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# CUADERNOS DE SOFÍA EDITORIAL

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# MECHANISMS OF GENDERED LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES, AS A RESULT OF EARLY JOB INSECURITY AND CONSEQUENCES WITHIN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

MECANISMOS EN EL MERCADO DE TRABAJO EN FUNCIÓN DEL GEERO, COMO RESULTADO DE LA TEMPRANA INSEGURIDAD DEL PUESTO DE TRABAJO Y CONSECUENCIAS DE LA TRANSICIÓN A LA EDAD ADULTA

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#### Resumen

La transición a la edad adulta es un proceso que crea distintas dificultades para los jóvenes y en el cual deben tomar importantes decisiones para su futura vida. Cuando este proceso coincide con una crisis económica y financiera, con una transformación política y transición en el mercado de trabajo, la situación para los jóvenes se pone aún más difícil. Sobre este fondo, este artículo enfoca la inseguridad del puesto de trabajo entre los jóvenes en Europa e investiga las consecuencias del mismo en la transición a la edad adulta. Se utiliza información de 209 entrevistas: historias de vida de siete países europeos (Bulgaria, la República Checa, Alemania, Grecia, Noruego, Polonia y el Reino Unido). El artículo analiza los mecanismos en el mercado de trabajo en función del sexo. En el mismo se estudian concretamente varias situaciones que provocan considerables dificultades para las mujeres que buscan un empleo satisfactorio, como por ejemplo: maternidad (maternidad prematura y madres solteras), atención a los miembros del hogar y necesidad de lograr un balance entre trabajo y familia, percepciones subjetivas de los entrevistados sobre las signos de amenaza para los empresarios y discriminación en base a género y etnia, así como posibilidades de movilidad social creciente desde la perspectiva de la generación y el género.

#### **Palabras Claves**

Signos de amenaza – Discriminación en base a género y etnia – Movilidad social Empleo satisfactorio – Balance trabajo-familia

#### **Abstract**

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

the youth is further hampered. Against this background, the present article focuses on the job insecurity among the youth in Europe and investigates its consequences for the transition to adulthood. It uses information from 209 life course interviews from seven European countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom). The material analyses mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes. More specifically, it discusses several situations which provoke considerable difficulties for women seeking satisfying employment, such as: motherhood (early motherhood and single mothers), care work and the need for work life balance, subjective perceptions of the interviewed on the scarring signals on the side of the employers and discrimination, based on gender and ethnicity as well as the chances for upward social mobility from a generational and gender perspective.

#### **Keywords**

Scarring signals – Discrimination on gender and ethnicity – Social mobility Satisfying employment – Work-life balance

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#### Introduction

Job security in Europe has been put under threat, especially since the economic crisis of 2008. Young people have been one of the groups most affected by it, especially those with low levels of education and those living in areas with low economic development. To address this problem, various initiatives have been introduced, aimed at reducing youth unemployment. However, the magnitude of the problem continues to be alarmingly high. Thus, unemployment rates among young people are double, or even more than double, the average for all ages². Combating youth unemployment is an important issue, due to its short and long-term consequences for various aspects of the lives of young people.

Previous studies<sup>3</sup> have demonstrated that gender<sup>4</sup> is an important factor influencing the transition of young people from school to employment and to adulthood. The relevant literature has well described the negative effects of the education to employment transition among women. Five years after completing their formal education, only 25% of males have not gone on to employment, but the corresponding share is 50% among women. In the southern countries of Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Spain, the guick entry of women into employment is less pronounced compared with that of men<sup>5</sup>. The cited analysis by Brzinsky-Fay was focused only on the West European countries; the present article aims to explicitly describe the mechanisms of gender exclusion and deprivation in countries with varying policies and cultures of combining work and family. Numerous studies have shown that caring for children and performing daily household chores are activities that have a strong statistical gender effect. It is mostly women that are occupied in such activities. This correlation of the impact of gender with respect to caring for children and the family is observable in different institutional contexts: in post-communist countries in Central Europe like Hungary<sup>6</sup> and in Southeast Europe like Bulgaria, in developed West European countries that have conservative childcare policies, such as Germany<sup>7</sup>, and in countries with developed policies of support for raising small children, such as France.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Youth Guarantee country by country, Bulgaria, May 2018, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, European Commission, 2018, 3-9, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13631&langId=en

