

# Sedentary or Mobile? The Mobility of the European Workforce

Final Conference of the FP 6 Project

Job-Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe.  
Modern Mobile Living and its Relation to Quality of Life

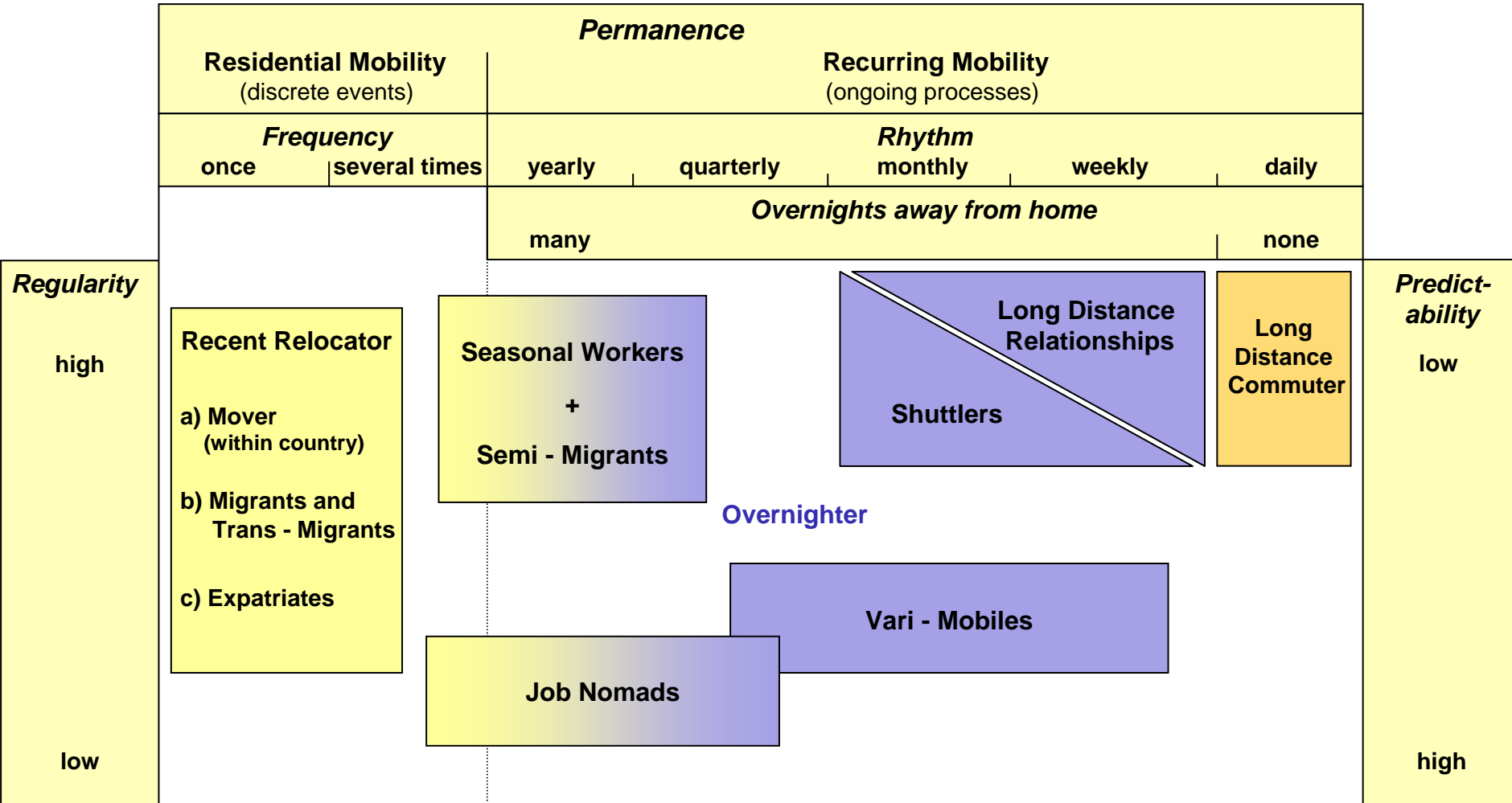
Brussels, 17th October 2008

- Six European countries: France, Germany, Spain, Poland, Belgium, and Switzerland
- 7220 respondents aged between 25 and 54 years
- Telephone interviews (face-to-face interviews in Poland) with standardised questionnaires in summer 2007
- Three topics are in the focus of the study:
  - the **relevance** and **diversity** of job-related spatial mobility in Europe
  - the **causes** and **circumstances** of job mobility, and
  - the **consequences** of mobility for family, subjective well-being, job career, and social relations

- 80 % of the Europeans (EU 25)\* live in the region in which they grew up
- 1,5 % of the Europeans (EU 25) live in another than their home country (migrants)
- Only 25 % of these people migrated for job reasons but 75 % due to private reasons, mainly love (30 %) and a better climate (24 %)
- 1 % of the Europeans (EU 25) in the employable age move for job reasons per year; the same is true for 2,3 % of the US-Americans and 2,1 % of the Canadians

Sources: Eurostat 2006; EU Commission 2007; US Department of Labor 2002

\* 25 countries of the European Union, without Romania and Bulgaria



## Empirical Questions of Interest

- How mobile is the European workforce?
- In which ways are the Europeans geographically mobile for professional reasons?
- How big is the willingness to become mobile?
- Are there empirical clues for increasing mobility demands?
- Who are the mobile people?

