



Foundation findings

Mobility in Europe – The way forward





The policy background



A basic right for all citizens

A cornerstone of the European agenda is the right of freedom of movement throughout the EU – a basic human and social right. Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, freedom of movement for EU citizens and their families has been one of the core ‘acquis’ of the European Communities. This also means that EU citizens be equally entitled to employment opportunities, public housing, tax advantages and social benefits, regardless of their Member State of origin.

This right is of central importance to European citizens: when asked what the EU represents to them, 53% say ‘freedom to travel and work in the EU’. This answer comes first, well ahead of the introduction of the euro as a common currency (44%) and safeguarding peace (36%).¹

Mobility and the Lisbon Agenda

The goal of the Lisbon Agenda, set in March 2000, was that Europe become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and social cohesion.’ To achieve this, a better skilled

and more adaptable labour force is needed, as is a more open European labour market. However, the goal is far from being achieved: skills and labour shortages are prevalent and the ageing of the workforce will result in a shrinking of the labour force. Europe needs to mobilise its existing human resources. To this end, the renewed Lisbon Strategy, and the European Employment Strategy, call for the elimination of any obstacles to voluntary mobility, either geographical or job mobility, and the active encouragement of greater mobility on the part of workers.

EU policy initiatives

Mobility can be encouraged by making social protection, health care and pensions more portable as well as introducing universal recognition of qualifications. Mobility of workers can be aided through better training, lifelong learning and more widespread language tuition. A number of EU policy initiatives adopted to date have attempted to encourage mobility.

In 2002, the European Commission adopted an action plan on skills and mobility designed to assist the Union in reaching its Lisbon goals. A number of initiatives have been implemented as

¹ Eurobarometer survey (2005)

**“ Long-distance mobility is not common:
only 18% of Europeans have moved outside their region, while only 4%
have ever moved to another Member State and only 3% outside the Union. ”**

part of the action plan, in terms of facilitating labour market mobility.

- Education and training systems have been made more responsive to labour market needs.
- Educational levels have been raised, and the numbers leaving school without formal qualifications have been reduced.
- Participation in lifelong learning has increased.
- Qualifications have been made more portable and transferable (for instance, the Europass portfolio of documents has been set up).²
- Further development of human resources has been promoted in less developed areas of the EU.

Other measures have been taken with a view to facilitating greater geographical mobility.

- Administrative and legal barriers to workers' mobility have been removed.
- Cross-border social security systems have been modernised and simplified, and a European health insurance card (EHIC) introduced.
- Occupational pension rights have been made more portable.
- Barriers to the recognition of professional qualifications have been lowered.
- The EURES initiative, designed to facilitate job searching and job-matching for workers within the European Economic Area, has been improved.

Mobility and employment

Greater mobility has the potential to foster employment growth in Europe, if citizens move from areas of high unemployment to areas where large numbers of job vacancies remain unfilled. The mobility of citizens to other jobs can lead to similar efficiencies in the labour

market. Greater adaptability on the part of workers is also a key element in making Europe more competitive at a global level, and at an individual level enabling employees to raise their skills levels and their employability, income and career prospects.

Transitional arrangements

Although there is broad support for the concept of mobility across Europe, policymakers still have concerns regarding the impact of labour inflows from new Member States: at every stage but one of the Union's enlargement, temporary transitional arrangements have been put in place to limit the free movement of people on the labour market.³ For the enlargement of May 2004 which saw the entrance of 10 new Member States (NMS), transitional arrangements were put in place that must come to an end by 30 April 2011. Different countries have adopted different policies: from the outset, Ireland, Sweden and the UK placed no barriers to the entry of workers from the NMS; by contrast, three years later, Austria and Germany still intend to retain restrictions.

Eurobarometer survey

The importance of mobility to European policymakers is evident from the decision to designate 2006 as 'European Year of Workers' Mobility'. To learn more about the extent of European citizens' geographical and job mobility, and their future intentions, the European Commission funded a special Eurobarometer survey (EB 64.1), which was carried out at the end of 2005 in the 25 Member States then forming the Union. The Foundation conducted the analysis of the data in cooperation with the Commission, looking at the drivers of, and barriers to, mobility in Europe, and the economic and social effects of mobility patterns.

² The Europass portfolio consists of a set of documents that are designed to make a citizen's skills and qualifications more clearly understood across the EU.

³ The only enlargement for which transitional arrangements were not applied was in 1995, when Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined.



