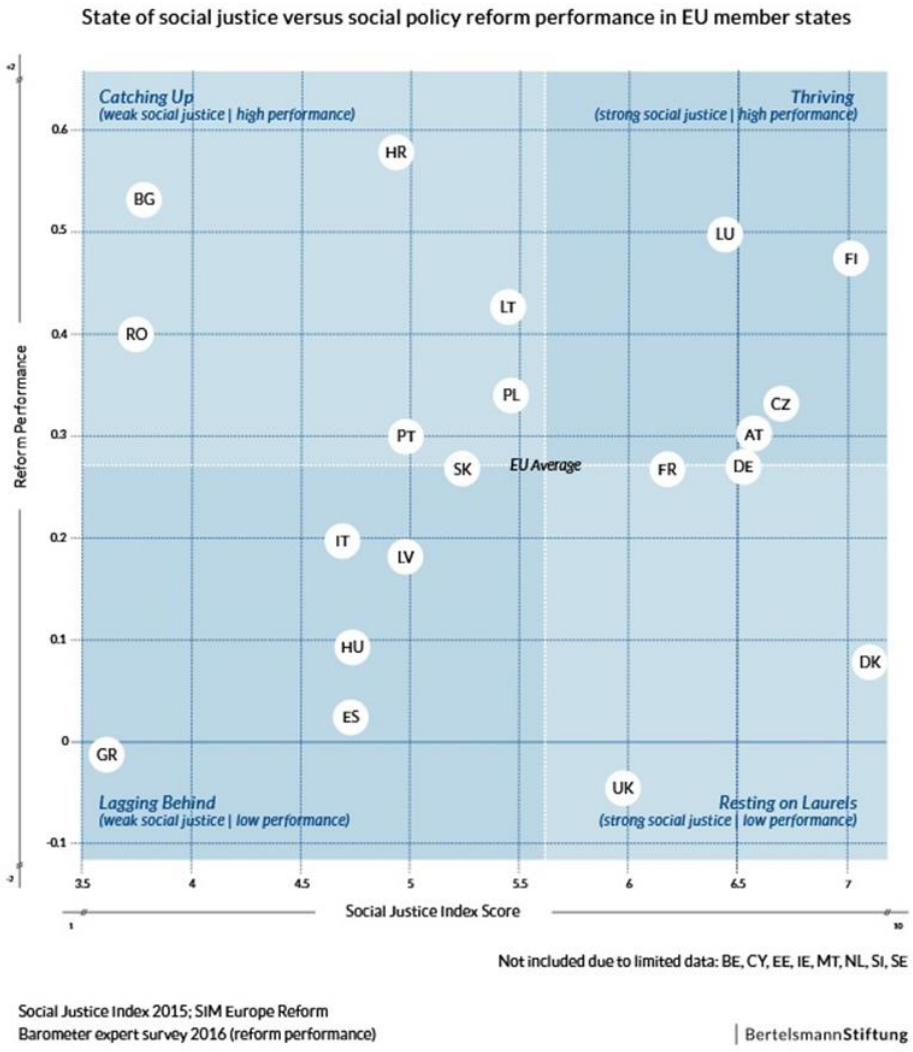
Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. At the same time, responses by governments aimed at addressing this issue were rated to be the second-least effective among all investigated policy objectives (only integration policies rate worse).

The results of the study also provide evidence of a strong need to improve the situation of young adults. The reform need for social policies is particularly strong as refers reducing rates of youth unemployment, early school leavers and young people who are not currently engaged in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs); preventing child poverty; and weakening the ties between students' learning success and their socioeconomic background.

In order to collect contextual data related to LLL policies for young adults, the YOUNG_ADULLLT project crossed the study's results on the policies for young people in nine European countries with the different European models of welfare state – the forms of commitment and responsibility of the state in ensuring its citizens social and economic security by its expenditure as well as granting of social rights (cf. Esping-Andersen, 2013, p.140).

