

## Call for Papers

# **Education and Work: (Un-) equal Transitions** **with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe**

Conference organized by the Institute for the Study of Societies and  
Knowledge and the University of Basel

Thursday-Friday, **24-25 September 2015**

**Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Sofia, Bulgaria**

*Keynote Speaker: Prof. Dr. Irena Kogan*

Educational transitions and school-to-work transitions have been the subject of numerous analyses in national and comparative social research. Young people's passages from education to employment have become increasingly uncertain in Europe where the international financial crisis has disproportionately affected the job prospects of the young generation. The challenges of labour market integration include high youth unemployment but also higher shares of temporary work contracts, increased education-job mismatch and unequal opportunities for young workers. The labour market difficulties young people face have led to fears of a 'lost generation' in some European countries. More applied forms of education are often considered as a solution for precarious employment conditions. Similarly, the processes of access to and completion of higher education has received growing attention, not least due to considerable labour market insecurities of university graduates in the context of higher education expansion.

These changes have reshaped the educational and labour market experiences of young people, their transitions within education and from education to work, and their career prospects. However, there is great cross-national diversity not only with respect to the educational and economic performance of young people, but also in terms of how the educational systems are designed and linked to the labour market structures.

The conference aims to bring together scholars working on the outlined issues in education and labour markets, including researchers investigating the role of inequalities based on gender, social background, ethnicity and place of residence (e.g. urban vs. rural regions) in these transitions. The conference focuses on the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries but papers on other countries are welcome too. Educational transitions and school-to-work transitions in the CEE countries have not been systematically analyzed, yet such research is of key relevance. In particular, the role of the education system is considered increasingly important in structuring school-to-work transitions with the consolidation of the labour markets. Recent comparative studies of school-to-work transitions in CEE countries highlight the efficiency of vocational education and training for labour market entry. While previous research on Western Europe has emphasized firm-based vocational training as key for promoting smooth school-to-work transitions, research on CEE countries - where school-based vocational education and training proves similarly efficient - calls these institutional explanations into doubt. Hence, there are lessons to be learned from CEE countries for international transition research.

The conference seeks contributions on the following three topics:

### **Educational Transitions**

There are various institutional pathways that education systems offer to their students. Scholars have made comparisons in terms of permeability, the quality of education and schooling, and the differences between general and vocation-oriented education. Studies have also investigated educational reforms and structural changes in the education sector which provide new opportunities while also posing novel risks for students.

Relevant research questions may include: *How are educational transitions constrained and/or enabled by institutional and socio-economic contexts? What are the effects of regional disparities (nationally or internationally defined) on educational transitions? How does social origin impact the educational transitions in Central and Eastern Europe? What are the direct and indirect effects of academic achievement on educational outcomes? What are the impacts of institutional and individual factors on early school leavers / dropouts? What are the patterns of diversity and stratification in the access to higher education institutions? What are the various institutional pathways and non-traditional routes to higher education? How is the access to higher education shaped by different types of secondary schools?*

### **School-to-work Transitions**

Research has explored how the educational structures and organizations shape labour market integration. In particular, the institutional linkages between schools and the labour market are relevant. In this regard, the diversity of school-to-work outcomes between school leavers with

vocational and general schooling as well as between graduates with lower and higher education has received growing scholarly attention.

These are some questions of interest: *What are the important educational determinants explaining job (in-) security? What are the causes for and effects of the education-job mismatch? How does the first job shape mid- to long-term job opportunities? Does vocational education (school vs. company based) serve as a safety net for disadvantaged youth? What is the extent of gender segregation in school-to-work transitions? What are the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder social mobility? How does the transition into the first job shape young people's personal autonomy and independent life? How does international mobility in education and work shape occupational careers? How significant are transferable skills (language, IT, and other soft skills) on employment prospects? What about of work-to-school transitions, that is, transitions from work to further studies and advanced training?*

### **Labour Market Inequalities and Policy Responses**

The risks of unemployment, an education-job mismatch, or temporary work are not the same for all young people. Temporary work may consist of new 'non-standard' forms of employment in comparison with traditional categories of part-time and temporary employment (e.g. work without or with inadequate contracts in CEE countries). Hence, there is much diversity in the employment experiences of young adults and substantial cross-national differences exist in the policy measures aimed at the integration of young people into the labour market.

These trends could be captured by the following questions: *How do young people cope with unemployment experiences? How do integration measures and labor market policies affect youth employment and the reintegration of the unemployed? How do work contracts shape work and employment experiences? What are the regional patterns of the uncertainties Europe's youth face entering their first jobs? How does gender impact youth employability? How does family leave affect career and re-integration opportunities? What does empirical data tell us about the job quality and career outcomes of young people with different social backgrounds? How does ethnicity shape job prospects? What are the employers' preferences with regard to different qualifications and individual characteristics of young job applicants?*

We welcome empirical and theoretical contributions on the above outlined and related areas of research. Especially welcome are contributions on Central and Eastern Europe, studies that are of comparative nature, and research that offers a gender perspective on inequalities in education and work.

In addition to the academic sessions, the conference will also include a policy / stakeholder roundtable. Further conference details (including accommodation and travel information, registration fees, and a preliminary conference schedule) will be announced in May 2015.

Submit your abstract via email to [franziska.bieri@unibas.ch](mailto:franziska.bieri@unibas.ch) **no later than 31st March 2015**. Abstracts should be about 1000 words in length and written in English. Please include the abstract together with the working title and the author information in one attached Word or PDF document. Letters of notification will be sent out by 15th May 2015.

The Conference Committee looks forward to receiving your submissions.

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*The Conference "Education and Work: (Un-) equal Transitions" is organized by participating scholars in the project "Social disparities and regional differences in school-to-work transitions in Bulgaria" within the Bulgarian-Swiss Research Programme (BSRP). For more information please visit [www.schooltowork.bg](http://www.schooltowork.bg).*