Partnership Formation and First Home-Leaving in Europe

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1 Introduction

Leaving the parental home and establishing the first cohabiting union are major life course event during young adulthood, and partnership formation is an important route out of the parental home. Some leave for reasons related to studying or work, others leave with the aim of becoming independent, irrespective of their life course events. It is not uncommon either that young people establish their own household at the same time when they move together with their partner for the first time.

The majority of young adults aspire towards independence: establishing one's own household is usually linked with the need for private sphere. The desired level of independence cannot always be achieved while living together with the parents and this situation is a potential source of conflicts. Conversely, having a separate household functions as a new sphere of independence and helps young adults to reshape the relationship with their parents, friends and partner. Moving significantly increases their personal autonomy and makes them able to live their lives more flexibly and under much less parental control (Gaiser 1999; Huinink—Konietzka 2000).

According to the individualization thesis, the relationship between first home-leaving and first cohabiting union is gradually loosening. More and more young people leave the parental home not only to start living together with their partners but for reasons of schooling, employment or simply to live independently (Mulder et al. 2002). This phenomenon is the most apparent in the Nordic countries and the USA. Some researchers explain it with individualization and the fact that traditional family values are losing ground (Buck—Scott 1993). Others emphasize that, due to the postponement of family formation and childbearing, financial independence, employment and living separately from parents have become more important (Corijn—Klijzing 2001).

In contrast with the phenomenon of individualization, the co-residence of parents and their adult children with partner also exists. Its main reasons are high housing cost, no affordable rental flats, the comfort of the parental home, better access to parental resources or mutual emotional support (Aquilino 1990; 1991). However, living together with their adult children can also be beneficial for the parents: they provide company, especially to single, divorced or widowed parents; they can help in housework or in caring for sick or disabled parents.

In the present paper, we analyse cross-country differences in the relationship between first home-leaving and first cohabiting union among young adults in 25 European countries. We look at how the effect of the first partnership on the risk of leaving the parental home differs across countries and country groups.

The present paper uses the event of first home-leaving as the dependent variable; however, the author will develop competing risk models in order to compare the incidence and determinants of leaving the parental nest to move together with a partner or for other reasons.

2 Home-Leaving in European Perspective

The grand theories of demographic change view change as unidirectional, and explain cross-country differences by the achievement of different levels of progress during the course of a universal social, demographical and economic developmental process (Billari—Wilson 2001). Other theories emphasise divergence and the role of the path dependence of institutions (Mayer 2001) and the importance of the initial conditions of cultural inheritance (Reher 1998; Micheli 2000) in creating diverse outcomes.

Mayer (2001) and Blossfeld (2000), while underlining the effect of country-specific institutions on the life course, offered a solution to the paradox between global social change and national path dependencies: the challenges and pressures of globalization are basically the same in all advanced societies, but historically embedded institutional differences leads to very different outcomes in different countries. Therefore, if we want to understand the demography of early adult life, the national configurations of the institution of education, housing and labour market should be also taken into consideration (Billari—Wilson 2001).

The approaches that emphasize long-term persisting differences in cultural and institutional patterns across Europe imply that welfare state regimes and geographical units still play an important role (Billari—Liefbroer 2010). For example social-democratic welfare states – and to a certain extent conservative ones as well – make early transitions possible and are conductive to the spread of new behavioural patterns because they decrease the level of uncertainty in the transition process.

While both the cultural inheritance model and the institutional constraint approach imply that convergence is not to be expected either at the national or at the individual

level, the proponents of the general theory of individualisation argue that while the demographic behaviour of societies converge, within-country divergences increase. The standardised life course is disappearing with growing individualisation. Within demographic literature, the theoretical framework of the 'Second Demographic Transition' (SDT) is usually applied to describe these changes (Lesthaeghe 1983, van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe—Moors 2000). It refers to important changes in family behaviour, such as the postponement of parenthood and marriage, the increasing popularity of non-marital cohabitation and childlessness.

SDT implies that all European countries experience the same individualisation of life course transitions, which increases the differences within societies and decreases variance between countries. That is to say, there is "convergence towards diversity" (Billari—Wilson 2001: 7). The observable differences between countries are mainly due to the fact that they are in different stages of the same transformation. Scandinavian are assumed to take the lead, while Southern European countries are seen as laggards (Lesthaeghe—Moors 2000).

The new pattern implied by SDT theory would mean a relatively late exit from the parental home, followed by time spent without a partner, then entry into a non-marital union. Childbearing would take place at a relatively late age, and marriage would occur either late (just before or after entry into parenthood) or not at all (Billari—Liefbroer 2010). In other words, the events of home-leaving and union formation would become increasingly de-coupled.

