

CHALLENGING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

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Abstract

Youth unemployment is a challenge in many European countries – especially since the financial crises. Young people face difficulties in the transition from education into employment. This article focuses on young mobile Europeans from six countries (Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Spain). The research question is whether and to which extent international mobility has an impact on employability and therefore reduces youth unemployment. By using a cluster analysis of personal adaptability, social and human capital and career identity, the importance of mobility experiences for employability is analysed in a recent dataset of 5,272 young (formerly) mobile respondents. Youth mobility is established as a strong characteristic for the employability cluster. Mobility is however not the long-term aim of most of the mobile young people, since most of the mobiles choose to return to their home countries after one or more stays abroad.

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1. Introduction

Since the mid-2000s, the EU has developed a number of policy instruments to address youth employability, as a firm response to relatively high youth unemployment rates compared to those for the adult population (Eurostat, 2018b). The need to place the youth (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2008) at the core of the EU's future development and sustainable growth (Kmiotek-Meier et al., 2019) was primarily triggered by the economic crisis which has heavily affected young people in all EU Member States (Van Mol, 2016).

International mobility of Europeans is seen as a promising tool to increase employability among young people. It may also represent a tool to reduce unemployment rates in some European regions by supporting employment mobility (e.g. to other European regions). Starting with a campaign of policy initiatives on education and youth employment in Europe, frameworks such as Youth on the Move (2010-2014) were developed with the aim of supporting young people trapped in unemployment and/or unable to make the transition from school to work (European Commission, 2010). EU initiatives largely include the complementary idea of mobility by emphasising the fact that “geographical mobility can also help resolve local mismatches between supply and demand for young workers” (European Commission, 2012, 3). In reality, fixing youth employment opportunities through mobility has not paid off. Evidence from EU data suggests that unemployment does not trigger mobility in a broader sense.

Youth unemployment, which is a societal issue in many European countries, experienced rises especially during the financial and economic crises from 2007 onwards. O'Reilly et al. (2015, 1-2) have defined five characteristics of this recent youth unemployment: 1) difficulties in stable employment trajectories; 2) mismatches between young people's skills and employers' demands; 3) “more extensive, selective, and diversified” (p. 2) intra-EU youth mobility; 4) family work history legacies creating new forms of polarization for younger generations; and 5) a new, more explicit role for the EU support system. Even in 2016, 9 years after the start of the crisis, the youth unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 (and not in education) ranged from 7.7% in Germany to 47.3% in Greece. In eleven EU countries it was over 20% (Romania, Belgium, Finland, France, Slovakia, Portugal, Cyprus, Italy, Croatia, Spain and Greece) (Eurostat, 2018b), which shows the enormous effects of the financial crisis on youth unemployment. Even though the differences in youth unemployment rates were quite high, the mobility rates remained low (Eurostat, 2018a).

The research question is whether, and to what extent, international mobility affects employability by reducing youth unemployment. Employability is defined in more concrete terms, and operational terms. This article focuses on finding the employability characteristics of skilled young mobile Europeans from six countries (Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Spain). Using the database of the MOVE Project, we analysed each

dimension of employability (Fugate, 2004) by applying the cluster method to determine the main characteristics. Mobility ^[i]– only international and not intra-national in this article – is not seen solely as mobility in higher education, but it is broadened here to all types of mobility that exceeds two weeks and is not tourism-related. Considering that employability is situated at the intersection of personal adaptability, career identity and social and human capital (Fugate, 2004), we have linked this with different types of mobility (horizontal and vertical, upward and downward) and demonstrated that mobility is a vehicle for addressing unemployment.

1.1. Employability – search for a definition

Employability is a complex concept with a broad variety of definitions (Fugate et al., 2004; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Minguéz, 2013; Schomburg, 2011). Employability takes into account the relationship and links between employer and employee, by making the individual responsible for their future career and for proactively adapting knowledge, skills and abilities to the different demands of the labour market (Fugate et al., 2004: 15; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008: 504). Increasing individuals' employability is seen as a key factor in getting young people out of unemployment, and empowering them “to fight against unemployment and stimulate youth employment” (Minguéz, 2013: 343). The transition from studying to employment is not always directly linked to the employability skills gained (Wilton, 2011). The type and duration of contract and frequency of the unemployment periods are seen as important indicators of employability (Schomburg, 2011: 264). Some authors (Berntson et al., 2006) distinguish between two areas of the literature regarding employability: some research studies focus on the employability of the unemployed, while others address the employability of employed individuals, mainly their objective employability, and relating to moves between jobs. Recent studies analyse individuals' perceived employability to identify the determinants of an individual's perceived employability (Berntson et al., 2006; Wittekind et al, 2010), or to relate job security/insecurity or employment security/insecurity to perceived employability (De Vos et al., 2011; Håkansson et al., 2012).

A classical approach, the human capital theory, is much cited and referred to in the research literature on employability. In line with the human capital theory and its connection to the labour market, several scholars have tried to define and explain individuals' employability in different but convergent ways. Following Forrier and Sels (2003), who define employability as “an individual's chance of a job in the internal and/or external labour market”, Berntson et al. (2006) describe employability as “a way for the individual to improve his or her attractiveness to the labour market” and show that education and development of skills are among the factors affecting the individual's job security and his/her perceived employability. The mismatch between the first employment and education affects future employability trajectories (O'Reilly

et al., 2015). Wittekind et al. (2010) empirically show that education, support for career and skill development, current level of job-related skills, and willingness to change jobs constitute significant predictors of perceived employability, while the willingness to develop new skills, opportunity awareness, and self-presentation skills are not predictors of employability.

