

FUTURES ON HOLD

**Young Europeans talk about
combining work and family**



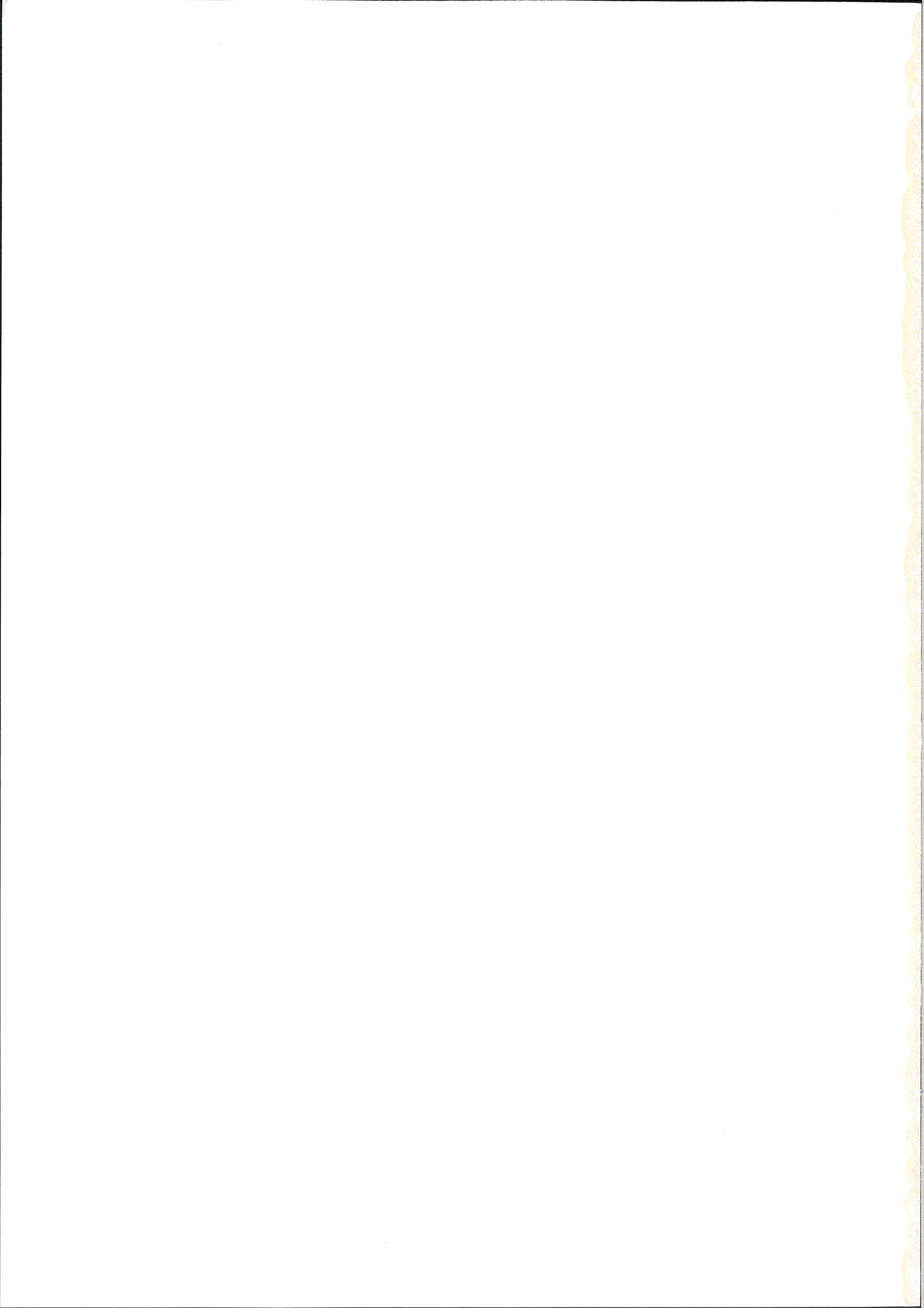
WORK-LIFE RESEARCH CENTRE

Employment & social affairs



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FUTURES ON HOLD

Young Europeans talk about combining work and family

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Findings from the project:

**The Reconciliation of Future Employment and Family Life:
Understanding and Supporting the Family and Employment
Orientations of Young People in Europe**

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Employment & social affairs

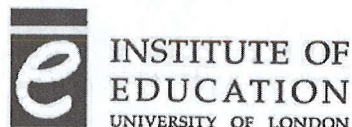


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About the Work-Life Research Centre

The Work-Life Research Centre is a virtual research Centre, which aims to stimulate fresh thinking and creative approaches to the challenges and opportunities at the work-home-community interface. Formed as an independent European centre of excellence, its focus is future-oriented: monitoring and researching emerging work-life issues. It encourages active dialogue between stakeholders in the area of work, home and community and provides an information base to help identify solutions consistent with their objectives, both social and economic. The UK team is led by specialists at the forefront of work-family research and practice with a proven track record in the fields of management science, organisational psychology, sociology, economic and social policy.





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KEY FINDINGS

The growth in non permanent work and real or perceived job insecurity makes it difficult for today's young adults to envisage their future work and family lives. This study sought to understand how young people aged 18 to 30 in five European countries think about their future employment and family lives in the context of major social and economic changes. Young people from different backgrounds at different points in the transition to economic independence participated in focus groups and interviews in Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the UK. Some of the key themes to emerge from this rich qualitative data were:

- Young people appear to live in an extended present. The present is seen as a time full of freedoms, choices and opportunities. They want to "live their lives" fully now but talk of "settling down" at some future time . At the same time, trends such as longer periods in education, growth in non permanent work, perceived job insecurity and new definitions of "careers" are making it difficult for young people to anticipate or plan for future employment and family life.
- It is more appropriate to talk about work-life than work-family priorities for this age group as few have current caring commitments and many find it difficult to anticipate these. But young people do have significant work-life priorities at this time and value quality of life both within and beyond paid work.
- Women's and men's expectations are converging to some extent. Women in all the groups expect employment to be part of their current and future lives. Many of the men, especially the more educated, say they hope to share family work. But equality between men and women in the labour market and the home is still a "virtual reality" for many young people, even in the Scandinavian countries.
- A new "psychological contract" appears to be emerging between young people and employers. Young workers expect flexible working hours that leave time for interests and demands outside of work, and opportunities for developing skills and employability, but without lifelong commitment from either side.
- Flexible employment contracts erode rights to statutory entitlements such as maternity/parental leave. Many young people feel that employers use short term contracts to avoid providing such entitlements and this leads to a lack of trust and confidence in employers.

- **The work-family arrangements the participants think they will adopt if they have young children vary both between and within countries. Their expectations are based on attitudes ranging from a modern view, most typical in Sweden and Norway, which endorses employment for both parents and the use of external daycare (more widely available than in the other countries), to a traditional view most prevalent among the Irish participants, favouring mothers at home.**
- **Young people generally have low expectations of support from employers for the reconciliation of paid work and family. They do expect some working time flexibility but other support is only expected if they recognise that it is in employers' interest to provide this.**
- **Support from the state for reconciling paid work and family is taken for granted in Sweden and Norway, but far less so in the other countries. However growing awareness of different state policies across Europe appears to be raising expectations among those in countries with lower levels of provisions. On the other hand the growth of atypical employment contracts is reducing expectations of employment protection and benefits, which are based on permanent employment.**
- **Most of these young people cannot imagine a role for trade unions in supporting the reconciliation of employment and family life. There is an opportunity, though, for trade unions to involve and support more young people by taking on board their hopes, aspirations and concerns about future work and family life.**
- **Research suggests that the reconciliation of employment and family life is easier for those who are able to think well ahead and make realistic plans and preparations. Employers as well as policy makers at the national and European levels need to consider the implications of the current uncertainties in young people's lives for the achievement of a committed and effective workforce, empowered to reconcile paid work and family in the future.**

INTRODUCTION

About the project

This project was undertaken as part of the Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Community and was co-funded by DGIV of the European Commission and by the universities of the respective members of the research team, together with funding support from Midland Bank, Manchester Training and Enterprise Council and the British Council. A major theme within the Fourth Action Programme is the reconciliation of employment and family life. However, both family life and employment are changing across Europe. So, how do the incoming generation of workers in Europe think about work and family? Now and in the future? In the changing European context, and in specific national contexts within Europe? These are questions addressed in this study of young people aged 18 to 30 living in Britain, Ireland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden.

Cross-national approaches and methods

A transnational team of researchers sought to take account of young adults' views in a series of focus groups (at least 12 in each country) and individual interviews. Separate focus groups were conducted with students in higher education and voluntary training, those who were unemployed or in precarious employment, and those in professional or managerial occupations or in blue collar or lower level white collar jobs. Most focus groups were single sex although a few were mixed. Participants included a few who were already parents, single or married (See appendix for details of the groups). Focus groups were conducted in large metropolitan areas in the UK and Portugal, in Norway's second city and in smaller cities in Ireland and Sweden.

In the focus groups and interviews young people were invited to discuss ideas for the present and the future about their transitions to adulthood including relationships and "settling down", having children, their expectations and priorities in relation to lifestyles, current and future employment, job insecurity, and career paths. They also considered what to many was a highly hypothetical set of issues, namely whether and how they might combine employment with family life in the future and the kinds of support they thought they would find helpful (or not) from family and other informal sources, the state, employers, and trade unions.

Both the project and the young people themselves considered what these issues meant from the point of view of being a young man or a young woman in their respective countries. An important focus of the study was the issue of gender equity in the reconciliation of employment and family life. The focus groups were also encouraged to talk about what they regarded as "good practice" in supporting working parents, especially by employers, another important and highly practical issue which the study sought to examine. Examples of good practice viewed through these young adults' eyes are interspersed throughout this report.

In presenting young people's views we have sought to quote from young people directly where possible. Inevitably, we have had to simplify some of the complexity and variation in these rich portraits of young people's views and their changing lives. There is considerable variation among those at the younger and older end of the age range and among those with different levels of education and training and in different types of occupations. Moreover we do not wish to suggest

that each focus group reached a consensus nor that all young people in the focus group contributed to the discussion on every issue discussed. Nevertheless many common themes have emerged from the focus group and interview analysis and form the basis of this report.

The focus group data are not intended to be generalised to all young people across Europe or indeed within each of the countries. Indeed this is not the purpose of focus group methods. Rather they provide a means of eliciting the different discussions that take place concerning young people's present and future lives.

In making sense of young people's views and experiences as they themselves present them, it is crucial to interpret them within cultural contexts, demographic and social trends, policies and provision at national and EU levels. These constitute an important basis for interpreting young people's accounts and for assessing the differences and similarities in these accounts as they emerge cross-nationally. Below we discuss some of the significant ways in which these four EU and one non-EU country (Norway) differ or are similar, as background to the study.

Trends in young Europeans' lives

As people live longer and fertility falls, young people are a declining proportion of the population in all European countries (European Commission, 1997). At the same time, the so-called "youth" phase between childhood and adulthood is lasting longer as young people stay in education and training for extended periods thereby putting their futures on hold. This protracted limbo between childhood and adulthood involves being economically dependent upon parents, upon the state and/or upon borrowed money, for example student loans. While economic transitions are key, domestic transitions are also important in the attainment of full adult status and involve an underlying shift in responsibilities: from being the responsibility of parents to taking responsibility for others. Recent economic changes, notably labour market flexibility, the restructuring of welfare states with the placing of welfare responsibility on to the individual, and the increased instability of family life all mean that the future for young people is filled with risk and uncertainty.

Education, training and employment

The information society requires a highly trained workforce and that young people stay longer in education and training. Young Europeans are increasingly likely to complete upper secondary education.

Table 1: Percentage of young people aged 25-29 having completed upper secondary education, 1997

UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
57	66	36	90	89

Eurostat/Labour Force Survey, Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics

The rates of part-and full-time education and training have risen in recent years for the UK, Ireland and especially Portugal while the proportion of those in work has fallen. The trend has been especially marked for young women. More young women than young men are now staying on in education and training, particularly in Portugal. At school, young women are performing better than young men, although segregation by subject persists which has implications for how young men and women later fare in the labour market (Rubery et al, 1996). British young people are still likely to enter the job market at an earlier age than in the other four countries, with more 18 year olds both in training and in a job (European Commission, 1987).

Employment insecurity

The last part of the twentieth century has seen a transformation in the very nature of work. Globalisation, the restructuring of the labour market and organisations, technological development, and the growth of the information society have revolutionised the world of work. A growth in fixed term and temporary employment contracts have produced a decline in job security, once thought essential for family stability. Jobs for life are a thing of the past. The proportion of employees with fixed term contracts is increasing across the EU, with young people the most

affected. Over 35% of employees aged 15-25 are in temporary employment compared with 14% of all employees.

Table 2: Trends in fixed term contracts as % of total employment

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
1987	6.2	8.6	16.9	no data
1995	7.0	10.2	10	13.6

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Norway: no data for 1987 or 1995. In 1997, 12% of total employment was in fixed term contracts.

Young people's unemployment

Unemployment has risen across the European Union in the 1990s. Those most likely to be unemployed are young people. Almost five million of the 18 million unemployed in Europe are under 25, with the proportion unchanged between 1990 and 1995 (European Commission, 1997). Ireland continues to have particularly high unemployment rates among the 15-24 years olds compared with all the other EU countries

Table 3: Youth unemployment 1995, (by %)

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
Age 15-19	17.3	27.7	15.6	21.2	6.0
Age 20-24	14.5	16.0	16.1	18.3	7.0

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics

Unemployment is significantly higher among those in the 25-29 age group with only compulsory schooling and upper secondary school education

Table 4: Unemployment in the 25-29 age group, (%) by level of education

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
Only compulsory	9.8	16.9	6.4	8.9
Upper secondary education	7.2	7.5	6.7	7.7
Higher/further education	3.8	4.2	3.2	3.5

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

The gaps between young men and women are also considerable. In Sweden and the UK, more young men are unemployed while in Portugal more young women are unemployed. In Ireland, more young men than young women under 25 are unemployed while the opposite is the case for the over 25s (European Commission 1997).

Young people's living arrangements

With the rise of unemployment, the extension and growth of training and education and the tightening of the housing markets during the 1980s young people are tending to live in their parents' home for longer than in previous generations. Nowadays almost two thirds (65%) of young Europeans aged 20-24 live with their parents; in the older age group (25-29) young people are much less likely to live with parents especially in the UK, Scandinavian countries and to a lesser extent Ireland (European Commission, 1997). Young women tend to leave home earlier than young men.

