Youth Inequality across Europe – Addressing the participation of young people in employment, education and lived experiences

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1. Introduction

The situation of young people in Europe has undergone considerable change over recent years. This chapter makes a contribution to this topic by investigating how education, employment and lived experiences have changed over the crisis period, offering a statistical portrait of the situation of young people from a capability-oriented approach. It asks how, and in what areas, inequalities in capabilities have worsened. The three sections of this chapter provide a multidimensional set of answers to this question, in the spheres of education (section 2), the labour market (section 3) and in lived experiences (section 4).

Section 2 presents descriptive statistics on the incidence and composition of educational outcomes and inequalities across EU countries. Considerable disparities in educational participation exist between member states, and within states, educational outcomes are strongly correlated with background disadvantages. Meanwhile, the role of education in decreasing, preventing and better meeting changing economic needs has been well established, and transposed into various European-level initiatives to enhance the overall skill and knowledge level of young people. For example: New Skills for Jobs (European Commission 2010a); ET2010 and ET2020 (Council of the European Union 2002 and 2009) and the need to increase the employability of young people (European Commission 2011a); New Skills for Jobs (European Commission 2010b); Youth on the Move (European Commission 2010b); as well as the European Employment Strategy taken as a whole.

Compounding this problem, in most member states, the economic crisis starting in 2008 was marked by a rise in unemployment which has hit young people hard. Section 3 outlines the results of the analysis of labour market outcomes. In many countries the grim unemployment picture is darkened further by a large number of involuntary non-standard jobs. In a context of recession, the major risk in terms of social consequences is that austerity is likely to impede capability for work enhancement; i.e., the real freedom to choose the job one has reason to value (Bonvin and Farvaque, 2006). It highlights the labour market vulnerabilities of young people, compared to adults, and calls for action to support young people at risk, such as the risk of long-term unemployment or involuntary part-time and temporary employment.

Section 4 explores the divergence in youth participation in education, in the labour market, and at large within and across regional clusters. Clusters of economically deprived regions are disadvantaged across educational, labour market, political and social forms of participation relative to other less deprived clusters. In these contexts, young people are revealed to have lower attainments across dimensions compared to the general population.

2. Educational participation and its correlates and consequences

Education is a key resource in structuring individuals' opportunities to live the lives they value, and the capabilities approach provides a way of analysing upfront the differences in the ability to convert these resources into functionings (Otto & Ziegler, 2006). The capability approach moves beyond the notion of understanding education as a tool to enhance human capital; it conceives of it as empowering not just labour market outcomes but all dimensions of life, and demands equality of access of education to all groups, regardless of likely labour market attachment (Robeyns, 2006).

This section uses data from the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) to examine the prevalence of low educational participation among young people (aged 16-29) across Europe[i], and its connection to individual and household characteristics. The data suggests that there are disparities in access to education, and that low participation and attainment are correlated with background disadvantages.

2.1. Participation in education across Europe

Low educational participation is defined here as those who do not hold at least upper secondary level[ii] qualifications, and are not currently undertaking any educational programme or vocational training. This is also known as 'early school leaving', and reducing it is a target of the Europe 2020 strategy.[iii]

Among 16-18 year olds (Figure 2.1a), rates of early leaving vary across countries, although in all countries shown, at least 90% of this age group either have upper secondary level qualifications or are in education or training. Rates of early leaving are higher among 18-24 year olds (Figure 2.1b), with the highest rates in Norway, Spain, Portugal and Romania.

Figure 2.1a: Rates of early leaving among 16-18 year olds

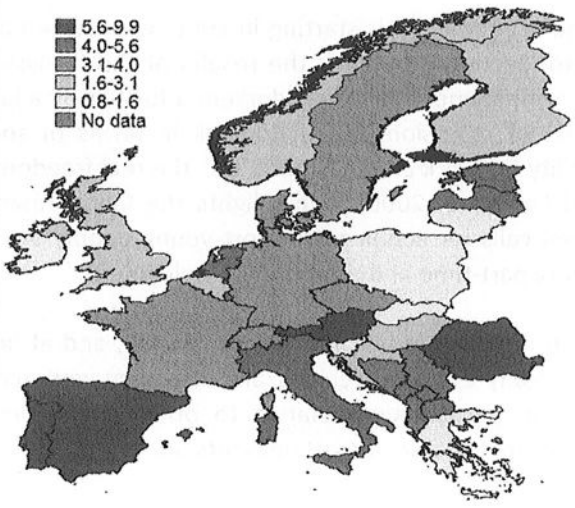
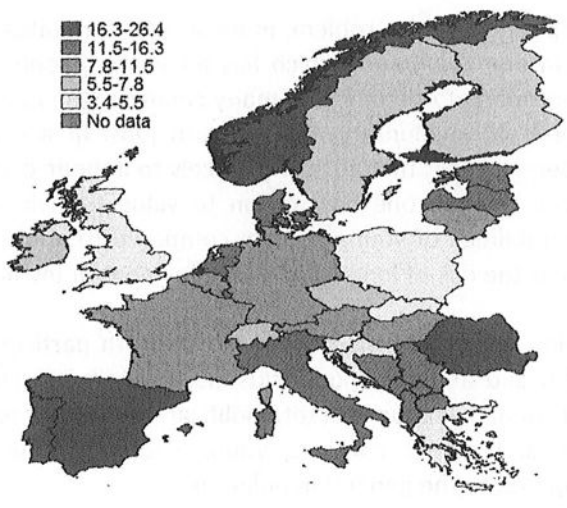


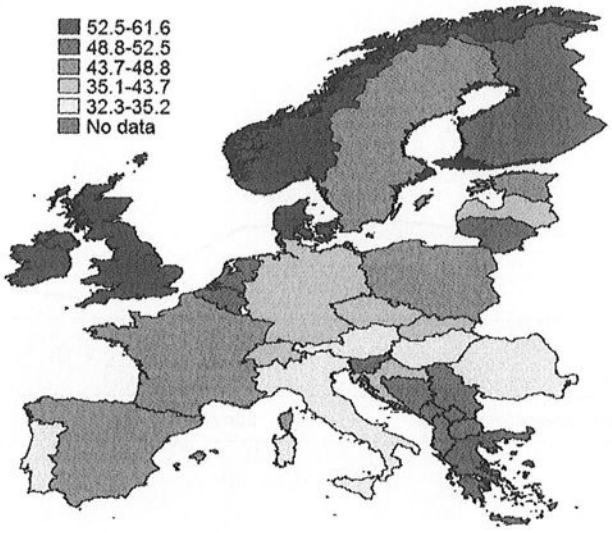
Figure 2.1b: Rates of early leaving among 19-24 year olds



Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

Among the 25-29 age group, there is cross-national variation in the proportion who hold, or are currently pursuing, tertiary education qualifications. (Figure 2.2). In general, the proportion is higher in Northern and Western Europe, and lower in Southern and Eastern Europe.