Key findings

- **Present levels of geographical mobility are low.** Despite their approval of mobility as a concept, EU citizens are unlikely to show a dramatic increase in actual mobility in the near future. Moving across borders represents a challenge for potential migrants: they risk losing the support of their social networks and finding a new job is a challenge, as is dealing with the administrative systems of another country.
- **Different Member States have different mobility intentions.** Concerns about an exodus from the NMS to the EU15 are overly simplistic: citizens in different countries in the NMS have very different intentions in terms of their willingness to move within the EU. In four of these countries, indeed, citizens have much lower mobility intentions than their fellow citizens in the EU15.
- **Young and educated workers are the most likely to move.** The majority of migrants are young, and have significantly higher levels of education than those who have no intention of moving. An inflow of energetic and skilled workers would be a gain for the recipient country, but a loss for the home country.
- **Mobility goes hand in hand with economic success.** For national economies, higher levels of geographical mobility and job mobility are associated with higher rates of GDP growth, higher employment rates and lower rates of long-term unemployment. For the individual, job-related inter-regional mobility is associated with higher employment rates and better access to permanent employment, while job mobility is associated with upwards occupational mobility.
- **High potential outflow of NMS citizens.** Although the national proportions of those intending to leave the NMS are low, the absolute numbers may be quite substantial. Between 2.4% and 3.6% of the working age population in Poland expressed a firm intention to move to another EU country in the next five years. With a working-age population of around 25 million, this could translate into a potential outflow of between 600,000 and 900,000 people over the period 2006 to 2010. Moreover, findings indicate that future levels of geographical mobility may be higher than at present.
- **Discrepancy between stated view and practice.** While European citizens view geographical mobility very positively, an overwhelming majority (almost 70%) have no intention of moving in the near future.
- **Geographical and job mobility are interlinked.** Countries that have high levels of geographical mobility also have high levels of job mobility.
- **Type of social welfare regime play a role in mobility level.** Liberal welfare states (Ireland and the UK) and social-democratic type regimes (the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries) have the highest levels of job mobility.
- **Not all workers are equal.** A dual labour market appears to exist, with more vulnerable workers being exposed to more involuntary job changes than their higher-skilled or better protected counterparts.



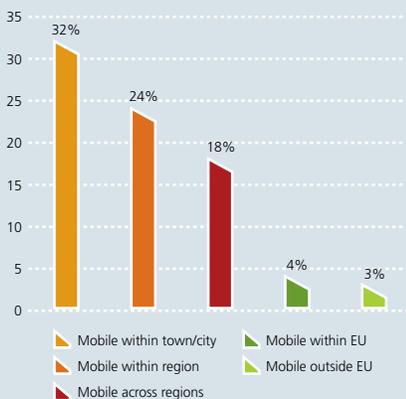
Geographical mobility



Levels of mobility

The overall picture of geographical mobility gained from the Eurobarometer data is that Europeans are not very mobile. Figure 1 illustrates that the extent of mobility decreases as the distance to be moved increases. Long-distance mobility is not common: only 18% of Europeans have moved outside their region,

Figure 1: Past mobility, by distance of move (%)



while only 4% have ever moved to another Member State and 3% outside the Union. However, almost a quarter have moved within their region.

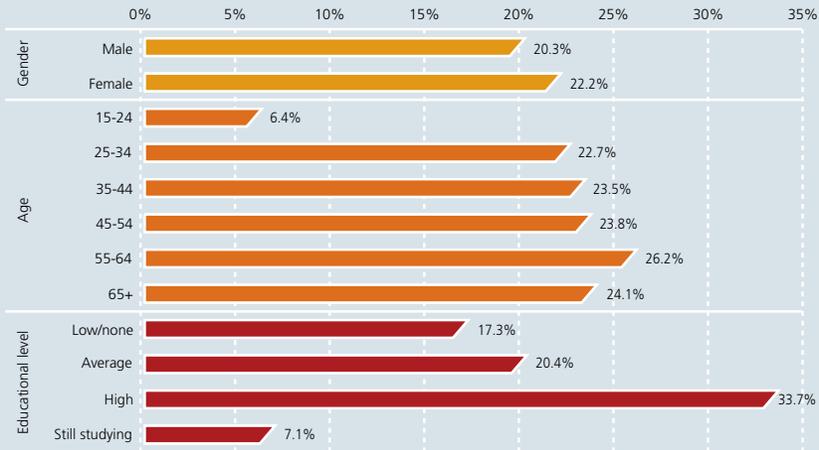
This level of mobility is frequently contrasted with the levels of geographical mobility seen in the US, where almost a third of citizens (32%) live outside the state in which they were born, substantially more than the 22% of Europeans who have ever lived in another region or Member State. However, migration between states in the US takes place within the same linguistic, political and cultural context, unlike long-distance migration in Europe.

Main reasons for moving

The survey data reveal that long-distance moves (to another region or Member State) are most often related to the labour market. A new job or job transfer was cited by 34% of respondents as being their reason for moving. Another key reason was a change of partnership or marital situation (18%). Strong gender differences are apparent in these findings: men report moving because of a 'new job or job transfer' far more often than do women (44% as against 27%);



Figure 2: Mobility by demographic characteristics (%)



Notes: the chart indicates past geographical mobility levels in the EU by gender, age and education: that is, the percentage of people in each of those categories that has ever moved between regions in the EU.

Source: Eurobarometer (2005)

women more often seem to make a long-distance move in order to follow their partner.

Profile of people who move

Education level

Well educated individuals are substantially more likely to have moved than those with a low or average level of education. This difference in mobility may be because workers with a lower level of education face significantly higher employment risks: as a result, they are more dependent upon their social networks (in particular their extended families) if they should become unemployed. This is not surprising: economic globalisation has tended to result in highly-skilled workers being more mobile on the international labour market.

Age

Age is clearly important in terms of past mobility: the youngest age group, those aged between 15 and 24 years, are too young and have not yet had the time to move to another country. However, the next youngest (25–34 year olds) have moved as much as the older generations in a shorter time span, indicating

that there may be a general, EU-wide increase in mobility taking place.

