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LIFESTYLES AND LIVING CONDITIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both *generational* and *youth* studies argue that “Lifestyles and Living Conditions” represent two of the most important features in defining youth behaviour and culture. These issues must also be understood as manifestations of both historical changes and national contexts and must therefore be constantly updated in order to contribute to an efficient identification of youth setbacks, dilemmas and problems. This identification provides useful information to devise evidence-based youth policies.

With the encouragement of the [partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth](#) and benefiting from data from several cross-section European surveys, the aims of this report are to contribute to a “[Better understanding and knowledge of youth and youth policy development](#)” (as suggested by the [8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth](#)) and to provide a big picture of the lifestyles and living conditions of young people throughout Europe by identifying challenging issues. Whenever possible, we also aim to make recommendations for policies, practices and research.

The substantive part of this report was organised in four related but autonomously analysed topics. The most relevant findings are presented below.

1| TRANSITIONS

Points presented in this section refer mainly to some important demographic markers and transitional events.

Source of Income | The predominance of different “sources of income” amongst young adults (from ages 15 to 30) clearly reifies some already well-known dichotomies such as the one represented by Scandinavian countries (as well as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Ireland), on the one hand, and southern European countries (as well as Bulgaria and Hungary) on the other. In the first case, findings suggest a predominance of “regular job” as the main source of income, combined with significant percentages for “educational grants and training allowances”, whereas, in the second case, the “family” is the major source of income.

Family | Married (or in civil union) young adults in Europe still constitute a small proportion of the young population, which is the case in countries such as Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary with percentages of approximately 10%. The synchrony between the entry into conjugal and parental roles is very heterogeneous throughout Europe. Processes of match and mismatch between consensual union and parenthood are the result of both cultural (age norms¹, for

¹ For data concerning these aspects, see the European Social Survey 2006 data, specially the Timing of Life Module.

instance) and structural features of the countries. Five profiles of *synchrony of entry in conjugal and in parental roles* were found and developed later in this analysis. Religion seems to have a significant influence on the early entry into conjugal roles (through marriage), independently of the timing for parental ones.

Residential autonomy | Great discrepancies in Europe are found on this matter. Scandinavian countries are the only ones to present more than half of its respondents aged 18 to 24 not living with their parents, whereas in Portugal, Slovenia, Poland and Bulgaria, around 80% of respondents still live with their family of origin. The most important reasons for the delayed departure from the parental home are usually institution-based rather than individual-based, such as “not having the sufficient income”, followed by “not having affordable housing available”.

2| LEISURE

This subject refers to some leisure activities and perceptions about them.

Subjective free time for leisure activities | Patterns for this section are not determined by well known dichotomies nor by the actual time spent in leisure activities. When it comes to variations in the definition of free time, cultural reasons appear to be a stronger explicative variable than the actual “time spent” in leisure activity or the “frequency of the activities”. A reason for this is the non-linear relation between the amount of time spent in all considered-activities and the subjective evaluation of their spare time. This depends on the definition of “free time” and if this equates to everything that falls outside of time spent at work, in school or in training or if other activities such as sports or family obligations for example are considered as “compulsory” in the respondent’s general time management and use.

Comparing physical, mind and social activities | “Reading activities” are the least practiced. Countries characterised by a higher level of “physical activity” are Germany, Ireland, Slovenia and Finland with 60% of respondents carrying out a “regular activity of walking, biking or sports”, whereas countries like Spain, Latvia, Ireland and Sweden stand out as having more regular “social activities with friends”.

Sports and moderate-to-vigorous daily activity | Men are, in a transversal way, more physically active than women of the same age (15 years old). Country-wise, Northern and Scandinavian countries present the highest percentages for “physical activity”.

Media Usage | Whilst evoking the concept of *internet generation*, mass and transversal activities such as “watching TV, listening to music, using a computer or playing games” (80 to 90%) must be highlighted. Belgium stands out for its low usage level, Germany and the Netherlands for the highest levels of usage and France for the biggest gender gap. “Watching TV” and “reading activities” seem to be “rival” activities. This is particularly visible in countries

like Sweden, Finland, Austria, Hungary and Estonia (all with high percentages of newspaper reading) and Cyprus (with a high level for watching TV). Although statistics for “internet use” are high, they are also very heterogeneous throughout Europe. In Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Belgium, more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents use Internet on a daily basis, whereas Bulgaria, Slovakia, Portugal and Spain show lower percentages (up to 40%).

Cultural activities | Besides cultural activities such as “watching ballet” or “visiting museums”, “visiting the library” comes out as a frequent and popular activity. Approximately 80% of all respondents stated that they had never watched a ballet show (or any other dance performance) in the last 12 months, whereas approximately 60 to 70% (at most) had “visited a museum”, with the lowest percentages in the case of Scandinavian countries.

Sociability and peers | The “valorisation of friends” in this stage of life is relatively transversal across European countries. The relation between the “valorisation of friends” and “having someone to talk about intimate issues with” is almost linear. The same does not necessarily happen with regards to the weekly frequency of actually “being with those friends”, with the exception of Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands. Besides these countries, southern European ones (with the exception of Portugal) also present high levels of frequency of “being with friends”.

3| RISK BEHAVIOUR

This section mainly focuses on the use of intoxicants and on sexual behaviours.

Alcohol | “Experimenting alcohol (at least once in the past year)” at the age of 16 is very common and transversal across European countries. However, the state of “drunkenness (at least once a year)” is very heterogeneous: Cyprus, Portugal, France, Romania, Italy and Greece present the lowest levels (up to 30%), whilst Denmark, Ireland, Austria, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Estonia present the highest ones (68 to 82%).

Drugs | The percentage of young people “using drugs other than cannabis” is small but quite transversal across all countries. Heterogeneity between the countries is found when it comes to “trying cannabis at least once”, with countries such as the Czech Republic, Ireland, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium with the highest percentages: a prevalence of 30% to 45%.

Cigarettes | More than half of young people in every European country has already “tried cigarettes” (with the exceptions of Malta and Greece, with percentages below, but very close to, 50%). High percentages of experimentation are particularly evident in countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Slovakia. There seems to be a strong relation between experimenting and consuming cigarette on a more regular basis.

Sexual and reproductive health | The gender gap in sexual activity amongst young people aged 15 is more evident in countries such as Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, as opposed to Sweden, Finland or Austria. We verify that the lower the gender gap, the lower the percentage of young people stating that they “have had sexual intercourse” (particularly striking in Slovakia, Latvia, Spain and Germany). The use of the contraceptive pill (more stated by women) is more evident in Northern and Scandinavian countries, whereas the use of condoms (more stated by men) is much more transversal across both sexes and across all countries, with percentages between 60 and 80%.

Teenage Pregnancies | There seems to be a strong relation between “teenage pregnancies” and the low usage of the contraceptive pill. This is especially relevant in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania.

4| HEALTH

This section refers mainly to the subjective state of general and mental health and well-being issues, as well as to matters pertaining to overweight and nutritional behaviours.

Subjective state of health | Evaluation of the “state of health” as “bad or very bad” is very low in all the countries.

Body mass and subjective perception | Although more women than men “consider themselves fat”, men are more often overweight compared to women, which reveals a strong stereotyped image of the “feminine” and the pressures endured by young women to be thin. This discrepancy is especially true in countries such as Germany, Poland, Slovenia and the Netherlands.

Mental Health and well-being | “Tiredness” is the most frequent and transversal negative indicator of a low level of “subjective well-being”. We can see that the lowest levels of subjective well-being (index) are more evident in countries such as Hungary, France and Sweden. This index of well-being doesn’t appear to have a linear relation with suicide rates (amongst young people from 15 to 19 years old). Social integration, which is usually seen as one of the most important variable in explaining “suicide” (Durkheim, *Le suicide*, [1897]) was not measured in this report and cannot, thus, be directly translated into subjective well-being indicators.

Nutritional behaviour | “Breakfast habits” are not homogeneous between European countries. In many countries (such as Slovenia, Greece, the Czech Republic, Malta, Austria, Hungary and Romania), less than half of respondents have breakfast on a daily basis. Additionally, young girls tend to skip breakfast much more than young men. Homogeneity in fruit-eating habits is much higher. Nonetheless, national percentages for fruit-eating habits are much lower (varying between 14% and 46%) than the ones found for “Breakfast habits”.

This report provides, along with its main conclusions, some insight into country heterogeneity, identifies potentially critical aspects relating to young people's lifestyles in Europe and makes some suggestions to inform youth policymaking processes (see pages 46 to 47).

1. INTRODUCTION

Together with other three reports (on [Employment](#), on [Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities](#) and on [Attitudes of Young People](#)), this document attempts to respond to the need to consider Youth issues in a multifaceted way, by providing an analysis of some transversal features of youth. The transversal character of "Living Conditions and Lifestyles" is particularly evident, and the dialectic relation between these two topics is exceptionally useful to map the diversity of European Youth.

Consequently, this report seeks to contribute to a "Better knowledge of European Youth" by (1) providing a big-picture analysis of the major trends of young people's living conditions, (2) identifying the most important cross-country differences and by (3) detecting problematic or urgent issues in the lifestyles and living conditions of young people throughout Europe. The first two goals will be explored in the section on data analysis, whilst the third goal will be particularly developed in the concluding part of this report.

2. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Understanding what lies behind the numbers and the limitations of these statistics is important for the interpretation of data. For that matter, two aspects concerning the data should be considered. The first refers to the selection (and limitation) of the variables; the second, to the age groups considered for this analysis.

Regarding the **variables**, one should acknowledge that the transversal character of lifestyles and living conditions is as useful as it is complicated to analyse. In fact, as this report is not exhaustive, the selection of variables that best indicate the composition of lifestyles and living conditions of young adults was a difficult task. The option then was to favour a variety of variables and sources (that would, together, provide a general picture) rather than privilege a multivariate analysis (that would analyse data from one single source but would consequently investigate fewer topics). Thus, the data were collected from several different sources, the majority of which were available online. The original data for this report was previously gathered by a team from the Turku University (Finland). As many potential dimensions were to be included in each of the report's four main topics (transitions, leisure, risk behaviour and

health), this selection could only include some of the relevant variables for each considered dimension. This selection is reflected in this report.

Regarding the **age groups**, it should be emphasised that the heterogeneous and ongoing redefinition of the concept of youth provides a flexible definition of the age groups that circumscribes it. This aspect, together with the variety of sources used in this report, resulted in a multiplication of definitions and thus enlarged the range of age groups to be considered in this analysis. The problems brought by the heterogeneity of age groups are minimized by the complexity of contemporary transitions into adulthood. This transition from childhood into adulthood is a demographically dense moment in one's life, but the sequence of transitional events is not linear, or not as linear as it once was. For this reason, these transitional periods have been extended and transitional events are more dispersed and multiplied over time. Although the data is not longitudinal, the heterogeneity of the age groups may refer to identical generational cultures anyway.

As to the **nature of the data**, it should also be taken into account that analysing the lifestyles and living conditions among young people implies the inclusion of both practices and value-related data, which also provides a rich picture.

The strategy for **data analysis** was mainly a descriptive one, but it also took into account, whenever possible and pertinent, the existence of linear relations between variables from the same indicator. A data reduction analysis (cluster by hierarchical method) or the construction of indexes with variables of the same indicator was also included in the analysis. This allowed for a classification of countries in groups that would otherwise go unnoticed, as the information would have been dispersed throughout the variables. In these and in other cases, the heterogeneity was represented in maps.

As previously mentioned, lifestyles and living conditions are not measured forthrightly through obvious features, nor are these concepts easy to grasp. The transversal and changeable nature of lifestyles and living conditions interferes with the possibility of a linear identification of relevant indicators, as well as with the production of a straightforward typology of lifestyles that would consider the similarities and variation between the European countries analysed (whenever available information allows it). For these reasons, the indicators were organised in **four main topics**: transitions, leisure, risk behaviour and health. "Lifestyles" is definitely a concept for which the statement "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" fits perfectly. Thus, the separation of information into these four topics is merely for analytical purposes and does not suggest that these areas are in fact really segregated from one another.

3. YOUTH TRANSITIONS

The first of these four big topics addressed the issue of “Transitions” and mainly relates to demographic markers (such as the “entry in conjugal roles” or “entry in parental roles”) and transitional events² (such as “leaving the parental home” and having a “regular job” as a primary source of income), both of which are conventionally considered by youth researchers as important milestones for reaching adulthood. This includes several focuses: income sources, family transitions, housing careers and housing quality.

The age group considered for the analysis of “sources of income” is relatively large (15-30). Nonetheless, it still is very efficient in determining the distinction between countries on their profound differences concerning structural conditions, welfare regime types and abundance of policies. This distinction can be grasped in figure 1, where almost opposite tendencies are visible. We find, on the one hand, that in southern European countries (and in Bulgaria and Hungary), the “family” of origin or the newly constituted one is the predominant source of income, whereas in Scandinavian countries (and also the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland and Malta), a “regular job” (with no reference on its full or part time regime) constitutes the predominant source of income.

Overall, “training allowances or educational grants” represent an important source of income only in a small percentage of cases and in a small proportion of countries. In the majority of countries, sources of income from educational or training backgrounds are rather insignificant. However, in other countries, this percentage is relevant: Sweden (where this percentage is almost as important as a regular job in terms of main source of income), Denmark and Finland, but also the United Kingdom, Germany, Malta, Slovenia and Austria. In these countries, access to educational grants is more recurrent and, as a consequence, income dependency on the family is much less common.

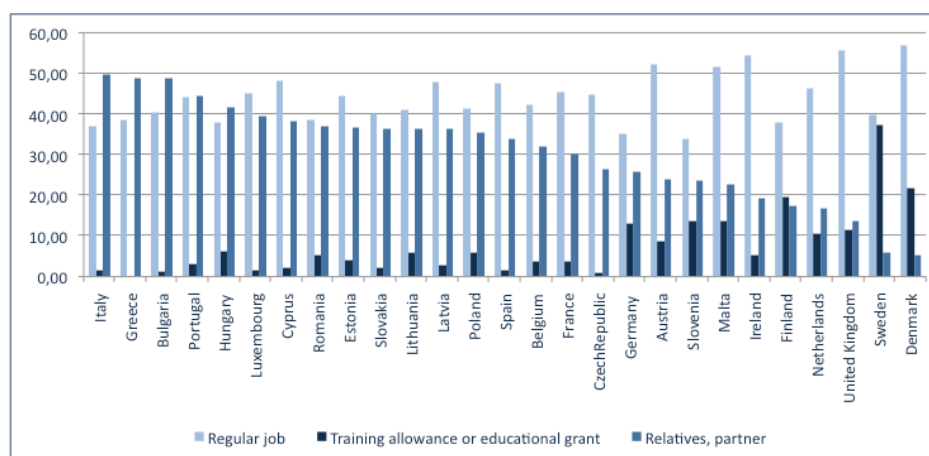
² Transitions to adulthood are usually measured, both qualitatively and quantitatively, by three different “packages” of transitions, some easy to grasp through demographic data, some just representing an important event in one's transition to adulthood: the occupational one, that is, the transition from school to work and the entry in the labour market; the family related one, that is, initiating a consensual union and/or fathering a child; and the residential one, the entry in the housing market and initiation and independent living from the family of origin.