# How Mobile is the European Workforce? Current and Former Mobility Experiences of Gainful Employed Individuals by Country (in %)

	F	D	E	PL	CH	B	EU6
Currently mobile	15	19	14	15	13	17	16
Formerly mobile	36	31	38	21	38	25	32
Without mobility experience	49	51	48	63	49	58	52
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008

# In which Ways are People Mobile? General Patterns of Current Mobility of Gainful Employed Individuals by Country (in %)

	F	D	E	PL	CH	B	EU6
Recurringly mobile	65	68	83	76	73	87	72
Residentially mobile	27	22	12	12	18	11	20
Mobile in both ways	8	9	6	12	9	2	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008

In which Ways are People Mobile?  
Specific Patterns of Current Mobility of Gainful Employed Individuals  
by Country (in %)

		EU6
Recurring Mobilities	Long Distance Commuter	41
	Vari-Mobiles (Persons often away on business trips)	20
	Weekend Commuter (Shuttler)	3
	Long-Distance Relationship	4
Residential Mobilities	Mover	15
	Migrant	2
	Expatriate	3
Multi-Mobilities	Two or more mobilities at the same time	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008

## The Willingness to Become Mobile of Currently Non-mobile Persons Working for Pay

Willingness to Become Mobile by Type of Mobility	EU6	France (least willing)	Germany (most willing)
Migrate to another country	16	7	27
Move to another region within the same country	19	11	28
Start long distance commuting	27	16	36
Not willing to become mobile (in any form)	53	65	38

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008

# Are there Increasing Mobility Demands? Cohort Differences Regarding Current or Former Mobility Experiences

Age Group	F	D	E	PL	CH	B	EU6
25 – 34	51	51	59	44	49	46	52
35 – 44	56	47	47	30	55	41	47
45 – 54	47	50	48	35	49	39	46

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008,  
100% = all gainful employed persons with mobility experiences

Differences between sex and other socio-demographic criteria are observable with regard to the *extent* and the *manifestation* of mobility.

Examples concerning the *extent* of mobility:

- Persons with university degrees are highly mobile; there are only small differences among the other educational levels in respect of the *extent* of mobility, Switzerland is different in this respect
- People in insecure employment situations are highly mobile
- Two third of the mobile persons are male; this is mainly an effect of parenthood
- Men's mobility is hardly, women's mobility strongly influenced by parenthood; this interrelationship is particularly intense in Germany and Switzerland