Relationships and fertility

Across Europe, marriage is losing its popularity among young people while the average age at first marriage has risen in all countries, particularly among those with high levels of education. Cohabitation is much more common in the UK and the Scandinavian countries than it is in Portugal and Ireland, although young people in all countries are equally supportive of this way of

living (European Commission, 1997). European women are having fewer children and are having them later in life

Table 5: Average age at first marriage 1992

	UK	Ireland	Sweden	Portugal	Norway
Women	25.5	26.6	27.9	24.3	26.5
Men	27.5	28.4	30.3	26.3	28.9

Eurostat

Every country in the EU now has a fertility rate below replacement level, with Ireland reaching subfertility in 1991 for the first time in recorded history.

Trends in family life and employment

Young people's future lives as workers and carers may be different from those of today's parents but they constitute an important part of the current context of young people's lives. Employment trends need to be considered against the backdrop of economic growth. While Norway's economy has continued to flourish because of North Sea oil, Sweden's economy has been in recession with a sharp rise in unemployment since 1991-92. Ireland has the highest economic growth rate in Europe, albeit starting from a low base, while the UK economy continues to suffer from low investment in manufacturing but has experienced a significant fall in unemployment in recent years. After the economic turbulence of the 1980s, Portugal's economy grew during the 1990s and has now stabilised. However a country's stage of economic development does not necessarily match the priority it gives to ending inequalities between men and women (United Nations 1995).

Mothers' employment

The second half of the twentieth century has been marked by enormous changes in the lives of women especially mothers. Women are tending to stay in the labour market when they become parents, and to have shorter breaks from employment (Rubery, Smith and Fagan, 1996). Mothers' employment rates vary considerably in the critical period when children are very young. Employment rates for mothers of young children have shown most rapid recent change in the UK and in Ireland. Both countries started from a very low base in the employment of mothers of very young children. Maternal employment is highest in Sweden and Norway. There remains much less variability in fathers' employment across countries.

Currently mothers are much more likely to work full-time in Portugal (as in all southern European countries) while part-time employment is very common for mothers in Sweden, Norway and the UK. Part-time employed mothers in Sweden and Norway work longer hours than in the UK. Average weekly hours of mothers are particularly low in the UK due to high levels of part-time employment and to very short hours, while mothers' hours of work are highest in Portugal (Deven et al, 1998).

Different family forms

Marriages and relationships are not necessarily for life. Families are becoming more diverse, reflecting broader lifestyle choices. There are growing numbers of single parents, step parents, child free relationships, people living alone, people with friends and in same sex relationships. In all five countries births are occurring in the context of cohabitation rather than marriage. Estimates of lone parenthood for the early 1990s suggest that 21% of all mothers with a child under 18 in the UK and Norway are lone mothers. This is the highest rate of lone parenthood in Europe followed closely by Sweden (18%) and then by Portugal at 13%, with Ireland lowest (11%) (Millar and Warman 1996).

Support for working parents - publicly and privately provided

In most member states informal provision (family, relatives and friends) continues to be the main source of care for very young children while their parents are at work, notably in the UK, Portugal

and Ireland. Employer support is most discussed, if not provided, in the UK and is almost entirely absent from the child care debate in Sweden and Norway, where publicly-funded services are the main providers of child care. In Sweden in 1996, 57% of children aged 1-2 years received some form of non parental care and 76% of children aged 3-6 years. In Norway the situation is similar with 63% of 3 to 6 year olds accommodated in publicly subsidised services (Leira 1996). In contrast, British and Portuguese working mothers with young children still depend very largely upon informal care, typically the children's grandmothers. However, with the growth in full-time employment for mothers of young children in the UK and Portugal, private childcare use is growing rapidly.

Sweden and Norway provide considerable periods of paid parental leave for parents when children are young (which in Sweden can also be used flexibly and taken on a part-time basis even when children are over school age). Moreover, the Nordic states have moved towards a model of parental leave in which one part is a family right (to be divided between parents as they choose) and another part which is an individual right which is not transferable, in order to encourage fathers to participate more in parental leave. Portugal, with the highest proportion of full-time working mothers, offers mothers four months of paid leave but longer periods of unpaid leave and unpaid parental leave. Britain and Ireland have paid maternity leave and are considering how to implement the European Directive on parental leave.

CHAPTER ONE

Becoming An Adult

How do young men and women feel about their lives? What is important for them at the moment? How do they compare to previous generations? How do they perceive adulthood? As they move from the dependence of the teenage years into adult roles, what is new for this generation?

The process of "becoming an adult" has changed considerably in Western Europe in the last few decades. Sociologists say that the themes mentioned as important for transition to adulthood include economic independence from one's family of origin, having a stable job, getting married or entering into a marriage-like relationship, having children, and getting a home of one's own. In the focus groups young people were asked specifically about changes in their lives as compared to their parents. Looking into some of the answers to these questions, gives some impression of young people's *ideas of adulthood*, and also how they think about changes over their life courses as compared to their parents' generation.

Looking back: differences from parents' lives

In the countries taking part in this study, young people are economically dependent on their parents for much longer than previous generations. This is due to them spending longer in education and training, and to increased youth unemployment, and to a decrease in permanent jobs for this age group.

"Before they hardly needed education, then you could get a job"

Young people in all the five countries this study focuses on, expect that their lives will differ significantly from their parents' in many respects. A group of young Norwegian men focus on the differences between their own lives and their parents' with regard to the amount of education required to get a job.

'Before, they hardly needed education, then you could get a job, not a really good one, anything like that, but at least you got a job.'

'Before, at any rate when my father went to school, he's also got a background in electronics, at that time there was one year on electronics, it wasn't a three-year course. It was one year, that was a course called electronics. If you finished the year then you were qualified. But that's not enough now. You've got to take different courses if you're going to keep up with what's happening in the world. So one's studying practically all the time.' (Norwegian men, vocational students, aged 18-20)

A second major difference young people see between them and their parents' generation is the age at which people expect to 'settle down', seen by most as meaning establishing a long term relationship, and perhaps having children.

'When my mother was my age, 21, she had two children, me and my brother. Imagine, to already have two children, when I still think of myself as a child!' (Swedish woman, temporary employed, aged 21)

Young women in Norway and the UK in particular view their mothers' lives as boring, and hope for more for themselves, as these 18 year old UK women, studying on an I.T. course, show:

'My mum left school when she was 15, she didn't do any more education, now she, she's gone through being like a cleaner, so I'm definitely not doing that.'

'My mum's never worked, she's just brought the children up, but I wouldn't want to do that.'

Living in the present: The "Interrail generation"

Several images of young adult life emerge in the focus groups. In most of them the image of transition prevail, young people make a contrast between their life now, and their expected next future life, when they will settle down and possibly start a family. Many say things like, first I must have a life of my own, live my life.

These young men and women value having time to travel, to enjoy themselves, and to develop themselves. Frequently they talk about wanting to do a number of other things first, like travel and meet different people in foreign places. Being on the move, or in motion for a while, is a phrase that comes up especially in Sweden and Norway, to describe a present in which they are either trainees, students and/or in non-permanent employment. A young Swedish woman says:

'The potential is always there, we are the inter-rail generation who have travelled and have had the freedom which makes us want freedom. We have experienced the sweetness of this and do not want to change. When you are bored you continue, you struggle you want to advance, we might take some risk because we have managed before.' (Swedish woman, permanently employed, aged 28)

Table 6: What young people aged 18 and 24 are doing (by %)

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
Age 18					
In education/full time training	27	64	60	70	84*
In education and working too	29	7	5	1	
Working and not in education	38	26	28	25	
Not in education or working	6	3	7	4	
Age 24					
In education/full time training	4	8	14	16	
In education and working too	10	4	10	5	
Working and not in education	74	80	68	73	
Not in education or working	12	8	8	6	

Eurostat, 1997

Note: Ireland, Portugal and Sweden follow the 'Initial training-job market' model of vocational training. The UK (similarly to Germany, the Netherlands, and Finland) follows a 'Work/Education' combination model, with relatively few 18 year olds exclusively in education or training.

* Norwegian data is not included in many Eurostat tables; where possible throughout this report we have added comparable data from the Norwegian Bureau of Statistics

It is important to this generation to have time to be free, to be together with friends, to develop, to find out what education and jobs they want, to gain experiences. This is particularly the case for the younger ones, especially the university students.

Table 7: Changes in the status of young people aged 15-24 between 1987 and 1995 by %

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
Active with job				
1987	44	37	47	No data
1995	39	32	32	39
Active, seeking job				
1987	10	13	9	no data
1995	8	8	5	9
Not active, nor in education				
1987	8	5	9	no data
1995	8	4	6	8
In education or training				
1987	39	46	35	no data
1995	46	56	57	44

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Settling down

The prospect of 'settling down' seems undesirable at present for many. Most of the young adults think that someday they will want a 'settled life', but *not yet*. Ambivalence is common:

'When I graduate this year, I've got to get a job. I've got to like wake up and get out there and be a regular person. Cos unfortunately I'm, you know, I have got to think about, I want kids. I want children in my early 30's'
(UK, woman student, aged 28)

'It's nice to have your ambitions fulfilled with what as far as you can go, and do what you want when the time is available to you. And, obviously, it's inevitable that you're going to settle down'
(UK, Asian woman student, aged 21)

Most young people in all groups expressed a desire to have a permanent relationship, a reasonably steady job, and children, *eventually*.

'Yes, it's the 'Svenson' (a job, family, children) life you want, I mean when I have had time to do what I want - travelling and education' (Swedish woman, aged 21)

This is similar in Norway, where people talk about settling on an island.

'While I'm young I'd like to live in town and have fun as long as I need it that way... but then I could fancy having a family on an island, getting a house there. When I have a family and settle down, then I reckon it'd be quite OK'.
(Norwegian woman student, aged 22)

The idea of settling down is desirable in the future, not now. Many young people expect a variety of other events to occur first and a number of conditions to be fulfilled before even considering having children. However, the women in particular are quite aware they can't put off these decisions for too long.

Thinking about the future

In many of the groups a second image of young adult life appears too, one as a period of preparations, which entails thinking ahead, choosing an education or training that will lead to a

job, to acquire good qualifications, or to do well as a trainee so that there is a chance to get a job. The view is related to a notion of a growing competition in society and a precarious labour market. There seem to be two ways of coping with the pressure to think ahead. Many young adults strive to acquire education, personal development and freedom. Others mention frustration at the increasing length of time they have to spend in training and education before getting a 'real' job, and financial independence, and feeling properly adult.

**"But it always comes to the same
thing - money"**

In several discussions the desire for freedom and independence now is contrasted with the need to have an economic basis in order to become independent. Young adults in all the countries except Norway are experiencing difficulties in finding jobs, and earning enough money to be able to be independent from parents, grants and benefits, and to live their lives as they choose without relying on others. For many, the main goal is *'being financially independent and living without help from anyone'* (Portuguese woman student).

The desire to travel, to have fun, and to have a time of freedom from adult responsibilities before settling down, contrasts with the desire to prepare for the future, as these young Swedish men show:

'You would not say no thanks to going around the world.'

'But it always comes to the same thing - money. Without money - no fun, but with money you have fun.'

'Do you want a permanent job? or do you want a job to be able to travel and then come back to look for a new job?'

'If this would be possible I would not refuse if I knew all the time that I could get a new job if I went away for half a year to have fun. And then come back and get the same job again. That would be good, but you know that this is almost impossible today. A permanent job is always good to have today.'

Many of the young adults in the focus groups want to have space and time to 'live life now', before settling down. However, they are constrained by the realities of the labour market. Getting educated, getting a good job, and some financial stability, are the main priorities for many.

Getting qualified

Many of this generation are spending a considerable time in post-school education, either at university, college or on training schemes. This is seen in different ways; it is about life now and about preparation for the future. Some express a willingness to go into higher education and a recognition of the importance of education for their future life, for gaining new competence and qualifications, and for 'finding themselves'.

'Some people who I've spoken to who just want to get as much out as possible, like really experience something and not just be getting qualifications but getting a whole new way of life.'

'Yes, finding yourself, and everybody wants to experience new things, I mean like you said you want to get away from home, it's your chance for freedom, you don't know what you are doing it's all new and interesting.'
(UK men, university students)

Others are eager to move on to an independent life with a regular income, and see their prolonged education as a means to this end. Particularly in the Scandinavian countries where a high proportion of young adults are university educated, some view higher education in an instrumental way.

'Even when studying you think about the future the whole time, about the job you want to have.'

'You don't go to university because you want to gain knowledge and are curious?'

'Well, yes as well. Nowadays it has changed – before you chose the education that you were most interested in – but not nowadays so much. You think about the future. Are there any good jobs or not related to this education?'

'As the job climate has got tougher people are more inclined to go on to higher education. More people than ever apply to University or adult education.'

(Swedish men, students)

'You need your qualifications ... just to get back into work again if you do have children' (UK woman secretarial student)

"To study half your life - no I don't feel I want to"

In Ireland and the UK there is much recognition that a degree is unlikely to be sufficient to get a job; some form of training will also be necessary. Some are unsure of the value of a university degree at all. Others are reluctant to undertake more study when they leave school. For example, a group of 18 and 19 year old Swedish male nursing students display reluctance to undertake higher education:

'As I feel now I don't have the guts to go to higher education. Never, not to go from one school to another. We've done that for so long.'

'To be free for at least a year.'

'To study half of your life – no I don't feel I want to.'

Those who go into some form of vocational training talk about this as a way of gaining skills as a route to employment. As they are aware that employers value experience as well as qualifications, courses which include work placements are valued as an investment for the future .

'It's the placements that are important. I'll get a job a lot quicker now I've had that practical experience.' (UK women trainee, aged 26)

Training and placements are valued because they can enhance self esteem, although self esteem can also be threatened if trainees are not taken on as employees.

'By the end of it, it takes away from your self-esteem doesn't it?'

'It does yeah'

'Because you know right, if at the end of it, that your employer didn't keep you on, going for your next job or your next training course, you'd slightly be put off . You wouldn't want to put that same effort in, in case the same things do occur'

(UK men, vocational trainees)

The women, particularly in the UK and Ireland view training and qualifications not only as a means to a job in the short term, but also as part of their longer term plans for reconciling work and family.

