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**International Youth Mobility and Life Transitions in Europe:  
Questions, Definitions, Typologies and Theoretical Approaches**

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## **Abstract**

This paper takes as its main focus the intersection of young people's international mobility within Europe with a number of youth life transitions – from education to work, from unemployment to employment, and, more widely, from 'youth' to 'adulthood'. It surveys both the extensive empirical literature on European youth migrations and a number of theoretical approaches which help to conceptualise and understand this youth-mobility phenomenon. Three categories of young intra-EU migrants are identified: students who are studying abroad, graduates who are working or seeking work abroad (the 'higher-skilled'), and non-graduates working or looking for work abroad (the 'lower-skilled'). The age-band is 16-35 years, although we acknowledge that 'youth' and 'young adults' are flexible categories. We also problematise the notion of skill and its various levels. Amongst the theoretical lenses we deploy to frame youth mobility are economic theory (neoclassical and 'new economics'), social networks, life-course studies, temporal conjunctures (EU enlargement, the 2008 'crisis'), and core-periphery dynamics. The three longest sections of the paper review the empirical and theoretical literatures on mobile students and higher- and lower-skilled workers. The concluding discussion reviews policy measures taken at EU, national and local levels.

## **Keywords**

*Youth mobility, youth transitions, Europe, student migration, skilled migration, policy*

## **Introduction**

The central concept of this review paper is that the geographical mobility of young persons (defined pragmatically as those aged between 16 and 35) provides a strategy for negotiating a number of crucial life-course transitions, notably those from study to work, from unemployment to employment and, more widely, from 'youth' to 'adulthood' (Corijn and Klijzing 2001). Henceforth, when we refer to 'youth mobility', we imply *spatial* mobility, which of course interacts in various ways with socio-economic mobility. Our task in this review is twofold: both to survey the existing empirical literature on young-adult geographical mobility in Europe (mainly but not exclusively international mobility) and to advance a range of theoretical perspectives from which this prominent human phenomenon can be interpreted. The review comes at a time when, across Europe, but especially in the more economically vulnerable peripheral member-states, there is a crisis of youth unemployment and a general scenario of labour-market precarity. Hence there is a broad need to assess whether international youth mobility, especially to the more prosperous member-states, some of which are experiencing specific skills shortages, may be an effective strategy to achieve the fabled 'triple-win' outcome. This is when, as a result of migration, economic benefits accrue to the sending regions (exporting surplus labour, receiving inflows of remittances), to the receiving regions (which needs certain types of youthful labour) and to the migrants (who improve their material wellbeing and life chances).

Following the Horizon 2020 YMOBILITY project, of which this paper is a key initial output,<sup>1</sup> we categorise mobile ‘youth’ into three types based largely on educational status:

- students who are studying at university or some other educational institution in another European country;
- graduates who are working or seeking work abroad – ‘higher-skilled’;
- non-graduates who are working or seeking work abroad – ‘lower-skilled’.

These are by no means watertight categories, and there are attendant problems of definition, notably over the notion of skill level, which will be addressed in due course. Moreover, international mobility may be precisely the mechanism through which individuals transit from one category to another – from university to high-skilled employment for instance, or from school to low-skilled jobs, or even (as we shall see) from higher-skilled (but poorly paid) employment in their home country to low-skilled (but better-paid) employment in another country.

This overview paper is presented in several sections as follows. The next three sections are dedicated to ‘clearing the ground’ – we address the key questions underpinning our review and analysis; the hypotheses and possible causal mechanisms which trigger and explain youth mobility, especially in contemporary Europe; and important issues of the definition of key concepts. The succeeding section examines and unpacks the notion of youth transitions. Then, in the three longest sections of the review, we survey the fast-growing literatures on the three types of youth mobility – students, high-skilled workers and lower-skilled workers. We conclude the review with some policy perspectives.

## Key questions

Four key questions underpin all migration processes and episodes: Who? Where? Why? and How? In a bit more detail:

- *Who migrates* (and who does not)? Does migration draw away a representative cross-section of the population of the sending region/country, or are there social, economic, demographic, ethno-cultural or regional filters?
- *Where are people migrating to?* Are there preferred destinations? What are the patterns of migration expressed in space and time – for instance as intense flows to particular destinations, or as more diffuse and gradually evolving flows?
- *Why do people migrate?* This is perhaps the most fundamental question of all in migration research and, like the first question, it needs to be paired with its counterfactual: Why do

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people stay put? The probable determinants of migration include a range of economic, demographic, social and psychological factors which are mainly expressed at the individual level, together with meso-level factors related to networks, channels and organisations, and the macro-structure of political economy, including regional inequality and financial crisis. These hypothesised migration drivers are described in more systematic detail in the next section, and will then echo throughout this review paper.

- *How do people migrate?* Although migration is often conceptualised as an individualised action, it rarely takes place without at least some reference to other social groups, including family, friends and peer groups. It may also be framed by specific networks and channels, as noted above. Also relevant here are the means of travel when migrating, especially their cost.

These four questions constitute the essence of the migration process itself, but it is also important to interrogate the impacts of migration – on the regions of arrival, the regions of departure, and the migrants themselves.

- *For the regions of arrival*, what impact does youth migration have on the economy, labour market and social environment, and what are the main issues surrounding the integration of young-adult migrants?
- *For the regions of origin*, does the departure of large numbers of youthful migrants distort the age-structure, leading to an ageing society? Is there a registered decline in unemployment? Are there worries over brain drain? How do migrants keep in touch with ‘home’ – for instance by return visits, sending remittances, and other forms of communication? What are migrants’ intentions of return migration?
- *For the migrants*, to what extent do they objectively and subjectively feel that they benefit from their migration experience – for instance in terms of accessing better jobs, higher incomes, better career prospects, better study opportunities, and overall improvement in their sense of well-being and life satisfaction? How is their identity affected? Do they still identify strongly with their home country or are other identities fashioned in migration – European, global or related to the host country?

### **Hypothesised determinants of youth mobility**

Standard migration theory has many explanations for why migration and mobility occur, and most of them apply, to a greater or lesser measure, to youth migration. Here is not the space for an extensive review of the hypothetical determinants of migration/mobility; these are ably spelled out in the general texts on migration (for instance Boyle *et al.* 1998; Castles *et al.* 2014: 25–54; Cohen and Sirkeci 2011; Samers 2010: 52–120). Simplifying a very large body of literature and theory, the determinants of migration can be seen to exist at four levels: individual, family/household, meso-level social networks and channels, and macro-structures relating to spatial economic inequality and time-dependent macro-economic trends. We now take each level in turn, drawing on hypothetical and common-knowledge links to youth migration in

Europe where appropriate. These links will be firmed up in our empirical review of the three migrant types (students, high- and low-skilled workers) in later sections of the paper.

Despite the attractiveness of this multi-level framework for exploring the determinants of migration, we are still some way short of a comprehensive understanding of why some people migrate and others, who may have very similar characteristics to the movers, do not. Several key interventions published in the 1990s (Fischer *et al.* 1997; Hammar and Tamas 1997; Massey *et al.* 1993) all commented on the relatively limited understanding of who migrates and who does not. This is still largely the case today. Nevertheless, we hold to the view that a multi-scale analysis of the potentially relevant determining and structuring factors holds out the best hope of an integrated and relatively ideologically neutral understanding of what ‘drives’ migration, with special reference to youthful Europeans in the 21st century.

### *Individual mobility: the micro scale*

At the micro-level of the individual, there are three broad sets of factors that have been hypothesised as determinants of migration/mobility – demographic, socio-economic and psychosocial. Of course, these subgroups of factors can become blurred or combined, either simultaneously or sequentially but, for the time being, they are kept analytically separated.

The main individual-scale demographic factors which are likely to be contributing determinants of migration are age, gender, generation and level of education. Also potentially relevant are family context – marriage/partnership, existence of children, number of siblings and even birth order (since this can relate to care duties towards parents, inheritance patterns etc.). Clearly, youth defines our focus here on younger-age migrants, although there are other demographic and kinship factors to be taken into account, such as the composition of the migratory unit, which could involve other family members migrating at the same time, or a joining process with other family members already abroad. At an aggregate level, it is well-documented that spikes in migration propensity cluster around the two main education-to-work transitions which occur at late teens for school-leavers and early–mid 20s for university leavers (King *et al.* 2006).

Although many intra-European mobility flows are made up of roughly equal numbers of men and women, there are some imbalances, related mainly to the structure of labour-market needs and opportunities. The gendered segmentation of labour niches has become a well-documented aspect of global migration flows at least since the 1950s and 1960s, when Europe’s guestworker migrants (mainly men) were recruited to staff the factories and building-sites of the fast-growing industrial economies of France, the UK, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland (Berger and Mohr 1975; Piore 1979). More recently, and especially since 2004, we observe a similar male predominance in lower-skilled migrant-worker flows from countries like Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Romania into the construction and other casual-labour sectors of the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Nordic countries. On the other hand, female-majority flows are often associated with the caring professions and include the cases of Portuguese nurses recruited to the supply-deficit health sector in the UK, or *au pair* migrants. Many student mobility flows, especially language-based exchange programmes, are also female-majority.

The individual-scale economic drivers of youth migration largely rest on human capital theory – on the notion that an ‘investment’ in migration, either for work or for study, produces benefits which will eventually outweigh the costs of the move (Sjaastad 1962). This approach provides insights into which migrants tend to migrate to which destinations, and for how long, and into changes over time in their earnings and benefits-to-cost ratio (Dustmann 1999; Dustmann and Kirkchamp 2002; Dustmann and Weiss 2007). Unemployment, or the fear of unemployment, also constitutes an important economic trigger for youth migration (Blanchflower and Shadforth 2009).

Secondary data constraints mean that most human capital research on migration has depended on education or qualifications as surrogates of skills. This has meant a focus on technical skills, and fails to analyse the ‘softer’ social skills possessed, or acquired, by migrants. This gap has been addressed by Williams and Baláž (2005, 2008), who focus on the concepts of tacit knowledge and competences (cf. Evans 2002). Based especially on their research on young Slovakian migrants, Williams and Baláž analysed a range of competences (including values and attitudes, social and interpersonal skills, reliability, language knowledge etc.) that can only be acquired through face-to-face proximity and more-or-less deep immersion into the culture of the destination country. Language skills are often found to be particularly important in enhancing earnings and career trajectories (Dustmann 1999).

Through migration, individuals acquire not only skills and competences, but also a broader cultural experience from the places and countries they migrate to. This can be regarded as an absorption and enhancement of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) or the acquisition, perhaps, of a more general *transnational habitus* (Kelly and Lusia 2006) deriving from the experience of international mobility and living across and between two or more countries. Writing of the recent youth emigration surge from Ireland, Cairns *et al.* (2013) and Moriarty *et al.* (2015) have stressed the *mobility habitus* that young Irish graduates have by virtue of the historically embedded culture of migration in Irish society. Yet another term which has gained traction when referring to the personal, deployable benefits derived from frequent travel and spells of living abroad is *mobility capital* – applied by Murphy-Lejeune (2002) to the intra-European experiences of Erasmus students and language assistants.

From a more psychological perspective, individual personality characteristics are important. Boneva and Frieze (2001) have written about the *migrant personality*: compared to non-migrants, migrants tend to be more work-orientated and to have higher achievement motivations, whilst ‘stayers’ are more tied to their families and home-based social networks (Cairns 2009; Reher 1998; Van Dalen and Henkens 2012). Other literature which specifically utilises the concept of migrant personality includes research on students (Frieze *et al.* 2006) and on migrant workers (Polek *et al.* 2011). A final element of the psychosocial make-up of migrants is their hypothesised tolerance towards risk and the way in which they manage risk in their lives (Williams and Baláž 2012).

#### *Family and household: the ‘micro-meso’ scale*

Moving from the individual to the family-household level – a small but significant up-scaling to what we call the ‘micro-meso level’ – produces new framings of why and how young people

migrate. Although the general construction of youth mobility is that this is an independently activated migration stream of individuals, this is by no means always the case. First, young people may be embedded in family migration – going abroad as teenagers or young adults with their parents. This whole-family migration usually involves children who are younger, but older children are not excluded, particularly if there are younger siblings involved and/or if there are strong economic motives driving the migration of the primary migrant breadwinner(s), the parent(s). The difficulties of managing ongoing educational needs may be eased by going to an international school, where there may be better possibilities for continuing in the same language and curricular system (such as the international baccalaureate). Or the family move may coincide with the transition from school to higher education, or from education into the labour market. For family migration in a lower-skill context, the younger generation may be more limited to lower-wage manual employment when abroad.

Another family-driven mechanism for youth migration occurs when migrants join other family members already living abroad – either their siblings or, less commonly, one or both parents who, having migrated some time earlier, left the son/daughter in the care of other family members (the remaining parent, grandparents, aunts/uncles, older siblings, or to live independently). But such family solidarity is not always the norm, and a not inconsiderable share of youth migration occurs as a result of, or reaction to, some kind of family rupture (parents' separation or death, bankruptcy, or the need to 'escape' a difficult family environment etc.).

#### *Networks and channels: the meso level*

If the family-household scale can be considered the 'micro-meso' level, more solidly meso-level factors pertinent to youth mobility in Europe include a variety of social and community networks, business networks and recruitment channels for the higher-skilled, and educational networks for students. Networks play a particularly important role in overcoming barriers to migration, such as reducing the uncertainties related to finding jobs and accommodation, and negotiating administrative and bureaucratic procedures (Boyd 1989); their importance and nature varies between students, skilled and unskilled migrants (Cairns 2010; Jordan and Düvell 2003), and, often markedly so, by gender. According to Faist (1997), the 'crucial meso-level' is an overlooked layer of analysis in explaining migration, interposed between the individual and larger structures such as the nation-state. Although not the whole story, *social capital* is particularly important in understanding the volume of international migration, the mechanisms at work, and who migrates, via individuals' links to chain migration, migrant associations and ongoing patterns of friendship and cooperation within various social groups (Faist 1997: 188).

#### *Spatial and temporal structures: the macro scale*

In contrast to the relatively recent incorporation of meso-scale factors into migration research, macro-scale factors have a longer history of being seen as important shaping structures of migration flows, especially at regional and international scales. Two of the historical bases of a macro-regional approach to framing labour migration flows are the Lewis (1954) dual-sector

growth model, applied to postwar Europe by Kindleberger (1967); and the ‘Third-Worldist’ model of dependent development within a global centre-periphery system (Frank 1969; Wallerstein 1974), applied to Europe by Seers *et al.* (1979). The Lewis–Kindleberger line of analysis sees accumulation in the industrialising capitalist sector of the European economy, located in the advanced core regions of the continent (traditionally, North-West Europe during the 1950s–1970s), fed and sustained by transfers of seemingly unlimited supplies of labour from the rural, semi-subsistence regions of the periphery. During these early postwar decades of rapid industrial growth and mass labour migration, there was a ring of the poorer, outer countries of Western Europe which constituted an unmistakable labour periphery: in the north, Finland; in the west, Ireland; and to the south, a sweep of Mediterranean countries from Portugal through Spain, Southern Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. Later in this paper we shall see how some of these periphery-to core migration flows have been resurrected since the 1990s, with an eastern periphery added after 1989, and especially after the ‘A8’ enlargement of 2004. This time the migrants are not poorly educated rural-origin workers but a diversity of more-highly educated workers and students.

## Definitions

Across all social science, definitions are necessary and helpful, but also often problematic. More often than not, they need to be carefully interrogated and even deconstructed. The toolbox of terms, concepts and categories that we deploy in this paper is no exception.

