

**ON-THE-MOVE – "The reality of free movement for young European citizens
migrating in times of crisis"**

Grant Agreement JUST/2014/RCIT/AG/CITI/7269



**Report on individual experiences
of young people on the move**



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and
Citizenship Programme of the European Union



Disclaimer: This report has been produced with the financial support of the Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of the project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

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Introduction

This report presents the results of qualitative research into the experiences of young EU citizens moving from one EU country to another. This research was carried out in 15 EU member states in order to find out what the reality of free movement looks like for young Europeans, especially in the context of the economic crisis affecting countries and labour markets. This led to a focus on the young people's motives for moving, the barriers they encounter in doing so and the solutions they apply or suggest to overcome these barriers. The research into the young people's experiences forms the central part of the overall project "EU On the Move", funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.

This report is based on 15 country reports summarising the data collected at country level. The first section of this report describes the methodology and the sample. The next section presents the results of the research: the drivers, barriers and solutions reported by different target groups of young people. The last section of the report brings together the experiences in order to draw overarching conclusions.

A. Methodology and sample

For the qualitative part of the research, all participating countries followed the same approach, albeit adjusted to the specific countries' position in the study. At the outset, the objective was to interview 30-50 young movers and 5-10 representatives from public authorities. In constructing the sample, the underlying aim was to cover the experiences of movers in all phases of movement: from those who are planning to move, those who have moved and are staying in the host country, to those who have returned to their home country after a period of movement. This underlying objective led to a twofold categorisation in the sample: a categorisation of countries and a categorisation of interviewees.

The selection of the countries involved was already influenced by the effort to include both countries that are mainly facing outgoing movement and countries that are mainly facing incoming movement in the study in the first place. In the actual execution of the research, the participating countries were divided into three categories: receiving countries, i.e. those countries mainly observing an influx of EU citizens, sending countries, i.e. those countries mainly observing outward movement of their own citizens, and mixed countries, i.e. countries observing both an influx of EU citizens and outward movement of their own citizens. This third category was added after the results of the desk research led to the conclusion that a more simple categorisation into sending and receiving countries did not reflect the actual situation of current movement within the EU. This leads to the following country clusters:

- Sending countries: GR, PT, PL, EE, BG, RO
- Receiving countries: DE, BE, NL, UK, FR
- Mixed countries: CY, ES, AT, IT

In addition to the categorisation of countries, the young movers were categorised, in order to construct a sample that adequately reflects different experiences. The most relevant distinction between different types of movers was found in the phase of movement, as this was thought to most directly influence the variety of experiences an interviewee can talk about, and possibly the value judgment attached to these experiences by the interviewee. This leads to the division into three categories:

- Young people who wish or are planning to move: the leavers;
- Young people who have moved to another EU country and remain there: the remainers;
- Young people with experience of moving who have returned to their home country: the returnees.

Since the focus of the research is on the drivers and barriers influencing movement, the assumption at the outset was that the phase of movement significantly impacts the drivers and barriers experienced by the movers. Interviewees planning to move might be facing a lot of barriers without knowing how to overcome them yet, or alternatively might not be aware of barriers they are still likely to face when actually moving. Young people who already moved to another country are most likely aware of a lot of drivers and barriers and some ways to overcome them, but might be inclined to emphasise positive aspects of their moving in order to keep themselves motivated. Returnees could be expected to have the most objective view of their movement, as they are looking back on a more or less completed phase of their lives. At the same time, they might be more negative in cases where the return feels like the outcome of a failed project. We will return to these hypotheses in the analysis part of this chapter.

The combination of country clusters and mover categories led to a sample construction in which the emphasis in the sending countries was placed on interviewing leavers and returnees, the emphasis in the receiving countries was placed on interviewing remainers, and the emphasis in the mixed countries was distributed evenly across the different categories. In addition, in the group of remainers, a weighted distribution across the countries of origin was agreed, whereby young movers from all participating countries were included, with a larger representation of movers from the main groups of EU citizens moving to a specific country. Other exclusion criteria that were applied were the following:

- Interviewees were between 25 and 35 years of age at the time of moving;
- Interviewees planned and executed their move independently, i.e. not assisted by a university (in the context of study) or by an employer (in the context of work).

The approach to recruiting the interviewees was the same in all the participating countries. Most interviewees were recruited through public calls for participation on websites and social media, invitations sent to organisations working with EU citizens, personal contacts of researchers and in some cases distribution of information material on paper in communities of EU citizens. Furthermore, the snowball method was applied by asking interviewees to suggest further contacts for interviews. In some cases, the country research teams could point other country teams to possible interviewees. Especially the recruitment of leavers, i.e. people still thinking about or planning to move, proved difficult, just as the recruitment of some specific country samples in the receiving countries. An even stronger emphasis on personal networks of researchers was the main solution to this issue. In the end, this approach resulted in the following sample composition:

	Leavers	Remainers	Returnees
Sending countries	97	47	73
Receiving countries	20	180	0
Mixed countries	47	75	28
<i>Total</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>101</i>

The total sample of movers interviewed about their personal experiences therefore consists of 567 persons. While the group of interviewees is divided according to the criteria used, the absence of other criteria led to a certain bias in the sample. Thus, in all three categories and across the different countries, highly educated movers were overrepresented, as were interviewees from urban areas. This bias is probably due to the method of recruitment, especially the strong reliance on personal networks of researchers themselves. In addition, many low-skilled EU movers are assisted in their move by employment agencies, and therefore fall outside of the scope of this research. This bias in terms of level of education and background is important to take into account when interpreting the results.

The interviews with young movers were structured by means of a simple topic guide. This topic guide included the following main parts:

- Views on free movement
- Drivers for free movement
- Obstacles and barriers to free movement
- Suggestions and solutions to issues identified

In this report, the views on free movement are taken as background information to inform the other questions. In the following, we report per section what the different categories of interviews (leavers, movers, returnees) experienced.

B. Results of the research

B.1 Drivers for free movement

The analysis of the different categories of interviewees shows that all interviewee target groups – leavers, movers and returnees – were able to point to both push and pull factors driving their (plans to) move. It is important to note that those wishing or planning to move are in fact in the phase of movement whereby the motives are most clear and present. The other target groups might have already re-examined or unconsciously readjusted their motives. However, the fact that the drivers reported are fairly consistent throughout the target groups seems to suggest that this effect is limited. In the following we examine the drivers of the three different target groups separately.

B.1.1 Drivers reported by the leavers

The drivers most commonly cited can be grouped under the following categories:

Work-related reasons

The term includes better employment prospects, jobs in highly specialised fields which are not developed at home, better working atmosphere and work conditions (BG), more stable jobs (GR), better match of jobs/skills (GR,CY). This would be expressed primarily as a career-orientation move aimed at professional advancement but at the same time a wish to earn a higher salary than at home, seen as a just remuneration for their skills which are not adequately appreciated and compensated for at home (PL).

“It hurts me a lot that I have a higher education degree, I am very devoted to my work and still I cannot afford going skiing in the winter break and somewhere else in the summer while my friends who work in the UK not exactly in their professional area, for example in the gastronomy sector, travel a lot to Brazil or some other countries. It encourages me to move because I also want to see something in my life.” (PL6, female, 27 years, going to the UK)

Also, specialisation into fields or sectors which are non-existent or underdeveloped in one’s own country, apart from raising questions about the adequacy of career orientation during school and vocational training years, leads to considerations about moving to a country where these sectors are more developed. This was the case with several of the highly skilled interviewees from the sending countries plus Cyprus.

The choice of the destination country is often determined by where they can find a job matching their interests and skills, where they speak the language, where they have friends/family, where the lifestyle is sufficiently attractive. Even the countries badly hit by the crisis did not demonstrate narratives of being prepared to take a step back into their careers in the destination countries (CY, GR, ES). In many cases, people were moving because they had already secured a job in the destination country or were resolved to move only if they secure a job. There have also been cases of persons ready to move without having secured a job in advance; these would typically be younger persons without children, moving in order to learn the language and explore the world (EE). Finding work before moving led to expectations of a supportive employment framework where the employer in the destination country, typically a large private sector enterprise, should and would provide

significant help with formalities and logistics, and is expected to organise accommodation for the new comers, as opposed to public sector employers or smaller companies. For the highly skilled, the propensity to move for employment reasons is not unconditional: the job must relate to their interests and qualifications and cannot be a low-paid/low-status position; moreover, they would never move without having secured a job (GR, CY, DE). The only exception were the persons moving primarily in order to learn a language were less concerned about the type of work they would find, as the job in those cases were seen as a tool to achieve the primary goal (PL).

The anticipated higher salary in a destination country was a major driver (e.g. ES, BG planning to move to UK) although most people were aware of and concerned about the higher cost of living which would also have to be considered in the equation (BG).

“The salary is not the definitive factor here. Yes, I am certain I would receive a higher salary there but I am also happy with my pay here – if it is enough for me taking into account how expensive the country is, then it’s perfectly fine for me even if it is not considered that high.”(BG27, male, 27 years, BG national)

The cost of living in the destination country was an area clouded with misconceptions and lack of information, with some interviewees citing as an indication the prices of goods sold in supermarkets in the destination country compared to their home countries and others referring to the high cost of accommodation abroad assessed against the fact that whilst at home they had the option of living with their families and therefore keep living expenses costs down. Interviewees did not appear aware of any credible sources of data regarding the cost of living in the destination country and how that compares with the cost of living at home to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not it is profitable for them to move.

A better working environment and a more rewarding atmosphere were also valued, sought after and at the same time taken for granted to exist in the destination country (BG). The perceptions of a better working environment abroad did not appear to have a reliable premise though and it was cited by the same interviewees who also reported feeling vulnerable to discrimination (FR, BG). Interviewees expected and hoped to find more interesting jobs abroad where the sector or field of their interest is more developed than at home, typically a country without austerity constraints and with considerable investments in specialised fields (BG, CY). Acquiring international experience on their CVs was particularly valued by interviewees in all the sending countries (BG) but also in countries from the other clusters (CY, ES, FR).

Joining a partner or a spouse

This could be a move to join partners already living in the destination country either because they had moved before or because they are nationals of the destination country. In either case, the partner is expected to play the role of the “facilitator” in establishing social contacts, in finding work and in dealing with bureaucracy. Accommodation is not an issue where the partner is already established in the destination country but is an increased obstacle where the couple is moving together (AT) and especially where children are joining them in the move (GR). In one case, an interviewee reported a practice where couples were excluded from shared flats (AT). There remain issues of finding work and not speaking the language, but expectations from the relationship dominate job expectations which, at the stage of contemplating the move, do not emerge as important or serious. The difficulties faced by a mover joining a partner abroad, even where the partner is also a newcomer in the destination country, are mitigated where the partner already has a job in the destination country and has, through this job, the opportunity of establishing new social and professional networks through work (BG). For the crisis-stricken countries, the propensity to join

a partner was not devoid of the employment element; they planned to move in order to join the partner who already found work abroad, hoping they would also find work (GR).

