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1 Introduction

Although there are signs of recovery, young people's labour market situation has remained particularly grim. In 2015 the youth unemployment rate for the 28 countries of the European Union was at 20% meaning that every fifth young person had difficulties in participating in the productive economy. In some countries young people were even more affected by unemployment. In the same year the youth unemployment rate was above 30% in Cyprus and Portugal, and above 40% in Greece, Spain, Croatia and Italy. Some countries, however, also recorded considerably lower youth unemployment rates, such as Germany, Iceland, Norway, Austria and Denmark (Eurostat, 2016).

Due to changed labour markets and the introduction of flexible work arrangements young people's transition from school to work has been subject to deep transformations (Silbereisen & Schoon, 2009, pp. 3–4). Transitions have increasingly been prolonged, fragmented and de-standardized. Today, it is not uncommon that young people start their professional career by shifting several times between education, non-standard employment and unemployment (Eurofound, 2014, p. 12). The diversification of transition patterns provides young people with greater opportunities to create their own individual trajectories. At the same time, however, the risk of marginalisation and social exclusion has increased (Walther, 2009, p. 121).

The transition from school to work is part of a wider transition to independent adulthood, which includes moving out from the parental home, cohabiting with a partner and having children. It is a time filled with many new demands but it does not guarantee effective entitlement to the full range of citizenship rights. It, thus, appears that there is a need to place a stronger focus on young people's human rights. Particularly relevant for young people is the right to autonomy. It draws attention on young people's possibilities to appropriate their own life course, to establish themselves as independent citizens and to exercise their human rights (European Youth Forum, 2012).

Moving from young people's lived experiences, the aim of the present thesis is to get a deeper understanding of the factors that empower young people and the factors that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. For this purpose a quantitative, empirical study was carried out among 160 young adults living in Rome and in Vienna. Since youth without employment represent a particularly vulnerable group, the study focused on this labour market position. Moreover, two cities were taken into consideration since the context considerably shapes the enablements and constraints that young people encounter in the transition from school to work (Kazepov, 2005).

In the subsequent two chapters the methodology of the study and the theoretical background are presented in detail. Chapter 4 provides insights into the interviewed young people's living conditions. Particular emphasis will be placed on discussing the possibilities that young people have to gain autonomy and independence in the two cities. Chapter 4, then, turns to young people's subjective well-being. The analysis explores which factors empower young people on a subjective level and which factors conversely increase their vulnerability.

The focus of Chapter 5 lies on young people's free-time activities, their life objectives and their career orientations. The results will provide indication about the space of action that the interviewed young people had in the two cities. Moreover, it will be possible to discuss what the respondents desired for themselves in their future professional life course. Attention is also paid on how young people's resources were associated with their life objectives and career orientations.

By drawing together the results, the Discussion will further elaborate on the factors that empower young people and the factors that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. In this regard, particular attention will be paid on similarities and differences between the two contexts. Moreover, based on the findings of the study some elements will be identified that would contribute to increase young people's possibilities to autonomously shape their own life course, to participate in society and to exercise their human rights.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Young people's transition from school to work

Traditionally, young people's transition from school to work followed linear patterns (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 32). Finishing education and entering the labour market succeeded each other seamlessly. Moreover, also other passages in a young person's life such as moving out from the parental home, living with a partner and having children followed a sequential order. The point of reference of these transition patterns was the standard life course model, which presupposes three different life phases: schooling, employment and retirement. This tri-partition "was centred around the equation of work with (...) citizenship - in the adult life stage" (Walther, 2005, p. 117).

Young people's transition experiences, however, have been subject to deep transformations. In particular, it appears that for many young people it is getting more difficult to enter stable full-time employment straightaway. Instead, transitions are characterized by long first time job searches as well as multiple shifts between education, non-standard employment and unemployment (Eurofound, 2014, p. 12; Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 5). The literature speaks of 'de-standardized', 'protracted' as well as 'fragmented' transitions. Starting and end points have become less clear while the possible routes in-between have diversified. In this connection it needs to be highlighted that school-to-work transitions are interlinked with other passages on a young person's path to adulthood. So, for example, a precarious occupational situation can carry over to other life spheres and make it difficult for young people to establish themselves as independent citizens (Silbereisen & Schoon, 2009, p. 10). Transitions "have also become reversible", as young people might have to withdraw steps that were previously taken due to changed circumstances (Walther, 2009, p. 123).

In the context of de-standardized transitions two factors, which are related to processes of individualization, appear at the same time: "choice and risk" (Walther, Bechmann Jensen, & Moerch-Hejl, 2002, p. 4). Young people are required to plan and shape their biographies by themselves, which involves risks and uncertainty but also new

possibilities and opportunities. So, for instance, “people must take individual decisions for or against certain educational and training routes, for or against flexible jobs offered to them by the employment services, for or against leaving home early or late” (...) (Walther et al., 2002, p. 4). This can be a productive experience as it allows young people to pursue alternative and individual trajectories. At the same time, however, it needs to be seen that the greater variety of possible routes does not mean that structural constraints have lost their relevance. Indeed, the literature underlines that not all young people dispose of the same resources “to master the risks and to use the chances in a successful and satisfying way” (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 6).

School-to-work transitions, however, are not only influenced by individual decisions but also by the wider socio-economic conditions (Silbereisen & Schoon, 2009, p. 3). In particular, it appears that factors such as the technological innovation, globalization, and the decline of manual work led to rising unemployment and more flexible work arrangements. Young people as labour market outsiders are particularly affected by these developments (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills, & Kurz, 2005). Their vulnerability emerges also in relation to the recent financial and economic crisis in Europe. During the crisis, “youth unemployment increased disproportionately with respect to the overall unemployment level” (Aassve, Cottini, & Vitali, 2013, p. 5). Studies, moreover, document an increasing polarization in youth transitions: some young people have the opportunity to access good education and, consequently, stable segments of the labour market, whereas others are confronted with problems of marginalisation or even social exclusion (Bynner, 2005, p. 375; I. Schoon, McCulloch, Joshi, Wiggins, & Bynner, 2001, p. 19). Repeated or prolonged unemployment as well as precarious employment are seen as particularly risky. In addition, other factors such as poor family background, dropping out from education or low educational achievement can determine an accumulation of disadvantages (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 6).

To sum up, many young people no longer experience linear transitions from school to work in which finishing education or training and entering the labour market follow each other smoothly. Instead, transitions are characterized by multiple shifts between education, non-standard employment and unemployment. For some young people this

period of life represents an opportunity to acquire additional skills and work experience before entering stable full time employment. For others, however, repeated or prolonged unemployment and non-standard employment can become a trap. In fact, many studies show that a precarious occupational situation substantially increases the risk of marginalisation and social exclusion (Castel, 2000; Kronauer, 2010).

2.2 Social inclusion and exclusion

In the 1950s T. H. Marshall conceptualized modern citizenship as the progressive expansion of civil (18th century), political (19th century) and social rights (20th century) (1977). He was particularly interested in social rights because they reduce people's dependence from the market and guarantee that all members in society dispose of enough resources to exercise their civil and political rights. In this connection it is interesting to note that Marshall defined the social element of citizenship in a very broad way. In his words it refers to the "whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live a life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society" (1977, p. 78). Indeed, the decades after World War II brought about the increasing realization of social citizenship rights in European countries. High growth rates, near full-employment and the further development of welfare and social security determined that living conditions were becoming more similar to each other (Kronauer, 1998, p. 52). Moreover, by integrating increasing numbers of citizens into paid jobs protected by the social security system it was possible to mitigate the risks and the uncertainties that individuals face over their life course. Although poverty and unemployment could not be completely eliminated, they could be considered residual (Castel, 2000, p. 526). This time was afterwards referred to as 'the glorious thirty' or 'the golden age of capitalism'. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the panorama started to change. Poverty was growing and unemployment was turning from frictional to structural (Kronauer, 2010, p. 16). Moreover, welfare states were increasingly subjected to financial as well as political pressure. In different countries the term social exclusion was introduced to describe these deep transformations, which were affecting Western societies. The term social exclusion implies not only a return of poverty and unemployment. It brings also to the

fore that unemployment and poverty can cause a new polarization within society and that this polarization manifests itself in limited opportunities to participate in important life spheres (Kronauer, 2010, p. 13). In the literature it is argued that the term social exclusion gained prominence because new standards regarding the possibilities but also the responsibilities of societies to guarantee the material and social well-being of their members developed in the first decades after World War II (Kronauer, 2010, p. 17). The point of reference shifted from absolute deprivation to an enriched understanding of citizenship, participation and democracy.

The multidimensionality of the concept

Social exclusion manifests itself across several dimensions of life. A good starting point to better grasp what social exclusion means for the individual is to consider the theoretical framework developed by Kronauer (1998, 2010). According to him social exclusion arises from the interaction of five different dimensions: exclusion on the labour market, exclusion from social and family networks, economic exclusion, institutional exclusion and cultural exclusion. Although these dimensions refer to different life spheres, they are highly interdependent. In particular, exclusion in one dimension can lead through the accumulation of disadvantages to exclusion also in other dimensions. This is also brought to the fore by the notion that human rights in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural sphere are interrelated and interdependent (OHCHR, 2016). The deprivation of rights in one sphere can affect a person's possibilities to realize his or her rights in other spheres as well. Analogically, the enjoyment of rights in one sphere can enhance the realization of rights in other spheres as well. In the following the different dimensions identified by Kronauer are discussed in more detail. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which inclusion and exclusion in these different spheres manifests itself in the lives of young people.

Exclusion from the labour market refers to the impossibility to enter the formal labour market. In modern societies wage employment represents the most important source for social recognition (Castel, 1996). The function of work goes beyond having an income since it gives people opportunities to be in contact with others, to learn and to grow on a

personal level (Eurofound, 2013, p. 48). There are social alternatives to waged employment such as being in education or retiring after many years of work. These alternatives, however, are available only for certain groups of people and in certain life phases. Labour market exclusion leads to social exclusion when there are no status alternatives; moreover, the risk of social exclusion increases with the duration of unemployment (Kronauer, 2010, p. 151). Although unemployment can come about abruptly, it more often results from a precarious career. In the words of Castel “the dynamic of unemployment has its roots in insecure work, moving from one training scheme or casual work to another and then into more or less prolonged inactivity, often leading to unemployment or even withdrawal from the labour market” (2000, p. 527). This could be confirmed by a study from Eurofound about young people’s transition from school to work: “when employment becomes less standard (other than full-time permanent employment), the probabilities of leaving employment clearly increase” (2014, p. 61). In addition, the study reveals that there is a strong state dependency in labour market statuses: young people who have been unemployed are at greater risk of becoming unemployed again (Eurofound, 2014, p. 61).

Social and family networks are an important resource for young people who are in a precarious occupational situation. In fact, studies show that emotional and financial support from family and friends can be a crucial protective factor against social exclusion (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001). Moreover, personal networks can help young people to overcome their situation, for example, by providing information about the labour market. At the same time, however, it needs to be underlined that a precarious occupational situation can exert stress on a person’s network. In particular, prolonged unemployment “can result in a reduction of social contacts (...) or in a concentration of contacts in a small circle of peers who are in the same disadvantaged position” (Kronauer, 1998, p. 65).

Economic exclusion means that a person can no longer provide for herself. In this regard it is necessary to consider that economic exclusion is a “social, relational category” (Kronauer, 1998, p. 63). It does not only refer to poverty in the strict sense i.e. not having the means for subsistence but also to the impossibility of living a life

similar to one's peers (see cultural exclusion). A precarious occupational situation in the transition from school to work, however, can be cushioned in several ways. Family support, for instance, can reduce feelings of economic exclusion. Moreover, also the available financial support from state institutions plays a role. In fact, a person's income does not only depend on the market but also on the redistributive capacity of welfare states (Kronauer, 2010, p. 146).

Institutional exclusion can be brought about in different ways. A first institution that needs to be considered is the education system. Vocational and educational qualifications are playing an ever-increasing role in determining young people's life chances. Although education systems on a declarative level are committed to equal opportunity, they can be considered a stratification system of their own right (Treptow, Järvinen, & Kobolt, 2015). So, for instance, many education systems still foresee the tracking of pupils at an early age or dead-end pathways. Moreover, not all young people enjoy the same support by their families, who can indirectly by promoting and supporting their offspring control their progression in the education system (Hurrelmann, 1989, p. 7). A second institution that can bring about institutional exclusion in the lives of young people is the social protection system. Many social security rights, such as unemployment benefits, are tied to employment (Evers & Guillemard, 2013, p. 15). This means that in order to be eligible for them it is necessary to have been in insured employment for an adequate period of time. Due to prolonged first time job searches, but also atypical employment contracts it can be difficult for young people to qualify for this work-centred rights. Particularly in countries with high youth unemployment rates this can be problem. Another development that is affecting young people is that many entitlements both for unemployed and uninsured people are being reshaped through activation. Beneficiaries are encouraged to engage in active job search behaviour and to participate in courses or training in order to increase their employability "in exchange for welfare benefits" (Leppänen, 2014, p. 1). Although the underlying idea of activation policies is to support beneficiaries' (re-)integration in the labour market and, thus, to decrease their dependence from welfare institutions, they are ambivalent in many ways. By putting individuals' behaviour, skills and competences at the centre of attention, activation policies imply a shift of focus from the structural level

(i.e. lack of jobs or apprenticeship places) to the individual level (i.e. lack of employability) (Leppänen, 2014). This makes beneficiaries individually responsible for “success or failure” in finding a job (Walther, 2006, p. 122). At the same time, activation increases the margin of discretion of social service administrators since benefits are not administered via a right but made conditional upon active job search or participation in courses or training. Activation policies, thus, determine a rebalancing of rights and duties. A last remark is that dependency from welfare institutions can lead to stigmatization and feelings of discrimination. This is particularly the case for those services that stem from the social assistance tradition. Institutional support can, therefore, lead to the paradoxical situation of excluding unemployed people while including them (Kieselbach, Beelmann, Stitzel, & Traiser, 2001, p. 31; Kronauer, 2010, p. 177).