Table 1. Main sources of income for 15-30 year-olds (percentage)

	Regular job	Training allowance or educational grant	Relatives or partner
Austria	52,3	08,9	24,0
Belgium	42,4	03,7	31,9
Bulgaria	40,5	01,2	48,7
Cyprus	48,3	02,1	38,2
Czech Republic	44,9	01,1	26,4
Denmark	56,9	21,7	05,4
Estonia	44,4	04,0	36,8
Germany	38,1	19,5	17,6
France	45,3	03,8	30,3
Finland	35,2	13,2	25,9
Greece	38,7	00,7	48,8
Hungary	37,8	06,3	41,6
Ireland	54,4	05,2	19,3
Italy	37,0	01,5	49,8
Latvia	47,8	02,8	36,3
Lithuania	41,2	05,9	36,4
Luxembourg	45,1	01,6	39,6
Malta	51,7	13,6	22,7
Netherlands	46,2	10,6	16,9
Poland	41,4	06,1	35,5
Portugal	44,1	03,1	44,4
Romania	38,5	05,2	36,9
Slovakia	40,2	02,2	36,5
Slovenia	33,9	13,8	23,8
Spain	47,5	01,6	34,0
Sweden	39,9	37,2	05,9
United Kingdom	55,8	11,4	13,8

Source: Eurobarometer (2003)

Figure 1. Main source of income of 15-30 year-olds (percentage)



Source: Eurobarometer (2003)

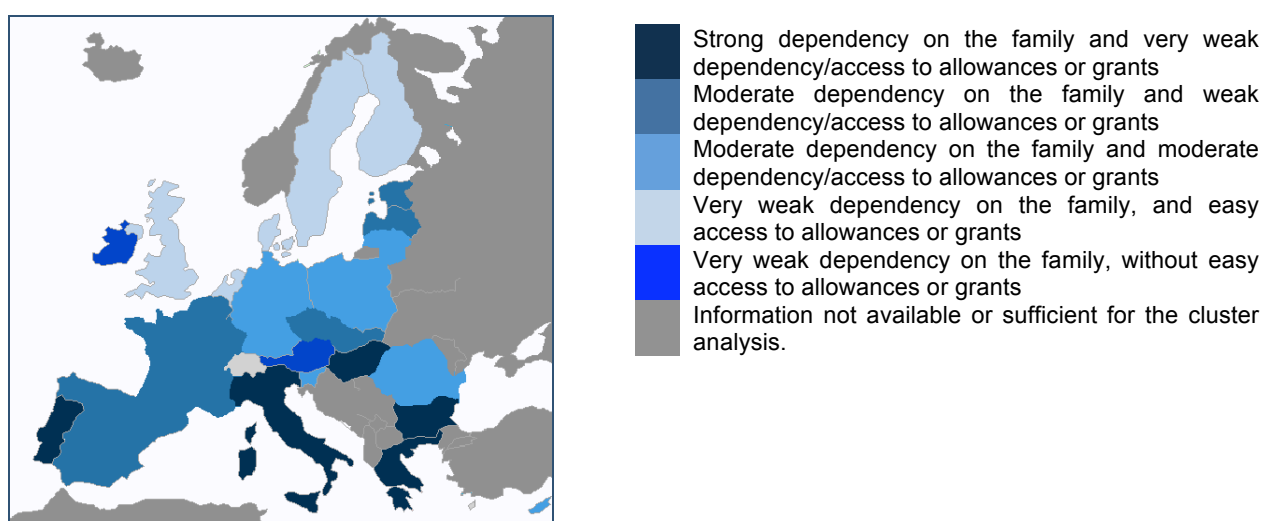
The following map (map 1) displays the previously mentioned conclusions, combining the relation between, on the one side, the dependency of young people on the family and on a regular job as a stable and sufficient income, and, on the other, the access to and abundance of training allowances or educational grants allocated to young adults, for whom this kind of income source may be the predominant one. We can see that even in countries where “training allowances or educational grants” are important, the relevance of a “regular job” as a main source of income still prevails.

This raises not only the question of abundance and availability of “training allowances and educational grants”, but also that of the monetary value of this support and, maybe more importantly, that of the legal possibilities to simultaneously perceive grants whilst having a regular and stable employment. In fact, several European countries’ legislation do not allow such a compatibility and simultaneity, thus pushing young adults to take on to the most profitable activity – usually the regular job – and forcing them to give up on the possibility of acceding to training allowances and/or educational grants. This can have an impact on young people’s motivation levels for education and/or can push them to renounce to continue their studies, whilst forcing them, in times of need (or for any other reason), to turn to the family for extra support.

Financial independency from the family of origin is a major indicator in a youth’s transition into adulthood. This milestone could occur sooner in life and have additional, potential and positive outcomes if a young person could combine the financial benefits from both school and work. Such simultaneity would be very positive in one’s life course, by allowing financial independency from the family to be compatible with the continuation of education.

In map 1, it is visible that the countries with the biggest challenges in regards to this incompatibility are Portugal, Italy, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria, which are the only countries where the percentage of “family” support as the main source of income is higher than the contribution from a “regular job”.

Map 1. Combinations of different percentages of main sources of income of 15-30 year-olds



Source: Eurobarometer data (2003)

If the diversification of the different patterns of school-to-work transition is easily understood in the context of welfare regimes (that is, as a direct consequence of macro-structural features

in each country), family transitions are often seen as individual choices or, at the most, cultural predispositions. Family *careers* are more often analysed as direct consequences of individual choices and decisions taken in the course of life. However, the strong constraints linked to working conditions, income abundance and stability constitute, most of the times, the best predictors to explain the timing and pace of conjugal and parental *careers*. The next table systematises the relevant information of the Welfare and Transition to Adulthood Regimes.

Table 2: Welfare Regimes, according to Gallie e Paugam (2000) and Transitions Regimes

Welfare Regime	Sub-protective	Liberal/ Minimal	Employment- centred	Universalistic
Characteristic of coverage	Very incomplete and very weak	Incomplete and weak	Variable and unequal	Comprehensive and high
Examples	Italy, Portugal, Spain	Ireland, Great Britain	France, Germany, Netherlands	Denmark, Sweden
School	Not selective	Not selective	Selective	Not selective
Training	Low standards and coverage	Flexible, low standards	Standardized	Flexible standards
Social security	Family	State/ Family	State/ Family	State
Employment regime	Closed, high risks, Informal work	Open, high risks	Closed, risks at the margins	Open, low risks
Concept of youth	Without distinct status	Early economic Independence	Adaptation to social positions	Personal development, citizenship
Concept of youth unemployment	Segmented labour market, lack of training	Culture of dependency	Disadvantage (deficit model)	'Not foreseen'
Concept of disadvantage	Structure-related	Individualized	Individualized	Mixed (Individualized/ Structure-related)
Focus on Transition Policies	'Some' status: work, education or training	Employability	(Pre-) vocational training	Education, Activation

Source: Walther, 2006: 125-126

Overall, the percentage of young adults currently “married or in a civil partnership” is relatively low, whilst values peak in Slovakia, followed by Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary, and diminish in countries such as Ireland, Austria, Cyprus and Estonia. Parenthood tendencies usually accompany conjugality ones, with several exceptions in Ireland, Estonia, Sweden and Bulgaria where the percentage of young adults having already given birth or fathered a child is higher than the percentage of young people who are currently “married or in a civil partnership”. On the contrary, countries such as Slovakia, Slovenia, Belgium and the Netherlands show an

opposite tendency, with a higher presence of conjugality than parenthood (“Ever given birth or fathered a child”).

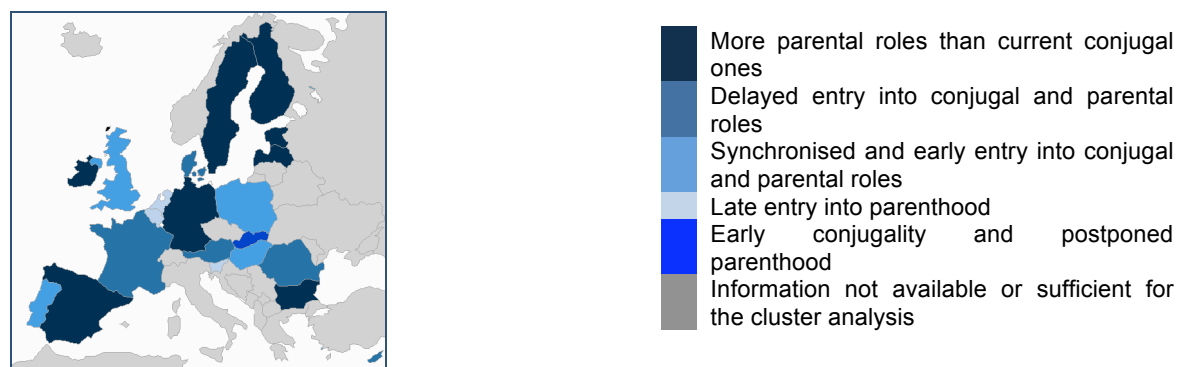
Table 3. Conjugal and parental status of young people with 15-24 years old (percentage)

	Married or in a civil partnership	Never been married and never in a civil partnership	Ever given birth or fathered a child
Austria	01,80	98,19	02,70
Belgium	09,62	88,78	03,19
Bulgaria	11,30	88,70	16,07
Cyprus	02,41	97,59	01,21
Denmark	03,65	96,35	03,62
Estonia	02,73	95,70	07,42
Germany	03,92	96,08	05,10
France	05,80	93,12	03,62
Finland	05,20	94,22	05,46
Hungary	10,17	85,70	08,47
Ireland	01,06	98,90	05,65
Latvia	05,70	93,30	06,70
Netherlands	07,80	91,74	02,75
Poland	06,46	93,26	05,90
Portugal	06,48	90,78	06,48
Romania	06,40	91,70	04,90
Slovakia	12,05	85,02	06,41
Slovenia	10,39	87,01	02,54
Spain	03,80	96,20	05,30
Sweden	02,78	96,88	05,56
United Kingdom	09,78	88,83	10,77

Source: European Social Survey 2006

According to the information available on these variables, the next map (map 2) illustrates different patterns of initiation of these family *careers* (synchronised or desynchronised conjugal and parental careers). As we can see, entry into conjugality is not always synchronised with the entry into parental roles. Five different patterns were found, as shown in map 2. At one extreme, Portugal, Poland, the United Kingdom and Hungary show an early entry into both conjugal and parental roles, whilst France, Denmark and Austria display a postponed entry for both roles. However, profound cultural differences lay between civil partnership and marriage. As many of these data are “diluted”, interpretation must be carefully done. Nonetheless, other non-linear associations between conjugality and parenthood are found in countries like Belgium or the Netherlands, and Slovenia where entry into parenthood occurs at a later stage compared to entry into conjugal life.

Map 2. Combinations of conjugal and parental status of young people amongst 15-24 years old



Source: European Social Survey data (2006)

It becomes evident, according to the previous table and map, that conjugality roles must be analysed independently from parental ones. The next data allow us to analyse these roles *per* gender. This is important, since family *careers* are still the most gendered spheres in one's life.

When considering “couples without children”, it is possible to verify that the higher gender gaps (with more women than men living in such a context) occur in countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Cyprus and Bulgaria, whilst countries like Finland, Estonia, Spain, Belgium and the Czech Republic present an opposite tendency, with more men living in “childless couples”.

Nonetheless, independently of the gap that separates both sexes, some countries present a very low tendency to live in “childless couples”. These are Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, Lithuania and Greece, where parental roles are less independent from conjugal ones. On the contrary, countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Sweden and Austria present higher percentages of young adults living as “childless couples”.

As we can see in the same table, being almost inversely proportional, the percentages of “couples with children” are consonant with the previously described distribution about parental and conjugal status. In that sense, countries with a low percentage of couples without children and, simultaneously, with a high percentage of couples living with one or more children are: Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Slovakia, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Poland. In some of these countries, religious values have a great importance in family trajectories, even for the younger generations (as we can now confirm).

Table 4. Conjugal and parental status of young adults amongst 18- 34 years old, *per gender* (percentage)

	Living as childless couple		Living as couple with children		Lone parent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Austria	14,00	26,00	13,00	18,00	2,00	12,00
Belgium	20,00	14,00	20,00	33,00	2,00	11,00
Bulgaria	3,00	13,00	23,00	25,00	0,00	4,00
Cyprus	9,00	20,00	19,00	30,00	2,00	2,00
Czech Republic	17,00	7,00	20,00	34,00	0,00	7,00
Denmark	28,00	28,00	20,00	21,00	0,00	9,00
Estonia	26,00	23,00	10,00	17,00	2,00	5,00
Finland	26,00	25,00	18,00	26,00	0,00	6,00
France	16,00	23,00	15,00	23,00	0,00	6,00
Germany	11,00	27,00	20,00	23,00	1,00	5,00
Greece	8,00	14,00	9,00	33,00	1,00	0,00
Hungary	10,00	14,00	16,00	25,00	1,00	3,00
Ireland	14,00	15,00	15,00	18,00	1,00	12,00
Italy	8,00	12,00	11,00	20,00	0,00	2,00
Latvia	13,00	20,00	21,00	24,00	2,00	6,00
Lithuania	8,00	14,00	34,00	35,00	0,00	10,00
Luxembourg	13,00	13,00	25,00	39,00	1,00	4,00
Malta	9,00	14,00	9,00	11,00	0,00	1,00
Netherlands	19,00	22,00	12,00	25,00	1,00	10,00
Poland	4,00	4,00	22,00	23,00	0,00	3,00
Portugal	8,00	10,00	28,00	30,00	0,00	9,00
Romania	12,00	18,00	11,00	20,00	1,00	2,00
Slovakia	4,00	4,00	21,00	31,00	1,00	3,00
Slovenia	10,00	11,00	17,00	26,00	0,00	3,00
Spain	22,00	16,00	13,00	26,00	1,00	2,00
Sweden	17,00	24,00	22,00	23,00	0,00	5,00
United Kingdom	22,00	36,00	8,00	19,00	1,00	13,00

Source: First European Quality of Life Survey: Families, work and social networks (2006)

Leaving the parental home is not only an important indicator of a predictable transition into adulthood, but it also represents an important feature in distinguishing European countries. Differences throughout European countries in the timing and motives for leaving the parental home not only reflect cultural differences between these countries but also reveal divergent housing policies and market availability that contextualise young people's biographical construction. In fact, "an early exit from the parental household may be supported by cultural values, but also by a favourable labour and housing market, as well as by welfare state provisions" (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2005).