Language learning and further education

Re-enhancing future employment prospects by pursuing education abroad was a recurring theme in the narrative of the younger interviewees (BG). Education appeared as synonymous to learning a new language, improving existing language skills, or attending further education; these concepts usually emerged together and were seen as intertwined. At the same time, all were seen as a means to improve one's CV and enhance future employment prospects. Language learning in particular emerged as a strong driver, seen partly as a means of improving one's employment prospects (e.g. BG), improve prospects of integration in the destination country, as well as an end in itself and part of self-development (DE, ES, EE, AT, BE, PL).

"After I graduated from university, I realised how important it is to know foreign languages in order to be able to find a good job related to your degree. For me, studying a foreign language in an environment where I don't speak it on a daily basis is impossible. That's why I decided that if go to work abroad for some time, it will be much easier for me to learn the language and catch up on everything that I've missed so far." (BG25, female, 27 years, BG national)

Language emerged as a crucial issue in one's choice of a destination country, in the sense that the choice was largely determined by whether or not the intending movers spoke or wished to learn the language of the destination country. This made the UK an obvious destination choice for many, although French was also mentioned as the language of EU institutions and therefore an important language to learn for the professional advancement of the highly skilled, which in turn made France an attractive destination.

"Discover the world"

Another recurring driver was the search for new experiences, the desire for personal growth, for new opportunities, the chance to meet a partner or a spouse (DE), a sense of exploration (BG, DE), a different lifestyle, attraction to a particular culture (BE, FR), self-exploration, or "getting out of your comfort zone", as characteristically stated by a Spanish interviewee. Perceptions about life in a warm climate, "kind-hearted approachable people"(BG), multicultural and multinational environment (PL, NL, FR), a more open society (PL, EE) often determined the choice of the country of destination. In addition, perceptions that in the destination country housing is cheaper, taxes are lower, the lifestyle is less stressed, and the locals are friendlier, less racist and more tolerant were also present in the narratives of interviewees of all three clusters. Greece and Cyprus were an exception to this; interviewees appeared reluctant to leave behind what they perceived as a high quality of life. In some cases, interviewees expressed a kind of self-criticism about their perceptions of the 'other' EU country, warning themselves that these may prove to be wrong, but wanted to move nevertheless as this could make them reconsider their perceptions about their home country (PL). The desire in some of the receiving countries (BE, DE) to move to another EU country was more premised upon a wish to try a different lifestyle, a warmer climate for some, less pollution and closer to nature (FR). An Estonian LGBT interviewee believed that he would have a better life outside Estonia, in more open societies.

Push factors at home

Described as an undesirable political, social or economic situation in the home country, the push factors at home motivating people to move included state corruption (BG), no respect for fundamental rights (FR, PL), racism (FR), nationalism (PL), right-wing policies (PL), the economic crisis and its impact on the labour market (GR,CY), political instability, lack of trust in government

institutions and the inefficiency and high levels of bureaucracy in the public sector, poor economy (BG, RO), poor educational and health system (RO) poor career advancement opportunities, negative disposition of home country population (BG). Curiously enough youth unemployment was not widely cited (e.g. In BG only two of 20 interviewees mentioned youth unemployment). Also lower salaries were mentioned by only two out of 20 BG interviewees; the rest of BG interviewees focused on lack of opportunities for career advancement. Low salaries and unemployment were dominant in the discourse of all other sending countries, however. Unemployment in the home country topped the list of drivers in the case of Portugal, where 10 out of 12 interviewees classified it as the primary reason for wanting to move. Half of the Portuguese sample comprised of unemployed persons which probably explains the pressing need to move out. Many of the interviewees in the sending countries reported being unable to go on holiday because of financial constraints. Discontent with their government because it does not respect fundamental rights, right-wing policies and rise of nationalism and xenophobia was cited by the Polish interviewees.

I am thinking about moving mostly due to the current political situation in Poland. If I did not have a job, I would move right away but because of my work it is better for me to stay in Poland for now. (PL2, female, 26 years, going to France)

Competition for jobs at home was a major push factor for interviewees from crisis-struck countries, with the Spaniards reporting that for every vacancy there are at least 200 qualified applicants. The terrible impact of the crisis on small and medium enterprises in the private sector meant that there are fewer and fewer jobs for the highly skilled, as the sector is shrinking (CY). The cuts in public spending also led to reduced investments into specialised sectors and therefore fewer jobs for the highly skilled. Disappointment and frustration over the conditions of the labour market in their countries are clearly detected in the narrative of all the crisis-stricken countries of the south (ES, IT, PT, GR, CY) with little hope for a real recovery. In some countries, like Cyprus, the crisis hit the labour market very abruptly, leaving young university graduates with no career reorientation options. Cypriots felt strongly about having invested in their studies only to be suddenly faced with a mass erosion of labour rights, with the employers using the collapse of the banking sector as an excuse to lower salaries and broaden their profit margins. Lack of career prospects and a certain demoralization in the labour market as a result of the crisis was also prominent in the narrative of the Greek interviewees who reported difficulties in finding a stable job in Greece.

Increase in manifestations of racism was for three out of four French interviewees a reason to seek a new life in a new more multicultural/tolerant country. One Dutch interviewee reported leaving the Netherlands because of racist attitudes towards his Portuguese partner; the couple moved to Germany instead. A French interviewee who worked as a secretary in France stated that in her home country she was being looked down upon because of her low-status job but believed that if she moved to Scotland she would be more highly regarded. Overall, the belief that their home countries had nothing to offer that and that 'the grass is greener' abroad, even in the absence of reliable data to prove this, was prominent in the discourse of most sending countries but also in some of the mixed and receiving countries- the desire to move was after all the common characteristic of all interviewees in the sample.

Implicit reasons

Not explicitly cited as drivers, a number of implicit reasons emerged as underlying themes encouraging people to move. They were primarily the following:

- **Previous migration history** in the family. Even where the member of the family who had migrated in the past is no longer in the destination country, a history of migration in the

family invariably clothed the moving prospect with a sense of normality and acceptance. The encouragement of the family towards the prospective mover to pursue a better life elsewhere like other family members may not suffice in order to drive a young person abroad but serves as support and facilitation of the decision and implicitly grants a type of a moral blessing and a type of 'clearance' from family obligations at home.

- The presence of “**facilitators**” in the country of destination such as a supportive employer, a partner who already lives there, family and friends (BG, DE). The facilitators usually assist with providing information and in dealing with the bureaucracy involved in moving and settling in the destination country. Interviewees were not specifically moving *because* of the facilitators, but their presence in the destination country served as a relief for many of their concerns, which would otherwise operate as barriers. For some, where the friends/relatives in the destination country express satisfaction with their overall situation, in terms of both work and quality, their experience becomes a driver for those considering to move (PL). For others, the positive experience of other persons who had moved before does not mean much- they reserve the right to decide for themselves after they have tried living abroad (RO). The presence of friends and family in the destination country was a primary reason for moving in the case of the Portuguese interviewees.
- The experience of **ERASMUS** or similar schemes, which offered them a rather stress-free sample of living abroad. Many of the interviewees were keen to go back to the country that hosted them as students, where they already speak the language and have local contacts to assist them. This was particularly the case with the Italian interviewees, all of whom were former ERASMUS students. The case of Bulgaria stands out from the rest: Out of the six persons who had studied abroad, four did not want to go back to the same country where they studied (UK), pointing to discrimination and anti-Bulgarian sentiments they had experience in their previous migratory project, but they were willing to move elsewhere.

B.1.2 Drivers reported by the movers

For the movers, there is a mix of reasons mentioned by interviewees with regards to their decision to move, and these regarded they came for a job, fall in love and decide not to move anymore, came to study, but find a job in a field of interest. They had relatives or partners in the host country. They also moved based on the need to make a change in their lives or because they were fond of the culture of the host country and decide to settle. All possibilities mentioned above were met and, in some cases, both personal and structural reasons were mentioned.

Work

Work emerged to be (as expected) the main driver of EU mobility and its conditions operate both as push and pull factors – precarious context of employment (low salaries, inability to find work related to their skills, inconsistency between educational skills and requirement on the labour market, Governments failure in understanding labour market changes - like the need of a better legislation for atypical forms of employment) determined movement in other EU country, where movers expect better chances and opportunities on labour market, higher wages, better working conditions, the possibility to make a career and to be respected for their work.

From those who mentioned work as drivers, two categories of movers have been identified:

- **Opportunity and curiosity seekers** – People from this category are either highly engaged in mobility for work (high skilled persons who are offered an attractive job in another country), either are at a stage of their life with a temporary break or gap, as they are bored or in search of an experience that could bring added value to their life/professional knowledge. They tend to appreciate adventure, courage and openness to learn about new cultures and they do not feel too attached to a certain place/country – they do feel free to go wherever they want.

I've been everywhere. I've been to Australia, I've worked in Australia. I mean that is not in Europe, but I just feel you can go anywhere. I'd go anywhere, anywhere to work. I just see the world... Freedom it's not just Europe, it's freedom of the whole world. Wherever you want to go, you can go and can work. It's just easier in Europe, you don't have to go through the papers, have a visa maybe... I think everybody can share the world." - (CY12A, female, 27 years, UK national)

Some also mentioned the possibility to enjoy more liberties as workers, mainly because of higher wages and work valorisation.

"I am independent here. You aren't independent back in Romania. You are always dependent on... Money. You are not able to survive with that worse salary... And there's lots of work and stress. Everybody is watching you how you... No, it's a lot of stress back there!" - (DE9, male, 26 years, RO national)

- **Social and economic constraints** - People who move away from their country of origin are lacking employment opportunities or jobs adequate to their qualification. In many cases, they move to another country without having a job offer and also with poor proficiency in the host country's language. These movers are from countries with a general high rate of unemployment, who are hoping for better chances with regards to the destination country. Also, there is a strong family element in terms of their responsibility towards their families, particularly with regards to their parents and young children left back home. This group mainly consists of movers from Bulgaria, Romania or Hungary.

Studies

Studies are also an important driver for citizens that move to another member State, especially if the destination country has a more flexible, affordable and accessible system compared to other EU states, with lower barriers, student fees and access regulations¹. Also, the quality of the education is relevant for the discussed subject². These interviewees usually plan to move back to their country of origin or to another EU country once they have completed their study. They would (and could) only remain staying in the host country if they find an attractive job – and some will seek for.

To this same category we can add those who have studied the language of the host country back in school or in their spare time and decide to try their luck.

Family or partners

Family or partners already moved in the host country was mentioned as another motive for young EU citizens when deciding to move. Joining their partners, spouses and other family members was

¹As an example, in the case of German citizens that move to Austria for study.

²The education system in Germany was praised by two Romanians, namely M (No.36), female, 26 years, RO and M (No.24), female, 25 years, RO. One of them noted that university in Germany was quite affordable and very encouraging, whereas the other one mainly appreciated the LMU in Munich as a top university.

important not only for personal reasons, but also for practicality, as they had someone to rely upon when in need.