At first, when we look at the data on the need for social reform, the perceptions of the national experts confirmed the assumptions within the welfare state models. In the c*onservative welfare regime* (Austria and Germany), where the state provides support when the family support system is exhausted, the need for policy reform for young people was perceived as average-low. In the *social democratic welfare regime* (Finland), where the overall aim is to establish equality by means that security is coupled to citizenship, the need was perceived as low. In contrast, in the *liberal welfare regime* (United Kingdom), where redistribution and social rights have a strong emphasis on individualism amongst its citizens and the liberal market, the need for reforms was the highest among all countries. In the *Latin Rim regime* (Italy, Portugal and Spain), where the systems of social security are only partially developed and the welfare system is not legally established, the need for reforms was perceived as high. Only in the *East and Central European Countries regime* (Bulgaria and Croatia), where a broad process of transformation is undergoing, the need was perceived in contrasting numbers – high for Bulgaria and relatively low for Croatia.

The study also capture the perceptions of the national experts on how governments are addressing the reform need and the quality of reforms in a single number (performance score). Combining quantity and quality, the performance score provide a way of holistically comparing social policy reforms across the European Union. Here the correlation with the models of welfare states became blurred: For example, within the *conservative welfare regime*, Austria and Germany present divergent performances. While the national experts in Austria perceived the quantity and quality of the initiatives on social policy reform as high and positive, Germans experts have chosen the other way around. The diversity in the results was also found when we compared the countries within others welfare state regimes, like Italy, Portugal and Spain, as well as Bulgaria and Croatia.



Graph 3: State of social justice versus social policy reform performance in EU member states, Source: SIM Europe Reform Barometer expert survey 2016, Bertelsman-Stiftung.

By crossing the *Social Inclusion Monitor Europe's* data and the welfare state regimes, we believe that is possible to show the complexity within the process of national policy-making. On the one hand, the data available seems to confirm the theoretical typology on welfare state regimes in terms of its social legacy. The need to reform policies in order to increase social justice

is considerably higher where the commitment and responsibility of the state in ensuring its citizens social and economic security is historically low. On the other hand, the data also shows that widely different ways to deal with these social legacies are being developed by countries within the same welfare regimes.

One important conclusion is the importance of the state in the development and realisation of social wellbeing. Here, the case of Portugal provides a particularly good example (see "Job protection under siege? Spotlight Portugal" by *Natália Alves, University of Lisbon*). A country historically characterised by widespread poverty, illiteracy, and low economic performance, Portugal that is more recently undergoing important changes that brought about sensitive impacts to social wellbeing, which were introduced by state policies. In the same line, the future of social justice for young people seems to depend strongly on the capacity of the state to promote policies that strengthen social and economic security as social rights.

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Education, Training Systems and Social Inequality

Jan Peter Ganter de Otero, University of Münster

The YOUNG_ADULLLT project assesses the different ways Lifelong Learning Policies (LLL) play out in different places by focusing on their embeddedness in regional economies, labour markets and individual life projects of young adults. For this reason, in the last months, the project developed a database based on four sections – *Education and Training Systems, Labour Market, Welfare State and Policy Frameworks*. This work helped us identify and collect contextual information and data related to the different objectives and orientations of LLL policies for young adults within nine European countries.

More specifically, the data on the different European Education and Training Systems is very important to analyze their socioeconomic outcomes related to young adults' life courses. Extant literature on this subject shows an interesting puzzle: There seems to exist no simple relationship between educational and socioeconomic equality. The relationships of educational institutions and private/public investments in terms of income and wealth distribution are much more complex. This is possible to be seen when the social outcomes of different Education and Training systems – in terms of social inequality, unemployment and labour market return - are compared.

Education and Training systems vary substantially across Europe. Every national – and occasionally also subnational – system is unique in its design as their particularities reflect how the nation understand education in its philosophical, political, economic traditions as well as social historical conditions. In YOUNG_ADULLLT project, in order to analyze the differences on Education and Training systems, there has been used the typologies proposed by West & Nikolai (2013) on "education regimes" and by Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012) on "systems of skill formation" across Europe.