In a rapidly changing world and knowledge-intensive economies, the employability development of individuals, especially of young people, is becoming an important, debated research question, which we now discuss further in relation to international mobility.

1.2. Employability and international mobility: does it work?

One aspect of employability mentioned in literature is geographical mobility, or as Brandenburg et al. (2016) put it: “mobility matters”. Even though the link between mobility and employability is considered important, little research has been done on the subject (King et al., 2010), and much less discusses whether “mobility capital” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002 in Wiers-Jenssen, 2013) increases employment prospects for young people (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013), or whether skills acquired in one EU country are transferable to another (Tzanakou and Behle, 2017). Here, mobility is “seen as a strategy for handling increasing labour market insecurity and perhaps also for fulfilling expectations of becoming a (geographically) flexible adult” (Frändberg, 2014, 148). Regarding the views of young people on such “wishful” mobility and their own employability, the benefits of international mobility seem questionable, as research paints a contradictory picture of mobility in young people’s life trajectories. Some researchers argue that mobility is becoming increasingly intertwined with the future lives of young people (Cuzzocrea and Mandnich, 2016), and that young people are expected to “incorporate mobility options into their life plans” (Robertson et al., 2018, 203). Others confirm that young people still struggle to accept it at all (Oiononen, 2018). Mobility may further reveal social-economic inequalities among EU youth (Skeggs, 2004), and thus the unequal employment opportunities.

Mobility is not uniform, as there are differences in duration, motivation and reasons, as well as “horizontal mobility” (between countries with the same economic status) versus “vertical mobility” (from a country with a lower economic status to one with a higher economic status) (Wiers-Jenssen, 2012, 472). While Wiers-Jenssen only focuses on upward vertical mobility, to our knowledge downward vertical mobility has not been researched so far. For the Nordic countries, short-term stays abroad seem to increase the employability of graduates, while longer stays decrease employability, as the degrees gained abroad may not be fully recognised in the home country’s labour market. Further employability variations exist between disciplines, personal performance or other factors such as language skills (Wiers-Jenssen, 2011).

It is important to understand at what stage in a person's career mobility is advantageous and effective for employability. Wiers-Jenssen (2013) suggests that the experience of mobility increases opportunities for international jobs for young people in the domestic labour market. If one considers employability as the skills/capital to facilitate obtaining work directly after graduation, then the length of time between graduation and work should be the main indicator. There are several ways of measuring employability after mobility; first, by looking at the number of months between graduation and the first employment; second, by looking at what graduates do a few years after graduation; third, the relevance to the employment of the skills acquired (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). Other valuable measurement techniques can be gleaned from research based on graduate surveys that examine the employment of bachelor graduates, by focusing on employment directly after graduation as well as during the first six months (Schomburg, 2011). They also consider success criteria, contract type, vertical or horizontal career prospects, job type, salary and overall job satisfaction (Schomburg, 2011; Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). To understand how they enhance employment opportunities for the young, mobility experiences cannot be seen in isolation, which is particularly evident through comparison with non-mobile people (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). While the added value of mobility in future employment, such as in terms of language skills (Kelly, 2013) or enhanced social capital, is clear to employers (Wiers-Jenssen, 2011), mobility per se does not necessarily guarantee a future job. Personal, individual characteristics such as socioeconomic background, education level and type of skills are also important and contribute to future success (Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). The ability of mobile students to choose is crucial; for example, economic and cultural capital enables young people first to become mobile and then to be employed internationally (Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). Employability is seen as orientated towards the future, meaning it "is how one is able to perform not only specific work tasks, but also in the imagined future [...]" (Nikunen, 2017, 663).

When discussing how employability is achieved in the country of destination, the focus is usually placed on full degree student mobility during the transition from education to work. Mobility increases opportunities for future employment (Van Mol, 2014; Schomburg, 2011), primarily due to increased language skills (Kelly, 2013). Mostly qualitative and exploratory research elaborates on the (flexible path) strategies that young graduate emigrants develop to improve their careers (Szewczyk, 2014) when facing life's uncertainties as adults. There is labour migration of the highly skilled, referred to in the literature starting in the 1960s as the 'brain drain' phenomenon (Pethe, 2007). Highly skilled professionals emigrated from less developed countries to industrialised countries because of the income gaps, or from industrialised countries to others for transfer of knowledge (Beaverstock, 1990).

2. Conceptual framework for youth employability

We emphasise that we are looking at employability not merely as the capacity to gain employment. Such a view considers employability as a property of the labour market, thus excluding the capacity of individuals.

We therefore integrate individual characteristics (personal adaptability) as well as various forms of individual capital (social and human), as we aim to emphasise the “individual”-like nature in conceptualising employability. While it is agreed that employability is a necessary concept for understanding youth transition to work, researchers primarily focus on transitions among “underprivileged youth”. Young people with skills are left on the fringes of researchers’ attention, their transition from study to work being assumed to be smooth (Oinonen, 2018) and unproblematic. Human, social and cultural capital should not be overlooked when understanding how young people get jobs (Souto-Otero, 2016). In the same way as mobility in itself is not a guarantee to future jobs for young graduates, we should not take a one-sided view of human capital and only consider the “formal education” (Nikunen, 2017) of young people.