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Eurostat, Unemployment rate by age, (2005-2018), Eurostat, 2017, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tepsr\_wc170&plugin=1

<sup>3</sup> M Buchmann & M Charles "Organizational and institutional factors in the process of gender

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> M. Buchmann & M. Charles, "Organizational and institutional factors in the process of gender stratification: Comparing social arrangements in six European countries", International Journal of Sociology, num 25 (1995): 66-95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> F. Bieri; C. Imdorf; R. Stoilova & P. Boyadjieva, "The Bulgarian educational system and gender segregation in the labour market", European Societies, Vol. 18 num 2 (2016): 158-179.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ch. Brzinsky-Fay, Gendered School-to-Work-Transitions? A Sequence Approach to How Women and Men Enter the Labour Market in Europe, in H. P. Blossfeld, J. Skopek, M. Triventi & S. Buchholz (Eds.), Gender, Education and Employment. An International Comparison of School-to-Work Transitions, eduLIFE Lifelong Learning Series (Cheltenham/Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> J. R. Riebling; R. Stoilova & D. Hofäcker, Habits or Frames? – Explaining Patterns in the Division of Paid and Unpaid Work in Germany, Bulgaria, France and Hungary, in T. Roosalu & D. Hofacker (Eds.), Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe Theorising Markets and Societies in the Post-Post socialist Era, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> D. Hofäcker; R. Stoilova & J-R. Riebling, The gendered division of paid and unpaid work in different institutional regimes: Comparing West Germany, East Germany and Bulgaria. European Sociological Review (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Analyses made in the framework of the project NEGOTIATE, indicate that, among the socio-demographic factors contributing to a higher risk of unemployment or labour inactivity and having a statistically-significant effect are education level – both one's own and that of the parents, nationality and ethnicity; but together with these, the effect of gender is also significant. The citied analyses, made within the Negotiate project, have been based on quantitative methods, while the present analysis is based on in-depth interviews, a qualitative method for data collection. The interviews provide a more nuanced picture and make it possible to grasp concrete situations and difficulties occurring among young women seeking satisfying economic employment.

The interviews will be analysed in terms of the importance of gender within the concepts of capabilities, social resilience, coping capacities, and discrimination.

The initial assumption of the capability approach is that people are characterized by differences in talent but also by the fact that they live in societies and communities with different traditions, social norms and customs, and these predetermine the difference in roles and responsibilities that men and women will have. In addition to the gender-specific norms, a country's specific public infrastructure relevant to raising children at preschool age is also important. The underdevelopment of family policies leads to dissimilar possibilities for realizing achievements, despite the similarity of the personal resources available to men and women<sup>8</sup>.

Using the concept of social resilience, we problematize the ways individuals cope with stigmatization and discrimination. We will analyse the individual's strategies for coping with situations that demean women, as well as the difficulties women encounter in the transition to paid employment, due to the impossibility of combining the care for children and family, and satisfying and secure employment. Women take different paths to cope with acts of discrimination, sexism and underestimation on the part of employers; these paths range from remaining silent about the stigmatizing facts to organized action to oppose such behaviour of employers<sup>9</sup>. Further on in the interviews, we will trace which ways of coping are chosen by the interviewees in the seven countries.

In the course of the education-to-work transition, employers<sup>10</sup> and staff recruitment officials play a key role. They are the ones who may potentially discriminate against young women with respect to hiring them for a certain position; for instance, against women with young children. On the contrary, women may be preferred for certain positions, based on the expectation that they are willing to accept lower-paid work. We will analyse the subjective feeling of being discriminated against at recruitment on the basis of personal characteristics: gender, ethnic origin, and family situation.