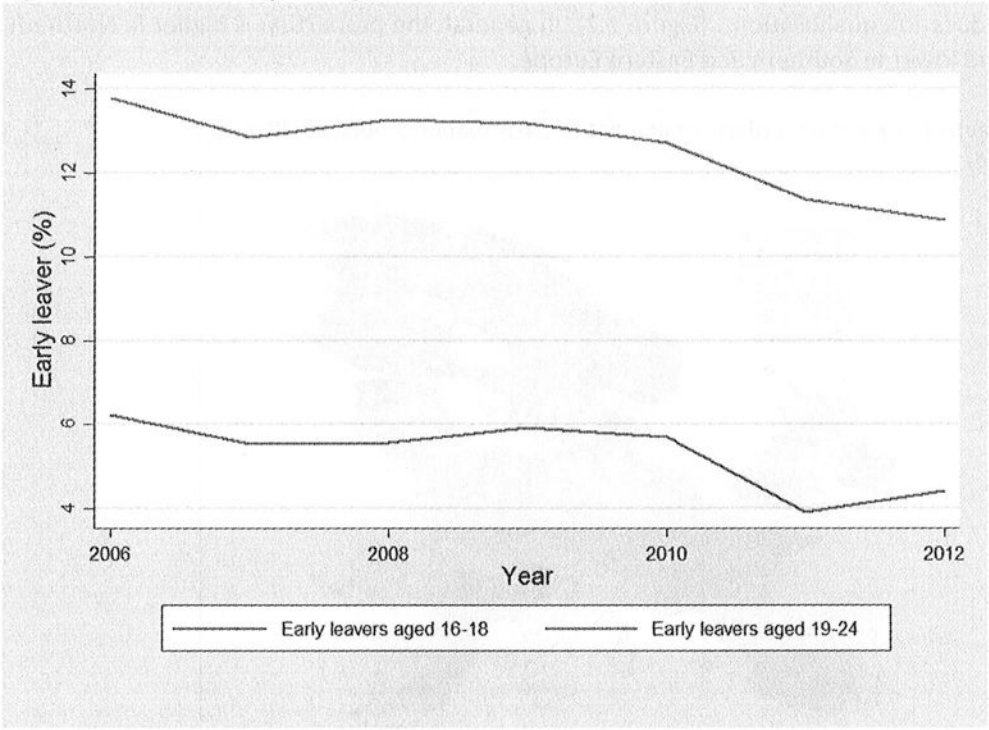
Figure 2.2: Rates of tertiary attainment or participation among 25-29 year olds



Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

The proportion of young people who are early leavers has fallen slightly in recent years. Figure 2.3 suggests that the early leaving rate, which had been relatively steady prior to the economic downturn, experienced a fall of around 3 percentage points for the 19-24 age group, and around 2 percentage points for the 16-18 group.

Figure 2.3: Trends in early leaving, 2006-2012



Source: EU-SILC microdata

2.2. Non-participation in education and adverse outcomes

Educational participation is important because early leaving, and to a lesser extent not gaining or pursuing tertiary education, are associated with adverse labour market outcomes. It is not necessarily the case that early leavers are opting for employment instead of continuing their education. Table 2.1 shows the employment status of those not currently undertaking education or training. Only 27% of 16-18 year olds who have left education without upper secondary qualifications are in employment, compared with 69% who have gained these qualifications. The gap is slightly less stark in the 19-24 age group, with just under half of those without upper secondary qualifications in work, compared to 72% of those with these qualifications. The gap is narrower still for the 25-29 group with respect to holding tertiary qualifications, although there is still a difference of around 15 percentage points in the employment rates of those with and without these qualifications.

Table 2.1: Employment outcomes of those not currently in education or training, by qualification level

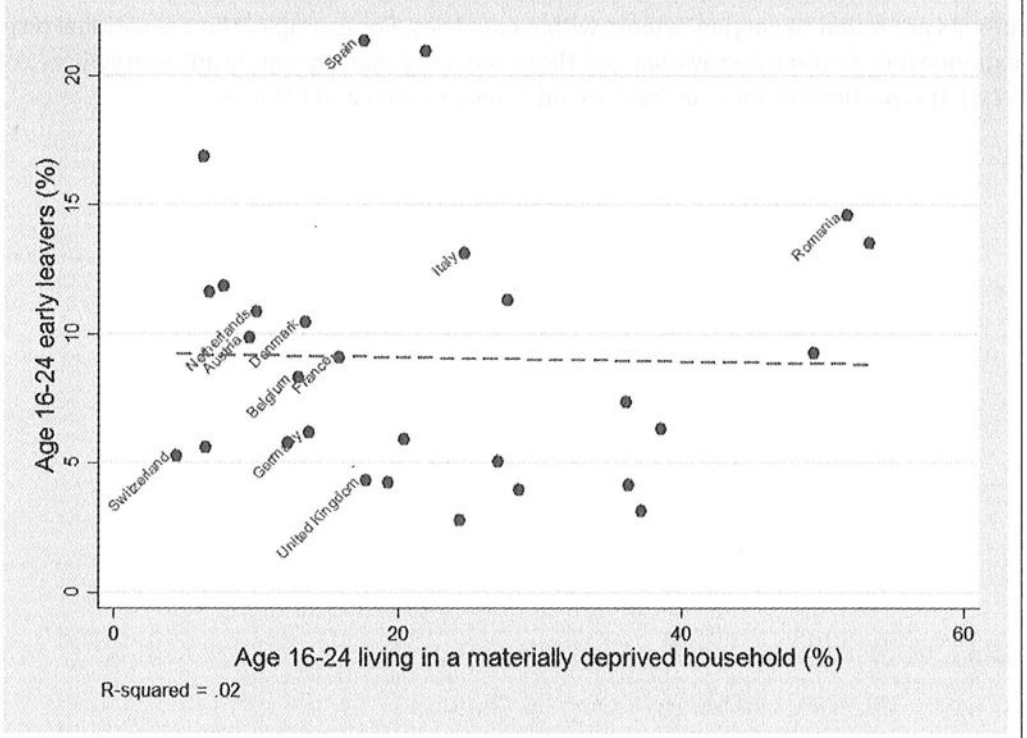
		In work (%)	Not in work (%)
16-18	No upper secondary qualifications	73.1	26.9
	Upper secondary qualifications	30.7	69.3
19-24	No upper secondary qualifications	52.5	47.5
	Upper secondary qualifications	27.6	72.4
25-29	No tertiary qualifications	28.8	71.2
	Tertiary qualifications	14.1	86.0

Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

2.3. The correlates of early leaving

There is little association between early leaving and individual or household background factors at the country level. For example, Figure 2.4 shows no correlation at the national level between the extent to which people in the 16-24 age group experience material deprivation, and their likelihood of early leaving; the regression line is flat and the R-squared value is very small. It is evident that countries with similar levels of material deprivation in this age group – for example Spain, France, and the UK – have quite different rates of early leaving. A similar lack of association can be seen at the country level with other background factors, such as parental qualification holding, or with national level policy factors such as educational expenditure or the number and compensation of teachers (Graham & Raeside, 2014).

Figure 2.4: Cross-national association between material deprivation and early school leaving



Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

However, at the individual level, a number of factors can be shown to be associated with early leaving (Table 2.2). Material deprivation is strongly associated with early leaving. Males and those born in a different country are more likely than females and non-immigrant young people to leave education early, especially in the 19-24 age group. Parental characteristics are also relevant, with 16-18 year olds less likely to leave education without upper secondary qualifications if they have at least one parent educated to this level.

Table 2.2: Association between selected background factors and early leaving from education, selected countries[1]

Background factor	Early leaving 16-18 (%)	Early leaving 19-24 (%)
Not materially deprived	2.8	8.4
Materially deprived	8.6	22.1
Female	3.1	9.5
Male	4.7	13.2
Born in country of residence	3.7	10.4
Born outside country of residence	6.7	24.0
Parent(s) have at least upper secondary qualification	2.6	n/a*
No parent with at least upper secondary qualification	10.0	n/a*

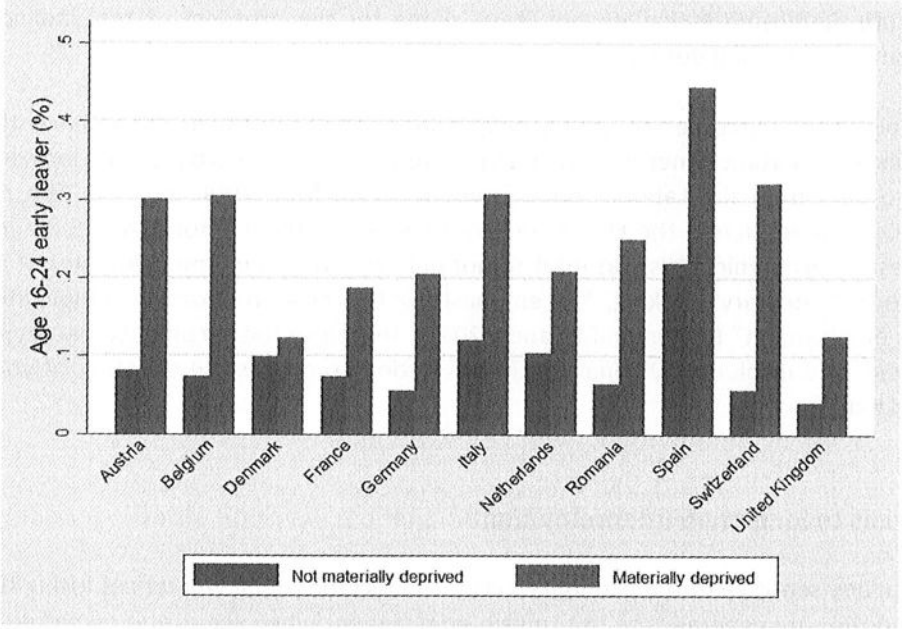
Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

[1] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and UK.

* Not estimated due to lack of data on parental characteristics for this age group

These effects are found to varying extents within countries. For example, the educational disparity between those experiencing material deprivation and those not is statistically significant everywhere except Denmark (Figure 2.5). It is particularly large in Switzerland, Spain, Austria and Belgium.

Figure 2.5: The association between material deprivation and early leaving among 16-24 year olds, for selected countries



Source: EU-SILC microdata, 2011

2.4. Conclusion

Educational participation is important because it shapes the opportunities available to young people. Early leaving from education is associated with adverse labour market outcomes, although it has fallen on average in Europe since the crisis. However there are inequalities in participation, both across and within countries. Individual and household background factors, such as gender and material deprivation, are associated with a higher likelihood of early leaving. To avoid widening inequalities, there is a need not only to provide a high quality education to those with the greatest capabilities to engage, but to ensure the engagement of marginalised groups in the education system by addressing the barriers to engage, and providing opportunities for re-engagement later in life.

3. Quantity and quality of youth employment in the evolving crisis

When the labour market situation worsened in 2008, it was difficult to foresee that the crisis would have substantial ability to evolve and that the labour market recession represented only its first, initial phase. As the eight-year period 2006–2013 went on, two successive phenomena could be seen more and more clearly (ETUI, 2015). During the first phase of the crisis (2008-2010), youth unemployment rose to alarming levels in most European countries. During the second phase (2010-2013), the unemployment situation worsened in a majority of countries, while the recovery proceeded somewhat unevenly in others.