With the help of analysing the trends of the transition to adulthood (leaving home, formation of first union, marriage and first birth) in Europe, Billari and Wilson (2001) have found confirmation for neither the individualisation hypothesis nor SDT theory. Through analysing more recent data, Billari and Liefbroer (2010) found support for the emergence of a new pattern of the transition to adulthood, which can be characterised as late, protracted and complex. Changes in the pathways to adulthood are going in a similar direction in most parts of Europe; however, they do not seem to converge (yet). In particular, the percentage of woman who left home before entry into a union has increased across cohorts in all regions of Europe except for the East.

Different home-leaving patterns exist in Europe as a result of differences in labour and housing markets, welfare regimes, social norms and cultural settings. Analyses usually differentiate between the Mediterranean or Southern European, the Northern, the

British and sometimes also the Eastern model (Reher 1998; Billari et al. 2001; Mayer 2001; Cavalli—Galland 2003; Saraceno et al. 2004; Spéder 2007; Billari—Liefbroer 2010).

The Southern European model is characterised by prolonged education, difficulty of finding stable employment, relative independence of young adults living in the parental home, low proportion of young unmarried people living together with their partner or living alone and relatively homogeneous life course trajectories. Many young people postpone nest-leaving until they get married. Southern Europe is also characterised by "strong" family ties and a preference for family closeness and a more family-based sense of solidarity (Reher 1998; Iacovou 2010).

The Northern pattern (continental Western Europe is also regarded to belong to this group) involves relatively early home-leaving and the relationship between leaving and partnership formation is weak. There is a norm in the Scandinavian countries that young people should leave at an early age and there is little variation in the age when they actually do it. Furthermore, Northern Europe is characterised by "weak" family ties, a preference for independence and a sense of social rather familial solidarity with elderly or weak members of society (Reher 1998; Iacovou 2010).

The British model combines early entry into the labour market, early and synchronized home-leaving and cohabitation but postponed childbirth.

The position of Eastern-Central Europe in this typology is of question. It is often regarded as being the closest to the Southern model because of relatively late home-leaving, the high proportion of 30-35 years olds who still live with their parents, heterogeneous life trajectories, postponed childbearing and difficulties of finding stable employment. It is relatively rare that young people leave the parental home before finishing education or live without a partner after having established a separate household.

However, there are significant differences between Southern and Eastern-Central European states. While the link between marriage and home-leaving is tighter in the former country group, many young adults who live together with their parents already have a co-resident partner in post-communist countries. More than half of women aged 25-34 and one third of men of the same age who co-reside with their parents lived with a partner and in some cases they hadchildren too. Since this situation may be the source of conflicts, young people probably choose this living arrangement out of necessity

(Spéder 2007). One of the main reasons can be found in the housing sector of the Eastern-Central European countries: the great majority is privately owned, there are few rented apartments, community housing hardly exists, and getting one's own house or apartment requires a long process of capital accumulation (Domanski et al. 2006).

3 Data and methods

The analysis has three research questions: (1) does the effect of partnership formation on first nest-leaving differ across Europe?, (2) can this variance be explained by country group dummies?, and if yes, (3) how the effect of partnership formation differ between these country groups?

Based on the literature, we suppose that (1) there are significant differences in how union formation affects the hazard of leaving the parental home in different countries and (2) in different country groups. We expect that the effect is the strongest in Southern Europe, where there is a high degree of synchronization between the two events in question. The effect may be high in Eastern Europe too but lower than in the Mediterranean states because home-leaving before family formation is relatively rare but some couples start to cohabit while still in the parental home in Eastern Europe. We expect the lowest effect in Northern Europe, where home-leaving usually happens at a relatively early age, independently of family events.

3.1 Data

The 3rd round of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2006)[1] is used in the present analysis, containing comparable data on 25 European countries. Beside the core sections, the questionnaire includes rotating modules in every round. In 2006 several questions on the timing of important life course events were asked in the changing module of ESS.

The risk population consist of respondents who lived together with at least one parent at the age of 14 and who lived in the same country at age 14 as where they were interviewed (not migrated across country borders). Respondents with missing values on any of the variables (with the exception of parental education) and with invalid histories were dropped.

[1] European Social Survey Round 3 Data (2006/2007). Data file edition 3.3. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data. Available: http://ess.nsd.uib.no

Only home-leaving between ages 15 and 35 is analysed. The intensity of leaving the parental home above the age of 35 is very low and is probably affected by different factors (e.g. the death of parents) than nest-leaving during early adulthood. Only respondents born between 1930 and 1979 and only women are analysed for the time being. Subsequent analysis will extend the analysis to men as well.