Those especially affected by the issue of employability are the ones entering the labour market and those trying to find a new job, perhaps after a period of unemployment (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). For young people, these aspects are observed mainly during the transition to work. In this regard, “mobility is typically treated as a short-term strategy that enables youth to stay ‘on track’ for a conventional pathway to secure work or a career” (Robertson et al., 2018, 207). We focus on youth mobility and youth employability, using the concept of Fugate et al. (2004, 19) (Figure 1), adapted and further developed, by investigating whether different mobility types, different durations and different destinations affect employability.

Becoming employed is one of the main transitions that young people undergo in the transitional phase known as ‘youth’ – even though the transition from childhood to adulthood is not the only experience and challenge faced by young people. This article does not discuss the concepts of youth (see e.g. Wyn and Dwyer, 1999), but it emphasises those aspects especially connected to youth and employability. In this concept, employability combines the aspects of personal adaptability, social and human capital, as well as career identity, all focused on the young person rather than the employer, regardless of local, national or international labour markets.

The section below considers various aspects of soft skills that contribute to a person’s chances of gaining employment; among them are personal adaptability, social and human capital, and career identity. These aspects are not seen as exclusive in understanding employability. We therefore focus on the individual characteristics as theoretical tools for our analytical model of youth employability through mobility.^[11]

Further on we describe each dimension of employability.

Personal adaptability

Personal adaptability indicates the potential and the willingness of people in general and young people in particular in this article, especially in having to adapt to new situations and/or new requirements. This can include changes of behaviour, skills, knowledge, abilities or other factors according to (perceived) employers' needs (Fugate and Ashforth, 2003), as well as in order to increase career success (Fugate et al., 2004). Fugate et al. (2004) identified optimism, propensity to learn, openness, internal control to be proactive, generalised self-efficacy, adaptability to organisational performance, and adaptability to career success as the main key drivers in relation to personal adaptability. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) also see geographical mobility as an important individual factor.

Social and human capital

Bohle (2005) differentiates between an individualistic approach and a collectivist approach to social capital in helping to resolve crises. Getting involved in social networks may be seen as a resource for young people, to be used first for employment and then for further career prospects. The quality of the social networks is more important than their quantity (Elbe, 2011). Coleman (1988) concludes that the "importance of concrete personal relations and networks of relations [...] in generating trust, in establishing expectations, and in creating and enforcing norms" (Coleman, 1988, S97) forms the basis of social capital. Therefore "the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value. [...] Social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups" (Putnam, 2000, 18-19).

Putnam (2000, 22) differentiates between "bridging (inclusive) social capital" and "bonding (exclusive) social capital". "To build bridging social capital requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves" (Putnam, 2000, 411).

While social capital combines individual outreach factors in the form of networks, human capital is more based on the individual characteristics of the young people and their own background, including their age, education, parents' education, gender, work experience, training, job performance, emotional intelligence, cognitive ability, knowledge, skills (e.g. language), abilities, and experiences (e.g. voluntary work, internship) (e.g. Fugate et al., 2004). Other factors may be health and well-being, household circumstances, access to transport or access to financial capital (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