'If you started on the line of getting your own qualifications then it would be very difficult to just throw that aside and get married and eat your hat.' (Irish woman trainee)

These are not considerations which enter the male trainees' discussions.

Achieving independence

'Becoming an adult' is culturally connected to ideals of *independence and autonomy*, of being able to support oneself economically, and entering into relationships that bring with them *responsibilities* for other people, including *other generations*.

"I think our main objective is stability"

The young Portuguese and Irish are particularly concerned with the aim of achieving independence from their parents, which they see as impossible without the stability which a permanent job and income bring.

Discussions in the focus groups about the best circumstances in which to have children, suggest that their ideas about such circumstances are strongly connected to *stability* in a marriage or marriage like relationship as well as in an employment contract. The notion of stability is thus tied in with control and predictability that in some groups seem to be lacking at the moment. Steady jobs, marriage and children are things for the distant future, not things to be considered at the moment, for many of the young adults in our study. This is partly because young people want to have time for other things first, but also because they do not feel they can control their lives enough to make plans for the future.

The effect of prolonged education, fewer permanent jobs for this age group, together with later ages for marrying and having children, mean that the transition into 'adulthood' is often postponed.

Conclusions

The notions of adulthood apparent in these discussions are varied yet have common elements. The common denominator is that adulthood means taking on long term social and financial obligations, and therefore stability and predictability in life are desired for some undefined future point in time. Most have some idea of constraints when other people's lives become interwoven with their own, and *long term responsibilities* follow from that. The notion of *settling down* is frequently referred to when talking about starting a family and having children. This often comes with the idea of some kind of permanent employment because a regular income is needed in order to be able to take on economic obligations.

The *insecurities and uncertainties* which recent changes in Western societies have introduced into people's lives are dealt with in different ways by the groups of young people interviewed. On the one hand the mobile and 'non-settled' life many in this age group lead in the present is thought of as desirable. They do not want to settle down yet.

To keep insecurities at bay the attitudes young people adopt seem permeated with ambiguities. They are scared of not being able to get a job, and thus not being able to take on long term responsibilities. Hanging on to the old notions of adulthood is therefore both a comfort and a threat. To lead a mobile life in terms of trying out different employment situations and partners by choice, seems attractive in youth. Choices are very important. But what comes out very strongly from our research is that most people need some security, or hope of future security, to be able to make these choices.

In this chapter we've introduced some of the issues about what it's like to be entering adulthood in the late 1990s. According to the young people in our study, it's an age full

of choices and opportunities, but also an age where external factors, particularly a difficult job market in most of the countries, leaves young men and women feeling anxious and insecure about their possibilities and their future. Becoming an adult is a longer, more ambiguous transition for many young people than it was for previous generations. While young people's parents' lives seemed predictable, theirs are ambivalent. They are both not wanting stability now, but wanting it for themselves in the future.

Choices are very important. But what comes out very strongly from our research is that most people need some security, or hope of future security, to be able to make these choices.

CHAPTER TWO

Does Gender Make A Difference?

Being a man or a woman is so much part of ourselves that we rarely stop to think about it. However, it is clear from what young people say that, to varying degrees and in different ways, gender affects getting into work, and promotion; the importance of partnership and/or children; responsibility for home and family and ultimately it affects reconciling these two areas at particular points in young peoples' lives. Each of these themes are briefly touched upon in this chapter, illustrating some of the variations and similarities that occur within and between countries.

For some of the young people, gender seems irrelevant in some contexts (such as paid employment) while it is seen as highly significant in others (such as family life). Whether you are male or female has different implications in the different countries. In Ireland and Portugal, there is a strong sense that gender roles which have been very traditional are being re-negotiated. In the UK many of the differences in men and women's work and family lives are regarded as a matter of individual choice. In Sweden and Norway, there are high expectations of gender equality, although in practice there remain many differences in women's and men's lives even in these countries.

Do young people think gender makes a difference?

Both men and women, in most of the groups, when asked whether being a man or woman made a difference, initially tend to say that it doesn't:

'I don't think so - I think it has a lot to do with your personality and your own individuality' (Irish woman, Business Management trainee).

'I'd say that men and women of today have got high similar priorities, they both want the same quality of life, they both want to blaze their own trails.' (UK man, university student)

"They have kind of met
in the middle"

The Swedish and Norwegian young men and women have the most egalitarian views in our study :

'I think men have become more - they have kind of met in the middle' (Swedish man, unemployed)

There is evidence of some convergence in gender expectations. The young women, like the men, want to gain qualifications, be financially independent and to have a meaningful life outside the home, while many of the men are stressing the importance of family and childcare. However, when they discuss their actual experiences and expectations they also begin to mention differences in relation to employment, relationships, and future work and family choices.

Differences in finding a job

While some respondents feel there are no differences in access to employment, and a few think it is easier for women, others believe that women have to be better qualified for many jobs and that access to jobs is particularly difficult for women with children. The Portuguese and Irish men and women are most likely to believe that there are differences in relation to access to jobs.

'The men don't need as much qualifications as the women'. (Irish woman)

'If you are a female and are going into that area it is not enough to be as good as the next male you are going to have to be that bit better' (Irish woman)

***'There are some positions where they clearly prefer a man or a woman.'* (Portuguese woman, administrators)**

"It is not enough to be as good as the next male, you are going to have to be that bit better"

In contrast, a few young men, particularly the lower skilled, are concerned that positive discrimination towards women might harm their efforts to find a job:

Do you think that being a man is an advantage in getting a job?

'The opposite actually. I read a review of a survey that was taken a couple of years ago in the UK and it said that late 20s, thirty-something white man is the most discriminated group in job hunting. This whole political correctness thing. You could have a man and a woman with identical qualifications, identical experience, the whole shebang and you might get a call down from head office - we'll give the job to her' (Irish man)

In Sweden, Norway and the UK however, most young people think there is very little difference for men and women in finding a job:

And do you think it's easier for men or women these days to get jobs? Is there a difference between the boys and the girls you know?

'Not among ourselves.'

'Not any more.'

(UK women, secretarial students, aged 18)

However, many think that the situation will change when they have children. There is a prevailing view that it is more difficult for women to get certain jobs if they have children, or in the case of Portugal, even if they are married rather than single. This is particularly the case for the lower skilled women.

***'They say to you, you know, what are your future plans, do you want to get married, want to have children, if you say yes, you want to have children, well you're pushed aside then.'* (UK women secretarial students).**

***'If two women go and look for work and one is married and one single the single one will get the job because they figure that the married one will have children sooner or later.'* (Portuguese woman, clerical worker).**

***'If I were going in for a job then I wouldn't tell them that I had a child. If she is coming and she is single, who are they going to pick, me or her?'* (Irish woman trainee)**

The Portuguese groups feel that employers prefer men because women may take parental or family leave to care for a sick child. So the statutory entitlements disadvantage them in occupational terms. From time to time the Portuguese media reports examples of illegal

behaviours, for example some employers will only hire women if they sign a statement that they will not become pregnant for a certain period of time, or who try to exclude women. Interestingly some Swedish women also feel that men are beginning to be asked questions about children as more of them take advantage of parental leave entitlements. Parental leave may have the effect of reducing sex discrimination and substituting discrimination against parents.

'Now there have been so much talk about paternal leave that they have started to ask men as well. Before only women were penalised for having children. Fathers were people who went out and in through doors. They shouldn't stay at home with sick children - now fathers are equally often at home.' (Swedish woman, unemployed, aged 23)

Gender differences in promotion

Many of the young women, especially in Ireland and Portugal, feel that they will have more difficulty than men in achieving promotion at work, other than in female dominated jobs, and are conscious of a glass ceiling.

'There is some element of it being more difficult. There are more male General Managers than women...' (Irish woman)

Indeed, in the Portuguese groups there appears to be a general understanding that women are discriminated against in the workplace and that this can, for example, determine who is offered permanent jobs as well as promotion prospects.

'I think there are situations where a female worker doesn't become permanent because she can eventually become pregnant or go on sick leave.' (Portuguese woman, administrative worker)

Nevertheless, with the exception of the Portuguese groups, many believe that this is changing.

"There are more male General Managers than women"

The men are sometimes ambivalent about recognising direct or indirect discrimination against women. Thus for example a young Irish male university post graduate said:

'Well I see no differences but then again I suppose from a woman's perspective they would see themselves as being disadvantaged. You just have to look at top executives of any company or anything like that and they are all men. So I presume there must be some disadvantage for women. But I wouldn't see it.'

Other men in all the countries recognise that discrimination is deeply ingrained in many organisational cultures. (See Chapters 3 and 6.)

Gender differences in the acceptability of being 'alone'

In Ireland and Portugal, but not in the other three countries, there are some gender differences in the perceived acceptability of being alone, that is, not in a long term relationship.

'I think a woman has to get married at some stage because people will say 'Oh look at that old one without a man'. (Irish women, hotel industry)

'I wouldn't be able to live alone'. (Portuguese woman university student)

In the UK, the young British Asian women felt it was very important to be married. This is very much a cultural expectation.

"You get left at the bottom of the pile, like a rotten apple"

'It's an expectation that people have, like, when you get to a certain age for a girl, a certain age for a guy, it's like, well you should be married this year, and, because of the arranged marriage thing it is like, it is a tangible possibility.'
'Otherwise you get left at the bottom of the pile, like a rotten apple!'

GOOD PRACTICE Gender equality

A British mixed gender group of clerical workers in a public sector organisation feel that it is good practice to monitor the outcomes of equal opportunities initiatives and to communicate the finding to the workforce.

P: They issued a paper by personnel development about six months ago which gave how many females and males were in each grade and who were on which benefits and you got a copy.

C: How many .. (laughter)

P: I can't quote exact figures but there were... junior management, supervisor level, there's women outnumbering men, clearly outnumbering, but as you go through the levels, HEO are middle management levels and there was a great amount of women in senior management obviously... It was quite surprising that the equal opportunities policy did seem to carry through there. I mean there were three on the DSS board, I think there's six members of the board and three are women.

I: Do you think that's because of a deliberate policy?

P: I think it's deliberate.

They are pleased that policy seems to be working, even though there is still more to be achieved and they still perceive there to be a glass ceiling

C: They give women jobs at HEO Levels to pacify them and say that it's equal opportunities and then once you get any higher in real positions of power then they are not so happy.

The most common view of young men and women though, is that it is equally acceptable for women and men to be single, at least in their twenties:

'I think there are huge differences between women at our age today and their mothers who wanted to settle down, they know there is nothing that we can't do, we can do this, we can do that, we don't want to get married till I'm thirty or something.' (UK man, university student)

Importance of relationships

This is an area where the most stereotypical views prevail. Both young men and women feel that one of the main gender differences arises from the fact that relationships are more important to women than to men. A widespread view is that women are more interested in marriage and having a family, although this is not borne out in the focus groups.

Many women view young men in their late teens and early twenties as more interested in jobs, money and 'having fun', than in long term relationships.

'I think with young men, jobs and money do come before everything.... it is all money and it is all what you can buy and it is all this going out and all that.... I don't think relationships come into it much at all.' (Irish woman, sales trainee)

"Girls start thinking about a family sooner"

Others feel that men do place importance on relationships, but that this priority emerges later than it does for young women.

'Girls may be more concerned about finding love, and having children, or anyway they may think more about things like that.. I don't know?'

'No, I think they just start thinking about it sooner. And boys also begin - at my age!' (Norwegian women students, early twenties)

Certainly the men and women at the older end of the age spectrum that we looked at are equally likely to talk about relationships being important.

Gender roles: innate or changeable?

The Irish and Portuguese men and women are most likely to see gender differences as innate and unchangeable.

'Men think one way and women another ...the men worry about the job, the financial situation, the house while women worry more about new curtains, a new table or something like that' (Portuguese man, construction worker)

The men in blue collar jobs in all the countries except Sweden have the most traditional view of gender and tend to see gender differences as innate and unchangeable. This view is also more strongly expressed in Ireland and Portugal than in the other countries.

The British Asian men also have strong views about inherent gender differences, reflected in different cultural roles.

'Principally, the culture is based on the religion, both the man has his role and the woman has her role' (British Asian man, university student)

However, the British Asian women hold far less traditional views than the men, and are much more critical of Asian cultural norms:

'I don't see why, because being a good wife and mother's not, it's not a static thing, you know, it can be different, um, being a good husband, what does that mean? Being a good father. These roles can change, they don't have to be the way they always were, the woman doesn't have to be wife and mother and everything else that goes, like, in a sense, when women first went out to work more, they had to be like, they had to look after the home, they had to work, they had to prove that they could do all of these things as well and work, and it doesn't have to be that way' (British Asian woman student)

Differences are greatest between men and women in the British Asian groups, but in all the countries there were differences between male and female viewpoints. In all the countries, women's lives have been changing faster than men's. Today's young women's lives are radically different from their mothers, while young men's lives are changing more slowly.

Perception of self as breadwinner

The Irish and Portuguese men, as well as the British Asian men in the focus groups tend to expect to take on a family breadwinner role at some stage..

'You don't just have to support yourself...'. At some stage you might have people depending on you, if you have a family to support, if you can't support yourself you can't think about having a family and taking on other people'
(Irish man, computer network trainee)

"It's more difficult to be a man at home minding the children"

Some of the Irish women are quite protective towards Irish men's breadwinning role.

'I think it is more difficult for a man to be at home minding the children if that is not what he wants. I think women cope a lot better with it.'

The young men in Norway, Sweden and in most of the UK groups seldom see themselves as a sole family breadwinner in the future. But many of them do see money as very important in a job, now and in the future. Although almost all the women in all the countries hope to be able to support themselves financially, they also tend to focus more on interest, usefulness, and social aspects of work in their discussions.

'If I was offered a job in front of a computer with a high salary, I wouldn't like it. I would prefer a job - however this is a typical female approach - where I feel good and have a good social environment and have fun. I believe that this is typically female.'
(Swedish woman, unemployed, aged 23)

Some people say that if women are earning more than their partner when they have children they will consider a reversal of provider and carer roles. In practice however, men's higher salaries are usually expected to justify a more traditional division of responsibilities even among the couples who articulate a modern view of gender roles.