### *Migration vs mobility: ‘liquid migration’ in Europe*

The first definitional issue is whether we are dealing with *migration* or *mobility*. The answer is both, but we need to be clear in distinguishing between these overlapping and competing concepts. Mobility is privileged by its inscription within the title of the wider project of which this paper is the launching-pad: YMOBILITY stands for Youth Mobility (and also Why Mobility?). But the project is really about youth *migration* in Europe since we research young people who have been a minimum of at least six months in another country, and returnees who have been at least six months back in their home country. Hence migration is about moving but then *staying put* for a certain length of time.

However, we also observe an increasing use of the term *mobility* in the study and portrayal of migration nowadays, especially within Europe. We suggest that there are both political-ideological reasons for this, and changes in the phenomenology of European migration. In their recent review of EU FP7 research on migration, King and Lulle (2016: 30–31) note a discursive shift in the terminology used by the European Commission, as well as by other international bodies such as IOM (2008) and UNDP (2009), away from ‘migration’ and towards the arguably more neutral term ‘mobility’. Migration has a history now of being seen as a ‘threat’ in many European countries – none more so than the UK in the Conservative-government eras. ‘Migration’ implies that migrants will stay for some time, perhaps for good, and become a burden on the welfare state. ‘Mobility’ signals that people will not stay but move

on, either back to their home country or onwards to another one. And there are, as King and Lulle argue (2016: 26–33), new geographies and new temporalities of European migration, especially since Europe's opening to the East. East-West shuttle migration, long-distance commuting, extended business visits, seasonal and circular migration, student exchanges, working holidays, transit migration – all these relatively 'new' forms of movement serve to blur the distinction between migration and mobility.

The linear bipolarity and fixity of the conventional construction of migration (a move from country A to country B, perhaps followed by a return to A) is challenged by these much more complex mobility regimes and trajectories, with their greater variability in time and space. Engbersen and Snel (2013) have advanced the seductive phrase 'liquid migration' to connote these new, more flexible and unpredictable forms of human mobility in the post-enlargement space of Europe. We also note a trend to describe intra-European migration as 'mobility', reflecting the EU's ethos of 'free movement', whereas immigration from outside Europe (or more precisely the EU and the European Economic Area) of 'third-country nationals' is labelled 'migration' (Boswell and Geddes 2011: 3; see also Recchi 2015).

We also need to acknowledge that a preference for the term 'mobility' has been given an intellectual boost by the advent of the so-called 'mobilities turn' in the 2000s. Inspired by books by Cresswell (2006) and Urry (2000, 2007), the notion of society being increasingly characterised by regimes of mobility of various types, and less by the 'old' concepts of class, career, residence and sedentarism, has taken firm hold in some quarters. In the mobilities optic, migration is just one form of human mobility, alongside both other forms of corporeal mobility (walking, travel, tourism, commuting, visiting etc.) and other mobile phenomena in real or virtual motion (material goods, capital, imagined travel, communication of messages and images etc.). An interesting multi-mobility focus is how different rhythms of mobility are enfolded within each other – for instance the relatively frequent rhythm of visiting home is encased within the longer-range migration for work or study abroad (King and Lulle 2015).

### *Youth: a process of 'becoming'*

The second key term to be unpacked here is *youth*. Like other age-related categories (childhood, middle age, old age etc.), youth is defined less in relation to fixed chronological age (on which there is no agreement anyway), and more as a life-course category which is *socially and culturally constructed*. The conceptualisation of youth varies from one society and culture to another, and perhaps also by class, gender and ethnicity. Youth is also expressed *contextually and situationally*; in other words it is a 'plastic' concept which can be moulded to fit changing circumstances, even moods. Above all, it is a *relational* category, seen in relation to, and in transition between, other age- and generation-related categories such as childhood, adulthood, middle age etc. It is both self-identified and externally ascribed – but these two perspectives might not match up, so that an individual may see him/herself as youthful, but be seen otherwise by the wider society (or *vice versa*).

In an important intervention into the study of youth and youth transitions, Worth (2009) argues for youth as a *process of becoming* – a dynamic temporal evolution oriented above all to the future rather than to the past or even to the present. Worth proposes the concept of futurity

to demonstrate how the process of becoming can embrace the inherent complexities of contemporary youth transitions.

In most Western societies, there is a general tendency to extend the youthful way of life into later chronological ages. This partly reflects the youth-dominated culture of such societies, sometimes verging on an obsession with youthful 'looks' and activities, and is reflected in such aphorisms as '40 is the new 30', '70 is the new 50' etc. Consumer culture, linked to selling sports and lifestyle products, clothing, cosmetics and grooming products, also feeds this 'youth cult', generating profit for many businesses. But the extension of the youth life-stage to other biological ages is also a result of external economic and cultural factors which are beyond the scope of individuals to control – the delayed access to satisfactory work and income, the difficulty of getting on the property ladder, and therefore the generally delayed transition to the 'full adulthood' stage of career, property ownership, spouse/partner, starting a family etc.

### *Skills, competences, and the 'learning migrant'*

The third and final problematic term to be considered in this review of definitions is *skill*. The established dichotomy between skilled and unskilled, or between higher and lower skilled, is an obvious oversimplification. All migrants have the capacity to acquire skills and other competences, so the emphasis should also be on the *learning migrant* as well as on static measures of skills endowment defined by specific education levels or training qualifications (Williams and Baláž 2008). Conradson and Latham (2005) urged researchers to focus on so-called 'middling migrants' and not only on the high-skilled professionals and the poverty-driven labour migrants. In their stimulating essay on 'the human face of global mobility', Favell *et al.* (2006) likewise critique the falsely polarised migrant worlds of 'elites' and 'proles' (proletarians). Beyond the 'frequent-flying, fast-lane, global elites', who are more common in 'glossy magazines or corporate brochures... lie other socially differentiated realities...: students, nurses, mid-level technical and clerical employees, ambitious or adventurous upwardly mobile middle-classes, migrants from a range of intermediate developing states, and many more...' (Favell *et al.* 2006: 2).

There is no consensus on who counts as a 'skilled' or 'highly skilled' person or migrant. Many studies use the criterion of possession of a university-level qualification to denote 'highly skilled', to which others would also add 'extensive experience in a given field' (Iredale 2000: 883), the type of occupation (professional, technical etc.), or even income level (Williams and Baláž 2005: 440). Some studies try to combine criteria (such as qualifications *and* occupation), or add in specific categories, such as students and entrepreneurs who may not (yet) be graduates, to create a composite class of 'professionals and highly skilled' (e.g. Mahroum 2000: 25). Necessarily pragmatic, our YMOBILITY consortium defines highly skilled migrants as those with tertiary-level degrees; students (undergraduates or postgraduates) are a separate category in the research design.

Choosing educational qualifications as the criterion for defining higher-skilled migrants is, however, not unproblematic. First, skills come in many types, some of which are not captured by formal qualifications. There are important 'soft' skills relating to communication, flexibility, sensibility to others' views etc. Reflecting the 'capabilities' approach to human

development (Nussbaum 2011), we should therefore speak about the lifelong skills *and competences* of migrants. Skills and competences can be enhanced and valorised through migration, or the reverse may also happen; hence we witness migration as a process of both ‘up-skilling’ and ‘de-skilling’ in different contexts. Furthermore, skills and competences can be developed in so-called low-skill work environments and later valorised in more prestigious occupations. This is shown, for example, in the case of Slovak *au pairs* working in the UK. Despite being employed well below their qualifications (most were university students or graduates), these migrants were able to acquire language and other social skills which proved useful upon return home to progress their studies and careers (Williams and Baláž 2005).

Second, skills are not ‘fixed’, universally valuable resources that individuals possess and can easily put to use wherever they go (Nowicka 2014). Numerous studies draw attention to the non-recognition of migrants’ qualifications or work experience (Bauder 2005; Erel 2010). This can happen in two ways: either the non-recognition of home-acquired skills and qualifications when migrants move abroad, or the non-recognition of qualifications and work experience earned abroad when migrants return to their home countries. Distinguishing between qualifications and skills, Csedő argues that skills are not simply owned by individuals but constantly negotiated between employers and prospective employees (2008: 807). Employers may be unfamiliar with and unable to assess a migrant’s qualifications and informal skills (Csedő 2008; Moroşanu 2016; Nowicka 2014). For their skills to be ‘recognised’, individuals also require the competence and confidence to communicate them in ways that resonate with relevant audiences and labour markets (Williams and Baláž 2005: 446).

Focusing on the common trend of ‘de-skilling’ amongst Polish graduates in the UK, Nowicka (2014) further emphasises the variable value of skills, depending on the sending and receiving labour-market contexts in which they are developed and put into practice. The Polish migrants she studied perceived the skills acquired in Poland as having little value in the UK, due to the apparent gap between the type of knowledge gained at university in Poland (general academic knowledge) and the more practical skills needed to access the UK labour market. However, although partly disadvantaged and working in mostly low-skilled jobs in the UK, these migrants could utilise their *general* competences in a different way, earning employers’ appreciation by showing a strong work ethic and the *potential* for learning new skills and thus moving to a better position in the labour market. Challenging the idea that skills are ‘fixed’ attributes that migrants can simply transfer abroad, Nowicka thus uses the term ‘migration skills’ to capture the ways in which migrants can re-define and validate their skills in specific labour-market sectors at destination, as opposed to the place of origin.

To conclude: although we define high-skilled largely on the basis of tertiary education, we seek to capture the diverse types of competence and expertise which migrants may possess and further develop in their countries of immigration. We remain sensitive to the complex nature of skills which can be acquired in different environments and have variable meaning and value, depending on where and how they are employed.

## Youth transitions

One of the key objectives of the YMOBILITY programme of research is to establish the extent to which young individuals consider international mobility to be a rational strategy for improving their lives and, in particular, to mediate three significant youth life-course transitions:

- school or higher education to work;
- unemployment to employment; and
- youth to independent or ‘full’ adulthood, the latter stage being generally understood as implying partnership formation, having children and establishing a ‘home’.

This broad sequence of youth transition to adulthood may follow the standard ‘Western’ model of school/education > work > marriage and house/flat > family and career but, increasingly, both in terms of empirical reality and the conceptualisation of youth/life transitions, there are alternative pathways. Rather than fixed stages, we can think of evolutions, ‘becomings’ (Worth 2009), but also of ‘ruptures’, ‘reversals’, ‘discontinuities’, ‘interrupted’ and ‘repeat’ transitions etc. (Borlagdan 2015; Hörschelmann 2011).

Youth mobility is a far from homogenous phenomenon, and different pathways provide different opportunities depending on whether those concerned are students or workers, skilled or unskilled, male or female, and embedded in strong or weak social networks, including formal recruitment channels for going abroad. Whilst it remains true that the highest peak in the demographic migration profile coincides with the transition from education to work (King *et al.* 2006: 240), youth migration has increased and diversified in recent decades, especially since 2000. There are now diverse migration and mobility pathways that range from student mobility within and beyond Europe, researcher mobility schemes, international placements and internships, to individual job-seeking migration and firm and agency recruitment, at all levels of the skills and experience hierarchy.

Within Europe, two factors have enhanced the pace and urgency of youth mobility in recent years. The post-2008 economic crisis, which has particularly affected the weaker, smaller, peripheral economies of the EU, has increased rates of (in some cases, already high) youth unemployment, pushing people to look abroad in order to become economically independent and develop their careers en route to achieving the transition to adult independence. Even without the crisis, the uncertainties of globalisation and labour-market flexibilisation have influenced young people’s ability to establish themselves as independent adults, form partnerships and become parents (Blossfield *et al.* 2012; Oppenheimer 2003). The second factor is the combined lubricating effect of institutional and technological developments: EU freedom-of-movement provisions and the transport-cost reductions of budget airlines and cheap coach travel.

We now examine the three youth transitions listed above and problematise each in turn.

### *Education into employment*

The *school/university to work* transition is the one which traditionally coincides with high spatial mobility, although this generalisation is usually made with reference to internal rather than international mobility. Relatively few people move abroad in their mid- or late teens immediately after finishing secondary school; rather the peak in international mobility comes in the later years of the early-mid 20s; following a spell in higher or further education and perhaps some years of work experience in the home country. Often it is the unsatisfactory nature of this work experience (low-paid, precarious, subject to bouts of unemployment etc.) which prompts the desire or need to move abroad.

But there are other mobilities and transitions which disturb this ‘classic’ study-to-employment transition. These include combined study/work regimes, such as Erasmus-sponsored international work placements and internships, *au pair* mobility, work-oriented ‘gap years’ between school and university, and the ‘intra-academic’ transition from student to paid researcher. Then there is the ‘reverse transition’ from work to study. In this latter case, these individuals may first work in their home countries in order to fund their studies abroad or may work abroad in order to fund their studies at home; others may move abroad in order to work initially and then switch to studying abroad; and yet others who, once abroad, combine work and part-time study (or full-time study with part-time work).

Du Bois-Reymond and López Blasco (2003) characterise these ‘misleading’ transitions, which deviate from the standard study-to-job norm, through a ‘yo-yo’ metaphor. ‘Yo-yo’ transitions are strongly linked to flexible labour-market relations and the ‘destandardisation’ of both work and education (Walther *et al.* 2006). These linked phenomena can be characterised in both a negative and a positive light. The negative interpretation emphasises the increasing precarity of the job market, especially (but not only) in weak economies and at lower skill levels. The more positive interpretation points to the creative way in which such yo-yo or ‘side-stepping’ moves enable young people to maximise their opportunities at different points in time, experience a diversity of possible future trajectories, and build up a portfolio of varied skills, qualifications and competences (Lundahl and Olofsson 2014).

### *Migration as a route from unemployment to employment*

*Unemployed to employed* is another classic transition which often coincides with geographical mobility, except that some categories of unemployed are highly immobile – their reluctance to move is related to a fear of the unknown and their embeddedness in family structures and socio-cultural networks tied to the place of origin. Within this general employment-related mobility transition, there are many sub-types, including from casual and part-time employment to full-time employment, from lower- to higher-paid work of a similar (or different) type, and from less- to more-skilled jobs. However, there are also work-related mobilities which combine ‘upward’ with ‘reverse’ transitions. These usually occur when there are language barriers to be crossed and/or significant contrasts in income and life-chances between the countries of origin and of destination. Under such circumstances, young migrants may have to disregard their qualifications (e.g. as graduates) in order to take low-skilled work which is, nevertheless, much more highly paid than the much lower wages available in the home country, even for secure,

highly skilled jobs. Hence, we find, for example, trained teachers or medical assistants in Eastern Europe forsaking their steady but low-paid jobs at home in order to undertake much better-paid manual jobs in high-wage economies in Sweden, Germany or the UK. More examples of this ‘deskilling’ and ‘brain waste’ will be given in later in this paper.

### *Youth to adulthood*

The above two transitions are part-components of the broader transition from *youth to ‘full’ adulthood*. Arnett (2004) argues that staged transitions from school to work and ‘emerging adulthood’ are standard across social contexts; a reflection of the robustness of the standard linear transition model. Roberts (2003) has likewise argued that young people in post-socialist countries demonstrate faithfulness to the conventional transitions paradigm – an interesting finding when set against the backdrop of individualisation and profound transformation in post-socialist societies.

Nevertheless, as already noted, right across Europe (and beyond), new uncertainties, conjunctures and structural forces combine to challenge the standard youth-to-adulthood transition model. These forces include the uncertainties of globalisation, economic crisis (profound in some countries, less so in others), labour-market flexibilisation and, working on a somewhat different principle, the emergence of wider youth-oriented lifestyle models which prolong youthful identities and practices into later age groups – to 20s, 30s, 40s and beyond (Settersten and Ray 2010).