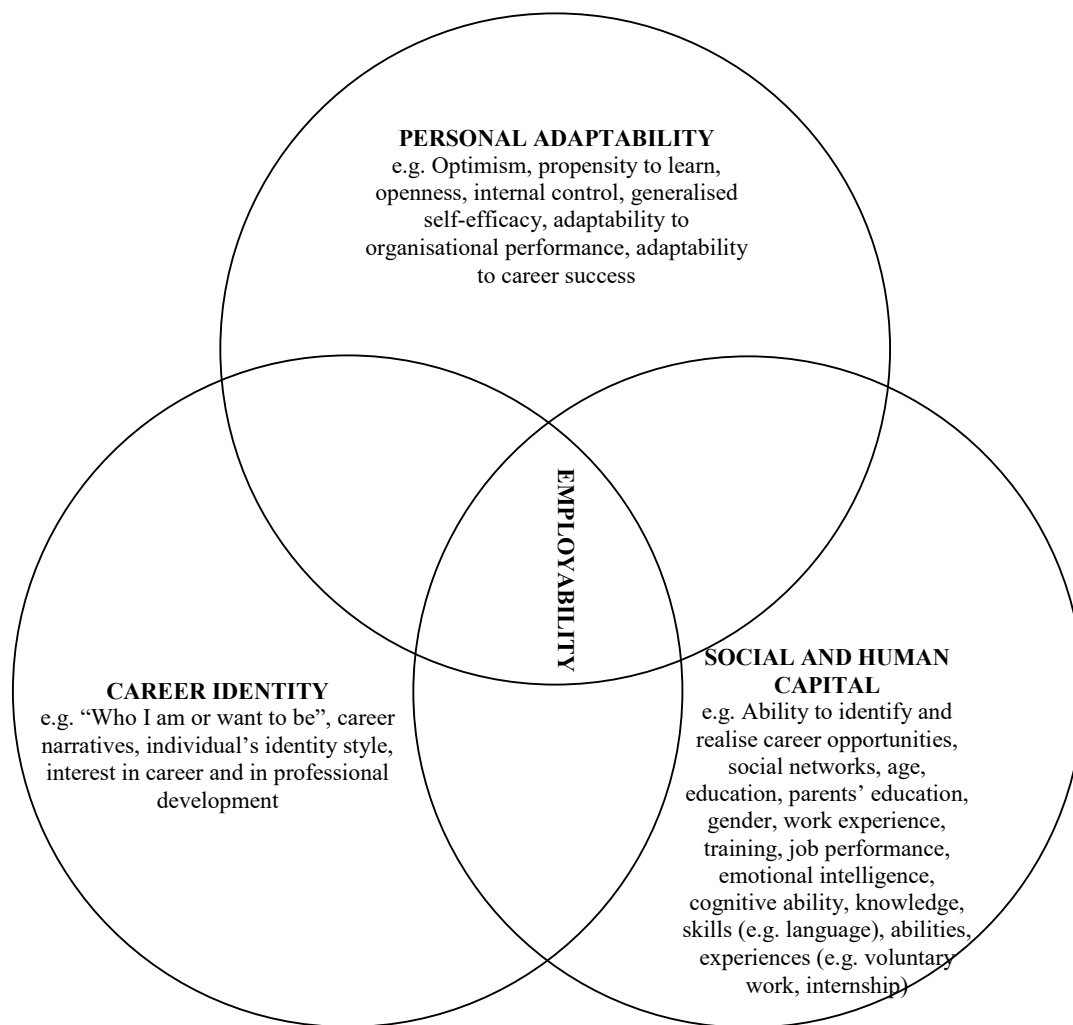


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of youth employability

Source: Fugate et al., 2004: 19, own adaptations and changes

Career identity

Unlike the first two aspects of employability, career identity is much vaguer, as it combines differences in individual experiences and aspirations, including concepts of “who I am or want to be” as well as career narratives or individual identity (Fugate et al., 2004). It can be seen as “one’s self-definition in the career context” (Fugate and Kinicki, 2008, 508) and, at the same time, the motivation for “career-related endeavours” (Fugate and Kinicki, 2008, 508). This can be crucial, especially for young people trying to figure out who they are, finding a “compass” (Fugate and Ashforth, 2003).

As the model (figure 1) shows, there are overlaps between career identity and personal adaptability, between career identity and social and human capital, and between personal adaptability and social and human capital. These overlaps show “that employability is a multi-

dimensional construct whose component dimensions are reciprocally related” (Fugate et al., 2004, 25).

What does this mean? Does “horizontal mobility” have less impact on employability than “vertical mobility”? Does the duration of stay abroad play a role in the employment status afterwards? Does the timing of being abroad have an impact on employability? By tackling such questions, the paper provides new insights into the role of youth mobility on employability and reducing unemployment.

3. Methodological Framework

The data used in this article derive from the two datasets resulting from the MOVE project (Navarrete L et al., 2017), via a dual sampling strategy: a panel survey and a snowball sampling survey, conducted for 8 weeks between November 2016 and January 2017. The respondents were young people aged between 18 and 29, from Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, Norway, Hungary and Romania. Both questionnaires were self-administered online, and covered a wide variety of topics such as the main features of mobility, motivations and barriers to mobility, employment and professional development or transnationality. The panel survey was addressed to mobile and non-mobile youth, resulting in 5,499 respondents. The panel survey was complemented with snowball sampling targeting only young people involved in a mobility experience at the time of the interview or in the recent past, resulting in a sample of an additional 3,207 respondents.

For the purpose of this research, only those mobile young people were selected, who have been abroad for longer than two weeks for a reason other than tourism or visiting relatives (Navarrete et al., 2017).

A final subset of 5,272 respondents remained, allowing for a detailed analysis of mobile European youth. The sample is distributed across the countries as follows: Germany-1,487, Hungary -425, Luxembourg- 669, Norway-428, Romania-679 and Spain -1,584.

The research strategy relies on cluster analysis, which has been recognised since the seminal work of Cattell (1943) as a powerful method for identifying patterns and grouping individuals into homogenous groups. The results of grouping a large number of cases considering their similarities across a group of variables are readily acquired using cluster analysis (Gunderson et al., 2008). Separate cluster analysis was therefore applied for analysing each employability dimension and structuring individuals into three distinct groups, the dimensions being: *Personal Adaptability*, *Career Identity* and *Social and Human Capital*. To find the clusters that are both stable and best differentiate between groups, a larger number of variables was initially used, with more detailed analysis conducted for every dimension. However, a number of variables were excluded from the analysis due to their high non-response rate, which would have reduced the sample size by about 50%, or because they generated an unstable cluster, the

initial centre of the cluster was significantly different from the final centre of the cluster. The final set of variables used for each dimension is described in the Annex.

The *k*-means partitioning method was applied, as it uses a minimised within-cluster variation as a measure for homogenous clusters. The method is also suited to the research objectives, since it is recommended for large samples (greater than 500) and for ordinal data (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). After empirical testing, three clusters were considered as best differentiating between respondents for the three dimensions.