'And none of you would expect your partners to stay at home and look after the children?'
'My partner would love to, but financially he earns more than I do, so it just wouldn't be feasible really. Cos all my work is kind of fixed contract all the time he's got a permanent job, it just kinda would be too, whatever the word is, not practical.'
(UK woman, professional job)

Discussions about people they know with a reversal of roles are met with some ambivalence. Some feel this is a valid and highly desirable choice while others are less certain.

'There's actually a guy on our section who is married to someone upstairs who is actually on a higher grade than he is and he was the one who actually went part-time to look after the child, rather than the other way round. So I think that's actually showing that times have changed...'

'Oh but he's brilliant!'

'Yeah I wish I'd have married him! Gets up with the kids every night. He's always got to dash home to do the ironing!'

(UK women clerical workers)

'Role reversal, you never know.. that happens as well.. you do have house husbands as well, occasionally, that one's changed.'

'It's just, I don't know... I suppose, with due respect, somebody who wants to stay at home, I'm not going to support him!'

(UK women university students)

Most of the group of blue collar working men young men in Britain are unable to imagine themselves in the situation of not being in paid work, or of caring for children full time:

'So, would any of you consider staying at home and having a partner going out to work?'

'Oh. If it was the other way around, I don't think I could stay at home 24 hours a day.'

'I couldn't do that. I'd go out of my mind.'

'I'd have to get out of the house.'

'How about if you had a partner who wanted you to, how about if she wanted to go out to work?'

'You couldn't do it though, it's different innit?'

(UK men in vocational training)

Responsibility for home and family

The division of work in the home has traditionally been an area of gender inequality. In many of the groups of young people it is assumed that any domestic work will be shared.

'Doing all the housework isn't fun.'

'No, for us it's completely unnatural, anyway for me, so... it's obvious, obviously we'll share it out, like! Are you quite, quite stupid? It's nothing to discuss even...'

(Norwegian women students, early twenties)

"It's obvious, obviously we'll share it out"

The Norwegian women say they take equality at home for granted but they also go on to discuss how in practice difficulties can arise.

'But those times I ask him to do it.. "yes, yes, of course I'll do the washing-up.. yes, yes, I'll do it." That's if he's visiting me, like. And then, if I'm at a lecture and come home, he's lying on the sofa and still asleep! And then I just do it, it irritates me that it's still not done. And it shouldn't be like that!'

Women who want to share responsibilities equally find that on some occasions they end up struggling not to fall into traditional domestic roles, as these UK women, talking about living with their male partners, show:

'I just look at my own family, the way my father doesn't even know where the kettle is never mind how to boil it. I actually go home and find myself dipping into this subservience and it's automatic.'

'I do that when I go home, find myself making cups of tea for people..'

'Yeah polishing shoes.'

'..and think why am I doing that. When he's just sat on his bum, looking at teletext.'

(UK women, professional jobs)

It is in discussions of parenthood however, that young people draw attention to gender most. Young women typically express a desire for partners who will share childcare.

'I'd like to do them both (work and childcare), but I want my partner to do both as well, I wouldn't want to do it just alone. I want to have kids and I want someone who'll take the responsibility, it's got to be shared. I think it's healthier for both people and the child, I think, if you get variety, working and looking after your child.'

(UK woman, community worker, aged 27)

There are also some young men, especially among the highly educated ones, in each country who say they are strongly committed to sharing home and family responsibilities.

'I don't want to be a manager, I want to see my kid grow up, and have the space to enjoy it.' (UK man, professional)

The trends towards much more equal sharing of family work and childcare is strongest in Sweden and Norway where there is ideological and structural support for gender equality.

'One wants to be as much as possible with the children when they grow up. As it was in older days the man was at the job always and could just see his kids at weekends'

'It's psychologically very important for the man, he often feels left out during the first period because it's so much mother-child -breastfeeding... I believe that it's good for a man to get a period with his child, a period of this daily life.' (Sweden, blue collar men)

"I want to see my kid grow up and have the space to enjoy it"

Many women in all the countries are frustrated with what they see as the slow pace of change in gender roles when it comes to home and family responsibilities.

'You see, the trouble is, I mean it's never gonna change until men actually think that the responsibility of providing childcare is theirs as much as it is women's, cos, at the end of the day it's still the woman who, who has to fit in her job around the crèche, and there, there's not many men whose job has to fit in around the crèche, and the nursery times.' (UK woman, doctor, aged 27)

Responsibilities for balancing family and employment

Although beliefs and expectations about gender roles have changed a great deal, especially in Sweden and Norway, there is still a gap in men and women's actual behaviour. Most young people haven't yet begun to consider combining work and family. They are both expecting to balance work and family, but even in Sweden and Norway where expectations of equality are high, women are usually expecting to take on the main parenting role, partly because of men's higher salaries and partly because of expectations associated with the maternal role.

'Often when a child is sick the mother stays at home. Men have much higher salaries - and besides, you do it much more often as a woman, you give in too easily, you take the role as a mother, that's what I think.' (Swedish woman, temporary employed, aged 28, mother of two)

When they are specifically asked who would take more parental leave, who would look after very young children, and who would pick children up from school and/or take time off to look after them if they are sick, most people think that mothers would have a more important role than fathers in childcare, although men in Sweden and Norway expect to be able to take some leave.

It is also commonly suggested that expectations from others, including employers, will encourage traditional gender roles:

'Even if my boyfriend went to his manager and said, "I want to take some time off, because the kid's got to go to the dentist" and he can't do it, you know, his manager's not going to see that - it's his managers, and the society that we live in, that's going to look at him, and say, "what are you doing? Get your wife to take it".' (UK woman student, aged 28)

In Sweden and Norway, and in some of the UK groups, men and women say they hope to share in responsibilities for children and family, and they talk about equal importance being given to men and women's careers. But at the same time, mothers are seen by many as the more important carer, and it is still rare for a man to take on the main caring role in all the countries studied.

"It's never gonna change until men actually think that the responsibility of providing childcare is theirs as much as it is women's"

Conclusions

Expectations of young women and men are converging to some extent for members of this age group, in all the countries studied, and for those from many different backgrounds. Young women of all social classes, and all ethnic backgrounds, are concerned with getting qualifications, being financially independent, and having a 'meaningful life' outside the home. Young educated men stress the importance of a life outside paid work, and are prepared to share in housework and childcare, at least in theory. Young men in blue collar jobs, or training for them, are the most traditional on these issues, seeing work, and earning a "breadwinner" wage as the priority, and showing the most reluctance to share in domestic work, in all the countries.

By and large young women and men feel that they have similar opportunities for education, training and job development if they do not have children, although there is considerable variation across countries and occupations concerning promotion. However, when we come to the issues of starting a family, caring for children, and taking responsibility for domestic issues, there is a large gap in gender expectations. It is not uncommon for young men and women to expect equality in the workplace, but to take on many aspects of traditional roles in the home. For the many young women and men who talk about their desire to share the responsibilities for family care, there are still strong practical, financial and cultural constraints which make this very difficult.

CHAPTER THREE

What Do Young People Want From Work?

The young people in poorly paid work and in temporary jobs place importance on the financial rewards of work. Once the need for basic income is satisfied, priorities in a job include challenge, enjoyment, opportunities for development, recognition and equitable treatment. There are also different short term and long term needs and a feeling that priorities will change when they become parents. In the longer term they hope for both job security and flexibility. They hope to be able to continue to develop their skills and above all, to lead lives which balance work and non-work interests.

Most of the trends and values discussed in this chapter apply in all five countries. There are nevertheless some variations in emphasis. For example more emphasis is placed on the value of reasonable working hours in Britain and Portugal, and among hotel and catering workers in Ireland, where working hours tend to be the longest.

Reasonable pay, enjoyment and challenge

While a regular income is a major concern for all young people after education, for those on a low income, pay is the most important factor in a job, but this instrumental approach is viewed by most as an expediency or short term, with interesting and challenging work equally or more important in the long term.

'It's just filling a gap, which, if you have money problems, you have to take it. You don't have a choice.' (UK woman clerical worker)

Many of the younger groups prioritise money in current jobs, to fund travel, pay off student debts or for other activities; a "good job" is a more distant prospect.

Adequate pay is related to independence from parents. This is particularly important in Portugal where most of the young people living with their parents long to find a steady job and have their own place.

'We get jobs to support ourselves, so that we don't have to depend on our parents and in order to keep ourselves.' (Portuguese man, vocational student)

Adequate pay is also valued as a source of self esteem, and for a sense of fairness.

'I don't think (pay) is the most important thing altogether. As long as you get a fair day's pay... I don't think you would want to be too far below what other people in similar jobs were getting.' (Irish ma, vocational trainee)

Although most consider other factors to be equally or more important than pay, income is considered to be the most important factor by those men who perceive themselves as current or future providers for families. For example, an Irish hotel manager states 'I need money to do my bit and feed my wife' although his wife is employed. In Portugal the male construction

workers are the most traditional, stressing their need to earn money to buy the things women want in the home. A group of British Asian male students also say that money, and status, which they perceive as strongly linked to income, are the most important factors in the long term. But this is linked to a strong traditional family ideology, with emphasis on their roles as male providers for future families and for their parents.

'If you've got a good job..... you can support your family, if you're earning like a hundred pounds you can't give much to your parents when they're older.'

Nevertheless, the ideal for the majority of men and women in all the countries is to be in a position where money is not the sole reward to be gained from work. Most anticipate that challenge and interest will be at least as important as money in the long term.

'Something I can enjoy with reasonable wages, that's most important.' (UK man, vocational trainee)

'If work was a part of your everyday existence and you enjoyed it. If you have a job you can enjoy... you feel that you are getting something out of it, making a contribution to whatever it is that you are doing.. are very important.' (Irish man, vocational trainee)

Social aspects of work are very important to men and women and in some cases work is represented as a new source of community or even family. The Irish participants in particular talk about wanting to enjoy and be happy in their work, with many of them focusing on the social elements; working with people they get on with. They discuss work colleagues as a social community, as jobs take over more and more of people's time.

'I think it is important to have a good social element to the work, jobs are very stressed and the hours are extending so much that you are pretty much in the job until sometimes seven days a week, and I think for that reason you need a good social element to the place where you are working because you may not have time after work' (Irish woman trainee).

"Ultimately I'd be working just
for my own sanity"

Some Portuguese women also talk about the job as a place where they have friendships and entertainment and may even consider colleagues as family.

'Our fellow workers are our family (in a way). We spend more time with them, we socialise, but if we are at home that doesn't happen.' (Portuguese woman, administrator)

Many of the women in all countries contrast the social benefits of working with what they view as the tedium of staying at home with children full time.

'I'd be working for the money, yeah, but I mean ultimately I'd be working just for my own sanity. I mean I'd do it for social (reasons)...' (UK university student)

'I was at home for three years and it was very boring. You only dedicate yourself to the house, wait for them to come home, clean up after them. This way I am entertained...I have colleagues, friendships that I wouldn't have otherwise.' (Portuguese woman factory worker).

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a stereotypical view in many of the groups that social benefits are valued by women more than men. However, in fact both express social values.

Job security and changing notions of careers

The notion of job security is being redefined and this is discussed in the next chapter. Nearly all the young people want some job security at some stage.

The notion of career is also taking on new meanings. Women in all the countries are as likely as men to talk about a career or what the British group of secretarial students call a 'career job', that is one with prospects. But a career is increasingly defined as a series of jobs with different employers rather than a continuous career with one employer.

Women are still more likely than men to anticipate a career break or a break from full time work when they have children, although some of the men in all five countries say they would like to do so. Only in Sweden and Norway is parental leave (a period of leave available to either parent after the birth of a child) for men considered a realistic possibility since a period of paid non-transferable leave is available for fathers in these countries. Despite a desire to spend time with families, those who are employed in rapidly changing types of work in Britain talk about difficulties with taking more than a very brief break.

'There's no substitute for actually being in the job. I mean if I took three years out the industry would just change completely.' (UK man, professional)

Opportunities to develop employability

There are few expectations of a job for life and so jobs that provide training and experience are highly valued.

'A job that's going to give me experience which is going to help find possibly another job down the line.' (UK man)

'To get work experience and practical training. At this point in my life it is the most important thing for me.' (Irish woman trainee)

"Training and keeping in touch with it, you have to do that for yourself"

Work placements in training courses are highly valued by the groups of trainees in the UK and Ireland as a way of getting into work. Although many complain about the very low pay associated with these training schemes and not all have positive experiences, most see this as an investment for the future, providing the experience gathered is perceived as useful and transferable.

There is a sense that everything is changing so quickly and it is important to "keep up" as a way of building human capital, particularly in the context of high levels of perceived job insecurity. If development opportunities are not available in a job some are willing to do this for themselves.

'Some of the questions about training and keeping in touch with it, you have to do that for yourself, because you certainly don't do it to impress anyone else, cos they don't listen to it anyway.' (UK man, professional)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the prospect of lifelong learning can nevertheless be somewhat daunting.

'It's just it's a bit scary when you think that I'd have to do more training, after seven years of training, in order to get another job, which is never what I thought I'd have to do.' (UK man, professional)

Work-Life Balance

An important theme which emerged in almost all the focus groups was the notion of "a balanced life". This generation seem to expect to balance challenging work with a high quality non-work life.

'(Men and women) are both learning that they don't have to be at work now the whole time. Whereas before the husband was always working and there was so much pressure on them to be bringing money home, so now they have the time for family' (Irish woman trainee)

'I would share. I wouldn't like it if it was only the mother looking after the kids...I might be utopian but I don't imagine myself in a job where I couldn't take my child to the doctor.' (Portuguese man, university student)

This generation is not happy with the long hours of work expected in many jobs. Shorter or flexible hours are valued, not just for childcare, but to achieve a balance between work and other activities. In Britain and in Portugal there is much criticism of the long hours culture.

'I think that in many companies, especially banks, insurance firms, it's much more important if a person stays there for a long time and does that quantity of work than to stay less time and do the same quantity of work.' (Portuguese man, unemployed)

"I want a life too, a person has other things to do apart from work"

Some young people are willing to put in long hours while they are training or to meet particular demands, but not to carry on working in that way indefinitely.

'I don't want have to work loads of hours for ever, I'm only prepared to do it for a short time as a training thing...' (UK woman, professional)

'Work long hours every day, no, that's not for me.... sometimes you have to work late, it's necessary once in a while. But to keep doing it...I want a life too, a person has other things to do apart from work' (Portuguese man, student)

The long hours issue is considered in relation to future work-family demands.