Gender

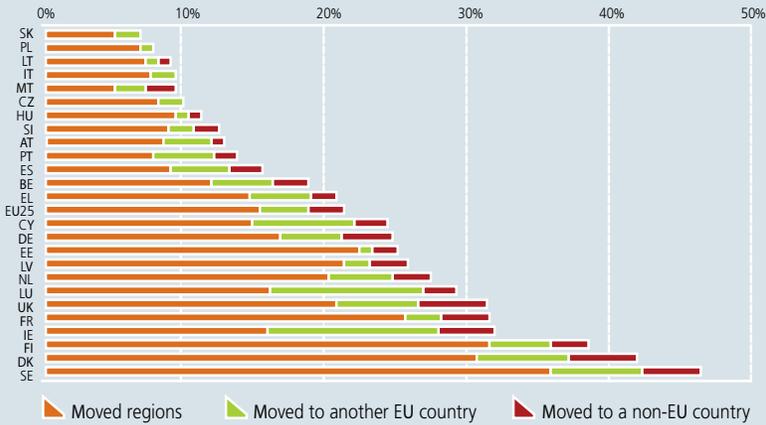
Approximately equal percentages of men and women have lived elsewhere, women being slightly more mobile. Long-distance mobility is undergoing a process of ‘feminisation’, due to:

- women’s increasing education and professional training;
- better job opportunities for women in specific parts of the services sector, such as care for children and the elderly;
- emancipation of younger women from traditional family or partnership structures.

Country differences

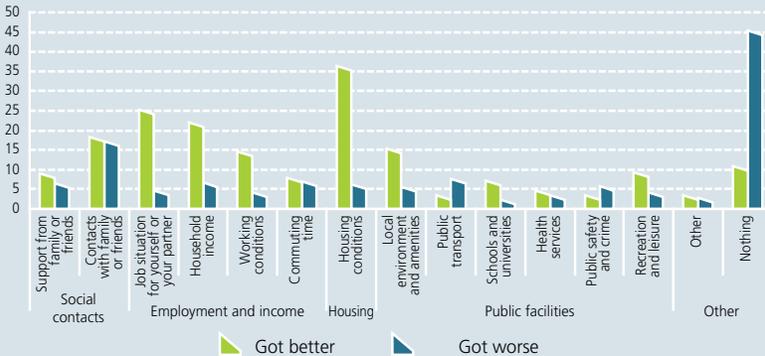
Geographical mobility in general tends to be higher in the Nordic countries; by contrast in most of the NMS and in most of the southern European countries, mobility within or outside the region is relatively low.

Figure 3: Past patterns of long-distance mobility in the EU, by country (%)



Source: Eurobarometer (2005)

Figure 4: Perceived results of long-distance moves (%)



Losses and gains in geographical mobility

Overall assessment

The overall perception on the part of those who had moved long distances was that it was a positive outcome: 45% felt that nothing had got worse (only 11% felt that nothing had improved). The single largest improvement was in housing: 36% felt that their housing conditions had improved. 25% felt that the job situation of one of the household members had improved (as against only 4% who felt it had got worse) and household income: 22% felt it had

improved, as against 7% who felt it had got worse.

Shortcomings

Just because mobility delivers benefits, it is not correct to say that more mobility is always a good thing. Moving region or country poses challenges to individual citizens, their families, employers and wider societies. Workers take a risk when moving – they may suffer a loss of material conditions, or find that their new job is less suitable than they may have hoped. They may also find that their previously valued skills are no longer applicable, and that the support



of family and community networks is gone. The large scale emigration of younger, better-educated workers would represent a substantial loss to a country or a region – a so-called ‘brain drain’.

One of the most important aspects of geographical mobility for EU labour markets is the potential it holds for offering a way to balance labour shortages and surpluses across the Union. However, whether such potential is likely to be realised in the near future is open to question. Only 31% of respondents said they would move to another region or country to find a job in the event of unemployment. This may be explained by concerns over loss of social support networks, and potential language barriers.

Benefits

At the macroeconomic level, higher levels of geographical mobility are associated with higher rates of GDP growth, higher employment rates and lower rates of long-term unemployment. Greater geographical mobility also seems to be associated with fewer regional labour market imbalances. While it is not possible to establish a causal relationship on the basis of this, it is highly significant that such geographical mobility is not associated with lower GDP or rates of employment.

Similar positive associations are seen at the microeconomic level. Job related inter-regional mobility is associated with greater individual labour force participation, higher employment rates and better access to employment on permanent contracts. Inter-country migration appears to improve the employment opportunities for those moving for job-related reasons.

Migration intentions

Overview

European citizens are broadly in favour of mobility. Of those surveyed, 49% think mobility

is beneficial for individuals, 50% think it is beneficial for the labour market and 62% think it is beneficial for European integration. Despite this largely positive view of mobility, however, almost 70% of respondents have no intention to move in the near future (the next five years).

A key part of the debate concerning migration and mobility is the potential effect of migration from the NMS upon the former EU15's labour markets. Hence, the expectations of citizens from the NMS regarding moving to other Member States are crucially important to current policy and debate concerning future migration flows.

Analysis of the findings from the Eurobarometer survey indicated that between 1% and 1.5% of the working-age population of the EU25 have a firm intention to move to another country in the Union over the next five years. Between 2.8% and 3.5% have a similarly firm intention to move to another region of their country of residence.⁴ Such low percentages do not point to a mass exodus of workers to other Member States.

European citizens who do express an intention to migrate tend to be younger and better educated, as the findings outlined in Figure 2 would indicate. Single people are most inclined to move long distances. Next most likely to move are those who are divorced and separated. Single parents are the most prepared to move.