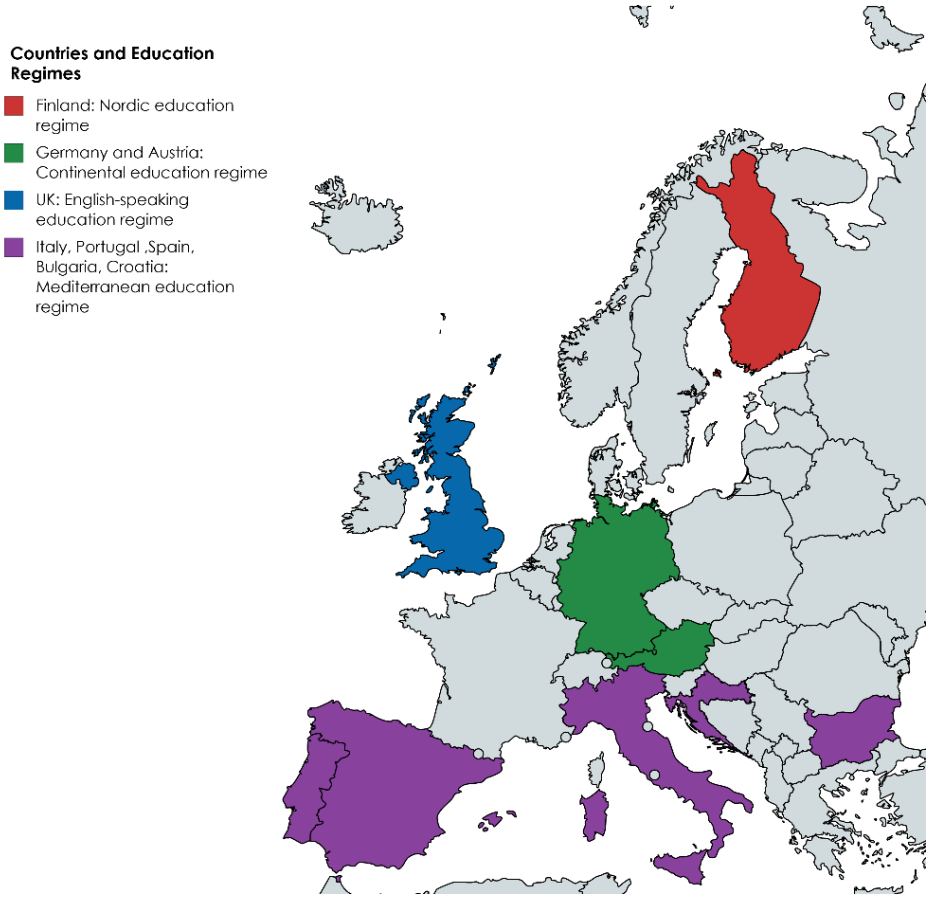

Figure 1: Overview of Countries and Education Regimes in YOUNG_ADULLLT (designed with mapchart.net)

Finland is our representative from the *Nordic education regime*, based on a universal welfare system, high public expenditure on education and a comprehensive non-selective system providing easy access to educational institutions without major transitions during compulsory education. In terms of vocational education and training (VET), Finland has a *statist skill formation system*, where high rates of participation are assured by the state, despite the limited involvement of employers.

The German-speaking countries, based on moderate to high public funding, are included in the *Continental education regime* with strong differentiation of tracks and high levels of stratification, thus including major transitions and severe selection at an early stage during compulsory education. This education regime can be associated with a *collective skill formation system*, where VET has a long tradition as a collaborative effort of firms/employers and of the state; also visible in the typical Dual System.