'The hours required are becoming absolutely ridiculous, I mean I on average will do 55 hours a week. To try and tie down any kind of life around that.' (UK woman, accountant)

'I believe that there will come a time when I will have to break the rhythm and find a job where you go home at six.' (Male professional, Portugal).

In Sweden there is less talk about a long hours culture but women and some men talk about a shorter (six-hour) day as the ideal,

'It would be best to achieve the six-hour day. I think it really is unacceptable with an eight-hour day' (Swedish woman, unemployed, aged 22)

In reality however, insecure labour markets mean that many young people have to take what working hours they can get.

'If you don't (work long hours) they'll just clear you out and get in someone who will...and there's enough competition for work....' (UK man, professional)

GOOD PRACTICE

Not expecting long hours of work

All the groups value flexibility at work and if they are not expected to work long hours all the time unnecessarily they will still put in the work when it is needed.

'No, the partners tend to work longer hours, but I think we are quite unusual as an accountancy firm in that it's nine till five. And most qualified staff stay till half past five at the latest and then that's it just go home. At the end of a job I'd tend to take some home with me and work all night on it just to get it finished but it's not expected of me.' (UK woman, professional)

Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working hours are a major priority across the five countries. Employers who offer flexible working hours are popular with both men and women. In fact opportunities for flexibility can compensate for the lack of the old kind of job security which employers used to provide for those in permanent jobs, and a new form of organisational commitment and loyalty, or "psychological contract", can emerge even amongst those in non-permanent jobs.

'That's one of the things that keeps you here. The money's not good, but flexitime makes up for it because you do have a life outside.' (UK man, clerical worker)

'Even though I don't have a lot of benefits where I work I have a good relationship with the bosses. I know that I might have to work nine or ten hours but if I say that I need a day off nobody says anything.' (Portuguese woman, administrator).

"The money's not good but flexitime makes up for it"

However, there is also a view that flexibility must be for everyone - men and women, parents and non-parents. If parents are perceived to be given special treatment, or if it is colleagues that have to make concessions for working parents, this can create resentment. Some of the British and Irish participants resent what they perceive as preferential treatment of parents. They want recognition of other non-work responsibilities. At the same time many feel that single working mothers should be supported.

'They (parents) get like preferential treatment a lot of the time it's like their time's more important.' (Irish woman trainee)

'It shouldn't be the other people, their colleagues, who are doing more to cover for them, cos that would just create resentment.' (UK man, professional)

Problems tend to occur when employees are over-stretched and expected to cover for absent colleagues. This is reported to be a problem for mothers in temporary employment in Sweden. They know that if they are unable to go to work there will be no spare staff to cover their work and this makes it difficult for them to take time off.

Part time work

The majority (but not all) of women in all the UK, Swedish and Norwegian groups say they would prefer to work part time when they have young children, reflecting the typical female working pattern in these countries. This preference is usually accompanied by assumptions that they will have the main responsibility for childcare, although there are often contradictions between what they would ideally like to happen (shared parenting) and what they expect.

GOOD PRACTICE Job sharing

The professional women in Britain have experience of job sharing and talk about it very positively.

'Yeah, I'm job sharing, the second one I've got.'

'Is that your choice?'

'It's the nature of the project, the woman I work with has always done job share especially with women who have got children.'

'Do you think that works well?'

'Yeah, I think it's easy to do.'

'There's no reason it can't work is there, as long as you communicate with each other what's going on.'

(UK women, professionals)

'There is a lot of that around (job sharing). I think that it is getting more popular and I think that employers are seeing that they need to do that for women. Women are working now and have families. There are a lot of creches now in companies.'

'Yes they seem to be aware of the fact that women have responsibilities to both.'

(Irish women, Business Management trainees)

A general preference for Swedish women seems to be a six-hour day. In Ireland, women see the options for when they have young children as between part-time or not working. They talk about building up a career first but then envisage "sacrifices" when they have children.

'The successful career I will have at that stage of my life, it would have to be sacrificed slightly (when I have children)...' (Irish woman, university student)

In Portugal there is no tradition of part-time work. Salary levels in Portugal are among the lowest in Europe (*Eurostat*, 1995) and so part-time work is not feasible. Only 7.5% of Portuguese workers work part-time (12% of women). Nevertheless some women university students say they would like to work part-time if it were possible.

Some of the men in all countries also say they would like to work part-time when they have children but they do not have much expectation that this will be possible.

'I'd like to bring up the kid, or at least work only part time, if that was possible. and yet, you'll always come up against employers in arranging that.' (UK man, professional)

'I think that giving up a few hours from the job wouldn't be realistic, that would put the job at risk.' (Portuguese man, university student)

GOOD PRACTICE Flexibility

There were many examples of workplace flexibility and all the young people value this.

'Oh very flexible, yes they are happy to change your working hours to part time or anything like that.'

'So it's quite easy to change between full time and part time?'

'Yes it is.'

'Well I think probably because of the fact we work for the public sector.'

(UK women and men, Clerical workers)

Norwegians value flexibility too, for all sorts of activities, but the male ship-workers think it is just their firm. They believe employers should make flexibility easier.

'I..think it is special for this company, it is quite easy to get time off and things like that...'

'Yes, if you oversleep in the morning you may come in on the late shift instead.'

Some Swedish women (27 and 29 years old) working in pre-schools talk about their experiences of a very flexible workplace. They consider a flexible work organisation based on the needs and wishes of employees to be an excellent way of supporting parents. They think solutions can be found if managers are prepared to look for them.

'Each of us made a schema, I wrote down my ideal working hours for a week, and then we put the schema together and we managed to make it work. I had a dream schema. Everybody said: do you work those hours? Yes it was very good..... If you start to talk you find the solutions.'

'Now we shall construct a new schema to fit a new structure of employees in May. Our principal has suggested one schema. I looked at it, and I did not want to open Tuesdays. I would prefer another day. So I take the schema and try to find another solution.'

'You must have great opportunities to plan the work yourself?'

'We do it all by ourselves without our principal.'

'She did it to reduce our work burden, it was a suggestion and then we discussed it. She knew what we wanted. She understood because her husband is on duty and she doesn't want to work afternoons more than once a week so that her child does not have to stay at the after school centre too much. (She knows that) a single mother can't open at half past six.'

Swedish female engineers talk about their experience of freedom to plan their working hours, which they think is a way of facilitating reconciliation between work and family:

'I think that this place is good because we have flexible work hours. If I can't come one morning but I can come back in the evening to do the work I may do that. When you work as a teacher you can't just go home.' (Swedish woman, aged 28)

New technologies and tele-working

The importance of new technologies is unquestioned by members of this age group in the focus groups. It is accepted that people need to be skilled in computer literacy, that people in a wide variety of jobs need to use technology. Some young people anticipate a future **'Class distinction between those who understand technology and those who don't.'** (Norwegian man, vocational student)

"There'll be a class distinction between those who understand technology and those who don't"

The rapid changes in skills needed to keep up with changing technology are acknowledged and accepted by this generation.

'After all, you must invest, for the future. If you don't take that risk, then you won't get anywhere, you'll be a loser in the end. If you don't latch on to the latest technology you'll just be unable to keep up.' (Norwegian man, vocational student)

'Well just because the technology changes so quickly, the skills needed will be totally different in a few years time.'

'So do you think that your skills will be past it in a few years?'

'My current skills will be, yes, but it [computer games industry] generally attracts people who, who modify and change very very quickly, and who are going to be able to be retraining themselves largely without training.' (UK man computer programmer)

Tele-working, or working from home with the aid of new technology, is viewed by many as a positive option for helping people to balance their work and non-work lives. Some people feel that working from home would be too socially isolating for them.

'Part of going to work is actually coming out of the house into a workplace and just being with other people.' (UK woman, professional)

Others think that their work needs a social environment.

'Whilst I'm in the computing industry, people will sort of say, you can work from home, tele-working, modems, blah, it would, we're working in big teams now, you have to be in there with the team, working remotely on your own just doesn't really work. You need to be in the office with ideas bouncing around all the time.' (UK man, software engineer)

Generally, new technology and tele-working are seen as useful possibilities for achieving a greater variety of working styles by the young people in the study.

Jobs where you are valued: respect, dignity and equity

This generation seek jobs where they will be valued and treated equitably and with respect. For the Portuguese being treated with dignity and respect means being able to get a work contract so as to be able to take advantage of benefits granted by employment legislation. For those in employment lack of respect or inequitable treatment at work is sometimes a reason for leaving a job.

'One of the reasons I left my first job was that they had a written policy that they would never have a female partner. They had it written in the partnership agreement, which didn't worry me when I was training, but all the way through I didn't have to be as good I had to be better, it took me three years to get on the same salary as the guy that was training with me, and I passed my exams he failed his.' (UK woman, accountant)

GOOD PRACTICE

Management support and interest in workers

Supportive management is valued greatly. The young people want to have their opinions heard.

'My boss is great, every six months, four months, we have a sit down and talk about what I might need, he's great.' (UK man, vocational trainee).

Those with children or who have thought about having children in the future believe that management support is or will be essential if there are to be opportunities to adjust their working hours to family needs. A group of Swedish men feel that this is often dependent on whether their line manager has children him or herself.

'I think that it varies from company to company, if you have a manager with young children it is easier to get leave than if you have a manager without.'

'Do you see differences between bosses?'

'Yes the boss we had before, he changed completely when he had a child, before he was tough and now he is understanding.'

'Do you think that it is a question for the superior or for the top management?'

'I think it is the superior first of all, he can decide rather much I believe.'

'We are so many here that there should be no problems, but at a small company where they are four persons and one is away, then the others get a much larger work burden.' (Swedish men, 25- 27 years old)

'I worked in an organisation where I started at 9am and finished at 11pm. I started with a good salary but they demanded too much of me. The human condition must be respected.' (Portuguese man, information technician)

Many women still feel that they must work extra hard to prove themselves, although they hope that this is changing as the older generation of managers retires. They want equal opportunities but not necessarily to be given special concessions, especially if this is then thrown back at them.

"They had a written policy that they would never have a female partner"

'I was looking for jobs in engineering, I was applying to the big blue chip companies and they have to have a quota every year.... one of the companies I actually applied for basically said, we need women you've got the job regardless of what the interview said, and I was, I don't want it thank you, and walked out.' (UK woman, engineer)

"If you have a manager with young children it is easier to get leave than if you have a manager without"

Conclusions

The young people in all the five countries value jobs which provide challenge, enjoyment, opportunities for development, social benefits and reasonable pay. Money is a major priority for those in precarious short term jobs. Flexible working arrangements and opportunities to lead a balanced life are highly important to this generation. It appears that a new form of psychological contract - the unwritten mutual understanding between employers and employees - is emerging. This is one in which employees want opportunities to develop their skills and abilities, to be treated equitably and as whole people, to work flexibly and to achieve a work-life balance. In return they too expect to be flexible and committed to their organisations while they are employed. In the short term, they aim to be able to earn enough to live independently, without having to rely on family or state benefits. Young people are realistic about the labour market, and there is no expectation of jobs for life, but they do want some security in the long term. The nature of this security however is being redefined and this is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

What Do Young People Think About Insecure Work?

Job insecurity emerges as a strong theme in the focus groups in all five countries. There are differences between the countries studied in extent of insecure work for young adults. Norway is the least affected, though even in Norway, 12% of workers are in non-permanent employment. Sweden, where previously there was full employment, has recently seen a big rise both in unemployment, and in temporary contracts, and this is affecting the youngest workers particularly hard. In the UK and Portugal non-permanent forms of work have also been increasing, and many young people are concerned about the implications. In Ireland, especially in the West of Ireland where the study was located, there has historically been a great deal of casual, seasonal and temporary work. In Ireland, more than in the other countries in the study, it appears to be more taken as a "fact of life", and accepted by the young people.

Changing notions of job security

These young people accept that jobs for life no longer exist. They are very concerned about job insecurity, especially when thinking in the long term. They are well aware of increasing flexibilisation of jobs, and the increase in non-standard forms of working. In fact, their idea of a "secure" job is different from that of earlier generations.

"I don't really have a career as such, just take short term jobs"

'Well, I equate fixed term contract with permanent job right now.' (UK man, professional)

'A secure kind of job. Secure in that you have a contract every few years rather than every six months.' (Irish man, hotel manager)

These speakers do not envisage anything more long-term than a few years and even those in permanent jobs do not assume they will be there forever. Notions of "career" appear to be changing too, as a software engineer explains:

'I don't really have a career as such, just take short term jobs' (UK, man, software engineer)

Problems created by job insecurity

Young people may have different notions of job security, but the more short term contracts do create problems for young people, especially in relation to their lives outside of work. Most feel that it is important to have a relatively secure income when thinking about planning ahead, and "settling down". For example, getting mortgages and other loans is difficult on temporary contracts, because as one young man explains;

'You are not creditworthy, are you?' (UK man, vocational trainee)

They see this problem as widespread:

'I'm, and most of the people I know are on short term contracts, so you plan it so,... for six or 12 months at a time, which I think is a little bit scary because I'm just buying a house at the moment, and then there's someone saying 25 years, and that's just not in our timescale'. (UK man, professional)

Table 8: Percentage of fixed term contracts in the under-25s, and among all employees.

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
Employees under 25	13	19	26	42	35*
All employees	7	10	10	14	12

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 1997, Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics
* Mainly students working part time during education

Planning ahead

It becomes difficult to plan ahead in this employment situation.

'You don't know where you are going, like, and you can't budget because you don't know where you are going to be in six months time.' (Irish woman)

The young people in the focus groups make a distinction between short term insecurity, which is generally viewed as "acceptable", and long term insecurity, which is seen as undesirable. While most of the young people, especially at the younger end of the spectrum, are happy to defer "settling down", many feel that the adult roles they would want "sooner or later" are dependent on security which short term and temporary contracts do not offer.

Achieving stability

This is an important notion for many, as described in Chapter 1, but difficult to achieve without secure employment.

'I think that it's the main preoccupation, and anxiety, finding a stable job, which is something that's beginning to be very rare, or at least young people think that it's rare.' (Irish woman, student)

Settling down

A particular worry, expressed by both men and women is about starting a family in this situation.

stage when they are gaining skills and experience in the job market, and long term insecurity, which is seen as problematic, especially when combined with taking on other adult roles such as house buying, or starting a family. Young adults are finding ways of adapting to the recent changes in the labour market, but these adaptations are not always satisfactory.