Another set of contrasting influences derives from diverse family and community contexts. In Southern Europe, where family structures and cross-generational support mechanisms remain strong (although declining), young adults are supported by their parents until later ages than would be considered the norm in Northern Europe. Difficult access to the labour market, especially for graduates with degrees in non-vocational subjects, means that young men and women may be ‘sheltered’ and ‘subsidised’ by their parents, who provide them with board, lodging and financial support until such time (typically nowadays in their 30s) as they can finally acquire a decent job and settle down independently or with a partner. In other countries and amongst other classes, ‘adultification’ may start much earlier, due to family break-up or the emigration of one or both parents (Burton 2007). Yet another way in which a measure of independence may be thrust on young people is when they are sent to boarding school, either in the home country or abroad. In the UK, top boarding schools have many pupils from wealthy families in continental Europe (as well as Russia, China, Nigeria etc.) who have been placed in such schools as a springboard for accessing leading UK and international universities (Dunne *et al.* 2014).

Above all, class and wealth inequalities, highly dependent on the places and countries where young people grow up, also play an important role in future mobility choices and life transitions towards adulthood (Ball *et al.* 2000; Macdonald 1998; Macdonald *et al.* 2005). In some of the intersections between class, youth, mobility trajectories and choice, mobility is almost pre-ordained; in others it is a precarious trajectory, subject to risk and uncertainty. Middle- and upper-class youth can enjoy international mobility as a ‘rite of passage’ and benefit from the enriching outcomes of yo-yo transitions between international study and work-

placement opportunities. They can afford experimentation with identity roles, open-ended careers and relationships, and are often able to trade on the boosting effects of well-developed family contacts and the prestige of an education from a prestigious university (Findlay *et al.* 2012). Working-class youth usually cannot afford to delay the transition to work and the establishment of the material base for a family (Silva 2013), or the migration of a young parent may be necessary in order to support children at home. For working-class students and migrants, there can be important ‘hidden costs’ in moving abroad, such as the loss of working-class social capital (Borlagdan 2015: 841).

In sum, the challenges and risks that emerge from the diversification and blurring of youth transitions are different in the various countries, places and regions of Europe, and they also markedly differ according to class, educational status, family status and gender. In the next three sections of this review, we exemplify these generalisations with reference to three main groups: students, higher-skilled migrants, and lesser-skilled migrants.

### **Mobile students**

The mainstream migration and mobility literatures have tended to overlook international student mobility. Open any of the main textbooks on migration (for instance, Boyle *et al.* 1998; Brettell and Hollifield 2015; Cohen 1995; Cohen and Sirkeci 2011; Constant and Zimmermann 2013) and you will find almost nothing on students-as-migrants (an exception is Samers 2010: 5–6, 26–30, 79–80, 164–168). Much the same goes, even more surprisingly, for the texts on the mobilities paradigm (Adey 2010; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007); surprising, since the general discourse speaks about *mobile* students and student *mobility*. Clearly, students moving across international borders to pursue studies in another country are not conventionally seen as ‘migrants’; nor, indeed, do they see themselves as such. Ask them if they are migrants, and they will reply that no, they are international students, visiting or exchange students etc. Purposely or unwittingly, they distance themselves from migrants, who are constructed in their minds as people who move for work and who are more likely to be poor people or refugees. And yet, following the neutral, technical definition of international migration – according to Samers (2010: 9–10) ‘the act of moving across international boundaries from a country of origin to take up residence in a country of destination’ – usually subject to a minimum threshold of residence (such as six months or one year) – students qualify as migrants.

Within Europe, the labelling of travelling students as mobile people, rather than as migrants, is reinforced by EU terminology, which is resolutely about their *mobility*, not their *migration*. There is an implied, but rarely made explicit, distinction between intra-EU student movement as mobility, and long-distance student movement, for instance from China, Africa, the Middle East etc. into Europe to study and then perhaps stay on to work, which is seen as international student migration. Either way, international student mobility or international student migration, we can use the acronym ISM.

What this all means is that the literature on ISM has tended to develop outside the mainstream migration/mobilities studies literature. Only recently have papers on ISM started to appear in migration journals, and they still appear rather rarely. Instead the ISM literature is scattered in education journals and in journals from disciplines like sociology and geography.

On the other hand there has been a glut of recent books on ISM, many of them global rather than European in scope (see, for instance, Bilecen 2014; Brooks and Waters 2011; Byram and Dervin 2008; de Wit *et al.* 2008; Murphy-Lejeune 2002; Van Mol 2014).

### *Typologies and geographies of internationally mobile students*

ISM is a phenomenon which is rather easily classifiable into different subtypes; more difficult, however, is to put a container around the phenomenon, as it merges into other forms of hybrid migration/mobility such as the student-worker, international internships and study-work placements, or the blurred boundary between study and research careers – in some countries and institutional contexts a PhD student is classed as a student, in others as a career-track member of the research staff. In what follows we paraphrase the literature review carried out by King *et al.* (2010: 7–9).

Probably the most fundamental difference is between what is generally termed *credit mobility* and *degree or diploma mobility*. In the former case the student studies abroad (or perhaps does a work placement) for a relatively short period, typically a semester or a year, and then returns back to his or her home university to complete the programme of study, bringing the ‘credit’ from the foreign study or placement with them to contribute to the overall final assessment of the programme. A further subdivision of credit mobility regards whether the period spent abroad is mandatory or voluntary. Mandatory mobility is often part of specific degree programmes such as foreign languages or international business studies; voluntary mobility is strongly encouraged – indeed it is regarded almost as a right in European universities – even if it is still taken up by a relatively small proportion of the total student population. In the case of diploma or degree mobility, the student moves abroad for the entire duration of the academic programme – Bachelor’s, Master’s or doctoral degree, or some other kind of higher education diploma. On the whole, within Europe, credit mobility is more common amongst undergraduate students, whereas degree mobility is more attractive to postgraduates.

Other typologies are hinted at above: namely the *level* of study, ranging from undergraduate (or even pre-university study) to doctoral; and the *type of activity* undertaken – study within a university setting, work placement or internship, or taking a job as a temporary language teacher or laboratory assistant within a framework of credit mobility.

*Geography* plays a differentiating role, too. Here the main distinction is between ISM *within* Europe (such as the long-running Erasmus scheme of student exchange mobility) and ISM *beyond* Europe, where the main outward flows are to the United States, and the main inward flows are from less-developed countries such as China, India and countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

The geography of student mobility within Europe has been shaped by the twin tracks of the Erasmus programme and the Bologna process. The Erasmus scheme started in 1987 and was promoted to facilitate student exchanges between pairs and networks of countries and universities. The Bologna process, launched in 1999, was designed to create a European area of higher education based on harmonised systems and structures of academic study with mutual recognisability. ‘Erasmus’ is in many ways a unique programme in that people are *paid* to be

mobile, receiving a top-up grant (albeit modest, around 250 euros per month) and supported by a network of protocols and administrative structures (Recchi 2015: 41–43). According to Recchi (2015: 71), the Erasmus scheme has been ‘the single most important EU activity to spread Europeanness into everyday life’. Approximately 3 million students have benefited since the scheme’s inception. Yet the scheme has consistently failed to achieve its targeted numbers over its several decades of operation, and participation rates have been highly uneven across its constituent members (now the EU28 plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey).

Commenting on the uneven geography of Erasmus flows and exchanges, Brooks and Waters (2011: 76–81), de Wit (2008) and King (2003) make the following observations. There are long-established net outflows from the less wealthy southern EU countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece) to the wealthier northern partners (especially the UK and Ireland, but also France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden). The UK and Ireland – arguably because of their attractiveness as English-language destinations and also because of the perceived high quality of the educational experience – are unusual in the matrix of flows because of the imbalance between inflows and outflows (the former roughly twice the latter). However, there are important changes over time, such as the rise of Spain as a favoured destination for North European Erasmus students, and the marked imbalance in flows from the Eastern EU countries – all net ‘exporters’ of Erasmus students. The highest net exporters (ratio of out- to in-movers) are Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia (Brooks and Waters 2011: 80; de Wit 2008: 175).

Outside of Erasmus, rather little is known about degree-mobile students who move within Europe: the statistics are patchy and the evidence partly anecdotal. Part of the statistical problem is how degree-mobile students are defined – by their ‘foreign’ citizenship, birthplace, habitual residence or country of prior residence. Erasmus-type exchange students are supposedly excluded, but this may not always be the case. In de Wit’s (2008) analysis of UNESCO, OECD and EURODATA statistics for the early-mid 2000s, several trends emerge. The key factors (push and pull) shaping the observed patterns include language, academic reputation of university systems, cost of living and fees. Hence students move within language-similar countries – Germany, Austria and Switzerland; France, Belgium and Switzerland; the UK and Ireland etc. On average, European countries see around 2–3 per cent of their students engaged in outbound mobility – a share which has been relatively stable over time (Brooks and Waters 2011: 77; de Wit 2008: 185). For smaller countries, such as Cyprus and Luxembourg (but not Malta), the share is more than 50 per cent. The vast majority of degree-mobile students from Central and Eastern Europe study in Western Europe, in particular in Germany; 20 per cent stay within the Central-Eastern region.

Some recent flows – quantitatively modest in the grand scheme of things – have been triggered to the few universities in continental Europe (notably in the Netherlands and Sweden) which teach degrees through the medium of English and which have lower fees than, for example, parts of the UK, where fees for most courses were recently raised from £3000 to £9000 per year. At the postgraduate level, there has been a rapid expansion in Master’s-level programmes taught in English, thereby creating clusters of international students in certain university cities. Likewise, increasing numbers of PhD theses are written, and research training and seminars given, in English. Hence there is a correlation between the ‘Europeanisation’ of university programmes and the expanding use of the globally hegemonic language of English.

### *Theorising international student mobility*

Attempts to theorise international student migration/mobility have been made by, amongst others, Brooks and Waters (2011: 10–18), Findlay (2011), Findlay *et al.* (2012), King and Findlay (2012) and Raghuram (2013). Following these writers, we nominate four main theoretical domains:

- ISM as part of highly skilled migration;
- ISM as both a product of, and a key mechanism underpinning, the internationalisation and globalisation of higher education;
- ISM as part of global youth mobility cultures; and
- the importance of a class analysis of ISM and its relationship to social inequality.

We take each of these theoretical perspectives in turn.

Looking at *ISM as a form of highly skilled migration* reinforces the key transition noted earlier from higher education to a high-skilled, professional job. However, there is an argument that students are not ‘yet’ highly skilled since they have not yet entered the labour market, although there may be exceptions to this in the cases of mature students or students on sandwich courses which combine paid work and study.

On a global scale, Australia and Canada have been the most active in the strategy of attracting foreign students as a way of enriching the supply of highly qualified human capital into the domestic labour markets. This is a macro-economic policy which is pursued by some European countries, where it seems to work particularly at the postgraduate level for scientists, academic researchers and teachers. Rights to stay on after graduation are guaranteed for EU nationals, but the pattern is uneven for graduating third-country nationals. A potential flipside is the danger of a form of ‘brain drain’ from the smaller peripheral countries of Europe if their ‘brightest and best’ students are studying abroad, and not returning, in large numbers. The transition from higher education to employment is reviewed in more detail in the next subsection.

Second, we see ISM as reciprocally linked with the *globalisation of higher education* – it is both a product of globalisation and an underlying mechanism of that very process. Higher education, both globally and within the European setting, has become a multi-billion-dollar business with clear market, and increasingly marketised, features. Supply and demand are likewise recursively related. Higher education products and services (university degrees or the overall ‘student experience’) are supplied to ‘customers’ (students) who ‘demand’ them and are willing to pay a certain price. In the reverse relationship, the supply of students, particularly the best international students, is a scarce resource demanded, competed for and consumed by the increasingly stratified global higher education system. Hence the notion of ‘world-class universities’ (Findlay *et al.* 2012) emerges as a powerful symbol of this progressively globalised, neoliberal market for higher education. Alongside this hierarchisation of universities globally, another process sees them standardise, and internationalise, their curricula, thereby making them more internationally marketable and less shaped by national

perspectives and examples, especially in the humanities and social sciences (Brooks and Waters 2011: 137).

The third conceptual frame for ISM considers it as part of *youth mobility cultures*, whereby travelling, living and studying abroad is seen as a life-stage rite of passage, and therefore more of an ‘act of consumption’ than an economic strategy aimed at improving an individual’s human capital and, thus, income and career prospects. The key objective is not so much academic achievement in and of itself (although it is important not to ‘fail’), but the cultural experience of living in another country, with its different climate, scenery, historical heritage, recreational opportunities, food and music traditions, and opportunities for new cross-national social encounters. Following Bourdieu’s well-known essay on the ‘forms of capital’ (1986), Murphy-Lejeune (2002) proposes the appealing term ‘mobility capital’ as accruing to the mobile student – a form of capital which enriches the individual’s life experience and which can perhaps also be parlayed into an improved CV and job credentials. Thus the mobile and interculturally experienced student distinguishes him/herself from the routine modernities of a static student lifeworld by celebrating the international stage on which their study history and personal, individualised biography have been built (cf. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

This third perspective tends to construct internationally mobile students as an elite category, which leads to the fourth framing – *the importance of class and inequality* in analyses of ISM. Several studies have shown that ISM acts as a means to reproduce social-class distinctions and elite formation. For example, the *Euro Student 2000* report found convincing evidence that ‘students from low-income families make substantially less use of opportunities for studying abroad than do those from families with higher income’ (Schnitzer and Zempel-Gino 2002: 115). In this analytical frame, we therefore see a symbiosis between social divisions and educational structures, with a distinguishing role for ISM, creating an elite within an elite. In the European context, the effect is twofold: to create and maintain what Sklair (2001) calls ‘the transnational capitalist class’, and to give birth to an EU-mobile group of multilingual students (‘Eurostars’ à la Favell 2008) who are favourable to the ‘EU-project’ and who became ideal employees in EU institutions (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003).

The strength of class divisions and their fluidity over time obviously vary in Europe from one country to another. For students, parental occupation and income constitute one structuring variable, but how this is passed on to the next generation varies according to the nature of the education system, including access routes from school to university. Countries where the state-provided education system is of uniformly high quality, and caters for all or virtually all of a country’s pupils, have the best chance of smoothing out the inherited effects of parental status and income. However, in other countries such as the UK, the private educational system, whose bastion is the elite sector of the perversely named ‘public schools’, has a key role to play in reproducing entrenched class divisions. In two papers drawn from the same project, Dunne *et al.* (2014) and King *et al.* (2011) show how, for UK applicants for higher education and for studying abroad, there are powerful social-class filters activated through this binary distinction between state and fee-paying schools. Pupils from the latter are both more likely to apply to and get into the ‘best’ UK universities (the so-called ‘Russell group’) and are more likely to apply to study at elite universities abroad such as the ‘Ivy League’ in the US or top universities in continental Europe.

### *ISM and youth mobility transitions*

There are multiple transitions involved in the stage of life in which education is the dominant activity: transitions both *within* education and *between* education and employment. All types of study-to-study or study-to-work transition may or may not coincide with spatial mobility, and that mobility can be either within a country or international. The main types are as follows:

- school to university (stay-at-home, internal mobility or international move);
- undergraduate to postgraduate study (Bachelor's to Master's, Master's to doctorate; again stay put or migrate internally or internationally);
- university to employment (stay put, move internally, return to home country, or move on to a third country).