In the United Kingdom, the *English-speaking education regime* develops moments of high selectivity in terms of preference and funding, in spite of being officially a publicly funded comprehensive school system. The transitions in terms of academic selection display a low intensity and automatic progression, however, become quite selective after compulsory education when entering a tracked tertiary education. Enrolment in tertiary education is high compared to a low participation in VET, which is generally viewed as low status as the routes are less straightforward. In the *liberal skill formation system*, VET is based on minimal employer involvement and medium public funding.

Italy, Portugal, Spain are located in the *Mediterranean education regime*, with a very centralized ET system. These countries have similar levels of public funding, which lie below the Nordic and the *Continental education regimes*. Also, regarding stratification, access and selection as well as important transitions during compulsory schooling, the countries show certain differences (yet all have later transitions than can be observed in the *Continental transition regime*). In terms of VET, countries in this regime type may be associated with a *mixed skill formation system*, where both public and private involvement and expenditure is low. In YOUNG_ADULLLT, Bulgaria and Croatia are also allocated to this regime as they share central characteristics.

As the Education and Training systems vary in terms of public and private expenditure, differentiation of tracks, and levels of stratification, also vary their redistributive implications, with deep impacts on young adults lives. This variation was the object of study by Marius Busemeyer from the University of Konstanz in his recent work, "Skills and Inequality" (BUSEMEYER, 2014). Busemeyer analyzed data on several OECD countries to conclude that a high share of private spending on education, particularly in the case of higher education, is associated with higher levels of socioeconomic inequality. This conclusion can be applied to the *English-speaking education regime* and to the *Mediterranean education regime*. In contrast, higher levels of public spending can lower income inequality, as the *Nordic education regime* and the *Conservative education regime* shows. In addition, countries with well-established publicly funded VET systems (*statist and collective skill formation system*) tend to have lower inequality as they increase labor-market return for the low skilled. However, in countries like Germany and Austria, permeability between the different tracks is rather low. For this reason, at a very early age, schooling and labour market careers are strongly tied to social background. Hence, public involvement in VET does not seem to reduce youth unemployment. Apprenticeship training,

however, based on high employer's involvement in VET, has a strong negative effect on youth unemployment.

This kind of research helps us to understand that different European ET national systems are related to different social outcomes in terms of social inequality, unemployment and labour market returns, however it is also imperative to be attentive to regional and local specificities as they play important roles in shaping young people's life courses. This conclusion is very significant to the development of YOUNG ADULLLT project and social policies for young adults in general. Education and training systems in Europe should not be seen as homogenous forms of schooling and professionalization, but instead as institutions with very different setups and great influence on socioeconomic inequalities.

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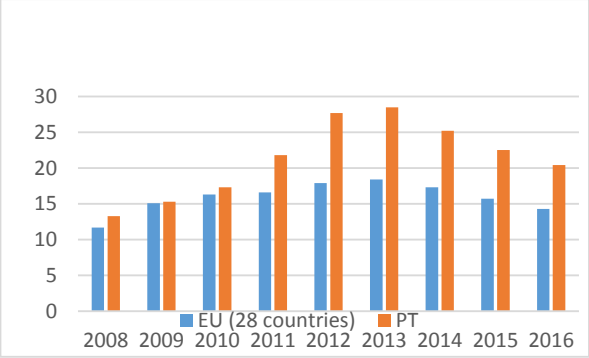
Job protection under siege? Spotlight Portugal

Natália Alves, University of Lisbon

In the last decades there have been important changes in the European labour markets from which Portugal could not escape. The reforms and measures implemented aimed at opening the markets to international competition, deregulating the economy, privatizing strategic sectors and public services, liberalising industrial relations, and making people more responsible for their situation in the labour market. Following neoliberal ideology and policies, Portugal has carried out the flexibility of the labour market, the weakening of the Welfare State and the individual responsibility as principles to boost the economy.