There are also two types of movers where we found this element:

- **Those who move in another country because their partners are nationals in the host country** – Although they are driven by love, they usually have some knowledge on the host country, either by previously visiting it a few times before, either by information given by the partner (including language) who is already there/from there. In this category we also include those who came on a temporary job or for scholarship and got in a relationship, turned back home when their first drivers “ended”, but found a way to return to their partners.
- **Those who move in another country because their partners/families are already settled there or are offered a job/working opportunity** – Also seen as passive movers, this category is vulnerable to isolation, as they mainly lack skills in the national language of the host country and, furthermore, opportunities to integrate in society and labour market.

It is important to have in mind that although the driver is positive (family/love), the context in which they make this movement might put them in difficulty.

Life experience and curiosity

Looking for something new/a life experience and curiosity was also a reason for moving, more frequent for people from Western Europe than for those from Eastern Europe. At the time of movement, they had a full-time job, the job was connected to their studies and skills and they were paid well, but felt the need of a change in their life and wanted to do something different. For some, the movement experience was part of a gap-year. Getting to know a new culture, learning or improving language skills and curiosity for seeing how life goes somewhere else were frequently mentioned by those indicating this driver. If those going to Germany people’s way of being, respect for environment, and social justice were mentioned as incentives, for movers to France architecture, art and the language were important, while for those who moved to The Netherlands or to Portugal the culture of these countries was highly appreciated. Even more, some mentioned the multiculturalism/diversity of ethnicities of the capital cities as a value that determined their moving.

Quality of life

The quality of life was also mentioned, even in new member states, like Bulgaria and Romania, despite much lower incomes. In these cases, the explanation is that the same amount of money can ensure different lifestyles, especially as in these countries prices are lower. Also, when wage is lower, the loss in salary is nevertheless compensated by the work and free time balance, by the nature (flora and fauna), or the “calmness” (*tranquillity*)³.

Other factors

The political, social and economic situation of the home country was also a factor worth taking into account, corruption and the feeling of a non-interested-about-its-citizens country, with no future prospects, determined people, especially from Bulgaria and Romania, to move.

³According to incomers in Estonia.

My main reason was that I really wanted to try something outside of Romania because in Romania the corruption is really high. So even if... I don't know. My whole life I was thinking about starting something, doing something for myself but in Romania it's impossible as you do not have enough money plus you know it's a corrupt country. So, it's really difficult even if you open something you will have lots of trouble.”(S (No.40), male, 28 years, RO)

To these factors, some added the shortcoming of education, social security and health systems as key drivers. The **inability to integrate in another EU member state** was also mentioned by movers (mostly by those who had prior experiences of movement in other countries), who choose their destination considering State’s general course, orderliness and organization of public services, as well as the nationals and their mentality⁴. These reasons are strongly connected to the **comfort and security offered by the host country**. Especially for those who are established in countries where they used to learn/work – they stress the advantages of knowing the language, culture and people’s way of being. To some, spatial proximity to their home State was also very important when moving.

B.1.3 Drivers reported by the returnees

Also the movement of returnees is basically driven by work, education and love. This is valid for movers from the East, South, North and West and thus for movers of sending, receiving and mixed countries.

A closer look at the driver work however reveals slight differences between sending countries and mixed countries. While work-driven movement of returnees from countries, like Austria or Spain is related to career development and perspective, work-driven movement of their colleagues from Bulgaria or Romania is rather (but not exclusively) related to economic constraints and lacking availability of work in the sending countries. Work-related movement of Austrian and Spanish returnees is to a higher degree a matter of choice than the one of Bulgarian or Romanian returnees. These are tendencies, which have been observed when studying the data. However, we have also identified career-strategic considerations in the movement of Bulgarian or Romanian interviewees. Furthermore, we found drivers of movement, which are only valid for sending countries and not for mixed countries, namely: “better life” in terms of health care, insurance and trustworthy political apparatus.

The following sections point out these drivers in more detail using original quotes from the interviewees.

Financial constraints

In south-eastern EU MSs, a mismatch between highly-skilled specialisation on the one hand and career prospects in the post-crisis era on the other, has been identified as main driver for youngsters to move to the north-west. This driver of movement has mainly been found in interviewed citizens of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Poland and Romania, but also Spain and Cyprus. Some of the interviewees, who report this motive, explicitly refer to the economic crisis.

⁴Those who moved to Germany reported the social security and educational system as drivers. Also, the country was perceived as taking care of its citizens and environment. Likewise, showing respect towards fellow citizens, social justice and German mentality as a whole were mentioned as factors. Another example is of EU citizens living in Bulgaria – they generally find Bulgarian people open and easy-going, as well as warm and welcoming.

My year [at the university] was very much affected by this [crisis]. The years 2009-2010 were the most difficult ... (...) Many of my colleagues couldn't find a job.(PL22, female, 31 years, returned from Germany)

The financial constraints, which force movement, are unemployment, precarious employment “working poor”, short-term contracts and the need to economically support the families. This “forced movement” rather than “career-strategic movement” (see section 2.2) may lead movers to take every reasonable job offer in the destination countries – and not only those, who seem promising in terms of career development. Movers, driven by financial constraints, move even without having a job offer in the destination countries. Some interviewees noted that any kind of job, even requiring low qualifications, seemed to be better paid than highly-skilled jobs available in their countries of origin (mostly Eastern Europe and the “crisis countries”). Cyprus reported that this emerged as a pattern in the narratives of all categories of interviewees, but it was more prevalent in the cases of those who had left and returned:

“In Cyprus, there is a quality of life which surely makes the salary seem less important in comparison to what Cyprus has to offer to one’s everyday life. But a person’s professional situation becomes no longer viable when there is a 24h feeling of job insecurity as employers are increasingly using the economic crisis as an excuse to pursue precarious and flexible working contracts with no working rights, and preventing young people from planning their life in the medium or long-term. I cannot cope with this situation in Cyprus; this is why I am thinking of moving to work abroad.” (CY50C, aged 33 with a PhD in Social Sciences).

Another example stems from Portugal:

I studied in Portugal, I did a vocational course. I always had this aim of working in order to pay for my expenses but here in Portugal it is very difficult. So, after talking with some relatives I understood that it would be easier to find a job outside Portugal and that was why I moved (PT6, Male, 31 years, PT national)

Another participant, who moved from Greece to London, explained the factors that played a role in his decision to move:

«...I had a difficult time; I was at a personal shock... I was unemployed... my financial situation was tough... To be honest, I could not see any light ahead... any hope... I really couldn't figure out what I could do in Greece” (B GR25, male, 35, GR)

These movers move under unfavourable conditions. However, they resort to friends or relatives, who are already resident in the destination countries and who help them starting there. Thus, friends and family form a great part of facilitators of movement (see chapter barriers and solutions).

Career development

The initial movement of returnees was also driven by career-strategic considerations or investments into the personal standing in the labour market. In this case movers do not need to move in order to make a living for themselves or their families – this is no forced movement by financial constraints. These movers would also have access to the (qualified) labour market in their countries of origin, but they prefer working abroad in order to push their career and to better qualify themselves. This kind of movement has been identified in almost all samples (sending and mixed countries).

Depending on the movers’ age and their step on the career ladder, they either move to another EU country for studying or for a (temporary) job, which is expected to help pushing their careers. These

movers look for enriching professional experiences, such as working in multinational environment, in good companies and learning new skills:

"Working abroad is a plus, you prepare for life and career; everyone should try it, it's an experience to be lived. It should be mandatory since high school" (RO42, female, 30 years, RO national)

In the words of one respondent who returned from Germany, "the work there would improve my professional experience on the specific topic and I would then be able to find better opportunities (BGR2, female, 31, GR).

Many of these movers already have jobs when moving. The employers facilitate a great share of their movement.

"There are employment opportunities in other countries and the mobility is ideal, the working conditions being good is a different matter. Leaving with a job really makes things easier. [...]". (ES21, female, 30-35).

The future employers provide them with information about local conditions, such as healthcare, social security, working contracts or even organize these issues for them. Some interviewees also stated that large companies organize the move for their employees. These persons do not really reported problems when moving.

"Better life" in terms of safety, security, healthcare

Interviewed citizens of Romania, Bulgaria and Estonia reported that their movement was driven by the search for a "better life", which is not necessarily related to work, but rather to public goods in education, safety, healthcare, the cost of life and the cleanliness of the cities. In these cases they expect particularly countries like Germany, France, UK or Belgium to offer the conditions for such a better life. Particularly movers from Eastern EU countries expect the public authorities in Western Europe to be more correct, fair and less corrupt.

Accompany a partner/spouse

Another motive for movement among the interviewed returnees is attending the work-driven movement of a partner/spouse or parents.

My husband finished a MBA and he started to look for a job but it was not easy – we were at 2013, the worst year of the economic crises. So he began to look all over the world. The first opportunity came from England and then we decided to go (PT7, Female, 33 years, PT national)

Some movers also move to be close to their partners, who already live in the destination country in order to end a long-distance relationship. These persons receive information and support in organizing the movement from their partners; they also have access to their circle of friends.

B.2 Barriers to free movement and ways to overcome them

Barriers to free movement are factors that impede free movement or that make the experience more difficult for the young people than they would have wished. This can include legal, administrative, social or personal obstacles. Barriers can occur already in the planning phase of movement, they can make life difficult for movers while they are settling in their country of choice, and they can even stand in the way of a successful return. In the following, we report the different barriers encountered by the young movers, and also the ways in which they try and succeed to overcome them.

B.2.1 Barriers reported by the leavers

Starting with the group of leavers, i.e. those wishing or planning to move, it is important to note that the majority of persons in the sample had lived abroad before in one capacity or another and were aware of (some of) the practical difficulties facing young people on the move. Some of the barriers identified were the actual difficulties they themselves faced on a previous migratory project or the barriers reported by friends and family members who had moved before them. The barriers were located mainly in the destination country (e.g. accommodation, formalities, high cost of living, competition in the labour market, new language etc) but some were also at home (e.g. family left behind, a comparably satisfying lifestyle at home).

The issues raised should be seen more as areas of concern rather than barriers per se. The sample consists of persons who are considering or in the process of moving, so these factors did not operate as effective barriers which were significant enough to dissuade them from moving. However, the barriers identified were often cited as potential reasons for eventually returning, e.g. if in the destination country the salary is just about sufficient to cover the living expenses and they have no quality of life, they would return to their home country (GR). We will now present the barriers mentioned one by one.

Accommodation

The high cost of accommodation, the low quality of the buildings, the scarcity of available accommodation in the large urban centres, combined with landlords' practices and requirements which effectively exclude newcomers, were major concerns for the overwhelming majority of the interviewees.