The changing labour market, and in particular the increase in insecure work, whether perceived or actual, creates tensions when young adults try and plan for the future. Many of this age group are still in a precarious work situation, and can reasonably expect to still be in precarious work for at least a few more years. This is a major concern for many of them.

CHAPTER FIVE

How Do Young People View Combining Employment With Parenthood?

Attitudes vary across the five countries concerning whether mothers of young children should work outside the home, and if so, what form of child care is best for children.

Irish mothers are least likely to be in the labour market in contrast to Norwegian, Swedish and Portuguese mothers, with British mothers somewhere in the middle (Table 9). Portuguese mothers almost always work full-time, and long hours. Norwegian mothers tend to work full-time, but not as long hours as in Portugal and the UK. British and Swedish mothers most often work part time (long part time in Sweden, short part time in the UK)

The great majority of fathers work full-time in all the countries. UK fathers work the longest hours in Europe, followed by Portuguese fathers, with Norwegian fathers working the shortest hours. Fathers of young children tend to work longer hours than other men in all the countries.

Table 9: Parental employment in five countries

	Portugal	Sweden	Norway	UK	Ireland
Mother's employment (children 0-16)	69%	75%	72-85%	58%	37%
Mothers' full-time employment	62%	35%	-	20%	23%
Mothers' part-time employment	7%	40%	-	37%	14%
Mothers' average no. of working hours per week	38.1	-	29.7	25.7	32
Fathers' average no. of working hours per week	44.5	-	38.7	46.9	40.7

Source: Deven et al, 1997

Countries vary according to the public support they provide for working parents and their children (Table 10). The countries without parental leave and publicly-funded childcare - Ireland and the UK - have long assumed mothers stay at home when children are under school age. However, since the mid-1980s in the UK and Ireland employment for mothers with children under school age (five years) rose rapidly. Portugal has the highest employment of mothers in Europe. British, Irish and Portuguese working parents largely depend on informal care, typically children's grandmothers, and have no parental leave. By contrast, Sweden and Norway have high levels of publicly funded childcare, and considerable periods of paid parental leave. Portugal has recently brought in paid parental leave.

Table 10: Parental Leave and Childcare in Five Countries

	Portugal	Sweden	Norway	UK	Ireland
Parental leave	paid	paid	paid	none	none
Public childcare	some	high	increasing	low	none

EU Childcare Network

Young people's views about combining employment with family life

Most of the young people do not yet have children. Although, as described in Chapter 1, young adults are postponing childbirth, most take for granted that they will have a family at some time in the future. Two main issues are addressed in young Europeans' discussions concerning the reconciliation of employment and family life. The first issue is whether mothers should work outside the home. The second is what young people think is a suitable environment for very young children to be looked after (care by mothers at home, care by relatives, and creches, nurseries and kindergartens). Opinions vary within the focus groups about these issues, for example, on the ages at which children 'ought' to start daycare, and on the hours that mothers and fathers 'ought' to work when children are very young. Young people's views are not necessarily fixed or consistent on these issues.

Most of the young people in our study can be characterised by one of three attitude positions, which represent extreme points on a continuum: (A) 'Modern attitudes', whereby mothers' employment is taken for granted and public forms of collective child care is seen as broadly acceptable; (B) 'Transitional attitudes', in which young people accept mothers' working but still hold an allegiance to families as the best place for children to be cared for; (C) 'Traditional attitudes', when young people prefer mothers not to be employed and to care for their young children at home. These attitude positions can be illustrated by quotes from various groups.

A. 'Modern Attitudes'

Mothers' employment is acceptable and children should be cared for institutionally. Modern views of parenting are current among Swedish and Norwegian young people, relatively rare among British and Portuguese young people, and almost entirely absent among Irish young people. These young people broadly accept employment as the normal thing for mothers to do and 'kindergarten' is perceived to be good for children's social development, while exclusive maternal care is regarded as 'overprotective'- *'You'd think it was porcelain they had'*. Since in Norway and Sweden, mothers' employment is a more taken for granted feature of everyday life and public nursery care is widely available, this is less questioned than in the other countries.

'You see, for me it seems out of the question that I'd want to stay at home and be looked after, I mean, apart from the maternal leave, I wouldn't stay at home and wash the floor and vacuum clean every day and look after the children and all that, for several years!' (Norwegian woman, student)

Many Swedish young people think that parents ought to share responsibility for children. As one young student said, an advantage of both parents taking parental leave is that the father can get 'close' to the child: *'so that the father won't become the funny person who returns at five with a present in his pocket and the mother the nagging one.'*

Ideally, they believe that parents ought to work similar short hours (such as the six-hour day), which is permissible in Sweden until a child is 8 years old, and share the time off when children are ill.

GOOD PRACTICE

Training: courses for women returners

In Britain and Ireland where many women take a break from employment, or from full time work, getting back into the labour force can be difficult. The British trainee women returning to the labour feel that training and also gaining experience and qualifications are very important. Here they talk about a training course for women returners which, they say, provides good experience and enhances their self confidence.

'These courses are aimed at getting you back to work. There's a few for men, but these are for women, and they teach you practical skills like filling out application forms, and looking at applications in a different way. Like, I look at applications and it's just a big bit of paper with these big squares, and they want all this information, and you think, Uh?! But they do teach you the right way of filling it out, you don't realise it's not so much what you say, it's the words you use. In some cases you don't sell yourself, like, I've done bar work since I've had kids, but I don't put bar work on my CV, cos it's not enough, you've got hospitality business, stock rotation and all this, but you don't realise till someone's actually pointed it out to you, you don't know how to sell yourself. I think that's the problem... You say you've just been a mum, but you're a manager, you advise your children, you're a counsellor, you're an accountant, cos you have to work out your money, but these are things you don't think of.'

But they recognise that this is rarely possible in practice because, as some of them say *'Men earn more'...* *'It's always the economy, it controls everything'*. Young Swedish working class men also hold modern views of fatherhood, and are less traditional than working class men in other countries.

'One wants to be as much as possible with the children when they grow up. As it was in the old days the man was always at work and could only see his kids at weekends.'

Some British young people hold this view, including some young mothers who are returning to work after spending some years at home with their small children, an experience which they had not enjoyed very much. As one mother says about recently returning to work:

'I've got more, I spend more quality time with my children than I ever did, now I think, except for when they're first born and it's a novelty. But then you get stuck in a rut again don't you?' (British mother of three children, aged 26).

Some of the young British professional men and women support nursery care but on a part-time basis and preferred the idea of part-time work.

B. 'Transitional Attitudes'

Mothers' employment is acceptable but children should be cared for by 'family'. Members of most of the Portuguese groups, and many in the UK groups, have transitional views. Members of all the Portuguese groups emphasise the necessity of two incomes in the current difficult economic climate. Fearful of job insecurity, they see work as fundamental to creating 'stability' in their lives.

'In the old days (it was) normal (not to work before or while having children). One salary is not enough for the house.' (Portuguese woman, professional, separated with two children)

'Getting married without having a job is digging your own grave. Having children without a job is covering it up with earth.' (Portuguese man, graduate)

The low level of public child care, the high level of temporary employment contracts ('green receipts') and the very long working hours in Portugal (which extend beyond nursery opening hours) make it difficult to decide when to have children (most do). There is a strong emphasis on family support in Portugal, with practical help with childcare provided by grandmothers. Many young people had themselves been cared for by their grandmothers, even when their mothers were not employed. They trust 'family' more than 'strangers'.

'I had a very positive experience with my grandparents. So I would like the same for my children. It's important for a child to have a close relationship to family. To give the loving care that only a grandparent can give. Daycare, I don't agree because it's like placing your child with strangers who might not know the needs of that particular child.' (Portuguese woman student, aged 23)

"Getting married without having a job is digging your own grave"

Many of the Portuguese do however advocate nursery care for slightly older children, over about three years old, because of the social and educational stimulation it provides '*Nursery teachers know how to stimulate*'. Some are sceptical that grandmothers are the 'right persons' to do this:

'My mother who is 60 is probably not the right person to care for my niece. I am not questioning my mothers' capabilities. I just think my niece should be brought up differently - more actual, more pedagogical.' (Portuguese woman)

Members of several UK groups also have transitional attitudes. Even though a group of Asian origin female university students have gone to university and have thereby broken cultural conventions for young women, they are unsure whether they will work when their children are young, so that while they use education as a strategy or excuse to defer entering marriage and motherhood, they are unsure about '*going the whole hog*'. The majority of both the Asian and non-Asian university student women in the UK favour family-based child care, and are mistrustful of nurseries and childminders. They are also realistic and think that their male partners are unlikely to participate in child care.

Most of the British male professionals and male university students favour mothers' employment mainly because they believe in gender equality at work: it is only fair that women should be able to carry on with their careers. They do not like the idea of nurseries and childminders for pre-school children preferring, rather unrealistically, that both parents (fathers as well as mothers) work part-time and look after children at home.

'This way young children would be able to be cared for in the home. I'd rather pursue the notion of part-time working, I think, for both partners, and for the childcare. As a computer programmer, many women I work with are offered part-time work three days a week and it works very well. It's, I think, we're still a long way from offering that to men.' (British man, software engineer, aged 27)

C. 'Traditional Views'

Mothers' employment is unacceptable and children should be cared for by mothers. Here there is a concentration of the majority of the Irish young people, and members of three UK groups. The Irish young people do not approve of working mothers, even for school-age children. The mother at home remains a central image of a 'proper' Irish family life.

'It is not much, it is not many years really. You have from five until they are almost twenty, fifteen years when they will be in school or some time of college training... A lot of people go back to work say two or three months after having a child and are back to pressures of working nine o'clock to six o'clock in the evening. I don't know, I don't think that is right. If I was going to have a child I would be there... It is important.' (Irish graduate woman on a training course)

Despite being highly educated, most Irish young people still have traditional views. Yet, even though the Irish women believe that mothers should be at home with their children, they are not necessarily looking forward to doing this themselves.

Irish young people are particularly mistrustful of leaving children to others' care, particularly in nurseries, which they think will loosen mothers' 'bonds' with their children and adversely affect their children's emotional development.

"We are still victims of our upbringing"

'Children need to be brought up properly. And if they are just going to be moved from one childminder to another then they will get confused. And they won't know what a proper family life is.'

Complementing the idea of the Irish mother's place in the home is the Irishman's role as the family breadwinner, his 'proper' place being at work. The idea of fathers staying at home is greeted with incredulity.

'It's so traditional. We are still victims of our upbringing. I couldn't possibly, I don't think, have respect - For example my friend and her boyfriend stayed at home to look after the children. I think in his case it's true, that he couldn't get a job... He was so useless he had to stay at home.' (Irish woman, postgraduate)

In Ireland, parenthood is still seen much more as an inevitable obligation in the fulfilment of which 'sacrifices' have to be made. By contrast, in the UK, parenting discourses focus more on personal choice and individual responsibility. For Irish young people, provided 'the family comes first', mothers' employment may be acceptable.

Other traditionally minded groups include young working class male trainees from Norway and the UK, and a group of British male university students of Asian origin.

Conclusions

Countries which provide childcare and parental leave are also those where young people have the most supportive views of mothers working and institutional childcare. But even in countries where mothers' employment has long been the norm, some young people are quite conservative, especially working class young men. In all the countries, young women have high labour market aspirations but in countries with little child care support, they are also sceptical about the feasibility and, in the case of

Ireland, the desirability of combining motherhood and employment when children are young. Many young women, whichever country they come from, favour part-time work and short hours for children in daycare.

British young people's attitudes straddle the attitude spectrum. They vary by social class, gender and ethnic origin. Britain has a particular combination of characteristics: historically high employment rates among mothers of school age children, high rates of mothers working short part-time hours, and no history of public child care. British young adults seek to solve the work-care dilemma through flexible work patterns for parents and private (paid) childcare for children (for the higher paid workers). Though some British men would like to work shorter hours and participate more in childcare, they do not see this as feasible because of the demands of the workplace.

Portuguese young people expect to work full-time for financial reasons and can hardly envisage having children without both parents working. With little institutional public daycare, the Portuguese continue to rely on family support, even within the rapidly changing economic context.

In Norway and Sweden, with a long-established welfare model which provides extensive childcare and considerable periods of paid parental leave, young women envisage fewer problems in combining work and family. In Sweden in particular, many young men talk about the importance of making use of parental leave and to work the short day, thereby taking an active role in childcare. However, as Chapter 4 suggests, with high levels of temporary, insecure, employment in Sweden, this is often not possible.

In Ireland, many young women and young men are highly qualified and, with a booming economy, many mothers of young children are entering the labour market. Yet, in spite of this young people hold traditional attitudes. It remains to be seen how the Irish young people will resolve the work-care dilemma.

In this chapter we have shown how attitudes to childcare and to parents working vary across the five countries. Chapter 6 looks at what supports young people expect in order to manage their employment and caring needs.

Expectations: What Support Do Young People Expect From The State, Employers And Unions?

We looked at what the young people want from work in Chapter 3. In this chapter we look more closely at what they expect, and particularly their expectations of support from the state, employers and trade unions for reconciling employment and family life.

There are some cross-national variations in the nature and source of supports expected. These reflect different welfare state contexts and underlying assumptions about individual or collective responsibilities for families. But there is also some convergence in expectations. Membership of the European Union appears to increase awareness of other countries' practices, and is raising expectations of state support in countries which have traditionally emphasised individual responsibility for families. At the same time the growth in non standard employment contracts is reducing expectations of employer or trade union support.

Expectations of the state

There is more cross-national variation in expectations of the state than in the discussions about employers and trade unions. The young people discuss what they view as the role of the state in terms of:

- taking measures to combat unemployment
- providing a "safety net" for families
- providing parental leave entitlements and childcare
- regulating and monitoring employers and childcare provisions.

Taking measures to combat unemployment

Jobs are crucial for young people to achieve balanced lives. New definitions of careers, discussed in Chapter 3, carry with them a strong sense of individual responsibility. When discussing finding a job and keeping up with training the young adults in all five countries talk about the ideals of self-reliance, self motivation and independence.

'I think it's really important that for our generation, we want to make sure that we're not having to beg and plead.' (UK woman, clerical worker).

Despite this emphasis on self reliance in finding individual jobs there is a parallel expectation that governments should take responsibility for providing the right context by combating unemployment.