Boler et al. 2019<sup>11</sup> interpret the early insecurity based on the Negotiate project life course interviews in four narratives entitled: the Stumbler, the Stigmatized, the Great crisis

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> I. Robeyns, "Sen's Capability Approach and Gender Inequality: Selecting Relevant Capabilities", Feminist Economics, Vol: 9 num 2-3 (2003): 61-92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> M. Lamont; J. S. Welburn & C. M. Fleming, Responses to Discrimination and Social Resilience Under Neoliberalism, in P.A. Hall & M. Lamont (Eds.), Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era, (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

R. Stoilova; V. Krasteva, and G. Yordanova, The Role of Employers on the Labour Market in Bulgaria. Sociological Problems, Special Issue, ISSK-BAS, BSA. 2017, 36-59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> K. Bøhler; I. Tolgensbakk; J. Vedeler; V. Krasteva and R. Stoilova, Four Narratives of overcoming early job-insecurity in Europe: A capabilities approach, in Bjorn Hvinden, Jacqueline O'Reilly, Mi Ah

and the Messy life. Our aim is in this article to deepen the understanding of the gender specific narratives, connected with situations, which are identified in literature as provoking considerable difficulties for women seeking satisfying employment:

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

The interviews enable us to trace the comparison between the interviewees and their parents, respectively, the daughter sand their mothers. The perspective on *subjective* social mobility allows us to obtain a better idea as to the actions of individuals, because it represents the way in which they experience their objective mobility and how they themselves define their class position in society. This factor has an impact on their attitude to, and behaviour in, their surrounding society.

### Research question

The present article tries to answer the research question: What are the mechanisms of gendered labour market outcomes?

### **Methodological framework**

The analysis is based on unique data set of 209 semi-structured life-course interviews with women and men belonging to three birth cohorts (1950-55, 1970-75 and 1990-95) in seven EU countries: Bulgaria (BG), the Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (GER), Greece (GR), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), and the United Kingdom (UK). The fieldwork was conducted between May 2016 and November 2016. All interviewees had experienced unemployment or job insecurity<sup>12</sup> by the time they were 25 years of age. The interview guide was thematically organized and its main questions refer to the transition from school to unemployment, the effects of unemployment on the interviewee's life situation, the opportunity for being active during unemployment, and the support the interviewees have received from family, nongovernmental organizations and the government. A transcript in the national language and a synopsis in English was made for each interview. In addition, national summaries by each research team were prepared<sup>13</sup>. We have collected rich, extensive and heterogenic data<sup>14</sup>. However, two main problems necessitate caution when

Schoyen and Christer Hyggen (Editors) Negotiating Early Job Insecurity. Well-being Scarring, and Resilience of European Youth (Volume 1) (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2019).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The discussion of early job insecurity is beyond the scope of this report. We accept it as a predetermined in the criteria for recruitment of the interviewees. For more details on the concept of early job insecurity and early employment insecurity see in Abebe, D. Sh., Bussi, M., Buttler, D., Hyggen, Ch., Imdorf, Ch., Michoń, P., O'Reilly, J., & Shi, L. P., Explaining consequences of employment insecurity: The dynamics of scarring in the United Kingdom, Poland and Norway, NEGOTIATE working paper no. 6.2., 2016, p. 5-25, available at: https://negotiate-research.eu/files/2015/04/NEGOTIATE-working-paper-no-D6.2.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> In order to respect the anonymity of the interviewees, the interviews are cited with abbreviation, for instance: BG01 1990-95 F, which indicates the country, number of the interview, the birth cohort of the interviewee, and their gender, or pseudonyms are used.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> I. Tolgensbakk; J. S. Vedeler & B. Hvinden, Youth unemployment and the consequences for life satisfaction and social trust in seven European countries NEGOTIATE working paper num 4.4.,