The next table (table 5) illustrates these differences, which are best represented by the dichotomy between Scandinavian and Southern European countries. In this sense, we can see that Denmark, Finland and Sweden are the only countries where less than half of the young adult population is "not living with their parents", whereas in Slovenia, Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria, more than 80% of youngsters aged 15 to 24 are still "living with their parents". A transversal feature across European countries in regards to the delayed departure from the parental home is that a higher percentage of men compared to women live with their parents. The difference is specially striking between countries like Romania, Bulgaria and Lithuania on

the one hand (where more men live at home), and countries like Belgium, Finland and Sweden on the other (with lower percentages). This may have to do with the increasing percentage of women in the higher education system and also with the lower average age (compared to men) at the first marriage.

Information on young people living independently (with more complete information from European countries) allows us to complete this picture. The early process of leaving the parental home in Scandinavian countries is once again confirmed (with percentages above 50% of young adults living independently from their parents), whereas the percentage in countries like Italy, Slovakia, Poland, Portugal, Malta, Luxembourg and Spain is very low. The majority of these countries is either subject to a strong religious influence or characterised by a very scarce availability on the housing market, specially in the rental system.

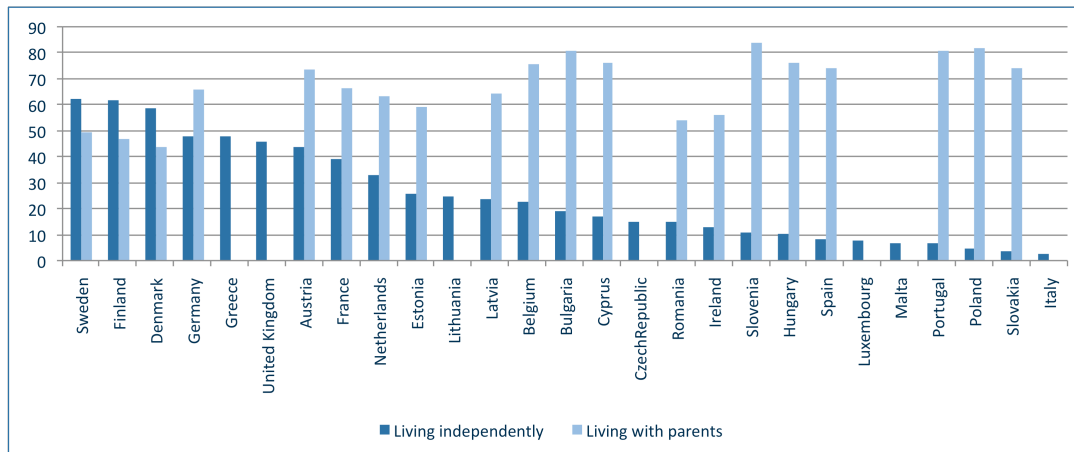
Table 5. Living independently (18-24 years old), with parents (18-24 and 15-24 years old), and alone per gender (18-24 years old) (percentage)

	Living with parents**	Living with parents*		Living independently*	Living alone *	
		M	F		M	F
Austria	73,7	29,00	13,00	44,00	35,00	23,00
Belgium	75,49	28,00	28,00	23,00	28,00	11,00
Bulgaria	80,57	50'00	23'00	19'00	11'00	3'00
Cyprus	76,25	43'00	29'00	17'00	16'00	6'00
Czech Republic	-	48,00	28,00	15,00	9,00	8,00
Denmark	43,80	17,00	8,00	58,90	33,00	28,00
Estonia	59,13	36,00	29,00	26,00	17,00	19,00
Finland	47,04	13,00	11,00	61,80	39,00	29,00
France	66,18	30,00	18,00	39,00	36,00	24,00
Germany	65,78	21,00	14,00	48,00	40,00	16,00
Greece	-	39,00	19,00	48,00	33,00	24,00
Hungary	76,14	47,00	32,00	10,50	13,00	5,00
Ireland	55,96	25,00	19,00	13,00	10,00	7,00
Italy	-	67,00	60,00	3,00	11,00	6,00
Latvia	64,50	39,00	22,00	24,00	14,00	13,00
Lithuania	-	41,00	18,00	25,00	9,00	8,00
Luxembourg	-	35,00	25,00	7,80	12,00	5,00
Malta	-	67'00	55'00	7'00	7'00	4'00
Netherlands	63,33	36,00	22,00	33,00	27,00	20,00
Poland	82,02	55,00	45,00	5,00	2,00	3,00
Portugal	80,76	48,00	33,00	7,00	7,00	5,00
Romania	54,30	51,00	19,00	15,00	6,00	11,00
Slovakia	74,11	57,00	41,00	4,00	4,00	1,00
Slovenia	83,69	53,00	43,00	11,00	10,00	6,00
Spain	74,23	45,00	34,00	8,60	5,00	5,00
Sweden	49,48	12,00	10,00	62,30	44,00	31,00
United Kingdom	-	19,00	12,00	46,00	33,00	14,00

Sources *First European Quality of Life Survey: Families, work and social networks (2006), 18-24 years old

** European Social Survey data (2006), 15 to 24 years old

Figure 2. Living independently (18-24 years old*) and with parents (15-24 years old) (percentage)**



Sources: *First European Quality of Life Survey: Families, work and social networks (2006)
 ** European Social Survey data (2006)

Different reasons can be perceived by young adults to justify this increase in the average age upon their departure from the parental home. These are the subjective reasons given from all youngsters aged between 18 and 24 (and not just the ones that haven't left the parental home). Overall, the most frequent answers and challenges for not leaving the parental home point out to "not having a sufficient income" and "not having affordable housing available", whilst the third reason for a postponed departure from the family home is "wanting to maintain certain housing comforts and not assuming responsibilities". The first two reasons are actually two sides of a same circumstance. What separates them is merely a matter of sphere to which young people attribute responsibility: individualised or institutionalised? It is in this bifurcation that the differentiation between European countries becomes clearer.

We can easily see that in some countries, there is a tendency to underestimate the importance of available and affordable housing, emphasising the importance of the argument on comfort and responsibility instead. The countries that attribute great importance to these points are mostly Southern European (Portugal, Italy and Greece) but also Cyprus, Finland and Austria. In these countries, individualised responsibilities are emphasised, simultaneously highlighting the objective setbacks and the subjective motivations. The role of the housing market is, therefore, undervalued. The opposite tendency can be observed in countries like Lithuania, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, where responsibility is mostly placed upon unavailable housing.

However, Italy and Portugal show a large and significant percentage of young adults who emphasise the close relation between the timing of both their marriage and their departure from the parental home ("because they get married later than used to"), more than they highlight the

unavailability of housing. This has to do with cultural and age norms more than with the contextual circumstances of their country.

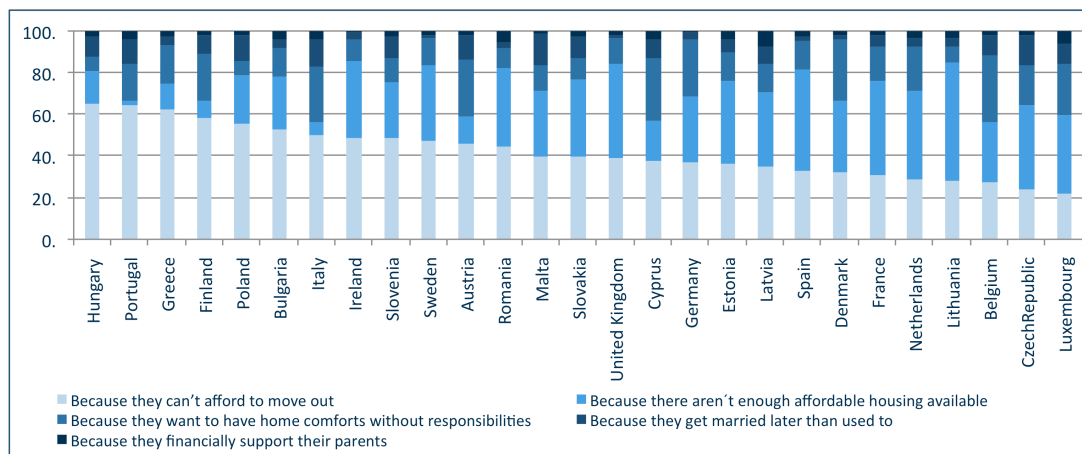
In spite of this, there are some countries that reveal the importance of the comfort argument in postponing their departure from the parental home, with approximately 30% of respondents stating that the main reason for the increase of the average age when leaving the parental home is due to the fact that “they want to have home comforts without responsibilities”. This is the case for Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Austria.

Table 6. Subjective reasons for young adults to be living with parents longer than in the past (all respondents aged between 18 and 24) (percentage)

	Because they cannot afford to move out	Because there aren't enough affordable housing available	Because they want to have home comforts without responsibilities	Because they get married later than they used to	Because they financially support their parents
Austria	44,00	13,00	26,00	11,00	2,00
Belgium	26,00	27,00	30,00	9,00	2,00
Bulgaria	51,00	25,00	13,00	4,00	4,00
Cyprus	37,00	19,00	29,00	9,00	4,00
Czech Republic	24,00	39,00	19,00	14,00	2,00
Denmark	31,00	32,00	28,00	2,00	2,00
Estonia	35,00	38,00	13,00	6,00	4,00
Germany	36,00	31,00	27,00	3,00	1,00
France	30,00	43,00	16,00	5,00	2,00
Finland	57,00	8,00	22,00	9,00	2,00
Greece	61,00	12,00	18,00	4,00	3,00
Hungary	64,00	15,00	7,00	9,00	3,00
Ireland	49,00	37,00	10,00	3,00	1,00
Italy	49,00	6,00	26,00	13,00	4,00
Latvia	34,00	34,00	13,00	8,00	7,00
Lithuania	27,00	54,00	7,00	4,00	3,00
Luxembourg	21,00	35,00	23,00	9,00	6,00
Malta	39,00	30,00	12,00	15,00	1,00
Netherlands	28,00	41,00	21,00	4,00	3,00
Poland	55,00	23,00	7,00	12,00	2,00
Portugal	62,00	2,00	17,00	11,00	4,00
Romania	43,00	36,00	9,00	3,00	5,00
Slovakia	39,00	36,00	10,00	10,00	3,00
Slovenia	48,00	26,00	11,00	10,00	3,00
Spain	33,00	48,00	13,00	2,00	3,00
Sweden	46,00	35,00	13,00	1,00	2,00
United Kingdom	38,00	44,00	12,00	1,00	2,00

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 202. Young Europeans (2007)

Figure 3. Subjective reasons for young adults to be living with parents longer than in the past (all respondents from 18 to 24 years old) (percentage)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 202. Young Europeans (2007)

A different set of information about the transitions and living conditions of young adults in Europe relates to the housing quality and its characteristics (where the different trends on leaving the parental home already mentioned should be taken into account). The next table (table 7) allows us to analyse the heterogeneity of conditions between the age groups 18-24 and 25-34, especially the ones that dichotomise the predominant residential status: parental home *versus* own home.

Being so, we can see that concerning the average number of rooms, there isn't a great difference between the cohorts. The major differences do not occur within countries but between them, revealing the strong and relevant differences in national housing systems. Countries with the larger number of rooms are the United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Malta and Ireland. In to the southern or post-socialist countries, the "average number of rooms" starts to decline (some examples: Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovakia).

It should be taken into account that the number of rooms in a house does not really indicate a lack of space or privacy, for that depends on the number of occupants and the space allocated to each of them. In that sense, it is important to analyse how young people perceive their lack of space. It is possible to notice a slight negative relation between the lack of space and the number of rooms. In so being, the following countries simultaneously reveal a lower average number of rooms and a higher "claim of lack of space": Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Portugal (amongst others).

An important indicator for the European heterogeneity concerning welfare states' transition regimes, housing availabilities, valorisations of homeownership and, consequently, different

housing *careers*, is the actual percentage of homeownership. As we can see in table 6, in most countries, the percentage of homeownership increases over the life course of young people. In this case, this would occur from the age group 18-24 to 25-34. There are only a few exceptions to this tendency, as represented in Slovenia, Cyprus, Italy and Luxembourg. This may be due to a slight undervaluation of homeownership by the most recently residentially independent generations, which are traditionally very high in some of these countries (especially by older generations and lower social classes). These countries, together with Hungary, Malta, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria (amongst others) have the highest percentages of homeownerships (between 60 and 80%). On the other hand, countries like Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Austria, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany and France show homeownership percentages lower than 50%. Some of these countries are precisely those that state that the “unavailability of affordable housing” is the most important reason for not leaving the parental home earlier than in the past.

This table also reveals figures for the ownership of mobile phones. It is currently transversal across young generations to use and own this means of communication. Bulgaria and Romania are the only countries to show a percentage below 90%.