The Portuguese interviewees mentioned lacking information both about availability and about what is the right price to pay for rented accommodation. Finding affordable accommodation in the destination country has topped the list of barriers reported. This is a logical result of the fact that most people were looking into moving to a big urban centre, where supply is limited and information is scant. In addition to the limited availability, rents and local rates are high and in some cities, like Paris, landlords require proof of income that is at least three times the rent. Also landlords in Paris and London demanded of foreign tenants to present a guarantor who is a national or has nationally generated income. A vicious circle between bank services and accommodation exists in this context, as newcomers must offer address of residence in the country in order to open a bank account and yet they needed to have a bank account in order to rent a place of residence. The delays observed in some destination countries in receiving the certificate of registration from the authorities has caused problems for some in securing accommodation, as some landlords demand this document.

Interviewees reported having solved these problems through the assistance of friends and family but felt this matter should more appropriately be resolved at an institutional level with easily accessible on line information about accommodation on offer and the requirements and restrictions associated with it. Many resort to the solution of a “starter flat”, a furnished shared place used as a basis in order to search for a more long term one. Couples found it impossible to find a shared flat who are for some odd reason excluded from this type of cohabitation.

The low quality of accommodation abroad was also highlighted. The low quality of some buildings is inevitable in a big metropolis like London, where the demand for affordable accommodation by far exceeds the supply. That is one of the many results of the urbanization process triggered by free movement which severely affects the quality of life of locals and foreigners alike.

“There is a huge housing problem both in London and Berlin. But when it comes to London, it is not so much because the city is big or because it is too expensive... the buildings themselves are horribly constructed... British people have still not discovered the double glazing... This never ceases to amaze me. How are they so advanced in so many aspects and yet lagging behind in so many others.”(BG36, female, 25 years, BG national)

Coupled with the high cost of accommodation is the high cost of living in general which inevitably forms part of the ‘package’ of living in a bigger economy and in a big urban centre. The figures needed in order to make one’s calculations and determine whether moving would be profitable or not do not seem to be available in the public domain.

Language

A driver for those who want to learn a new language and a barrier for those who don’t speak it, language can operate as an obstacle in cross-border recognition of qualifications and in the transfer of welfare entitlements from one country to another, as the authorities in the destination country are often reluctant to rely on official documents of another member state in a language other than their own. Translation of official documents was reportedly expensive and burdensome and there is little help available from their embassies in the destination country (NL). Not knowing the language of the destination country also acts as a barrier in accessing the labour market in that country (FR). The interviewees expressed the view that unless they knew the language of the destination country, finding a job and integrating would be much harder. Half of all Romanian interviewees reported language in the destination country as a major problem particularly because of their high level of education and their expectation to find work in a specialised field where a good command of the national language is essential. In many cases, knowledge of a certain language would determine the choice of the country of destination.

“Language has been the biggest challenge. I'm going to start a course called social integration where you learn German, it's subsidized, given in the city town halls and quite reasonably priced.”(ES36, female, 30-35).

Formalities and bureaucracy

Although most felt confident that this was a hurdle that could eventually be overcome, bureaucracy in the destination country was a commonly cited concern especially as regards registration, standardisation of diplomas and transfer of social benefits, medical insurance and tax contributions. Despite acknowledging that institutions in the destination country are likely to be more organised than in their home country, the anticipation of high bureaucracy was accentuated by the fact that they many did not speak the national language (BG) but partly relieved where they had sufficiently networked facilitators such as employers.

Transferring unemployment benefits from one EU country to another had proven to be difficult, stressful, extremely bureaucratic and time-consuming. The fact that official documentation was issued only in the national language complicated things further for persons trying to transfer benefits to a country of destination with another national language. The language of the medical insurance documentation was also a hurdle for persons moving from one country to the other, which could only be resolved by having to pay for expensive certified translations. Language disparities across the EU also affects the cross-border recognition of academic qualifications and necessitate expensive translations. The lack of uniformity of health care systems across Europe created uncertainties and insecurity for persons accustomed to national health systems where all health problems were covered, when they were suddenly faced with the refusal of the health authorities in the destination country to cover psychotherapy or dental treatments. Delays on the part of the authorities in the destination country in completing the registration formalities is an obstacle to opening bank accounts or renting accommodation, perceived as particularly frustrating (NL).

Discrimination (or fear of)

This appears to be an issue only for some. French, Austrians (moving to Germany) and Germans did not anticipate being discriminated. The issue of discrimination was most prominent in the narrative of the Bulgarians who reported being faced with anti-Bulgarian sentiments in the UK, leading them to choose other destination countries for their new migration project.

“I would not say I ‘expect’ to feel discriminated against or face negative attitude abroad. I don’t expect it but I wouldn’t be surprised if it happens.”(BG41, male, 25 years, BG national)

By contrast, all Italian interviewees were happy to go back to the countries where they lived as Erasmus students, which suggests that discrimination affects some nationalities more than others. Four out of five German interviewees stated that they themselves had not faced discrimination when they moved in the past and did not anticipate facing discrimination in the future. This was also the experience of the Austrian interviewees, however one Austrian reported that other nationalities did face hostility in UK. The Greeks did not fear being discriminated against although they were aware that stereotypes about Greeks in the context of the financial crisis did exist. BREXIT was cited by many as a cause for concern, for apparently leading to increased xenophobia (PL).

Competition on the job market in destination country

For those planning to move primarily in order to work and without having secured a job, a major concern is whether they will be able to find a job in the destination country. The Bulgarian interviewees referred to intense competition in the labour market across Europe. The German interviewees demonstrated a reluctance and ambivalence about moving: when leaving Germany they would be leaving behind a good job or the prospect of a good job and wander into the unknown sphere of working abroad, in countries hit or potentially to be hit by the crisis. From this perspective the German narrative was unique amongst the countries under examination in that, whilst attracted by the prospect of moving abroad, they were at the same time unwilling to settle for a low-paid job and cope with the rest of the problems facing the labour markets of other countries. The case of Germany could only perhaps be seen as comparable to that of Belgium, where all three persons interviewed reported their wish to move for reasons unrelated to work (lifestyle and learning the language of the destination country).

No start-up money

The lack of funds needed to start a new life in another country was cited as a major issue by the Spaniards, who reported having no governmental grants to assist them in their migration project. Amongst the costs that need to be met is the standardization of their diplomas which in addition to

the length of time and the paperwork involved, costed them €1,000. Although a valid concern ultimately amounting to a crippling barrier, this was not raised by any other nationality, who presumably did have (access to) funds to cover the cost of moving or were comfortable with relying on their friends and relatives in the destination country for board and shelter until they start generating their own income.

Fear of the unknown

This is a broad category of factors which are premised largely on lack of information and a feeling of insecurity involved with moving to an unknown environment. These factors included the fear of not being able to make friends (FR, DE); that the quality of life may be worse in the destination country (GR, CY); that they will be unable to integrate; that they will be homesick (RO); that they may be unable to find proper child care and education for their children in the destination country (BR); whether their same sex partnership will be recognised/accepted in the destination country. Amongst the unknown factors generating insecurity was of course BREXIT as, at the time of writing, its impact was still unclear. The Portuguese interviewees were concerned about the lack of information on formalities and reported anticipating difficulties with the legal procedures and the new way of life.

Family members who cannot join them in moving

Family members who would be left behind (PL, GR, CY), particularly children (CY) were a major source of sadness and anxiety for only a few of the interviewees. In the case of a Cypriot interviewee, the predicament of the single parent family is such that if she is to move abroad, her child will have to remain at home under the care of the grandparents. In the case of a Greek interviewee moving to join her husband abroad, the children would be moving with her but were distressed and unhappy about having to leave behind their friends, their grandparents, their schools, their lives. Under these circumstances, the burden of adjusting to a new environment is multiplied by the stress of the children having to face a new language, a new school and a completely new life. On Estonian interviewee describes this in more general terms:

“When people move, they lose their sense of security – family and friends. The further away people move from Estonia, the less they come together as a local Estonian community which would offer support. If a person moves alone, s/he might have trouble to not become lonely after the move.” (EE16, female, 27 years, EE national)

B.2.2 Barriers reported by the movers

Shifting our attention to the barriers reported by those who have already moved to the destination country, it can be noted that the interviewees have perceived barriers in all stages of movement and particularly later on, when issues regarding contact with authorities came up. If for some the situation reported there was serious and even determined willing to leave the host country, there were also EU citizens who reported no barriers at all or just minor inconveniences, like delays in fulfilling their needs. Some of the barriers overlap with the concerns of the leavers just discussed, whereas others are clearly additional and thus apparently only occur once the young people have actually undertaken the move. It is important to take into account that all these barriers are interconnected, so the appearance of one easily lead to others.

Language barriers

Language barriers were found in almost all countries (exceptions being reported by those who spoke English most of their time in the host country, or by those who took language classes, or by those

who used to speak in the host country the same language as home⁵) whether we talk about the proficiency of incomers in the language of host country, or about the capacity of authorities to offer information or advices in an accessible language (as for example, English)⁶. Lack of language skills can lead to loneliness and isolation and can influence, in a negative way, the processes of fitting in the respective society or of finding work.

“So it's really a big big difference when you are able to speak [the language]. Then you understand the people and you understand the culture and then I think that you are integrated. I think the language is the most important thing.” (FR43, female, 27 years, PT national)

Access to information

Lack of information or receiving contradictory information on several types of rights, duties and services provided by the origin country as well as by the host country were reported by movers from the sample group, whether we talk about information offered by public officials or by website of authorities. Language plays an important role here, as information is available in most of the times in national language only. The information is also spread between authorities, which makes it even harder for a foreigner to find it and to understand it. An important example is that lack of specific information on the functioning of the social welfare system⁷ and healthcare system. This is a problem reported by a high share of interviewees and it is a situation extremely important if we bear in mind the fact that every EU member State has a different system.

Bureaucratic barriers and public authorities

Understanding of moving conditions and settlement was a frequent barrier for movers, mostly when it comes to time required and the difficulties such processes involve. Lack of information played an important role. This one is the mostly mentioned and also being very frustrating for movers, as one procedure can delay or even block another.

Cooperation with authorities worked quite hard, as language barrier was a major problem in interactions, that could/must (in the case of The Netherlands for example) be made in the national languages only. This complicates administrative procedures of registration and settlement, the recognition of documents and certificates from the country of birth. Another problematic factor in the relation with authorities was the fact that some officials were not informed about EU matters. This was noted by interviewees from Bulgaria, Romania and Portugal, who dealt with officials who were unaware whether their country was or not an EU member State. Also, some EU citizens stated that authorities' lack of customer skills and the bad way they treated them.

Young people seem to deal more with registration issues, compared to the older movers, who reported that they were more likely to see cooperation with authorities as a problem. The same issues were reported by those who came from new member States, compared to those from older EU member States. Cooperation with the authorities and registration procedures are apparently more difficult for married/cohabitating movers than for single ones, maybe due to the fact that a single free mover might simply leave if problems in finding work are encountered, in comparison to those involved in a relationship, that are reluctant from moving.

⁵As example, Greek in Greece and Cyprus.

⁶Some authorities are not allowed to speak other language than the national one.