Within the third category, above, some students and postgraduates will transition to employment within the academic world, to a postdoc, research assistant or lecturing post, which again may well involve international mobility, either to another, new country or, if the student has studied or researched abroad, back to the country of origin. There is now a growing literature on these academic mobilities which examines the interactions between the phenomenon of international mobility on the one hand and the various, rather blurred, evolutionary transitions along the academic staircase from student to researcher to lecturer (see, for example, Ackers and Gill 2008; Amelina 2013; Byram and Dervin 2008; Jöns 2009; Larner 2015; Pásztor 2015).

Selected insights from this literature are as follows. First, there are powerful echoes of the well-known debates on brain drain, brain return and brain circulation, especially when the 'brains' originate from peripheral, weaker economies in the Southern and Eastern EU. Bulgaria is a country where there has been a large-scale brain drain to the 'West' and where the pool of scientific expertise has been significantly depleted. Italy, albeit a much richer country, also voices concerns about brain drain. Here, problems with the funding of universities and the non-transparent (some would say highly personalistic, even corrupt) system for academic appointments and career progression have a dual effect which stimulates many academics and research students to emigrate, and which deters 'outsiders' from applying for university posts. As a result, Italy has one of the least diverse university staff populations in Europe (Ackers and Gill 2008: 17). Even returning Italian academics, who have PhDs or other research experience from abroad, are viewed with a mixture of jealousy and suspicion, and blocked from appointments to posts for which they are highly qualified, in favour of 'local' candidates who are less well qualified but have 'connections' (Ackers and Gill 2008: 17).

Amelina (2013) describes the experience of Ukrainian scientists in Germany, where the outcome is rather different. In the Ukraine, foreign academic experience such as a PhD, a visiting fellowship or an appointment in a West European university carries great prestige whereas, in Germany, these 'Eastern' scientists are made to feel like second-class academic citizens and expected to work 'twice as hard' as their German colleagues (2013: 143). Ukrainian (and presumably other 'Eastern') scholars in Germany develop an ambiguous self-narrative as an 'exploited elite'. They are aware of their exploitation but they accept it, partly out of pride that they can indeed work 'twice as hard' and partly because of the counter-

balancing prestige that they enjoy in their home country, where they often hold visiting appointments and are treated as heroes.

Returning now to the main transitions idea associated with third-level study abroad – namely that it has ‘value’ which can be materialised in the form of higher earnings and a more satisfying career – there is a general orthodoxy that this is indeed the case, but also some counter-evidence which not so much contradicts but nuances the orthodox view and poses some questions about its in-built assumptions.

First, then, the conventional view, in support of which there is a fair amount of research evidence, both statistical and qualitative. The quantitative evidence comes from a variety of sources, of which we cite just a couple here. In one of the earliest papers which tried to quantify the ‘pay-offs’ of study abroad, King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) compared a sample of graduates who had taken an undergraduate year abroad (n=261) with a control sample (n=106) of those who had not. The data were collected during 2000–2001 from graduates of the University of Sussex who had graduated during 1987–2000. The results are revealing. Those who had been on a year abroad were:

- more likely to have pursued postgraduate study (69 per cent vs 46 per cent for the ‘non-mobile’ sample);
- more likely to be in employment related to the degree that they took (45 vs 30 per cent);
- more likely to be employed as a professional, manager, director or teacher (56 vs 43 per cent);
- more likely to have an annual income of at least £20,000 (52 vs 33 per cent);
- more likely to have lived abroad at some stage since graduation (43 vs 26 per cent); and
- more likely to be currently living abroad (20 vs 7 per cent).

These survey data indicate not only that year-abroad graduates do better in career and income terms, but also that they are more likely to carry over their university experience of international mobility to their post-graduation lives.

There is, however, a potential logical flaw which the authors acknowledge (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003: 247) and which is further commented on by Recchi (2015: 82–83). This is the fallacy of the self-fulfilling prophecy: namely that, in spite of the fact that the authors controlled for academic performance at entry to university and for parental socio-economic class, nevertheless there is the possibility that those who choose degree courses with a period of study built in were already, by that very choice, a self-selected group who were more ambitious, adventurous and curious about languages and cultures different from their own.

If the King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) samples were rather small and drawn from one university only, subsequent analyses carried out for and by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (see HEFCE 2004: 81–90; HEFCE 2009; both summarised in King *et al.* 2010: 28–31) provide remarkably similar results based on the entire national populations of ‘returned’ Erasmus students and of all students in higher education in England. These studies show that, compared to the total national student body, returned Erasmus students after graduation are:

- disproportionately female (69 vs 55 per cent);
- less likely to be ‘ethnically non-white’ (8 vs 16 per cent);
- more likely to be from the top three parental socio-occupational classes (83 vs 76 per cent);
- more likely to get ‘first-class’ degrees (15 vs 11 per cent) and more likely to get ‘good degrees’ (first plus upper-second-class, 73 vs 61 per cent); and
- more likely to be earning £20,000 per year one year after graduation (29 vs 17 per cent).

Once again, however, we should be cautious about attributing these positive outcomes purely to the ‘Erasmus effect’, since there is an inbuilt bias towards high academic and economic performance deriving from the fact that, at the national aggregate scale, Erasmus students enter university with significantly higher school-leaving grades. Specifically, whilst 49 per cent of Erasmus students have more than 360 tariff points from A-level and equivalent qualifications, for non-mobile students the share is only 29 per cent (King *et al.* 2010: 30).

Qualitative evidence on the link between international study and an advantageous transition into employment largely comes from interview material with students/graduates who are about to go, or have passed, through that study-to-work transition. Here there is a rather unanimous collective discourse that international exposure as a student, particularly if the experience is at a ‘world-class’ university (Findlay *et al.* 2012), will yield a career advantage, especially if the student aspires to an ‘international’ career. This is a collective view sustained not only by mobile students but also by ‘mobility managers’ – the international and study-abroad officers in the universities heavily involved in promoting ISM – and by the publications and websites of the Erasmus offices in Brussels and elsewhere (see the review in King *et al.* 2010: 34–38). ISM is ‘good’, the chorus says, because it enhances students’ employability in an increasingly competitive graduate labour market, especially one which becomes inevitably more globalised, and because, at a macro-European level, it enhances the global competitiveness of European businesses and corporations.

The missing link in this discussion is the view of the employers. Varghese (2008: 24) asserts that the advantages of studying abroad, in terms of employment and prestige, are higher in developing countries than in developed ones. Evidence for employers’ views in Europe is limited to small-scale surveys. Fielden *et al.* (2007: 14) surveyed ‘more than 20’ large companies in the UK and found that ‘around 60 per cent of the country’s top employers indicate that experience of international study enhances employability’. They commented that studying abroad makes an applicant well-rounded in terms of skills, experience and personal development. The remainder of this small survey indicated that they recruited graduates on the basis of the individuals’ strengths rather than paying any special attention to international study experience. Secondly, the broader EU VALERA study (VALue of ERAsmus) on the professional value of the Erasmus experience found that, in general, employers ‘consider the internationally experienced graduates superior to other graduates as far as many competences are concerned, and many of them believe that formerly mobile students will be more successful in their long-term careers’ (Bracht *et al.* 2006: xxiii). Here again, however, we must be cautious because of the small size of the employer respondent group and low response rate. The much larger student response dataset in the VALERA study endorsed the value of Erasmus but found that perceptions of its value declined in successive rounds of the survey between the early

1990s and the mid-2000s, possibly because of the increasing numbers of Erasmus-experienced graduates and hence their decreasing competitiveness and advantage over time (Bracht *et al.* 2006: xxiii).

More critical perspectives on the ‘employability’ argument of international study come mainly from qualitative studies which go beyond and behind simple interview or questionnaire survey data, and pose questions which demand a different perspective to illuminate the wider process of student-to-employment career trajectories. One key point is that the very nature of these trajectories varies from one national context to another in Europe. Lindberg (2009) compares student and early career mobility patterns in four countries – Finland, Germany, Italy and the UK – where ‘mobility’ means both vertical (career) and horizontal (spatial) mobility, the latter referring to movement between universities and study programmes mainly *within* the respective countries. Different national patterns emerge. In Finland and Germany there is a high level of student mobility at the basic degree level followed by a low level of career mobility after graduation. In the UK the opposite occurs: low-level student mobility but high career mobility afterwards. In Italy, students demonstrate prolonged and problematic transitions, with little mobility either as students or at the early career stage.

Another strand of critique challenges the widespread notion of studying abroad as a highly socially selective process available only to an elite class of students who strategise their choice to study internationally as part of individualistic rational-choice careerist ambitions. Pásztor’s (2015) study of international doctoral students at a prominent British university found other, supply-side factors to be important, including access to networks of academic researchers and organised schemes of funding at the international, national and university levels. Pásztor also argues that, at least at the doctoral level, access to international study is socially broader and governed by the ‘exceptional ability’ of individuals to win scholarships and bursaries, thereby questioning the notion of international students as a ‘migratory elite’ (2015: 839).

The main line of critique against an individualist reading of ISM, especially at the postgraduate level, is that this optic ignores the broader structural, family and life-course settings, and in particular the role of family relationships and responsibilities. Carlson (2013) stresses that the ‘why’ of student mobility decisions should be combined with the ‘how’ of their migration processes, and set within student biographies. He argues for a processual understanding of the personal dynamics of ISM, recognising that students, like other migrants, alter their ideas about migration and longer-term life-plans throughout their periods of study abroad or back home.

Several authors (Ackers and Gill 2008; Geddie 2013; Mosneaga and Winther 2013) focus on the family and partnership aspects of ISM. This emphasis is especially relevant for students and researchers at doctoral and postdoctoral levels, where this phase of advanced study and research often coincides with stable partnerships, marriage and the birth of children. Hence the simplistic focus on the individualistic, disembedded, almost disembodied, transition from education to employment needs to take on board a whole range of constraining or enabling factors such as partner’s career and nationality (and hence rights to citizenship and to work), the needs of children, regimes of childcare and maternity/paternity leave, and the wider family context, including the care needs of elderly parents. Referring to Marie Curie mobility, Ackers and Gill (2008: 91) write: ‘Having a partner affects the way people think about moving in a

number of ways: it influences decisions about *whether* to move at all or to move again (including *return*); *where* to move to; and for *how long* to stay' (emphases in the original). A similar range of effects is brought about by the presence of children in the family, and it goes without saying that *gender* enters crucially into joint negotiations in decisions about academic mobility, as is clear throughout Ackers and Gill's study.

### *Towards a Europeanisation of identity?*

A key question for all migrants who move within or enter the 'space' of Europe concerns their changes of identity, and specifically whether they take on some kind of 'European' identity alongside, or replacing, their 'national' identity. This by no means exhausts the range of identity outcomes which can hypothetically result through mobility – we should also acknowledge the national identity of the country that students move to, as well as broader, more 'global' or 'cosmopolitan' identities that might be expressed, on their own or in combination with other levels and layers of identification.

The possible formation of a 'European identity' was one of the questions of the aforementioned King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) study on the year-abroad experiences of Erasmus students compared with non-mobile students. Questions which were asked as part of this University of Sussex study related to knowledge about and interest in EU affairs, attitudes towards membership of the EU, and various kinds of European, national and 'other' identity. Summarising the results, year-abroad graduates compared to non-mobile graduates were (in their own eyes):

- more likely to be well-informed about the EU (50 per cent vs 39 per cent);
- more likely to be interested in EU affairs (62 vs 54 per cent);
- more likely to see the UK's membership of the EU as a 'good thing' (87 vs 72 per cent); and
- more likely to be unhappy about the break-up of the EU (64 vs 57 per cent).

Regarding identification, perhaps due to the variety of combinations (European only, national only, European first then national, national first then European, 'other' etc.), there were no significant differences because of the problem of small numbers in each cell.

What is equally interesting is the difference between the various nationalities of mobile students. If UK students, who have low rates of both Erasmus and outward degree mobility compared to other European nationalities, can therefore be classed as 'reluctant Europeans' (Findlay *et al.* 2006), other nationalities express more positive, pan-European, identifications. Van Mol's (2013, 2014) detailed comparative analyses, based on large-N questionnaire surveys and smaller-N interviews and focus groups, showed that a pro-active move towards a sense of shared 'Europeanness' was evident for most of the nationalities he surveyed (Austrians, Belgians, Italians, Poles) but less so for the 'Eurosceptic' Norwegians and British. Of course, there are different geopolitical histories lying behind these differential attachments to Europeanness. Belgium and Italy were participants from the very beginning of European 'unification'; Austria was not a founder-member but is by now a long-term member and has a

sense of Europeanness by virtue of geography – bordering many countries, both ‘east’ and ‘west’; the recent accession of Poland to the EU has created an ‘omnipresence’ of Europe which strongly influences feelings of European identity among its mobile students; whilst Norway is a ‘different place’ in Europe, more attuned to a Nordic or Scandinavian identity; and the UK, tongue-in-cheek, is ‘an island between Europe and the United States’.

Other research, more ethnographic in nature, documents the means of interaction of Erasmus and other mobile students who move within Europe. Key here is their friendship and socialisation patterns (Bilecen 2014; Tsoukalas 2008). Studies reviewed by Brooks and Waters (2011: 14–16) indicate that, often, mobile students do not intensively socialise with host-country students; rather, they ‘stick to their own’ or they mix mainly with other international students, often using the medium of English as the common language. For Murphy-Lejeune (2002), Erasmus students are the ‘new strangers’. In this author’s rich ethnography, still virtually unique of its type, Murphy-Lejeune concludes that ‘the lived experience of strangers arriving in a new culture’ results in ‘a special blend of distance and proximity which puts to the test the boundaries between self and other’ (2002: 229). She summarises the various stages that the ‘typical’ exchange student goes through (2002: 229–230):

- expectations and anticipations before the move takes place;
- cognitive shock on arrival, when students are thrown into direct contact with ‘otherness’, much of which is occasioned by being taught, learning and socialising in another language;
- adaptation and social construction, when students start, and continue, to accommodate to the ‘new space’ of learning, everyday life, and building new friendships;
- and at the end, a time of assessment of the value and meaning of the whole experience.

Murphy-Lejeune’s main research finding is that practically everything in the European exchange-student experience, even the negative episodes, is assessed as enriching, positive, beneficial and character-building – unlike other migrants in other migratory contexts where the costs, personal and financial, may outweigh the benefits (2002: 230).

### **High-skilled intra-European migrants**

Official statistics indicate that a considerable share of intra-EU migrants are highly skilled – bearing in mind our earlier discussion about the problematic definition of this category. According to Castro-Martín and Cortina (2015: 113), the typical European citizen who has lived in another member-state is young, male, and highly educated. Almost half of the movers from ‘old’ EU member-states (49 per cent) are known to be graduates; the proportion from the ‘new’ EU member-states is smaller but still significant – 22 per cent for A8 countries, 14 per cent for A2 countries (see Recchi 2015: 58).

Many studies concerned with intra-European migration focus on the legal framework and policies framing cross-border mobility (Recchi 2015; Recchi and Favell 2009). By contrast, the experiences of the actual movers, particularly in terms of integration (cf. Gilmartin and Migge 2015) remain comparatively less understood – although the landmark study by Favell (2008) on the ‘Eurostar’ generation is an exception. Existing studies of the high-skilled migrant

category are quite diverse in their empirical focus, thematic concerns and theoretical approaches. In this section, we seek to extract some of the key themes and findings emerging from this literature. We look at the different types of high-skilled European migrants and their motivations to engage in cross-border mobility, their labour-market trajectories, the social aspects of integration and identity, and their orientation towards settlement or return.

### *Diverse types and motivations*

The literature on high-skilled European migrants is rather fragmented, and informed by a variety of theoretical perspectives, depending on the themes and migrant category under study. Many studies tend to focus on the experiences of a single national-origin group in one place or country of destination, often working in a specific occupational sector. Examples include Irish teachers in the UK (Ryan 2015), French professionals working in London's business and finance sectors (Mulholland and Ryan 2014; Ryan and Mulholland 2014a, 2014b), high-skilled British migrants in Paris (Scott 2006, 2007), and German finance managers in London (Meier 2015).