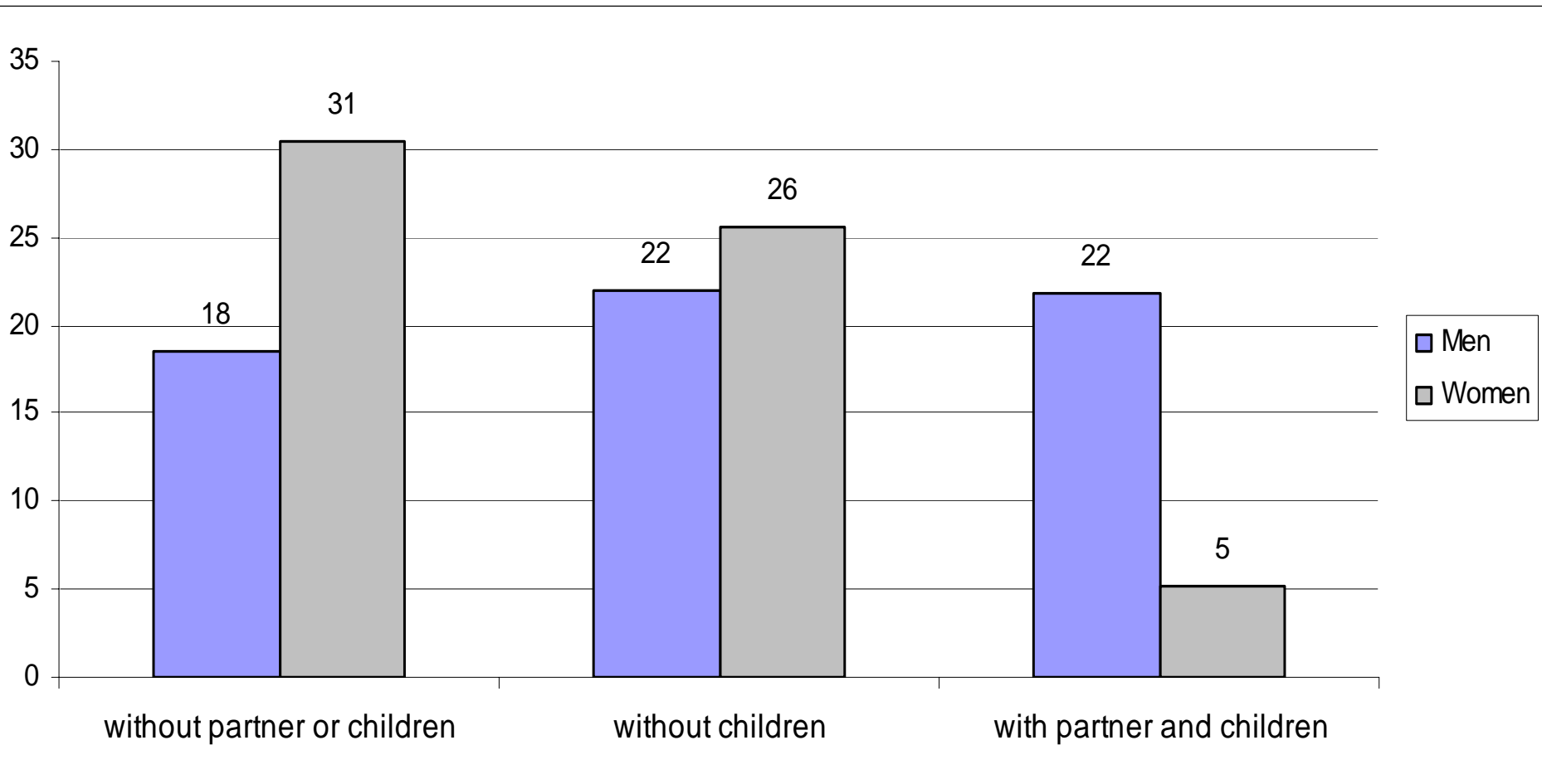
Education	F	D	E	PL	CH	B	EU6
Lower Secondary	11	15	12	10	9	17	13
Upper Secondary	13	17	13	15	17	15	15
University	22	33	18	23	19	21	24
Total	16	19	14	15	13	18	16

Sources: JobMob and FamLives 2008,  
share of currently mobile persons, 100% = all gainful employed people

Examples concerning the *manifestation* of mobility:

- Younger people (under 35 years) prefer relocating, older people commuting, especially long distance commuting
- The higher the education is the more people are willing to relocate; people with lower education are sedentary and tend to commute
- People in precarious working situations commute
- Women tend to move, men prefer commuting

Percentage of Mobile Persons by Living Arrangement and Sex in Germany



n=890, n=470, n=189

Source: JobMob and FamLives 2008, German data set

1. Job-related spatial mobility is a widespread phenomenon in Europe.
2. Job-related spatial mobility in Europe is characterised by a high extent of recurring and a low frequency of residential mobility.  
This means: The Europeans are locally attached but as commuters highly mobile.
3. Differences concerning the extent and the manifestation of mobility are rather small between European countries.
4. The mobility flow has increased in all countries during the last two decades.
5. The willingness for relocation is small and a significant increase during the next decades is not to be expected.

6. There are important differences between social groups in countries. Especially sex, education, age, and family situation influence the mobility of people.
7. Increasing mobility requirements can have negative effects on family development and family life. They aggravate the compatibility of family and professional life – especially for women. That way mobility may have a negative effect on the birth rate and on gender equality in Europe.

## Implications of the results of the study for policy makers

Our findings reveal *three dilemmas* for policy makers in Europe:

- First dilemma: job-related spatial mobility is usually very difficult to combine with being an active parent. For this reason an increase in mobility may discourage especially women from proceeding family planning and may decrease fertility rates in Europe.
- Second dilemma: job-related spatial mobility often initiates a back-fall of couples into a traditional division of labour between paid and unpaid work. This implies a goal conflict between increasing mobility and increasing gender equality in Europe.
- Third dilemma: increasing mobility may complicate social engagement and volunteer work and aggravate the development of the civic society.

In times of rising mobility requirements politics and business are challenged to develop strategies to increase the willingness of people to become mobile and to minimise the negative consequences of mobility.

For further information:

[www.jobmob-and-famlives.eu](http://www.jobmob-and-famlives.eu)

Norbert F. Schneider & Gerardo Meil (Eds.):

Mobile Living Across Europe I. Relevance and Diversity of Job-Related Spatial Mobility in Six European Countries. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 2008.

Norbert F. Schneider & Beate Collet (Eds.):

Mobile Living Across Europe II. Causes and Consequences in Cross-cultural Perspective. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 2009.