⁷ As an example, a German citizen, who lived in Austria, said she was bad informed about settlement requirements and heard rumours and received contradictory information on the requirement of employment for settlement.

If for new member States countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania - mainly sending countries, cooperation with authorities seems somehow apposite (attention – this should not be understood as an accepted excuse), as they are faced more often with nationals leaving their home country, than with incomers, for those with tradition in free movement this must be a major alarm signal, as problematic relationships with authorities hinder integration and, thus, free movement.

Recognition of qualifications and degrees

Recognition of qualifications and degrees gained abroad was an important barrier especially for those who tried to find a job to match their studies and skills. This barrier emerged from both bad cooperation with authorities and bureaucratic procedures. Also, fees related to this action are reported to be a barrier (as the process is expensive).

Employment

Finding employment for those who do not yet have a job when moving or finding proper job suited to their qualification was also a barrier, emerged mostly because of lack of language skills or because qualifications and degrees weren't recognised.

Discrimination

Discrimination in various ranges was mentioned by movers involved in this research as being important, from situations likely to be only misunderstandings to exceptional cases of labour trafficking and sexual harassment. The majority referred to rules or laws that differentiate between nationals and EU citizens (the right to vote or access to social services) or individual unpleasant interactions. Situations where the movers faced on-the-job discrimination (longer hours, lower wage and, in general, worse working conditions compared to nationals and lack of respect to labour legislation), verbal discrimination (related to the accent on non-native speakers) and police abuse of power are just some of the problems reported by interviewees in this sample.

"I can really set the clock on it: within five minutes, the Austrians recognize that I come from Germany and not from Austria. I have no idea, I say "nee" instead of "na" when I refuse something. [...] This is still the case a bit: I do not feel accepted, I rather get confronted with the fact that I am not from here [Austria]. I am still "the German", and my attention is called on that permanently. [...] I feel a bit like a petting zoo: I am behind a fence and I am allowed to participate a bit, but I am still outside" (AT5, female, 29 years, DE national).

When I took a ferry from Stockholm with my [Estonian] wife and two friends in 2015, and when we had returned to Tallinn, a police came running after me and started shouting "Show me your passport" and grabbed me from my arm. I replied that as we are inside the Schengen, I don't have to show it. Then the police officer told me again to show him my passport. Then I started to speak to the police officer in Estonian and showed my Estonian ID. Then the police officer said "No, I don't want your Estonian ID, I also want your Spanish ID". Then I wrote a letter to the police and asked about the situation. I got a reply from the Police and Border Guard Board saying that Estonian national law allows them to do random border control for Estonia's own security."- (EE12, male 36 years, ES national)

Several interviewees said that hearing/being approached with stereotypes related to their country⁸ have sometimes made them feel discriminated. Other EU movers reported about witnessing

⁸For instance, IT3, male, 34, had issues renting a car in France because car renters thought that Italians drove badly. Two interviewees out of three from Portugal explained how there is the stereotype that Portuguese people in France are caretakers, and those people who looked down on them were surprised when they were told that in fact they had studied.

discrimination against other movers, although the person did not perceive discrimination or harassment as such by himself/herself. Cases of exploitative practices at work were reported especially when speaking of workers from Eastern Europe.

The first months in Cyprus, it was horrible. I hated Cyprus, I hated Cypriots. They tricked me with the contract. I was supposed to work at a restaurant as a waitress down town in Nicosia (capital of Cyprus) and they took me to Kakopetria (a small village in the mountains). (...) He told me 'ok, in the morning you will make breakfast for the guests of the hotel'. After they finish eating, wash the dishes, clean the restaurant. After this, you go to the rooms and you clean the rooms. After the rooms, you come down to eat, after you eat you go change and you work at the cafeteria of the hotel until it's closed. So the problem is that I had to work from five in the morning until one o'clock in the night every day." - (CY, female, 32 years, RO national)

Social barriers

Inclusion of families in other EU countries comes out to be a problem when these try to get integrated in the society. This is the passive part of the moving family which faces difficulties several years before getting accustomed to the host country. They often leave to accompany their partners without knowing the language of the host country, customs and, obvious, with no opportunities on labour market.

Difficulty in making friends was also mentioned as a challenge. This is especially in strong relation with language barriers and discrimination and was often reported by the passive part of the families and by young people.

Homesickness was reported as a barrier in inclusion, as movers miss their home country, their culture (traditions, food, people's way of being), families and friends back home. Those who reported homesickness also said they had difficulties in making new friends. Homesickness is related in some cases to the fact that movers feel that are not/cannot be integrated in the new society, thus not feeling like home, although this should not be assimilated to discrimination.

Housing and cost of living

Housing was another problem mentioned by movers, as sometimes the landlords are either discriminating certain people on their nationality (by refusing them entitled rights), simply denying to rent properties to foreigners, inflating prices, or being unable to communicate (lack of language skills plays an important role for both incomers in national language and landlords in wide known languages, like English). In some instances, interviewees reported unfair and/or discriminatory behaviour of landlords⁹.

The cost of living was mentioned mainly by those unemployed or employed in low-skilled jobs, with difficulties to provide for themselves and for their families.

Political and legal barriers

Adhesion to EU is often mentioned by Romanians and Bulgarians, who find justification to specific problems due to their late adhesion and legal restrictions implied (job insecurity and rights restrictions) before 2007. Also, in some countries, authorities were reported to lack information on

⁹As an example, a German citizen, who moved to Austria, reported that a landlord made her believe that the law does not allow foreign citizens to be main tenant, but only subtenant of a shared flat (which is not true). He argued that this was necessary because it would be difficult for a landlord to file a complaint against a foreign national. She also reported that the landlord charged her for furniture in the flat in addition to the rent (which is not allowed).

these adhesions. Although there is not much of a difference, new member states movers reported the existence of some discrepancies in making use of their rights.

"There are still a lot of differences between the European countries. We're at different points, there's still a lot of corruption and we have yet to establish a better institutionalism." (BG6, female, 30-35 years old)

Different laws for different types of movers were brought into attention by EU citizens from this sample, who explained that although they benefit from free movement rights, they receive less help from public authorities. See the case where people from third countries can take language classes at no costs, while those from EU member States must pay for the same service.

Political development of host countries, such as the decision to leave the EU (Brexit) or attitudes towards movement/foreigners is sometimes seen as a barrier.

B.2.3 Barriers to movement reported by the returnees

Finally, we will shift our attention to the returnees. The returnees can look back on the entire experience of moving and therefore also possibly report the most complete set of barriers. In addition, it could be the case that the barriers were actually a reason for returning, which would mean that this group of interviewees reports more or more severe barriers. Looking at the overall group, this however does not seem to be the case. Also, no differences have been identified between sending or mixed countries. Still, some barriers are reported as more prevalent among the interviewees of mixed countries, like Austria and Spain. While recognizing qualifications from abroad were only named by returnees to mixed countries, discrimination was stronger reported by interviewed returnees to sending countries, particularly Romanians, Polish and Bulgarians. The destination countries are similar for both groups. However, these differences need to be treated with caution and further analyzed (with more data).

For now, we will present all the barriers as reported by this group of interviewees. As the returnees at some point were also movers and leavers, it is no surprise that there is a high degree of overlap in what they report.

Language

As we have already seen in the case of the leavers, language barriers cause a great deal of challenges for movers in the destination countries. Language barriers are a challenge itself *and* other challenges met in the destination countries are related to language skills and communication barriers. Not being a native speaker sets limitations in social contacts, in understanding legal requirements for settlement and other bureaucratic procedures and in career advancement.

"If you aren't fluent is better not to leave. Finding a job is very difficult unless you have the exact profile they are looking for." (PL male, returned from Germany).

"The Polish language has been a great shock for me, although for the period I stayed there I have taken language classes. But being the only person, from the whole group, who have not learnt any Slavic languages before, I quickly lost the pace, as they moved to difficult things in a matter of weeks" – RO19, male, 26 years, RO national.

Movers, who move without or with only few language skills, have more difficulties integrating and are more vulnerable to discrimination. They feel lonely and isolated or are only able to make friends with other movers.

"The biggest obstacle was not being able to communicate, not being able to interact with your surroundings." (PL male, returned from Germany).

Even interviewees who speak the local language feel excluded as they still have a foreign accent and as they do not understand jokes or idioms.

"At the beginning, I did not fully understand if they were speaking quickly and, in addition, I did not correctly pronounce some words. Needless to say I made some mistakes, like I could not figure out the real meaning of a sentence that should be basic in the job I had: in Greek language, "big coffee" and "coffee with milk" sound about the same, I used to be confused about that" – RO16, female, 27 years, RO national.

Linguistic difficulties restrict the access to the labor market, health care and education and information (especially when dealing with administrative issues).

"Language was the biggest obstacle. Once that obstacle is overcome there are more possibilities of developing yourself, finding your place; doing some things becomes more feasible. Since I didn't really speak the language, I wasn't able to clarify some matters related to the payment, for instance, of the contracted hours and the overtime (...)" (PT male, returned from Germany).

Talking in English is not always an effective solution, as fluent English skills are not widespread in the destination countries – also many clerks and other professionals do not or barely speak English. English can only be a solution for highly qualified movers, who work in international enterprises – thus on the labour market. E.g. Greek data shows that English was overall sufficient for fulfilling official or work related obligations, while it was no solution in other issues of life. To overcome these problems, interviewed returnees took classes to learn the language and use the services of a translator in the beginning of their stay in the destination country.

However, the only really effective solution to avoid barriers related to language is having sufficient knowledge of the language before moving or selecting the destination country according to language skills:

Besides Portuguese, I only speak English, so I never thought about going to another country (...) [than the UK]. The choice of the country had to do with the language (PT5, Female, 33 years, PT national)

Accommodation

Finding accommodation was reported as barrier for movers, particularly to Western capitals. Barriers in finding a suitable accommodation touches upon different issues, i.e. requirements, which are unfulfillable for newcomers, such as financial guarantors or employment contracts; discriminatory attitudes of landlords; competitions with many other potential tenants; lacking knowledge on how and where to search for reasonable accommodation and expensive prices. These barriers have been mentioned from returnees from France (Paris), UK (London), Austria (Vienna) and Germany (Munich and Berlin). One Greek respondent who returned from France explained

“It is difficult to rent a house, more difficult than in Greece. You have to prove your income... Some might ask for recommendations... and in some cases their expectations are quite high, your income must be three or four times bigger than the rent ... (GR14, male, 35, GR).

An interviewed Bulgarian national faced similar challenges in accessing housing in Paris.

“The greatest challenge when looking for accommodation in France, if you are a student, is that landlords always require you to submit a copy of an employment contract showing that you work full-time there. At the same time, however, university students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours a week, or half-day...”(BG13, female, 31 years, BG national)

Discriminatory attitudes have also been reported as barrier in accessing accommodation. This particularly affects citizens of Eastern Europe, who moved to Western capitals. Thus, discrimination may also be explained with the narrow housing market in these urban areas, having a much higher demand for accommodation than supply, which may leave “room for discrimination”. According to one respondent, among 50 candidates for a flat, Germans would not choose ‘someone with a foreign name’ just by instinct (BG15, female, 32 years, BG national). An interviewed Romanian returnee states:

“I was quite hard to find a place to live. I have tried online, but the website was restricted for Romania. I never understood why” – RO9, female, 36 years, RO/SP national.