Table 7 Characteristics of the housing (18-24 and 25-34 years old) and ownership of mobile phone (15-24) (percentage)

	Average number of rooms (18-24)	Average number of rooms (25-34)	Claiming a lack of space in housing (18-24)	Claiming a lack of space in housing (25-34)	Households lacking flushing toilet indoor (18-24)	Households lacking flushing toilet indoor (25-34)	Owners (18-24)	Owners (25-34)	Respondents who personally have a mobile phone* (15-24)
Austria	1,5	1,6	23,00	23,00	0,00	1,00	30,00	44,00	97,59
Belgium	2,2	2,4	15,00	22,00	1,00	3,00	51,00	61,00	97,44
Bulgaria	1,0	0,9	30,00	22,00	16,00	26,00	69,00	78,00	84,92
Cyprus	1,3	1,5	15,00	21,00	2,00	3,00	81,00	73,00	99,40
Czech Republic	1,1	1,1	19,00	26,00	6,00	5,00	31,00	34,00	
Denmark	1,7	1,7	23,00	32,00	0,00	2,00	41,00	51,00	97,79
Estonia	1,1	1,2	53,00	42,00	10,00	8,00	66,00	73,00	94,16
Germany	1,3	1,3	20,00	33,00	0,00	2,00	30,00	51,00	99,22
France	1,5	1,6	28,00	32,00	2,00	2,00	24,00	31,00	97,09
Finland	1,4	1,6	20,00	22,00	1,00	1,00	27,00	27,00	95,64
Greece	1,4	1,3	25,00	27,00	1,00	4,00	30,00	55,00	
Hungary	0,9	0,9	22,00	32,00	11,00	6,00	81,00	82,00	91,57
Ireland	1,6	1,7	20,00	20,00	1,00	1,00	53,00	57,00	97,51
Italy	1,0	1,4	24,00	20,00	0,00	1,00	80,00	66,00	
Latvia	0,9	1,0	41,00	44,00	17,00	15,00	49,00	43,00	92,30
Lithuania	0,9	0,8	31,00	41,00	21,00	30,00	72,00	78,00	
Luxembourg	1,5	2,0	35,00	31,00			75,00	65,00	
Malta	1,6	1,7	8,00	18,00	0,00	0,00	74,00	75,00	
Netherlands	1,6	1,9	23,00	24,00	2,00	2,00	29,00	42,00	98,62
Poland	0,8	0,8	34,00	39,00	3,00	10,00	54,00	73,00	93,82
Portugal	1,2	1,3	30,00	27,00	1,00	3,00	55,00	59,00	94,14
Romania	1,1	1,1	28,00	32,00	30,00	34,00	62,00	71,00	80,80
Slovakia	1,0	1,0	23,00	20,00	5,00	6,00	72,00	78,00	91,08
Slovenia	1,1	1,0	13,00	28,00	7,00	2,00	85	72,00	99,58
Spain	1,3	1,5	9,00	22,00	2,00	1,00	67,00	68,00	93,16
Sweden	1,4	1,4	26,00	38,00	0,00	0,00	32,00	43,00	98,96
United Kingdom	2,2	2,4	19,00	32,00	2,00	0,00	36,00	50,00	95,04

Source: First European Quality of Life Survey: Social dimensions of housing (2006); *European Social Survey data (2006)

4. YOUTH LEISURE

So far we have been examining the different living conditions amongst young adults across several European countries. These living conditions shape different leisure possibilities and constraints. Let's now see how these types of activities are distributed and practiced among European countries. This report provides an analysis of a combination of some types of leisure activities but omits other dimensions, such as those linked to the Leisure Culture (leisure time spent, preferred activities, budget), cinema attendance in the "Media Culture" dimension, Body Culture (sports are included but expenses in clothes and cosmetics are not), and Music Culture (production, reproduction and consumption).

What is the subjective perception on time available for leisure? There are great discrepancies between countries, which can inform on the amount of professional, familiar or

educational obligations that actually prevent young people from having the time to do those things they “really enjoy”. The countries with the lowest percentages of young people stating they “seldom have time to do things I really enjoy” are Austria, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Cyprus and Hungary. Facing these data, one could state that the construction of time available for leisure relates more to a cultural dimension than a circumstantial one. On the opposite side, some other countries display high percentages of young people feeling they seldom have time for leisure activities. This is the case in Latvia, but also Estonia, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Romania, France and Bulgaria.

Table 8. Sports, Reading and Social activities (15-30 years old) and subjective evaluation of the free time available (15-24 years old) (percentage)

	Regularly go for a walk, bike ride or any kind of sports during their leisure time [15-30]	Regularly read during their leisure time [15-30]	Regularly meet friends, go dancing, go out to eat/drink during their leisure time [15-30]	Agree or strongly agree with to following statement: "I seldom have time to do things I really enjoy" [15-24]*
Austria	53,40	24,10	37,10	19,13
Belgium	40,70	22,10	32,40	30,35
Bulgaria	34,70	21,30	42,30	40,80
Cyprus	32,20	27,00	22,10	23,95
Czech Republic	44,30	22,30	17,90	
Denmark	40,80	29,10	44,10	22,63
Estonia	49,40	14,30	32,10	47,66
Finland	59,40	29,10	27,30	21,18
France	44,80	18,10	31,00	40,94
Germany	62,30	23,10	44,90	31,12
Greece	32,90	24,90	25,50	
Hungary	48,90	41,00	43,40	29,21
Ireland	61,90	23,60	53,30	34,29
Italy	43,80	33,60	46,70	
Latvia	51,10	36,80	53,50	62,40
Lithuania	19,20	17,70	32,40	
Luxembourg	43,50	24,50	18,80	
Malta	38,30	27,10	42,80	
Netherlands	56,30	19,20	40,40	23,39
Poland	32,30	23,70	31,30	33,15
Portugal	44,60	38,20	42,60	46,76
Romania	37,90	27,70	35,10	43,50
Slovakia	47,20	26,90	42,50	31,73
Slovenia	61,60	22,20	24,60	31,93
Spain	40,80	32,90	55,90	31,20
Sweden	51,60	15,00	45,90	31,94
United Kingdom	36,30	19,00	36,50	47,37

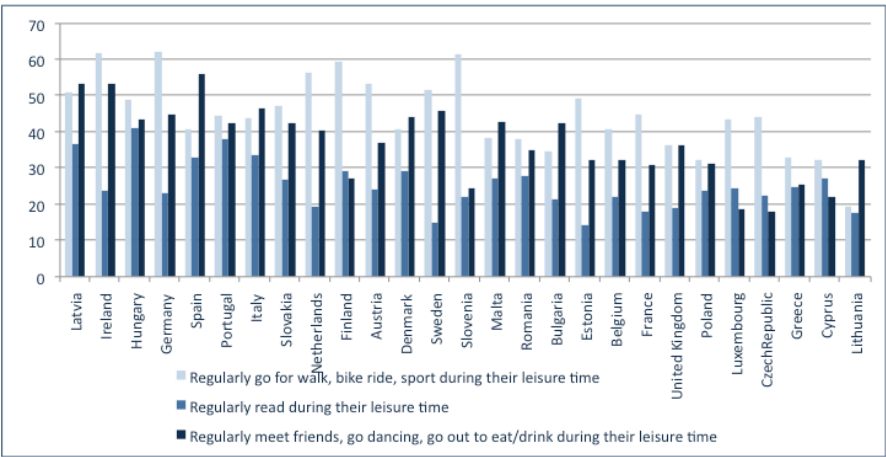
Source: Flash Eurobarometer 202. Young Europeans (2007).* European Social Survey data (2006)

Figure 4 demonstrates that there is no linear relation between the amount of time actually spent in all the activities considered and the subjective evaluation of their spare time. In that sense, countries like Latvia, Ireland, Hungary, Germany, Portugal and Spain present almost double the time devoted to leisure compared to Lithuania, Cyprus, Greece or the Czech Republic.

With regards to the proportion of each of these activities within the total of activities developed, “reading activities” are regularly practiced by less than 50% of respondents in all countries. Compared to physical and social activities, reading is the least important leisure activity. This is especially true in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia, France, the United Kingdom and Lithuania.

Some countries are characterised by high levels of “sports activity”, with more than half of respondents stating their practice a regular activity. These countries are Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Latvia. Of these countries, Latvia, Ireland, Sweden and Germany also show a high percentage of young people with regular “social activities”. These social activities are, in some countries, higher than sport and physical activities, as is the case in Spain, Latvia, Italy, Denmark, Malta, Bulgaria and Lithuania. It must be underlined, however, that the dimension of “social activities”, such as meeting up with friends for a movie, a drink or a meal, can be culturally constructed. The joint analysis of these three different activities may be hiding important cultural differences among countries.

Figure 4. Sports, Reading and Social activities (15-30 years old) (percentage)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 202. Young Europeans (2007)

Let’s now concentrate on sports and on moderate-to-vigorous daily activities. Two kinds of outputs can be taken from the following table (table 9). The first relates to the objective and subjective evaluation of regular sports activity. The second relates to gender differences in daily activities.

For the first outcome, one can see that the objective and subjective evaluation do not always match one another, the percentage for subjective evaluation being often higher than one for objective evaluation. Focusing on the percentage of young people who “regularly play sports during their leisure time”, we can verify that the difference between the lowest and the highest

national percentages is very high. Nordic and Scandinavian countries (along with Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden) present the highest levels of sports activities amongst young people, whilst countries such as Lithuania, Cyprus, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Romania and Malta, reveal lower percentages.

As for the second outcome, and regardless of the level of activity, the previous data should be complemented with a gender perspective: Nordic and Northern countries present lower levels of gender gap (as expected) and men in all countries are usually more physically active than women (approximately double).

Table 9. Sports and moderate-to-vigorous daily activity (percentage)

	16- 25 year-olds who regularly play sports during their leisure time	Agree or strongly agree with the following statement: "My life involves a lot of physical activity"[15-24 years old]*	Report at least one hour of moderate- to-vigorous activity daily (male) [15 years old]**	Report at least one hour of moderate- to-vigorous activity daily (female)[15 year old]**
Austria	55,00	53,48	13,00	10,00
Belgium	37,00	57,19		
Bulgaria		36,57	24,00	16,00
Cyprus		21,95		
Czech Republic			27,00	16,00
Denmark	50,00	61,31	20,00	16,00
Estonia		71,54	18,00	9,00
Finland	50,00	62,75	15,00	9,00
France	56,00	51,45	14,00	5,00
Germany	53,00	48,55	16,00	10,00
Greece	38,00		16,00	7,00
Hungary		58,19	19,00	11,00
Ireland	49,00	52,54	27,00	13,00
Italy	51,00		16,00	7,00
Latvia		65,90	26,00	16,00
Lithuania			19,00	13,00
Luxembourg	63,00		19,00	11,00
Malta			19,00	13,00
Netherlands	54,00	69,12	18,00	15,00
Poland		53,93	21,00	10,00
Portugal	44,00	47,78	15,00	5,00
Romania		65,90	16,00	6,00
Slovakia		45,34	46,00	29,00
Slovenia		55,27	19,00	9,00
Spain	49,00	39,02	19,00	12,00
Sweden	55,00	62,02	11,00	10,00
United Kingdom	44,00	60,50		

Source: EurLIFE Database (2001), *European Social Survey data (2006), **Inequalities in young people's health.

HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

The relation between leisure activities, media and technology usage has become increasingly important, especially amongst young people. Data from table 10 helps to illustrate this point, as most countries show between 80 and 90% of young people stating they "regularly watch TV, listen to music, use a computer or play video games". Belgium for the lowest percentage, Germany and the Netherlands for the highest and France for the biggest gender

gap deserve a special mention. “Reading newspapers” is an activity that most frequently takes place in countries like Sweden, Finland, Austria, Hungary and Estonia, where more than 75% of respondents state they “read a newspaper on an average weekday”. Some of these countries also show the lowest percentages of “TV watching” and “radio listening”. It is worth highlighting that Cyprus combines a very low percentage of young newspaper readers on a daily activity with the highest percentages for “watching TV” and “listening radio”. This could lead us to conclude that the relation between TV and radio, on one hand, and newspapers, on the other, is close to being inversely proportional.

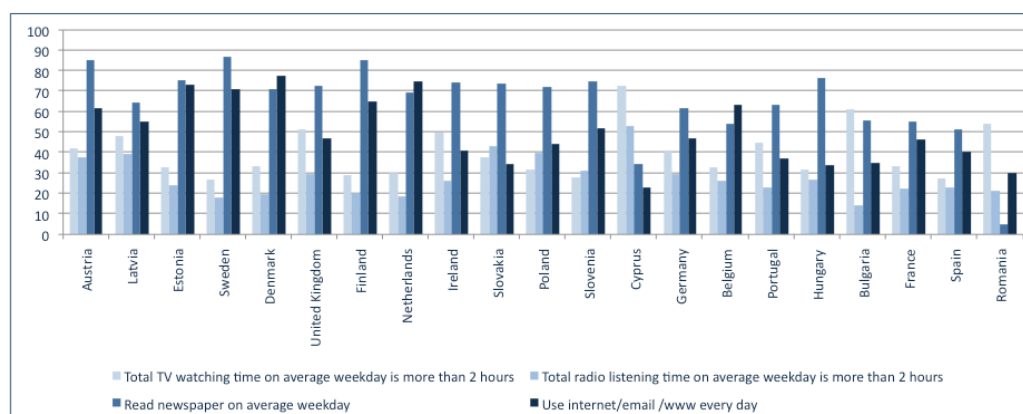
Internet use, although high, reveals great discrepancies between countries. In only 6 countries do more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents use internet on a daily basis (Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Belgium), whereas Cyprus and Romania show proportions lower than $\frac{1}{3}$ of respondents using internet in a daily basis. The remaining countries reveal in-between percentages, although figures for Bulgaria, Slovakia, Portugal and Spain are relatively low (up to 40%).

Table 10. General media usage (16-25 year-olds), watching TV, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, using Internet (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)

	Regularly watch TV, listen to music, use a computer or play video games during their leisure time (male) [16-25]*	Regularly watch TV, listen to music, use a computer or play video games during their leisure time (female) (16-25)*	Total TV watching time on average weekday is more than 2 hours [15-24]	Total radio listening time on average weekday is more than 2 hours [15-24]	Read newspaper on average weekday [15-24]	Use internet/email /www every day [15-24]
Austria	91,00	91,00	41,92	37,95	85,05	61,82
Belgium	70,00	69,00	32,91	26,20	54,31	63,26
Bulgaria			61,24	14,20	55,75	34,86
Cyprus			72,89	53,01	34,55	22,89
Denmark	88,00	87,00	33,33	19,57	71,01	77,54
Estonia			33,07	23,83	75,49	73,44
Finland	93,00	91,00	29,02	20,00	85,49	65,10
France	94,00	64,00	33,58	22,26	55,07	46,74
Germany	94,00	92,00	40,80	29,60	61,78	47,26
Greece	80,00	88,00				
Hungary			31,46	26,55	76,40	33,71
Ireland	95,00	88,00	50,00	26,52	74,39	41,20
Italy	78,00	78,00				
Latvia			48,00	39,20	64,50	55,10
Lithuania						
Luxembourg	92,00	91,00				
Netherlands	95,00	95,00	30,28	18,35	69,27	74,77
Poland			31,83	39,78	72,11	44,26
Portugal	90,00	92,00	44,67	23,21	63,14	37,33
Romania			54,20	21,40	58,10	29,90
Slovakia			37,90	43,13	74,04	34,62
Slovenia			27,66	31,09	74,79	51,90
Spain	93,00	86,00	27,27	23,11	51,32	40,23
Sweden	95,00	96,00	27,08	18,06	87,15	71,18
United Kingdom	93,00	88,00	51,66	29,36	72,65	46,96

Source: European Social Survey data (2006), * EurLIFE database (2001)

Figure 5. Watching TV, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, using Internet (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: European Social Survey data (2006), * EurLIFE database (2001)

“Cultural activities” represent another way to spend free time. When comparing all three cultural activities considered in all countries, the least frequently attended cultural activity is going to see a “dance and ballet” (with approximately 80% of respondents stating that they did not attend this cultural activity) while the most frequent is “visiting a library” – this could be explained by the fact that this particular age group does not necessarily attend the library for cultural or leisure purposes, but also due to their enrolment into formal education.