The total sample includes about 30,900 respondents. Since the maximum length of the observation period was 21 years (between ages 15 and 35), there are 1 to 21 rows for each respondent in the data set, corresponding to the number of years until she left the parental home or was censored at the time of the interview. The total number of person-years is about 134,000 and on the average every respondent was observed for 4.3 years. We can think of the data set as a three-level hierarchical data set, with person-years nested in persons and persons nested in countries. For a detailed description of the sample see Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the sample (ESS 3, only women)

Countries		Number of persons	Number of person-years		Number of events
			Total	Mean (per person)	
Austria	AT	1 532	6 849	4,5	765
Belgium	BE	1 218	5 301	4,4	606
Bulgaria	BG	1 017	5 291	5,2	515
Switzerland	CH	1 119	3 540	3,2	588
Cyprus	CY	693	3 238	4,7	341
Germany	DE	1 981	7 670	3,9	937
Denmark	DK	1 075	2 725	2,5	533
Estonia	EE	810	3 333	4,1	414
Spain	ES	1 212	6 712	5,5	570
Finland	FI	1 355	3 943	2,9	664
France	FR	1 406	5 330	3,8	729
Great Britain	GB	1 603	5 973	3,7	846
Hungary	HU	1 123	5 256	4,7	597
Ireland	IE	997	4 657	4,7	499
Latvia	LV	1 007	6 144	6,1	486
Netherlands	NL	1 361	5 105	3,8	696
Norway	NO	1 208	2 965	2,5	570
Poland	PL	1 135	5 837	5,1	504
Portugal	PT	1 462	8 797	6,0	767
Romania	RO	1 417	5 830	4,1	644
Russia	RU	1 540	8 858	5,8	750
Sweden	SE	1 271	3 428	2,7	631
Slovenia	SI	949	4 978	5,2	457
Slovakia	SK	1 147	5 500	4,8	521
Ukraine	UA	1 258	7 122	5,7	623
Total		30 896	134 382	4,3	15253

3.2 The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the event of leaving the parental home for the first time. The question was formulated as follows: "In what year, if ever, did you first leave your parent(s) for 2 months or more to start living separately from them?" There were separate codes for people who still lived in the parental home and never left for two months and for those who never lived with a parent. The latter (very small) group was excluded from the analysis.

The questionnaire includes some explanations on how to interpret the question. "Living separately" is defined as "living independently from parent(s) or guardian(s) in separate accommodation (i.e. with a separate entrance)". It includes students who live separately for 2 months or more even if they return to live with parents occasionally. Parents include any legal guardian, such as foster, step and adoptive parents.

The value of the dependent variable is 0 in all years when the respondents still lived with the parents and it is 1 in the year when they left for the first time. The dependent variable is an absorbing event, that is it can happen to the same person only once.

3.3 Independent Variables

The most important independent variable is partnership status. It is time-varying and takes on value 0 in years when the respondent did not live with a partner and value 1 in the first and subsequent years of cohabitation. Only those cohabiting unions are taken into account that lasted for at least three months.

Throughout the analysis, the terms "first union", "first cohabitation" and "first partnership" are used interchangeably. They include only those partnerships when the partners live in the same household. Unmarried and married unions are not differentiated from each other. The reason for this choice is that cohabitation can have different meanings and plays different roles in people's family trajectories in different countries and in different cohort (Heuveline—Timberlake 2004).

The baseline hazard is not a linear function of age but grouped into four categories: 14-17, 18-25, 26-29 and 30-35 years. We suppose that the baseline hazard is constant within these time periods and changes between them.

Fertility history differentiates between only two states: does the respondent have any children or not. Employment history makes a distinction between two states: whether

the respondent has ever been employed or been in paid apprenticeship of 20 hours or more per week for at least 3 months or not.

Time-constant covariates include birth cohort: 1930-1939, 1940-49, 1950-59, 1960-69 and 1970-79, the highest level of education of the respondents and their parents (primary or less, secondary or tertiary)[2]. If the education level of the two parents differed, the highest one was taken. Family background at age 14 was measured by the presence or the lack of the mother and the father in the household (if both were absent, the person was dropped from the analysis).

Previous research found that people who were not raised up by both of their biological parents leave the parental home earlier than others due to the lower level of cohesion and the higher frequency of conflicts in families that include a step-parent, and analyses have found a stronger effect among daughters than sons (Buck—Scott 1993; Goldscheider—Goldscheider 1998).

One limitation of the study is that social class or income differences cannot be taken into account as these variables change over time but they are not available retrospectively. Moreover, life course events are absorbing events, i.e. they can occur only once per person. As a result, changes in one's partnership status (union dissolution, death of the partner), unemployment spells or returning to education cannot be taken into account.