Cultural exclusion refers to the inability “of living according to the socially recognized and dominant patterns of behaviour, life orientations, and values” (Kronauer, 1998, p. 64). As young people grow older their leisure time activities change. In particular, commercial leisure such as travelling or going to the cinema gains increasingly in importance. Marginalization may occur when young people cannot due to limited financial resources participate in activities which play a central role in the lives of their peers (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, p. 59). Research about poverty and unemployment has shown that a frequent strategy to deal with this inability to live up to dominant life goals is to attach less importance to them. This, however, does not mean that these goals do not play a role anymore in one’s life, but rather represents a response to the discrepancy between dominant life goals and one’s own possibilities to realize them (Kronauer, 2010, p. 190). Another aspect is that uncertainties and risks in late modernity demand from young people to adopt more flexibility and mobility oriented life strategies. Yet, these new strategies with regard to time and space are not open for all young people to the same extent. As noted by Leccardi, especially young people “with meagre social and cultural resources seem to suffer most from the loss of modernity’s progressive future and traditional forms of project creation” (2008, p. 126).

As mentioned above social exclusion arises from the interaction of different dimensions, such as exclusion from the labour market, exclusion from family and social networks, economic exclusion, institutional exclusion and cultural exclusion. An important aspect is that exclusion in one dimension does not yet imply social exclusion. So, according to Kronauer, “exclusion from the labour market is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for social exclusion” (2010, p. 45). This is particularly relevant for the analysis of the transition from school to work. In fact, it can be assumed that a precarious occupational situation (i.e. unemployment or non-standard employment) does not have the same meaning for all young people (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 16). Strong family or social ties can protect young people without employment against social exclusion. Similarly, better educated youth may experience their situation differently than young people with not many educational resources. Also, young people who can afford to lead a life similar to that of their peers might feel included in society despite their precarious occupational situation. So, young people’s social inclusion/exclusion stems not only from their occupational situation, but also from other factors and resources. The concept of social inclusion/exclusion, thus, requires consideration of different dimensions of a person’s life.

Income, living conditions and subjective well-being

The framework developed by Kronauer shows that social inclusion and exclusion touches upon many different life spheres. Yet, it does not provide information on how social inclusion/exclusion can be captured empirically. After presenting different approaches, the following section will highlight that the analysis of social inclusion/exclusion requires taking into consideration different sources of information.

One of the ways to reveal the hardship that is induced by unemployment or a precarious occupational situation is to focus on income and wealth. Historically poverty was measured narrowly in terms of minimum incomes that are necessary for subsistence. Peter Townsend, however, showed that “people’s needs, even for food, are conditioned by the society in which they live and to which they belong” (1979, p. 38). So, he proposed to define poverty not in absolute terms but in relation to the standards of

consumption and participation that are prevalent in a given society. In particular, in his work he found that there are levels of income below which “families find it particularly difficult to share in the customs, activities and diets comprising their society’s style of living” (1979, p. 60). Townsend’s approach, therefore, brings to the fore that poverty does not only refer to the lack of basic needs, but that it can exclude people from the style of living that is seen as normal and acceptable in a given society (Kronauer, 2010, p. 169).

Increasingly, however, it has been recognized that income alone does not provide a complete picture of people’s lives. For this reason broader approaches were developed to measure people’s welfare or quality of life. One of them is the ‘level of living’ approach in the Swedish welfare research. According to this approach people’s resources include income and wealth but also education, mental and physical energy, social relations and security. Access to resources is thereby seen as a prerequisite for the individual to be able to “control and consciously direct” one’s own living conditions (Erikson, 1993, p. 73). The latter are measured through objective indicators, which means that individuals are not asked to subjectively evaluate but to describe their living conditions. Researchers of this tradition are suspicious of subjective evaluations since according to them they express the extent to which people “adapted to their present conditions” (Erikson, 1993, p. 77).

Another concept that developed as an alternative to measure welfare or quality of life solely through income is the ‘subjective well-being’ approach. In this tradition quality of life is determined by subjective well-being, which reflects people’s own perception and evaluation of their lives (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 16). Subjective well-being is the outcome of one’s own living condition but also of “processes of comparison with past experiences, futures expectations, living conditions of relevant others as well as the availability of resources such as cultural capital and social networks” (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 16). To measure subjective well-being positive components such as happiness and life satisfaction as well as negative components such as stress and worries are taken into consideration (Zapf, 1987). Some of the measures ask people to evaluate their life as a whole; others focus on specific life spheres.

Rather than opposing each other, today the overall consensus is that the two sources of information – objective living conditions and subjective well-being – complement each other (Noll, 2004). Allardt, for example, integrated the two perspectives in his ‘having, loving, being’ approach. ‘Having’ refers to material and impersonal needs, ‘loving’ to social needs and ‘being’ to needs for personal growth. These three spheres of human needs are evaluated by using both objective as well as subjective indicators (Allardt, 1993, p. 93).

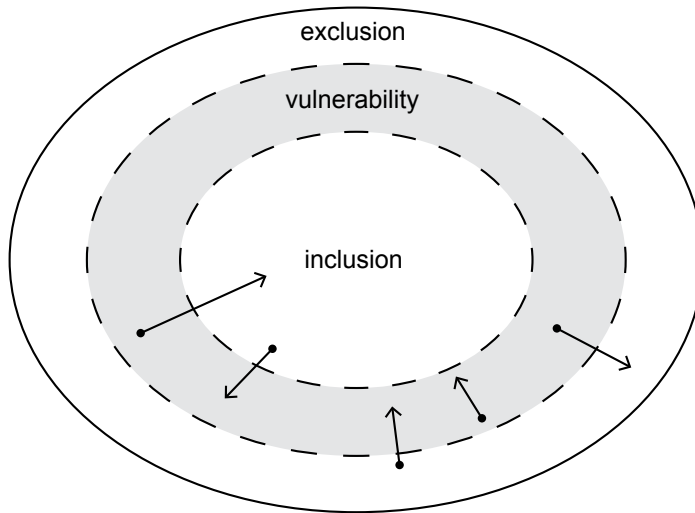
The previous discussion highlights that people’s material standard of living needs to be considered in the study of social inclusion and exclusion since income below a certain level can prevent people to participate in society according to “culturally defined standards of living” (Kronauer, 2010, p. 63). However, people’s material standard of living should be only one indicator among others. Education, employment, housing, partnership, friendship and leisure time are other important aspects that reflect people’s inclusion or exclusion on an objective level. Especially the Swedish ‘level of living’ approach contributed to broaden “the quality of life concept beyond purely economic resources” (Eurofound, 2010, p. 6). Moreover, welfare or quality of life depends also on people’s subjective perceptions and evaluations. Inclusion on a subjective level is associated with positive subjective well-being, i.e. feeling happy and satisfied and being able to cope well with life. Conversely, marginalisation on a subjective level is related to negative subjective well-being, i.e. not feeling happy and satisfied and having difficulties to cope well with life. Relevant for the study of social inclusion and exclusion, however, are not only the observed outcomes. It is also necessary to consider how different factors, for example individual resources or contextual factors, influence people’s living conditions and subjective well-being (Eurofound, 2010, p. 7). Such analyses provide insights into the processes that lead to social inclusion or exclusion.

Inclusion and exclusion as a process

Social exclusion needs to be understood not only as a state but also as “the extreme limit of a process” (Castel, 2000, p. 524). Following Castel, this process leads from the ‘zone of inclusion’ (permanent work and strong social relationships), through the ‘zone

of vulnerability' (instable work and fragile social relationships) to the 'zone of disaffiliation or exclusion' (absence of work and dissolution of social relationships) (2000). As shown in Figure 2.1 "the boundaries between the zones are porous" (2000, p. 525). Even though one's situation can change abruptly, more often inclusion or exclusion results from long processes that involve the accumulation of advantages or disadvantages. These processes, however, are strongly influenced by the context in which individuals are embedded. Institutions, in particular, can be seen as mediators between forces on the macro level and responses on the individual level (Mills & Blossfeld, 2005, p. 6). According to Scott "institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience and are composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott, 2010, p. 6). Institutions influence processes of inclusion and exclusion since they: "(...) provide a structured context for action. On the one hand, their constraints (normative, cognitive and regulative) limit and modify the free play of interactions; on the other, they provide resources for actions to take place. In other words, they define through complex social interactions borders, i.e. in-out relations" (Kazepov, 2005, p. 8). Institutional arrangements, which refer to "the relative importance and connections of key institutions", vary greatly across countries (Lee, 2014, p. 716). Thereby, the specific institutional arrangement in a given country determines which people are particularly at risk of social exclusion. Institutions that are frequently taken into consideration in the analysis are the welfare state, the market and the family. In this picture the welfare state plays an important role: "(...) the state establishes the prominence of the political by linking the different institutions through its policies, which explicitly (through rights and duties, resources distribution, and so on) or implicitly (e.g., without intervening in or regulating specific issues) define the responsibilities of the other institutions, their obligations and constraints on the one side and the rewards and opportunities on the other" (Kazepov, 2005, p. 11).

Figure 2.1 Inclusion and exclusion as a process (adapted from Kieselbach, Beelmann, et al., 2001, p. 30)



2.3 Citizenship rights and human rights

The two-fold nature of citizenship

One of Marshall's main merits in the 1950s was to show that social and material well-being is a necessary precondition for people to be able to participate adequately in society. Social rights guaranteed by the (welfare) state should, thus, reconcile the "tensions between capitalism (inequalities) and democracy (equal citizenship)" (Reinprecht, 2012, p. 52). Citizenship as conceived by Marshall, however, is closely related to people's participation in the labour market. Marshall wrote: "Of paramount importance is the duty to work, but the effect of one man's labour on the well-being of the whole society is so infinitely small that it is hard for him to believe that he can do much harm by withholding or curtailing it" (1977, p. 129). One of the reasons why Marshall considered work primarily from a duty perspective is that at the time – at least for the male population – jobs were not lacking. Elsewhere he states: "(...) the essential duty is not to have a job and hold it, since that is relatively simple in conditions of full employment, but to put one's heart into one's job and work hard" (1977, p. 130). However, as pointed out by Kronauer, building the edifice of social rights on wage employment entails both in theory and in practice a serious construction problem (2010, p. 91), which becomes particularly visible in relation to young people's transition from

school to work. In the context of favourable macroeconomic conditions young people could expect that they find a stable and full time job after finishing education or training and that their citizenship rights are realized in the adult life stage (Walther, 2005, p. 117). Due to the introduction of new technologies, globalization and the decline of manual work increasing numbers of young people, however, no longer experience linear transitions from school to work. Rising unemployment but also flexible work arrangements dramatically changed young people's employment opportunities (Silbereisen & Schoon, 2009, pp. 3–4). So, although young people are formally endowed with the same citizenship rights as everyone else, it is often difficult for them to achieve effective entitlement. A difficult access or partial integration in the labour market can translate into lower levels of security and protection (Evers & Guillemard, 2013, p. 16). This is particularly evident in relation to social rights, which require minimum periods of employment, such as unemployment benefits. Moreover, the reshaping of transition and labour market policies in activation logic can increase young people's individual responsibility while reducing their possibilities to make their voice heard. Ultimately, unemployment or precarious employment does not only undermine young people's social rights, it also has repercussions on their broader participation and inclusion in society (Muižnieks, 2014, para. 1).

Promoting young people's inclusion through human rights

As noted above the demise of linear transitions from school to work and changed labour market opportunities can adversely affect young people's participation and inclusion in society. Moreover, the difficult situation of young people has been further exacerbated due to the recent financial and economic crisis in Europe. But not only the crisis, also the responses to the crisis increased young people's vulnerability. So, for example, it has been shown that "the countries that experienced the strongest fiscal tightening, have also experienced the highest increases in youth unemployment" (European Youth Forum, 2014, p. 7). These different developments require looking for a common language that is suitable to promote young people's well-being and their possibilities to participate in society. One of the most promising ways forward in this regard is to reach to the language of human rights. So, for instance, Nils Muižnieks, the current Council of

Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, draws on different data about young people i.e. the youth unemployment rate, the share of young people not in education, employment or training (so-called NEETs) and the fact that youth is the age group most at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union to advocate for youth policies based on human rights (2014, 2016). In contrast to citizenship rights, human rights “are given to people on account of their humanity” (Douzinas, 2009, para. 7). They move from the premise “that all people are entitled to a certain standard in terms of physical, mental and social-wellbeing” (European Youth Forum, 2012, p. 2). As such they can unveil national or local forms of inequality and social exclusion, but their function goes beyond that. Indeed, human rights can be seen as a call for action, as a source to promote institutional change and as a possibility to re-imagine (global) citizenship (Morris, 2012; Sen, 2007).

Human rights and the welfare system

Welfare systems developed to guarantee the social and material well-being of citizens. Yet, they are based on the tri-partition of the life course (Evers & Guillemard, 2013, p. 7). So, one of the questions that arise spontaneously is the extent to which welfare systems consider the needs of young people. In this connection in a recent report the European Youth Forum – the principal voice of youth organizations in Europe – invokes the human rights framework to argue that “we are in need of a forward-thinking approach to ensure new safety nets for young people in a changing European labour market, and a changing global society” (2016, p. 3). Challenges that according to the European Youth Forum make such an approach necessary are the inclusion of young people with migration background, the de-standardization and the increasing delay of youth transitions and the emergence of new work arrangements. Human rights are, thus, a powerful tool to address young people’s welfare and their inclusion in society.

Human rights and young people’s autonomy

When it comes to promoting young people’s human rights, the specific life phase in which young people find themselves needs to be considered. As described in section 2.1 young people are confronted with many demands, which they increasingly have to

master by themselves. As such they are confronted with new responsibilities, while they do not yet have access to the full range of citizenship rights. For this reason the European Youth Forum is striving for the adoption of a Convention on the Rights of Young People¹ (2012, p. 4). A right that is seen as particularly important for young people is the right to autonomy. It can be argued that autonomy implies “an active understanding of (...) human rights” (Reinprecht, 2012, p. 53). It allows young people to become the authors of their own lives and to act and bring about change according to their own objectives. Autonomy, however, depends also from the support received by other actors, agencies and institutions. Among others the following aspects can be considered to play a role: the support available to establish one’s own household, young people’s access to the labour market, welfare, housing and financial institution as well as more broadly young people’s possibilities to fully participate in society (European Youth Forum, 2012, p. 9). In this connection it is necessary to note that a given institutional arrangement might not have the same influence on all young people (Lee, 2014, p. 716). Young women and men or young people with and without migration background might achieve different individual outcomes. From a human rights perspective it is, thus important to assess how a particular institutional arrangement shapes the freedom to take decisions and perform actions of different individuals and groups. Ultimately, this requires starting from the young people themselves and to find out what empowers them and what, on the contrary, discourages them or hinders them on their path to independent adulthood.