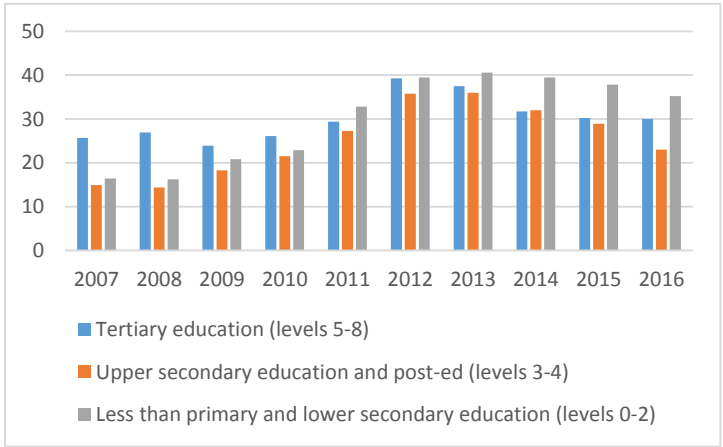
The reconfiguration of the Portuguese labour market was initially carried out on the basis of voluntary adherence to neoliberal policies. In a second moment, from 2011 to 2015, this reconfiguration is the result of the imposition of structural adjustment policies by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, due to the loan that was conceded in order to solve constraints caused by the national public debt.

Several studies have demonstrated the effects of neoliberal policies on increasing unemployment, precariousness and inequalities in the work and in living conditions among the Portuguese population in general (Farinha & Andrade, 2013; Kóvacs & Casaca, 2007) and youth in particular (Carmo & Matias, 2016; Oliveira & Carvalho, 2010). The fragility of Portuguese youth's situation in the labour market is reflected in the raise of unemployment, in the precarious insertion into the labour market and in the growing difficulties in accessing a stable job. Similar to what happened in other European countries, especially in Southern Europe, in Portugal the vulnerability of young people in the labour market worsened with the deep financial crisis, the economic austerity and the Troika agreement. The following charts show the degradation of the young Portuguese labour force in recent years. The graph 4 shows the youth unemployment rate's evolution between 2008 and 2016. The Portuguese financial crisis had an important impact in the youth unemployment rate, mainly from 2012 to 2014. In these years, more than one in four young people was unemployed.



Graph 4: Youth unemployment rate (%) (15-29 years), Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

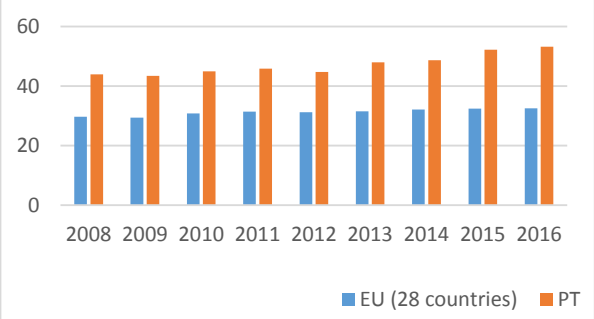
One of the peculiarities of youth unemployment in Portugal is shown in Graph 5. Opposite to what happens in other EU countries, until 2011 youth unemployment rate was higher among tertiary graduates than among the less qualified young people. This particular situation is explain by the characteristics of the Portuguese economy based on low



Graph 5: Youth unemployment rate by educational attainment level (%) (15-24 years), Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

qualified working force and low wages. The changes in the youth unemployment profile since 2013 are yet to be explained. The raise of unemployment rate of the low qualified young people can be either the result of a change in the model of economic specialization or the effect of the mass migration of young university graduates that has occurred in recent years.

Alongside unemployment, precariousness is another phenomenon affecting young Portuguese and their life course. Since 2008, young temporary employees'percentage did not stop increasing. In 2016, Portugal was the country with the third highest percentage in EU. More than half of the young employees had a temporary job (53,2 %).