Contextual variables could also be either time-dependent or time-constant. Country variables that change in time could be used only if we have information on how its values changed throughout the observation period. In our case it would mean that we have to collect data for every single year and every single country for the period between 1944 and 2006. This works very rarely. Moreover, estimation would require crossed random effects between individuals and years.

We resort to using country group dummies as contextual variables, assuming that they have a time-invariant impact on home-leaving behaviour. Country groups may be thought of as complex "indices" that incorporate the effects of different institutional settings and cultural characteristics of different European regions.

Four country groups are created: Northern countries include Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Western countries are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Southern countries consist of Cyprus, Portugal

[2] Since no education history data is available, schooling could not be treated as time-varying. The percentage of full-time students at the time of the interview was below 1% in our sample.

and Spain[3]. Eastern countries are Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. This is a simple and straightforward categorisation often used in the literature.

The distribution of the variables used in the analysis can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Exposure time and the number of occurrences in each category of the independent variables

		Person-years		Number of occurrences
		n	% of total	
TIME-CONSTANT VARIABLES				
Cohorts	1930-39	22486	16,7	2219
	1940-49	25954	19,3	2986
	1950-59	28962	21,6	3398
	1960-69	29618	22,0	3544
	1970-79	27362	20,4	3106
Highest level of education	primary or less	50395	37,5	5366
	secondary	53588	39,9	6115
	tertiary	30399	22,6	3772
Childhood family background	intact family	122155	90,9	13967
	no mother	2085	1,6	244
	no father	10142	7,5	1042
Highest level of education of parent(s)	primary	78748	58,6	8862
	secondary	36261	27,0	4141
	tertiary	14917	11,1	1833
	missing	4456	3,3	417
Country groups	West	44425	33,1	5666
	North	13061	9,7	2398
	South	18747	14,0	1678
	East	58149	43,3	5511
DYNAMIC VARIABLES				
Age categories	14-17	62900	46,8	4730
	18-25	54743	40,7	9792
	26-29	9145	6,8	823
	30-35	7594	5,7	268
Partnership status	has not cohabited	106422	79,2	6545
	cohabited	27960	20,8	8707
Childbirth	childless	115519	86,0	13006
	has at least one child	18863	14,0	2247
Work experience	has not worked	73316	54,6	5139
	worked	61066	45,4	10114
Total		134382	100,0	15253

[3] Unfortunately Italy did not participate in the third round of the European Social Survey.

3.4 Analysis Strategy

In the first part of the analysis we briefly describe the European patterns of home-leaving. We look at the timing of leaving the parental home for the first time with the help of quartile ages (Kaplan-Meier survival estimates).

The relationship between the events of interest – i.e. nest-leaving and partnership formation – is captured by their ordering. Since no question was asked about the purpose or destination of first home-leaving, we have no direct information on why people left: to live together with their partners, for other reasons related to their studies or employment or simply to live independently. So the only possibility to estimate the prevalence of leaving the parental household for partnership reasons is to inspect whether the two events took place at the same time or not. We define simultaneity as two events happening in the same calendar year. It gives us conservative estimates on home-leaving without a partner.

A recent paper by Billari and Liefbroer (2010) use the same data set and the same female cohorts in analysing the changes in the process of the transition to adulthood in Europe. The interested reader is advised to consult their paper for further descriptive results.

In the second part of the analysis, discrete-time event history analysis is used on a person-year data set in which each person is represented by a row of data for each year when the person was at risk of experiencing the event. The discrete-time hazard is being estimated, i.e. the conditional probability that the event occurs at time *t*, given that it has not occurred yet. We look at the effect of certain characteristics of the respondents and the occurrence of certain events – especially partnership formation – on the hazard of leaving the parental home. The risk duration is divided into four spells: 14-17, 18-25, 26-29 and 30-35 years of age. All „first" events are backdated by one year in order to avoid reversed causation.

Discrete-time survival models can be estimated via regression models for dichotomous data with maximum likelihood estimation. We will use the complementary log-log link instead of the logit link because it follows if a proportional hazards model holds in continuous time and the survival times are interval-censored. The exponential regression coefficients can be interpreted as hazard ratios in continuous time (Singer—Willett 1993; Rabe-Hesketh—Skrondal 2008). Complementary log-log models with

random intercept are robust to a possible misspecification of the distribution of the unobserved heterogeneity (Nicoletti—Rondinelli 2006).

Random effects model is used, including random coefficient and random intercept for partnership status, allowing both its intercept and its effect to vary from country to country. Country groups and a cross-level interaction between partnership status at the lowest and country group membership at the highest level are added in order to explain intercept and slope variance.

We suppose that the proportionality assumption is violated when it comes to partnership formation: the effect of starting a union on the hazard of leaving the parental home may differ by the age of the respondent. For this reason an interaction term between age and partnership status is included. The effect of partnership formation can also differ by cohort, so another interaction is specified.