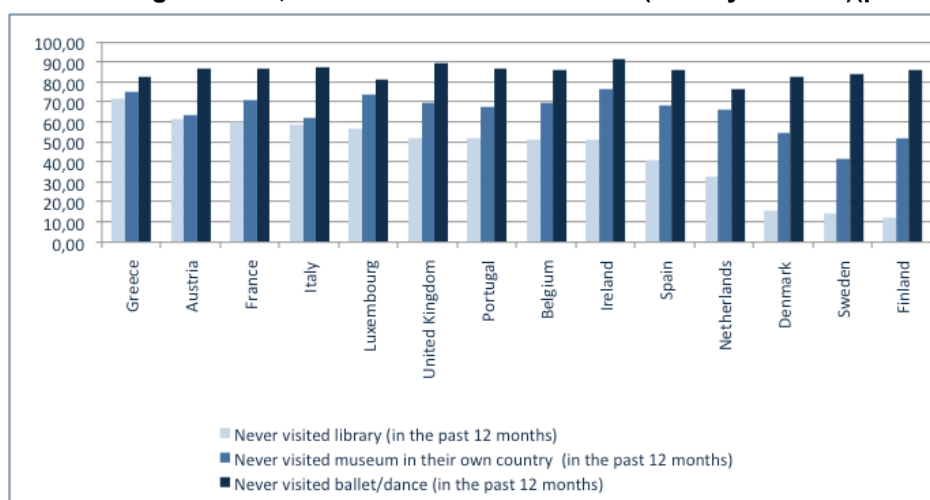
If the difference between the lowest and highest percentages concerning the “ballet and dance” attendance is not large, this is not the case with the other activities. One can clearly note that “visiting a museum” is more common in Sweden, Finland and Denmark, where percentages of young people not having visited a library in the last 12 months are lowest. The Netherlands and Spain also reveal low percentages of young people that have “never visited a library.” Nonetheless, the heterogeneity is not very high in what concerns these cultural matters. The next figure (fig. 6) resumes these tendencies.

Table 11. Visiting libraries, museums and ballet/dance (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)

	Never visited library (in the past 12 months) [15-24]	Never visited museum in their own country (in the past 12 months) [15-24]	Never visited ballet/dance (in the past 12 months) [15-24]
Austria	61,90	63,60	86,80
Belgium	51,60	69,90	86,20
Denmark	16,10	54,50	82,70
Finland	12,20	52,30	86,30
France	60,50	71,50	87,10
Greece	72,00	75,40	82,80
Ireland	51,50	76,40	92,00
Italy	59,00	62,60	87,80
Luxembourg	56,80	74,10	81,30
Netherlands	32,70	66,50	76,70
Portugal	52,10	67,50	87,00
Spain	41,40	68,40	86,40
Sweden	14,30	41,50	84,00
United Kingdom	52,20	70,00	89,40

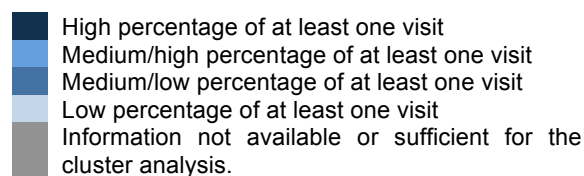
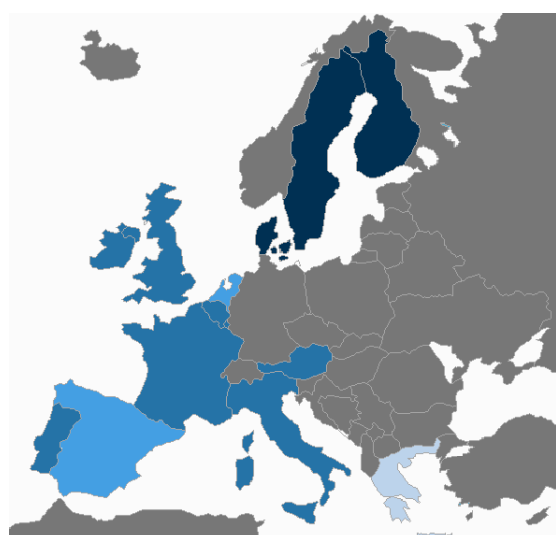
Source: Christensen, Thomas. Eurobarometer 56.0: Information and Communication Technologies, Financial Services, and Cultural Activities, August-September electronic data (2001).

Figure 6. Visiting libraries, museums and ballet/dance (15-24 year-olds)(percentage)



Source: Christensen, Thomas. Eurobarometer 56.0: Information and Communication Technologies, Financial Services, and Cultural Activities, August-September electronic data (2001).

Map 3. Clusters of frequency of visiting libraries, museums and ballet/dance (15-24 year-olds)(percentage)



Source: Christensen, Thomas. Eurobarometer 56.0: Information and Communication Technologies, Financial Services, and Cultural Activities, August-September electronic data (2001)

Finally, one could state that social encounters are the most characteristic leisure activity for the surveyed 15 to 24 year-old age group and of this particular transitional period into adulthood. Additionally, social activities are a good indicator of social integration processes. Having peers is a well-known and important feature of youth. Table 12 shows several variables that measure this aspect.

Transversal across all countries is the “importance of having friends in life”. However, we note that countries such as Latvia and Malta show the lowest percentage of young people sharing this opinion, whereas countries like Ireland, Sweden, Finland, France, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark present the highest figures.

Looking at the data, we can see that there is a tendency for a linear relation, at least for a majority of countries (with the exception of Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands), between the importance of friends in one's life and having someone to discuss personal matters with, so that the bigger the importance attributed to friends, the bigger the importance of having someone to discuss personal matters with. This linear relation does not necessarily occur between the valorisation of having friends in life and the weekly frequency of actually being with friends. Being so, southern countries like Greece, Spain and Italy are also characterised by weekly and frequent social encounters with friends.

Table 12. Weekly time spent with friends and importance attributed to friends in life (15-29 year-olds) and intimacy relations (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)

	Weekly spend time with their friends (15-29)	Friends are very and rather important in life (15-29)	Have someone to discuss intimate and personal matters with*(15-24)
Austria	83,07	95,57	94,90
Belgium	80,82	94,55	95,85
Bulgaria	79,61	92,72	94,86
Cyprus			95,15
Czech Republic	76,43	93,62	
Denmark	89,42	96,15	94,89
Estonia	73,57	91,15	89,84
Finland	87,74	98,60	97,65
France	83,65	96,85	89,09
Germany	76,32	96,38	97,11
Greece	92,47	95,79	
Hungary	62,55	90,17	94,32
Ireland	89,76	100,00	90,85
Italy	87,61	95,03	
Latvia	68,48	76,09	90,30
Lithuania	67,83	94,38	
Luxembourg	83,51	94,85	
Malta	58,87	80,16	
Netherlands	86,19	96,67	96,35
Poland	81,97	87,39	94,92
Portugal	81,97	91,39	95,53
Romania	69,04	84,84	87,10
Slovakia	67,92	91,64	92,16
Slovenia	79,84	92,61	95,36
Spain	86,64	93,47	96,95
Sweden	89,03	100,00	98,96
United Kingdom			94,49

Source: World Value Studies (2000), *European Social Survey 2006

5. YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOUR

Lifestyles and Living Conditions of young people create situations of vulnerability and constraints towards risky behaviour and/or potentially hazardous consumptions. This section was inspired by the variables included in the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (developed by the U.S. Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion) and includes alcohol, drugs, tobacco and sexual behaviour (amongst others that are not included in this section of the report).

Table 13 exhibits data on the use of alcohol, cocaine and cannabis. As these three substances have different impacts as regards to addiction, danger to one's health and integration into society, the data will be analysed separately.

Regarding alcohol and potential drinking problems, the following interpretation of data should take into account each country's legal framework. Whilst "drinking alcohol at least once a year" is rather usual amongst 16 year-olds across a majority of countries, results for "being drunk at least once a year" display a very heterogeneous and different distribution. Countries, such as Denmark, Ireland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and Finland show a very high percentage of drunkenness in the last year (especially amongst 15 year olds), with figures between 60 and 80%. On the opposite, Cyprus, Portugal, France, Romania, Italy and Greece, although showing very high percentages of alcohol consumption, reveal comparatively lower percentages for drunkenness, not exceeding 30% for the total of respondents. A division between northern and southern countries is again visible. However, this division does not translate, for instance, the distribution of young people that are frequently with friends, suggesting more national and cultural tendencies rather than generational ones.

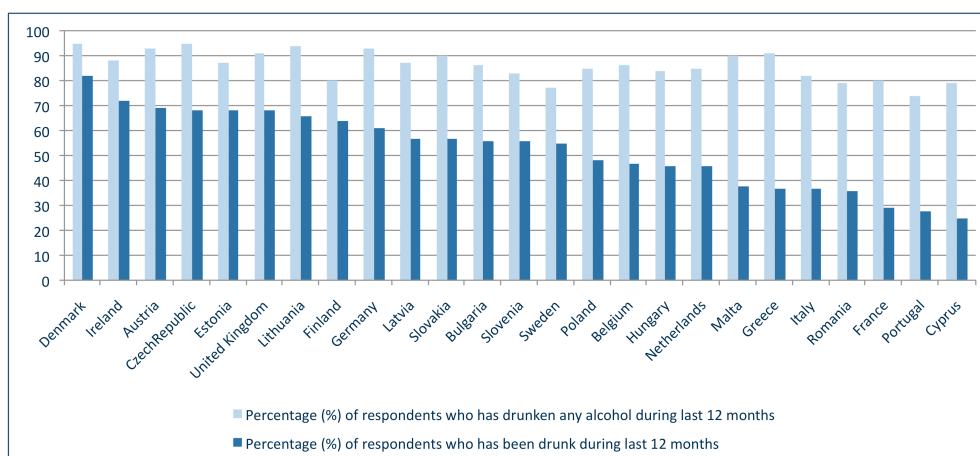
Legal frameworks should also be taken into account in the next interpretation of data. In the case of alcohol, while most countries witness similar "experimentation" amongst their younger populations, the abuse of substances (like being drunk) is different between countries. However, in the case of the use of cannabis, the tendency is reversed. There is a low but relatively transversal percentage of young people "using drugs other than cannabis" but figures are heterogeneous when in trying "cannabis at least once". This indicates that both tendencies, the use of cannabis and of other drugs, are independent processes, at least at this age, suggesting the need to have different policy approaches.

Table 13. Alcohol and drugs use (several age groups) (percentage)

	16 year-olds who have consumed alcohol in last 12 months	16 year-olds who have been drunk in last 12 months	15-34 year-olds who have used cocaine*	15-16 year-olds who have used cocaine*	15-34 year-olds who have used cannabis*	15-16 year-olds who have used cannabis*	16 year-olds who have used or tried cannabis	16 year-olds who have used any other drug than cannabis
Austria	93,00	69,00	2,80	2,00	28,00	21,00	21,00	8,00
Belgium	86,00	47,00		3,00	23,70	32,00	32,00	8,00
Bulgaria	86,00	56,00	2,40	2,00	8,70	21,00	21,00	4,00
Cyprus	79,00	25,00	1,40	0,00	9,90	4,00	4,00	3,00
Czech Republic	95,00	68,00	1,80	1,00	38,30	44,00	44,00	12,00
Denmark	95,00	82,00	9,10	2,00	49,50	23,00	23,00	6,00
Estonia	87,00	68,00		1,00		23,00	23,00	10,00
Finland	80,00	64,00	2,10	0,00	22,00	11,00	11,00	3,00
France	80,00	29,00	3,50	3,00	43,60	38,00	38,00	7,00
Germany	93,00	61,00	5,00	2,00	36,10	27,00	27,00	10,00
Greece	91,00	37,00	1,00	1,00	10,80	6,00	6,00	3,00
Hungary	84,00	46,00	1,50	1,00	17,40	16,00	16,00	5,00
Ireland	88,00	72,00	4,70	3,00	24,00	39,00	39,00	9,00
Italy	82,00	37,00	7,40	4,00	34,60	27,00	27,00	8,00
Latvia	87,00	57,00	1,90	1,00	19,60	16,00	16,00	5,00
Lithuania	94,00	66,00	0,70	1,00	13,00	13,00	13,00	7,00
Malta	90,00	38,00	0,90	1,00	4,80	10,00	10,00	4,00
Netherlands	85,00	46,00	4,90	3,00	32,30	28,00	28,00	6,00
Poland	85,00	48,00	1,30	2,00	14,70	18,00	18,00	7,00
Portugal	74,00	28,00	1,30	3,00	12,40	15,00	15,00	7,00
Romania	79,00	36,00	0,40	1,00	2,90	3,00	3,00	3,00
Slovakia	90,00	57,00	1,70	1,00	28,20	27,00	27,00	6,00
Slovenia	83,00	56,00		1,00		28,00	28,00	5,00
Spain			9,60		38,60			
Sweden	77,00	55,00		1,00	19,10	7,00	7,00	3,00
United Kingdom	91,00	68,00	11,10	4,00	42,30	38,00	38,00	9,00

Source: European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs - ESPAD (2003), *The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction - EMCDDA (2004).

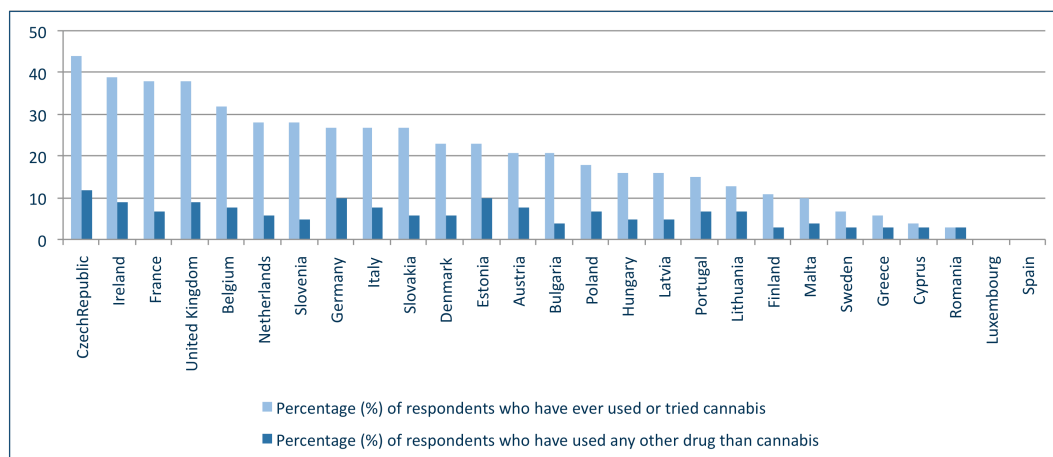
Figure 7. Alcohol and drugs use (several age groups) (percentage)



Source: European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD (2003)

One can also notice that there is no relation between the use of “alcohol” and the use of “cannabis”. The countries with a higher percentage of young people having already tried cannabis once are the Czech Republic, Ireland, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium, with a prevalence of 30% to 45%.