Graph 6: Youth temporary employees as percentage of the total number of employees (15-29 years), Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

For the large majority of Portuguese young people temporary jobs are not a voluntary option. According to Labour Force Survey, when asked about the main reason for temporary employment, the percentage of Portuguese young people aged from 15 to 24 years answering *did not want a permanent job* is one of the lowest in UE (8,1% in 2016). In the opposite*, could not find permanent job* reaches one of the highest percentage among European youth (71,1% in 2016). Involuntary labour precariousness is the main feature of the Portuguese youth labour force.

Several qualitative researches show the effects of unemployment, precariousness and job insecurity in young peoples' life course and the importance of the family welfare to cope with uncertainty (Kóvacs, 2016; Kóvacs and Lopes, 2012; Alves, Cantante, Batista, Carmo, 2011; Alves, 2008; Guerreiro e Abrantes, 2004). These researches refute the thesis spread by neoliberal ideology according to which individual opportunities increase with the flexibilization of the labour market, and it is up to individuals to freely make their choices.

If some have growing opportunities to make their choices based on post-materialistic values, work cultures based on a creative ethos or ambitious professional projects, giving rise to what Pais (2016) designates as precarious by choice; others in weak positions in the labour market are tied to precarious and poorly paid jobs. For them the imminent risk of being out of work is something that influences the reflexivity produced and wears out the daily life. In sum, these researches refute the thesis of the internalization of the rhetoric of flexibility and adaptability

of young people to the *nouvel esprit du capitalism*. And if some show confidence in the future even if uncertain, others are afraid of losing their jobs despite precarious and poorly paid.

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5. On doing research in the YOUNG_ADULLTs project – a researcher's personal note

What is Life Course Research and how relevant is it for the YOUNG_ADULLLT project?

Siyka Kovacheva, University of Plovdiv

My interest in life course research started when our societies in Eastern Europe broke free from the Soviet Block with its uniform one-party rule and centrally planned economies. While some commentators saw this social change as a linear transition to the market, many more researchers attempted to grasp the complexity of the change. My approach was to study the societal transformation through the study of youth transitions. This proved a relevant approach as youth is the life stage in modern societies when individuals experience significant movements and changes in the domains in which their lives unfold and this places them in a very similar situation to the transitions that the societies in Eastern Europe underwent in the last decade of the 20th century.

So what is a life course research? I would define it as an inquiry into the life course transitions of individuals in the particular social context of a given society at a given historical moment which are shaped by the interplay between the societal structures and individual agency. The understanding of the life course can start with the definition of Elder (1998) that the life course consists of 'age graded transitions through institutions and social structures, and is embedded in relationships that constrain and support behaviour – both the individual life course and a person's developmental trajectory are interconnected with the lives and development of others'. The life course research differs from the approach based upon the concept of the life cycle which presents the individual life as linear normative age related stages in a developmental process, outside of social time and space.

Institutions pave the way for the individual life course – however, the path contains many twists and turns.

The essential features of the life course research are summarized in the following principles formulated by (Heinz, 2009):

- Each life phase affects the entire life course: life-span development.
- Individuals actively construct their biography: human agency.
- The life course is embedded in historical events: time and place.
- Social circumstances and events influence transitions: timing of decisions.
- Social relationships and networks contribute to the shaping of biographies: linked lives.

In applying these principles in empirical research, we also come upon other closely related concepts. Thus a 'cohort' is a social category comprised of people who were born in the same period and lived through the same historical period at about the same age. 'Life transition' is a process of change in social roles and social statuses, an individual and group movement between the stages and domains of life, for example the transition from childhood to youth or from education to employment. Life events are major occurrences in a person's life which might result in more or less radical life transitions. Such events that produce significant and lasting shifts are usually referred to as 'turning points', such as parental divorce or changing school. The general sequence of events in a life course, the particular pattern of stability and change in the individual life is conceptualized as a 'trajectory'.