2.4 The context

Moving from an active understanding of human rights, the research interest of the present thesis is to shed light on the conditions that empower young people and the conditions that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. The study adopts a comparative perspective and focuses on the lived experiences of young

¹ Although in June 2011 a major step was reached with the adoption of Recommendation 1978 (2011) ‘Towards a Framework Convention on the Rights of Young People’ by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the reply by the Committee of Ministers in this regard can be considered to be more hesitant.

people in Rome and in Vienna. This permits an analysis of how the context influences young people's opportunities to shape their own life course, to establish themselves as independent citizens and to exercise their human rights. In the following the institutional and structural context in the two cities will be presented. Subsequently, previous comparative research about young people's transition from school to work will be discussed.

The institutional and structural context in Rome

In Italy youth unemployment is high among all educational levels due to structural problems inherited from the past and the recent financial crisis. In 2015 the youth unemployment rate was at 40% for the under 25 years olds² (ISTAT, 2016). The school system in Italy can be considered as unstratified (Mills & Blossfeld, 2005, p. 10). Since unifying lower secondary education in the early 1960s, children and young people attend 8 years of schooling all together. There are various upper secondary education streams but all of them provide access to university. Vocational training under the remit of the Regions is not particularly standardized. In the Region of Lazio vocational training takes mainly place in schools. Compulsory education in Italy lasts for 10 years but "young people have the 'right/duty' to pursue their education and training for at least 12 years before reaching age 18" (CEDEFOP, 2014, p. 22). The main course of action since the 1990s to reduce unemployment and to increase productivity and growth has been to infuse the labour market with greater flexibility. Different reforms – the most recent one dates back to last year – introduced non-standard employment contracts, facilitated dismissals and decentralised wage bargaining processes (Fana, Guarascio, & Cirillo, 2016). Young people as labour market outsiders are particularly affected by non-standard employment contracts. So, for example, "the share of young people employed with a temporary contract tripled from 20% to 60% over the period 1998-2015" (Fana et al., 2016, p. 82). In Italy unemployment benefits are of limited duration and tied to prior insured employment. In March 2015 the Italian government

² The youth unemployment rate by educational level ranged from 33% for young people with tertiary education up to 38% for those with upper secondary education, 46% for those with lower secondary education and 68% for those with primary education or no education (ISTAT, 2016).

modified the unemployment benefit system: “it linked payments more closely to contributions and slightly increased their coverage” (Iudicone & Arca Sedda, 2015). For young people, however, it is often difficult to meet eligibility criteria due to the high youth unemployment rate, non-standard employment that is not well integrated in the social security system and work in the informal economy. Moreover, there are no defined minimum benefits for uninsured people in need on the national level in Italy: “Each region and municipality, acting in accordance with regional legislation³ and depending on the available budgetary resources, implements its own policies (...)” (European Commission, 2013). Since most young people are not entitled to benefits by the welfare system, the basis for active labour market policies is quite limited in Italy (Fargion, 2013; Pohl & Walther, 2007). However, based on the Council Recommendation of the 22 April 2013 the Region of Lazio established a ‘Youth Guarantee’ programme. Young people aged between 15 and 29 that are not in education, employment or training can sign up for this programme at the public employment service. The aim of the programme is to provide young people valid opportunities in terms of traineeships, apprenticeships or courses within four months. Although the programme can be seen as an activation measure since young people commit to take advantage of the opportunities offered, it does not provide financial incentives. Throughout Rome there are four ‘regular’ offices of the public employment service. Moreover, in 2010 the public employment service opened additional offices within universities in order to become a stronger reference point for young people in the transition to work. The precarious material living situation of many young people in the transition from school to work is cushioned by their families. As noted by Ferrera, the family can be seen as a “social clearinghouse, mediating the difficult relationship between a variegated labour market and equally variegated income maintenance systems” (Ferrera, 1999, p. 21). Families have to shoulder these caring responsibilities to a large extent by themselves, for example, “through low divorce rates” and “low single households” (Kazepov, 2008, p. 259).

³ For a detailed description of the devolution of competences in the field of social policies in Italy and the differentiation of rights along territorial lines see Kazepov (2008).

The institutional and structural context in Vienna

Compared to other EU countries the youth unemployment rate in Austria is relatively low. In 2015 Austria recorded 11% for the under 25 year olds (Eurostat, 2016). The Austrian school system can be considered to be selective (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 41). Children and young people are channelled into different educational tracks after the fourth and after the eighth school year. At the same time, the dual apprenticeship training guarantees strong links between the education system and the labour market. Career guidance services, which aim at helping young people to discover the right occupation for them, play an important role in Austria (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2014b, p. 73). So, for example, the ‘career counselling centres’ of the public employment service not only provide assistance to individual young people but also offer special services to schools. To date compulsory education in Austria lasts 9 years, the ‘right/duty’ to pursue education or training until the age of 18 will be introduced this year (Der Standard, 2016). Labour market flexibilisation in Austria did not result “from a direct attack on employment standards and security” (Hermann & Flecker, 2015, p. 196). It rather emerged as a response to changed employment practices (Hermann & Flecker, 2009, p. 35). However, also in Austria “non-standard employment is associated with specific groups in the population: women and young people⁴” (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 7). As in Italy also in Austria access to benefits paid by the unemployment insurance scheme are conditional upon prior employment. Unemployment benefits are of limited duration whereas unemployment assistance can be claimed by people in financial need for an unlimited period of time after expiry of entitlement to unemployment benefit (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2014a, p. 50). Moreover, the means-tested minimum income scheme, which was introduced in 2010/2011, represents a last safety net for uninsured people. It provides for uniform eligibility criteria and uniform minimum standards throughout the country (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs

⁴ Data elaboration by Eurofound, however, suggests that young people in Austria are not affected to the same extent by non-standard employment as young people in Italy (2014, p. 41). In 2011 73% of school-leavers in Austria who were employed one year after graduation held a permanent full time contract. In Italy, this was the case for only 26%.

and Consumer Protection, 2014a, pp. 79–80). The other side of the coin, however, is that in Austria over the years an extensive and differentiated set of active labour market policies developed (Atzmüller, 2009, p. 30). Activation of the unemployed is pursued through the stipulation of individual action plans, the obligation to proof to be actively searching for a job and the mandatory participation in different measures. The latter include job application and personality development trainings, but also measures that aim at increasing people's occupational qualifications. Information and counselling is seen as an important element to make sure that unemployed people adequately evaluate their possibilities on the labour market and adapt their job search processes accordingly (Atzmüller, 2009, p. 30). There are also measures targeted directly at young people. The 'Future for Youth Action programme' guarantees that all young people under 24 receive an offer of employment, targeted training or a subsidized job within 6 months after registering at the public employment service. Most other measures, however, are conceived for youth of a younger age. The 'Vocational Training Guarantee', for example, ensures that young people under 21 who cannot find a company-based apprenticeship have the possibility to complete a vocational qualification within a supra-company apprenticeship facility⁵. Moreover, there are many transition measures which aim at supporting young people to develop adequate plans for their future (e.g. the 'Youth Coaching' programme) or preparing so-called disadvantaged youth to enter regular training (e.g. production schools) (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2014b). Also in the Austrian welfare state families have an important role of their own. However, due to more generous services by the welfare state they are not left on their own.

Comparative research about school-to-work transitions

To reduce social complexities it has become quite popular in the social sciences to group countries according to overall rationales. According to these groupings Vienna

⁵ Supra-company apprenticeship trainings are an active labour market policy measure since young people need to register as unemployed in order to qualify for these trainings, their compensation is paid by funds of the public employment service and the primary aim remains to find a company-based apprenticeship (Haidinger & Kasper, 2012).

belongs to a country with an employment-centred transition regime. Rome, instead, belongs to a country with a sub-protective transition regime (Walther & Pohl, 2005). Table 2.1 provides a summary of the characteristics of these two transition regimes. Some of the characteristics were already described in the previous section; others are further discussed in the following paragraphs based on comparative research about school to work transitions.

Some studies consider the overall performance of transition structures based on quantitative indicators (Eurofound, 2014). These studies highlight that in countries, which are attributable to the employment-centred transition regime, young people's school to work transition is rather smooth and quick (Eurofound, 2014, p. 44). Strong links between the education system and the labour market guarantee most young people an unproblematic entry into the world of work. Moreover, access to paid work makes it possible for young people to gain independence also in other life spheres. Transition events such as moving out from the parental home, living together with a partner or having children occur comparatively early in young people's life courses. Different dynamics, however, are observed in countries that are characterized by a sub-protective transition regime. Transitions from school to work are rather lengthy and difficult (Eurofound, 2014, pp. 46–47). Moreover, many of those who succeed in entering the labour market are employed through non-standard work contracts. Due to young people's problematic entry and attachment to the labour market, their freedoms are reduced also in other life spheres. Young people live longer in the parental home and start their own household and have children later in life.

Rather than concentrating on the overall performance of transition structures, other predominantly qualitative studies analyse young people's experiences on a subjective level (Walther, 2006, p. 120). The focus lies on how the context in which young people are embedded influences their possibilities to autonomously shape their own life course. Particular attention is paid on the experiences of young people that cannot immediately enter regular pathways. These studies highlight that in employment-centred transition regimes the selective school system and the standardized vocational training system reproduce a labour market, which is “divided into (...) a protected core (...) and less

protected peripheries (Walther, 2006, p. 128). Although the majority of young people succeed in entering the protected core of the labour market, risks emerge at the margins for those young people that cannot find a training position or a job. Their difficulties, however, are not interpreted as structure related problems (i.e. there are not enough training places or jobs) but in terms of “learning and social deficits” (Walther, 2006, p. 128). Young people are then channelled into remedial schemes, such as pre-vocational training, which “aim at compensation for these deficits” (Walther, 2006, p. 128). These studies, thus, point out that employment-centred transition regimes offer little choices and margin of action to those who are left behind. Moreover, tensions can be created between the strong demand to follow standard trajectories and young people’s lived experiences. In sub-protective transition regimes youth unemployment is more widespread and affects young people of all educational levels. Youth unemployment is, consequently, seen as related to causes on the structural level such as “socio-economic transformation, de-industrialisation or economic dependency, a situation where it is not the individual who is blamed in the first place” (Walther et al., 2002, p. 23). Due to long waiting phases in the transition from school to work and little financial support by the state, many young people are dependent on the support from their families. Next to the family, however, other informal agents such as friends and non-profit organizations also play an important role (Walther, 2006, p. 134). The latter offer young people opportunities to experiment, to try out their capacities and to discover their interests in a safe environment. Success is defined in a broad way since “inclusion into any system” is seen as an achievement (Walther, 2009, p. 139). According to these studies it can, thus, be argued that the sub-protective transition regime opens up “spaces of action beyond stigmatization” (Walther, 2006, p. 136). However, these spaces of action depend on the extent to which young people’s “families can afford to cushion long periods of waiting and/or experimentation” (Walther, 2009, p. 139). Thus, inequalities can emerge along traditional lines such as class, gender or ethnic background.

Another qualitative study that focused explicitly on the relationship between youth unemployment and the risk of social exclusion comes to similar findings (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001). Risks are higher for young people in countries that belong to the employment-centred transition regime than for young people in countries that

belong to the sub-protective transition regime. In particular, family cohesion reduces feelings of social isolation and economic exclusion in sub-protective transition regimes. While young people in sub-protective transition regimes hardly have access to institutional support by the state, the latter seems to produce feelings of poverty (economic exclusion) and discrimination (institutional exclusion) in employment-centred transition regimes. The findings, moreover, suggest that young people in employment-centred transition regimes are more vulnerable to psychosocial stress (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001, p. 23).

Table 2.1 Overview of transition regimes (Walther, 2006, p. 126)

	Sub-protective transition regime	Employment-centred transition regime
School	Not selective	Selective
Training	Low standards and coverage	Standardized
Social security	Family	State/family
Employment regime	Closed, high risks, informal work	Closed, risks at the margins
Concept of youth	Without distinct status	Adaption to social positions
Concept of youth unemployment	Segmented labour market, lack of training	Disadvantage (deficit model)
Concept of disadvantage	Structure related	Individualized
Focus of transition policies	Some status: work, education or training	(Pre-)vocational training

2.5 Objectives of the study

Departing from young people's lived experiences in Rome and Vienna, the present study attempts to shed some light on the following research questions:

- What relationship is there between the context in which young people are embedded and their possibilities of gaining independence and autonomy?
- Which factors empower young people on a subjective level? Which factors, instead, increase their vulnerability? What influence does the context have?
- Are there any differences in terms of the space of action that young people have in the transition from school to work between the two cities?

3 Design of the study

The results of the study are based on face-to-face interviews with young adults in Vienna and in Rome using a standardised questionnaire. The study focused on young people who at the time of the interview were not in employment. It is important to keep in mind that being unemployed in this life phase can have different reasons. Young people might be on their first job search, they might experience spells of unemployment between fix-term contracts or they might be unemployed after losing their job. Moreover, the meaning it has for a person to be unemployed varies according to life phase. This survey included young people between 18 and 29. The upper age limit of 29 was chosen in order to be able to look also into the transition experiences of young adults who completed higher education, since youth unemployment is high among those of all educational levels in Italy. In Austria transition measures focus on guiding youth towards suitable training and are directed primarily to young people under 21. A broader demarcation of the age range youth, thus, provides valuable and less explored insights into the Austrian context as well.

3.1 Data collection: sampling strategy and field work

The survey used a non-proportional quota sampling method to select survey participants. One third each of the interviewed young people should have completed (1) primary education, lower secondary education or vocational training, (2) upper secondary education and (3) tertiary education. Furthermore attention was paid to having an adequate distribution in terms of gender and citizenship within the sample. Not included in the survey were young people immediately after finishing or dropping out from education or training; their last qualification or discontinuation had to date back at least three months.

Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy. Since the probability that an element will be drawn from the population is unknown, non-probability samples are not considered to be statistically representative of the population (Bailey, 1994, pp. 93–94). Based on non-probability samples it is, thus, not possible to estimate distributions in the population. This means, for instance, that based on the sample of the present study it is

not possible to say how many young people in Rome and in Vienna had a paid job after finishing education or training, but only how many of the interviewed young people had one. Carefully constructed non-probability samples, however, can be representative for the social phenomena under investigation (Gobo, 2004, p. 453). Such samples are, thus, considered an adequate strategy to analyse the relationship between different variables. So, for instance, in the context of the present study it is possible to find out which variables (e.g. educational level, income, etc.) empower or increase young people's vulnerability on a subjective level. Such an analysis, consequently, aims at gaining knowledge about the nature of processes.