In this section we provide a snapshot of labour market trends regarding the 15-29 year-old group across Europe in the first and second period of downturn, moving towards a capability approach-inspired vision of employment. According to Robert Salais: "*The upheaval introduced by the capability approach relates to the choice of the yardstick against which collective action (policies, legislation, and procedures) should be devised, implemented and assessed. For Sen, the only ethically legitimate reference point for collective*

action is the person, and specifically his situation as regards the amount of real freedom he possesses to choose and conduct the life he wishes to lead" (Salais, 2005: 10). From this perspective indicators of both quantity and quality of youth employment that do not leave scope for the prospect of real individual freedom are open to criticism (Goffette and Vero, 2015).

Assessed in this light, employment outcomes of young people are pictured through the lens of their involuntary nature, emphasizing important dimensions such as involuntary non-standard jobs and long-term unemployment, using micro data from the Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) from 2006 to 2013. The next section reviews unemployment trends across the EU-28 countries and Switzerland among the 15-29 year-old group. In some countries the economic crisis was marked not only by a rise in unemployment, but also by increases in part-time and temporary working, "so emphasising the need to examine employment composition as well as non-employment" (Green and Livanos, 2015); therefore the second section focuses on non-standard employment held involuntarily. Finally, the last section compares the situation of young people to that of the overall workforce.

3.1. From a persistent crisis to long-term unemployment

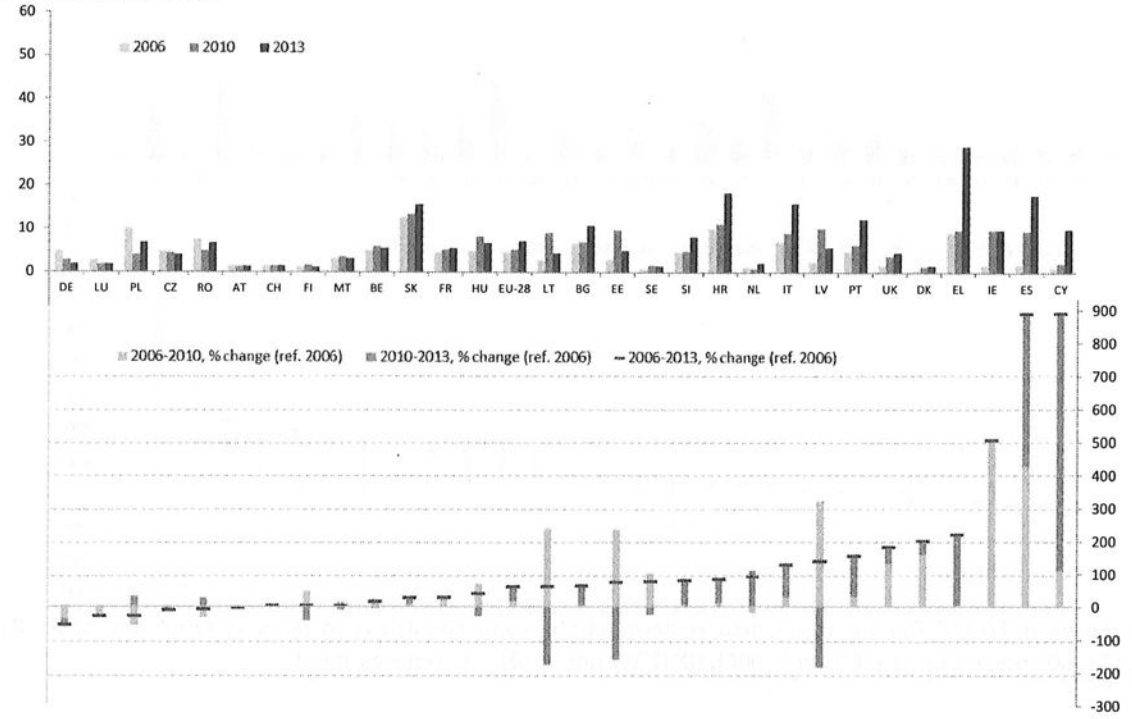
Youth employment is particularly sensitive to the economic cycle. The risk for young workers of losing their job is that much greater, and they are generally the last to gain employment when the economy picked up. Identifying the type of unemployment and the risk of long-term unemployment is a matter of fundamental concern to the capability approach. Indeed, as recalled by Bonvin and Farvaque (2006), "capability for work implies either a) capability not to work if one chooses to (via a valuable exit option, Hirschman 1990); or b) capability to participate effectively to the definition of the work content, organisation, conditions, modes of remuneration, etc. (i.e. the voice option)" . Yet, literature shows that in most cases, the long-term-unemployment is related to restrictions of labour market opportunities (Olejniczak M. (2012).

A large divergence in youth unemployment rates exists among countries (figure 1). In 2006, while the average EU-28 unemployment rate stood at 13.6%, a minimum of 5.3% was observed in the Netherlands and a maximum of 21.7% in Poland. By 2013, the EU-28 rate increased by 40% to peak at 18.9%, with a minimum of 7.3% in Germany and a maximum of 48.7% in Greece. Austria and Switzerland kept low levels of unemployment during the whole 2006-2013 period. Despite higher rates in 2006 in Germany and Malta, unemployment fell below 10% in both countries. On the contrary, unemployment was on the rise in most countries: it more than doubled in the Netherlands, Portugal, Lithuania and Greece, and tripled in Ireland, Spain and Cyprus. While unemployment rose during the whole 2006-2013 period in the majority of countries, it already started to decline during the second phase of the crisis in the Baltic countries.

The persistent crisis also induced a rise in long-term unemployment for young people. Between 2006 and 2013, the share of economically active young people who were unemployed for a year or more was multiplied by 1.5 in the EU-28. The long-term unemployment rate reached a level of 7.1% in 2013, compared to 4.5% seven years earlier. It grew in most Member States and was notably multiplied by 6 in Ireland (from 1.6% in 2006 to 9.7% in 2013), by 9 in Spain (from 1.8% to 17.8%) and by 10 in Cyprus (from 1% to 9.9%). Some countries kept low levels during the 2006-2013 period (Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden). During the same period, a few countries succeeded in reducing their youth long-term unemployment rate. In Germany it fell steadily between 2006 and 2013 (from 5.9% to 2.4%). Other countries reduced their rate during the second phase of recession (after an increase during the first phase): Baltic countries, and to a lesser extent Hungary and Malta. Yet, other experienced a second increase between 2010-2013 (Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Slovenia and

Bulgaria). In 2013, the highest long-term unemployment rate is observed in Greece (29.1%), and the lowest in Finland (1.1%).