Figure 8. Use of cannabis and other drugs (16 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction – EMCDDA (2004)

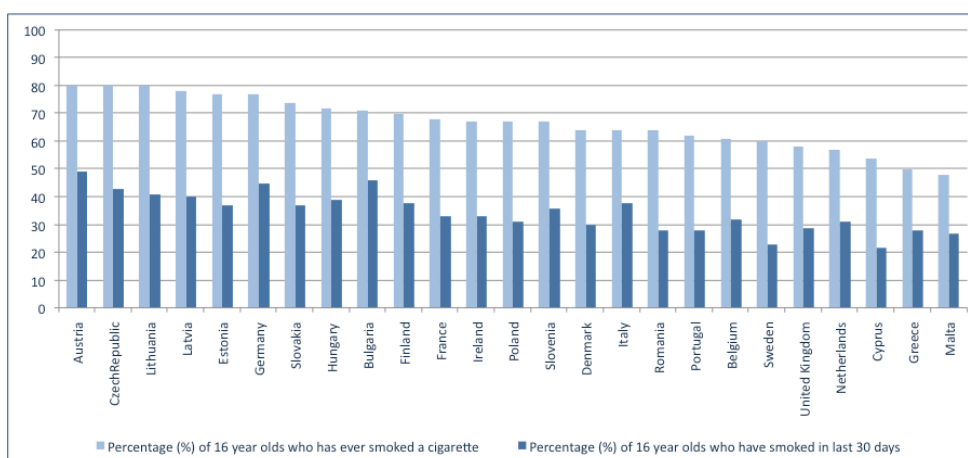
The use of cigarette presents a different and worrying tendency. As we can see in the next graph (fig. 9), more than half of 16 year olds has already smoked a cigarette (with the exception of Malta and Greece). These are extremely high percentages. This is particularly evident in the cases of Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Slovakia. As opposed to the use/abuse of alcohol or cannabis/other drugs, one can note that in the case of cigarettes, there is a linear relation between “ever having smoked a cigarette” and “having smoked in the last 30 days”, thus suggesting a more frequent consumption. Countries where there is a high percentage of experimentation of cigarettes also reveal a tendency for a (comparably) high percentage of people smoking more regularly.

Table 14. Use of cigarettes by 16 year-olds (percentage)

	16 year olds who have ever smoked a cigarette	16 year olds who have smoked in the last 30 days
Austria	80,00	49,00
Belgium	61,00	32,00
Bulgaria	71,00	46,00
Cyprus	54,00	22,00
Czech Republic	80,00	43,00
Denmark	64,00	30,00
Estonia	77,00	37,00
Finland	70,00	38,00
France	68,00	33,00
Germany	77,00	45,00
Greece	50,00	28,00
Hungary	72,00	39,00
Ireland	67,00	33,00
Italy	64,00	38,00
Latvia	78,00	40,00
Lithuania	80,00	41,00
Malta	48,00	27,00
Netherlands	57,00	31,00
Poland	67,00	31,00
Portugal	62,00	28,00
Romania	64,00	28,00
Slovakia	74,00	37,00
Slovenia	67,00	36,00
Sweden	60,00	23,00
United Kingdom	58,00	29,00

Source: European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD (2003)

Figure 9. 16 year-olds cigarette use (percentage)



Source: European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD (2003)

Sexual behaviour is also a sensitive issue in Youth Research. Premature pregnancies and unsafe sexual relations are the most important indicators of those sensitive issues. Two kinds of information are available in the next table (table 15): firstly, a description of the percentage of young people aged 15 who have had sexual intercourse and secondly, a description of the type of contraceptive used during sexual relations.

For the first variable, some countries present a big gender divide. Young men tend to be more precocious than young women in initiating sexual activity. This is the case of Bulgaria,

Greece, Romania, France and Slovenia. Several cultural gender norms may explain this discrepancy: men may be motivated to state that they have already had sexual intercourse even if this is untrue, and women may be motivated to do the opposite. In Sweden, Finland and Austria, the gender gap is reversed although much less striking. In the remaining countries, sexual initiation amongst boys and girls is relatively similar when it comes to age.

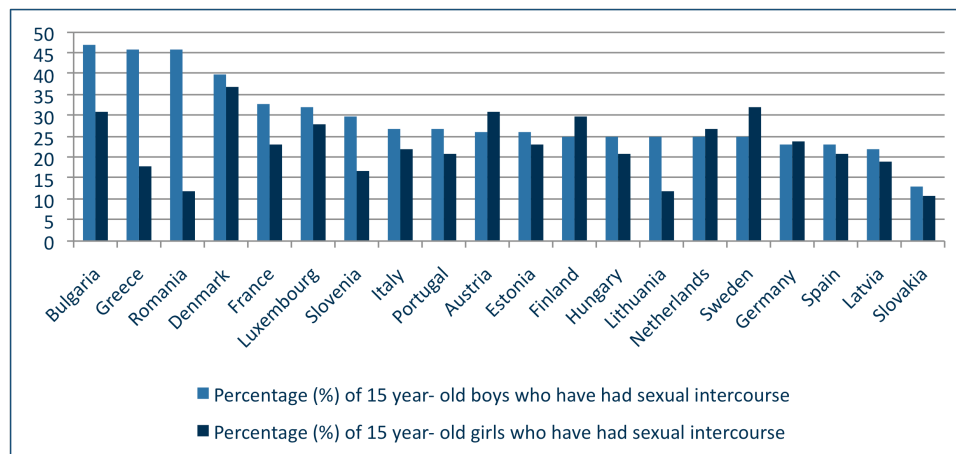
Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the gender gap is higher precisely in the cases where the percentage of 15 year old boys that have had sexual intercourse is highest (and not due to the cases where the percentage of 15 year old girls that have had sexual intercourse is lowest). This is the case for Slovakia, Latvia, Spain and Germany. Those unmentioned countries present medium levels of sexual initiation and no significant gender gaps.

Table 15. Sexual behaviour and contraceptives use (15 year-olds) (percentage)

	Boys who have had sexual intercourse	Girls who have had sexual intercourse	Boys whose partner used the contraceptive pill at their last sexual intercourse	Girls who used the contraceptive pill at their last sexual intercourse	Boys who used a condom at their last sexual intercourse	Girls whose partner used a condom at their last sexual intercourse
Austria	26,00	31,00	18,00	30,00	86,00	76,00
Belgium			44,00	57,00	79,00	67,00
Bulgaria	47,00	31,00	9,00	7,00	86,00	76,00
Denmark	40,00	37,00	42,00	47,00	74,00	63,00
Estonia	26,00	23,00	14,00	14,00	88,00	81,00
Finland	25,00	30,00	24,00	31,00	80,00	64,00
France	33,00	23,00	17,00	26,00	88,00	80,00
Germany	23,00	24,00	41,00	55,00	83,00	73,00
Greece	46,00	18,00	5,00	5,00	91,00	69,00
Hungary	25,00	21,00	11,00	13,00	79,00	76,00
Italy	27,00	22,00				
Latvia	22,00	19,00	7,00	11,00	86,00	77,00
Lithuania	25,00	12,00	5,00	11,00	83,00	75,00
Luxembourg	32,00	28,00				
Netherlands	25,00	27,00	42,00	61,00	85,00	74,00
Portugal	27,00	21,00	11,00	27,00	86,00	84,00
Romania§	46,00	12,00	3,00	9,00	81,00	61,00
Slovakia	13,00	11,00	9,00	3,00	65,00	67,00
Slovenia	30,00	17,00	19,00	25,00	70,00	84,00
Spain	23,00	21,00	4,00	5,00	83,00	95,00
Sweden	25,00	32,00	24,00	27,00	69,00	63,00

Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

Figure 10. Sexual behaviour (15 year-olds) (percentage)

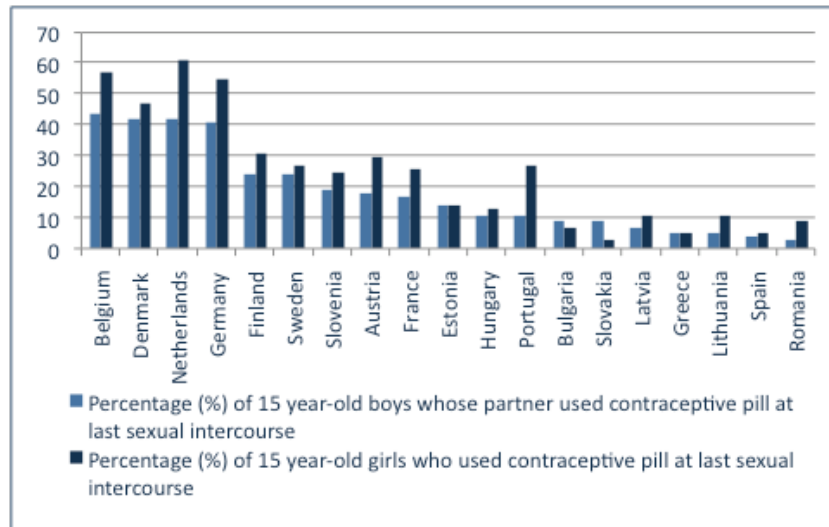


Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

One of the main indicators of a responsible behaviour towards one's sexual life is the use of the contraceptive (female) pill. Its use reveals a relatively high level of information about reproductive health as well as a responsible agency towards it. In the next two graphs (fig. 11 and 12), the important use of the contraceptive pill and condom is presented across the countries.

The use of the contraceptive female pill by the respondent (or by his partner) is more likely stated/confirmed by the young women than by the young men, thus revealing very different percentages between the two sexes ([Inequalities in young people's health](#). HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey). Nonetheless, there are differences worth highlighting: countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Austria and several Scandinavian countries show a high percentage of women using the contraceptive pills, whilst southern and post-socialist countries tend to use them less. The religious factor could be one (of many) explanation for this dichotomy.

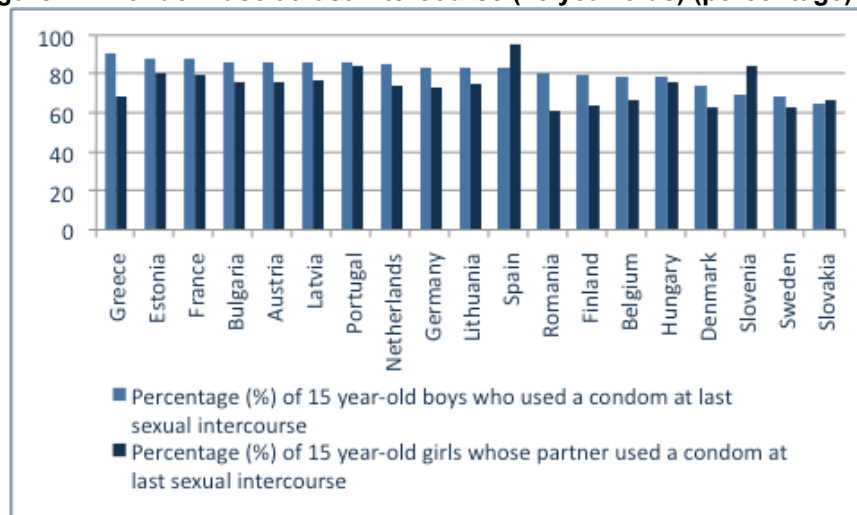
Figure 11. Contraceptive pill at last intercourse (15 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

The use of a male condom at the last intercourse, by the respondent (or by his/her partner) is more frequent, transversal across all countries and almost equally reported by both sexes (contrary to the use of the female pill, which is much more reported by girls). Differences between countries on the use of the condom are not significant.

Figure 12. Condom use at last intercourse (15 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey.

According to this same data, one could also verify that there is a strong relation between high percentages of “pregnancies in ages between 15 and 19” and a low “use of contraceptive pills” (mentioned specially by girls). This is particularly evident in countries like Bulgaria (13,6%), Romania (12,8%), Latvia (8,7%) and Lithuania (8,2%). Countries like Denmark, the

Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Finland, Greece and France present most lowest percentages of “teenage pregnancies”.

6. YOUTH HEALTH

These issues – sexual behaviour and intoxicants – are common indicators of health issues. In this report, the option was to include just a few important variables, such as the “subjective state of health”, the “evaluation of body mass” and “mental health and well-being”. In the next table (table 16), we notice that the percentage of young people who self-assess their state of health as “bad or very bad” is very low in all countries. However, regarding different “subjective evaluations of overweight”, data are more heterogeneous and this issue is particularly gendered. The next two graphs (fig. 13 and 14) show that although more men than women (in all countries) are physically overweight, more women than men (in all countries also) perceive themselves as being “fat”/overweight.

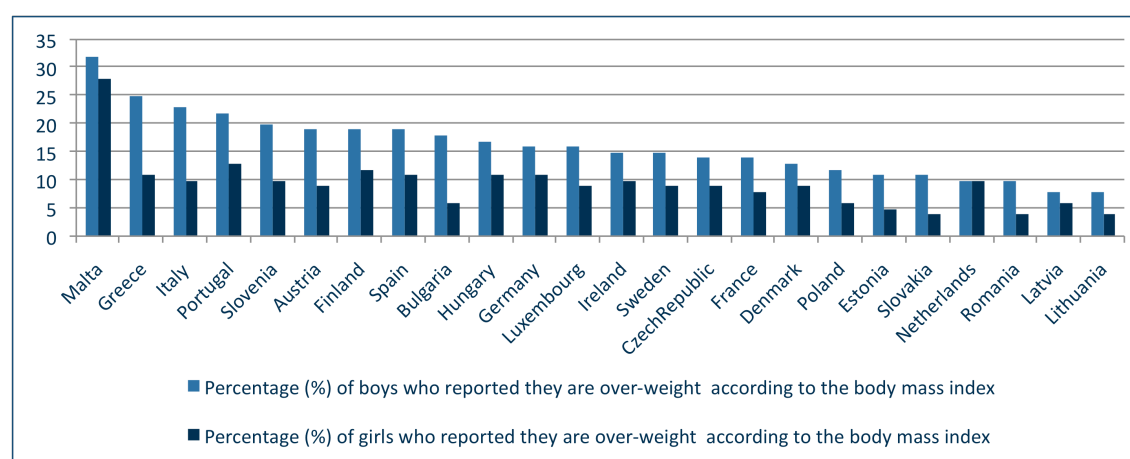
Moreover, it is worth noting the significant discrepancy of values between countries. Whilst southern countries, as well as Slovenia, Austria and Finland, reveal the highest levels of body mass index, countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, the Netherlands and Slovakia show the lowest indexes. These extreme variables are particularly evident amongst the male subsample, whereas the female subsample does not present a significant heterogeneity. National and cultural features, rather than generational ones, could possibly explain these discrepancies.