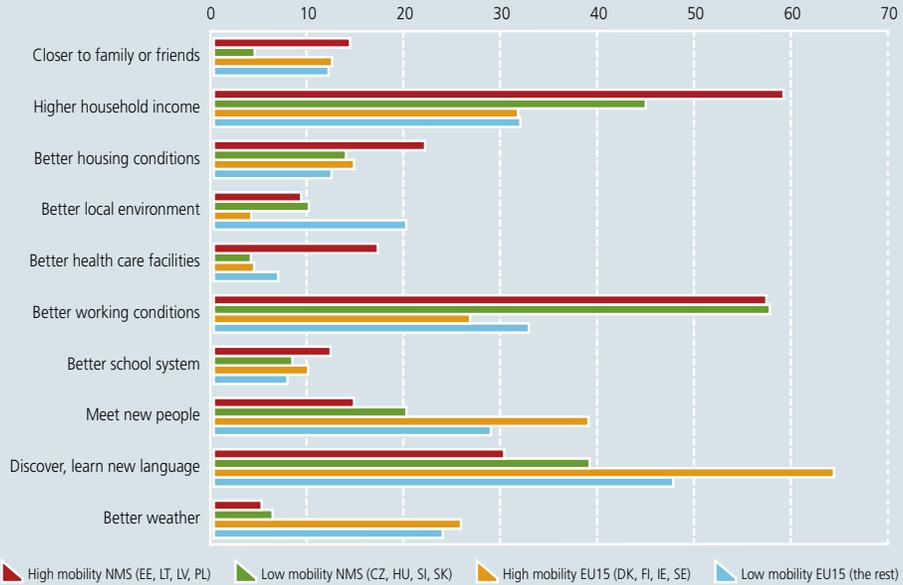
Country breakdown

In general, citizens in the EU15 express greater intentions of moving than their counterparts in the NMS. However, when individual countries are looked at, a pattern emerges of four groups of countries, with distinct profiles of mobility expectations. These four groups are listed in descending order of the expressed intentions of their citizens.

1. In four ‘high mobility’ NMS (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland), more citizens have firm intentions of moving – between 2.4% and 4.2%.
2. In four high mobility EU15 countries (Denmark, Ireland, Finland and Sweden) between 1.4% and 2.9% of citizens have firm intentions of moving: more than twice the level in the low-mobility NMS;

⁴ These figures are in line with the estimates presented in the Employment in Europe 2006 report, which is based on data from the European Labour Force Survey.

Figure 5: Factors encouraging intercountry mobility, by country groupings (%)



Notes: Figures are for people intending to move to another EU country in the next five years.
Source: Eurobarometer (2005)

3. In the 11 low-mobility EU15 countries, citizens display a slightly higher intention of moving than those in the low mobility NMS.
4. In four 'low mobility' NMS (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia) few citizens have firm intentions of moving – between 0.5% and 1.8%.

The distinction between the high and low mobility groups of countries in the NMS is an important one, in light of concerns in the EU15 regarding potential inflows from these countries. Given the low levels of stated mobility intentions in the low-mobility NMS, it is unlikely that future migration from these countries would challenge labour markets in the EU15.

Mobility outflow from NMS

On the basis of the stated intentions, it is possible to estimate likely migration flows from the NMS. For the low mobility countries, it is

between 0.5% and 1.8% of the working population. For the high mobility countries, it is between 2.4% and 4.2%. (For a large country such as Poland, this small percentage does represent a considerable absolute number of individuals).

The Foundation's analysis of the Eurobarometer findings compared the data with those obtained in an earlier survey (from 2001). Between 2001 and 2005, in the high mobility NMS, there was an increase of between two and three percentage points in the numbers of those with a firm intention to migrate. Actual labour market figures on economic migration from these countries to the EU15 – in particular, Ireland and the UK – confirm a substantial movement of people. In turn, the developing social networks of migrants who have already made a move create an additional 'pull' for potential migrants.



Future patterns

This tends to show that migration flows in the future are likely to be greater than in the past. This may well be a direct consequence of EU enlargement. Furthermore, the mobility intentions of citizens in the NMS are rising relative to those of their EU15 neighbours.

As with the profile of those who moved in the past, those who plan on moving from the high mobility NMS are young (75% are aged less than 35) and well educated (one third is still studying and one third is highly educated). For these countries, cross-border mobility could represent a significant ‘brain drain’.

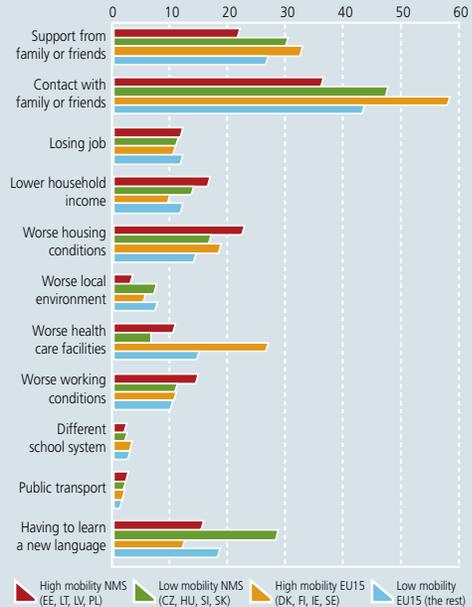
Drivers of geographical mobility

Across the EU25, the most often cited reason for moving was to meet new people and discover new places: 40% of those who expressed an intention to move in the next five years give this as a reason. This is hardly surprising, given the preponderance of young people and students in this group. More than a third (38%) cited economic reasons – more money or better employment. However, when the EU15 and the NMS are compared, it emerges that citizens have markedly different reasons for intending to move. In the EU15, lifestyle factors and retirement seem to be the key drivers. In the NMS, economic motivations are much stronger: for both high- and low-mobility countries in the NMS, the key motivators are higher income and better working conditions. The findings do not support sentiments that people from the NMS want to move to the EU15 to access welfare payments or better public services.