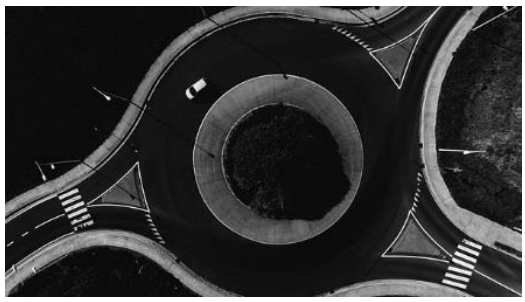
The life course perspective has a heuristic potential because it demands the combined application of at least three approaches: contextualist, biographical and comparative. The contextualist approach examines a person's trajectory as embedded in social time and place. The timing of key events in the life course is studied in relation to the cohort the person belongs, the person's gender, class, ethnicity in the historical period in which the life is lived. It acknowledges the interaction of multiple layers of milieus: the macro referring to the social structures in terms of global and national economic developments, political and demographic processes, dominant cultures, trends in the educational system and welfare policies; the meso including the institutions at the regional and local level, local labour markets, educational opportunities, local government and provision of social services, civil society organizations, social networks; and the micro level comprising of the individual actors themselves, with their own abilities and biographical perspectives, and their relations with family members and close friends.

Life course research will be impaired if the contextualist approach is not matched with a biographical analysis. It understands the biography as 'a story told in the present about events and experiences in a person's life in the past and her/his expectations for the future' (Kohli 1981). The biographical approach starts with the assumption that individuals actively construct their own biography making more or less informed choices, attribute meanings to

their actions and reflect upon them creating their own understanding of the sequence of the events in the life course. The biographical approach probes into the links between the factual events in one's life, the meanings that the person attaches to them, and personal narration ('story') of those events. Thus, a person's trajectory becomes understandable as a complex interplay between the structures of opportunities and constraints at different layers of context and the individual agency in the personal actions, the meaning making processes that underpin these actions and the interpretive accounts of the interrelations between events in the subject's life.

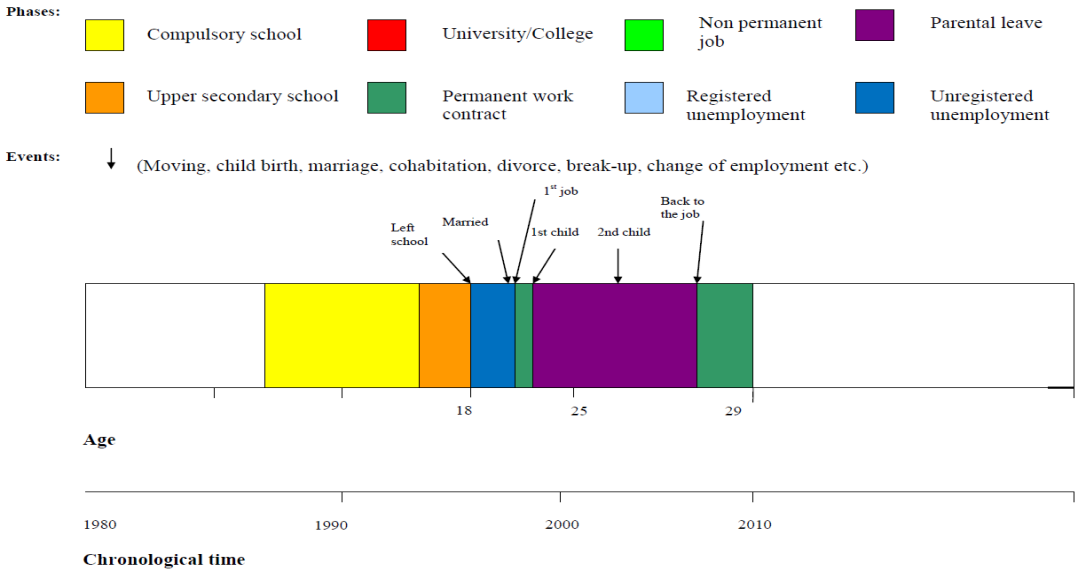
Life course research is comparative in essence and often applies a case study logic to the comparisons between personal stories in different contexts. It aims to provide thick descriptions of a small number of cases following the interactions between many 'variables'. The challenge starts from the selection of cases for the comparison and is multiplied when aiming at cross-country comparisons raising issues of generalizability and transferability of findings. The approach requires a careful selections of countries (transitions regimes), localities (different economic, educational, social contexts), and interviewees (variations in life course patterns). Through a matching and contrasting of cases (revealing meaningful similarities and differences) life course research can outline not only the broad trends over time in the major institutions both within and across countries but also how they are perceived experienced and acted upon by individuals.