Table 16. Subjective state of health (16-24 year-olds), body mass index and subjective evaluation of being too fat (15 year-olds) (percentage)

	Young people who self-assessed their state of health as bad or very bad (16-24)	Boys who reported that they are over-weight according to their body mass index [15]*	Girls who reported that they are over-weight according to the body mass index [15]*	Boys who think they are too fat [15]*	Girls who think they are too fat [15]*
Austria	1,00	19,00	9,00	31,00	50,00
Belgium	2,00				
Bulgaria		18,00	6,00	18,00	36,00
Czech Republic		14,00	9,00	16,00	39,00
Denmark	1,00	13,00	9,00	20,00	44,00
Estonia		11,00	5,00	14,00	32,00
Finland	1,00	19,00	12,00	22,00	45,00
France	3,00	14,00	8,00	21,00	44,00
Germany	3,00	16,00	11,00	31,00	58,00
Greece	0,00	25,00	11,00	24,00	36,00
Hungary		17,00	11,00	18,00	40,00
Ireland	1,00	15,00	10,00	22,00	45,00
Italy		23,00	10,00	19,00	38,00
Latvia		8,00	6,00	11,00	43,00
Lithuania		8,00	4,00	12,00	40,00
Luxembourg	1,00	16,00	9,00	27,00	53,00
Malta		32,00	28,00	17,00	32,00
Netherlands	3,00	10,00	10,00	25,00	53,00
Poland		12,00	6,00	19,00	54,00
Portugal	1,00	22,00	13,00	26,00	47,00
Romania		10,00	4,00	14,00	33,00
Slovakia		11,00	4,00	10,00	17,00
Slovenia		20,00	10,00	26,00	54,00
Spain	2,00	19,00	11,00	27,00	45,00
Sweden	2,00	15,00	9,00	23,00	48,00
United Kingdom	1,00				

Source: EurLIFE Database,(2001) *Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

Figure 13. Body mass index (15 year-olds) (percentage)

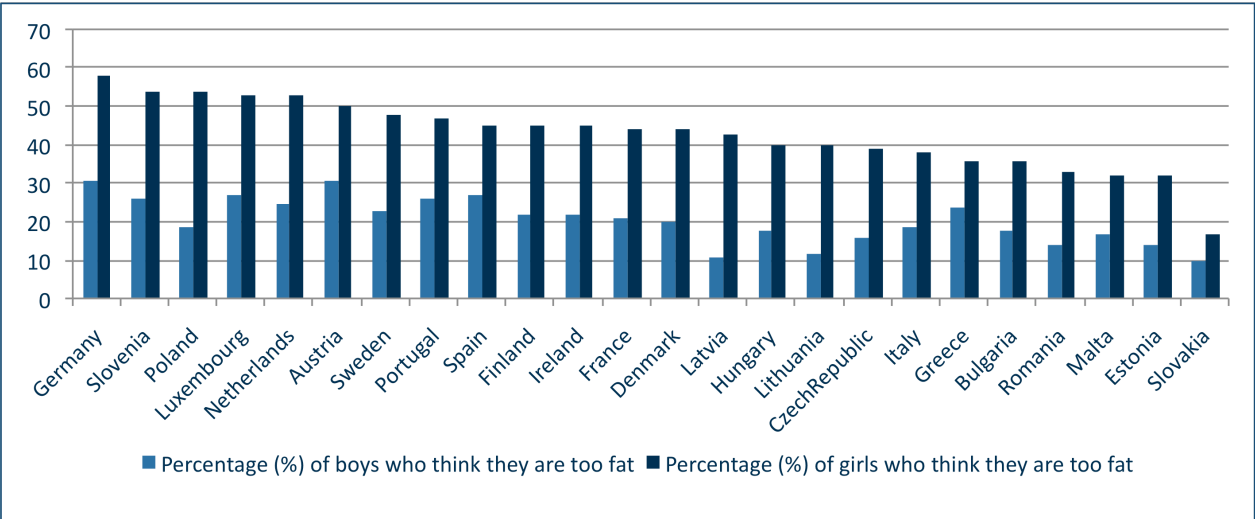


Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

Combined with figure 13, this next graph (fig. 14) reveals the discrepancies between objective and subjective (or perceived) evaluations of overweight. Subjective evaluations demonstrate that more young girls than young boys consider themselves "fat"/overweight. This

is visible in Germany, Poland, Slovenia and the Netherlands, where more than 50% of female respondents share that opinion. This demonstrates the impact of gender social structure and gender roles in these societies. Great attention should be given to these issues, to their relation with potential eating disorders and to the incidence of gender roles and images on young girls.

Figure 14. Subjective evaluation of being fat (15 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: Inequalities in young people’s health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

Another indicator for the dimension of physical health relates to injuries suffered in the last 12 months. As shown in table 16, the percentages of 14 year olds with a minimum of one medically-attended injury in the last 12 months is considerably high. The difference between sexes is striking. Men report much more these events than women. Nonetheless, countries with high percentages for men also tend to display high percentages for women and bigger gender divides. This could reveal that both the national contexts and gender social structure raise the propensity for medically-attended physical injuries.

Countries with the highest percentages for injuries incurred by men are Spain, Lithuania, Malta, Italy, the Czech Republic and Latvia, with more than half of respondents reporting such events/accidents. On the opposite end, Bulgaria, Poland, Sweden and Romania present statistics below 40% for 15 year-old boys and below 25% for 15 year-old girls.

Table 17. 15 Year-olds medically attended injury in the last 12 months, per gender

	Boys having reported at least one medically-attended injury in the last 12 months	Girls having reported at least one medically-attended injury in the last 12 months
Austria	49,00	41,00
Bulgaria	28,00	21,00
Czech Republic	54,00	45,00
Denmark	49,00	48,00
Estonia	42,00	30,00
Finland	45,00	36,00
France	46,00	37,00
Germany	50,00	44,00
Greece	43,00	31,00
Hungary	47,00	37,00
Ireland	50,00	34,00
Italy	55,00	39,00
Latvia	51,00	39,00
Lithuania	56,00	43,00
Luxembourg	46,00	39,00
Malta	55,00	38,00
Netherlands	42,00	31,00
Poland	34,00	26,00
Portugal	49,00	34,00
Romania	37,00	25,00
Slovakia	48,00	37,00
Slovenia	41,00	27,00
Spain	65,00	49,00
Sweden	37,00	34,00

Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBS international report from the 2005/2006 survey

The indicators in table 17 and in map 4 have been chosen to measure subjective well-being. It is clearly visible that “feeling tired” is most common amongst young adults, with percentages up to 31%. Overall, feelings of depression or loneliness display considerably lower percentages.

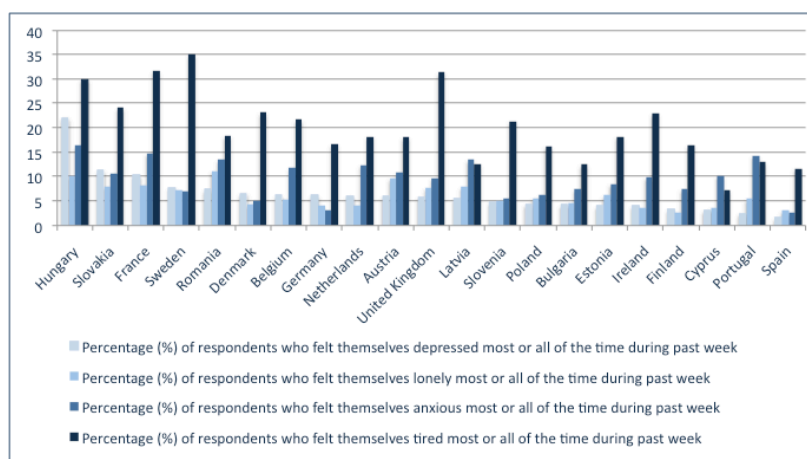
Hungary unfortunately stands out as the country with the highest percentages of young people feeling “depressed”, “lonely” and “anxious”. Although “feeling depressed” is not the most striking indicator of a vulnerable well-being during one's youth, it is important to differentiate countries. While Spain, Portugal and Cyprus, but also Finland and Estonia, present percentages up to 3%, figures for Romania, Sweden, France and Slovakia are higher than 7%, with a worrying 22% for Hungary.

Table 18. Mental health and well-being (15-24 year-olds) and suicide rate (15-19 year-olds) (percentage)

	Respondents who feel depressed most of/all the time in the past week (15-24)	Respondents who feel lonely most of/all the time in the past week (15-24)	Respondents who feel anxious most of/all the time in the past week (15-24)	Respondents who feel tired most of/all the time in the past week (15-24)	Suicides crude death rate per 100 000 persons (15-19)*
Austria	5,89	9,76	10,88	18,10	8,10
Belgium	6,07	5,43	11,82	21,73	
Bulgaria	4,12	4,57	7,51	12,50	4,00
Cyprus	3,03	3,61	10,24	7,23	
Denmark	6,52	4,35	5,15	23,19	6,40
Estonia	3,89	6,25	8,56	18,29	3,10
Finland	3,15	2,76	7,48	16,54	12,50
France	10,22	8,33	14,86	31,64	14,50
Germany	6,07	4,02	3,19	16,71	4,50
Hungary	22,03	10,17	16,38	29,94	4,30
Ireland	3,89	3,60	9,93	22,97	1,00
Latvia	5,40	7,90	13,50	12,60	6,40
Netherlands	5,96	4,13	12,44	18,26	13,10
Poland	4,24	5,62	6,20	16,25	
Portugal	2,39	5,46	14,33	12,97	7,30
Romania	7,30	11,20	13,50	18,40	16,40
Slovakia	11,18	8,01	10,68	24,12	
Slovenia	4,62	5,04	5,46	21,43	
Spain	1,51	3,04	2,65	11,74	4,40
Sweden	7,64	7,29	6,94	35,07	9,20
United Kingdom	5,80	7,73	9,70	31,40	1,50

Source: European Social Survey data (2006); *Eurostat (2006)

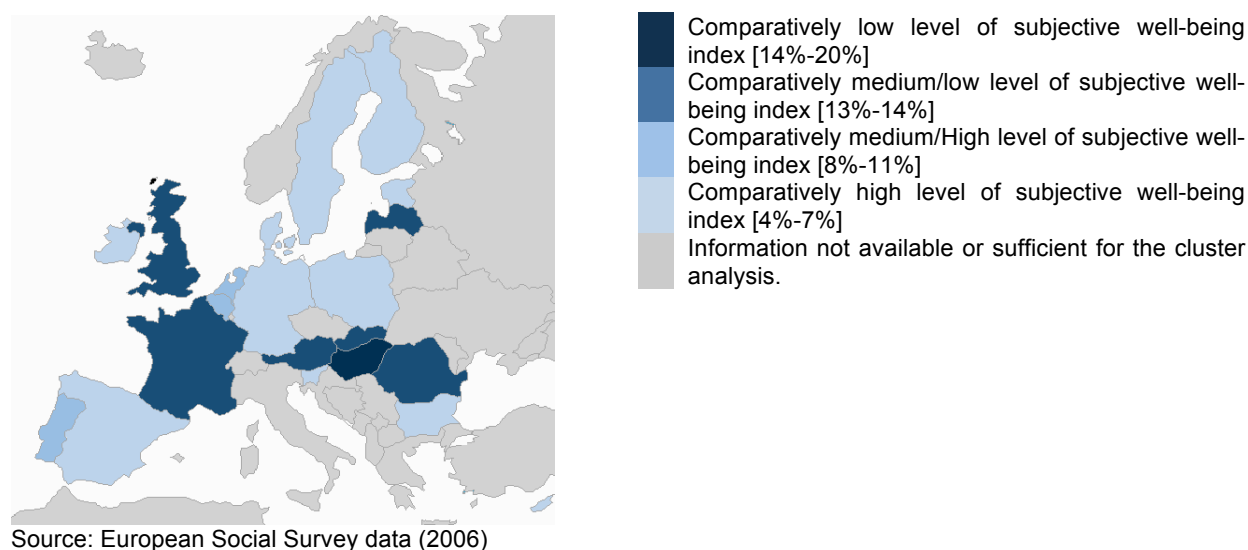
Figure 15. Mental health and well-being (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)



Source: European Social Survey data (2006)

Regarding subjective well-being as a result of these four indicators (depression, loneliness, anxiety and tiredness, see map 4), we verify that the countries that reveal a lower subjective well-being are Hungary (with the highest level of “depression”), France and Sweden (mostly due to the high levels of “tiredness”), followed by the United Kingdom, Slovakia and Romania. On the other end of the scale, countries like Germany, Finland, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Spain reveal the highest levels of subjective well-being.

Map 4. Mental health and Well-being index (15-24 year-olds) (percentage)³



Another serious indicator of poor well-being are the “suicide rates” amongst people aged 15 to 19. The situation in Estonia, Ireland, Finland, Lithuania and Belgium is very worrying, with rates reaching 16,4% for Belgium and 12,5% for Estonia. Southern countries demonstrate the lowest suicide rates. It could be stated that well-being and mental health go beyond those predictable variables of a “successful” transition into adulthood.

The next table (table 19) provides information on eating habits, such as “eating fruit”, “drinking soft drinks” and “having breakfast” on a daily basis. Generally speaking, a “daily breakfast” is the most frequent nutritional behaviour compared to consuming fruits or soft drinks, with values fluctuating between 33% (for girls eating breakfast in Greece on a daily basis) and 79% (for boys eating breakfast in Portugal on a daily basis). The country variations are considerably large. In Slovenia, Greece, the Czech Republic, Malta, Austria, Hungary and Romania, less than half of young people eat breakfast every weekday (from 40% in the case of boys and from 37% in the case of girls). For all the remaining countries, percentages are superior to 60% when it comes to boys eating breakfast. However, this 60% mark only applies to 4 countries when it comes to girls eating breakfast on a daily basis.