making comparisons between countries and cohorts. First, the data are qualitative <sup>15</sup> and approximately 30 interviews have been conducted in each country. Second, although the national samples have some common characteristics (e.g. the samples are gender balanced), they differ significantly in relation to ethnic composition, age, place of residence and health status of the interviewees. Thus, the Bulgarian and Czech samples include large proportions of representatives of ethnic minorities (in the Czech sample, 11 out of 33 interviewees are Roma, whereas in the UK case, only three interviewees are from ethnic minority groups); in both the Norwegian and the UK samples, there are nine interviewees with disabilities, whereas in the Czech sample, there are only two, and the German case does not include any disabled people; the Norwegian sample includes only six people living in villages and small towns, but in the sample from the Czech Republic, there are 12 such interviewees. The three cohorts are also unevenly represented, as the oldest cohort has only one representative among the interviewees in the Czech Republic, three in Bulgaria, five in the UK, five in Norway and ten in Germany.

Of the 209 conducted interviews, the distribution by gender is approximately equal: 108 men and 101 women; respectively, the gender balance in the selection of interviewees has been maintained in all the countries, with some preponderance of interviewed men in Poland<sup>16</sup>. For the needs of the present analysis, only interviews with women are selected for discussion; this is due to the greater difficulties young women have compared with men (as described in literature) to settle in satisfactory economic employment.

#### Motherhood

### Early motherhood

Early motherhood is defined as that which occurs before completion of formal education and before beginning the first significant paid employment. The widest gulf in adult outcomes occurs for those who enter motherhood early (before age 23), though further reinforced for teenage motherhood for most adult outcomes. According to Eurostat, in 2013, more than 127,000 births of first children in the EU were to women aged under 20 (teenage mothers)<sup>17</sup>. The largest share of teenage childbirths was in Bulgaria, amounting to half the percentage in the UK, and the lowest share was in Norway and Greece. The risk of subsequent poverty and exclusion of mothers giving birth in their teens arises from their early interruption of education, from the impossibility of working and raising a child without the support of the extended family and/or inclusion in family policies at national

<sup>2017,</sup> p.4-56, available at: https://negotiate-research.eu/files/2015/04/NEGOTIATE-working-paper-no-D4.4-Youth-unemployment-and-the-consequences-for-life-satisfaction-and-trust.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Analysis based from quantitative data within the same project is available within the article: Imdorf, Ch., Shi, L. P., Sacchi, St., Samuel, R., Hyggen, Ch., Stoilova, R., Yordanova, G., Boyadjieva, P., Ilieva-Trichkova, P., Parsanoglou, D. and Yfanti, A., Scars of early job insecurity across Europe. Insights from a multi-country employer study, in T. Sirovátka, B. Hvinden and Ch. Hyggen (eds), Youth unemployment and job insecurity in Europe: Problems, risk factors and policies. Cheltenham. UK: Edward Elgar, 2019, p.93-116

policies. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2019, p.93-116

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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Births below 20 in: Bulgaria 14.7%, United Kingdom 8.2%, Poland 7.4%, Czech Republic 4.7%, Germany 4.1%, Norway 3.3%, Greece 3.2%, Source: Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average, Eurostat 2015, p.2, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/

and local level; thus, there is a considerable likelihood for such women and their children to live their lives in poverty.

For teenage mothers, low or incomplete formal education and the need to continue education is a significant challenge as regards seeking employment combined with caring for a child. Early childbirth leads to premature interruption of education and the risk of not being able to continue education at a later stage easily and without support. An interviewed woman expresses her willingness to get more years of education, including going on to higher education, but she has come up against a lack of understanding on the part of employers, who are not prepared to take into consideration and reward this double effort. The same woman rejected the idea of labour mobility to a foreign country, as she was afraid she would not be able to cope:

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

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

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

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

Early motherhood is indicated as involving a typical constellation of risks for young women in Germany as well. Early motherhood complicates the already-unfavourable conditions even for starting vocational training (especially through lower secondary education). One young woman has been writing applications for vocational training, but has usually been rejected. Among the reasons for this, she mentions her school qualification and her single parenthood. In this life story, her parents' family is where the young woman finds support. She experienced alcoholism and violence on the part of her partner, so that her mother and stepfather took her (and her child) back to (the place

where she was born)... Her mother supports her in caring for the child (foster placement). She also gives her money for cigarettes (GER U26-9 1990-95 F).