British landlords were suspected of refusing to rent flats and houses to Bulgarians (BG14, male, 34 years, BG national), while allegedly a lot of landlords and agencies in Paris specified in their ads that they do not offer accommodation to foreigners (BG21, male, 30 years, BG national).

“Finding accommodation in London is hard. It was hard 10 years ago but now it’s even worse. I don’t know why but London changed so much over a decade – it became incredibly, sometimes even impossibly, expensive. When they hear you come from Bulgaria, many landlords simply don’t want to take you in as a tenant.” (BG14, male, 34 years, BG national)

Friends and acquaintances on site are also an important resource in dealing with problems in accessing accommodation. Having friends on site help overcoming barriers of almost any kind when moving. As regards barriers in accessing accommodation, friends may provide a place to sleep for the first time, counsel and guide when searching for accommodation.

I had friends there. They informed me about what was needed and let me stay in their home (PT8, Female, 28 years, PT national)

Persons, who do not have friends in the destination country reported that they searched for a “starter flat”, which meets minimum requirements (often shared flats) and then searching for the actual place to live.

Cultural stereotypes and discrimination

The data on Romanian and Bulgarian returnees provides interesting insights on discrimination and discriminatory attitudes, as their interviewees provide contradictory assessments. One is differentiating between discriminatory practices of institutions (landlords, employers), while having open-minded inhabitants and cultures. The other contradiction is discrimination on societal level and at the same time praising the effective work of institutions. It seems as if the interviewees would downplay or relativize their experiences of discrimination in order to not besmirch the image of the destination country.

Apart from this specific issue, data indicates the relevance of cultural stereotypes when it comes to discrimination:

"English people are very racist; it doesn't seem like it because they are very polite, but they are. For example going to the doctor, tell him what is hurting and he answering me "in this country we don't complain about everything, like in yours." (ES woman, returned from the UK).

Romanian data indicates stereotypes related to Romanian population – often confounded to Roma community – affecting Romanian movers.

"I felt discriminated because of stereotypes. People from the host country believed that all Roma are Romanians and vice versa. I struggled to explain that are different things, different cultures. Now, if they really understood it, I can not know" – RO16, female, 27 years, RO national.

Other Romanian returnees mentioned the negative reflection of Romania in the mass-media of the host country.

"Romania was a very dark name in Belgium at that time - we were whores, orphans, people that lived in ghettos, people that sell their children for organs. I felt discriminated, because people treated me the way they knew Romania from mass-media. It was insulting. After Romania entered EU, things changed, especially in Brussels. (...) As example, once I was helping a street seller and I was talking to a lady customer. She asked me, because of the accent, from where I was. When I said Romania, she squeezed her bag to her chest. I felt so, so bad. Years later, a co-worker started to say bad jokes on Romanians so I could feel bad for being there, in a transnational company (in his mind, I should have been at the train station, where the prostitutes lived)." – RO8, female, 36 years, RO/BE national.

Many Romanian and Polish movers reported discrimination at the labour market in the destination country and about negative stereotypes affecting them. Experience of discrimination was related to the overall negative perception of Eastern EU movers:

When I was in Berlin I realized that there are many people from Poland who did not have luck. There is a particular image of Poles there and I'm not surprised why. There are many homeless Poles on the streets. I didn't know about it when I was moving. It motivated me a lot to do my best to change that image. (PL27, male, 30 years, returned from Germany)

Those negative stereotypes affected the movers in accessing the labour market or accommodation. Some of them were exposed to unpleasant remarks. An interviewed Polish mover believes that if she had a French or Spanish accent she would be treated better in Germany, for example in public offices. To prevent such situations, she uses her scientific title (PhD) wherever she could (in her e-mails, insurance card, etc.) to make people more respectful towards her.

The interviewed Greeks did not report feeling discriminated against at personal level, rather at country level – referring to the "image" of Greece in the time of the economic crisis. Several Greek returnees (6 out of 10) mentioned that negative comments were addressed to them concerning Greece and Greeks in general. The majority stated that stereotypes about the Greeks were reproduced, for example being noisy, not being punctual etc.

Be discrimination due to cultural stereotypes or not, it has concrete consequences for the movers. Particularly when it comes to accessing the labour market in the destination countries:

"As soon as I finished my law degree, I started sending out traineeship applications to law firms in Italy. I sent out more than 100 CVs and application forms but received zero calls – and we are speaking about an unpaid internship here, not even about an actual job. I was really frustrated and I decided to put the name of an Italian colleague of mine on all the documents without changing anything else, not even the part with my Bulgarian education. And after applying again for about 10 positions, I got a call from a firm I had previously applied to with the exact same application but under my real name."(BG18, male, 35 years, BG national)

"In the region where I lived they were very close-minded (the Alps region). It may depend too on the profession and the field. But there are real difficulties when it comes to find a job. Being a foreigner is an obstacle by itself. They'll choose French at first. Being a foreigner is already a difficulty by itself. French prefer French people, they have even said to me that I was overqualified. I don't speak just French and I've been rejected because 'I was overqualified'."(ES woman, returned from France).

Also data from Estonia shows discrimination in accessing the labour market. For example, an interviewee who now holds a CEO position in an Estonian company was called "cheap Eastern European labour" in the United Kingdom, because of her accent.

No concrete solutions come out of the data. Interviewees recommended not taking these stereotypes too seriously. No discrimination has been reported by Austrian returnees.

Information about benefits and obligations

Lacking information on how to access benefits and how to meet obligations are another barrier reported by the interviewed returnees and faced in all types of countries. This particularly concerns issues related to health care, tax payments or social support systems. A striking quote on these issues comes from a Spanish interviewee, who lived in France and then returned:

"Information and handling of the procedures should be simplified, everything related to the standardization of diplomas, as well as everything you're asked for just for not being French. Information is there but is disseminated; you really have to go round in circles to clarify some procedures (...). Procedure should be simplified and made less expensive. You can spend one or two years just to pay a piece of paper. Not all of us have that economic level and you have to advance little by little, so that stretches on the process." (ES40, female, 30-35).

As an example, only a few of those who worked in another EU country said they knew about social security system and how it worked.

"Taxes, knowing more about how to pay contributions in each country is a mess. Sometimes you pay more than you should because you're lacking information." (ES male, returned from UK).

"It seems like you have to have a "master's degree" to figure out the administrative stuff in Germany. A double social security system (public/private), Church taxes. They ask you if you're a Catholic or not and depending on your answer you pay extra in your IRPF tax (individual income tax on natural persons). A master's degree in the health care system, public/private, a lot of insurances" (300 insurance companies) (ES woman, returned from Germany).

This lacking knowledge can be explained by various factors: no need to use social benefits, usage of health and social services from country of birth, young age (and good health status).

Once more, a solution applied in order to deal with this barrier is asking colleagues and friends for help and information including their assistance to overcome language barriers. The establishment and existence of social networks was mentioned as the main way of assistance and support to deal with any kind of difficulties and barriers in everyday life but also in communication with authorities. E.g. data from Cyprus suggests that movers (and returnees) not rely on information from the competent national information points, but on their own informal networks (i.e. family, relatives, colleagues and friends) and the social media particularly as regards the process and practicalities of moving and their rights in the destination country.

The informal network of friends is a first support and the first step to know where to start. Once this network is activated it is easier to go to the internet and look for information in specific websites (PT5, Female, 33 years, PT national)

The lacking exchange of citizens' personal data (e.g. insurance matters or working times) is a connected barrier for EU movers and even more for the returnees. Even if in general the interviewees described their move back as easy, some interviewees were unsure which actions they were supposed to take. People who had lived in another country for a longer period of time (i.e. more than 5 years) were also missing information on the authorities they need to turn to for specific procedures, e.g. where one can register for a doctor. Interviewees faced bureaucratic problems after leaving the destination country. Others described problems with information exchange between different countries' authorities regarding their working experience. In one case, the Spanish authorities did not pay back the income tax even though the interviewee had done everything he was supposed to:

"Things connected to the tax declaration in Spain are extremely complicated. There are some agreements signed between Estonia and Spain which are written in "Chinese". There is nothing understandable. I have a legal background myself and can comprehend laws and decrees but these agreements were just stunning. I turned to the Spanish embassy in Estonia asking how to fill in the declaration. The embassy contacted the Spanish tax office and some other institution, and as an end result, they reported that they do not know themselves what to do." (EE2, male, 34 years, EE national)

The problem with the lack of data-exchange between two countries was also pointed out by other interviewees and it particularly affects tax declarations, working times, social benefit. Particularly for persons, who move independently between different EU countries, it is especially important that all the information regarding work-experience could be officially verified to access the social benefits, e.g. pension.

Relations with authorities

The relations with authorities received contradictory assessments, much depending on the interviewee. The authorities in the same EU Member State (e.g. UK) may be praised for their efficiency by one interviewee and criticized for their inefficiency by another. Only French authorities and French bureaucracy received consistently negative assessments by various different interviewees. An example from France is circular requirements: for example, in order to open a bank account, they were obliged to present a work contract while in order to sign a work contract, a bank account was necessary.

A solution reported by interviewees is avoiding personal contacts with authorities through using e-services as far as it is possible. E-services are reconcilable with employment and facilitate organizing movement from the country of origin. However, they are not implemented to a large extent in many

EU MSs and still most of the administrative processes have to be done in person or on paper. Estonia is a country of good practice in this regard, as they have implemented comparably many e-services. The interviewed Estonian returnees witnessed a considerably shorter time period spent on the administrative procedures when moving back due to the e-services in Estonia.

Children and family

Family constraints can act as barriers to mobility particularly where a person has young children or old relatives. This seems to affect women more than men and it is particularly supported by Cypriot data. A Cypriot mover with two children, aged six and three, found a job in UK and moved with her husband to arrange matters before taking her children, who remained in Cyprus with their grandparents. She found it difficult to survive in the new environment due to the difficulties related to her children's transition to a different life style. She spoke about the numerous obstacles she faced:

- Finding an apartment in a safe neighbourhood for her children, not far from good schools;
- Register her children to school and kindergarten;
- Arranging for reliable and affordable child care;
- Her husband found it difficult to find a job in the UK to match his qualifications.

The only solution to the "barrier" children and family as reported by the interviewees is moving back to the country of origin or not move. Family seems to be a major challenge for EU movers.