The fieldwork in Rome was carried out in May 2015. The vast majority of the interviews in Rome were conducted inside the public employment office located in the 7th sub-municipality of Rome (CPI Cinecittà). Young people could be approached and asked for an interview in the waiting room of the public employment office. Moreover, on several occasions it was possible to present the study to young people that were attending an information seminar about the 'Youth Guarantee' programme. Young people interested in participating in the survey stayed after the seminar or returned for the interview. Another spot where interviewees were recruited was in front of the service 'Porta Futuro' in the 1st sub-municipality. Set up by the Metropolitan City of Rome⁶ and supported by the European Social Fund, this service aims at facilitating the encounter between labour supply and demand. The area in which 'Porta Futuro' is located attracts many young people since it hosts also the service 'Informagiovani', museum and university off-sites as well as a historical and a fair trade market. Additionally, interviews were also conducted in front of the Job Guidance Centre in the 7th sub-municipality, which is a service by the local government providing information about education and training opportunities and the local labour market. However, only a few interview partners matching the criteria of the study could be recruited in this location.

⁶ The Metropolitan City of Rome replaced on the 1st of January 2015 the Province of Rome and comprises next to the capital city of Italy other 121 municipalities.

Data collection in Vienna took place in June and July 2015. The interviews were conducted in the employment office for youth (AMS Jugendläche) in the 6th district and in the employment office in the 3rd district (AMS Esteplatz). In the former it was possible to cover the age range 18 to 21 and in the latter the age range 22 to 29. Moreover, a ‘career information centre’ is located in both employment offices where people of all age groups can get information about professions as well as work and training opportunities. Employment offices are organized in a three-zone-structure: the ‘info zone’ where general information and self-service facilities are provided, the ‘service zone’ where clients registered as unemployed and seeking for a job are offered placement services and benefit claims processing and the ‘counselling zone’ where clients needing more intensive counselling are referred to. For the study young people who were waiting for their turn or appointment in the different zones of the two employment offices as well as those visiting the respective ‘career information centres’ could be asked for an interview. Most of the interviews were, then, for privacy reasons held in a separate room. A few interviews were also conducted in the employment office in the 10th district (AMS Laxenburgerstraße). However, when the work started in this location, the target of around 80 interviews was almost reached.

3.2 Description of the sample

The total number of respondents was 160: 51% (n=82) of the interviews were conducted in Rome and 49% (n=78) in Vienna. Key characteristics of the sample are documented in Table 3.1. The survey achieved an acceptable balance between female and male respondents in both sub-samples. Whereas respondents are almost equally distributed among all educational levels in Vienna, young people with upper-secondary and tertiary education are over-represented in the Roman sub-sample. This reflects the difficulty encountered during the fieldwork in Rome in reaching young people with primary education, lower secondary education and vocational training. In both sub-samples there is an equal share between respondents that reported that they and their parents have the country’s citizenship and respondents that indicated that they and/or their parents have a different citizenship. The latter group in the Roman sub-sample originates from a multitude of different countries: Asian countries, such as Bangladesh

and the Philippines, African countries, such as Ivory Coast, Senegal and Eritrea, South American countries such as Ecuador and Peru and finally European countries such as Romania, Albania and Spain. In the Viennese sub-sample most of the young people that reported that they and/or their parents have a different citizenship had their origins in older EU countries, such as Germany and Italy, in newer EU countries such as Poland, Hungary and Romania, in European countries, such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine as well as in Turkey. The countries in the sample cover the most important communities that are present in the two cities (Centro Studi e Recherche IDOS, 2014; Statistik Austria, 2015). Respondents' age and the time since completing the last school or vocational qualification follow similar distributions in the two sub-samples.

Table 3.1 Description of the sample (percentages)

	Rome (n=82)	Vienna (n=78)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	44	53
Male	56	47
<i>Level of education</i>		
Primary, lower secondary education and vocational training	24	35
Upper secondary education	38	31
Tertiary education	38	35
<i>Respondent and parents citizen of the country</i>		
Yes	63	64
No	37	36

3.3 The questionnaire

Questionnaire development and translation

The questionnaire is based on a previous empirical study on the transition from school to work carried out in Vienna in 1999 (see Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002). The questions and different sections of the questionnaire were adapted to the research objective of the present study and translated into Italian. In order to obtain an instrument that is suitable for both Vienna and Rome, adaptation and translation were carried out in parallel. For the translation reference was made to Italian questionnaires that deal with

similar topics such as the ‘Indagine statistica sull’inserimento professionale dei laureati (survey about the employment conditions of graduates)’ by the Italian National Institute of Statistics and to multi-lingual international surveys such as the ‘European Quality of Life Survey’ or the ‘European Social Survey’. Furthermore, to make sure that the Italian questionnaire reads naturally, two bilingual people reviewed the translation and gave inputs regarding question and response wording as well as question ordering. Before starting the fieldwork test interviews were carried out using both the German as well as the Italian version of the questionnaire. The average length of an interview was 30 minutes.

Overview of the questionnaire

The questionnaire comprised four thematic areas:

Firstly, respondents were asked about their living conditions (living arrangement, family and partnership, income) and their subjective well-being (happy and satisfied with life, stress). In this connection information about their social background was also collected. Secondly, their education (level of education, changes or drop outs from school or vocational training) and employment biography (first job, difficulty and method of finding this job) was surveyed. In this regard, respondents were also asked about the support received by parents, friends and teachers. The survey, then, comprised a series of questions about the respondents’ present situation (duration of unemployment, job searching processes, retraining/courses, subjective evaluation of the situation). Lastly, questions about young people’s attitudes and orientations were included, for example, regarding life objectives or career aspirations.

3.4 Data analysis

The collected data was analysed using the statistical software SPSS. In a first step, the data from the two sub-samples was summarized descriptively. So, for example, frequency tables with simple counts and percentages were created. In a second step, the data was analysed using the following statistical methods:

Correlation analysis

Through correlation analysis it is possible to find out whether there is a relationship between two variables, for example, between income and young people's well-being. The two variables can be related in three different ways, positively, negatively or not at all. Correlation coefficients lie between -1 and +1. A value of +1 indicates a positive relationship, meaning that increases in one variable are accompanied by proportional increases in the other variable. Conversely, a value of -1 indicates a negative relationship, meaning that increases in one variable are accompanied by proportional decreases in the other variable. A value of 0 indicates that the two variables are not related one to another. The tables in the result chapters report only significant positive and negative effects, i.e. effects that are different enough from zero that it is possible to assume that they did not occur by chance. With regard to interpretation it is important to note that correlation coefficients do not provide any information about the direction of causality. This means that even if two variables correlate, it is not possible to say "which variable causes the other to change" (Field, 2009, p. 174).

Exploratory factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical method to discover if different variables "group together into underlying factors" (Eurofound, 2010, p. 19). These groups are identified by looking for variables that correlate highly with each other but not with other variables. High correlations among groups of variables suggest that these "could be measuring different aspects of the same underlying dimension" (Field, 2009, p. 628). Factor analysis, thus, aims at reducing a larger set of variables to its underlying dimensions, which are known as factors. The relative importance that a variable has for a given factor is described by the factor loading, a number between -1 and + 1. Ideally, as noted by Andy Field, variables should have high loading only for one factor and low loadings for all other factors (2009, p. 632). Based on the variables that load highly onto a factor, the researcher has to assess whether "the mathematical factor produced by the analysis represents some real-world construct" (Field, 2009, p. 666). Frequently used cut-offs for high loadings are $\pm 0,4$ or $\pm 0,5$. In the result chapters factor analysis is used for two

purposes: firstly, to identify different response patterns between the interviewed young people in Rome and in Vienna; secondly, to discover how variables group together in order to create synthetic variables.

Reliability analysis

When new synthetic variables are created based on a factor analysis, it is important to make sure that the new measure is reliable. According to Andy Field “reliability means that a measure (...) should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring” (2009, p. 673). If a new synthetic variable composed of three items is created to measure stress, then a person with low stress should not only have low scores on the overall measure but on each of the three items. The reliability of a synthetic variable can be assessed using the split-half method. After dividing randomly the items composing a measure into two, the score for each respondent on both halves is calculated. If a measure is reliable, then the scores on both halves should correlate across respondents in a sample. The correlation coefficient, however, can be influenced by the way the items are divided. For this reason a measure was developed “that is loosely equivalent to splitting the data in every possible way” and calculating the average correlation coefficient (Field, 2009, p. 674). This measure, known as Cronbach’s Alpha, was used in the results chapters to assess the reliability of synthetic variables. The values of Cronbach’s Alpha lie between 0 and 1, and as a general guideline values around 0,70 are considered to be good.

Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis is used to get a deeper understanding of the relative importance that several predictor variables have for an outcome variable. The coefficients of the predictor variables (b-values) indicate to what extent each predictor variable affects the outcome, while controlling for the effects of all other variables (Field, 2009, p. 238). Predictor variables that significantly contribute to explaining variability in the outcome variable have a b-value that is significantly different from 0. Interpretation of the b-values, however, is not easy because the unit of measurement of the predictor variables influences them. For this reason it is better to look at the

standardized versions of the b-values, known as beta-values, which are “directly comparable” (Field, 2009, p. 239). SPSS provides not only information about each predictor variable, but also about the fit of the regression model as a whole. So, for example, R squared indicates how much variance in the outcome variable is accounted for by the predictor variables included in the analysis. On the one hand, multiple regression analyses were carried out for the two sub-samples separately. This allows discovering if an outcome variable, for example ‘well-being’, is affected by different factors in the two cities. On the other hand, multiple regression analyses were carried out for the whole sample. In these analyses the city where the young people were living i.e. Vienna or Rome was included as a dichotomous variable among the predictors. This allows finding out if there is an independent effect of the city in explaining differences in a given outcome variable.

4 Living condition and well-being

4.1 Young people's living conditions

The following section provides insights into the interviewed young people's living condition. In a descriptive way their employment history and their current situation in terms of duration of unemployment, income, living arrangement and social relationships are discussed. The analysis focuses on how the context in which the interviewed young people were embedded is reflected in their lived realities. Furthermore, particular emphasis is placed on young people's possibilities to achieve autonomy and independence.

Transition from school to work

Half of the respondents in Rome (49%) reported that they had a paid job after finishing education or training (or dropping out from education or training). The other half (51%), on the contrary, declared that they never had a paid job. Hence, at the time of the interview the young people in the latter group were searching for their first job. Among those who were previously employed, 15% found that it was very difficult and 35% that it was rather difficult to find their first job. The remaining 50%, instead, recalled that it was rather not or not at all difficult. The survey, furthermore, reveals that 43% had a full-time job, 40% a part-time job and 10% an occasional or marginal job. 8% reported other forms of employment such as on call jobs. An important issue related to the labour market entry is also the method used by young people to find their first job. For the interviewed young people in Rome both networks and formal channels played an important role. So, 28% found their first job through friends and acquaintances, 10% through parents or relatives, 20% through spontaneous applications and 18% by replying to a job advertisement. Interestingly, 8% also mentioned less common methods to find a job. So, for example, one respondent found his or her job through the church and another respondent while waiting in a doctor's waiting room.

In Vienna the vast majority of the interviewed young people (87%) reported that they had a paid job after finishing education or training (or dropping out from education or

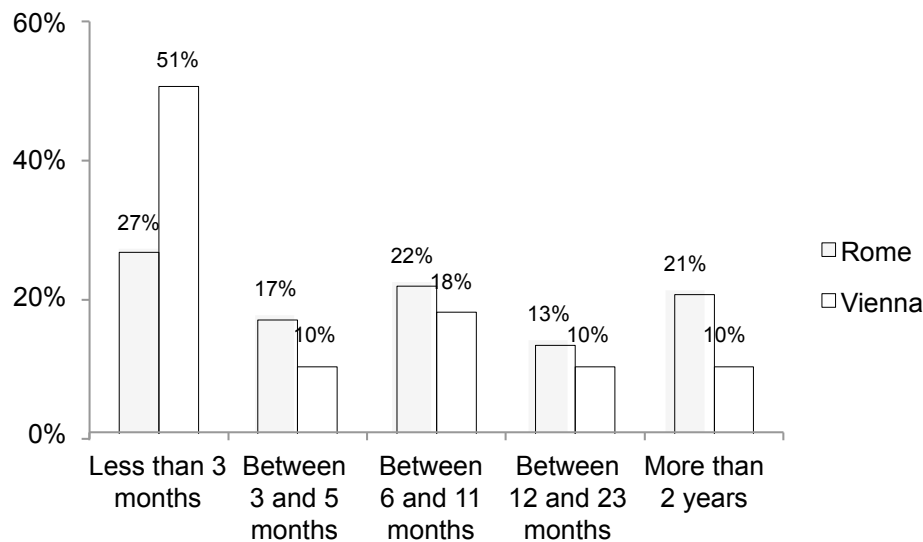
training). Only 13% indicated that they never had a paid job. While a proportion (30%) of those who were previously employed found it very or rather difficult to find their first job, 70% reported that it was not so or not at all difficult. The majority (59%) of them had a full-time job, 22% a part time job, 13% an occasional or marginal job. Also in Vienna most of the interviewed young people found their first job through formal channels and networks: 37% found it by replying to a job advertisement or through a spontaneous application and 32% through friends, parents or relatives. In addition, in Vienna also education and training institutions played a role since 10% of the interviewed young people reported that they have found their job through these institutions.

To sum up, the survey reveals that the two interviewed groups faced different realities in the transition from school to work. Among the respondents in Vienna a higher percentage had a paid job after finishing education or training. This reflects the different labour market entry patterns in the two countries, which are frequently reported in the literature (Eurofound, 2014). For many young people in Austria school to work transitions are rather smooth and quick, while they are more protracted and difficult in Italy. Correspondingly, among those who had a paid job, in Vienna a higher percentage reported that it was not so or not at all difficult to find it. Interesting to note is that for many interviewed young people in both cities the first job was not a full-time job. In Rome 58% reported that they were part-time, occasionally/marginally or in some other form employed. In Vienna the percentage amounts to 41%. Non-standard employment contracts are frequently introduced to ease the entry of labour market outsiders. However, they are less integrated in the social security system and often undermine young people possibilities to attain a “solid labour market attachment” (Eurofound, 2014, p. 60). A last observation is that the methods used by the interviewed young people to find their first job were quite similar in the two cities with networks and formal channels figuring most prominently. The only exception being that education and training institutions played a more marked role among the interviewed young people in Vienna.