In a previous research project named 'Transitions' (Nilsen et all 2012) we employed a lifeline analysis within a life course perspective and plotted lifelines of each individual trajectory of young working parents. The lifelines clearly showed the phases in a person's life, their length, the timing of key events. While a person's trajectory is never linear, chronological time is and the lifelines can graphically demonstrate the overlaying of different phases and the sequencing of significant events thus identifying patterns of linearity and nonlinearity, types of trajectories by gender, class, ethnicity and the role of individual agency. I attach here two examples of a short and linear transition into employment and parenthood of a young Bulgarian woman (Roza) and a more prolonged and complicated path of another young woman (Neli). Both are from a working class family background, living in the same region and country, working in social services and have already become mothers thus struggling to combine work and motherhood.

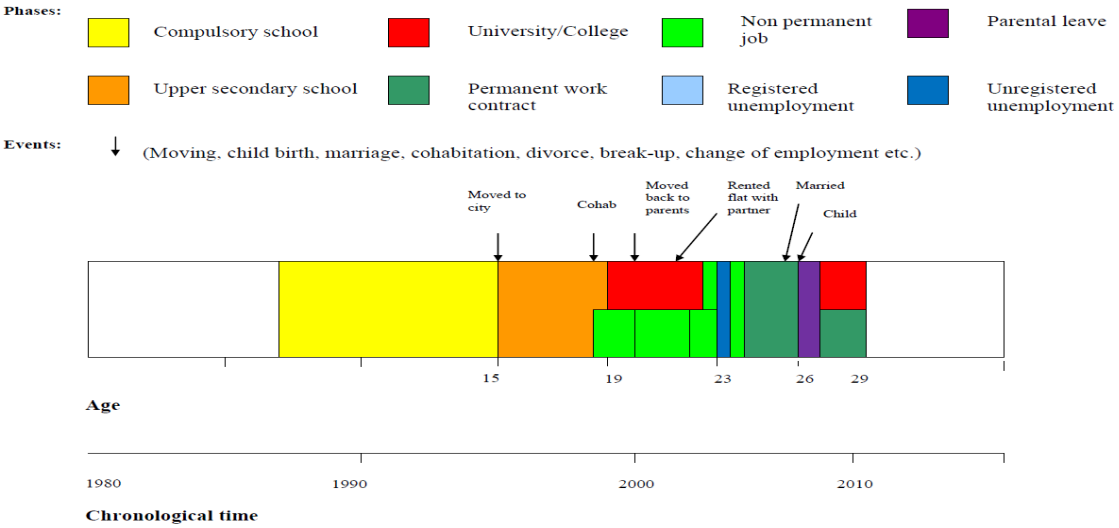


The chronology of life courses are marked by various intersections and turning points.

Roza's Lifeline



Neli's Lifeline analysis



I find life course research highly applicable to the analysis we are doing in the YOUNG_ADULLLT project. Employing it to the biographical interviews of young people in their transitions through the forms and stages of lifelong learning and how these interact with other life events embedded in the contexts of different localities, regions and countries will certainly enrich our understanding of various policies and practices. At the same time, as Rambla (2017: 5) warns us, a 'crucial methodological point is that evidence and theory do not necessarily match in a linear way' and while we hope that the project will profit from the use of

this approach we also presume that our study 'may also spell out evidence that suggests fresh, innovative questions … [and thus] stimulate further debate and theoretical sophistication'.

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