Concerning fruit-eating patterns, it seems as though gender and national variations are much smaller. In most cases, the percentages of young people who consume fruit in their daily routine represent less than half of the surveyed group. Nonetheless, such consumption habits are more frequent in countries like Denmark, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Portugal and

³ The small amplitude between the lowest and highest levels of subjective well being found should be taken into account in the interpretation of this data (namely the index of well being constructed with the arithmetic mean of these four variables: loneliness, tiredness, anxiety, depression).

Romania. These “activities” are gendered: “breakfast” and “drinking soft drinks” occur more frequently in young men’s daily routine compared to that of young women. However, in all countries, girls, more than boys, tend to eat fruit every day.

Table 19. Nutrition behaviour (15 year-olds) (percentage)

	Boys who eat breakfast every school day	Girls who eat breakfast every school day	Boys who eat fruit every day	Girls who eat fruit every day	Boys who drink soft drinks daily	Girls who drink soft drinks daily
Austria	47,00	35,00	18,00	32,00	30,00	22,00
Bulgaria	66,00	50,00	25,00	27,00	51,00	48,00
Czech Republic	45,00	43,00	25,00	41,00	34,00	24,00
Denmark	70,00	58,00	29,00	46,00	19,00	9,00
Estonia	71,00	58,00	18,00	30,00	11,00	5,00
Finland	59,00	58,00	14,00	28,00	9,00	4,00
France	65,00	51,00	24,00	29,00	35,00	25,00
Germany	62,00	53,00	23,00	35,00	26,00	20,00
Greece	44,00	33,00	24,00	24,00	24,00	12,00
Hungary	47,00	37,00	23,00	29,00	38,00	32,00
Ireland	70,00	57,00	29,00	39,00	33,00	24,00
Italy	66,00	55,00	47,00	37,00	31,00	19,00
Latvia	68,00	59,00	15,00	26,00	11,00	13,00
Lithuania	65,00	51,00	15,00	23,00	15,00	11,00
Luxembourg	59,00	48,00	27,00	41,00	42,00	28,00
Malta	46,00	38,00	35,00	34,00	49,00	35,00
Netherlands	76,00	65,00	20,00	30,00	50,00	37,00
Poland	67,00	57,00	24,00	34,00	33,00	22,00
Portugal	79,00	69,00	36,00	40,00	32,00	22,00
Romania	47,00	35,00	30,00	40,00	44,00	38,00
Slovakia	53,00	45,00	22,00	33,00	42,00	36,00
Slovenia	42,00	37,00	26,00	40,00	33,00	25,00
Spain	71,00	60,00	24,00	27,00	34,00	28,00
Sweden	68,00	62,00	22,00	34,00	13,00	6,00
United Kingdom	47,00	35,00	18,00	32,00	30,00	22,00

Source: Inequalities in young people’s health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

Aggressiveness towards fellow schoolmates in school is a serious issue that can be measured by analysing the number of times one has bullied or has been bullied in the last two months. The next table (table 20) demonstrates that differences between sexes are higher than differences between countries. Nonetheless, it would seem that the higher the percentages of 15 year-olds involved in bully behaviours, the higher the gender gap. Thus, the high percentages of bully behaviour is mostly visible amongst young men.

In a majority of countries, the percentage of young boys being bullied is lower than the percentage of those who have bullied. That is to say that bullying at 15 years old is a rather transversal characteristic of young people. The only exception is Bulgaria, which presents a higher percentage of 15 year-olds being bullied than those who bully.

Countries presenting percentages of young people who bully higher than 20% are Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Austria, Luxembourg and Germany), whereas countries

such as the Czech Republic, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Malta and Ireland present the lowest percentages,

To sum up, there seems to be a power relation based on age and centred on a hegemonic idea of masculinity, as would be true in the case of bullying rather than being bullied. However, it is also worth noting that young girls are also involved in these behaviours, but not as much as male bullies themselves.

This analysis should also take into account relevant national differences in defining the term “bullying”, as this could have interfered with the values presented and analysed.

Table 20. “Bully” behaviours (15 year-olds) (percentage)

	Boys who have been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months	Girls who have been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months	Boys who have bullied others at school at least twice in the past couple of months	Girls who have bullied others at school at least twice in the past couple of months
Austria	18,00	9,00	26,00	11,00
Bulgaria	34,00	14,00	18,00	8,00
Czech Republic	6,00	4,00	5,00	2,00
Denmark	6,00	5,00	15,00	5,00
Estonia	14,00	13,00	29,00	11,00
Finland	6,00	5,00	8,00	2,00
France	9,00	10,00	18,00	8,00
Germany	13,00	11,00	21,00	9,00
Greece	21,00	17,00	38,00	12,00
Hungary	3,00	3,00	10,00	2,00
Ireland	9,00	7,00	9,00	2,00
Italy	5,00	5,00	14,00	5,00
Latvia	16,00	14,00	35,00	20,00
Lithuania	23,00	21,00	34,00	22,00
Luxembourg	11,00	12,00	24,00	10,00
Malta	6,00	2,00	9,00	5,00
Netherlands	6,00	4,00	12,00	5,00
Poland	8,00	5,00	18,00	6,00
Portugal	13,00	10,00	13,00	8,00
Romania	12,00	8,00	27,00	18,00
Slovenia	10,00	3,00	11,00	3,00
Spain	3,00	4,00	7,00	6,00
Sweden	5,00	3,00	9,00	2,00

Source: Inequalities in young people's health. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey

7. MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The abundance of variables included in this report had made for a challenging but interesting analysis. At the same time, such variety and abundance of variable have contributed to presenting and making possible a big picture of Lifestyles and Living Conditions. It is worth noting that the following conclusions are still fragmented and any extrapolation based on these results should be carefully avoided. Main trends, country heterogeneity and potentially problematic issues are schematically presented in the following tables.

TRANSITIONS		
Main Trends	Country heterogeneity	Potentially Critical Aspects
(Source of income) "Regular job" and "family" as the most common sources of income throughout Europe.	(Source of income) Two patterns: Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Ireland with a predominance of "regular jobs" as a main source of income, combined with "educational grants"; Southern countries, Bulgaria and Hungary with a predominance of the "family" as the main source of income.	(Source of income) Apparent (1) incompatibility in some countries of having educational grants and a part-time job at the same time and/or (2) insufficient amount in educational grants to represent the main source of income.
(Family) Low proportion of young Europeans who are married or in a partnership; some independence between conjugal roles and parental ones.	(Family) Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary with the highest levels of conjugality (approximately 10%).	(Family) The diversity of timing and pace of constituting a family is potentially invisible and should be taken into account.
(Residential Autonomy) Dichotomised tendencies but diversified reasons/justifications for postponing the departure from home. Good example of institutionalised/individualised society paradigm.	(Residential Autonomy) Two patterns: Scandinavian countries with more than half of young people living outside the parental home; Percentages for Portugal, Slovenia, Poland and Bulgaria only reach approximately 20%.	(Residential Autonomy) Lack of institutionalised response to the lack of affordable housing and unavailability within the rental system, thus impeding on flexibility and mobility.

LEISURE

Main Trends	Country heterogeneity	Potentially Critical Aspects
<p>Subjective free time for leisure activities) Great diversity in evaluation, and no linear relation between the regularity of time spent in physical, reading and social activities.</p>	<p>(Subjective free time for leisure activities) Stating more free time for leisure activities in Austria, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Cyprus and Hungary.</p>	
<p>(Comparing physical, mind and social activities) Reading activities are the least frequent. Social activities are more widespread than physical ones.</p>	<p>(Comparing physical, mind and social activities) Countries characterised by a higher level of physical activity are Germany, Ireland, Slovenia and Finland with 60% of respondents carrying out a regular physical activity, whereas Spain, Latvia, Ireland, Germany and Sweden stand out as presenting more regular social activities with friends.</p>	<p>(Comparing physical, mind and social activities) Imbalance of the time spent for reading, physical and social activities.</p>
<p>(Sports and moderate-to-vigorous daily activity) Very strong gender effect in this variable. Subjective perception of physical activity is higher than objective perceptions.</p>	<p>(Sports and moderate-to-vigorous daily activity) Northern and Scandinavian countries have the highest percentages of physical activity.</p>	<p>(Sports and moderate-to-vigorous daily activity) Girls with lower sports activity.</p>
<p>(Media usage) Notion of internet generation confirmed, very high percentages of media (especially newspaper) and internet usage.</p>	<p>(Media usage) Belgium stands out for its lower media usage, Germany and the Netherlands for the highest ones, and France for the biggest gender gap in activities such as watching TV, listening to music, using a computer or playing games. Bulgaria, Slovakia, Portugal and Spain show the lowest percentages of internet use.</p>	<p>(Media usage) Lack of information on the potential use/misuse of the content available on Internet.</p>
<p>(Cultural activities) The library as the most visited cultural institutions.</p>	<p>(Cultural activities) More frequent in Finland, Sweden and Denmark.</p>	<p>(Cultural activities) Low frequency of visits to museums and dance</p>

Country heterogeneity when it comes to the frequency of visiting museums.

performances.

(Sociability and peers)
High valorisation of having friends and linear relation between this valorisation and the frequency of time spent with friends.

(Sociability and peers)
Importance of friends lower in Latvia and Malta, and higher in Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark.

(Sociability and peers)
Evaluation of the effective peer-pressure.

RISK BEHAVIOUR

Main Trends	Country heterogeneity	Potentially Critical Aspects
Having experimented alcohol is transversal across most European countries, but "being drunk at least once a year" is much less frequent and more heterogeneous between countries.	"Being drunk at least once in the past year" is less common in Cyprus, Portugal, France, Romania, Italy and Greece, while Denmark, Ireland, Austria, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Estonia present the highest percentages (68 to 82%).	Early age experiencing alcohol and lack of justification for the transition to "have been drunk".
The percentage of young people using drugs other than cannabis is small but rather transversal across all countries. Heterogeneity between countries is found when it comes to trying cannabis at least once.	Trying cannabis at least once is more frequent in countries such as the Czech Republic, Ireland, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium: prevalence of 30% to 45%.	Worrying percentages of young people having used cannabis and others drugs.
More than half of young people in every European country have already tried cigarettes.	High percentages of experimentation is particularly evident in Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Slovakia.	Lack of information on the reasons for trying cigarettes and its outcome.
Percentages of young people who have already had sexual intercourse is below 50% but still significant in all countries. The gender gap is very significant. Mainstream use of condom but not of the contraceptive pill.	Wide gender gap, especially in the case of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. The lower the gender gap, the lower the percentage of those who having had sexual intercourse. The use of the pill is much less frequent in Southern and Post-Socialist countries.	Lack of information about sexual education in schools and sexual health consultations.

HEALTH		
Main Trends	Country heterogeneity	Potentially Critical Aspects
Very good and transversal subjective evaluation.		
Gender effect in the perception of being overweight: men are more frequently “fat”/overweight but women consider themselves more frequently fat.	Southern countries and Slovenia, Austria and Finland show the highest levels of body mass index whereas countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, the Netherlands and Slovakia present the lowest ones.	Disproportionate evaluation of being “fat”/overweight (especially for women)
Being tired is the most frequent and transversal negative indicator of a low level of subjective well-being.	The lowest levels of subjective well-being are more evident in Hungary, France and Sweden.	
Heterogeneity is found between countries in regards breakfast habits. In 8 countries, less than half of respondents has breakfast every weekday. Low percentages and variation is found in the habit of eating fruit.	Less than half of respondents has breakfast every weekday in the following countries: Slovenia, Greece, the Czech republic, Malta, Austria, Hungary and Romania. Variation in fruit-eating habits is much lower, but so are national percentages (varying between 14% and 46%).	Insufficient habits for good nutrition.

8. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Producing recommendations for public policies is always a fundamental and challenging task. The analysis of “Lifestyles and Living Conditions” is particularly ambitious due to the specificity and broadness of the variables. Nonetheless, by taking into account some of the potentially problematic issues presented in this report, suggestions on policies, on research and on “good practices” can be presented. These suggestions are in no way exhaustive and do have the pretence of being innovative, but rather seek to emphasise the need to reinforce some important features within youth studies, policies and realities.

GENERAL

Promotion of relation and communication between the two spheres of action and knowledge on youth: Research and Policy. A dialectic relation should be promoted between the two in order to produce more useful knowledge on youth, and best responses to policymakers requirements for producing adequate policies.

TRANSITIONS

Policy	Research	Practices
De-standardisation of policies, programmes and recommendations for reconciliation between different spheres one's course of life. In a demographically dense period such as the transition into adulthood, not only does the reconciliation between work and family make sense but also between work-school/training.	Identification, at a national level, of the impediments of reconciling work with educational grants/training allowances.	By Universities: Flexibility for student-worker, facilitating and promoting the possibility to combine learning and earning.
Assessment of the fairness of the variety of impediments in conciliating work and educational grants/training allowances.	Confirming data on the subjective justification for a postponed process of leaving the parental home (income available, macro data on availability and price of housing).	
Adjusting the rental housing system to the mobility needs of young adults.		

LEISURE		
Policy	Research	Practices
Promotion of sports activity, especially by girls and diminution of the male hegemony in sports culture.	Identification of the conditions and problems of the effects of peer pressure on the transition from school to work and performance at school.	Information for young children on the dangers of intoxicants.
Promotion of national reading plans, through programmes and initiatives, recommended literature, book clubs, etc.	Identification of the main obstacles to frequent reading activities and unattractiveness of reading activities.	

RISK BEHAVIOUR		
Policy	Research	Practices
Promotion of information programmes on the use of intoxicants: consequences on health and quality of life.	Identification, at a national level, of the implications of different legal frameworks in the profiles of use of alcohol.	Information targeted to young children on the dangers the use of intoxicants
Promotional programmes for free consultations on sexual and reproductive health for boys and girls.	Mapping the availability of sexual and reproductive health and the profile of users.	
Awareness programmes for parents and young people about sexual and reproductive health.	Identification, at a national level, of the implications of different curricula on sexual education and on the responsibility of young adults in their sexual active life.	

HEALTH		
Policy	Research	Practices
Promotion of information and awareness-raising programmes on eating disorders.	Promotion of the inclusion of social variables of well-being in cross-section European surveys.	By parents and schools: Guarantee good nutritional habits, such as eating breakfast and fruit daily.
Programmes for a free evaluation of physical conditions.		

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