The two-step partitioning method was performed as well (also suitable for ordinal data), but the differences between the three clusters obtained for each dimension were smaller than for the *k*-means partitioning method and, as it provides weaker results, it is not included in the paper.[iii]

As in Figure 1, Employability is found at the intersection between the *personal adaptability*, *career identity* and *social and human capital* dimensions. The precise identification of mobile individuals belonging to each cluster allows for identification of the cluster describing the employability. 27 different clusters were obtained when considering the intersection of the clusters initially produced for the three dimensions. Following the conceptual framework of this study, the relevant employability cluster is characterised by high personal adaptability, strong career identity and well-developed social and human capital, and it includes young mobile people at the intersections of these three clusters.

4. Results from cluster analysis

Cluster analysis allows for discrimination between respondents and for grouping them in homogenous categories across the three employability dimensions: *personal adaptability*, *social and human capital* and *career identity*, as confirmed by our results.

4.1. Designing each dimension

Personal adaptability

In generating the three clusters related to personal adaptability (Table 1), highly correlated variables were excluded (such as “myself to go abroad”, and “others to go abroad” or “collaborated actively with youth or student organisations”, “financed by family”, “financed by EU”), as well as variables with a high non-response rate (such as “current occupation matches your studies”). We kept a number of individual characteristics that capture “personal adaptability” (also listed in Table 1), such as “comparing the new situation with the past one” or “acting even when unsure about results”.

Table 1: Cluster characteristics for the Personal Adaptability dimension

Clusters	Cluster 1: Adaptable	Cluster 2: Neutral to adaptable	Cluster 3: Highly adaptable/ flexible
Age	18-21 – 24.3% 22-25 – 47.2% 25-29 – 28.5%	18-21 – 6.8% 22-24 – 53.2% 25-29 – 0%	18-21 – 0% 22-25 – 34.2% 26-29 – 65.8%
When I act I usually consider alternatives	Agree	Totally disagree	Agree
I never compare the new situations with the past ones	Disagree	Totally disagree	Neutral
Expectation achieved (acceptance in the society)	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled	Fulfilled
Still financially dependent on parents or legal guardian for financial support	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral
Obstacles faced in moving abroad	No barriers (64.9%) Psychological well-being (13.4%) Lack of financial resources to move abroad (9.5%)	Lack of information support (25.8%) Lack of sufficient language skills (50.2%)	Lack of sufficient language skills (48.7%) Information support (22.2%)
Identification with Europe	Complete identification	Poor	Good identification
Did your parents/legal guardian move to live in a different country?	Yes	No	Yes
Acting even though unsure about results	Neutral	Totally disagree	Totally Agree
Cluster size*	1851 (35.09%)	1559 (29.55%)	1767 (33.50%)

* missing values 95

Source: Own calculations

The representative respondent of the first cluster is aged between 22 and 25 years old, has experienced no barriers or lack of financial resources to move abroad, is financially independent and fully identifies with Europe. He/she has a family background in relation to mobility, usually compares new situations with previous ones, and considers the alternatives of the new situations. Such a young person is considered to be adaptable.

The representative respondent of the second cluster covers youth between 22 and 24 years old, with every experience considered as new (also because the respondent belongs to younger age groups), perceiving the lack of information support as an obstacle, having poor

identification with Europe, and with no family background of mobility. The cluster includes individuals who are neutral to personal adaptability.

The representative respondent of the third cluster covers youth between 26 and 29 years old who expect to be accepted in society, have experienced obstacles such as a lack of sufficient language skills and informational support, and who have good identification with Europe, being flexible and readily adaptable.

Social and human capital

Using variables related to education, acceptance in the new society or the likelihood of moving to another country (Table 2), we have identified three clusters related to social and human capital, describing young people with a high level, a developing level or a moderate level of social and human capital.

Table 2: Cluster characteristics for the Social and Human Capital dimension

Clusters	Cluster 1: High level of social and human capital	Cluster 2: Developing social and human capital	Cluster 3: Moderate level of social and human capital
Age	18-21 – 0% 22-25 – 18% 26-29 – 82%	18-21 – 35.8% 22-25 – 63.1% 26-29 – 1.1%	18-21 – 38.7% 22-25 – 59.9% 26-29 – 1.4%
Expectation achieved Acceptance/adjustment in new society	Exceeded my expectation	Not fulfilled	Exceeded my expectation
Highest educational level achieved	Bachelor's degree (32.7%) Master's degree (41.9%)	Post-secondary and upper secondary (57.6%)	Bachelor's degree (30.1%) Upper secondary (46.9%)
Educational level of father/legal guardian	Post-secondary and under (57.5%)	Upper secondary (40.4%) Lower secondary (33.4%)	Bachelor's and Master's degree (60.6%)
Identify yourself with Europe	Neutral	Complete identification	Complete identification
Possible in the future to move to another country	Very likely	Very likely	Very unlikely
Cluster size*	2022 (38.35%)	1616 (30.65%)	1568 (29.75%)

*missing values 66

Source: Own calculations

The first cluster (in Table 2) grouped youth between 26 and 29 years old whose expectations were exceeded regarding acceptance in the new society, being well-educated (Master's degree) and very likely to move to another country in the future.

The second cluster included youth around 22-25 years old whose expectations regarding acceptance in the new society were not fulfilled, who fully identify themselves with Europe and are very likely to move to another country in the future.

The third cluster grouped youth around 22-25 years old who are well educated, along with their parents, who completely identify themselves with Europe, but are very unlikely to move abroad.