Figure 1: Long-term unemployment rate as % of economically active population in 2006, 2010 and 2013 and changes since 2006, age 15-29



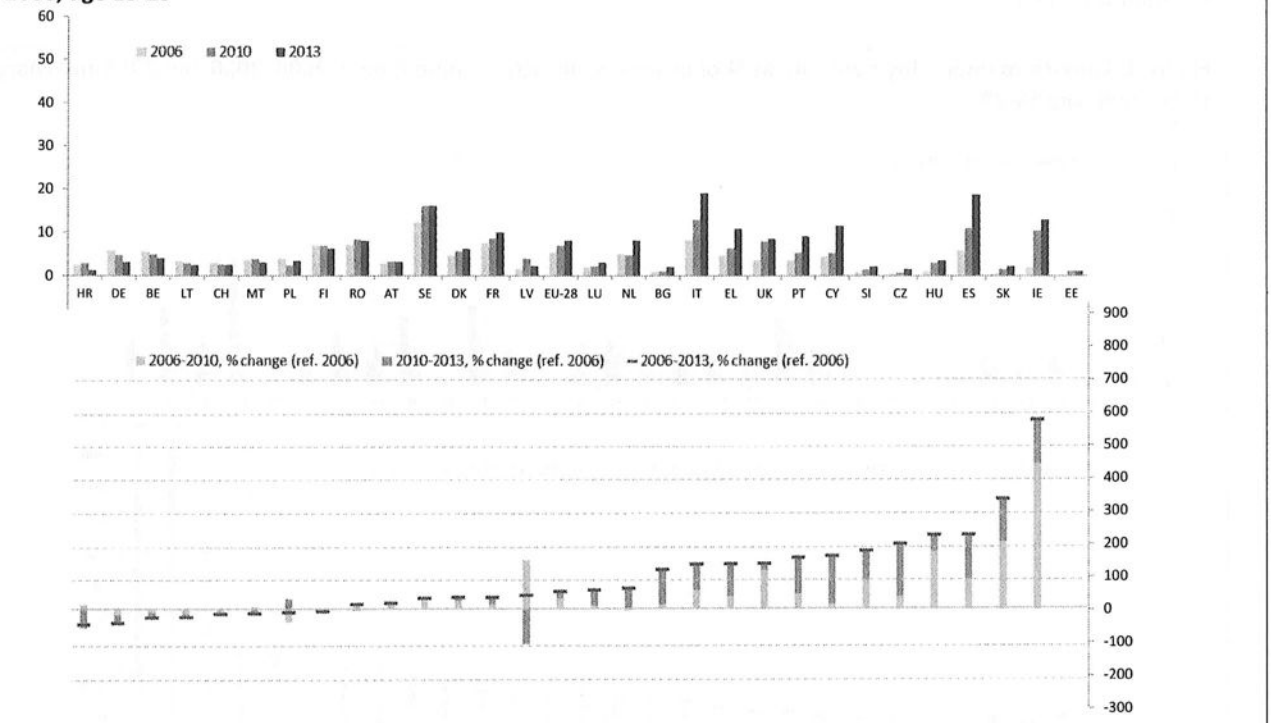
Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS – Céreq treatment

3.2. A high level of involuntary temporary employment and a rising trend for involuntary part-time

The Europe 2020 strategy promotes non-standard forms of employment (such as part-time and temporary working) to support increasing fluidity in the labour market (European Commission, 2010). However, European directives have also concentrated on improving the quality of such work (Green and Livanos, 2015). From the capability approach, non-standard employment may be considered negative when it occurs involuntarily, as is the case with the analyses presented below.

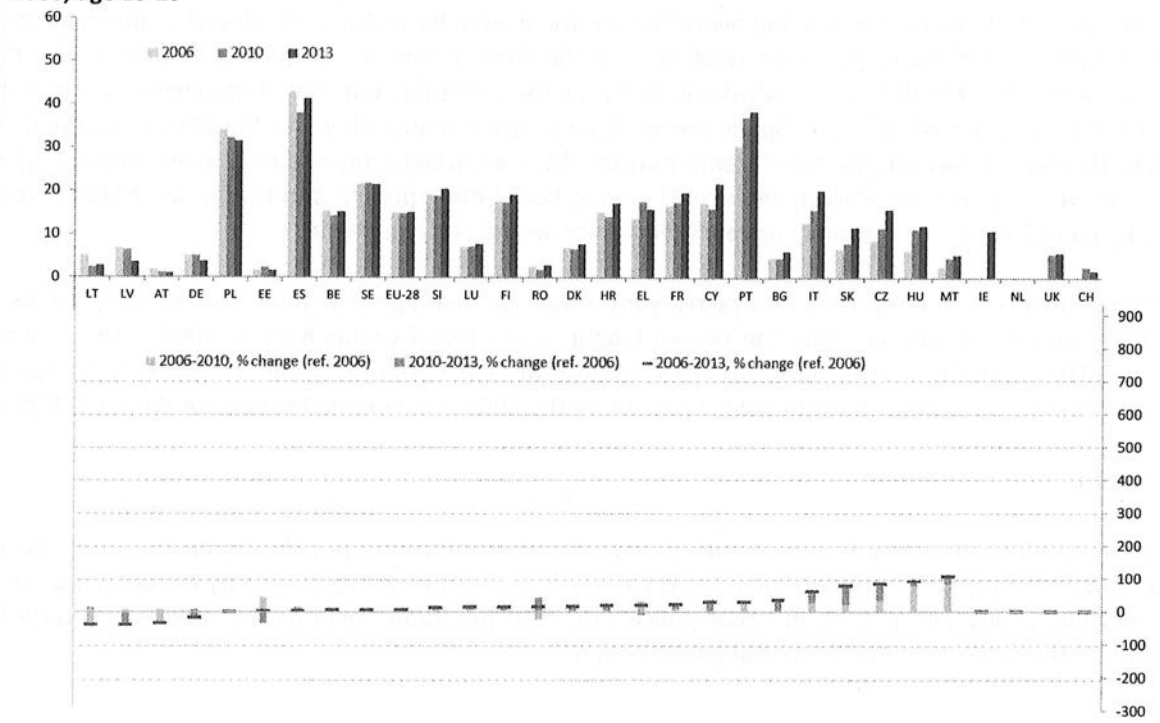
In the EU-28, involuntary part-time employment rose from 5.2% of total employment in 2006 to 8% in 2013 (figure 2). Some countries like Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, the Baltic countries, Luxembourg and Switzerland kept levels below 3% during the 2006-2013 period. In spite of rates higher than the EU-28 average in 2006, involuntary unemployment decreased in Germany, Belgium and Finland. For most countries, involuntary part-time employment increased: it was multiplied by 6.7 Ireland, 4.3 in Slovakia, and 3.3 in Spain and Hungary. In 2013, involuntary part-time employment was found among 19% of young workers in Italy, 18.6% in Spain and 16% in Sweden and 12.8% in Ireland.