'In the future the state will have to...encourage people to job share, spread out jobs for everyone.' (Irish man, hotel manager)

In the UK and Portugal where working hours tend to be longest there is the suggestion that government has a role to play in shortening working hours, as a solution to unemployment.

'It seems just ludicrous that half the country is working itself into an early grave, and the other half is unemployed and going round the bend with boredom.' (UK man, professional)

'..put an end to overtime. First because it would give others the opportunity to find work... instead of one shift it would be two shifts of six hours each... the remaining time could then be spent with the family.' (Portuguese woman, professional)

Providing a "safety net" for families

There is a strong sense of individual responsibility for family in the UK, Ireland and Portugal, with an emphasis on personal choice and responsibility. There is nevertheless a view that government should provide a safety net for families if parents lose their jobs.

'It is up to the parents look after the children. Definitely. It's got nothing to do with the government if you decide to go off and have a baby. But, there should be something there. Say you are working and you've had a baby and then you lose your job, there should be something there for that person to fall back on.' (UK woman)

"In the future the state will have to encourage people to job share, spread out jobs"

GOOD PRACTICE Broadening Horizons

Membership of the EU appears to be broadening young people's perceptions of possibilities.

'If you look at countries like France they will have excellent creche facilities provided by the state whereas in Ireland they don't.' (Irish man, retail sales trainee, aged 19)

'Britain's the only country in Europe now without proper paternity leave.' (UK woman, professional, aged 27)

'There are countries that have got much better guidelines about providing childcare and it being a necessity.' (UK woman, student, aged 28)

'Well it works in Sweden... in Sweden, the social services, they have got a fantastic social structure. So the DSS (public service sector) equivalent they have got creches and everything else, and it seems to work over there.' (UK man, clerical worker in public sector, aged 23)

Parental leave and childcare

Expectations of state support for reconciling work and family are highest in Sweden and Norway. Policies on parental leave and leave to look after sick children are taken for granted. If anything there is an expectation that parental leave rights, which are comparatively generous, should be extended. State support for childcare is also expected and taken for granted in Sweden and Norway but not in the other countries.

'The municipality should (be responsible for running nurseries),.. every municipality should be responsible for that... there is lots of private daycare too, but I don't really think individuals should be responsible for these things... you must pay to have a kid in the nursery...but the public authorities should be responsible for building and running them.' (Norwegian woman, vocational trainee).

There have been recent cuts in provisions in Sweden and the Swedish groups are concerned about this.

The British and Irish groups expect less support from the state, but there are signs that this is beginning to change. A popular idea in Ireland is to pay women who stay at home to look after their family. There is no consensus on this in the focus groups. Some men and women think it would be valuable while others want to see more state provision of childcare.

Those who express dissatisfaction with the level of state support for reconciling paid work and family point to state provisions in other EU countries (See Good Practice box above).

Regulation and monitoring of employers and childcare

The role of government in regulating and monitoring employers is emphasised particularly by the Portuguese. The Portuguese focus groups discuss the need for both new laws and for a tighter monitoring of existing laws which many firms currently ignore.

'I think we need inspection, someone to control the situation, nobody controls it, the boss does as he pleases.' (Portuguese man, construction worker)

"There should be government regulations about having to provide a creche"

Some of the British participants argue that regulation is necessary to reduce the use of temporary employment contracts. They do not expect that employers will change voluntarily. But in Sweden and Norway, where some regulation of the use of temporary employment exists there is less optimism about its impact.

State responsibility for monitoring provision and quality of daycare is taken for granted in the Scandinavian countries and some form of regulation of childcare is favoured by some of the Portuguese and British groups.

'There should be government regulations about having to provide a creche and having guidelines... for the cost.' (UK man, clerical worker)

Expectations of employers

Expectations of employer support for families are rather limited in all countries. There is cynicism about employers' motivation in many of the groups, particularly in Ireland and Portugal, and this creates low expectation of employer support.

'I think that employers in our country are extremely closed minded I am investing today because I want profit tomorrow.' (Portuguese woman, clerical worker)

'(If they had a choice, employers) wouldn't even bother with people who have children, they just want single people.' (Irish woman trainee)

Flexibilisation of the labour market confirms these beliefs. This is interpreted as a means of avoiding costs associated with maternity leave and other entitlements.

'More and more jobs are going down to short-term contracts, and the employers attempt to get round the cost, like maternity cost and redundancy payments and the rest of it. And I think that's really destructive.' (UK woman, professional)

"The employers attempt to get round the cost, like maternity cost "

When expectations of employer support for reconciling work and family are discussed, this is in terms of:

- **childcare support**
- **opportunities to take up parental or maternity leave**
- **opportunities for part time and flexible work**
- **equal opportunities.**

Employer support for childcare

There is a range of views about whether employers should assist with childcare. In general the participants do not expect employers to provide or assist with childcare although many say they would choose to work for an employer who does so.

"I'd go for the employer who offered at least childcare benefit and were willing to be flexible"

I don't think it's the employers' responsibility but I think I'd go for the employer who offered at least childcare benefit and, were willing to be flexible.' (UK woman, professional)

'When the firms have daycare centres I think that it's an incentive for people to want to work there. They know that their child is there and they can even spend their lunch time with the child.' (Portuguese woman, professional)

Some, especially in the UK believe that it is in the interest of employers to provide childcare, and those who hold this view are most likely to expect employer support.

'Something like an NHS employer has a massive workforce of mainly young people...would actually benefit from having a creche that employees had to pay for, because.. they're gonna have people who don't have to rush away and .. don't give up their jobs and they'll also be making money.' (UK woman, doctor, aged 27)

In Portugal however, childcare is viewed only as a cost to firms and therefore there is little sense of entitlement to such support.

'I think day care centres are a good idea although few companies would agree with it because having a day care centre would mean higher costs, more staff, and nowadays its exactly the opposite of what they looking for.' (Portuguese man, management administration student)

Opportunities to take parental and maternity leave

The women in all five countries expect employers to enable them to take at least some parental or maternity leave. However full parental rights are mostly related to permanent employment and are therefore being eroded by new forms of work. Many women with temporary employment contracts feel they are being denied their full rights because employers are finding ways around the regulation.

'Cos I'm on a fixed term contract it means my maternity rights are kind of kaput basically. Even though I've been here for over five years in the same job because this current contract ends at the end of June and I can't come back for three months after maternity leave, it means that my maternity rights are virtually non-existent. And I don't think that's right, I think I should have the opportunity to, you know have the full benefits that somebody would have if they had a permanent post to start off with.'
(UK woman, professional, aged 30)

Men's expectations of taking up parental leave are more limited than women's in every country. Women are still more likely than men to anticipate a career break or a break from full time work when they have children, although some of the men in all five countries say they would like to do so. Only in Sweden and Norway, where one month of parental leave is exclusively for fathers, is parental leave for men considered a realistic possibility. For example, a group of Norwegian men (shipyard workers) feel there will be no problems if they have children.

'...but you have paternal leave and maternal leave, and... so there is really no.... they have made it easy for people to work and have children.' (Norwegian man, shipyard worker, aged 20)

GOOD PRACTICE

Parental support beyond legal entitlement

The Portuguese feel that many employers do not even adhere to the legal minimum entitlements of, for example parental leave. However, those which do provide support, especially if this is beyond the minimum requires are very highly valued.

'There are firms that do more than the government. There are fantastic firms, they offer all the necessary conditions, even medication and doctors.' (Portuguese woman)

In Britain and Ireland, where there are currently no parental leave rights other than maternity leave, (although statutory parental leave is soon to be introduced), the low skilled men have little understanding of what parental or paternity leave are and therefore no sense that they should be entitled to this. The British working women and white collar working men have a better grasp of the issues and are more likely to feel that men should be entitled to parental leave. In Portugal neither women nor men see parental leave as feasible as they all agree that this would prejudice their occupational opportunities. Nevertheless some young Portuguese women and men do say that they would like to be able to take advantage of these rights if it would not affect their careers.

'It would place my career at risk. But it would be ideal, at least personally, I would like

***to dedicate some of that time to the child.'* (Portuguese man, unemployed)**

All the groups agree that entitlements to leave to care for sick children or family emergencies are essential for parents. However, even in countries with statutory entitlements to family leave, non permanent employment and pressurised workplaces can prevent parents from realising their rights, and lower their expectations of support.

The Swedish precariously employed women explain that in temporary jobs it is very important to be seen to be reliable. A mother who often stays at home with sick children does not easily get new jobs. Some of the Swedish and British groups talk about how lean workforces and team working can exert pressure not to be absent from work because this places greater pressure on colleagues, who are already overloaded.

'If we were full a work force there would be no discontent'

'Do you bring in substitutes?'

'No if it is possible without, we don't. But those who remain have to work double. That's why people become discontented with the one who gets sick, even though it's not her fault.'

(Swedish women, temporary employed)

In Portugal it is felt that employers often try to avoid hiring women employees because they fear they will take time off work to look after sick children, so this makes it difficult, even for women who do have permanent jobs, to deal with family crises.

Part time and flexible work

There is an expectation in Sweden, Norway and the UK that part time opportunities will be available for women, at least in female dominated jobs, but a recognition that changes in management attitudes and men's behaviour will be necessary for it to be more widely acceptable for men,

'Many women I work with are offered part time work three days a week and it works very well, I think we're still a long way from offering that to men.'

'What, the same offer's not made to men?'

'Well, there's two things, the men aren't, probably asking... and management has a long way to go before they recognise that that's important.'

(UK men, professionals)

All the young people believe that employers should be flexible about working time.

'It (combining work and a family) ... well it is up to yourself too, but employers should do something as well.... make it easier for people..'

'What could employers do then?'

'Well there are many who, ... there are some here who have special agreements... they can come in a little later, and they can work shifts if they want to and things like that. That's good I think if they can be more flexible.'

(Norwegian men, ship-workers)

"We can do a better job for you so it is in your interest to provide for me"

They recognise however, that this may be more difficult for employers in some circumstances and are prepared to take account of this.

***'A small company might need more money and if you are away for a week it might be difficult.'* (Swedish men, permanent employment).**

There is a widespread belief that in practice it is often easier for women than men to ask for flexibility for family reasons. But some of the women feel that it can be difficult for women too.

***'You don't want them to feel that your family is encroaching on your work.'
'It depends on how important you are to your employer. If you are in middle management and you have a good job then you can call the shots so to speak, depending on your position there you could say "personally we can do a better job for you, so it is in your interest to provide it for me".'
(Irish women, business trainees)***

The men are also more likely than women to believe that their current jobs could not be flexible. For example male hotel managers in Ireland assert that flexitime, job sharing and other flexible forms of work would not work in the hotel industry. They suggest it would work better in predominantly female forms of work. However Irish women training for hotel and catering jobs believe that it would be possible to have flexible hours as hotel managers, if they owned their own business.

Flexible working places and tele-working

Tele-working (working from home with the aid of new technology) is seen by many young adults as a positive opportunity for people who want to manage work and non-work interests. However, many young people, especially those who are already parents, see combining working from home with care of very young children as unfeasible:

"You can't really concentrate on your work, you can't concentrate on the kids"

'You can't do two jobs at once... It's nice, it's a nice idea but... childcare is a full time occupation.' (UK man, computer programmer, aged 27)

'If you've got a job, and you're working from home when you've got children to look after, you can't do 10 things at once, you can't really concentrate on your work, you can't concentrate on the kids.'

'It's like doing two jobs at once.'

'It's like trying to watch telly and listen to the radio at the same time.'

(UK women, secretarial students)

This generation, having grown up with computers, view tele-working as a useful way of increasing flexibility of where and when they work. However, it is not seen as a solution to combining work and family.

Expectations of equal opportunities for men and women at work

When discussing equal opportunities at work most of the women say they expect to have some protection against discrimination, although in practice many accept discrimination by employers as a fact of life, especially in Portugal, Ireland, and to a lesser extent the UK

The most positive view of equal opportunities comes from some of the younger groups, such as the trainees, in Britain and Ireland. In Britain a growing number of employers describe themselves as Equal Opportunities Employers and some of the younger participants expect this to be the case.

'Most employers are equal opportunities employers now so there shouldn't be a problem' (UK woman, secretarial student, aged 18)

Other are less positive and feel that many employers are failing to recognise shifts in gender responsibilities. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is not uncommon for mothers to feel discriminated against in some contexts. Often questions are asked about family responsibilities at selection

interviews, despite equal opportunities laws. At other times discrimination is more subtle. For example two British women trainees who describe their partners as househusbands, still feel that employers expect them to be unreliable because they have children.

There remains a widespread acceptance that sexism is ingrained in organisations and will be difficult to change.

'It's very much, it's a problem with status quo isn't it? Because the majority of managers and so on are male at the moment, it's always going to be easier for them to cope with other males coming up to their level.' (UK man, professional)

'There is mostly males in the top... That is just life and there is not much you could do about it.' (Irish woman trainee).

The Norwegian participants do not appear to expect such a problem with discrimination, but this may be because most of the groups are younger and with little experience of work.

There is an emerging optimistic view however (although it is weakest in Portugal), that ingrained sexism may be changing as younger generation managers take over;

'Our senior partner is quite anti-women, but he retires in September so hopefully things will change.' (UK woman, accountant)

Expectations of trade unions

Non standard forms of work have increased alongside a diminution in the support provided by the unions. In general the unions find it hard to recruit and provide useful services to temporary workers and these workers are less likely to be unionised than those on standard contracts (Brewster et al, 1997).

In all the countries, expectations of support from the unions for reconciling work and family are limited. The British groups have the lowest expectations of support from the unions. Some young people are not even sure what trade unions are;

'What's a Trade Union?' (UK woman, unemployed, aged 18)

'I don't know anything about them really.' (UK women, vocational trainees)

Most of the UK groups discuss unions in terms of strikes, or regard them as a spent force.

A: They just don't have the strength

B: They go on strike

C: They're just a waste of time

(UK, women, secretarial students, aged 18)

Others associate unions with discussions on a minimum wage but still do not regard them as very important. The British white collar men and women are somewhat more positive about the unions than other British groups but there is a view in all the countries that flexible contracts have substantially reduced the impact of the unions.