There are some exceptions – studies which take a broader and more comparative perspective, either of the same nationality group in different destinations, or different national groups in the same destination. For example, Koikkalainen (2013) studied high-skilled Finns across Europe, and Ralph (2015) looked at Irish professional 'Euro-commuters' in different European cities. For studies which take the opposite comparative angle of mixed samples in a single destination, see Csedő (2008) on Hungarians and Romanians in London, Kennedy (2010) on EU graduates in Manchester, and two papers by King *et al.* (2014, 2015) on the 'lure of London' for, respectively, German, Italian and Latvian graduate migrants, and young migrants from the Baltic states. Broader in its geographical scope (although limited to the EU15 member-states), and more imaginative in its epistemological approach, is Favell's (2008) study of young graduate 'Eurostars' in London, Amsterdam and Brussels, typical 'Eurocities'.

To some extent, Favell's 'Eurostar' label gives a potentially mistaken impression of the young, mobile graduates he is writing about. Yet, as the author notes, these are not so much the archetypical elites who populate EU institutions and corresponding social circles (Favell 2003). Rather, the Eurostars more resemble the 'middling' migrants of Conradson and Latham (2005). Middling migrants do generally come from well-educated, middle-class backgrounds, but also include 'high achievers from modest backgrounds', such as first-generation university graduates.

Although most research on the 'middling transnational' and 'Eurostar' types focuses on citizens of the 'old' EU member-states, especially those in Northern Europe, this has started to change with studies of post-accession East European professionals, whom Csedő (2008) calls the 'new Eurostars' (cf. also White 2016). The challenge for these new 'Eastern' Eurostars is to find employment commensurate with their qualifications. A common trend is that of downward occupational mobility with migration (Nowicka 2014; Trevena 2013) or retreat into self-employment (Vershina *et al.* 2011). This reflects a common distinction in the literature on intra-European mobility between 'free movers', typically from the old member-states, and 'workers' from the new member-states, due to the concentration of the latter in lower-skilled

jobs irrespective of their educational qualifications (Krings *et al.* 2013). Nevertheless, as Krings *et al.* show in their study of Polish migrants in Ireland, many of the participants in their study problematise the ‘professional’/‘worker’ divide; they are closer to the ‘middling’ migrant profile. Young, educated Polish migrants in Ireland ‘are part of a new generation of mobile Europeans for whom the move abroad is not only work-related but also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration for self-development’ (Krings *et al.* 2013: 87). Reviewing the broader literature on Polish migration within a comparative European context, White (2016) similarly emphasises that the growing visibility of young, ambitious, well-educated migrants, free from family obligations and without well-defined plans, increasingly matches the ‘Eurostar’ ideal-type.

In between the ‘old’ northern member-states and the ‘new’ eastern ones lies an intermediate group along the EU’s southern flank (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece), plus Ireland. These are countries which turned themselves from emigration to immigration countries over the time-span from the 1950s–1970s (emigration) to the 1990s–2000s (immigration) but which now reappear, post-2008, as new countries of emigration, especially of young unemployed graduates (see, amongst others, Bygnes 2015; Cairns 2012; Conti and King 2015; Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014). Once again, we observe a range of employment trajectory outcomes. Some are able to materialise their good academic and vocational qualifications and prior work experience into good jobs abroad, especially if they are fluent in the requisite languages. Others, however, are constrained to take lower-level jobs, for instance in restaurants and other service-sector employment. This may be a temporary phase until they acquire better language skills and other competences that enable them to move up the occupational ladder.

Studies that focus on high-skilled European migrants underscore the diversity of motivations underpinning their migration decision. Economic factors such as higher salaries and better employment opportunities are often important but, in many cases, they do not seem to play the sole or even the primary role. The search for adventure, new experiences, learning a new language, escaping the restrictive norms of the home society, self-development, lifestyle considerations or romantic relationships are often invoked to justify the decision to move abroad, alongside opportunities for career and skills development (for an overview of these various factors see Recchi and Favell 2009).

Younger movers are particularly likely to emphasise non-economic considerations, sometimes to the detriment of economic gains. For instance, for Germans in London, factors relating to living in a vibrant, culturally rich, global city often prevailed over income or career-related factors, which were put ‘on hold’ pending an anticipated return after a couple of or a few years (King *et al.* 2014). German graduates were willing to ‘mark time’ in their careers, or even trade down to a more mundane office job, in order to enjoy their ‘time out’ or ‘career break’ in London (King *et al.* 2014: 10–11). Likewise, cultural reasons seem to be important amongst British migrants in Paris (Scott 2006) or amongst highly educated migrants in Berlin (Verwiebe 2014). In their study on intra-EU migrants in Ireland, Gilmartin and Migge (2015) also found that the majority moved for social or cultural reasons related to the acquisition of language skills, studying and gaining ‘new experiences’ in the workplace and in wider life.

Despite the inherent complexity of migration motivations, economic factors remain important, especially for migrants from the ‘new’ EU member-states (Nowicka 2014;

Szewczyk 2015), or post-2008 migrants from ‘older’ member-states such as Spain, Italy and Greece (Bygnes 2015; Conti and King 2015; Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014). These migrants consistently express concerns about the limited career opportunities available in their home societies but also highlight the broader structural problems that prevent young people from accessing suitable (graduate-level) employment there and becoming independent from family support. Many of these themes are echoed in Bygnes’ (2015) research on Spanish high-skilled migrants in Norway, where the main stress is on the societal conditions that compel them to migrate. Spanish graduates interviewed by Bygnes expressed a rather profound sense of insecurity and disillusionment about their home society, which led them to move abroad. Bygnes uses the trope of *anomie* to denote the stream of complaints about the ‘state of Spanish society’ and its alleged corruption, growing social inequality and other flaws. These migrants are, however, reluctant to portray themselves as ‘crisis migrants’ as they see this as a sign of desperation and stigmatisation from which they wish to distance themselves. Similar results are found by Conti and King (2015; also King *et al.* 2014: 17–18) for Italian graduates in London, who explained their move away from Italy less in terms of reaction to the country’s economic crisis and more in terms of a deep structural crisis of youth and graduate unemployment in a society and labour market dominated by hierarchical seniority and a culture of ‘connections’ and ‘favours’.

In a study of Polish graduates moving to the UK after 2004, Szewczyk (2015) also moves beyond purely economic reasons for migration, this time underscoring the importance of the historical political context and the socio-economic changes experienced by youth growing up in post-socialist states, which shape their sense of generational belonging and subsequent migration decisions. These young graduates are well aware of the ‘new space of opportunities’ (Morokvasic 2004) emerging after the collapse of communism and subsequent accession to the EU, and hence experience migration as another major change in their lives.

Lastly, the literature on scientific and academic mobility adds a specific dimension to motivations for engaging in cross-border mobility by noting that, for academics and researchers, mobility may be the ‘norm’ (Guth and Gill 2008: 829; Morano-Foadi 2005: 144). In this case, researchers move because of the nature of their study-projects, seeking supportive work environments and laboratories where their research can flourish and their careers advance.

### *Labour market status and employment trajectories*

Within the ideology of neoliberalism, classically trained economists argue strongly for the ‘free mobility’ of labour – ‘the ultimate economic resource’ – in order to achieve the best allocation of resources and hence, they claim, to maximise aggregate economic welfare (see Simon 1981 for the foundational study; Zimmermann 2014 for a useful recent summary). ‘The key to it all’, opines Zimmermann (2014: 6), ‘is to focus on the migration of skilled people’. Zimmermann goes on to argue that intra-European skilled migration not only fosters economic efficiency, but also creates additional jobs for the unskilled and the ‘differently skilled’ (2014: 6). His view, stated with a typical economist’s disregard for the human, emotional and embodied consequences of what amounts to a virtual forced migration, is that the recent economic crisis in Greece, Portugal and Spain was a ‘blessing in disguise’, since there is a strong incentive for

the skilled unemployed in these countries to move to booming employment centres in Germany and the UK, where their talents can be better utilised (2014: 10).

All this is fine in theory and, for some, in practice too. But, as Zimmermann himself acknowledges (2014: 6–7), there are barriers which make this smooth mobility and efficient deployment of skilled labour more difficult to achieve in practice. Chief amongst these obstacles are language barriers, socio-cultural tensions, integration challenges, and the interplay between labour-market segmentation and nationality-based discrimination.

In terms of labour-market status and occupational positioning, international mobility seems to have benefited migrants from the West European EU15 countries more than those from the post-2004 accession countries. The former have often achieved upward mobility, compared to their non-migrant peers back home, by accessing better occupational positions abroad. For the latter group of migrants, the opposite seems to be the case, since they have only been able to take up employment in less-prestigious (but, of course, better-paid) jobs compared to those who do not migrate (Recchi 2015: 71–72). For East Europeans, and latterly also many South Europeans, the main job sectors available are catering, hospitality, construction, manufacturing or the domestic service sector, despite many migrants' third-level qualifications (see King *et al.* 2014: 5; Nowicka 2014: 172; Recchi 2015: 70). As Recchi notes (2015: 72–73), around 30 per cent of post-accession East Europeans experienced downward mobility (initially), and they are also prone to insecure, temporary modes of employment. Nevertheless, the post-2004 (A8) migrants' labour-market position seems to have improved over time, whereas the 'A2' Romanians and Bulgarians continue to occupy a more disadvantaged position on the pan-European labour market (Recchi 2015: 73–74).

As an example of East Europeans' predisposition to downward occupational mobility on migration, Trevena's (2013) research on university-educated Polish migrants in London identifies a combination of factors which channel Polish graduates into low-skilled employment, at least initially. Trevena identifies three types of graduate migrant, based on their reasons to migrate:

- 'drifters', whose migration is driven by the desire to travel, learn a new language and live in a global city;
- 'target earners', for whom financial motivations prevail; and
- 'career-seekers', who migrate to progress their careers long-term.

Whilst most participants in Trevena's study started as 'drifters' and accessed low-skilled jobs initially, they tended to become 'career-seekers' over time, on the look-out for better employment opportunities.

In another study on Polish graduates in the UK, Szewczyk (2014) likewise identifies three types of migrant, depending on their career trajectories:

- 'continuers', who found employment in their field of expertise, often after following further education and training in the UK;
- 'switchers', who showed flexibility in undertaking additional studies or training in a different field and thus changed their career direction; and

- ‘late awakeners’, who exhibited lower levels of confidence in their ability to progress (often due to poor language skills), worked in ‘ordinary’ jobs and saw their careers stagnate for a time, before attempting to move up at a later stage.

Both of these studies by Trevena and Szewczyk demonstrate that, although East European migrants may experience downward occupational mobility in the early stages of migration, there is scope for improvement over time. There are also other positive dimensions, relating to the enjoyment of guaranteed higher wages than at home, and the perception of security and independence brought by these otherwise ordinary jobs, compared to the previous job market in the home country (White 2016: 14).

Two further studies offer useful insights into East Europeans’ labour market transition. Parutis (2014) interviewed 64 young Polish and Lithuanian migrants in London, most of whom were graduates in their 20s and 30s. She found them to be highly mobile within the British labour market, after an initial phase of down-skilling. Provided they possess, or acquire over time, sufficient language skills, these young migrants move from a first stage where they accept ‘any job’ in order to survive and secure a steady income, to a ‘better job’ with improved status and pay, to finally (but for some only) their ‘dream job’, which fully matches their experience and aspiration to achieve self-development and job satisfaction.

The second set of insights comes from Nowicka’s (2014) study of (yet again) Polish migrants in the UK. Nowicka critiques the common understanding of skills as ‘fixed attributes’ that migrants possess and that researchers study in the receiving-country context. She highlights the role of the context of origin in understanding de-skilling, as well as the process of validating skills in the destination country. An important contribution that this study makes is the distinction between ‘migrating skills’, which refers to skills that can be transferred abroad more easily, and ‘migration skills’, which refers to strategies used by migrants to ‘validate’ and ‘develop’ their skills abroad. Whilst migrants’ skills and work experiences gained in Poland are not easily recognised in the UK, Polish migrants can draw on ‘migration skills’, such as their hard-working nature, reliability, flexibility and willingness to work long hours, to compensate for skills that remain unrecognised.

Compared to East Europeans, West Europeans tend to face fewer difficulties in terms of skills recognition and pursuing desired careers. However, this does not necessarily mean that they achieve ‘upward social mobility’, although this may be possible, particularly for those from more modest social backgrounds, and those for whom the destination country or city offers what Fielding (1992) has called an ‘escalator’ effect, accelerating career development in a dynamic and open high-skilled labour market, such as London (King *et al.* 2015). Furthermore, West Europeans are not entirely protected from the typical challenges of working in a new environment and institutional culture. For example, in their study of French professionals working in the finance sector in London, Mulholland and Ryan (2014) describe the challenges which French employees face in relation to differences in work culture, level of English language proficiency and social norms of behaviour in and outside the workplace.

### *Social networks and identities beyond the 'national'*

Another important theme in current research on high-skilled European migrants concerns their social integration, particularly in terms of the local and transnational social networks they develop post-migration. Intra-European movers may be thought to experience fewer difficulties in terms of social integration, given their 'whiteness' and cultural similarity (Favell and Nebe 2009: 206). *West* European migrants have indeed been seen as broadly unproblematic or neglected in public or political discourse, but the reception of *East* Europeans has been dramatically different, generating anxiety and negative press coverage in some of the societies of reception (Favell and Nebe 2009; Fox *et al.* 2012). In addition, as we saw above, East Europeans have held a more precarious and visible labour-market status if we consider, for example, the transitional restrictions on access to employment they faced in various EU countries for certain periods of time after enlargement. Despite these differences in legal status, reception and perception, both West and East Europeans encounter various informal barriers to becoming full members of the host society – for example, difficulties in everyday communication and language proficiency, in building social ties to the local population, or in accessing local institutions and resources related to health services, education, childcare, housing etc. (Favell 2008).

Challenges to building friendships with locals are a common outcome amongst both 'old' and 'new' Eurostars, including those positioned at the very elite end (Kennedy 2008; Scott 2007). For example, Ryan and Mulholland (2014a) show, in the case of the French in London, that even those successful in building professional relationships are not necessarily able to convert these links into personal friendships, especially with 'natives'. Nevertheless, the literature documenting high-skilled Europeans' friendship networks often shows that they do not simply seek the company of co-nationals or co-ethnics to compensate for the problem of social isolation from the native population. Indeed, many groups seem to consciously avoid or distance themselves from co-nationals (Gilmartin and Migge 2015; Moroşanu and Fox 2013; Mueller 2015). This may be for various reasons and result in different outcomes. For instance, young German graduates living in London profess their wish to stay away from other Germans and instead forge friendships with the 'locals'. But they find this difficult, because people seem so busy, a lot of time is spent on commuting and, in a cosmopolitan city like London, 'true locals' are hard to find. As a result, Germans *do* socialise with each other, and many also keep in close touch with their friends and family in Germany (Mueller 2015; also King *et al.* 2014: 9–16). In the case of East Europeans abroad, high levels of mutual suspicion and the internalisation of migrants' negative image abroad may contribute to minimising co-ethnic bonding (on Romanians in the UK, see Moroşanu and Fox 2013). For all nationalities who have moved, their quest for new experiences, for a cosmopolitan lifestyle, and their 'normal' work and leisure interests may simply lead them to develop a range of friendship ties and common activities which span naturally across ethno-national boundaries, irrespective of 'home' or 'host' nationalities (Favell 2008; Moroşanu 2013; Ryan 2015; Ryan and Mulholland 2014a).