Duration of unemployment

Being unemployed represents a precarious occupational situation; however, the duration of unemployment varied between the two interviewed groups. While in the Viennese sub-sample every second young person was unemployed for less than three months, this applied only to approximately every fourth young person in the Roman sub-sample. Altogether it emerges from Figure 4.1 that the duration of unemployment was longer among the interviewed young people in Rome than those in Vienna. This reflects the fact that in sub-protective transition regimes, such as the one in Italy, school-to-work transitions are characterized by long waiting phases (Scherer, 2005; Walther, 2006). Not being able to find a job, however, can have various detrimental consequences for young people. So, for example, it can affect their employment prospects and increase their vulnerability to social exclusion. Particularly worrying, however, is the situation of young people that are unemployed for more than 12 months. This was the case for 34% of the interviewed young people in Rome and for 20% of the interviewed young people in Vienna.

Figure 4.1 Duration of unemployment



Income situation

The interviewed young people were asked to indicate their primary source of income and if applicable also one or more additional sources of income. Table 4.1 summarizes the responses. For the interviewed young people in Rome financial support from parents, odd jobs and informal jobs played an important role both as a primary and as an additional source of income. Savings were also frequently mentioned as a supplementary source. Among the respondents in Vienna, unemployment benefit/assistance and other social security benefits represented together with formal work⁷ major sources of income. Moreover, also savings, financial support from parents and odd jobs were often reported as additional sources of income.

The collected data bring to the fore that more than half of the interviewed young people in Rome (57%) were relying on the financial help from their parents. In Vienna a high rate of respondents (54%) was living either on unemployment benefit/assistance or on other social security benefits, such as the minimum income scheme. As in Austria, also in Italy not everybody is entitled to claim unemployment benefit but only people who have been in insured employment for a certain period of time. The fact that almost none of the interviewed young people in Rome reported unemployment benefits as a source of income, suggest that they didn't fulfil the access requirements. Waiting phases but also atypical work contracts with lower social protection levels explain why it may be difficult for young people to qualify for these work-centred benefits. Referring to Italy Fargion even argues that there is an "intergenerational divide" in social citizenship between "the adult core sector labour force that enjoys standard permanent job contracts" and "growing numbers of young workers on part-time, fixed-term, temporary jobs" that are not well integrated in the social security system (2013, p. 184).

⁷ This response category was chosen by young people who had a marginal job with an income below the 'marginal earnings threshold' (Geringfügigkeitsgrenze) as well as by young people who had a job until shortly before the interview and expected the spell of unemployment to be of short duration.

Table 4.1 Primary and additional sources of income (percentages)

	Rome (n=82)	Vienna (n=78)
<i>Primary source of income^a</i>		
Formal work	4	19
Unemployment benefit/assistance	1	40
Odd jobs	10	1
Scholarship	2	1
Financial support from parents	57	9
Financial support from partner	5	4
Financial support from relatives	-	-
Maternity allowance	-	1
Savings	7	9
Other benefits	1	14
Informal jobs	10	1
Other	2	-
<i>Additional sources of income^b</i>		
Formal work	1	6
Unemployment benefit/assistance	4	24
Odd jobs	18	22
Scholarship	1	1
Financial support from parents	12	29
Financial support from partner	6	8
Financial support from relatives	9	8
Maternity allowance	-	1
Savings	20	37
Other benefits	1	5
Informal jobs	22	8
Other	1	5

^a Three major sources are highlighted.

^b Sources > 10% are highlighted.

Furthermore, the different response patterns of the interviewed groups in the two cities reflect also contextual differences regarding minimum benefits. In the Italian welfare system there are no defined minimum benefits for uninsured people in need on the national level. As noted in section 2.4 each region and municipality implements according to regional laws and available resources its own policies (European Commission, 2013). Although also in Austria benefits may vary at the Länder level, the means-tested minimum income scheme ensures the same minimum benefits throughout the country (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2014a, p. 79). As such in Austria minimum benefits are allocated on the basis of a guaranteed social right while they are distributed less consistently and more discretionarily in Italy. Young people who cannot gain a foothold on the labour market

and who are not entitled to benefits by the welfare state, often have to rely financially on their families. Thereby, financial support from families can occur in different forms including income transfers, in-kind benefits such as housing, clothing, food or the use of the car.

Besides the sources of income, the interviewed young people also reported their level of income. On average the respondents in Rome had €488 and the respondents in Vienna €923 at their disposal per month. The average income but also the more detailed overview in Table 4.2 reveals that the reported level of income was lower among the interviewed young people in Rome than those in Vienna. It, thus, appears that the respondents in Vienna were able to attract a greater amount of economic resources on a personal level. However, in terms of living standard the difference between the two groups might not have been as great as the numbers suggest. Indeed, many of the interviewed young people in Rome, when reporting the level of income, considered only their own economic resources, but not, for example, in-kind benefits from their parents in the form of meals, clothing or housing. In fact, the families of many young people in Italy are able to cushion the precarious situation of their children (Schizzerotto, Trivellato, & Sartor, 2011, p. 49). So, for example, a comparative study shows that in Southern European countries the widespread amount of family support reduces the risk of economic exclusion faced by unemployed young people (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001, p. 19). However, and this is important to note “social origin can be a protective factor for the youth as well as a decisive vulnerability factor” (Kieselbach, 2003, p. 75). Indeed, if no other sources of income are available, the living conditions of young people are primarily determined by the economic means that are available in the family of origin.

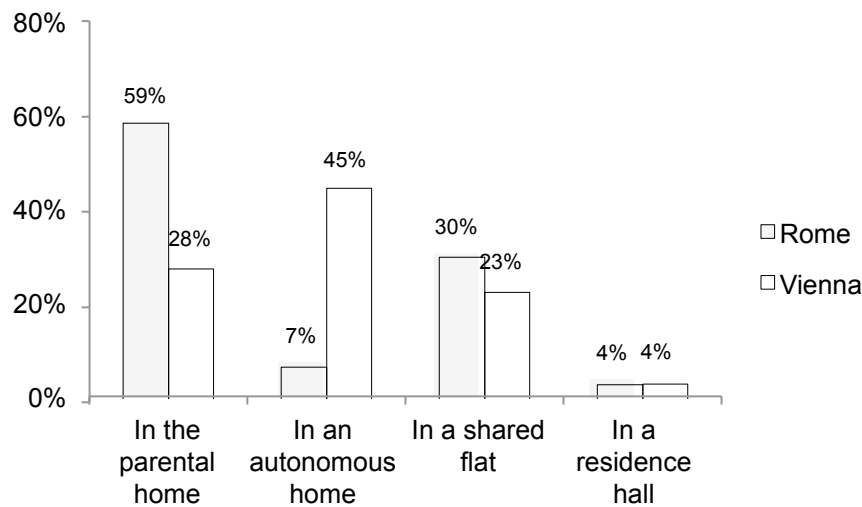
Table 4.2 Level of income in Euro (percentages)

Level of income in Euro	Rome (n=82)	Vienna (n=82)
0-200	28	4
201-400	12	10
401-600	26	12
601-800	9	24
801-1000	11	24
1001-1400	-	12
1401-1800	1	6
Over 1801	1	8
No answer	11	-
Don't know	1	-

Living arrangement and social relationships

Data about the residential status of young people is often used to discuss their progression on the path to independent adulthood. Also the respondents of the present study were asked to indicate where they were living at the time of the interview. More than half of the respondents in Rome (59%) were living in the parental home, 30% in a shared flat, 7% in an autonomous home and 4% in a dormitory. The interviewed young people in Vienna were predominantly living independently from their parents: 45% in an autonomous home, 23% in a shared flat and 4% in a dormitory. Only 28% were living in the parental home. Although the proportions in Figure 4.2 reflect only the living arrangements of the interviewed young people and not of all young people in the two cities, it is well established in the literature that there are different home-leaving patterns across European countries (Eurofound, 2014). While different factors of institutional and cultural nature have been put forward to explain these differences, young people seem to have a preference for independence. Using data from the European Community Household Panel, Iacovou shows that “young people’s own incomes are positively related to the probability of leaving home” across all European countries (2010, p. 159). Young people’s own income, thus, plays an important role in fostering their possibilities to achieve residential autonomy.

Figure 4.2 Living arrangements: Percentage of interviewed young people that were living...



Another important aspect of young people's lives is the state of their personal relationships. 45% of the respondents in Rome and 60% of the respondents in Vienna had a stable partner at the time of the interview. Interestingly the occupational situation of partner and friends reflects the context in which the interviewed young people were embedded. So, among those who were in a stable relationship in Rome 51% declared that their partner was full or part-time employed; in Vienna this applied to 74%. In Rome 58% of the respondents indicated that they had many unemployed friends. Moreover, their friends in employment were predominantly part-time or occasionally/marginally employed. In Vienna, only a small proportion (17%) of respondents reported many unemployed friends. Also, the majority indicated that their friends in employment had a full-time job. In summary, it appears that in Rome not only the interviewed young people were in an instable situation but to a great extent also their partners and friends. In Vienna, in contrast, young people's reference groups were less frequently in such a situation.

Summary of results

In line with the literature the results suggest that the interviewed young people in Rome were confronted with rather lengthy and difficult school to work transitions. 49% of the respondents had a paid job after finishing education or training, among them 58%

reported that their first job was not a full-time job. This means that at the time of the interview 51% of the respondents were looking for their first job. The fact that school-to-work transitions in sub-protective transition regimes are characterized by long waiting phases is also reflected in the reported duration of unemployment. 27% of the interviewed young people were unemployed for less than 3 months, 39% between 3 and 11 months and 34% for 12 months and more. The reported sources of income bring to the fore that a difficult entry into the labour market combined with a high share of non-standard employment can undermine young people's access to social rights. In fact, almost none of the interviewed young people in Rome had access to unemployment benefits. This highlights that in the context of protracted and de-standardized transitions the work-centeredness of social rights can be problematic. If young people cannot gain a foothold in the labour market and are not entitled to state benefits, one of the only options available to them is to resort to informal actors. The majority of the interviewed young people in Rome (57%) were relying on the financial help from their parents. Moreover, a considerable share of respondents reported incomes from odd and informal jobs. On average the interviewed young people in Rome had €488 at their disposal per month. It, thus, appears that the economic resources that the young people could attract on a personal level were quite limited. The majority of the respondents in Rome (59%) were living in the parental home. Although cultural and institutional factors play a role, several studies highlight that economic independence is a crucial prerequisite for young people to establish their own private economy. A last interesting aspect that emerges from the analysis is that not only the interviewed young people but to a large extent also their reference groups (i.e. partner and friends) were in a precarious occupational situation.

The employment biographies of the interviewed young people in Vienna reflect that in employment-centred transition regimes school-to-work transitions are rather smooth and quick. 87% of the respondents had a paid job after finishing education or training, among them the majority reported that their first job was a full-time job. Overall the results reveal that the duration of unemployment was shorter among the interviewed young people in Vienna than those in Rome. Yet, it needs to be noted that also in Vienna there was group of young people (20%) that was unemployed for 12 months or

more. The results, furthermore, suggest that many of the respondents in Vienna had access to benefits from the welfare system: 40% reported unemployment benefit or assistance as their primary source of income and 14% other benefits such as the minimum income scheme. The average reported level of income amounted to €923 per month. Most of the respondents (78%) were living independently from their parents in an autonomous home, in a shared flat or in a dormitory. In contrast to Rome, the reference groups of the interviewed young people in Vienna were less frequently in an instable occupational situation.

4.2 Young people's subjective well-being

Life quality is not only determined by objective living conditions but also by subjective well-being, which reflects people's individual evaluation of their lives (Zapf, 1987). Subjective well-being comprises positive components, such as life satisfaction or happiness, as well as negative components, such as stress or insecurity (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002, p. 16). In the following the analysis explores which factors empower young people and which factors increase their vulnerability on a subjective level. Since the two contexts differ in terms of "social security, school, vocational training, labour market (...) and interpretations of disadvantage (structural versus individualised)", it can be assumed that young people experience their situation differently (Walther, 2005, pp. 119–120).

Presentation of the synthetic variables

Subjective well-being was measured by asking respondents to report their happiness and life satisfaction. As noted by Eurofound, these two items are overall measures for subjective well-being since they require respondents to "consider their life as a whole" (2010, p. 18). A synthetic variable for respondents' overall well-being was created by adding up the two single variables. With a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,70 the synthetic variable proved to be reliable.

In order to get a fuller picture of young people's subjective evaluation of their lives, the questionnaire included a set of items about different positive as well as negative aspects

of well-being. In factor analysis two underlying dimensions could be identified; the first dimension was related to stress and insecurity, and the second dimension to autonomy and control.

The variables most important for the dimension related to stress and insecurity were 'I cannot cope with some of my problems', 'I often feel overwhelmed by my problems' and 'I sometimes feel tossed around in my life'. These three items with factor loadings above 0,50 were added together to produce a synthetic variable. The overall reliability of the synthetic variable was 0,70.

The dimension related to autonomy and control included the items 'I feel I am free to decide how to live my life', 'What I set out to do, I can also achieve' and 'I am not discouraged by setbacks'. While the first two items had factor loadings above 0,50, the third one had a lower loading. Due to low reliability it was not possible to create a synthetic variable based on these three items. Autonomy and control, however, are positive aspects of subjective well-being, which help young people to cope with the many challenges they encounter in the transition from school to work. Moreover, autonomy and control are essential requisites for developing motivation. In this regard, autonomy refers to "the subjective incentive to strive toward a certain goal" and control to "the subjective belief in one's own ability to reach a goal" (Walther, 2009, pp. 125–126). The possibility for people to develop such positive feelings and beliefs, however, is influenced by contextual factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). It is, therefore, important to find out which conditions support young people's autonomy and control. Since it was not possible to create a synthetic indicator, the items 'I feel free to decide how to live my life', 'What I set out to do I can also achieve' and 'I am discouraged by setbacks' were taken into consideration individually.

The item 'I cannot change things that are important to me in life' did not load onto any of the two factors. Particularly in Rome, however, through this item many different and interesting relationships could be detected. For this reason also this item was included individually in the analysis.