Figure 2: Involuntary part-time employment as % of total employment in 2006, 2010 and 2013 and changes since 2006, age 15-29



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS. Due to missing data, replacement for some countries and years: EE (2005 not 2006, 2011 not 2010), LT (2005 not 2006), SK (2005 not 2006), UK (2011 not 2010). – Céreq treatment

Figure 3. Involuntary temporary employment as % of total employment in 2006, 2010 and 2013 and changes since 2006, age 15-29



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS. Missing data: CH (2006), IE (2006, 2010), NL (2006, 2010, 2013), UK (2006). – Céreq treatment

Figure 3 provides a complementary picture of the involuntary participation of young people to non-standard employment. Compared to the variations observed for involuntary part-time employment, changes in involuntary temporary employment are markedly more restrained. The share of young workers in involuntary temporary employment remained stable, from 14.9% in 2006 to 15% in 2013. The highest increase is observed for Malta, where it doubled, and the sharpest drop took place in Lithuania, with a reduction by half. In 2013, the share of young workers in temporary employment because they were unable to find a permanent job ranged from 1.1% in Austria to 41.4% in Spain.

3.3. Young people in a more vulnerable situation than the overall labour force

Employment outcomes of young people are particularly sensitive to the economic cycle. During the 2006-2013 period, young people were 1.5 times more likely be unemployed than workforce as a whole: 13.6% versus 8.3% in 2006; 16.6% versus 9.7% in 2010 and 18.9% versus 11% in 2013 (Figure 5). More surprisingly, the overall labour force experienced a relatively higher increase in unemployment between 2006 and 2013 (57.8% versus 39%), due to an increase in the 2010-2013 period (42.2% versus 16.9%), with the notable exception of Germany where unemployment decreased among both young people and the workforce as a whole. However, during the same period, youth long-term unemployment increased at a faster pace than overall long-term unemployment (Figure 6). In 2013, long-term unemployment is one third higher among the 15-29 year-old group than the broader workforce.

Another way of comparing the labour market situation of young people and workforce as a whole is to look at involuntary non-standard employment. During the 2006-2010 period, involuntary part-time was on

average one third higher among young people (5.2% versus 4.0% in 2006), and increased even more among young people over the 2006-2013 period: a 53.3% increase for young people versus 44.6% for the broader workforce (Figure 7). In other words, the overall labour force were hit by the crisis almost as much as young people regarding involuntary part-time working, but the former started out from involuntary part-time levels that were already a third lower. Most countries experienced substantial increases specifically oriented toward the 16-25 year olds (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary). However, divergent trends may be observed in Germany and to a lesser extent Belgium, where involuntary part-time working decreased among both young people and the broader labour force, with a higher reduction among young people than among workforce as a whole.

Concerning involuntary temporary contracts, youths are on average 1.7 times more likely to be in involuntary temporary contract than the overall labour force: 14.9% versus 8.9% in 2006 – 14.8% versus 8.6% in 2010 – 15.0% versus 8.5% in 2013 (Figure 8). Furthermore, while involuntary temporary employment is stable among young people, it fell during the 2006-2013 period broader workforce (-4.9%).

3.4. Conclusion

The global employment crisis has exacerbated the difficulties of young people in gaining access to the labour market and capability-friendly jobs. The greater affectedness of young people by the crisis is a sign of a higher vulnerability and it is urgent that policies develop programs towards the increase in both the quantity and the quality of employment of young people.

4. Youth Participation in Society: A Multidimensional and Cross-Regional Overview

The multidimensional notion of development endorsed by the study was applied to both the analysis of young people's attainments, as well as that of regional development. Indeed, socio-economic development within and across selected[iv] EU15 countries was investigated by drawing upon indicators of healthcare, education and labour market progress as well as purely economic growth (Table 1).

The analyses were performed by drawing upon two data sources, namely: EUROSTAT and the Flash EuroBarometer survey "Youth on the Move" (No 319a). Through the integration of information from these two data sources, a comprehensive dataset was created, which included multiple contextual socio-economic and youth-relative variables of interest for all NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) level-1 regions in nine selected EU-15 countries. The study focused on year 2011 in order to capture an on-going economic crisis effect and scenario, which is known to have significantly influenced young people's opportunities; as well as due to data limitations (especially with regard to young people's social and political participation).

Table 1: Selected contextual and youth-relevant indicators

	Data Source	Code
Contextual Indicators		
Demographic Statistics		
Infant mortality rates	Eurostat	Infant_mort
Life expectancy at birth	Eurostat	Life_exp
Socio-economic indicators		
GDP/head at current market prices, EU27 =100	Eurostat	Gdp_pc
Total unemployment rate, ages 15 and over (%)	Eurostat	Unempl
Long-term unemployment as a % of the total unemployment (%)	Eurostat	Long_unem
Population aged 25-64 with upper secondary/tertiary education (%)	Eurostat	High_educ
Youth-Relative Dimensions		
Indicators of outcomes in education		
Students in tertiary education as % of the population aged 20-24 (%)	Eurostat	Stud_enrol
Early leavers from education and training (%)	Eurostat	ELSs
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (%)		NEETs
Indicators of outcomes in the labour market		
Youth Unemployment rate (ages 15-29 as % of population ages 15-29)	Eurostat	Youth_unempl
Youth Long-term unemployment as a % of the total unemployment (%)	Eurostat	Youth_long_un
Indicators of participation		
Participation in either professional organisations; churches or religious organisations; recreational groups; charitable organisations (%)	Flash EB	Social_part
Voted at national elections within the last 3 years (%)	Flash EB	Political_part

The first step of the investigation focused on categorizing the regional contexts in which young people operate. Hence, through the use of multivariate cluster analysis, NUTS level-1 regions were categorised according to similar levels of multi-dimensional socio-economic development.