High-skilled Europeans' socialisation patterns and mobility experiences raise interesting questions about the way these migrants identify themselves. In his study of West European 'Eurostars', Favell (2008: 101–103) notes their reluctance to self-identify as

‘migrants’, partly due to the perceived negative connotation of the term, the distance that they felt from the trajectories and lives of ‘typical’ (non-European or ‘third-country’) migrants, or the perceived ‘permanent’ character of migration, which hardly reflected their situation. But neither were these young elites and middling transnationals able to easily find an alternative label for themselves. Several were suggested – ‘free movers’, ‘expats’, ‘Europeans’ – but none of these gained widespread traction.

Although they may reject the ‘migrant’ or ‘immigrant’ label, high-skilled Europeans often move in ‘international social worlds’ in their destination, as discussed above and in lively and amusing detail by Favell (2008). And as Kennedy (2010) noted in his work on EU postgraduates in Manchester, migration means, for many, an exposure to individuals from a variety of backgrounds, leading to ‘life-changing experiences abroad’ and more cosmopolitan identities, which eclipse or complement national modes of belonging. Kennedy employs Beck’s (2004) notion of ‘forced cosmopolitanism’ to underscore the weight of economic factors influencing graduates’ decision to leave their country of origin. In other words, it is not cosmopolitanism *per se* that usually serves as the sole or main reason for migration amongst this group, but the difficulties in obtaining a suitable job in the ‘socially conservative and hierarchical work culture’ prevailing in their home countries (Kennedy 2010: 472). Subsequently, the actual experience of living and working abroad functions to enhance migrants’ knowledge of and openness towards other cultures, and leads them to be more critical of their own culture. In the case of Italian graduates in London, there is almost a dis-identification and disembedding from Italian society, rejected as gerontocratic, patriarchal and corrupt (Conti and King 2015). Examining the networks forged by Romanians in London, Moroşanu (2013) also highlights the cosmopolitan nature of everyday socialisation and cosmopolitan orientations amongst migrants working in both high- and lower-skilled occupations, with the difference that, for the former, these were more often the result of choice and initial aspirations, whereas for the latter they tended to be more the outcome of shared, often negative, experience abroad.

Alongside the concern with the development of *cosmopolitan* identities and dispositions, another strand of research on identity examines the extent to which intra-European mobility might foster *European* identities and an attachment to Europe – a theme that was already introduced in our earlier discussion of evolving student identifications. In order to illustrate some of the empirical complexity of analysing various combinations of national (home vs host nation), European and cosmopolitan identities, we refer to four examples from the literature, two based on quantitative methods and two based on qualitative approaches.

In the first study we review, Rother and Nebe (2009) use the dataset from the PIONEUR project (‘Pioneers of European Integration from Below’) to explore the presence of a European identity among free-movers in five EU countries: Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The first headline finding is that, as one would expect, EU movers are significantly more likely to have a ‘European’ identity than non-migrants. More specifically, 70 per cent of the mobile respondents reported holding some kind of European identity attachment, in combination with a country of origin (COO) and/or country of residence (COR) attachment. Half of the sample held tripartite identities, that is to say, strong COO identities, strong COR identities, *and* strong European identities. These are the people whom Rother and Nebe (2009: 152) call ‘perfect Europeans’ or ‘highly Europeanized citizens’, who find it easy to develop an ‘intercultured’

European identity layer *and* who experience no conflict between their COO and COR identities. This group are nearly all graduates, they speak the COR language, are interested in politics and, importantly, have several friends from both the country of origin and that of residence.

The remainder of the mobile sample divides into three more or less equal-sized groups:

- those who are attached to both the COO and COR but not to the EU;
- those who hold European identities but only one national identity (COO or COR); and
- those who hold one identity only (COO, COR, EU) or profess no identity at all.

As one might expect, these patterns are not uniform across the five countries surveyed. The most ‘different’ case is the ‘British effect’. In the concluding words of Rother and Nebe (2009: 153): ‘Migrants from Britain are a special kind of European movers... they are unlikely to develop a tripartite identity... Feeling British and feeling European seem to exclude one another. On the other hand, they are most likely to assimilate to the county of residence – either with or without nurturing a feeling of Europeanness’.

The second quantitative study (Duchêne-Lacroix and Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2016) is more geographically specific – French citizens in Berlin. Respondents were asked to self-identify with four identity categories – French, German, European and cosmopolitan – in any combination and priority of importance. Multiple correspondence analysis was applied to results from 1000 returned questionnaires of the 3000 sent out, with various identity combinations correlated and aligned with self-reported integration indicators. Of the theoretical 25 identity combinations possible, seven account for 92 per cent of respondents. To summarise briefly, people whose identification is either ‘French’ or ‘French/cosmopolitan’ have a very low degree of integration into the German culture area. The ‘European’ and ‘European then French’ profiles are associated with higher integration indicators into both the French and German culture areas than other groups. ‘Franco-Germans’ and ‘Europeans’ are better integrated into the German culture area than other groups; conversely, those who nominate ‘French then European’ show a medium level of integration into the German culture area and greater integration into the French one (Duchêne-Lacroix and Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2016: 14).

Now, much more briefly, to the two more qualitative studies. Focusing on relatively young and highly-skilled Finnish migrants in various European destinations, Koikkalainen (2013: 97) finds that, although most participants identify primarily with Finland, they also develop over time an attachment to Europe (60 per cent of her sample expressed a primary or secondary identification linked to Europe, whilst showing limited interest in identifying with the country of destination. Finally, in a more historical review, Logemann (2013) shows that there are long-standing associations between migration experiences within (and even beyond) Europe that lead to an enhanced sense of ‘Europeanness’.

### *Uncertain futures*

Contrary to what one might expect, the future plans and orientations of high-skilled Europeans (defined, remember, by their graduate status rather than by the actual work they do) are often marked by uncertainty and ambivalence. The four alternatives are to settle longer-term in the

destination country, to return to their home country, to move on to a different country – either in Europe or elsewhere in the world – or, finally, to engage in some kind of lifestyle which involves continuous international mobility, shuttling back and forth between two or more countries.

The current absence of legal barriers to intra-EU mobility does not constrain choices over future mobility, but this very fact seems to make exercising that choice if anything more difficult: all options are theoretically open. Nor does this situation necessarily differ for high- vs low-skilled migrants. The precarious nature of employment affecting migrants from the Eastern EU states makes it difficult for them to plan for the future, unless they are ‘target earners’ who will return once they have accumulated the capital they seek. However, as Favell (2008) aptly illustrates in the Eurostars’ case, even those who are occupationally successful continue to face a variety of informal barriers in terms of their access to key institutions and middle-class lifestyles in the place of destination; these barriers become more concrete and visible when contemplating settling long-term, and hence hinder making plans for the future. Returning home, on the other hand, may not be an easy option either. As Ryan and Mulholland (2014b) found in the case of high-skilled French in London, these were sceptical about the possibility to return, resume their careers and transfer the skills and knowledge acquired in Britain to the home-country work environment. Similar uncertainties were expressed in the comparative studies of Germans, Latvians and Lithuanians in London carried out by King *et al.* (2014, 2015). In these cases, return in the short term was put off by the contrast between fast-paced careerist lifestyles in London and the more socially restrictive and limited nature of job opportunities in their home countries. However, in the long-term future, looking forward to the life-stage of family formation and children’s upbringing and education, ideas of return were generally more certain.

In fact, very few studies have been carried out on the return migration of intra-EU skilled migrants. Fihel and Górný (2013), using rather old data from the transition period in Poland (1989–2002, hence pre-accession), found that return propensity, and the likelihood of staying in Poland longer and not re-emigrating, were positively correlated with higher human capital, stronger family ties, and location in Polish urban areas. On the whole these findings are consonant with earlier research about the factors shaping return decisions – the relative costs of living *vis-à-vis* wages, safety and security, children’s education, cultural attachment and feelings of nostalgia (Cassarino 2004; Dustmann and Weiss 2007; Gmelch 1980).

In a more recent study on highly qualified migrants in Lithuania, Barcevičius (2015) finds that these graduate returnees are successfully reintegrated in rewarding professions, including many who are self-employed and business owners. The findings are based on a combination of questionnaire survey and interview data. However, the author acknowledges that, by focusing on the actual return migrants, the perspective of high-skilled non-returnees is missed.

We shall have more to say about return migration when we discuss the return of the lower-skilled labour migrants who are the subject of the next section.

## Lower-skilled migrant workers

In this part of the paper we lay out what is known, and where the gaps are, in the literature on lower-skilled migrating youth, and how their mobility relates to transitions from school to work, from unemployment to employment, and from adolescence to adulthood. We have already problematised the definition and conceptualisation of ‘skill’ earlier in the paper; from now on, we pragmatically define the lower-skill category as made up of migrating young people without third-level or university qualifications. At this level, too, there remains the problem of the mismatch between ‘skill’ and ‘education’ as a result of migration. In previous sections we noted the persistent phenomenon of occupational downgrading, especially of migrating graduates from Eastern Europe and, in the wake of the crisis, from Southern Europe, too (for additional references see Ciobanu 2015; Galgóczi *et al.* 2012; Johnston *et al.* 2015; Voitchovsky 2014). At the lower-skilled end, we prefer to relativise this category: rather than the almost-denigratory fixed and static class of the ‘low-skilled’ or ‘unskilled’, we opt for ‘lesser’ or ‘lower’ or even ‘differently’ skilled. We further stress the malleability and fluidity of this category, returning to an earlier-discussed concept of the ‘learning migrant’ (Williams 2007), who constantly learns new skills and perhaps also picks up new training and qualifications in the new environment.

As Kurekova *et al.* (2013: 2) have pointed out, most of the literature on the lesser-skilled concentrates on their formal education and (lack of) skills obtained through education. This is understandable due to the available statistical data being on an individual level. However, this focus on formal education also indicates a lack of theorising and ignorance of the existing empirical evidence on the ‘different’ skills these workers have. Kurekova *et al.* (2013: 4) emphasise both cognitive (such as information technology skills, driving skills, language skills and, importantly, the ability to learn) as well as non-cognitive skills (such as various personal and social skills like punctuality, team-working and communication skills) in lesser and medium skilled professions. Furthermore, personal characteristics and physical appearance can also play a role in lesser-skilled professions (2013: 10).

Unpacking in a little more detail the non-graduate skills–education mismatch, we can observe at the theoretical level a fourfold typology when migration to another country and labour market occurs. There are:

- those with minimal education and no formal qualifications who, as expected, find manual-labour jobs abroad which require no particular skills to perform apart from physical strength and/or manual dexterity;
- those with secondary-level and/or vocational training who manage to find jobs abroad which require such qualifications and experience – plumbers, electricians, car mechanics, childcare assistants, mid-level service workers etc.;
- those with these qualifications and experiences who are not able to capitalise on them, because of either language barriers, the non-recognition of diplomas, the non-availability of jobs in their particular trade, or discrimination against ‘foreign workers’, with the result that they are forced to accept lower-skilled work; and,
- finally, those who embody the ‘learning migrant’ model whereby an initially low human capital endowment is improved via the migration process – new skills are learned ‘on the

job’, perhaps new qualifications are obtained by part-time study, and an upward skills-status trajectory is made possible over time.

These work-status and geographical mobility trajectories will be borne in mind in the review and analysis presented in the rest of this section.

Amongst the key questions that we, with the help of the extant literature, seek to answer are the following. How can we better understand the personality and motivations to migrate of young and lesser-skilled individuals, and how does international mobility interface with biographical and regional-development transitions (cf. Frändberg 2008; Polek *et al.* 2011)? Are there different integration and cultural attachment processes for those with lower levels of formal education and in lower-skill jobs? Using a dual lens of intersectionality and translocal positionality (Anthias 2002, 2011), how do class, age, gender and places of origin and destination intersect in identity shaping? Or, put more straightforwardly, what does ‘doing identity’ transnationally mean for people performing lesser-skilled work abroad?

Anne White (2010, 2014) is one of the few researchers who has specifically analysed the mobility of young, lesser-skilled migrants from Poland to the UK. Revealingly, she found that lower-skilled young migrants have more agency than older workers, even if these young people without higher education come from poor families and depressed regions. In comparison to the higher-skilled, lower-skilled migrant workers rely more on social networks – friends, and friends of friends – who are instrumental in helping them to find jobs and accommodation abroad (on which see also Ciobanu 2015; Gill and Bialski 2011; White and Ryan 2008).

As a final scene-setter for this section, we briefly comment on the changing geographies and typologies of lower-skilled labour migration in Europe over the long transition from the postwar industrial boom to the more recent and current era of post-industrial service economies.

### *Changing geographies and typologies of lower-skilled migration*

From the 1950s to the mid-1970s, there occurred a mass labour migration from the Southern European countries to the growing industrial economies of North-West Europe – from the ‘periphery’ to the ‘core’ of the continent. Estimates vary, but around 10–15 million migrant workers, some with family members who also entered the labour market, migrated within and into Europe during this era. They migrated from Portugal, Spain, Southern Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey to France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden. Some also went to the UK, but most labour migration to this country at this time was from the Republic of Ireland, the Caribbean and South Asia. Most of these migrants were rural-origin workers with minimal formal education who were recruited to work in the so-called ‘3D’ jobs (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) in factories, on construction sites, and in transport and other service sectors which required manual-grade workers. These migrations have been amply documented: for two contrasting important studies see Castles and Kosack (1973), and Salt and Clout (1976).

These were the migrations that helped to underpin the long years of postwar prosperity for Europe and that also laid the foundations for the ethnically diverse societies that we see in

most West European countries today. The workers were initially recruited on temporary contracts as ‘guestworkers’, but most ended up ‘staying for good’ (Castles *et al.* 1984), having brought over or started new families in the destination countries. No large-scale outmigration from the Eastern bloc countries took place at this time, due to the effectiveness of the Iron Curtain as a migration barrier. Emigration to the capitalist West was forbidden, except from Yugoslavia, which relaxed its rules on this in the 1960s and, on a smaller scale, from Poland in the 1980s.

The geography of intra-European labour migration changed after 1989, and even more so after the EU enlargements of 2004 (A10 countries), 2007 (A2 countries) and 2013 (Croatia). Now a new labour periphery was opened up for the rich economies of Western Europe to draw on, although throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, long-term migration and settlement opportunities were limited. Instead, East Europeans got used to various kinds of ‘shuttle’ or ‘pendular’ migration timed around the length of stay permitted by tourist and visitor visas: in the words of Morokvasic (2004), they were ‘settled in mobility’. After 2004, and the accession of eight Eastern European countries (plus Malta and Cyprus), the West European labour market was opened up, although initially only three countries (the UK, Ireland and Sweden) allowed unfettered access to working opportunities; the rest of the EU15 (so, 12 countries) imposed transition arrangements which have now expired.

Hence for the past decade and more, the main lower-skilled migration flows within Europe have been from East to West, with the largest single flow by far being from Poland to the UK, which now has around 750,000 Polish residents. Polish workers also moved in large numbers to Germany (560,000), Ireland (118,000), Italy (98,000), the Netherlands (86,000), Norway (86,000), Spain (70,000), Belgium (65,000), France (50,000) and Sweden (46,000) – figures from Eurostat for 2014. Lithuanians and Latvians also migrated in significant numbers (relative to their population size) to the UK and Ireland. More recently, Romanians have become prominent and widespread in intra-EU migration flows, settling in large numbers (around 1 million in each) in Italy and Spain, as well as France, Germany, the UK and elsewhere.