The three-level complementary logistic random-coefficient model can be estimated in Stata 11 using gllamm with the link(cll) option. Unfortunately, even after several tries and modifications the model did not converge. For the time being, we resorted to using a simpler model, being aware that this way we cannot fully make use of the richness of the data set and the statistical possibilities. We run a two-level random-coefficient complementary log-log model where person-years are nested within countries and the effect of partnership experience is allowed to vary between countries (random coefficient).

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Even though the timing of first home-leaving differs across Europe, there is considerable similarity in young adults' behaviour (Figure 1). The median ages range from 19 years in the Nordic countries to 24 years is Spain; however, they fall between 19 and 21 years of age in 19 countries. People in Northern Europe leave the parental home at the youngest age, followed by Western, the Eastern and then the Southern countries. The inter-quartile range (i.e. the length of the range between the first and the third quartile, between the ages when one forth and when three forth of the risk population left) is an indicator of the heterogeneity of life course trajectories. Heterogeneity is by far the

lowest in Northern Europe, it is moderate in the Western states and relatively high in the East and the South.

Figure 1. Quartiles of age at first home-leaving by countries and country groups (estimates of Kaplan-Meier survival curves)

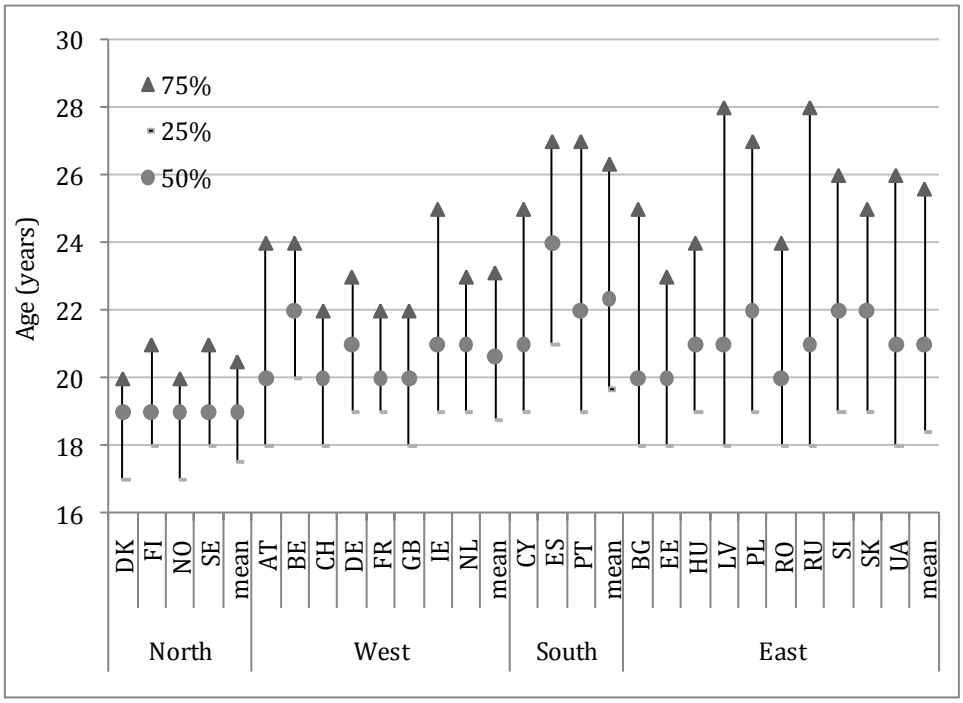


Table 2 shows results on the sequencing of first home-leaving and first union. Leaving the parental home before establishing the first cohabiting union is the majority behaviour in all the Northern European states, as well as in several other countries including Switzerland, Ireland and the successor states of former USSR, while it is relatively rare in the South, in Belgium and in the remaining countries in the Eastern group. Very few women move together with a partner in the parental home in the Northern, Western and Southern states, while it is relatively more common in the post-communist countries.

Data indicate that the home-leaving behaviour of women in different parts of Europe really differs and the observed patterns are in line with results from previous research. The Nordic countries form a very homogeneous group and are characterised by relatively early home-leaving and highly homogeneous life course trajectories. The relationship between union formation and nest-leaving is the weakest: about two thirds of the respondents left home before entering their first union, and the rest experienced both events in the same calendar year.