### Single mothers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Without the support from the family, the state, the municipality, or civic organizations, single mothers find themselves at a dead end, in the impossibility of caring for their own children, of combining childcare with paid employment, or of leaving a violent partner. An extreme decision that some mothers in this situation of lack of support see as

a solution is to give their child up for foster care or for adoption. This is certainly a very difficult situation and a hard choice to make for any parent.

#### Care work and the need for work life balance

### Childcare as a limitation for women's employability

The task of caring for young children of preschool age, ailing family members, or elderly parents is often assumed by the mothers and sisters in the family. Women more often adapt their job requirements - such as flexibility and remoteness so that the job may correspond to the necessity of caring for children or ailing family members in need of daily assistance. Inappropriate working hours, which are hard to combine with the working hours of childcare centres, are an obstacle not only for women with a low level of education but even for those with a high level, for instance, programmers, who avoid work in well-paid jobs because they would then need to work late (since the work is in teams in scattered locations); they prefer low-paid positions in the public sector, or in the administration, that provide better possibilities for combining paid employment with care for children and family<sup>18</sup>. When the distance from home is seen as incompatible with caring for young children, the job offer is declined by women if other possibilities for combining work and care are lacking. The decision whether to take up additional training is also taken in consideration of the spare time available from work. We see all these circumstances as barriers to satisfying paid employment for women. "Voluntary refusal" on the part of mothers with small children and who lack appropriate possibilities for raising their children. a lack that includes the excessively high price of services in childcare centres, are an obstacle to gender equality in many contemporary European societies. One interviewed woman repeated several times how hard it was to find a job, since, having a son, she can only work part-time. This she perceives as the greatest consequence that could influence her employment situation for the next period. "The kindergartens are open till 4 or 4:30, so the jobs are limited" (CZ 18 1990-95 F). Some narratives tell of young women who are forced to accept undeclared work. A young woman in the Czech Republic stated in the interview that, until the time of her pregnancy, during maternity leave, and after it, she had been doing either unstable part-time jobs or undeclared work (CZ 22 1990-95 F). Combining work and family is difficult for many women, not only in the youngest but also in the oldest generation of interviewed women. Despite the assistance that a young woman received from her husband's family, combining work with care for her children proved very hard.

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

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

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

"It's harder. When you tell them you have a child, they don't hire you. They hire those who don't have children, so they can work. They say to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> R. Stoilova, Impact of Gender on the Occupational Group of Programmers in Bulgaria, in R. Stoilova & V. Kirov (Eds.), Changes of work and the Knowledge–based society – the realities in South-Eastern Europe, Sociological Problems, Special Issue, 2008, 94-117.

themselves, she has a child, she will take sick leave, things like that, it's hard to get a job when you have a child" (BG 29 1950-55 F)

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

### Caring for ill family members

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

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

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

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

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

### Scarring signals and discrimination

### Discrimination based on gender and ethnicity

Intersectionality between gender, ethnicity and class tends to burden agency very strongly. The Roma ethnic group is problematized in interviews in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. In Bulgaria, discrimination by gender and ethnicity is felt particularly strong, which is confirmed by other studies<sup>19</sup> of the situation of young people in the labour market. In Bulgaria, ethnic origin is the third greatest cause of discrimination objectively, judging by the number of filed complaints with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination; the personal status is in first place and disabilities in second.