In the following the term 'overall or general well-being' will be used to refer to the measure composed of happiness and life satisfaction. The term 'subjective well-being',

instead, will be used to refer to all well-being measures, which include ‘general well-being’, ‘stress’, ‘feel free to decide how to live my life’, ‘what I set out, I can also achieve’, ‘not discouraged by setbacks’ and ‘cannot change things’.

Multiple and diverse relationships

Partnership, residential independence and income

In the previous section it came to the fore that the interviewed young people in the two cities faced different realities. So, for example, their lives differed with regard to partnership, living arrangement and level of income. But are there any relationships between these different aspects describing young people’s living situations and their reported subjective well-being? Table 4.3 shows that living independently from one’s parents, i.e. in an autonomous home, in a shared flat or in a dormitory, wasn’t related to any of the well-being measures among the interviewed young people in the two cities. Also partnership, i.e. having or not having a stable partner, didn’t produce any significant correlations. These results are interesting in as far as moving out from the parental home and finding a partner are regarded as important milestones in the transition to adulthood in the literature. Not surprisingly, however, the level of income reflecting a person’s material living situation was associated with various subjective well-being measures. In both cities a lower income was associated with a lower general well-being, a higher reported level of stress and a lower belief in being able to change things that are important to one’s life. In addition, in Vienna a lower income also lessened the belief in being able to achieve what one sets out and heightened the feeling of being discouraged by setbacks. The results, thus, suggest that poor economic resources enlarge the vulnerability of young people in the transition from school to work in both cities.

Table 4.3 Well-being and living conditions (correlation coefficients)

	Overall well-being	Stress	Feel free to decide how to live my life	What I set out, I can also achieve	Not discouraged by setbacks	Cannot change things	N
<i>Residential independence from parents</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Stable partner</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Level of income^a</i>							
Rome	-,294*	-,266*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,345**	69
Vienna	-,289*	-,243*	n.s.	-,264*	-,250*	-,242*	78

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

^a high

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Young people's education biography

Education is one of the most important resources in contemporary knowledge societies (Mills & Blossfeld, 2005, p. 9). According to Evers and Guillemard education does “not only provide skills and competences but also increases people’s ‘capabilities’” (2013, p. 24). Conversely, discontinuities in education may limit young people’s scope for action. In fact, experiences such as dropping out from education/vocational training, changing school or repeating a school year are seen as particularly risky since they may contribute to the accumulation of disadvantages.

Table 4.4 shows the relationship between the various well-being measures, the educational level of the respondents and the experiences of discontinuities in the education biography. Discontinuities are measured with a two-item index⁸ composed of ‘dropping out from education/vocational training’ and ‘changing school/place of instruction’ and the single item ‘repeating a school year’. Among the respondents in Rome a higher educational level was associated with a higher belief in being able to

⁸ With a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0,53 the two-item index has a relatively low reliability. The measure was not discarded since the low value of Alpha seems to be attributable to the low number of items rather than to a poor item inter-relatedness. The results based on this two-item index, however, should be interpreted with caution and possibly validated with another study.

change things that are important to one's life. Repeating a school year, on the contrary, lessened the belief in being able to change things. In Vienna a higher educational level was associated with a higher feeling of being free to decide how to live one's life and a higher belief in being able to change things. Experiencing school dropouts and/or changes, instead, was related to a lower overall well-being and a lower feeling of being free to decide how to live one's life. Repeating a school year was also associated with a lower feeling of being free to decide how to live one's life and a lower belief in being able to achieve what one sets out.

Drawing together, the detected relationships among the interviewed groups in the two cities point towards the enabling influence of a higher educational level and the constraining influence of discontinuities in the education biography. More pronounced relationships, however, could be observed among the interviewed young people in Vienna. This would be in line with the hypothesis that more stratified education systems have a stronger influence in structuring the life chances of children and youth, since they allocate them early on to different "occupational careers and social positions" (Walther, 2006, p. 128). However, considering that there is an increasing polarisation between those who can, due to sufficient resources, access stable segments of the labour market and others who are permanently dependent upon precarious employment (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2000, p. 6), it becomes more important for education systems to be as open and inclusive as possible in order to preserve their democratic character. This would mean, for example, broadening access to recognized education and training, to offer second chance programmes and to recognize informal learning.

Table 4.4 Well-being and young people's education biography (correlation coefficients)

	Overall well-being	Stress	Feel free to decide how to live my life	What I set out, I can also achieve	Not discouraged by setbacks	Cannot change things	N
<i>Educational level of respondent^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,386**	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	-,237*	n.s.	n.s.	-,227*	78
<i>Discontinuities in education^b</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	76
Vienna	,278*	n.s.	,256*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Repeating a school year^c</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	,350**	75
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	,292**	,351**	n.s.	n.s.	78

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

^a high; ^b many; ^c often

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Unemployment and the efforts of young people to overcome their situation

The aim of the following section is to shed light on the relationship between subjective well-being, the duration of unemployment and the efforts of young people to overcome their situation. With regard to the latter the interviewed young people were shown a list of sixteen different strategies that are frequently used to find a job and asked if they had already tried them out. In SPSS the number of strategies tried out to overcome unemployment was calculated for each survey participant. Additionally, the respondents were asked if they were following a course or a retraining at the time of the interview. The results are shown in Table 4.5.

Among the respondents in Rome there was a significant relationship between the duration of unemployment and stress: the longer the duration of unemployment, the higher the reported level of stress. However, the absence of formal work was not connected to their general well-being or other aspects of well-being. This result mirrors the fact that in Italy unemployment is seen “more as a common social problem rather than a sign of personal failure” (Borghi, Chicchi, & La Rosa, 2011, p. 384).

The more active the job search behaviour of the interviewed young people in Rome, the higher their belief in being able to change things that are important to them in life. In Italy it is not very frequent that young people are subjected to coercive measures that require them to look for a job. Among the respondents active job search behaviour

seems to emanate from the young people themselves. At least in principle this might provide young people with spaces for individual development.

Furthermore, in Rome taking part in a course or a retraining was related to a higher belief in being able to achieve what one set out to do. In a context that is characterized by long waiting phases and dependency from the family of origin, taking part in a course or in retraining provides young people, at least temporarily, with a socially recognized status. Indeed, as noted by Walther, “inclusion into any system is considered as a success” and this might at least in part explain the observed relationship in the present study (2009, p. 139).

Among the respondents in Vienna a longer duration of unemployment was associated with lower overall well-being, higher stress and a lower belief in being able to achieve what one set out. The duration of unemployment was, thus, linked to a greater diversity of well-being measures than in Rome. In this regard, one needs to take into consideration that young people in Vienna are embedded in a social environment where social policies and institutions are committed to smooth and quick transitions from school to work. Yet, as pointed out by Leppänen, “social policies and institutions (...) contribute to shape the life-courses of young people by providing norms and requirements for their realization” (2014, p. 1). So, especially young people that don’t meet standard trajectories, such as youth without employment, may experience their situation as stressful.

As shown in Table 4.5, the more active the job search behaviour of the interviewed young people in Vienna, the higher the reported level of stress and the lower their belief in being able to achieve what they set out. Many transition and labour market policies in Austria follow an activation logic. While activation policies aim at a fast (re-)integration of beneficiaries into the labour market, “issues of social justice and well-being” are not so often considered (Leppänen, 2014, p. 1). Usually, activation policies are based on a contract, which requires beneficiaries to actively look for a job and to increase their employability. While not leaving much space for choice, activation policies put young people “under pressure by constant control of meeting objectives, deadlines and expectations (...)” (Leppänen, 2014, p. 10). Moreover, activation policies imply that

young people are individually responsible for “success or failure in transitions to work” (Walther, 2006, p. 122). However, individual responsibility is unfair as long as it is not accompanied by “real opportunities” (Leppänen, 2014, p. 10). Indeed, if young people’s efforts are not met with real opportunities, the risk that they lose faith in themselves increases. Although, activation policies alone do not explain the observed correlations among the respondents in Vienna, the results suggests that young people’s efforts to overcome their situation have to emanate “from the premises of the young people themselves, not as imposed by activation but from real freedom for self-development” (Leppänen, 2014, p. 11).

Table 4.5 Well-being, unemployment and young people’s efforts to overcome their situation (correlation coefficients)

	Overall well-being	Stress	Feel free to decide how to live my life	What I set out, I can also achieve	Not discouraged by setbacks	Cannot change things	N
<i>Duration of unemployment^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	,234*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	,350**	,312**	n.s.	,229*	n.s.	n.s.	77
<i>No of strategies tried out to overcome unemployment^b</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,254*	78
Vienna	n.s.	,304**	n.s.	,327**	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Following course/retraining^c</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,344**	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

^a long; ^b many; ^c yes

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Social support by parents, peers and teachers

The state intervenes in various ways to support young people in the transition from school to work. Yet, to what extent and how is also closely connected to the role ascribed to other actors, such as the market, the family or peers (Esping-Andersen, 1993, p. 21). Considering the interrelation between these different actors is important, since “different welfare strategies point to different rights with different effects on the division of roles and responsibilities in the welfare system at large, its public and private parts” (Evers & Guillemard, 2013, p. 27).

The analysis brings to the fore that emotional support by parents was of particular significance for the interviewed young people in both cities. In Rome emotional support by parents was associated with a higher belief in being able to achieve what one set out to and in Vienna with a higher general well-being and with a lower reported level of stress. These results point to the particular relevance that family support has for the young. Aristotle, who was interested in enhancing the capabilities of young people, argued that “in addition to a system of public education, the love and intimate particular knowledge of the family⁹ is also required; and so the legislator ought to support and not to undermine the family as a social institution” (as cited in Nussbaum, 1987, p. 22). Aristotle’s perspective, however, implies that responsibilities should not simply be passed on to the family, but that conditions should be in place, which allow families to build good and qualitative relationships.

Unlike in Vienna, among the interviewed young people in Rome significant relationships could be found also with regard to the emotional support by friends. This would be in line with Walther’s analysis, who holds that in Italy due “to the lack or underdevelopment of public structures adequately regulating transitions to work (...) not only the family” but also other informal actors such as friends gain on importance (2006, p. 134). Indeed, in Rome emotional support by friends heightened the feeling of being free to decide how to live one’s life and the belief in being able to change things. These are positive aspects that mirror the idea that the lack of structure opens up “spaces for action” (Walther, 2006, p. 136). Nonetheless, the reliance on informal structures has also a downside, which comes to the fore when the results regarding financial support by friends are considered. Among the respondents in Rome financial support by friends was not only associated with a higher belief in being able to achieve what one sets out to do but also with a higher reported level of stress. A closer analysis of the latter relationship reveals that it can be found only among the interviewed young people that have a migration background and here the correlation coefficient is particularly high. On the one hand, this result points out that the lack of support

⁹ The term is not used in a narrow sense, but refers to all different forms in which family life nowadays takes place (Zartler, 2015).

structures can increase the vulnerability of some groups. On the other hand, it suggests that having to rely on the financial help from friends (when other support structures are lacking) can be stressful.

Among the respondents in Rome support by teachers increased the belief of being able to achieve what one set out to. Also this association applied only to the interviewed young people with migration backgrounds. An interesting aspect in this regard is that in Rome several young people with migration backgrounds indicated that they either followed an Italian language course or acquired a lower secondary degree through the adult education system. It is, thus, plausible that this group got in contact with teachers not only through the regular but also through the adult education system. Among the interviewed young people in Vienna no significant relationship could be found between the support by teachers and the various well-being measures. However, a separate analysis revealed that higher support by teachers was associated with a lower reported level of stress among young people with a migration background. The presented results, thus, bring to the fore that teachers represent a very important reference group for young people with migration backgrounds in both cities.

Table 4.6 Well-being and support by parents, friends and teachers (correlation coefficients)

	Overall well-being	Stress	Feel free to decide how to live my life	What I set out, I can also achieve	Not discouraged by setbacks	Cannot change things	N
<i>Emotional parental support^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,231*	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	-,243*	-,225*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Financial parental support^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Emotional support by friends^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	-,238*	n.s.	n.s.	-,257*	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	77
<i>Financial support by friends^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	,267*	n.s.	-,354**	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Support by teachers^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,342**	n.s.	n.s.	77
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

^a strong

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Gender, citizenship and educational level of the father

Transition regimes do not have the same influence on all young people, since they might operate to the advantage of some and to the disadvantage of others (Lee, 2014, p. 716). For this reason the variables gender, citizenship and educational level of father were put in relation with the various well-being measures of the interviewed young people in the two cities. Table 4.7 shows that among the respondents in Vienna no significant relationships could be found. Among the respondents in Rome significant correlations were observable for all three variables. Being a young woman lessened the feeling of being free to decide how to live one's life. Having a migration background and a lower educational level of the father, instead, were associated with a lower belief in being able to change things that are important to one's life. It, thus, seems that the difficulty of entering the labour market and the lack of welfare support in Rome is more penalising for young women, young people with migration backgrounds and young people from less privileged backgrounds.

Table 4.7 Well-being, gender, citizenship and educational level of father (correlation coefficients)

	Overall well-being	Stress	Feel free to decide how to live my life	What I set out, I can also achieve	Not discouraged by setbacks	Cannot change things	N
<i>Gender^a</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	-,249*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Citizenship^b</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,257*	78
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Educational level of father^c</i>							
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,306**	74
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	71

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

^a male; ^b respondent and parents have the country's citizenship; ^c high

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Determinants of psychosocial vulnerability in Rome and in Vienna

The correlations presented in the previous section suggest that different factors explain young people's well-being in the two cities. To test this assumption multiple regression analyses were carried out for the two sub-samples separately. Given the size of the two sub-samples, only three predictor variables could be included in the models to detect

medium effects (Field, 2009, p. 223). The included predictors were the level of income, the duration of unemployment and the subjective evaluation of the stress caused by unemployment.

Table 4.8 shows that in Rome only the level of income had a significant independent effect on subjective well-being. This result indicates that the level of income represents an important protective as well as vulnerability factor in Rome. Unemployment benefits and other income support measures are difficult to access for young people in Italy (Eurofound, 2015, p. 138). So, their level of income is determined mainly by the availability of economic resources in the family of origin or jobs in the informal economy.