Table 2. The order of leaving the parental home for the first time and first cohabiting union by counties and country groups (%)

Country groups	Countries	Leaving before first union	In the same year	First union before home-leaving	Total
North	DK	70,4	26,5	3,2	100,0
	FI	62,7	33,9	3,4	100,0
	NO	74,6	23,8	1,6	100,0
	SE	67,1	32,0	0,9	100,0
	Total	68,5	29,3	2,2	100,0
West	AT	44,9	46,3	8,8	100,0
	BE	24,4	72,7	2,9	100,0
	CH	66,3	31,3	2,4	100,0
	DE	48,5	44,6	6,9	100,0
	FR	49,9	46,7	3,4	100,0
	GB	48,7	48,2	3,0	100,0
	IE	56,1	41,8	2,1	100,0
	NL	47,1	50,3	2,6	100,0
	Total	47,8	48,0	4,3	100,0
South	CY	31,5	62,1	6,4	100,0
	ES	27,8	67,4	4,7	100,0
	PT	23,4	73,5	3,1	100,0
	Total	26,8	68,9	4,4	100,0
East	BG	32,2	48,3	19,5	100,0
	EE	60,7	28,2	11,1	100,0
	HU	20,4	64,4	15,3	100,0
	LV	53,6	35,4	11,0	100,0
	PL	33,9	50,5	15,6	100,0
	RO	42,9	47,7	9,3	100,0
	RU	49,4	36,9	13,7	100,0
	SI	37,1	48,7	14,2	100,0
	SK	28,5	56,9	14,6	100,0
	UA	55,6	30,3	14,1	100,0
	Total	41,2	45,1	13,7	100,0
Total		47,3	45,5	7,2	100,0

Note: includes only those respondents who have already experienced both events

Home-leaving takes place 1-2 years later and behaviour is less homogeneous in Western than in Northern Europe. On the average, every second woman synchronizes the events of moving away from her parents and moving together partner, and the other half of the respondents leave before their first union.

The Southern European pattern is characterised by postponed home-leaving and a high level of coupling between partnership formation and home-leaving. The two events take place in the same calendar year in about two thirds of the cases. Young women who do

not establish their own household and their first union in the same year typically start to live independently before partnership formation.

The last group is the largest and also the most heterogeneous, but clearly differs from the above patterns in some important ways. Even though the ages when 25% and 50% of young women already left home is similar in the East and in the West, people who leave the latest tend to postpone this event as much in the East as in the South. The average inter-quartile range is 1.5 years in Northern, 2.5 years in Western, 4 years in Southern and 4.6 years in Eastern Europe. Regarding the ordering of life course events in the Eastern countries, about 41% of women leave the parental home before starting to cohabit with a partner and about 45% does the two things in the same year. These figures are only a little lower than the ones observed in Western Europe. However, the unique feature of the post-communist countries is that about every seventh women started their first cohabiting partnership while they still lived in the parental household.

4.2 Regression Models

Results of the two-level random coefficient model with complementary log-log link are presented in Table 3. The baseline hazard of home-leaving is the highest between the ages 18 and 25, about 40% lower for respondents aged 14-17 and 26-29 and very low for people who are over 30. Cohort differences can be found only in the two oldest cohorts: women born in the 1930s and the 1940s had a lower hazard of home-leaving than women who were born later. Having completed only primary education is associated with a lower and having a tertiary degree is with a higher hazard. The education level of the parents of the respondent has an effect above the effect of the person's own schooling: daughters whose parents have completed secondary education have the lowest nest-leaving hazard. Women who did not live with their mother at the age of 14 (either because she had died or left) are more likely to leave than women from intact families. Moreover, mothers have a lower hazard than childless women, and having entered the labour market has a positive effect on home-leaving.

Table 3. Maximum likelihood estimates of the relative hazard of home-leaving

		exp(b)	P>|z|
Age categories	14-17	0,607	0,000
	18-25	1	ref.
	26-29	0,615	0,000
	30-35	0,284	0,000
Cohort	1930-39	0,751	0,000
	1940-49	0,878	0,002
	1950-59	1	ref.
	1960-69	0,997	0,946
	1970-79	1,388	0,328
Highest level of education	primary or less	0,757	0,00
	secondary	1	ref.
	tertiary	1,388	0,00
Highest level of education of parent(s)	primary	1,08	0,005
	secondary	1	ref.
	tertiary	1,126	0,001
	missing	0,936	0,315
Childhood family background	intact family	1	ref
	no mother	1,189	0,029
	no father	0,934	0,088
Childbirth	childless	1	ref.
	has at least one child	0,242	0,000
Work experience	has not worked	1	ref.
	worked	1,910	0,000
Cohabitation experience	has not cohabited	1	ref.
	cohabited	32,46	0,000
Age if cohabited (interaction)	14-17	3,461	0,000
	18-25	1	
	26-29	0,405	0,000
	30-35	0,333	0,000
Cohort if cohabited (interaction)	1930-39	1,247	0,002
	1940-49	1,146	0,035
	1950-59	1	
	1960-69	1,054	0,402
	1970-79	1,036	0,590
Country group if not cohabited	West	1	ref.
	North	2,257	0,000
	South	0,384	0,000
	East	0,760	0,099
Country group if cohabited	West	1	ref.
	North	0,523	0,119
	South	2,609	0,035
	East	0,337	0,001
Random part			SE
Variance	level2 (country)	0,438	(0,128)
Variance	level1 (person-year)	0,118	(0,035)
Covariance		-0,174	(0,060)
Log likelihood	-34449,702		