The particularities of each family situation vary but certainly impact deciding to move or not to move. A female Cypriot mover had four job offers, in Gabon, Qatar, Netherlands and Cyprus. As she is not married, she preferred Europe, due to the cultural factors and the way of life. She eventually returned to Cyprus for a post in her field that also combined the opportunity to be close to her partner and family. Mobility is much easier when you don't have a family:

"Thinking as a professional there would be no question: I would have never returned to Cyprus. I would have stayed abroad. However, I have some other commitments; family [...] My fiancé works in a good company in Cyprus. It is a good job, stable with a very good salary. He was willing to move, but when we realised that I had a chance to stay in Cyprus, we stayed. Had I not found a job here, we would have moved." (CY)

Accessing locals

Interviewed movers state that they did not have close interaction at social level with local people. Their social environment was mainly composed of colleagues, other movers or compatriots who lived there. This was not due to isolation but to the fact that it was easier to liaise with others who were in the same position. As a Greek who moved to France mentioned

"...when you move to Paris, Parisians who have been there for 20 plus years already have their friends ... they have their own life ... they will not easily engage with you. They do not need to ... Initially all foreigners would hang out together ... with the French less, we had some but not particularly strong friendships.." (BGR14, male, 35, GR).

Romanian interviewees also add this experience to discrimination. A challenge for some, as almost half said that they either could not integrate or had no time to socialize.

"They did not want to sit/talk to me because I was Romanian" – RO46, male, 27 years, RO national.

A Greek who returned from Germany shared this experience but did not perceive this as discrimination. He highlighted not only the importance of the language but also of age. He mentioned that

“social life is more difficult when you do not speak the language and you leave your country at an older age and not when you are 18 as a student when you can integrate easier ... integration is not so easy (BGR 11, male, 35, GR).

Also here, the most effective solution is moving to a country where social contacts and friends already exist. E.g. following friends to their destination countries or moving to countries where an ERASMUS stay has already been carried out.

Recognizing qualification from abroad

The data from Austria and Spain indicates recognizing qualifications is barrier and how it affects the movers' access to the labour market in the destination country. This is not only a matter of language, as it also occurs in countries with a common language, e.g. Austria and Germany:

I have never expected these problems in the recognition of my qualification, but I did expect my occupational situation to become worse. I knew that I will not find a job in B. [city of residence], which is equal to the one I had in terms of salaries and career opportunities. (AT3, female, 33 years, AT national)

This person reported that she had expected to find work in the destination country easily because of the EU free movement guideline.

That I am unemployable with my qualification hit me totally unexpected. I thought all doors are open to me and I can start wherever I want. But in the course of all these job applications, it turned out, that this is not the case. [...] Also this was very, very unexpected for me, that my [basic] education is not recognized and I really hoped until the last stamp, that they recognize it after all, but that was not the case (AT3, female, 33 years, AT national).

Similar experiences were reported from a Spanish returnee:

"There's no information about the standardization and recognition of diplomas, no one knows how to do it. I'm a teacher and for me it was absolutely key to fulfil the education requirements, becoming a collegiate member, and no one knew how to do so. I've had a lot of trouble with that. They want to charge you for recognizing your diploma and they take a lot of advantage of your ignorance." (ES woman, returned from France).

Particularly destination countries with a strongly regularized labour market – as it is the case in Germany, France and Austria – restrict EU movers in accessing their labour markets.

B.2.4 Drivers and barriers in returning

So are the barriers just reported the reason that these individuals decided to return to their home country? And how do additional barriers occur when people decide to return? To conclude this section, we will shortly summarise the experience of return as described by the returnees.

Looking back

Almost all interviewed returnees report in positive ways on their experience abroad. It seems to be an enriching experience because they were able to make new friends (even if not with locals) and discover other cultures and different lifestyles. The knowledge gained in learning or improving a different language was also mentioned often.

It was still a good experience: I learned other languages; I knew other people and other realities different from ours (PT6, Male, 31 years, PT national)

Many interviewed returnees report that they are satisfied with their stay abroad and that their initial expectations have been met. Still they returned. Some reasons for returning are due to barriers met in the destination country, e.g. language barriers, lacking recognition of qualification gained from abroad or lacking access to the labour market in the destination country (push factors).

The quality of life without the knowledge of local language is lower, that's for sure. There is certain frustration that you have a language barrier even when you are trying to deal with the easiest things, in shops, and so on. It affected my decision to move back to Poland. Without the necessary language skills the quality of my life in Germany would never be the best possible. (PL27, male, 30 years, returned from Germany)

However, the reasons for returning to the country of origin cannot fully be related to barriers met in the destination country. Particularly family-related reasons and homesickness are a pull factor to move back to the country of origin. Family related reasons can be the wish to found a family or elder relatives in need of care (pull factors).

Pull factors for returning

An important driver for moving back to the sending country is family. It is either the motive of starting a family or supporting the parental family – in the family business or through care work. Some young people return to continue family businesses, while others return to care for sick parents/relatives. Parents' deteriorated health and the desire to get together with, or separate from, partners were cited among those motives. Some couples also want to have their children growing in their country of origin (also close to their grandparents) and not in the destination country. A Spanish returnee points out:

"I decided to return for two reasons: feeling home-sick and uprooted, and because my job was temporary (museums, seasonal activities). The working conditions are much better there but I wanted to start a family and I wanted to return to Spain." (ES woman, returned from France).

Similar motives were named by the returnees to Poland: some of interviewees were planning to start a family in Poland. Others missed their families and friends left in Poland. Several interviewees found it difficult to establish a close circle of friends abroad and felt lonely, sometimes due to the lack of sufficient knowledge of the local language. Others have kept strong emotional ties with people left in Poland and found it difficult to live a life divided between two countries:

This was not a real life, it was 'vegetation'... I never wanted to stay there permanently. I was living there, I was saving money and I was all the time thinking that I want to live in Warsaw. (PL30, female, 28 years, returned from the UK)

A quote from a Cypriot mover indicates homesickness combined with an inadequate weather and working culture:

"Brussels had nothing else to offer to me. I had completed my cycle. And after some years I got tired. I got tired from the weather, the working hours. I wanted to be closer to my family (...) I developed an allergy there, because I wasn't getting enough sun. I am a Mediterranean person. I am not from Sweden and I am not from Brussels." (Cypriot mover)

The trend for returning to Estonia is coherent: most of the Estonians returned because they wished to settle down in Estonia and they had missed a sense of belonging while living in the other EU country. Some younger interviewees felt being at "crossroads" after having spent some time abroad and after which they decided to return. They thought that if they had not done it at that point in their life, they would have probably never returned.

"My daughter is born in December 2013 and I returned to Tallinn to give birth to her there. The medical system and doctors are better in Estonia than in Ireland. And my family, my mother, my grandma, my aunt are here and could support me being a mum. If I stayed alone in this moment, I would not have managed it." (EE woman, returned from Ireland)

Longing for the family and homesickness are connected with each other and form a main motive for the movers to return.

"I thought if I don't come back now, I will always wonder if my life will not be better in Bulgaria. Plus, my heart was never really into what I was doing there, no matter what job I was having at the moment. As strange and emotional as it sounds, I always thought I could be doing the same things in Bulgaria and it would have a much greater impact here than it ever did there."(BG11, female, 35 years, BG national)

Push factors for returning

Push factors for returning are mainly due to the loss of opportunities in the destination countries' labour market.

"I came back because I witnessed the way the economic crisis unfolded in Spain. From a country where people were going on holidays twice a year and a country that was the 9th strongest economy in the world, Spain became a completely different place when its economy crashed. And after spending four years living there, I started asking myself how much longer I wanted to be just a waitress there (...) Plus, I had already quenched my desire for Spain. I needed a bit of fresh air, I needed something different in my life and this is also partly why I came back to Bulgaria."(BG6, female, 27 years, BG national)

"Not finding a job was the biggest difficulty, I had been unemployed the whole 2012. That's the reason I decided to return in the beginning of 2013." (ES male, returned from Germany).

"But there are real difficulties when it comes to find a job. Being a foreigner is an obstacle by itself. They'll choose a French person at first." (ES woman, returned from France).

Labour discrimination motives were involved as a push factor for respondents to return to their home country. At some point, movers felt humiliated continuing to struggle with finding a job after

having invested so much time, money and effort and started to consider moving back and trying their luck here. An interviewed Bulgarian citizen reports about his motive to move back:

“In your own country no one sets limitations to your personal development and to what you can do with your life. As long as you want it, and you have enough determination and knowledge, you can become a minister or even a president, whereas the situation abroad is obviously not the same. There you can reach a certain level and that’s it, there is simply no way you can go beyond it.”(BG18, male, 35 years, BG national)

An Austrian citizen moved to Spain, lived there and was employed in gastronomy. She reported that she never faced barriers in accessing work or learning the language. However, after a while staying in Spain, she got severely ill. She did not feel well taken care of in the Spanish healthcare system and thus decided to move back to Austria in order to get adequate health care.

Suddenly I got ill, I had terrible abdominal pain and fall to the floor while working. Then the ambulance came and drove me to hospital. Then all I remember was waking-up after surgery and the doctor told me that they had to remove one of the fallopian tubes. The Spanish doctor just said to me: [in a sarcastic tone] “If you want to have children some time: good luck.” I was twenty-one years old that time! What kind of doctor says this to a twenty-year old girl? Then I went back home [to Austria] to get health care. Later, when I was already in Austria, my Austrian doctor told me that this removal was not necessary from a medical point of view. (AT, female 32 years, AT national).

C. Conclusions and recommendations

In this section, we will summarise the overall conclusions emerging from the individual experiences reported above. Again, we report the conclusions category by category, before concluding with an overview of recommendations provided by young people themselves.

C.1 Leavers

As we have seen, regarding the experiences of young people wishing or planning to move, the following conclusions and main trends emerged:

Planning and preparation to move in another EU country is subjective and related to the drivers' profile that determine citizens to go in another country. But push and pull factors are in balance – things that drive them away from their home country guide them to the host country.

The highly educated over-represented in the study's sample may support the hypothesis that higher qualified persons are more likely to move, as they look for an opportunity of professional development or improvement of their career perspectives, not seeking for a specific destination. The same driver should be linked to the communication skills – the more languages an EU citizen knows, the easier is for him/her to find a job. Especially if one of the known languages is the national language of the destination country. Also, personal and domestic experience in movement work is a valid reason for going elsewhere being mentioned and making future movement easier.

For the great majority, public authorities from both country of origin and destination have not proved very useful sources of information and advices. In many national reports comparted in this analysis, national authorities staff was reported as lacking language skills and throwing blame on movers, for example, the time-consuming administrative procedures - there are too many foreigners and if they are unhappy or bothered, they specifically suggested that they should return to their home country. Somehow, one procedure block another procedure, thus some attention should be turned to the “web” of administrative procedures in order to simplify and clarify them.

Movers felt well informed about their rights, but they really understood the content of their rights in practice, once they had already moved and had to deal with practical issues. Interviewees reported that it took them a while to understand the bureaucratic procedures in these countries, their duties and rights so that to organize all things of daily life, such as insurance and access to authorities' services.

The main barriers to free movement of EU citizens are represented by the difficulties related to learning a new language, understanding and making use of administrative procedures, getting accessible and complete information, cooperating with authorities, getting a job according to their skills and level of education or having same benefits (in terms of labour legislation, housing, pension, social security etc.) as nationals.

