
Youth mobility in Europe and its social, political and economic macro - drivers. A case study of Germany, Luxembourg and Norway from 2004-2013

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Abstract

Young people's mobility is seen as a driving force for smart, sustainable and economic growth and further integration of the EU. However, research on young people's cross-border geographic mobility within Europe is limited. Early studies identify drivers of youth mobility especially at micro- and meso-levels, but consistently neglect variations at the macro-level. Furthermore, the combination of micro-meso-macro data is rare.

Based on this desideratum, the paper examines the role of macro-level characteristics in shaping mobility among youth in Germany (EU), Luxembourg (EU) and Norway (non-EU). Different indicators are analysed descriptively in relation to youth-mobility using a heuristic theoretical model containing the sectors of state, society, and economy. This paper aims to shed light on the questions of how cross-border youth mobility developed in those three countries over the period 2004-2013 and which of the macro-indicators could explain the developments. The macro-results will be discussed against the backdrop of youth mobility micro-data for the three countries as derived from the recent MOVE online survey.

The study is part of the EU-project "MOVE: Mapping Mobility" which has received funding from the EU-Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No.649263. The current paper is based on a secondary macro-data analysis and supported by micro survey data. The macro data were derived from different sources, namely: macro-drivers of mobility (EUROSTAT, OECD, World Bank) and youth migration data (German Federal Statistical Office, Norwegian Federal Statistical Office, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg). The secondary data were collected within the MOVE-project for the period of 2004-2013. Survey data were collected in an online questionnaire between November 2016 and February 2017.

As the present study focuses on three countries, descriptive comparisons over time for three selected years (2004, 2008, 2013) will be conducted. Germany, Luxembourg and Norway are countries with a growing economy. While in Germany and Norway youth-unemployment has been decreasing (reaching below the 10% mark), Luxembourg has experienced more fluctuations within the range of 15-20% in recent years. The average wages rose slightly, whereas

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job vacancy rates remained (very) low in the three countries.

The level of foreign population has been increasing over time in the analysed time period in the three discussed countries. Hence, Germany, Luxembourg and Norway are attractive "receiving countries" for European mobile youth. As a result, the migration proportion (incoming-outgoing to EU-countries) increased enormously in all three countries; additionally, the youth-immigration-rate increased as well. Contrastly, the youth-emigration to other EU countries developed differently: it remained stable in Norway and increased in Germany (for Luxembourg: data available only for 2011-2013).

In 2013 most of the young people moving to Germany came from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Spain and France (all > 5,000), whereas those moving to Norway came mainly from Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Romania, Denmark, Germany and Latvia (all > 500). Luxembourg received young people mostly from Portugal, France, Italy, Belgium and Germany (all > 300).

These results mirror developments within the EU, e.g. EU-enlargement, financial and economic crises and countries' migration histories. They further reveal that Germany and Luxembourg developed to be both receiving and sending countries for mobile youth, whereas Norway remained more of a receiving country. Key explanations are that all three countries had a comparatively stable economic situation over the observed period, released barriers for labour market access and intensified student exchange (Bologna reform, Germany; internationalisation in education, Norway; tradition of degree student mobility and obligatory semester abroad for all undergraduates in Luxembourg). Regarding the sending countries from which young people come, all three countries vary: while many youth from northern countries and Baltic States migrate to Norway, Germany seems more attractive for youth from south(-east) Europe; Luxembourg attracts youth from neighboring countries and countries with preexisting links (guest workers).

Keywords: mobility, youth, macro drivers, secondary data, quantitative data