"You feel as though any time you do something like this someone puts a little mark next to your name"

'This is the trouble with things like rights, because you can take, you can adhere to all the rights but you feel as though, any time you do something like this, someone puts a little mark next to your name to be remembered the next time, so that when it comes to looking at contracts, they look at each person who went on strike for that

day, each member who is demanding paternity benefit, he was taking all the rights that they could have, bloody hell, I'm not having him here.' (UK man, administrator)

'It is an employers' market now because of the large unemployment. When I started working as an electrician... the unions were strong, they decided the conditions.... (now) they seem to do nothing. Many leave the unions today to save a hundred and fifty crowns.' (Swedish man, unemployed)

GOOD PRACTICE

The role of the unions

Only in Norway did any young people talk about the role of the unions in supporting the reconciliation of work and family.

'What can unions do then?'

'They could make demands like they usually do.'

'In this place they have been important for making parental leave longer.

Someone got two years. The union saw to that.

'Are there equal terms for male and female employees in relation to parental leave and things like that?'

'I don't know but I think so.'

'Those who have children here... there is no problem for them to.. like if they have a sick child at home there is no problem taking time off for that.'

(Norwegian men, ship-workers)

The history of union attitudes to work and family issues also affects expectations. There is some discussion among the Irish groups of what unions could do, such as campaigning for flexitime, but mixed views about whether they will actually take up work and family issues;

'It can be done through the unions and they will voice it for you on your behalf....'

'Which trade unions are going to bother with that... Would they see it as a private family issue?' (Irish women, trainees).

The most positive view about the unions' role in supporting the reconciliation of employment and family life comes from the Norwegian ship workers. They believe the unions have been important in negotiating longer parental leave rights in their company and so are able to make a direct and concrete link.

Trade unions have a role to play at European, national and regional levels in relation to the reconciliation of work and family. There is evidence that, for example, UK workplaces which recognise trade unions are more likely to have a range of work-family policies than other organisations (Forth et al, 1997). This does not necessarily indicate a direct involvement of the unions, but does suggest a valuable role. It would seem however, that the role which the unions could play in this respect is not being communicated or understood by younger workers and those in education or training, particularly in a context of job insecurity.

Conclusions

Most of the young people say that they expect to be proactive and self reliant in finding jobs. But they expect the government to provide the right conditions by taking measures

to combat unemployment and ensuring a fairer distribution of work. Beyond this, expectations of state support and the form this might take tend to reflect national context and support frameworks. So, for example, young people in countries with good parental leave entitlements and childcare provision take this for granted while others are more ambivalent about what they can expect. Nevertheless membership of the European Union appears to be broadening perceptions of the possibilities of support from the state, at least amongst those who are aware of policies and practices elsewhere.

Expectations of support from employers are fairly modest, but they tend to increase when people recognise that it is in employers' interest to support workers' needs for reconciliation. Most young people say they expect equal opportunities at work, although in practice many accept that sexism is deeply ingrained in organisations. Nevertheless there is an emerging optimism that this will change with a new generation of managers.

The young people expect flexible working hours and opportunities for part time work, at least for women and in some cases also for men. Few say that they expect employers to assist with childcare although many would choose to work for an organisation which does so. Non permanent employment reduces entitlements and expectations of workplace support, particularly in relation to parental and emergency leaves, even in countries with substantial parental rights for those in permanent employment. Temporary or fixed term contracts are viewed as means for employers to avoid supporting the reconciliation of paid work and family. This appears to have diminished trust of employers and increased cynicism about their motives.

Expectations of support from the unions for reconciling work and family are minimal for the young people that took part in this study. Expectations are particularly low in contexts where there are high levels of unemployment or non standard work, which are perceived as weakening the influence of the unions.

CONCLUSIONS

The late twentieth century has seen increasing importance placed on paid work for men and women especially in the child rearing years. This decade is also witnessing a major extension in the time that people spend outside the labour market. The information society requires that young people spend longer in education and training and levels of unemployment are relatively high among the young.

This study examined how young people experience the pressures to stay in education and training, the difficulties and complexities of gaining a foothold in the labour market and finding jobs with prospects and some degree of security. In this context we asked how they view their future work and family lives, whether they see a future in which they will combine employment and parenthood and what they think it will be like.

The young people participating in this study were at a number of different points in the transition to economic independence - in education, training and the labour market. They came from a variety of social backgrounds and were qualifying or had already qualified for jobs at a variety of levels of skill and expertise. The views they express, and our interpretation of their views, should not be generalised to all young people across Europe nor should they be seen as representative of all young people in their various countries. Rather, this report paints a picture which complements statistical reports of social trends and representative surveys and provides a rich account of young people's current and future lives from the standpoint of young people themselves.

Present lives: opportunities, choices and constraints

Young people's lives are crammed with concerns of the present: how to gain the "right" qualifications and training; how to get into work which has reasonable prospects, decent pay and some level of security. Young women in all the countries are particularly concerned with getting qualifications, being independent and having a "good job". But young people's present lives are also about matters other than work: many want to travel, see the world, take "time out", "get a life". A variety of lifestyles, freedoms, choices and opportunities is on offer and young people want to take advantage of them. However, those without qualifications and without employment are not only excluded from work as a source of community but they also lack the financial means to create a life outside work.

Ambivalence about the future

Only a minority of the young people in this study already have children, but most aspire to a life where they settle down with stable jobs and relationships and possibly children. But this is for some time in the future, not now. First they want to have fun, travel and "live their lives". The long period that young people spend in education and training and the difficulty in finding secure jobs mean that the period of "youth" now extends well into their 20s. On the one hand, they view this positively. But it is also a time when external factors, particularly a difficult job market in most of the countries, traps them in an "extended present" and leaves them feeling anxious and insecure about their future lives. Young people are therefore highly ambivalent, especially young women, caught up in a myriad current concerns and preoccupations, yet knowing that their biological clocks are ticking away. Childbirth cannot be deferred indefinitely.

Everyday employment flexibility and insecurity

The critical issue for young people is gaining a job and the right sort of job. Young adults today enter the labour market in Europe in a very different social and economic context from that of earlier generations. They appear to be adapting and do not expect jobs for life, but they do expect something in their place. A new "psychological contract" between young people and employers may be emerging: an expectation of flexible working hours that leave time for interests and demands outside work and an expectation of opportunities for developing skills and employability, in relatively secure jobs, but without life long commitment. However employers' drive for "leaner" workforces, sustained by the need to survive in globalised markets and a highly competitive environment, creates feelings of insecurity and uncertainty throughout the workforce and among all young people, including those in permanent jobs.

Work and life beyond work

The jobs that young men and women value are those which offer adequate income, some everyday flexibility and opportunities for development, including the development of employability. They also value challenge, enjoyment, social benefits and being respected and treated with dignity. Above all this generation hope to live balanced lives, with time for work and time for other interests which may ultimately include having a family. They dislike "the long hours culture" which is particularly prevalent in Portugal and the UK.

Employment stability for the future

Flexible labour markets may meet some young people's present needs, but they mean increased difficulty in achieving future economic independence, and meeting future family responsibilities, for example entering a long-term relationship, starting a family or taking on financial commitments such as a mortgage. Long working hours, inflexible working arrangements, and constraints imposed by insecure working situations cause problems for anyone (male or female) who is trying to combine paid work and family responsibilities.

Gender equality and difference: workplace and home

Employment is increasingly a part of young women's present and future lives. But equality between men and women in the labour market and in the home is still a "virtual reality" for many young people. In some countries, notably Sweden, Norway and the UK, young people often have a "gender-neutral" approach, thinking that gender inequalities in paid work have been solved or at least that the means for ensuring equality at work are largely in place. Portuguese and Irish young men and women are the most likely to refer to overt sex discrimination in the workplace. Even in Scandinavian countries, where formal equality has been achieved, young people point to a "double vision" of gender in which men and women are expected to share responsibility for both employment and caring but women are still expected to take most responsibility for children and the home and most of the parental leave.

Men's contribution to family life

On the domestic front, young women often express frustration at the gap between what they think men and fathers should contribute to family life and what they expect will happen in practice. Young people hope for egalitarian relationships but many young women in all the countries, continue or expect to take on the major caring role when they become parents. Nevertheless both men and women say that men are changing. Young men would like to be involved fathers when they have children. The more educated men are more likely to say that they want to participate fully in child care, while young men in or training for blue collar jobs in all the countries except Sweden tend to be more traditional on these issues, often seeing work and earning a

'breadwinner' wage as more of a priority. For those young people who say they hope to share parenting equally or even engage in role reversal, there are still strong practical, financial and cultural constraints which make it difficult. Some men hope to cut down their hours or involvement in paid work when they become parents but, in the UK, Ireland and Portugal, they fear that employers may not make this easy. Scandinavian young men foresee fewer problems in this respect.

Combining employment and family life in the future

Sweden and Norway, the countries which provide child care and parental leave, are also those where young people have the most supportive views of mothers working and institutional child care. But even in countries where mothers' employment has long been the norm, some young people are quite conservative, especially working class young men. In all the countries, young women have high labour market aspirations but in countries with little child care support (UK, Ireland and Portugal), they are also sceptical about the feasibility and, in the case of Ireland, the desirability of combining motherhood and employment when children are young. Many young women, whichever country they come from, favour part-time work and short hours for children in daycare.

Expectations of support from the state, employers and trade unions

Most of the young people say that they expect to be proactive and self reliant in finding jobs. But they expect the government to provide the right conditions by taking measures to combat unemployment and ensuring a fairer distribution of work. Beyond this, expectations of state support for the reconciliation of work and family tends to reflect national context and support frameworks. Expectations are highest in Sweden and Norway where parental leave and childcare provisions are highly developed. In Portugal there is an expectation that the state should regulate and monitor employers. Expectations are generally low in the UK and Ireland, but are increasing as young people become more aware of provision in other EU countries. At the same time the growth in temporary employment contracts is reducing young people's expectations of employment protection and state benefits, which are based on being a member of the permanent workforce. This is particularly notable in Sweden where entitlements for permanent employees are considerable but temporary employment has grown dramatically.

Young people do not generally see employers as having a major responsibility for helping parents to meet family responsibilities, although they do expect some working time flexibility. On these issues they tend to view the world from the viewpoint of employers. Thus they tend to increase their expectations of support when they recognise that it is in employers' interest.

Most young people say they expect equal opportunities at work, although in practice many feel that sexism is deeply ingrained in organisations. Nevertheless there is an emerging optimism that this will change with a new generation of managers.

Expectations of support from the unions for reconciling work and family are minimal for the young people that took part in this study. Expectations are particularly low in contexts where there are high levels of unemployment or non standard work, which are perceived as weakening the influence of the unions. There may be an opportunity for trade unions to involve and support more young people by taking on board their hopes, aspirations and concerns about future work and family life.

Research (Weitzman, 1994) suggests that the reconciliation of employment and family life is easier for those who are able to think ahead and make realistic plans and preparations. Employers as well as policy makers at the national and European levels need to consider the implications of the current uncertainties in young people's lives for the achievement of a committed and effective workforce empowered to reconcile paid work and family in the future.

APPENDIX

Statistical Data

Table 11: Focus Group participants in each country

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway	Total
Total participants in all focus groups	76	42	84	76	27*	305
Number of women	43	26	38	46	12	165
Number of men	33	16	46	30	15	140
Age groups						
Aged 19 and under	26	15	20	18	13	92
Aged 20-25	20	20	51	33	14	138
Aged 26-30	30	7	13	25	0	75
Members of ethnic minorities	15	0	7	3	1	26
Occupational status						
Working in permanent job	16	9	10	17	5	57
Working in temporary job	15	0	16	17	4	52
University student	23	8	37	13	5	86
Vocational student	13	22	14	16	13	78
Unemployed	9	3	7	13	0	32
Highest level of education reached						
University degree	44	19	45	25	9	142
School/training to age 18	16	18	24	51	18	127
School to age 15/16	16	5	15	0	0	36
Family status						
Number of parents	9	5	10	8	3	35
Number married	4	3	7	3	1	18
Number cohabiting (approximate)	18	3	2	19	4	46

* There were fewer focus groups in Norway, and all among the under-25 age group, as the research in this country was carried out in the context of an ongoing research project, which used individual interviews as well as focus groups.

The source for many of these tables is Eurostat (in particular, Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life (European Commission, 1997) Norwegian data is not included in many Eurostat tables; where possible throughout this report we have added comparable data from the Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics

Unemployment

Table 12: Unemployment rates (% of labour force) for all ages

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
1990	7	13	4	2	5
1997	7	11	6	11	3

Eurostat, Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics

Table 13: Trends in the under-25 unemployment rate (by %)

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
1990	10.8	19.4	10.0	4.5	7.0
1995	15.9	19.5	16.6	19.4	7.0

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, Norwegian National Bureau of Statistics

Education and vocational training

Table 14: Enrolment in vocational training by age group

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
Age 15-19	11.9	16.0	11.4	41.1
Age 20-24	4.3	8.4	3.1	1.5
Age 25-29	2.0	1.0	1.1	0.4

Eurostat 1994

Note: Vocational training in Sweden and Norway is nearly all at school. In Portugal, 91% of vocational training is at school, and the rest at school and work. In Ireland, 78% is at school, and 15% at work. In the UK most vocational training is post-school, in college and in work.

Norway data: In 1996, 43% of women aged 16 chose vocational training after completing compulsory education, whereas 55% of 16 year old men chose this education.

Fixed term contracts

Table 15: Fixed term contracts among young employees, as a percentage of employees in this age group

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
Age 15-19	17.7	33.0	27.4	56.8
Age 20-24	10.8	15.4	25.3	35.6
Age 25-29	6.4	8.6	15.3	18.7

Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Marriage and fertility

Table 16: Trends in fertility rates of women aged 20-29
Number of births per 1000 women

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden	Norway
Age 20-24					
1980	107	115	135	123	115
1994	74	47	64	64	78
Age 25-29					
1980	137	198	130	141	121
1994	110	105	110	136	136

Eurostat, Demographic statistics

Trade Union membership

Table 17: Estimate of Trade Union Membership as ratio of total workers of ALL ages

	UK	Ireland	Portugal	Sweden
1980	56.3	45.83	61.11	No data
1991	43.4	49.0	46.0	No data

Eurostat

Table 18: Percentages of union members by age and sex in Norway 1995

	Age 15-24	25-44	45-64
Men	19	51	55
Women	17	50	44

Bureau of Statistics

Note: The low percentage in the youngest age group has to do with the fact that so many are pupils/students, and the oldest women have had a low level of union membership mainly due to part time work and in-out of the labour market.

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