Career Identity

All variables included in the *Career Identity* column in Table 3 were considered, but some (such as gender) were not differentiated among clusters, while for others (such as type of contract), many non-responses were recorded. The most stable cluster configuration was chosen when initial cluster centres were closest to the final cluster centres (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011, 317).

Table 3: Main characteristics of each cluster for the Career Identity dimension

Clusters	Cluster 1: Less career-oriented	Cluster 2: Career consolidator	Cluster 3: Career initiator
Age	18-21 – 24% 22-25 – 47.2% 26-29 – 28.8%	18-21 – 18.4% 22-25 – 43.9% 26-29 – 37.7%	18-21 – 26.1% 22-25 – 41.3% 26-29 – 32.6%
Length of stay	Short-term mobility (3 months or less 49.3%)	Long-term mobility (more than 1 year 60.8%)	Short to medium-term mobility (less than 9 months 100%)
Important reason for moving abroad	Family-related reason/ learning languages	Previous knowledge of language/ learning language	Previous knowledge of language/ learning language
Main reason for mobility	Different type of studies/ language courses	Different type of studies/ language courses	Different types of work or entrepreneurship
I use the experience of others when coping with a new situation	Partially agree	Disagree	Do not know
Size of place lived most	Towns	Cities	Cities
Times been unemployed	Once	Once	Never
Highest educational level	Bachelor's/Master's (52%)	Bachelor's/Master's (58.9%)	Upper secondary (36.3%) Post-secondary/short tertiary (20.8%)
Cluster size*	2082 (39.50%)	1715 (32.53%)	1393 (26.42%)

*missing values 82

Source: Own calculations

For the first cluster, the representative respondent is 22-25 years old, with short-term mobility (less than a month), whose main reason for mobility is studies or language courses. The representative respondent has lived for the most of her/his life in towns and (s)he has obtained a Bachelor's/Master's degree. Since the respondents who consider family-related reasons as being important for moving abroad seem less interested in career development, this cluster was labelled as "less career-oriented".

The representative respondent of the second cluster is 22-25 years old, has experienced long-term mobility, has lived mostly in cities, and has experienced unemployment once. (S)he is highly educated (Bachelor's/Master's degree) and prefers to rely on his/her experience in new situations. The cluster describes an individual in the process of consolidating his/her career.

The representative respondent of the third cluster is 22-25 years old, involved in short or medium-term mobility, with language acquisition as an important reason for moving abroad, living mostly in cities and obtaining or being involved in post-secondary education. This cluster includes young individuals in the early stages of their career, suggesting the label of "career initiator".

4.2. Individual characteristics of youth from the Employability cluster

Next, the result of the intersection of the previously determined clusters is presented. The subsample possessing the *Employability* characteristics is established as the intersection of the third cluster of the *Personal Adaptability* dimension, the second cluster of *Career Identity* dimension and the first cluster of the *Social and Human Capital* dimension (Figure 2).

This subsample was manually selected and grouped together the greatest share of the respondents (494) that are the most adaptable, career-oriented, and represent the best social and human capital.

The 494 respondents covered the six countries as follows: Spain (44.1%), Germany (18.8%), Luxembourg (17.8%), Romania (8.7%), Norway (7.5%) and Hungary (3%). They are relatively mature, with an average age of 27.

This cluster grouped adaptable young people who are well-integrated in the labour market: 42.5% of the respondents have never been unemployed for more than four weeks. A larger proportion of them were employed (56.5%, as against 44% in the total sample), confirming the hypothesis that the selected characteristics are relevant factors for youth employability (the difference is statistically significant at 1% significance level). High mobility is one of the major characteristics of this employability cluster: 43.5% of the respondents stated they had travelled abroad more than 20 times, and 20.7% between 11 and 20 times. Long-term mobility also characterises this cluster. More than half of the respondents (53.9%) rated their experience abroad as "very good".