Barriers to geographical mobility

While long-distance mobility may deliver clear economic benefits for individuals, the numbers who intend staying where they are indicate that citizens have broader concerns about mobility than solely economic considerations. Responses to the survey indicate that far from being simply ‘rational actors’ who attempt to ‘maximise their utility’, EU citizens must balance aspirations for career advancement with the uncertainty of moving, and the potential loss of systems of support. For the EU25 as a whole, the key factor

Figure 6: Factors discouraging mobility (by country groupings)



Notes: Figures are only for people not intending to move to another EU country.

Source: Eurobarometer (2005)

that deters people from moving is the fear of losing one’s social network: 44% give ‘losing direct contact with family or friends’ as a reason for not wishing to move region or country, while 27% cite ‘missing support from family and friends’. Such social network factors are much more of a disincentive to moving than the challenge of learning a new language. This is usually considered a key factor in limiting geographical mobility between EU countries. However, only 19% cited this as a reason for not moving. Housing conditions and healthcare were cited as less important concerns.

When country groupings are compared, concerns over loss of one’s social networks is still the primary deterrent. However, in the high-mobility NMS, this is much less of an impediment than for the other country groupings: 10 percentage points less than in the low mobility NMS, and 20 percentage points less than in the high mobility EU15.



Job mobility



If Europeans are to move more from one job to another, labour markets will need to become more flexible, economic growth will need to become more employment intensive and the risks of job transitions will have to be minimised. Currently, Member States differ in the institutional arrangements that they have implemented to promote this sort of labour market flexibility.

Measuring job mobility

Switching employer

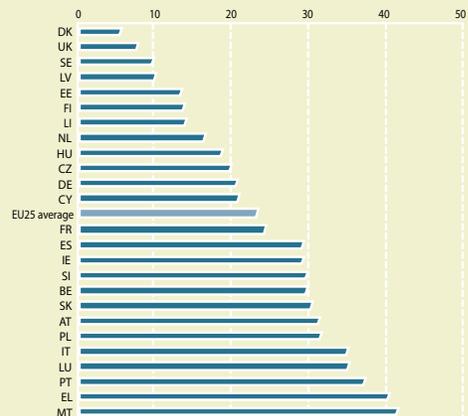
To understand present levels of job mobility, it must first be measured. Job mobility can be assessed by counting the number of times people have changed employer, and measuring the average duration of each job they have held. The survey looked at the relative proportions of people who had never changed employer after the age of 35 years (this age was chosen to balance the fact that younger people may never have had the opportunity to change jobs). Across the EU25, 23% of respondents had never changed employer.

Furthermore, substantial differences are found between Member States in terms of mobility: only 6% of Danish respondents had never changed employer, compared to 42% in Malta.

When the figures for the EU15 are examined more closely, a striking correlation emerges between level of mobility in a country and the type of welfare state that country operates. Welfare states are commonly classified into three types:

Liberal welfare states, where collective benefit systems are limited and citizens are encouraged

Figure 7: Percentage of people who have never changed employer, by country



Source: Eurobarometer (2005)



to provide for their own private insurance programmes (Ireland and the UK);

Social-democratic welfare states, which provide very generous, universal social insurance (the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries);

Corporatist welfare states, where reasonably generous provision benefit systems are largely funded by citizens own contributions during their working lives (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg).

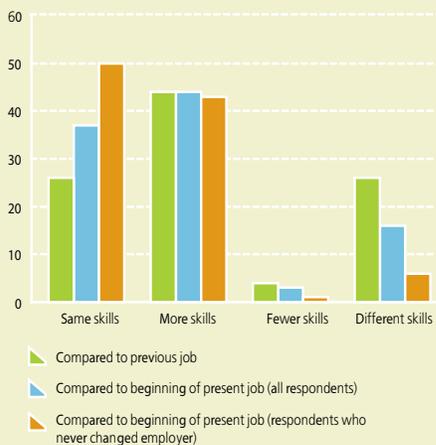
It is the social-democratic, and the liberal, welfare states that facilitate the highest levels of market flexibility. More liberal employment protection legislation in these countries means that jobs are less protected, and hence workers are forced to be more flexible. However, greater security – in the form of active labour market policies, low exit rates and high re-entry rates – encourages and enables citizens to make job changes and hence participate in greater job mobility. With their much higher levels of job protection, corporatist welfare states have less flexibility, and therefore have less mobility. Southern European countries, while not forming as coherent a group as the other three, also show lower levels of flexibility and hence mobility. (The picture for the NMS is more mixed, with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania having relatively high mobility.)