Among the interviewed young people in Vienna, on the contrary, the influence of the duration of unemployment and the subjective evaluation of stress caused by unemployment dominated. A first consideration in this regard is that “social norms and institutional differences can influence the non-income related costs of unemployment” (Stoll, Michaelson, & Seaford, 2012, p. 21). This means that dominant interpretations of (youth) unemployment can either mitigate or exacerbate on an individual level the cost of unemployment. In employment-centred transition regimes, such as the one in Austria, “youth unemployment is interpreted as young people not being ready for this socialization and allocation process, owing to learning or social deficits” (Walther, 2006, p. 128). Such an interpretation, however, can make unemployment more painful, since it focuses on individual and not on structural causes for unemployment. A second consideration is that the “effects on an individual of being unemployed” can be stronger in a context where unemployment in the local population is low (Stoll et al., 2012, p. 23). In this regard, it came to the fore in section 4.1 that the reference group of the interviewed young people in Vienna was less frequently in an instable occupational situation than the reference group of the respondents in Rome.

Table 4.8 Determinants of well-being in Rome and in Vienna (multiple regression, beta-values)

Variables	Overall well-being	
	Rome (n=71)	Vienna (n=77)
Income (high)	-,33**	
Duration of unemployment (long)		,23*
Feel stressed with my being unemployed (high)		,30**
r ²	,13	,24

Note. Overall well-being: higher score = negative evaluation

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The role of contextual differences in explaining young people's well-being

Two further questions were explored through regression analyses: Which factors overall have the largest effects on the respondents' reported level of well-being and stress? Does the city i.e. the context in which young people are embedded play a role in explaining the reported level of well-being and stress? Next, gender, social background (educational level of father) and income, the effects of discontinuities in education, the duration of unemployment, the subjective evaluation of the present situation, the support by parents and friends and the importance attached to free time activities were tested. Additionally, the city in which the interviewed young people were living i.e. Rome or Vienna was included as a predictor variable.

The analysis in Table 4.9 shows that two factors explained the reported level of stress. A longer duration of unemployment and less emotional support by parents increased the psychosocial frailty of the respondents. Contextual differences, however, didn't contribute in explaining the reported level of stress. Well-being, instead, was determined by three factors. Feeling stressed with one's situation and less emotional support by parents decreased the reported level of well-being. The analyses, furthermore, revealed that other things being equal, living in Rome had a positive influence on well-being. So, while contextual differences didn't produce an independent effect on stress, they played a role in explaining young people's general well-being.

As discussed, unemployment can compromise (young) people's well-being. This assumption could be confirmed in the present study. The duration of unemployment

provoked higher stress and feeling stressed with being unemployed had a negative impact on young people's overall well-being. These results highlight that unemployment has an important effect in its own right that goes beyond low income. This may be explained by the fact that work provides people not only with income but also with opportunities "for learning, initiative, social contact and personal development" (Meeus & Dekovic, 1997, p. 49). Unemployment, on the contrary, minimizes these opportunities for young people and should therefore be a cause of concern. According to the literature, however, there are also several mediating variables between unemployment and young people's well being (Meeus & Dekovic, 1997, p. 59). In this regard, the regression analyses showed that emotional parental support increased general well-being and lowered stress.

While no independent effect of the city could be found in relation to stress, the context in which young people were embedded had an effect on their well-being. In particular, the findings in Table 4.9 suggest that the context in Rome attenuated the risks that the interviewed young people were facing in the transition from school to work. This is supported by a comparative, qualitative project that analysed "the relation between youth unemployment and the risks of social exclusion" (Walther, 2006, p. 135). It was found that the risks were higher for unemployed young people in countries with employment-centred transition regimes than for young people in countries with sub-protective transition regimes. This highlights that structures do not only facilitate school-to-work transition, but can also exert pressures and constraints, especially on those who have difficulties to progress in their transitions.

Table 4.9 Determinants of well-being and stress for all respondents (multiple regression, beta-values)

Variables	Well-being (n=130)	Stress (n=133)
Gender (0=female, 1=male)		
Educational level of father (high)		
Income (high)		
Discontinuities in education (many)		
Duration of unemployment (long)		,19*
Feel stressed with my being unemployed (very)	,32***	
Emotional parental support (strong)	-,19*	-,18*
Emotional support by friends (strong)		
Free time activities (important)		
City (0=Rome, 1=Vienna)	,25**	
r ²	0,31	0,21

Note. Well-being measures: higher score = negative evaluation

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level

*** denotes significance at a 0.001 level

5 Work and other life spheres

The aim of the present chapter is to shed some light on the role that work and other life spheres have for the interviewed young people. In a first moment the focus lies on young people's free-time activities. In this context particular attention is paid on the meaning that the interviewed young people attributed to voluntary work. Especially in the transition from school to work voluntary work can be seen as an opportunity to try out one's interests, to actively do something and to be in contact with others. Moreover, voluntary work can provide people who are in a precarious occupational situation with a status alternative and, thus, protect them against social exclusion. In a second moment, the analysis turns to young people's life objectives. The analysis focuses on the ways in which the respondents' life objectives were related to their resources and their living conditions. This brings the topic of cultural inclusion and exclusion into view since life goals are to a large extent socially and culturally defined. The last part, then, deals with young people's career orientations. As noted in the theoretical background full, life-long employment is increasingly giving way to more variable trajectories. In this relation it is interesting to find out what the interviewed young people desire for themselves in their future professional life course. Particular attention is paid on the question whether all young people have the resources to take up a flexible, professional life course.

5.1 Activities beyond wage employment

The interviewed young people were asked to indicate how often they engage in different activities in their spare time. The list included free-time activities such as practising sports or engaging in other hobbies, activities in the private sphere such as doing housework and being at home alone, and active pursuits such as helping other people, making and repairing things (do-it-yourself) and doing voluntary work. Moreover, young people were asked to indicate how often they spend time with relevant others, such as family, friends and partners.

The response patterns of the interviewed young people were analysed through factor analysis. Reflecting a strong leisure time focus, the items 'practising sport or engaging in other hobbies' and 'spending time with friends' could be joined together into one

underlying factor for both cities. This is a plausible result since sports or hobbies represent an occasion for people to spend time with friends and/or to make new friends. In the Roman sub-sample another two underlying factors could be identified. The first one comprised activities that are outward-oriented such as ‘doing voluntary work’, ‘helping other people’ and ‘making and repairing things (do-it-yourself)’. The second one, instead, included activities in the private sphere such as ‘doing housework’ and ‘being at home alone’. In the Viennese sub-sample no clear differentiation between outward-oriented and private activities could be found. ‘Helping other people’ and ‘making and repairing things (do-it-yourself)’ loaded together with ‘spending time with the family’. ‘Doing voluntary work’, instead, grouped together with ‘helping other people’ and ‘doing housework’.

What role does voluntary work have in the transition from school to work? To what extent can it be considered a status alternative to wage employment? Although the results from factor analysis already provide some hints, in the following these questions will be further explored through the correlations presented in Table 5.1. Among the respondents in Rome voluntary work was associated with ‘helping other people’ and ‘making and repairing things (do-it-yourself)’. This suggests that the interviewed young people saw voluntary work as an opportunity to “actively do[ing] something with their lives” (Walther, 2006, p. 134). As noted in section 2.4 not-profit organizations are an important resource for young people in Italy. Although they are not directly involved in managing the transition from school to work, they offer through community-based activities of cultural practice a space for young people to try out and develop their interests. Simple usership can thereby turn through young people’s “voluntary engagement even into the beginning of a freelance career (Lenzi, Cuconato and Laasch as cited in Walther, 2005, p. 120). Voluntary work can, thus, foster young people’s non-market based inclusion in society and pave the way towards inclusion through wage employment. Despite the positive attributes of voluntary work, a word of caution is necessary. Not all young people are able to engage in voluntary work since it requires a financial backup. Moreover, to date voluntary work is not covered by the social security system. Therefore, it can also contribute to, rather than resolve, young people’s precarious situation in the transition from school to work. In the Viennese sub-sample

voluntary work was related to private activities such as ‘being at home alone’, ‘doing housework’ and ‘helping other people’. Due to the stronger confinement to the private sphere, in Vienna voluntary work seems to be less capable of providing young people with a status alternative in the transition from school to work. As pointed out by Stefano Zamagni, voluntary work unfolds its full potential only if it succeeds in shifting the gratuitousness¹⁰ that is peculiar to relations between family and friends from the private to the public sphere (2007, pp. 3–4). For this to occur voluntary work needs to be understood not as something that is done for others but as something that is done with others. To put it differently, true voluntary work is not about what or how much is given but about the possibility of generating reciprocal relationships. This requires giving voluntary work a role of its own, which is not merely auxiliary to the welfare state.

Table 5.1 Voluntary work and other activities (correlation coefficients)

	Be at home alone (often)	Do housework (often)	Help other people (often)	Make and repair things (often)	N
<i>Voluntary work (often)</i>					
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	,566**	,344**	82
Vienna	,240*	,231*	,260*	n.s.	78

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.2 Young people’s life objectives

Patterns in Vienna and in Rome

The questionnaire included a list of different life objectives, which had to be evaluated on a four-point scale. Through exploratory factor analysis different response patterns were identified. In both cities a factor with modern life objectives emerged, which included the items ‘free-time activities, such as sport and travelling’, ‘to have a partner with whom one is sexually compatible’ and ‘to have a circle of close friends’. In Rome also the item ‘to have money, to afford many things’ loaded onto this factor. Moreover,

¹⁰ This is an unlucky translation of the Italian word ‘gratuità’ which means to give or receive something without cost or obligation.

for the Viennese sub-sample a second factor representing a modern variant of stability oriented life objectives could be identified. 'To lead a well-ordered, quiet life', 'to have money, to afford many things' and 'to have a partner with whom one is sexually compatible' loaded onto this factor. The second factor in Rome was also stability oriented, but included more traditional life objectives such as 'to grow and educate one's own children' and 'to lead a well-ordered quiet life'.

Life objectives and resources of the young people

Research shows that people's life objectives, which represent important individual coping strategies, are adapted to their life chances (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2000, p. 17). It can, thus be assumed that there are significant relationships between young people's resources and the importance they attach to different life objectives. In this regard, the following analysis takes into consideration the educational level and the social background of the interviewed young people as well as the support by parents and peers available to them. Furthermore, the influence of the duration of unemployment on young people's life objectives will be addressed.

In both interviewed groups a higher educational level of the respondent increased the importance attached to modern life objectives and decreased the importance attached to traditional life objective (see Table 5.2). A possible explanation is that time in education offers young people with opportunities for independence and autonomy in a series of different areas, such as leisure, information and sexual relations (1989, pp. 24–25). Hence, education provides them with spaces to "choose and try out new and individual paths leading towards optimal growth and social integration" (Hurrelmann, 1989, p. 25). In the Roman sub-sample a higher educational level increased the importance attached to free-time activities and friends and lowered the importance attached to children, a well-ordered and quiet life and religious belief. Moreover, a higher educational level was also associated with considering it to be more important to have a job that corresponds to one's inclinations and abilities. Among the interviewed young people in Vienna a higher educational level went hand in hand with attaching greater importance to having a partner with whom one is sexually compatible and a lower importance to

religious belief. One interesting difference between the two sub-samples is that in Vienna a higher educational level was associated with attaching less importance to having money/affording many things, while in the Roman sub-sample this was almost the only item that was not influenced by the respondents' educational level¹¹.

Although young people today have a wider range of opportunities for autonomously developing their biographies, different authors underline the persisting influence of structural factors such as social background (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Reinprecht & Spannring, 2002). Also the present survey shows that young people's life objectives were associated with their social background. A more pronounced influence, however, could be observed among the interviewed young people in Rome: a higher educational level of the father not only increased the importance attached to having a circle of close friends, but also lessened the importance of traditional life objectives such as having children and a well-ordered, quiet life. In the Viennese sub-sample a higher educational level of the father was associated with attaching greater importance to free-time activities and lower importance to having money. Among the interviewed young people in Rome, furthermore, resources in terms of emotional support by parents and peers played a role (see Table 5.2).

In the Viennese sub-sample significant relationships could be observed between the duration of unemployment and young people's life objectives. So, a longer duration of unemployment was associated with attaching less importance to modern life objectives, such as having a partner with whom one is compatible sexually and free-time activities. With regard to the ladder one needs to take into consideration that as young people grow older their leisure time activities change. Young people move from "organized leisure" (e.g. "sports participation"), to "casual leisure" (e.g. "hanging around with friends"), to "commercial leisure" (e.g. "cinema attendance as well as visiting discos and pubs") (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, p. 56). Thus, the more limited financial resources of unemployed young people make it increasingly more difficult for them to keep up with the lifestyle of their peers. It can, therefore, be claimed that unemployment not

¹¹ This could be due to the higher redistributive capacity of the Austrian welfare state, since "postmaterialist values emerge only from a bedrock of security" (Ebner & Allmendinger, 2009, p. 189).

only denies young people entry into the world of work but also to live according to “socially recognized and dominant patterns of behaviour” (Kronauer, 1998, p. 64). Studies on unemployment have shown that attaching less importance to goals that cannot be reached is a frequent strategy to protect oneself (Kronauer, 2010, p. 189). However, this does not mean that these goals do not play a role in one’s life anymore, but rather represents a response to the growing discrepancy between internalized orientations and the diminishing chances of realizing them (Kronauer, 2010, p. 190).

Table 5.2 Life objectives, resources and duration of unemployment (correlation coefficients)

	Modern life objectives			← →	Traditional life objectives			Work-related life objectives		
	Free time activities	Friends	Partner		Children	Well-ordered, quiet life	Religion	Self-realization	Productive at work	
<i>Educational level of respondent (high)</i>										N
Rome	-,307**	-,238*	n.s.	n.s.	,235*	,267*	,304**	-,410**	n.s.	80
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	-,308**	,232*	n.s.	n.s.	,278*	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Educational level of father (high)</i>										
Rome	n.s.	-,340**	n.s.	n.s.	,236*	,250*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	75
Vienna	-,337**	n.s.	n.s.	,247*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	71
<i>Emotional parental support (strong)</i>										
Rome	-,261*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	80
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	78
<i>Emotional support by friends (strong)</i>										
Rome	n.s.	-,324**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	,249*	n.s.	-,347**	n.s.	80
Vienna	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	77
<i>Duration of unemployment (long)</i>										
Rome	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	80
Vienna	,345**	n.s.	-,248*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	77

Note. Life objectives: higher score = low importance

n.s. = not significant

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.3 Young people's career aspirations

The interviewed young people were not only asked about their life objectives, but also about their preferences with regard to different aspects related to work. According to the sociological literature life courses are subject to deep changes. In particular, in the field of work continuous full-time employment is giving way to less secure and more variable work trajectories (Mayer, 2001, p. 94). Sometimes, these changes are presented as new opportunities. So, for example, people do not have to adhere to the norm of a standard biography but are able to develop new alternatives that may provide greater space for self-realization. Sometimes, these changes are also presented as an inevitable fate requiring people to adapt, to become flexible. But what preferences do the interviewed young people have? What patterns are observable in the two cities? Do all young people have the resources to take up a flexible professional life course? To answer these questions the interviewed young people were asked to evaluate on a four-point scale different life course models. The first one refers with the dimensions 'a progressive and continuous professional advancement' and 'a long-term commitment to a company' to traditional career aspirations. The second one reflects with items such as to 'start something new from time to time', to 'work alternately sometimes more and sometimes less' and to 'live and work in another city/country' the concept of a flexible professional life course. Lastly, the items 'not to work for a time, even for a long period' and 'not to work at all' mirror a more distanced attitude towards work.