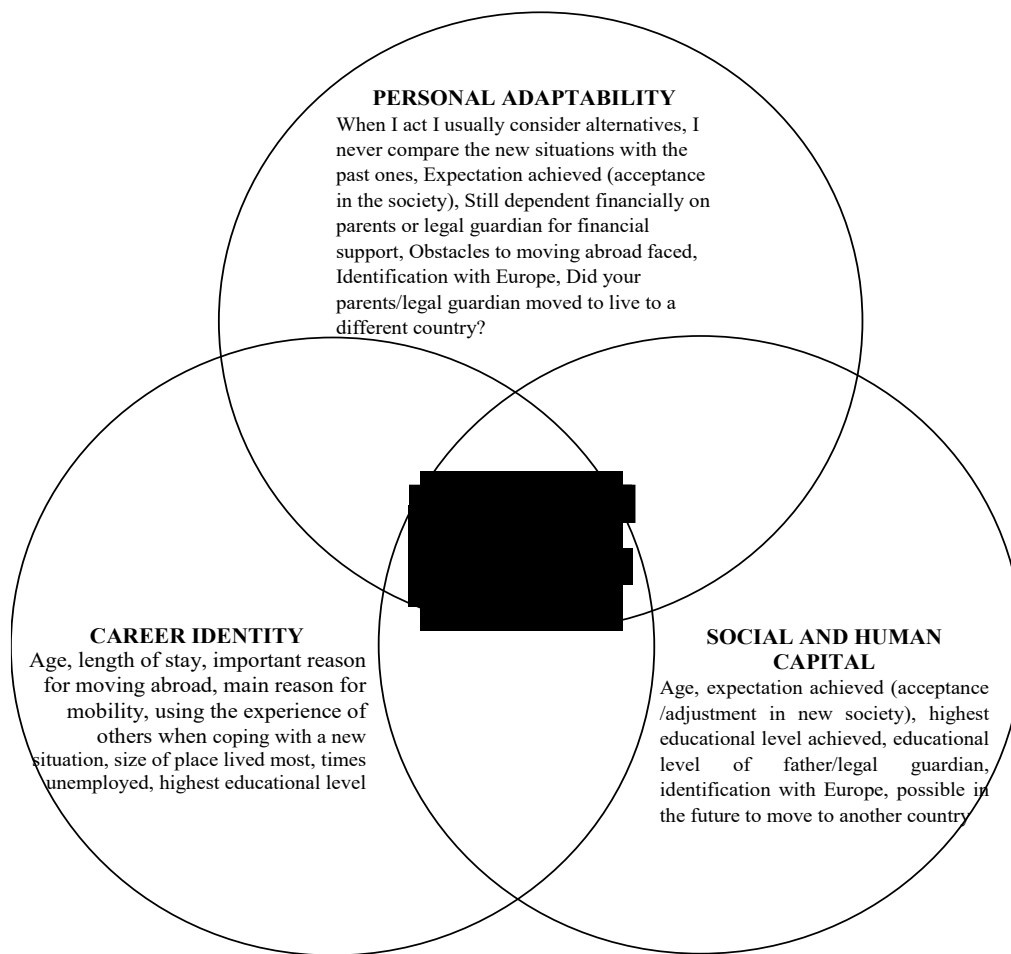


Figure 2. Youth employability framework adopted based on the results of this article

Source: Fugate et al., 2004: 19, own adaptations and changes

The main reasons for mobility were study-related (28.8% Erasmus and 21.9% entire degree programmes abroad: Bachelor’s, Master’s or PhD) and work-related (18.4%). These young people are highly skilled, with high human capital: 50.2% graduated with a Master’s degree or completed a post-graduate programme, and are focused on studies and improving their knowledge. 48.4% are very likely to obtain a higher qualification in the future.

The main reasons for mobility – those considered to be the most important – were learning or improving languages (54.1%), previous knowledge of language (20.3%) and study-related reasons (9.1%). The increase in human capital acquired through mobility seems to contribute to the respondents’ employability.

While abroad, this group faced similar obstacles to those faced by the general youth sample: lack of sufficient language skills (43.1%), lack of support or information (22.1%), and obstacles to or differences in recognition of qualifications (10.7%).

More than half (57.1%) of the respondents in the *Employability* cluster were involved in a second, separate instance of mobility for studies abroad (13.8%), for work-related reasons (8.7%), for language courses (7.3%) and for work experience/internship, as part of higher education studies (5.7%). A large share of the young individuals from the *Employability* cluster financed their mobilities through various European programmes, showing that the European Employment Strategies for reducing structural unemployment and promoting job quality while developing a skilled workforce are effective.

The *Employability* cluster is characterised both by vertical and horizontal mobility. Vertical mobility is best represented by young people from Spain going abroad to the United Kingdom (25.22%) and to Germany (9.17%). Young people from Luxembourg best characterise horizontal mobility: 26.13% chose Germany and 22.72% Belgium as their destination countries. A large percentage (34.4%) of the Germans chose a downward vertical move, and the top destinations were countries in Africa.

Almost 24% of the Germans (best representing downward vertical mobility,) chose non-European destinations (Africa, Latin America and Oceania). A large percentage (72.72%) stayed for about one year. For half of them, voluntary work was the main reason for mobility. For about 60% of the young Germans who had chosen Africa, Latin America or Oceania, their experience was good or very good, and for about 36% the experience was bad or very bad. A large share (91%) rated their expectations being exceeded or achieved (rated 4 out of 5). None of these respondents had parents who had studied abroad. For about half of them, learning languages was the main reason for moving abroad. These young Germans are highly educated (86.36% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree). About 60% of them lived their entire life in towns and small cities. Half of them declared that they had never been unemployed for more than four weeks, and only 31.81% declared they had been unemployed once for more than four weeks.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

This article has analysed how employability is affected by youth mobility in times of high youth unemployment rates in many European countries. The conceptual framework of Fugate et al. (2004) was adopted as a guiding concept, to analyse and to cluster the data on individual employability. The results for the employability cluster determined in this article are in accordance with those obtained by Wiers-Jenssen (2013): 42.5% have never been unemployed for more than four weeks and 48.4% consider it very likely that they will obtain a higher qualification in the future.

A large share of the employability cluster financed their mobilities through European programmes, showing that the European Employment Strategies for reducing structural

unemployment and promoting job quality while developing a skilled workforce should be widely promoted among EU countries.