Recent job changes

Another way of gauging levels of mobility is to look at the extent of recent job mobility – the proportion of citizens who have changed employer within the last year. When job mobility is measured in this way, the results are in line with previous measures: the highest recent mobility rates in the EU are found in Denmark (almost 16%); in other EU15 countries the highest rates are found in the UK (just under 13%) and Ireland (11%). The highest rates in the NMS are found in Latvia, Hungary and Estonia (over 13%) and Lithuania (over 12%). Most southern European countries as well as Austria show lower rates of mobility.⁵

⁵ Spain is something of an exception, in that it tends to display levels of job mobility close to, or above, the EU average.

Figure 8: Skills needed in present job compared to skills needed in previous career stages (%)



Source: Eurobarometer (2005)

Internal mobility

Remaining with the same employer does not necessarily mean that an employee is entirely static in their career: it is also possible to move jobs within an organisation. Although 25% of the Eurobarometer respondents have never changed employer, it is possible that some of them have been internally mobile. Respondents were asked about the changes in skills required of them, to gauge the extent to which they had moved roles internally: on the basis of this measure, it would appear that more than half had moved within the organisation.

In terms of skills acquisition, it would however seem that changing employer necessitates an even greater change in skill sets, and hence is desirable for skills acquisition.

Job duration

Job mobility, as indicated above, can also be measured by job duration. Shorter job durations indicate greater mobility: those countries with the lowest proportion of citizens who had never changed jobs also have the shortest job durations (the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Denmark has the

shortest job duration, at just under five years, while Portugal has the longest, at 11 years.

The average job duration increases sharply with age.⁶ This indicates that people change jobs more frequently early in their careers. It may be that older workers are more satisfied with the position that they have found; alternatively, they may be less confident about their chances of finding an acceptable alternative job at their later stage in life. It is noteworthy that the average number of jobs does not increase for people aged 35 years and over: this indicates that, in the past, people stayed longer with the same employer than they do now.

In terms of other demographic characteristics, people with children are among the most mobile; parents have the most pressing financial needs and are likely to search actively for better paying jobs. This is particularly the case for single parents.

When sectoral and job differences are examined, very different levels of job mobility become apparent.

1. Not surprisingly, workers in the more protected public sector display the least mobility: in public administration and defence, average job duration is almost 12 years. By contrast, workers in the hotels and restaurants sector have average durations of just over six years. Low-skilled manual workers also have shorter job durations.
2. Managers have somewhat longer job durations than other employees.
3. As would be expected, employees on permanent contracts have longer job durations – more than twice as long as those on other types of contract.
4. A spell of unemployment also appears to predispose a person towards higher mobility: once a respondent had been unemployed for three months or more, at

least once, their average job duration fell by half.

Forced and voluntary mobility

Job mobility is assumed to be generally desirable: however, an important distinction to make is to determine whether a job change was taken voluntarily or was forced on the worker.⁷ Demographic, sectoral and occupational differences emerge when this distinction is drawn. Across Europe, 65% of the working age population voluntarily changed employer in the previous five years, while 38% were forced to do so.

Age and education

Age differences are noteworthy: younger people aged between 15 and 24 years experience more forced mobility (46% being forced to leave their job); those aged between 25 to 34 years are more likely to leave their employer voluntarily (only 34 % being forced to leave). However, the proportions of older people being forced to leave their employer rises to 56% for those aged 55–64. These older respondents are both more likely to be made redundant or to have to leave for health reasons; the youngest age group is more likely to have had their contract expire.

Lower levels of educational attainment are also associated with a greater likelihood of forced mobility. Respondents who finished their formal education between ages of 16 and 19 are made redundant much more often than those in other categories. By contrast, those with the highest level of education have the lowest proportion of forced mobility.

Sectoral differences

When sectoral differences are examined, it becomes apparent that heavy industrial sectors (manufacturing, mining and quarrying) have a high proportion of redundancies, and hence of forced mobility. Again, as might be expected, those working in the public sector on permanent contracts are unlikely to have been forced to leave their employer. As the skills level of a job increases, so too does the ratio of voluntary to forced mobility. Workers in the service sector have the highest proportion of voluntary transitions (75%) and the lowest proportion of

⁶ Clearly, older people have had more opportunities than younger people to change employer. In order to correct for length of career, an indicator was used that permits comparisons of average job duration between different age groups.

⁷ A forced job change would be as a result of redundancy, expiry of an employment contract, or through ill health.



forced transitions (27%). This contrasts with unskilled manual workers, who have slightly more forced transitions (55%) than voluntary transitions (53%). Furthermore, health-related transitions are more prevalent among manual than white-collar workers.

Unemployment

A spell of unemployment earlier in the career increases a respondent's chances of being forced to leave their employer: the ratio of voluntary to forced transitions increases. When there are two or more spells of unemployment, the ratio then switches entirely: such workers more often report having been forced to leave than having done so voluntarily.

Dual labour market

Job mobility can have positive outcomes in terms of skills acquisition and the employability of people. However, the picture that emerges is of a dual labour market, with more vulnerable workers more likely to be mobile than better-protected or hierarchically higher employees. These more vulnerable workers – lone parents, blue-collar workers, those who have experienced unemployment, or who are on temporary contracts – are likely to change jobs more often and change to jobs that do not have longer job durations. Moreover, they are more likely to have been forced to leave their last employer than having done so voluntarily.

Benefits of job mobility

Upward mobility

Greater job mobility appears to result in higher overall levels of upward mobility.