The final stage in the evolution of intra-European movements of general migrant labour comes with the 2008 financial crisis: renewed flows from the countries hit hard by the economic downturn (the Baltic Republics, less so Poland); some return migration from the UK and other receiving countries as a result of redundancies and the contraction of sectors employing lots of migrant workers, such as construction; and also, in the case of returns to Poland, substantial re-emigration of those returnees (White 2014). The hard-hit Southern European economies also experienced a recession-driven wave of emigration of unemployed young people, both graduates and non-graduates.

With this geo-temporal background in mind, we now examine a series of labour-market transitions.

### *Transition from unemployment to work*

Youth unemployment nowadays in Europe, in the wake of the recent economic crisis, results in increasingly regionally and socially polarised life trajectories for young people, especially

those with low qualifications. Youth unemployment also imbricates allied phenomena such as precarious and part-time employment, temporary or no contracts, and low and uncertain wages, all of which make it impossible to establish an independent life in the home country. For lesser-skilled young people, the most dangerous symptoms are related to the high unemployment rate in many regions/countries (especially in the crisis-hit peripheral economies), the low levels of vocational training, poor geographical mobility and lack of willingness to move internally within their respective countries to places where their job chances might be better. Both in Central-Eastern Europe and in Southern EU countries, there is a generally low level of trust in measures taken by the government to resolve the dire situation of unemployed young people; and in some countries, too, a lack of support or initiatives coming from trade unions, who are more concerned to defend the rights of their older, established members (Grabowska and Getka 2014: 2).

The problem of youth unemployment varies markedly between countries, being particularly high in Spain, Italy and Greece, especially during the years of the financial crisis, but it is also a regional problem within countries. In Spain and Italy, it is their southern regions which have consistently posted high youth unemployment rates, in some instances in excess of 50 per cent. Schemes and policies that encourage the internal relocation of the unemployed are not usually economically viable for the lesser-skilled younger workers with low earning power. Rents and other accommodation costs in the cities where more jobs are available are high, and there is a lack of affordable housing and of housing support for the internal migration of young people leaving their family homes in peripheral areas (Grabowska and Getka 2014: 4). Exceptions to this situation arise when there is a prior family history of internal migration (for instance from Southern Spain to Barcelona or Madrid, or from Southern Italy to Rome or Milan), so that young unemployed people from the 'south' have relatives they can lodge with when looking for new jobs in the 'north'.

These exceptions apart, on the whole, unemployed young people get a more positive economic return with international migration, for several reasons (Magrini and Lemistre 2013: 292). First, within and across Europe (and especially across the East–West divide), wage differentials for all kinds of work are much wider than they are within countries – more detail on this will be given in the next subsection. Second, international mobility is often facilitated by institutionalised recruitment channels and social networks. Although recruitment channels can be discriminatory, filtering out the 'good' or 'ideal' migrant from the rest (Findlay *et al.* 2013), they are effective in recruiting and placing migrants in specific employment sectors such as hospitality, construction or IT work, and overcoming otherwise difficult obstacles of language, bureaucracy and 'cold' job applications. At a more informal level, personal networks of other family members (siblings, cousins) and friends (former schoolmates, friends from the same town or village) provide tangible help in finding jobs and places to live. Finally, international, as opposed to internal, migration appeals because of the chance of a more exciting and challenging life experience; insights into this aspect of lower-skilled migration will be given presently.

Another important element helping to explain the growth of unemployment and the way this leads to the emigration of non-graduates relates to the shift in attitudes towards different 'types' of education. In Central and Eastern European countries, there has been a widespread and pronounced desire for education after the collapse of the socialist system, during which

time the emphasis was relentlessly on productive work rather than on ‘bourgeois’ further and higher education. But this new aspiration for more, and higher, education happened hand-in-hand with a devaluing of technical and vocational education. Therefore it is graduates who have a competitive advantage on the labour market over those who have ‘only’ attended secondary or vocational schools. This relates not so much to the ‘real’ qualifications needed to perform some jobs (such as office and technical work, or retailing, for example), but more to the ‘prestige’ of a university degree, even if the degree (for instance, in literature or philosophy) has little bearing on the work done. The post-socialist devaluation of the ‘working-class act’ of manual craft and technical work means that young people with these non-graduate skills are little appreciated on their domestic labour markets; yet these skills are more in demand, and better rewarded financially, in other EU countries.

Something of the same kind also happened in the Southern EU countries where the elevated prestige, but over-supply, of graduates, especially in non-vocational arts subjects, means that, in the domestic labour markets of these countries, graduates have been increasingly employed in mid-level jobs for which their graduate status is not strictly needed. In this scenario too, then, non-graduates, with or without tangible qualifications, are relegated to the ranks of the unemployed or casually employed, and are stimulated to seek work abroad.

#### *From low pay in the country of origin to lesser-skilled work abroad*

Low pay, precarious work and outright unemployment in the home country form a powerful cocktail of migration-driving push factors – as has been shown in the history of labour migration worldwide (Constant and Zimmermann 2013; van den Broeck 1996). This encourages young workers to move abroad to seek almost any job that will pay significantly better than the (often limited) work opportunities at home. These, in a nutshell, have been the structural conditions shaping non-graduate labour migration in very recent decades. In what follows, we focus once again mainly on the archetype of this phenomenon – Polish migration to the UK – since this has been on such an unprecedentedly large scale, and has spawned an extensive research literature (for a selection of the studies available see Burrell 2009; Datta 2009; Datta and Brickell 2009; Drinkwater *et al.* 2009; Garapich 2008; Knight *et al.* 2014; Ryan *et al.* 2008; Stenning and Danley 2009; Trevena *et al.* 2013; White 2010, 2016).

In 2003, on the eve of the accession the following year, the average wage in Poland was just one-fifth of the EU15 average, indicating a powerful incentive to migrate. By 2007, after the initial post-accession surge in emigration, this had risen, but not by much, to one-quarter. In Latvia, the respective figures were 13 and 18 per cent, roughly one-eighth to one-sixth (Galgóczi *et al.* 2009: 10). Hence, even low-paid and ‘undesirable’ work in the UK and other countries in North-West Europe with high wage levels was financially rewarding and made the emigration worthwhile, since incomes earned abroad were many times greater than what could be earned at home, no matter what jobs were available. This differential also explains the syndrome of skills downgrading described earlier, whereby even teachers, office workers and other mid-level professionals were willing to give up their steady and poorly paid jobs in Eastern European countries to take much better paying but menial jobs in the more wealthy EU countries.

The main occupations for Central and East Europeans in the UK in the post-accession years were in the lesser-skilled echelons of the labour market. According to data cited in Blanchflower and Shadforth (2009) and Wills *et al.* (2009), the most common occupations were factory and warehouse work (34 per cent). Other popular job sectors were domestic and office cleaning (especially for women), auxiliary work in construction and property maintenance (for men) as well as hospitality (both genders). Overwhelmingly at this stage (between 2004 and the recession), Poles were employed in ‘routine’ (43 per cent) and semi-routine’ (31 per cent) occupations; far fewer in managerial and professional (10 per cent) and skilled and intermediate positions (16 per cent). The picture was broadly the same for other A8 migrants with, if anything, a greater share in the routine and semi-routine jobs (Drinkwater *et al.* 2009: 170).

Within the UK, and probably within other destination countries, too, there were recruitment stereotypes associated with Poles and other East European workers, hired for their physical strength and endurance, and their expected good and reliable work performance. As several studies have demonstrated (Findlay *et al.* 2013; Mackenzie and Forde 2009; Parutis 2011; Shubin *et al.* 2014), their attributes of being ‘white, European, and hard working’ (Parutis 2011) gave these intra-EU migrants a competitive and social advantage over other, non-EU migrants, especially those perceived as culturally and ‘visibly’ different. As Shubin *et al.* (2014: 467) pointed out, in the case of Latvian recruiting agents imagining an ideal lesser-skilled worker, he or she does not need a ‘big head’ (ie. brains) but rather ‘big feet’ for filling ‘wellington boots’ to work in agriculture or construction. McDowell (2009) drew parallels between post-2004 migration into the UK and an earlier wave of ‘white’ European migrants recruited under the European Volunteer Worker scheme during 1946–1949. Sixty years later, the UK Labour government favoured A8 migrants as part of its ‘managed migration policy’ to fill gaps in low-wage sectors with Europeans, rather than with third-country-nationals from other parts of the world. Although the scale of migration, facilitated by the UK’s signing up to immediate free movement and labour market access in 2004, exceeded all expectations, economic calculations by Dustmann and Frattini (2014) showed that these large injections of European labour played an important role in driving forward the UK’s booming economy in those years. A8 migrants, as well as other intra-EU migrants, made a large net fiscal contribution to the UK economy. This was due to the fact that, as largely young and healthy single workers, working full-time without much unemployment, they put into the national exchequer, via taxes, far more than they took out.

Although the work that they do can be monotonous and physically demanding, some of it out in all weathers, both the skilled and less-skilled migrants who perform this physical work gain job satisfaction and even pride in what they do. They do not feel themselves to be victims as exploited labourers, above all because of the stark contrast between the wage-levels characteristic of West European and post-socialist countries (Ciupijus 2011: 544). They are also, on the whole, tolerant of these arduous physical jobs because such work is often perceived by them as an interim stage before progression to better employment, or return home to capitalise on the invested savings and work experiences accumulated.

According to May *et al.* (2007: 163), the large-scale and steady influx of new intra-EU migrants into the UK economy enabled employers to fill vacancies without the need to increase wages or improve working conditions. The overall effect, especially in London, was to relieve

bottle-necks in an otherwise tight labour market and hold down wage inflation. For the labour migrants themselves, they have little room to manoeuvre in campaigning for better pay and conditions, since the sectors they work in have high rates of labour turnover and a ready supply of new migrants willing to accept the prevailing conditions, including irregular migrants from non-EU countries (Bloch 2013: 284; see also McDowell *et al.* 2007).

As a complement and an antidote to this predominantly economic labour market analysis, we change tune now to some more ethnographic evidence. There is an abundance of this in the literature, so let us simply select one example from the well-known case of Polish building and house-repair workers in London. This enables us to illustrate not only the working lives of these migrants but also their social encounters with others in their multicultural neighbourhoods of residence. Using the optic of ‘translocal geographies’, Datta (2011) evocatively describes the various neighbourhoods where Poles live cheek-by-jowl with other immigrants, both long-established and recently arrived like themselves. In the ‘global ethnoscape’ (Appadurai 1991) of Green Lanes, a centre of London’s Turkish and Kurdish communities, Poles find a congenial space in which to interact with other cultures and nationalities, feel comfortably at home, and live a straightforward life where all their shopping and service needs are on their doorstep, once the more challenging exigences of finding work and somewhere to sleep have been resolved. There are many other such diverse urban spaces in the interstices of London, pockets of cheaper housing where livelihoods can be sustained in a mobile habitus linking house-improvement and building projects in richer neighbourhoods with the need to find living accommodation in cheap neighbourhoods alongside Asians, Afro-Caribbeans, Middle Easterners and other East Europeans. The result, as Datta discusses in another paper (2009), is the production of a kind of working-class everyday cosmopolitanism for those Poles-on-the-move which is very different from their monocultural society back home.

#### *From temporary to more-permanent work*

According to data presented and discussed by Blanchflower and Shadforth (2009), during the mid-late 2000s, about half of the A8 migrant workers in the UK were holding temporary jobs. This proportion was even higher in agriculture – 70 per cent. By contrast, in another sector typical for lower-skilled migrant jobs – hospitality and catering – only 20 per cent were in temporary employment. Quite apart from the definitional difficulty of clearly distinguishing temporary from permanent work in a deregulated labour market, what is more important is the fact that 97 per cent of A8 immigrants were working full-time, with many picking up overtime as well.

Regarding incomes, 77 per cent were earning between £4.50 and £9.99 per hour (Blanchflower and Shadforth 2009: 154) at that time, thereby confirming the low-wage status of at least three-quarters of the A8 migrants. Average wages were below those of both the native workforce and other, ‘third-country’, immigrants. This latter finding is maybe surprising but is explained by the fact that entry to the EU and Britain from ‘outside’ Europe is mainly based on the principle of recruiting only the highly skilled, whereas, under the free movement of labour, intra-EU migrants can access all jobs, with the result that perhaps too many end up in low-paid, less-skilled jobs despite the fact that many possess good qualifications, and are

hence over-qualified for the jobs that they do (Blanchflower and Shadforth 2009: 162). Those with better and improving English skills and those with higher education are the ones the most likely to be successful in moving to a better job sooner or later; for some, further promotion to their 'dream job' may occur (Parutis 2014). The transition to better jobs for the less-educated is less-well documented, and would seem to be a gap in the research literature.

However, here are two examples of this kind of transition from low-paid temporary work to somewhat better-paid permanent, full-time employment: the first within the same sector, the second achieved by switching sectors.

Jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector are usually seen as 'low-paid, low-skilled, monotonous, highly-pressurised, involving poor working conditions, part-time and seasonal, not family friendly and with poor management and career structures' (Janta *et al.* 2012: 433). In these jobs, seasonal vacancies and word of mouth make access to temporary employment relatively quick and easy and, for many migrants with limited qualifications, this kind of work serves as an entrance job immediately after arrival. Although these jobs are often very poorly paid in terms of fixed wages, many workers receive tips, subsidised accommodation and free food, so that their basic wage is supplemented. Being intensively exposed to tourists from all over the world gives migrant workers the chance to improve their languages and awareness of other cultures; as a result, many report job satisfaction through this learning process. For some, the very temporariness of work is, or becomes, a lifestyle choice, especially for young and single workers (Janta *et al.* 2012: 433). For others, language improvements and on-the-job training and experience are the route to promotion within the sector, for instance to head cleaner or porter, or even to 'front-of-house' positions in restaurants and hotels. However, it has to be pointed out that the tourism/hospitality sector is 'bottom-heavy', with a very low ratio of permanent managerial staff to casual, temporary, part-time and seasonal employees.

Like the tourism sector, agriculture is another field of work reliant on short-term migrant labour, especially where the farming regimes are intensive and specialised, requiring sudden inputs of labour at harvest time. Here both the social and physical environments are tougher – no interesting tourists to interact with, and hard physical labour out of doors. Reported job satisfaction is generally lower, except for those who are specifically looking for seasonal work in order to achieve modest target savings, or to integrate with other work or responsibilities in their home country. On the whole, migrant workers in agriculture in Europe are structurally disempowered: working in remote places on short-term contracts, they are disengaged from trade unions and have weak bargaining power to petition for higher wages. In the case of this job sector, a move to better-paid and more-secure work involves a shift to a different area of employment such as factory work or work in the hospitality or care sector. In the Channel Island of Guernsey, where young Latvian women were recruited to work seasonally in the greenhouses of the horticultural sector in the 1990s and early 2000s, many have made the transition to full-time work in the island's hotel, care and retail businesses (King and Lulle 2015).

### *Establishing a home and returning from work abroad*

In the mid-late 2000s, migrants from the A10 countries in the UK were much more likely to be living in households with at least three adults, yet not living with a spouse, than was the case for either UK natives or migrants from non-A10 origins (the figures are 48, 24 and 27 per cent respectively; Blanchflower and Shadforth 2009: 155). The same data source shows that only 7 per cent of A10 worker-migrants had dependents living with them – but it should be remembered that this refers to the situation a decade ago, soon after the onset of post-accession migration. The data cited above indicate, in synthesis, two things: first that the model of the ‘single A8 migrant’ was still common throughout most of the 2000s (cf. White 2010: 578) and, second, that these single, low-paid migrants were living in poor conditions in multi-occupation households, presumably sharing with other single migrant workers. Ethnographic evidence from Datta (2011) upholds this general picture for young Polish men in London.