C.2 Movers

Regarding those interviewees who have already moved to another country, we can conclude that young people appeared to take the right to move and work abroad for granted. Either for work related reasons or because of lifestyle reasons, when moving into another EU country, young people choose to move into a big city, thus triggering an urbanization process which the infrastructure and landlord practices are not adequately responding to.

The domination of highly skilled persons in almost all the country sample probably accounts for the fact that the mismatch of skills and jobs available at home was prominent in almost all narratives, but perhaps more eminently in the discourse of the interviewees from the countries badly affected by the crisis (GR, CY) where there is little investment in research, innovation or technology which could lead to the creation of jobs for the highly skilled.

The western Europeans who move without having a 'facilitator' in the destination country are faced with the disappointment that the big international multicultural metropolis they had in mind was in fact an illusion; the reality they had to face up was a series of restrictions which essentially closed the city and its life to its nationals. The Western Europeans who moved to a country where there had 'facilitators' met with fewer practical difficulties but resented the fact that they had to resort to their networks to fill the gaps left by the inadequate infrastructure.

As it becomes obvious from a comparative look of the narratives, certain clusters emerge which do not necessarily fit the methodology's criteria. For instance, the nationals of a country a long history of migration in previous generations, such as the Greeks and the Cypriots, demonstrated a higher propensity to move for economic reasons, a choice also supported by their families, who tend to play an important role in some societies. In the narratives of the Cypriots, the family emerged as a crucial driver and a barrier" a driver where the family was supportive of the decision to move and a barrier where the family was unable to join the mover abroad. For the Cypriots, moving assumed the dimension of a necessity even where they had good jobs, because of personal or family debts to the banks which have to be repaid to avoid confiscation of their family homes by the banks.

Those who had lived abroad before had more realistic expectations of the destination country. The younger interviewees tended to be more adventurous and less concerned about having all the information beforehand – they were happy to move and then sort out the technicalities, confident that solutions would be found for all problems. The young graduates who had not yet entered the labour market did not have a problem with working in low-skill and low-paid jobs for a while (EE). Interviewees from smaller countries (EE, CY) are mostly driven by the pursuit of a better job that will match their skills in a bigger country since the 'smallness' of their home countries limits their career prospects. The higher the educational level, the more likely the interviews would be to move for self-development rather than a higher salary (EE). The narrative of the Spanish interviewees added an interesting dimension: free movement as a tool to help overcome nationalisms. As eloquently put by a Spanish interviewee, "there are greater things as defending a piece of land" (ES15, male, 30-35).

Not many of the interviewees were aware of EURES or its role. The main source of information emerged to be friends, relatives and co-expats in the destination country through the social media. For the Austrians, the internet was the main source of information but also the authorities in the destination countries. There was no consensus in the interviewees' accounts as regards the efficiency of on-line information but concerns were expressed as to whether or not the on line information was up to date. The absence of an institution specifically and exclusively mandated with the supply of

information on free movement made access to information complicated; many did not know which institution to turn to and where to look for information. Spanish interviewees described the information on cross-country tax contributions as “a mess”. Many complained about information being scattered and about the absence of an offline or online compendium with all the information that a person moving would need in a comprehensive format. Interestingly, a Polish interviewee mentioned being aware of the need to register in the destination country after three months of stay but did not do it because “nobody does it”.

A huge information gap emerged on job vacancies in the various countries, with several interviewees from different countries recommending the creation of an online portal categorising job vacancies by profession. Lack of information could potentially lead to human trafficking, especially of persons with special vulnerabilities. Some noted that private job placement agencies cannot be trusted, because they collect money in advance from job seekers who arrive to discover that the working conditions are well below what was promised (ES). These agencies also charge for standardisation which is carried out free of charge by some authorities, a practice that intending movers should be warned about.

Information supplied by the authorities appeared fragmented and inadequate. In most narratives, interviewees were looking for a coherent set of information offered by a single specialised body, providing step-by-step guidelines and timelines per country. For the Germans, lack of clear information was a barrier to free movement.

C.3 Returnees

A basic assumption of “on the move” was that the economic crisis and the youth unemployment lead to an increased use of the right to free movement among young Europeans: Young citizens of Southern EU MSs, which are particularly affected by youth employment, move to Northern EU MSs, in particular to France, Germany or the UK. This assumption leads to the conceptual division of EU MSs into “sending countries” (Southern and Eastern EU MSs), “receiving countries” (Northern and Western EU MSs) and “mixed countries”, MSs with no clear inward or outward mobility.

It was assumed that the experience of free movement is different for members of “sending countries” than for those of “receiving countries” or “mixed countries”. The analysis of the data on returnees – young Europeans, who moved and then returned into their countries of birth – supports this assumption in terms of drivers of movement. Work-related drivers are different for Bulgarian, Romanian or Cypriot movers than for Austrian or Spanish movers. South-Eastern Europeans’ movement is stronger driven by financial constraints and low chances on the labour market, while the movement of Austrians or Spanish persons is stronger driven by career-strategic considerations. This is an observable tendency, which is not necessarily connected to the economic crisis.

Another specific feature of movement from sending to receiving countries is that it is driven by the wish of having a “better life” in terms of social security and the rule of law – vice versa has not been found. Apart from this, there are no significant differences in the movement observable along country types.

The barriers faced in the destination countries are similar for all movers: language barriers and information barriers in terms of entitlements and duties connected to settlement. A feeling of exclusion and discrimination has been reported too. Particular information gaps are related to issues of employment (conditions, kinds of contracts, trade unions, chamber of labour), housing (how to

access the housing market, public support) and taxes (how to declare taxes paid abroad, consequences of working abroad for the pension entitlements, double taxation, etc.). Finding accommodation in big cities of the main receiving countries DE, FR and UK is another barrier reported by returnees.

The main facilitators are existing networks of friends, relatives or acquaintances in the destination countries, which provide help, counselling and are able to organise things on site for the movers. Furthermore, employers support movers in cases there is already a work contract in the destination country. Particularly large enterprises which operate internationally have been reported as helpful in this regard.

The main barriers when returning are related to restoring the health insurance, tax declarations and social security. Returnees also face problems in recognizing their qualifications gained in the destination countries. Particularly the Spanish, Polish and Austrian data suggests a need for a greater coordination of authorities in EU MSs (i.e. the registration and settlement offices) and a standardization of bureaucratic procedures for EU movement.

C.4 Recommendations

The experiences of the young people interviewed shows that most of them manage to overcome the barriers they face. This means that the obstacles make moving more difficult, but they do not prevent people from moving. Especially the help of friends, family and other acquaintances help young people deal with the problems which come up in the process of moving. Nonetheless, the interviewees provide many suggestions for policy makers at national and member state level, on how barriers can be prevented or overcome. While some of these suggestions include measures that are already in place to a certain extent, the experience of the interviewees clearly shows that the existing measures appear not to be sufficient.

Information

the vast majority of the interviewees recommended a streamlining of information and support system (including responsible authorities, sources of information, the format in which this information is available), as most of the information is reported to be available somewhere, but in national language only and spread across authorities (whether online or in print). The demand for understandable information on rights, duties, taxes, insurances, labour laws, education, residence, etc. in, at least, English language was clear. Some incoming EU citizens would appreciate a step-by-step guideline/a „welcoming toolkit”, both online and offline, on what to do and on how to do when they plan to move/actually move in another EU member state. It is expected to contain a list of documents needed, on how to get them, on their rights and responsibilities as incomers

Other ideas to improve the information position of young movers referred to the creation of a specialised agency to deal with enquiries, the creation of a single website or a matrix with all the information a mover might need per country, such as administrative procedures, taxes, insurance, health care; an internship or a welcome program for newcomers in the destination country, the organisation of meetings by the expatriate communities in the destination country.

Language

The demand for accessible information is also clearly related to the language problems encountered by interviewees. In this context, it is suggested to provide information in public places in both national language and another internationally used languages (English was everyone’s proposal), in

order to help people to easily integrate and enjoy the life of any national. Some go as far as suggesting making English a second official language in all EU countries and using it as an additional language in official documents, administrative procedures and official names.

Also, the improvement of the language proficiency and the overall capacity of national institutions to deal with non-nationals would facilitate the free movement of EU citizens according to our interviewees. Officials should be able to speak foreign languages and should invest more in offering free language classes for movers. In the same context, private language courses should be more affordable and citizens should be informed if there is the possibility to enrol in language classes at school with a money back policy in place. A few interviewees suggested that civic integration courses and language courses should be mandatory for all newcomers. A few others mentioned that these courses should last less long, so that people could actually join them to the final.

Procedures and authorities

Interviewees across all different groups call for simplification or at least clarification of various procedures. Whether realistic or not, free movement would be enhanced by a standardization of bureaucratic and administrative procedures for EU movement (from ID papers to qualifications recognition and pension). This is related to the suggestion of creating a specific institution on free movement in each country. The need for skilled and specially trained personnel, who could offer help and support in several languages, up-to-date information about country-specific laws, rules and customs, more online consulting and advice services or telephone numbers for foreigners in different languages was thereby underlined. Such organisations or institutions could also serve as consultation offices where EU movers can receive personal advice on country-specific guidelines, as questions tend to be individual and differ from case to case. These institutions could create a common platform where EU movers can go to get information in the each language.

Uniformity and support

Interviewees also suggest that education or university systems should be more uniform and it should certainly be easier to get foreign qualifications recognised. This could also make it possible to change universities at the European level and to receive qualifications adapted to all countries' standards/rules. Unification of all official documents, including ID cards, was another suggestion. A cross-country credit check could facilitate the finding of accommodation in the destination country. Finally, mobility support in the form of grants or loans (work related, training grants, promotion of entrepreneurship initiatives) to build a start-up budget for the moving and settlement expenses are seen as a possible tool to promote movement. In addition, it would be helpful to have mentoring/tutoring programmes for movers, providing support in a variety of areas such as finding a flat, answering questions, finding a job, and filing tax returns etc., and ultimately make the integration process easier and faster, as they would offer movers an opportunity to interact with a national.

Employment

To support the labour market position of movers, our interviewees place some responsibility with employers: thus, employers should be more active in providing free movement opportunities and should give the time and space to newcomers to get integrated. Also, human resource managers should be better informed about free movement according to some interviewees. In terms of the risk of exploitation and labour trafficking, private companies specialised on employment should assume more responsibility for the workers that they send abroad. Interviewees were concerned that these companies lack interest in the situation of the worker sent to another country, which might lead to discrimination or exploitation.

Preparation

Finally, most interviewees also stressed the responsibilities of movers themselves to make sure that their move turns into a success. Thus, collecting information about the destination country, about the administrative duties, learning the language and finding out about customs and habits in the country of origin are thought to be helpful for movers when settling into their new life. Interestingly, the interviewees themselves did not necessarily prepare in that way themselves. This can therefore be treated as a lesson learnt, and as advise to other generations of movers.