Of those who were working at the time of the Eurobarometer survey, around 15% had experienced occupational upward mobility during their career – moving jobs, but simultaneously moving to a higher-level occupation. Only 6% had experienced downward mobility. The majority had experienced horizontal occupational mobility – moving to a different job, but remaining at the same occupational level. A more in-depth analysis found that the greater the levels of job mobility, the greater was the increase in overall occupational mobility. Hence, more movement

overall in the labour market increases, at least statistically, a person's chances of upward occupational mobility.

Economic and employment growth

At the macroeconomic level, greater job mobility is associated with higher rates of GDP growth, higher employment rates and lower rates of long-term unemployment. While it is not possible to establish a causal relationship on the basis of this, it is highly significant that job mobility is not associated with lower GDP or rates of employment.

Future job mobility

Of those respondents who were currently working at the time of the survey, 43% said that they expected to change their current job in the next five years. As might be expected from the findings discussed above, expectations of future mobility are highest in the liberal and social-democratic welfare states, and in the Baltic countries. Citizens in corporatist welfare states and southern European countries have fewer intentions of changing employer.

Respondents who had changed jobs before were more likely to report that they expected to change in the future. Those who had never changed jobs were especially reluctant to change.

However, it should be noted that expectations of job mobility are higher than actual job mobility. While 43% of respondents said they expect to change jobs in the next five years, only 32% had actually done so in the preceding five-year period. Some caution when making projections about job mobility is therefore required.

Comparison with earlier data on job mobility would indicate, however, that job mobility is on the increase: in the 2001 Eurobarometer survey on mobility, 29% reported having changed job in the previous five years, while 32% reported having done so in the 2005 survey.

Link between geographical and job mobility

High positive correlation

Geographical and job mobility are clearly related: as already stated, a majority of moves across regions or borders are made for job-related reasons. The findings on geographical and job mobility can thus be combined to form a composite picture of European mobility. Across Europe, it would seem that levels of geographical and of job mobility coincide: in countries that have high levels of geographical mobility, people tend to change jobs more often.

Mobility clusters

The countries can be grouped into five mobility 'clusters'.

- The Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and the UK combine the highest levels of geographical and job mobility.
- Three Mediterranean countries (Malta, Italy and Portugal) and four central/eastern European countries (Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia): these countries have a generally low mobility profile, both in terms of geographical and job mobility.
- Three eastern European Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary and Latvia): have

high levels of job mobility but the lowest levels of geographical mobility.

- Two country groupings have medium scores on one dimension but higher scores on the other. France, Ireland and Luxembourg have a high level of geographical mobility combined with medium levels of job mobility, whereas Estonia, Latvia and the Netherlands have the highest levels of job mobility but only medium levels of geographical mobility.
- Four countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Spain) have average levels of both forms of mobility.

This pattern recalls the typology of welfare states discussed earlier: higher levels of both types of mobility are found in the social-democratic and liberal states. Such countries may have a wider application of social insurance, which encourages their citizens to consider both residential and job mobility as feasible options. This may be particularly relevant for those with lower levels of educational attainment, who may otherwise be more restricted in their overall mobility. Moreover, because most job transitions result in upward occupational mobility, this suggests that these states perform quite well in ensuring career advancement and social mobility for their citizens.

Further information

Further information, and links to the reports from which this *Foundation Findings* was drawn, is available at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/migration.htm>

Full text of the reports

Mobility in Europe (descriptive report)

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0659.htm>

Long-distance mobility in Europe: Getting the balance right (résumé)

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0636.htm>

Five analytical reports

Economic benefits of long-distance mobility

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0702.htm>

Factors determining international and regional migration in Europe

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0709.htm>

Job satisfaction and labour market mobility

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0710.htm>

Occupational mobility in Europe

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0711.htm>

Voluntary and forced job mobility in Europe

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0712.htm>



Policy pointers



Policy considerations

While the survey findings paint a complex picture of geographical and job mobility, it is clear that at the national level greater levels of both are associated with higher rates of GDP growth, better rates of employment and lower rates of long-term unemployment. Together with the greater opportunities for upward mobility available to those who undertake more job changes, it would seem that the focus on mobility in the European Employment Strategy is justified.

However, a reliance upon greater geographical mobility to resolve Europe's labour market issues could be misguided. The survey found that, in the event of unemployment, only 31% of respondents said they would move region or country to find a job. This indicates that only a small proportion of the European workforce would be prepared to cross national borders in the event of unemployment. While migration may be a solution to unemployment and labour market imbalances, it is likely to be so for a relatively restricted number of persons or households.

Moreover, encouraging greater mobility will be a challenge: despite its perceived and actual

benefits, geographical and job mobility in the EU is likely to remain at a low level. Only 4% of EU citizens have ever moved to another country in the Union, and fewer than 3% have moved to a non-EU country. When asked about their future intentions to move country, only 3% indicated that they might move in the next five years. Even when interregional mobility is considered, 21% have lived outside their region of birth. In terms of job mobility, a similar preference emerges for stability: 68% of working Europeans still have the same employer as they had five years ago, while 57% see themselves being with the same employer in five years' time. Only around one in three job transitions is voluntary, with a view to improving labour market position; the rest of the time, job changes are either forced upon the worker or are the result of an attempt to reconcile working and personal life.