Entering a cohabiting union significantly raises the hazard of leaving the parental home, more than any other variable in the model. The effect of partnership is the highest in the youngest age group and also higher in the cohorts born before 1950 than in younger cohorts. The effect of partnership experience varies across countries and country groups. The negative group intercept-slope covariance implies that countries with higher-than-average home-leaving hazard tend to have a weaker relationship between union formation and home-leaving. Coefficients for the country groups show that the effect of partnership formation is the highest in Southern Europe and lower in Eastern Europe than in the West and the North.

The partnership status variable entered into several interaction terms, what makes the interpretation of the coefficients difficult. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the estimated hazard ratios of broken down by age group, cohort and country group. The other covariates take the value of the reference categories. Figure 1 shows the hazard of home-leaving for the spells when the respondent lived with a partner, Figure 2 refers to spells when the respondent did not live in cohabiting union.

Regarding differences between country groups, the effect of union formation on home-leaving hazard is by far the highest in Southern and the lowest in Eastern Europe and it is basically the same in the other two groups. For people who do not live with a partner, the hazard of leaving is the highest if they live in Northern Europe. It is lower in the West and the East and the lowest in the South.

Figures 2-3 clearly indicate that the proportionality assumption is violated: the effect of partnership formation on the hazard of home-leaving is not constant across age group. When someone lives with a partner, the hazard sharply decreases with age. When someone does not live in a union, the hazard has a reversed U-shape. Values are the highest in the age group of 18-25. It is also visible that including an interaction term with cohort did not add much to the model, especially when the respondent lives with a partner. The home-leaving hazard of singles rose between people born in the 1930s and 1950s but remained stable later on.

Figure 2. Estimates of the hazard of home-leaving by age group, cohort and country group for spells when respondent lived with a partner

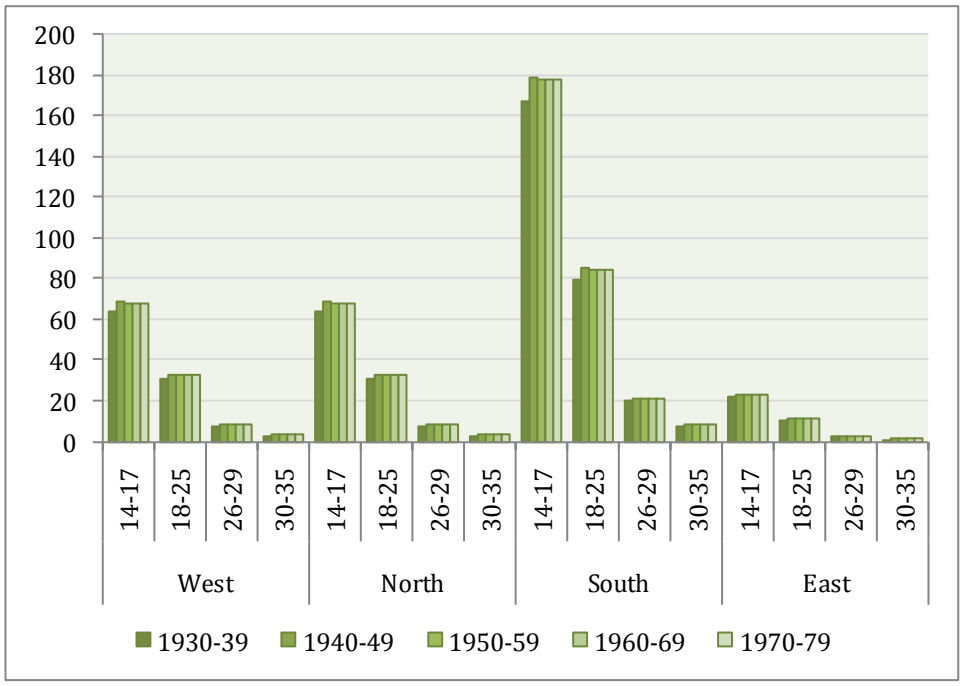
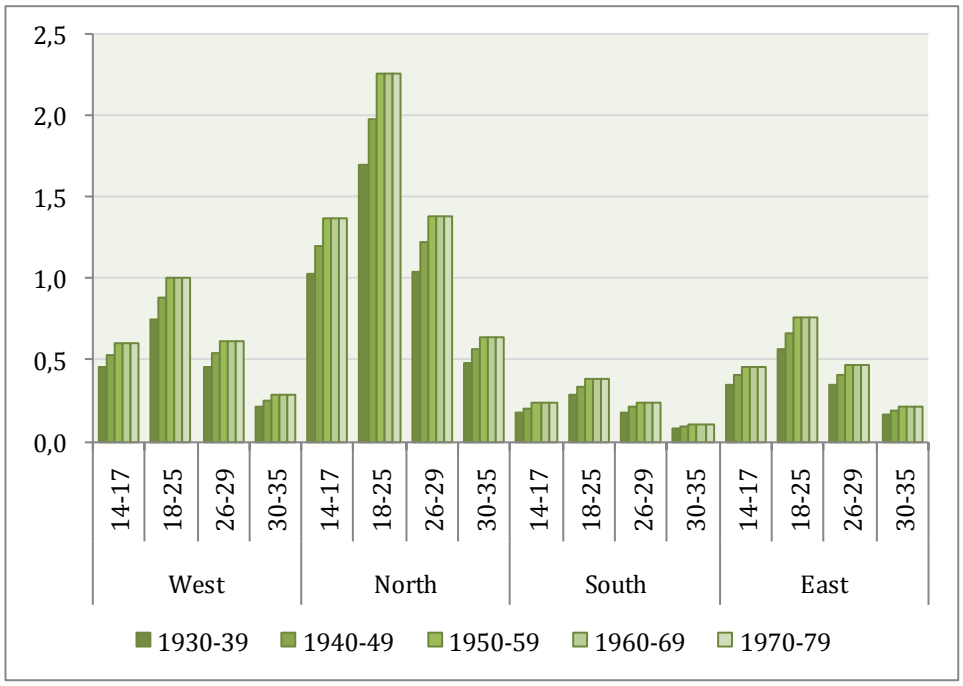