Six differentiated regional socio-economic contextual clusters were identified (Fig. 1) and illustratively renamed as:

1. ***"Most Economically Disadvantaged, but with Higher Life Expectancy"***,
2. ***"Highest Post-Compulsory Educational Attainment"***,
3. ***"Average Socio-Economic Performance"***,
4. ***"Well-Off European Regions"***,
5. ***"High Labour Market Performance"***
6. ***"Richest Metropolitan Areas"***

Fig. 1. Socio-Economic Clusters of European regions (2011)

Notes: The numbers of regions per cluster are indicated in brackets next to the colour-legend. The clusters are resultant of the K -means non-hierarchical clustering procedure[v].
Source: EUROSTAT database. Authors' elaboration.

Results revealed that socio-economic development varies across countries of the EU15, and that it does so not particularly at the national level but within and across nations, at the regional level. In fact, the clusters grouped regions, based on their similar socio-economic performance, both within and across countries. Further, regional similarities revealed to also cut across traditional social welfare models.

Furthermore, the results clearly indicated that economic performance purely measured in terms of GDP per capita was not in line with, nor indicative of, the clusters' educational and public health progress. Thereby confirming the value-added of a multivariate analysis that allows depicting contexts more comprehensively and on the basis of which to also potentially better tailor effective policies.

Following from this, the research focused on youth inequality and on their attainments by exploring how young people's participation in education, in the labour market and in society at large, in terms of social and political participation, varied within and across regional clusters.

Results revealed that young people's labour market, educational, social and political participation differed considerably both between and within socio-economic regional clusters (table 2). However, a cross-cutting feature was that females were structurally disadvantaged with respect to young males across all clusters (except one) with regard to being Neither in Employment nor Education or Training (NEET). Conversely, females recorded lower than male average levels of Early School Leaving (ESL) across all contexts.

It was also found that in regions characterised by high labour market performance for the aggregate population, on average also young people actively participated more in the labour market, but – importantly – also in society as a whole by being more socially and politically active. On the other hand, in

the cluster of economically deprived regions which however outperform in terms of health related outcomes, young people were relatively disadvantaged across educational, labour market, political and social forms of participation compared to other contexts. Young people's highest educational participation was recorded in rich metropolitan areas. In relatively well-off and average performing regions, young people were revealed to have lower attainments across dimensions compared to the general population.

Table 2: Youth outcomes by cluster (2011)

	Cluster 1 *"Most Economically Disadvantaged, but Higher Life Expectancy"*	**Cluster 2** *"Highest Post-Compulsory Educational Attainment"*	**Cluster 3** *"Average Socio-Economic Performance"*	**Cluster 4** *"Well-Off European Regions"*	**Cluster 5** *"High Labour Market Performance"*	**Cluster 6** *"Richest Metropolitan Areas"*
Stud_enrol	62.83	46.1	48.12	64.43	64.11	82.52
ELSs	26.54	9.74	14.54	13.69	10.33	13.3
Male ELSs	30.94	10.72	16.25	15.63	10.74	14.92
Female ELSs	21.91	8.66	12.77	11.82	8.22	11.7
NEETs	26.88	12.16	18.12	13.39	8.18	15.6
Male NEETs	27.57	11.64	16.89	12.56	6.81	15.2
Female NEETs	26.16	12.82	19.35	14.58	8.92	16.02
Youth_unempl	35.73	11.06	16.7	13.10	7.70	15.57
Male Youth_unempl	35.33	12.02	17.53	13.13	7.36	16.35
Female Youth_unempl	36.53	9.82	15.71	13.49	7.14	14.7
Youth_long_un	14.26	3.9	4.91	4.43	1.20	6.83
Male Youth_long_un	14.16	4.9	5.76	4.67	1.36	7.56
Female Youth_long_un	14.59	4.25	4.51	4.66	1.18	6.00
Social_part	39.76	43.94	47.08	47.28	52.52	39.70
Political_part	73.07	86.13	73.82	79.73	84.73	78.49

Source: EUROSTAT and the Flash EuroBarometer survey "Youth on the Move" (No 319a). Authors' elaborations. Percentage values

Importantly, the research also explored the context-specificity of the interrelations across young people's attainments and disadvantages. Correlation analyses were carried out across dimensions within socio-economic clusters to observe whether there were significantly different patterns across regional socio-economic contexts (Table 3). This analysis allowed identifying "corrosive" or "fertile" relations amongst these youth dimensions and how these may differ across diverse socio-economic circumstances. The notion of "corrosive disadvantages" is derived from Wolff and de-Shalit (2007), whereby disadvantage is intended as being both plural and dynamic, and corrosive disadvantages as those which accumulate/cluster amongst each other causing a vicious cycle of multiple disadvantages. It follows, that we intend "fertile" attainments to be those that positively accumulate forming a virtuous cycle of attainments.

Results provided evidence for young people's labour-market, educational, social and political participation inter-relating uniquely amongst each other across socio-economic contextual clusters, revealing an important context-specificity of fertile and corrosive relations across outcomes and space for policy-interventions to limit cumulative disadvantages or enable virtuous cycles. There are socio-economic clusters in which youth disadvantages are "isolated", such as in the regions with *"average socio-economic performance"* where disadvantages on the labour market cumulate but do not corrode other spheres of youth participation. However, there are situations in which disadvantages accumulate within and across forms of participation, as in the case of early school leaving in the context of *"well-off European regions"* that corrodes both labour market performance and social and political agency.

One particularly cross-cutting corrosive disadvantage seems to be early school leaving: a positive correlation between early school leaving and youth unemployment or NEET status persists across all clusters. However, depending on the socio-economic context, the corrosive influence of early school leaving is more or less isolated from influencing young people's social and political participation.