Taking a balanced approach

While mobility is seen as a desirable goal of European social policy, it is important to recognise that too much mobility, or mobility of the wrong sort, could create as many problems as it might be expected to solve. Geographical mobility has the potential to erode communities

and lead to a loss of social cohesion; it can also result in a 'brain drain' for countries or regions facing substantial emigration of young, well-educated workers (witness recently expressed concerns in Poland about the movement of many of its young people to the EU15). Job mobility can also represent a downward spiral for disadvantaged workers, who may be forced into an ongoing situation of precarious employment. Moreover, less mobile workers – the lower educated, those aged 45 years and over – may be in greater need of the protection against social exclusion provided by the social support of family and networks. Long-distance mobility could weaken this support. High levels of voluntary mobility can also create problems for employers, as it means higher recruitment and training costs (Employers may aim to reduce these costs by minimising staff turnover through a policy of raising levels of job satisfaction.) A policy goal for mobility then, is that it should be optimised, rather than maximised.

Fitting in with other EU policies

While mobility is an important goal of EU policy, it must be recognised that it exists in a policy context with other, established structural and regional policy directions.

Throughout the EU's history, regional development support has played an important role in protecting the human, social and economic capital of marginalised areas. This support, implementing capital mobility or foreign direct investments in these areas regions, has enabled less developed regions to compete with more industrialised regions of the Union. If mobility policy was implemented in such a way as to facilitate the permanent mass migration of better educated citizens from these regions, it would undermine policies of regional support. Instead, mobility policy and structural and regional policy should be designed and implemented in the context of an integrated EU employment, regional and social policy.

Developing a common European migration strategy

In recognition of the impact of demographic ageing on the economy, the European Commission has highlighted the need to review immigration policies in the longer term: more sustained flows could help contribute to the needs of the EU labour market. For this to work, a strategic pan-European initiative is required. In its absence, migration flows are more likely to be able to bypass current national legislation;

Part of such a strategic approach should be a system of recognition of the qualifications of workers from third countries; such recognition can give migrant workers better access to the labour market and hence facilitate integration. This would also entail wider recognition of the qualifications gained from initial induction and training courses.

Protecting vulnerable workers

Vulnerable workers – the previously unemployed, manual or unskilled workers, the poorer educated, and those on temporary contracts – make more job changes and are more likely to have been forced to leave their last employer. Such workers may require targeted intervention to ensure that they do not become discouraged and withdraw from the labour market.

Minimising risks

Those countries with the highest levels of mobility also have the best institutional arrangements balancing flexibility and security – for instance, the flexicurity ethos prevalent in Denmark. If institutional arrangements are such that security and flexibility go hand in hand, it is likely that both the individual worker and the broader economy will benefit. Such welfare systems minimise the risk of moving; the cost of changing jobs, or residence, is equalled, or more than recompensed by, greater 'profits' in terms of income, skills, or job satisfaction. Where such a favourable outcome is not guaranteed, however, people are more likely to remain in the situation that they are at least familiar with, retaining access to social support networks.



How to ensure that mobile citizens can be rewarded for mobility, and their risks minimised, is a challenge for policymakers.

Aiming for more open employment protection

Employment protection legislation results, clearly, in better job protection for workers. This has the advantage of reducing workers' expectations of being forced to leave their jobs; it also results in less downward occupational mobility. However, it would appear that more restrictive legislation reduces overall expectations of mobility – both voluntary and forced, and reduces the level of upward occupational mobility. Hence, while an important feature of labour market regulation, the implications of using strict EPL should be considered before making legislative changes.

Reviewing transitional arrangements for the NMS

Survey findings indicate that in four of the eastern European NMS – Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia – only between 0.5% and 1.8% of the working population are likely to move to the EU15 in the future. Given such a low rate of emigration, it may be that existing transitional arrangements should be suspended for these countries. By contrast, higher emigration (of between 2.5% and 4.2% of the working population) is expected for four other eastern European states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In light of this, Member States may consider further transitional arrangements to be appropriate.

Assisting the less advantaged in their mobility

The complementarity observed between geographical and job mobility suggests a mutually reinforcing effect. This benefits those who are already advantaged, but it could also mean that individuals who do not have the skills or resources to be more mobile (including languages), would become progressively disadvantaged over the life course. Mobility of all types is easier for the young, the better off and the well educated. Other groups however, require assistance if they are to become more mobile. One way to progress this would be to expand and upgrade the EURES job information network, so that it is readily available in each Member State.

Facilitating integration of migrants

Policymakers can facilitate mobility by removing barriers to geographical mobility, in terms of tax benefits, housing, healthcare (i.e. the EHIC initiative) and greater portability of pensions and mortgages. However, it should be noted that survey findings indicate that such considerations are only minor obstacles to citizens' mobility. Social, cultural, educational and infrastructural barriers pose more of an obstacle. To counter this, policymakers can foster the integration of migrants, provide a sufficient supply of adequate and affordable housing in recipient countries, invest in language training and assist young people in studying and working abroad (as has been done in such schemes as the ERASMUS programme).

'Mobility is synonymous with professional development and therefore it falls within the framework of lifelong learning, whether formal or informal. However, attention must be paid not to present mobility as a panacea for the effects of restructuring. The difficulties of mobility, which often does not work even at the national level, must not be underestimated. In fact, mobility is successful when it is a choice and based on qualifications.'

Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of the Regions

Foundation Findings provide pertinent background information and policy pointers for all actors and interested parties engaged in the current European debate on the future of social policy. The contents are based on Foundation research and reflect its autonomous and tripartite structure.

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