Figure 3. Estimates of the hazard of home-leaving by age group, cohort and country group for spells when respondent did not live with a partner



5 Discussion

In the present paper we analysed the relationship between leaving the parental home for the first time and entering the first cohabiting union in 25 European countries.

We found evidence for that the relationship between partnership formation and first nest-leaving differs across Europe. The home-leaving behaviour of women in different parts of Europe differs and the observed patterns are in line with results from previous research.

The Nordic countries form a very homogeneous group and are characterised by relatively early home-leaving and highly homogeneous life course trajectories. The relationship between union formation and nest-leaving is the weakest: about two thirds of the respondents left home before entering their first union, and the rest experienced both events in the same calendar year. Home-leaving takes place 1-2 years later and behaviour is less homogeneous in Western than in Northern Europe. On the average, every second woman synchronizes the events of moving away from her parents and moving together partner, and the other half of the respondents leave before their first union.

The Southern European pattern is characterised by postponed home-leaving and a high level of coupling between partnership formation and home-leaving. The two events take place in the same calendar year in about two thirds of the cases. Young women who do not establish their own household and their first union in the same year typically start to live independently before partnership formation.

The group of the post-communist countries is the largest and also the most heterogeneous. The median age of home-leaving is similar to the one in Western Europe but people who leave the latest tend to postpone this home-leaving as much in the East as in the South. Regarding the ordering of life course events, the unique feature of the Eastern countries is that about every seventh women started their first cohabiting partnership while they still lived in the parental household.

The results of multilevel discrete-time survival analysis indicate that entering a cohabiting union significantly raises the hazard of leaving the parental home, more than any other variable in the model. The effect of partnership is the highest in the youngest age group and also higher in the cohorts born before 1950 than in younger ones, while leaving for other reasons than partnership is the highest between ages 18-25.

The effect of partnership status varies across countries and country groups. Countries with higher-than-average home-leaving hazard tend to have a weaker relationship between union

formation and home-leaving. The effect of union formation is the highest in Southern Europe, followed by Western and Northern Europe and it is the lowest in the post-communist countries. These findings differ from our hypothesis in the sense that we found a lower effect in the Eastern countries than expected. The similar overall home-leaving intensity in the South and the East may be explained by the fact that while the effect of union formation is lower in the East, singles have a higher hazard of leaving than in the Mediterranean countries.

We found only partial support for the increasing de-coupling of union formation and home-leaving. The home-leaving hazard of young women with no co-resident partner rose for the 1930s and 1950s cohorts but remained stable later on. Moreover, in the Nordic countries, where the two events are the least related young people leave at the youngest age – contrary to what the theory of second demographic transition implies.

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