The characteristics of the employability cluster confirm that young people with high personal adaptability, who are career-oriented and have developed social and human capital have a high level of employability. Youth mobility is established as a strong characteristic of the employability cluster. It is a significant channel for generating human capital, which is an employability factor. Although the respondents in the employability cluster were mobile, being very likely for them to move to another country and they were involved in long term mobility, still most of the respondents would choose to return to their home countries after one or more stays abroad (when answering the question referring the possibility to move to their home country). According to the literature, both vertical and horizontal mobility contribute to increased employability. Here it is especially important to mention that not only upward vertical but also downward mobility increases the employability of young people. The experience gained by the vertical mobiles is thus to be encouraged and considered as an advantage for the economies of their home countries ('brain gain'), considering that a large share of the respondents returned to their home country. The results show that the stays abroad are quite long in duration, and the age of those included in the employability cluster is quite old compared to the definition of youth used in this article. The added value of the mobility experience and the potential transfer into employability depends on the individual young person.

This article has particularly focused on the most effective use of a mobility experience, meaning that not everyone can combine personal adaptability, career identity and social and human capital after a mobility experience in the best way to increase her/his employability. Almost half of those who succeeded had never experienced unemployment for more than four weeks. Therefore, not only does mobility affect employability, but it could also be considered a vehicle for successfully addressing unemployment.

The results obtained confirm that more research is needed, and should be complemented by qualitative approaches to analyse whether the career identity is also seen qualitatively. Moreover, further countries could be included to examine whether the benefits of downward vertical youth mobility are to be found in other settings. The benefits of youth mobility 5, 10 or 20 years after mobility are also worth investigating further.

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i The terms ‘cross border mobility’ and ‘migration’ are often used interchangeably even though they emphasise different aspects of cross-border mobility. The article is situated within an intra-European movement and thus employs the terminology of “mobility” to emphasise intra-EU cross-border movements (Geisen 2010, Navarrete L. et al. 2017).

[ii] The impact of supranational or national structures or regimes is not the focus of this paper, and is therefore not included in the discussion. Please see the work of Paugam, Walther, among others.

[iii] Principal Component Analysis was also tested in the early stages of the paper. The results confirm the employability dimensions

Annex:

Description of the variables used for cluster analysis, by dimensions of employability

<i>Career Identity</i>		<i>Personal Adaptability</i>		<i>Social and human capital</i>	
Age	23% aged between 18-21 44.5% aged between 22-25 32.5% aged between 26-29	Age	23% aged between 18-21 44.5% aged between 22-25 32.5% aged between 26-29	Age	23% aged between 18-21 44.5% aged between 22-25 32.5% aged between 26-29
Length of stay	63.7 stayed less or maximum 6 months 25.9% stayed between 7 months and two years 10.4% stayed more than 2 years	When I act, I usually consider alternatives	31.3% strongly agree (5/5) 42% rated 4/5 19.3% rated 3/5 4.1% rated 2/5 1.3% rated 1/5 2.1% DK/NR	Expectation achieved Acceptance/adjustment in new society	39.7% Exceeded the expectation 31.1% rated 4/5 18.3% rated 3/5 4.7% rated 2/5 3.8% expectation were not fulfilled
Reason important to move abroad	Previous knowledge of languages (24%) Learning languages (52.8%) Studies reasons (7.4%)	I never compare the new situations with the past ones	7% strongly agree (5/5) 11.1% rated 4/5 22.3% rated 3/5 29.2% rated 2/5 28.2% rated 1/5 2.2% DK/NR	Highest educational level achieved (top 3 answers)	32.7% upper secondary 29.9% Bachelor's degree 19.4% Master
Main reason for mobility	58.5 for studies 31.9% for work 9.6% for other purposes	Expectation achieved (acceptance in the society)	39.8% exceeded expectations (5/5) 31.2% rated 4/5 18.3% rated 3/5 4.7% rated 2/5 3.8% rated 1/5	Educational level of father/legal guardian (top three answers)	22% upper secondary 16.2% lower secondary 14.3% Bachelor 14.3% Master

			2.1% DK/NR		
Copying with a new situation I use the experience of others	7.1% Strongly agree (5/5) 23.8% rated 4/5 39.3% rated 3/5 19.3% rated 2/5 8.7% rated 1/5 1.8% DK/NR	Still dependent financially on parents or legal guardian for financial support	26.9% Completely 37.8% Partially 33% Independent 2.2% they partially depend on me	Identify yourself with Europe	25% complete identification (5/5) 31.5% rated 4/5 26.2% rated 3/5 11.3% rated 2/5 5.3% rated 1/5
Size of place lived most (top 3 answers)	24.6% Cities between 20001 and 150000 inhabitants 23.7% towns between 1001 and 20000 inhabitants 20.3% cities between 150001 and 800000	Obstacles faced to move abroad	31.9% lack of sufficient language skills 15.3% lack of support or information 23.2% any barrier	Possible in the future to move to another country	28.6% very likely (5/5) 22.1% rated 4/5 23.1% rated 3/5 11.3% rated 2/5 13.3% rated 1/5 1.6% DK/NR
Times been unemployed (top three answers)	53.9% none 18.8% once 9.7% twice	Did your parents/legal guardian moved to live to a different country?	35.1% yes 62% no 2.9% DK/NR		
Highest educational level (top three answers)	32.7% upper secondary 29.9% Bachelor 19.4% Master	Acting even unsure about results	15% strongly agree (5/5) 34.4% rated 4/5 32.6% rated 3/5 12.9% rated 2/5 3% rated 1/5 2% DK/NR		

Source: Own calculations