This means, in turn, that the transition to full adulthood, family formation and an independent home is achieved with difficulty under these conditions, up against practical and economic barriers (De Valk and Liefbroer 2007). When this transition does finally occur, as it does in a growing number of cases, it is usually achieved alongside improving knowledge of the host-country language, the learning of other skills and the passage to more secure and well-paid employment. Seasonal, low-paid and low-skilled work in agriculture or tourism, or the mobile life of a construction worker, are not ideal conditions under which to start family life in the destination society. But as soon as stable work and housing are acquired by migrants, conditions are better for inviting partners, spouses and children to join them abroad (White 2010: 578).

Another important dimension framing the intra-European mobility of young migrants is the urban vs rural context of their various moves. Ever since the early years of the era of industrialisation, the migration of young adults from rural and remote areas to cities and industrialised areas has been regarded as a ‘normalised’ process (Zelinsky 1971). This can take place through either internal or international migration. However, there is a need to better understand the cultural meanings and attachments to places that young people are moving from and to (Easthope and Gabriel 2008; Nugin 2014). Moving to urban regions may be associated with the realisation of aspirations and empowerment but it can also lead to frustration, disillusionment and alienation. The possibility or likelihood of return migration opens up new place-based decisions and attachments. To where, exactly, does the return take place? Migrants may return to their rural regions of origin which, even if they are constantly changing (developing and modernising, or depopulating and declining), may offer a quality of life that young people could not find in urban centres, especially when they plan to establish their own homes and a family. Or, because of the difficulty of finding remunerative and satisfying work in such rural regions in their home country, they may relocate to urban centres, where they are likely to face the same dilemma as when they were working abroad – that the best employment chances are available in cities where the housing and living costs are highest.

As noted earlier, there is rather little known about the return, resettlement and reintegration processes of intra-European younger migrants. Much of what we say here below is theoretical and speculative rather than based on solid empirical research, although a few studies can be cited.

For ‘target earners’ the return is planned ahead, with a specified outcome often in mind, such as acquiring the capital to build or renovate a house or buy an apartment. The question then is: What happens next? How does the returnee survive long-term in the home country? Re-emigration may be the economically logical or necessary option (White 2014).

On the other hand, the return may constitute the ultimate youth transition to full adulthood – settling down, establishing a home, starting a family etc. This may be the logical outcome of the whole combined migration and life transition cycle, or it may be fraught with difficulties and uncertainties, not only about finding work but also in terms of social reintegration and evolving identity processes. Lesser-skilled migrants will have learned some new work and other skills whilst abroad, but how relevant are they to the return socio-economic environment? On the downside, migration abroad can also deplete human capital (through de-skilling), diminish social capital (loss of previous friendship networks) and even be financially disadvantageous (if the economics of the project do not work out); these negative aspects can make return migration more difficult (Anacka and Fihel 2012).

If there is difficulty getting work on return, ‘reverse transitions’ may take place – from employment to unemployment, or from full-time employment to casual and part-time work, or at lower rates of pay. For some lower-skilled returnees (and higher-skilled ones, too), the solution may be to use the financial capital and work experience gained abroad to set up a small business – a trend that has been noted with studies of return migration in other geographical and historical contexts (Gmelch 1980; King 1986, 2000). Another, broader, reverse transition occurs when migrants return to their parental family home; the independent living, self-reliance and earning capacity experienced abroad are partially lost when they return to being adult children living with their parents.

We round off this review of return by referencing a couple of insightful quantitative studies, both set within the context of West-to-East return. The first (Martin and Radu 2012) analyses the return component of the EU Labour Force Survey, supplemented by data from the European Social Survey; the period covered is 2002–2007. Taken as a share of the active-age population in 2006–2008, returnees (native-born persons who had spent at least six months abroad in the previous 10 years) generally comprise 6–9 per cent for most A8 and A2 countries: the highest values are for Estonia (9.1 per cent) and Poland (8.0), the lowest Hungary (2.6) and Slovenia (4.3). Returnees were found to have a mix of sometimes contradictory characteristics. There was evidence of a positive selection at return, compared to both non-migrants and to migrant non-returnees, and there was an income premium of 10–45 per cent for their work abroad, depending on length of time abroad and job sector. Yet returnees were more likely to be unemployed post-return, as well as more likely to be in self-employment.

The second study is based on a survey of 654 Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian labour migrants in the Netherlands (Snel *et al.* 2015). The authors find, firstly, that a substantial proportion intended to stay in the Netherlands ‘for some years’ (2–10 years, 30 per cent) and an impressive number (25 per cent) ‘forever’ or ‘until retirement’. A similar proportion had no clear plans (28 per cent). In the rest of the paper, Snel *et al.* test three hypotheses about return intentions – note that this is about intentions to return, not actual return. The first hypothesis is *economic* but bifurcates into two competing hypotheses based in turn on *neoclassical economics* (NE) and on the *new economics of labour migration* (NELM). NE theory argues that ‘successful’ migrants will settle long-term in the destination country, whereas ‘failures’

will return because of their miscalculation of the relative costs and benefits of their move. NELM posits the inverse, in that successful migrants, who achieved their target in migrating, will return; whereas the ‘failures’, who failed to earn enough to return and are ashamed of it, will be forced to stay on. As a parenthetical note, in their review of German guestworker return migration, Constant and Massey (2002) argue that NE and NELM are not conflicting theories but complementary, applying to different types of migrant, respectively *income maximisers* and *target earners*.

The second hypothesis, about *socio-cultural integration*, is more straightforward. In a nutshell, those who are more socially and culturally integrated in the host society and identify more with it than with the homeland, are less likely to return. Conversely the third hypothesis, relating to *transnationalism theory*, argues that migrants who ‘forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and of settlement’ (Basch *et al.* 1994: 7) will be more likely to return.

Results from the analysis of Snel *et al.* (2015) are as follows. The socio-cultural integration and transnationalism hypotheses are clearly supported. Those who felt themselves to be highly integrated in Dutch society had weak return intentions, whereas those who kept in touch regularly with their country of origin via regular visits and remittance-sending, had high return intentions. On the two alternative economic hypotheses the results are more mixed, indicating that both ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ intend to return home, but for different reasons. However, on the whole, NE theory seems to be more powerful and logical for this group of survey respondents.

## **Conclusions and policy perspectives**

This review has demonstrated the existence of a wealth of literature on young people’s migration and mobility within Europe. Much of this literature is very recent, a product of the last few years and the wide availability of European and national research grants to fund this work. The literature continues to grow very fast, making this kind of literature review survey a challenge. Our review here is far from comprehensive, but we believe it covers the main types of youth migration and gives an idea of the main processes under way for each of the three nominated categories of young migrants – students, graduate-level workers and lower-skilled workers.

We have not attempted a systematic coverage of the EU’s 28 countries, nor have we surveyed the literatures in languages other than English – a major limitation. Our coverage of the continent is thus geographically patchy, as is the overall geographical distribution of the literature. Of recent flows within Europe, Polish migration to the UK is both the largest statistically and has attracted by far the most attention in the scholarly literature. We are very aware that there are some, mostly smaller, countries which are hardly mentioned in this review, such as Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, for example.

The paper is now rounded off with some brief insights into the policy realm. First, we note a selection of EU-level policies; then some national-scale ones. All relate to fostering

youth mobility, especially but not always in the context of transitions into work, and contributing to ‘development’ in some way. We also point to some policy gaps.

At the European level, the main problem to be tackled is *youth unemployment*. In 2013, according to the Commission, nearly 6 million people in the EU under the age of 25 were unemployed, and a total of 7.5 million were ‘NEET’ – not in education, employment or training. Youth unemployment, as noted earlier, is highly uneven across the EU, both between countries and regionally within countries. There are complex relationships between unemployment and migration but, on the whole, emigration has traditionally been high from high-unemployment countries, sometimes on a scale sufficient to produce a significant decline in youth unemployment, and hence overall unemployment, in these emigration source countries. For instance, in the Baltic States, migration has contributed to a sharp decline in youth unemployment in recent years (King *et al.* 2005). According to an OECD (2013) report, the profile of youth migration from the Baltics has changed in recent years. Young Latvians are more likely to be students or graduates and are oriented to long-term or even permanent settlement abroad, whereas Estonians are mainly male labour migrants working in the construction industry in Finland, and highly return-oriented. The Lithuanian migrant profile is somewhat intermediate between the above two, but closer to the Latvian one: young people dominate (55 per cent of emigrants are aged 20–34) and more than half of these had upper-secondary vocational qualifications, according to recent years’ statistics. Since both the immigration and birth rates are very low in these three countries, there are concerns about demographic decline, already in evidence from recent censuses. Policies for encouraging return migration have therefore been activated in recent years, and are gaining some modest impact now that the worst years of the economic crisis are over.

With the alarmingly high levels of youth unemployment across large parts of the EU, the Commission has made youth employment a major priority, with links to improving education and training. The Commission aims to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10 per cent, and to have at least 40 per cent of those aged 30–34 years completing third-level education by 2020.

*Youth on the Move*, launched in 2010, is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on education and employment for young people in Europe, and part of the ‘Europe 2020’ strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In a nutshell, ‘Youth on the Move’ aims to improve young people’s education and employability, in order to reduce the unacceptably high youth unemployment rate and to increase the youth-employment rate – in line with the EU’s wider target of achieving a 75 per cent employment rate for the working-age population (20–64 years). The objective to make education and training more geared to the needs of both young people and the labour market, encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country, and to encourage EU countries to take measures which will ease the education–work transition.

In order to increase youth employability, the largest policy is the *Youth Guarantee*, endorsed by EU countries in April 2013, which aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 get a suitable job offer within four months of them leaving formal education or otherwise becoming unemployed. Although precise figures are impossible to determine until each EU country has defined exactly how it will implement the Youth Guarantee, research by the International Labour Office (ILO 2013) rates the benefits higher than the costs. The total

estimated cost of establishing Youth Guarantee schemes in the Eurozone countries is €21 billion or 0.22 per cent of GDP. But inaction would be more costly. ‘NEET’ young people are estimated to cost the EU €153 billion (or 1.21 per cent of aggregate GDP) per year in benefits payments and foregone tax and earnings (Eurofund 2013). Moreover, the EU can top up spending on these schemes through the European Social Fund (ESF) under the €6 billion budget for the Youth Employment Initiative.

Another ESF initiative, to tackle youth unemployment through mobility, is the ‘Learning Network on Transnational Mobility Measures for Disadvantaged Youth and Young Adults’ (TLN Mobility). This is a partnership between 15 member-states and autonomous regions in Europe (Germany, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Portugal, Ireland, Flanders, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, and autonomous regions in Italy and Spain) to tackle youth unemployment through transnational mobility supported financially through their national and regional ESF programmes for 2014–2020. One example of an initiative under the TLN Mobility programme is the German IdA or ‘Integration through Exchange’ scheme. This supports young people who have difficulties entering or re-entering the labour market by enhancing their professional and training competences through a work-stay abroad. Priority is given to school and training-scheme drop-outs, youth with little or no formal qualification, young single mothers and young people with disabilities.

For those with more training and higher levels of education, there are the well-known Erasmus schemes (broadened to Socrates, as well as the recent Erasmus+) for higher education, the Marie Curie schemes for doctoral and postdoctoral mobility, and the more vocationally oriented Leonardo and Gruntvig schemes for training and learning abroad.

Regarding policy for supporting the *integration* of transnationally mobile young people, this is less developed at the intra-EU level, where the key policy initiatives are for integrating third-country migrants (see the review in King and Lulle 2016: 51–88). Unlike third-country nationals, it seems that EU migrants, benefiting from the principle of free movement, are expected to integrate themselves. However, in practice, intra-EU migrants do have their integration needs, especially as regards language and culture (King and Lulle 2016: 52, n22). In some countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, language courses are free, and EU migrants can join. In most other respects, however, intra-EU migrants’ real needs are overlooked, as they are caught in the no-man’s-land of free movement and equal treatment as native citizens on the one hand, and the special integration measures for non-European migrants on the other.

Turning now to national-level policies, these are mainly put in place by countries which have witnessed either long-term or (as in the case of the post-2004 accession countries) recent large-scale emigration. The two main policy areas, from a state-initiated perspective, are to forge links with the diaspora and to promote return. But there are also bottom-up initiatives coming more from the side of the migrants and their organisations to maintain links with the home country and, via philanthropic, economic investment or cultural activities, to help promote its ‘development’.

Increasingly, nowadays, countries with histories of emigration (‘emigration nations’; Collyer 2013) develop so-called diaspora policies (see, for example, Aikins and Russell 2013; Gray 2013; King and Melvin 1999; Marques and Góis 2013; Schain 1994). And although diaspora has a rather specific historical meaning relating to a combination of trauma and exile (Cohen 2008: 1–2), it seems nowadays to apply also to ‘scatterings’ of population created

through trade, colonialism or labour migration. The term ‘diaspora’ is also mobilised in the much more recent context of crisis-hit emigration, and countries label their recent emigrants as an evolving diaspora to avoid the negative connotations of the word ‘migrant’. Increasingly more European countries – especially, again, in Central and Eastern Europe – establish specific governmental departments responsible for the diaspora, and even designate ambassadors and ministers responsible for diaspora relations. In 2014, for instance, Ireland appointed a minister of state for the Irish diaspora. The minister’s main responsibility was strengthening ties with Irish youth abroad, especially recent emigrants with good education, with a further agenda of getting them either to return or to invest in the Irish economy from abroad. Nowadays, young and resourceful people living and working abroad are seen more and more as ‘lay diplomats’ who represent their country of origin (hopefully in a good light) and who may be an asset for transnational economic links and collaboration (King and Melvin 1999; Shain 1994). The key message underlying such political attention is the state’s wish to maintain links with its citizens abroad, tapping into their resources – financial, intellectual, emotional and political – and encourage their return migration, especially of the younger emigrant cohorts.

Mentoring and training programmes for emigrant youth are especially popular for countries with large emigrant cohorts abroad. An example is the ‘Irish Executive Mentoring Programme’ which recently received funding from the Irish government to run a support scheme for emigrants to develop the talents required by Irish governmental and other state organisations. After the mentoring phase, young emigrants are invited to undertake job placements in Irish governmental organisations and then themselves become transnational mentors for young, educated Irish migrants worldwide. Other examples abound. Since 2012, Estonia operates a programme called *Talendid Koju* (Bring Talent Home), and Slovenia, which has an estimated 10 per cent of its researchers working abroad, likewise puts a special emphasis on the return migration of its researchers. Yet another example – since 2008, Slovakia operates a programme called ‘Slovensk Calling’ to attract back skilled and talented Slovaks, informing them of work opportunities in the country of origin.

Finally, there are countless bottom-up initiatives of the migrants themselves, many of them based on the creative communicating and networking potential of the many forms of social media. These initiatives and associations are especially numerous amongst students studying abroad and amongst migrants and entrepreneurs with a business or philanthropic interest. Even individual blogs can be powerful voices in this field. For instance, in a blog called *Io Torno Se*, Antonio Siragusa collects stories of Italians who live abroad (see [www.iotornose.it](http://www.iotornose.it)). This is a space for discussions about politics and the problems of starting good careers in Italy for young people (cf. Conti and King 2015). Siragusa emphasises that the blog was launched not just as a platform for complaints but in the hope that Italian politicians would listen to these voices and act on proposals that come from the emigrants themselves. Such grass-roots initiatives are perhaps ultimately more meaningful than top-down state-bureaucratic policies because they are an expression of the individual ambition and enterprise that underpins the emigration process in the first place.

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