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

A young Roma woman from the Czech Republic feels she belongs among "the socially weak groups of the population". This is the official label used by the public administration when they speak about social assistance recipients. Her mother had been in a similar situation when young. She reflects the difficulty of social mobility due to being Roma (ethnic issue) and due to the social environment in which she lives (CZ 2 1990-95 F). The woman shares that she accepts just any job in order to get the money she needs to raise her child. She looked for a job mainly after the parental leave expired, through the Internet and contacts of family members. She was, in fact, forced to take any available job (no choices). For example, she would walk four kilometers to her workplace and back (not having money for public transport (CZ 2 1990-95 F).

Ethnic origin, in these cases, is surmounted through strategies of keeping silent about it and seeking work where no personal meeting with the employers or interview is required. In cases where the family helps out the young women, motivates them to get more education, the negative effects can be overcome in individual ways.

In the opposite case, when women do not get support from their family, identifying with the ethnic group, support from NGOs, and inclusion in special educational programs are preconditions for an equal start in life.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> V. Krasteva; M. Jeliazkova & Dr. Draganov, Young adults in insecure labour market positions in Bulgaria – The results from a qualitative study, EXCEPT Working Papers, WP num 20, Tallinn University, Tallinn, 2018.

### Scarring signals

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

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

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

Employers require a completed educational degree:

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

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

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

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

#### **Social Mobility**

Some of the youngest interviewed women assess themselves as being in a less satisfactory situation than their mothers. The causes of this are that their mothers created a family at an earlier age and had security in the form of a guaranteed permanent work contract and wages, things that are hard to achieve nowadays by young people with secondary or lower education. In the youngest generation of women, there are examples of upward mobility, when the daughters have received a higher level of education than

their mothers and, in this case, they value the individual achievement. Respondent assesses her professional position as higher than the professional position of her mother.

"My professional standing is higher, because of higher education. My mom tells me that she is working hard because she didn't learn and we, her children, we need to invest in education." Respondent estimates that her current and future economic position will be maintained in the medium. I know that when I finish school, I will not make (much) money as a doctor, but I will not earn the lowest national [salary]. Mother of the respondent lived in the family home and set up her own family before the age of 25. My aim is to advance in the social hierarchy. I'm a bit higher than in the middle. (PL 15 1990-95 F).

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

### **Conclusions**

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

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

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

Taking into account the specific difficulties young women have compared with men, and the gender aspects of early employment insecurity, is necessary in view of the specific cultural norms that determine the connection of women with unpaid labour and with care for children, elderly and ailing persons. Due to lack of work-family policies at national level and a lack of childcare centres and day care centres for ailing and elderly family members, women often become victims of the family and of circumstances. The focus in literature is put on three important policies in the gender perspective: 1) violence rooted in gender inequalities (domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking of women), 2) policies regulating the intimate or private sphere: divorces, marriages, reproduction rights, 3) policies in the sphere of employment – taxation policies, combining work and family, gender-based differences in pay and equal treatment<sup>20</sup>. The interviews demonstrate the importance of designing policies for all of these three areas.

Ethnic origin is also a challenge to young people and holds risks of their being marginalized and even falling into social anomie. When people lack the necessary education, because they live in the neighbourhood of other poor and unemployed families, in enclaves and ghettoes of poverty, then in order to escape from poverty and insecurity, they require the support of institutions and civic organizations at national and local level, which could help individuals in their effort to lead decent lives but could also motivate them and orient those who are discouraged, or have fallen under the influence of criminal groups, or have adopted destructive behaviour. Ethnic origin has been analysed in the interviews mainly in terms of the negative meaning of Roma origin for the integration of young people into education, employment and life in society. However, ethnicity is also important for European policies in view of the size of the migrant wave and the problems of integrating second-generation migrants. Multiple exclusion, resulting from deprivation based on gender, ethnic origin, or class, should be taken into account when assessing the effect of youth policies at European, national and local level.

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

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