In conclusion, the research has highlighted the importance played by the context in which young people operate in and that the context is best captured at the regional – rather than national – level. Further, the study demonstrated the necessity of taking a multidimensional perspective when investigating both socio-economic development and young people's attainments, disadvantages and inequality. The research also shed light on corrosive and virtuous relations amongst young people's attainments differentiated by socio-economic contexts. Ultimately, the research provided input for performing more contextualized, targeted and effective social policies able to limit corrosive associations between disadvantages and enhancing virtuous mechanisms across young people's attainments, while taking into account the influence played by the socio-economic context.

Table 3: Correlation across young people's outcomes within regional socio-economic clusters (2011)

	Stud_enrol	ELSs	NEETs	Youth_unempl	Youth_long_un	Social_part	Political_part
CLUSTER 1:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	-0.0976	1.000					
NEETs	**-0.6984***	-0.1493	1.000				
Youth_unempl	-0.2868	**0.8918*****	-0.0515	1.000			
Youth_long_un	**-0.8373****	0.0952	**0.9024*****	0.3134	1.000		
Social_part	-0.4373	0.1913	0.6046	0.0762	0.4594	1.000	
Political_part	0.2030	-0.0677	**-0.7803****	0.0249	-0.5839	-0.5867	1.000
CLUSTER 2:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	-0.6828	1.000					
NEETs	-0.5595	**0.9796*****	1.000				
Youth_unempl	-0.7162	**0.9657*****	**0.9673*****	1.000			
Youth_long_un	-0.2917	**0.8548***	**0.9413****	**0.8764***	1.000		
Social_part	0.5417	0.1874	0.3155	0.0480	0.6452	1.000	
Political_part	0.3163	-0.7974	-0.8515	-0.7659	-0.8362	-0.1171	1.000
CLUSTER 3:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	-0. 2759	1.000					
NEETs	-0.0170	**0.7661*****	1.000				
Youth_unempl	0. 2899	0. 2227	**0.6714*****	1.000			
Youth_long_un	0. 3103	0.2574	**0.5624****	**0.8213*****	1.000		
Social_part	0.0933	0.1710	0.0450	-0.2860	-0.1786	1.000	
Political_part	**0. 5071****	**-0.4335***	-0.3972	0.0529	0.1666	-0.1528	1.000

Notes: (1) *** indicates statistical significance at 1% level, ** indicates significance at 5% level and * indicates significance at 10% level
Source: EUROSTAT and the Flash EuroBarometer survey "Youth on the Move" (No 319a). Authors' elaborations

	Stud_enrol	ELSs	NEETs	Youth_unempl	Youth_long_un	Social_part	Political_part
CLUSTER 4:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	0.3911	1.000					
NEETs	**0.5354****	**0.8111*****	1.000				
Youth_unempl	**0.8136*****	**0.7424*****	**0.7668*****	1.000			
Youth_long_un	**0.8408*****	**0.7906*****	**0.8404*****	**0.9295*****	1.000		
Social_part	**-0.6366****	**-0.5534****	**-0.7377*****	**-0.6720*****	**-0.8437*****	1.000	
Political_part	-0.3733	**-0.8152*****	**-0.5625* ***	**-0.7489*****	**-0.5502***	**0.5267***	1.000
CLUSTER 5:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	0.1565	1.000					
NEETs	0.2643	**0.8905*****	1.000				
Youth_unempl	**0.7990*****	0.4765	**0.5940***	1.000			
Youth_long_un	**0.7445****	0.2197	**0.6800****	**0.7929****	1.000		
Social_part	**-0.6811****	**-0.5908***	-0.5246	**-0.8513*****	-0.4388	1.000	
Political_part	0.4299	-0.5186	0.2079	0.2248	-0.1523	-0.1713	1.000
CLUSTER 6:							
Stud_enrol	1.000						
ELSs	**0.9853****	1.000					
NEETs	0.7884	0.7536	1.000				
Youth_unempl	0.7219	0.6472	**0.9692****	1.000			
Youth_long_un	**0.9933 ***	**1.0000*****	0.9258	0.9723	1.000		
Social_part	-0.2464	-0.3252	0.3756	0.4920	-0.6601	1.000	
Political_part	0.4830	0.3313	0.6312	0.7969	0.6086	0.4787	1.000

Notes: (1) *** indicates statistical significance at 1% level, ** indicates significance at 5% level and * indicates significance at 10% level.
Source: EUROSTAT and the Flash EuroBarometer survey "Youth on the Move" (No 319a). Authors' elaboration.

5. Conclusion

Over the past decades, inequality has slowly but steadily increased, paving the ground for more striking differences between young people's and adults' capabilities. This chapter has highlighted serious concerns about the trajectories of the young compared to adults in the European Union, and demonstrates the need for policymakers and political institutions to be alert to this, and to sustain youth capabilities for the future of the European Union. This will ensure that 'Social Europe' was not barely fine words and eloquent rhetoric, but that, on the contrary, it represents one of the stepping stones on which European integration can build its future.

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Endnotes

[i] Countries under consideration in this section are the EU-28 (with the exception of Bulgaria and Malta due to data limitations) plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

[ii] Equivalent to ISCED Level 3 (OECD, European Union, 2015).

[iii] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm

[iv] The countries were selected on the basis of data availability and representation in SocIEtY: "Social Innovation–Empowering the Young (SocIEtY) for the Common Good, European Commission 7th framework research program. However the countries selected also account for typically diverse European social models (Sapir, 2005): Denmark, from the Nordic model; the U.K., from the Anglo-Saxon model; France, Belgium,

Austria and Germany typically belonging to the Continental model; and Spain and Italy from the Mediterranean model.

[v] The results were obtained through a two-step procedure: first, agglomerative hierarchical clustering was carried out, resulting in a dendrogram illustrative of six clusters. The positioning of the regions within clusters was further fine-tuned through the use of a non-hierarchical k-means clustering method. The results from this two-step analysis matched to a very large extent, with 96,6% of the regions belonging to identical clusters. This was perfectly in line with the literature utilizing this methodology (see for example, del Campo et. al 2008). As custom, the fine-tuned clusters obtained from the k-means methodology were utilized.