



---

## **Job Mobilities in Europe Relevance, Consequences, and New Challenges**

**17th October 2008, European Parliament Brussels, 9:30-13:00**

### **Conference Abstracts**

#### **Conference topic in general**

Due to the widely believed positive effects of job-related mobility, such as the fostering of innovations, economic growth and European cohesion, great efforts have been undertaken to enhance mobility. One of the prominent examples is the “European Year of Workers` Mobility 2006.”

Nevertheless the mobility of the European workforce has been repeatedly evaluated as relatively low. A recent study on job-related spatial mobility of all types - and not only on workforce migration - comes to striking results: almost half of the employees in Europe are mobile for job reasons or have been mobile during their professional life. Workers are sedentary but still highly mobile because they adopt different strategies to meet mobility demands. Europeans seldom migrate, but they commute daily or weekly over long distances, live in long-distance relationships for job reasons, fulfil foreign assignments or undertake frequent business trips in Europe or worldwide.

Based on representative data collected in six European countries the papers presented during the conference analyse the current mobility flows and the explanation of the corresponding consequences for society, economy, demographic development, gender equality, and quality of life in Europe. The findings of the study identify new challenges for the economy and suggest a change of political strategies directed to job mobility.

#### **Sedentary or Mobile?**

##### **The Mobility of the European Workforce**

Prof. Dr. Norbert F. Schneider  
Project Coordinator  
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

While job mobility requirements are increasing and great efforts are undertaken by European policy makers to encourage the migration flows in Europe statistical data indicate less mobile and rather sedentary Europeans. This raises the question how mobile the European workforce de facto is. Further questions are of interest too: In which ways are the workers mobile? Who are the mobile and who are the immobile people? Which differences exist between the European countries? Are there differences between willingness and demands to become mobile? These questions will be discussed in the first contribution.

The current developments of job mobility in Europe will be presented and commented in the beginning of this contribution. Also a short introduction of the study design and the research

questions of the project “Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe. Modern Mobile Living and its relation to Quality of Life” will be given.

One important result of the study is the insight that job mobility happens primarily as recurring and not as residential mobility. The prevalence and the diversity of job mobility in six countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Spain, and Switzerland) will be presented together with findings about the readiness of the Europeans to become mobile.

The question “Who is mobile?” will be addressed with respect to socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, age, and education.

The subjective perception of mobility will be outlined briefly in the last part of the presentation. The circumstances why people became mobile are discussed and the question will be raised if mobility is perceived as an opportunity, a need, or even as coercion.

## **Rising Mobility, Increasing Inequality? Economic and Social Consequences of Mobility**

Prof. Dr. Anna Giza-Poleszczuk  
University of Warsaw

One of the key phenomena we face in the contemporary Europe is increasing demand on mobility and flexibility of persons and institutions. It is widely believed that job-related mobility triggers the free flow of people and ideas and fosters innovations and economic growth. While contributing to the development of the borderless European society, job mobility is a social process, having consequences for the societies of Europe.

First, we will discuss the relation between job mobility and social stratification. Moving to get a job has two different forms. On the one hand, there is a mobility of less skilled people (lower social strata), for whom becoming mobile is the only way to get a job. On the other hand, there is a mobility of highly qualified people (higher social strata), looking for career opportunities. These two mobility types are connected with completely different experiences in terms of social integration and costs of mobility – in the social as well as the financial sense. Among the opportunity-driven mobiles we find well educated, young specialists, mostly men, whose mobility is – at least to some extent – financed by their employer, and it comes with some benefits (promotion, better pay, social status). In turn among the survival-mobiles all the costs connected with mobility are born by the worker-self. We will try to check whether mobility has developed into a mechanism of increasing social differentiation, widening the gap between social classes.

Second, we will discuss the demand for mobility across social groups in the comparative perspective. Mobility demand (or opportunity) is not equally distributed across all sectors of economy or all hierarchical positions in organisations. Positions of which mobility is most demanded are ‘middle positions’ – those, being supervised and supervising others at the same time, those working in the knowledge-based sector and industry, but not the agriculture, the young over the old, and men over women. Bearing in mind the differences between countries, we may expect mobility demand and opportunities are not equally distributed across Europe. We will try to see whether mobility – especially the international one – contributes to the convergence, or to the divergence between countries varying as to the level of economic development.

Third, we will briefly touch upon the consequences job mobility has on social mobility. Is job mobility the mechanism of moving upward on the social ladder, and if so – is it equally true for all social strata and for all countries? It is widely believed Europe benefits from mobility – do mobile people benefit from it too?

## **Mobile, Single, Stressed?**

### **The Effects of Mobility on Family Life and Individual Well-Being**

Prof. Dr. Gerardo Meil

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

In the first part of this contribution the question is raised whether an increasing mobility dynamic has an influence on the demographic development in Europe. How does mobility effect family formation and family dynamics? In particular it will be discussed whether mobility hinders the formation of a partnership or affects the decision to have children. Attention will be paid in this context to gender differences. Do the consequences of mobility concern men and women in different ways? Is motherhood equally compatible with mobility as fatherhood? It will be also presented how the household division of work is organised among couples with a mobile partner. Are there traditionalizing effects if the man is mobile compared to a situation where the women has become mobile?

In the second part we focus on the consequences of mobility for quality of life and general life satisfaction. How does mobility affect stress and psychological well-being? And if there are specific stressors, how can these be reduced and therewith well-being improved?

Finally it will be discussed how employers and policy makers can support mobile people. Which supporting measures do mobile people wish for themselves? Which measures would allow them to combine more easily family life, job and mobility in future and thus to stay mobile or to become mobile if there is a need or the wish to do so?