Patterns in Vienna and in Rome

The results show the enduring influence of traditional career aspirations. In both groups a progressive and continuous professional advancement was firmly anchored as a norm. Also a long-term commitment to a company was seen as desirable by the majority of the respondents in the two cities but the proportion was lower in Vienna. The results, however, reveal also more open and flexible career orientations. So, for example, young people can be found in both groups that would like to start something new from time to time, that are not afraid of changing jobs or that would find it interesting to work in

another city or country. Finally, there were respondents in both sub-samples for whom it was imaginable not to work for a time, even for a long period reflecting a more distanced attitude towards work (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Career aspirations (agreement in percentage)

	Rome (n=82)	Vienna (n=78)
A progressive and continuous professional advancement	95	82
A long-term commitment to a company	84	66
Change jobs from time to time	25	14
Work alternately sometimes more and sometimes less	62	56
Start something new from time to time	82	54
Live and work in another city/country	75	70
Start a business or an independent activity	67	50
Not to work for a time, even for a long period	20	37
Not to work at all	0	1

Note. Responses on a 4-level scale, agreement = 1+2 ('very desirable' + 'rather desirable')

Besides the relative frequencies, the response patterns in the two sub-samples were analysed. In both sub-samples three underlying factors could be identified. In the Roman sub-sample¹² the underlying factors reflect the three life course models that the interviewed young people were asked to evaluate. 'A progressive and continuous professional advancement' and 'a long-term commitment to a company' joined together in a factor representing traditional career aspirations. With items such as to 'change jobs from time to time' and to 'start something new from time to time' the second factor is attributable to more flexible career orientations. Finally, the third factor reflects a more distanced attitude towards formal work and included the items 'not to work for a time, even for a longer period' and 'not to work at all'. In the Viennese sub-sample, instead, factor analysis revealed a different response pattern. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the items measuring traditional career orientations did not load onto the same factor. With a negative factor loading the item 'a long term-commitment to a company' could be grouped together with to 'change jobs from time to time', to 'work alternately sometimes more and sometimes less', to 'live and work in an other city or country' and 'not to work for a time, even for a longer period'. This factor, thus, reflects the degree to

¹² Two items didn't correlate well with the other variables in the Roman sub-sample; for this reason they were not included in the factor analysis.

which a person is looking for stability or flexibility in his or her future professional life course. The second factor included the items ‘a progressive and continuous professional advancement’ and to ‘start a business or an independent activity’, and represents the degree to which a person is striving for success and recognition through his or her own initiative. Moreover, like in the Roman sub-sample, the last factor with the items ‘not to work for a time, even for a longer period’ and ‘not to work at all’ was attributable to a more distanced attitude towards the world of work. According to the literature a more distanced attitude towards work can result from difficulties on the labour market. If people are confronted with barriers to entering the labour market they may eventually “view themselves as being without chances and therefore withdraw from this system” (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001, p. 19). However, it is important to consider that people may display a more distanced attitude towards work also for other reasons. So, for instance, other life objectives may be at the centre of their attention such as growing up their own children or taking care of their private homes. Moreover, it is interesting to highlight that among the interviewed young people in Vienna the item ‘not to work for a time, even for a longer period’ was associated not only with a more distanced attitude towards work but also with a more flexible professional life course. This suggests that a more distanced attitude towards work can also manifest itself among young people that pursue a more open professional life course with a stronger focus on self-realization.

Flexibility – a desirable option for pioneers or an unavoidable reality?

Traditional forms of project creation are associated with the standard life course model, which involved three different life phases: education, employment and retirement. Today, however, many young people are confronted with less predictable realities. So, for example, they might start their career by switching several times between education, non-standard employment and unemployment (Eurofound, 2014, p. 12). This involves greater risk and uncertainty. Several commentators suggest that in such a context control is no longer exercised through long-term plans but by keeping options open (Leccardi, 2008, p. 127). This would, for instance, mean to revise one’s course of action in the light of changed circumstances and opportunities. But is it possible for all young

people to pursue a flexible, professional life course? Also, do flexibility oriented career aspirations correspond with certain life objectives? To shed light on these questions a new synthetic variable labelled ‘flexible career orientations’ was created for the Viennese sub-sample. It included the following items: ‘a long-term commitment to a company (reversed)’, to ‘change jobs from time to time’, to ‘work alternately sometimes more sometimes less’, to ‘live and work in another city/country’ and ‘not to work for a time, even for a longer period’. With a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0,70 this new synthetic variable proved to be reliable. Due to a different factor structure and low internal consistency, no synthetic variable could be created for the sub-sample in Rome. The following analysis, thus, focuses on the young people interviewed in Vienna.

It can be assumed that young people’s possibilities to pursue a flexible, professional life course are influenced by their resources and life circumstances. For this reason in Table 5.4 the variable ‘flexible career aspirations’ was put in relation with young people’s educational level, their social background (educational level of father) and the duration of unemployment. The correlation coefficients show that the respondents with fewer resources in terms of education and social background were more hesitant with regard to flexible career aspirations. Similarly, also a longer duration of unemployment lessened the respondents’ propensity for flexibility. This highlights that the young people themselves are aware of the risks that flexible work can bear. The literature in this regard underlines that for young people who are better equipped with resources flexible employment situations may represent a bridge until they find a suitable permanent job (Mills & Blossfeld, 2005, p. 9). For others, however, such experiences can contribute to the accumulation of disadvantages.

Table 5.4 Flexibility, resources and unemployment (correlation coefficients)

	Flexible career aspirations (desirable)
Educational level of respondent (high)	,274*
Educational level of father (high)	,334**
Duration of unemployment (long)	-,289*

* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Furthermore, Table 5.5 brings to the fore that flexible career orientations are not particularly compatible with stability oriented and traditional life objectives. In fact, respondents attaching greater importance to having money, leading a well-ordered, quiet life and religion were more hesitant with regard to flexible career orientations. Moreover, flexible career orientations were also less desirable for young people with a strong work ethic. Interestingly, however, no significant correlations could be detected between flexible career aspirations and modern life objectives. This suggests that young people with modern life objectives might be more open to navigate flexible labour markets but they do not necessarily desire them.

Table 5.5 Flexibility and life objectives (correlation coefficients)

	Modern life objectives			← →	Traditional life objectives			Work-related life objectives		N
	Free time activities	Friends	Partner		Children	Well-ordered, quiet life	Religion	Self-realization	Productive at work	
<i>Flexible career orientation (desirable)</i>	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-,266*	n.s.	-,355**	-,289*	n.s.	-,339**	71

Note: Life objectives: higher score = high importance
n.s. = not significant
* denotes significance at a 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** denotes significance at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

6 Discussion

6.1 Similarities and differences between Vienna and Rome

Being unemployed in the transition from school to work can have several reasons. Young people might be looking for their first job, they might experience a short spell of unemployment between fixed-term contracts or they might be unemployed after losing their job. According to Castel a precarious occupational situation is attributable to the ‘zone of vulnerability’ (2000). While some young people might be in the position to travel into the secure ‘zone of inclusion’, for others a precarious occupational situation can represent the risk of marginalisation or even exclusion. The aim of the present study is to get a deeper understanding of the conditions that empower young people and the conditions that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. The study focused on two cities since “socio-economic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns” considerably shape the enablements and constraints that young people face (Walther, 2006, p. 124).

A higher educational level was associated with positive subjective well-being in both cities. Education is an important resource in today’s knowledge economies, which opens up possibilities for labour market inclusion (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001). It can, thus, be seen as a factor that protects young people who are in a precarious occupational situation. Conversely, the survey reveals that experiencing discontinuities in education was related to lower subjective well-being. In fact, the literature suggest that experiences such as dropping out from education, repeating a school year or changing school can contribute to the accumulation of disadvantages (Reinprecht & Spannring, 2000). Considering that educational achievement is playing an ever-increasing role in determining young people’s life chances, it becomes more important for education systems to be as open and as inclusive as possible. This would, for example, mean recognizing informal learning and offering second chance programmes to early school leavers.

In both sub-samples a higher level of income was associated with higher subjective well-being. This suggests that financial security can decrease young people’s

vulnerability in the transition from school to work. A high proportion of the young people interviewed in Vienna had access to unemployment benefit/assistance or to other benefits such as the means-tested minimum income scheme. While the respondents in Rome could make little or no claims to state benefits, their precarious occupational situation was buffered by financial support from parents as well as odd and informal jobs. In this regard several studies show that family support in sub-protective transition regimes “can be a protective factor as well as a decisive vulnerability factor” for young people who are in a precarious occupational situation (Kieselbach, 2003, p. 75). The main reason for this observation is that “the reliance on the family bears the risk of reproducing inequalities if the family’s role is not backed up by state intervention” (Kazepov, 2005, p. 20). Indeed, the findings of the present study suggest that among the young people interviewed in Rome, specific groups i.e. young women, young people with migration backgrounds and young people from less privileged backgrounds displayed greater psychosocial vulnerability. Another related finding is that among young people with migration backgrounds financial support by friends was associated with a higher reported level of stress. This suggests that the reliance on informal agents can be particularly penalising for young people who are not backed by families that can support them financially. Ultimately, in regression analysis it came to the fore that the level of income had a significant independent effect on the overall well-being of the respondents in the Roman sub-sample.

Another area that proved to be relevant for both interviewed groups was access to close support. Considering all respondents together, regression analysis revealed that strong emotional support by parents decreased the reported level of stress and increased overall well-being. Social support helps young people to cope with the challenges they face and protects them against social exclusion (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001; Kronauer, 2010). In fact, inclusion in social relationships can compensate at least to some extent “for insecurity at work or absence of work” (Castel, 2000, p. 524). Unlike in Vienna, among the interviewed young people in Rome significant relationship could also be observed between emotional support by friends and well-being. This would confirm the argument that due to low public support in sub-protective transition regimes also other informal agencies besides the family gain on importance (Walther, 2006, p.

134). While support by friends opens up spaces for action, the reliance on informal actors is not only positive since it can increase the vulnerability of some groups. So, for instance, as mentioned above financial support by friends was associated with a higher reported level of stress among respondents with migration backgrounds in Rome. Lastly, it needs to be noted that social support is not only provided in informal but also in formal settings. In this regard the present survey brings to the fore that support by teachers was of particular relevance to young people with migration backgrounds in both cities.

Unemployment exerted an enormous strain on both interviewed groups. Considering all respondents together, regression analysis shows that a longer duration of unemployment determined a higher reported level of stress, whereas feeling stressed with being unemployed had a negative impact on young people's overall well-being. This brings to the fore that the cost of unemployment goes beyond having a low income. As noted by Kronauer, in today's societies wage employment plays a crucial role in the allocation of social recognition (2010, p. 150). Moreover, work provides people with the opportunity to engage in "a meaningful activity" and to be in contact with others (Eurofound, 2013, p. 48). Although unemployment, especially if prolonged, increased young people's vulnerability in both cities, there were also important differences. Among the young people interviewed in Rome a longer duration of unemployment was associated with a higher reported level of stress. However, the duration of unemployment was not related to any of the other well-being measures. The disadvantage that goes along with unemployment is, in sub-protective transition regimes, interpreted as structure related (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 41). This means that young people are not made individually responsible for their situation. Among the interviewed young people in Vienna, instead, a longer duration of unemployment was related negatively to a greater variety of well-being measures. Young people in Vienna are embedded in an environment that is committed to smooth and quick transitions (Eurofound, 2014). While this guarantees the majority of youth an unproblematic entry into the world of work, it also involves strong normative requirements. This can be particularly penalizing for young people who cannot progress smoothly in the transition from school to work. Another related aspect is that in employment-centred transition regimes interpretations of youth

unemployment do not focus on the structural level but on the individual i.e. on the lack of skills, competences and qualifications (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 41). Such interpretations, however, increase the non-income related costs of unemployment. The vulnerability of the respondents who were unemployed for a longer period of time comes also to the fore in relation to their life objectives. In fact, in the Viennese sub-sample a longer duration of unemployment was associated with attaching less importance to free-time activities such as sports or travelling and to having a partner with whom one is sexually compatible. This highlights that prolonged unemployment can exclude young people from the style of living that is normal for their peers in employment or education (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Ultimately, in the Viennese sub-sample both the duration of unemployment and the subjective perception of the burden caused by unemployment had an independent effect on young people's well-being.

An important aspect is the space of action afforded to young people who are in a precarious occupational situation. In this regard quite accentuated differences could be observed between the two interviewed groups. Among the respondents in Rome active job search behaviour, i.e. trying out many different ways to find a job, was associated with positive subjective well-being. Since it is rather difficult for young people to be entitled to state benefits the basis for coercive activation measures is quite limited (Pohl & Walther, 2007, p. 542). The efforts of the young people to overcome their situation, thus, seem to emanate from the young people themselves. Similarly, following a course or a retraining programme was related to positive subjective well-being. Due to the difficult access to the labour market any status (education, traineeships, etc.) is seen as an achievement (Walther, 2009, p. 139). This opens up space for action to young people who are in a precarious occupational situation since inclusion can be pursued in many different ways. Moreover, among the respondents in Rome, voluntary work correlated with outward-oriented activities such as 'helping other people' and 'making and repairing things (do it yourself)'. Voluntary work, thus, seems to offer young people a status alternative in the transition from school to work. Such alternatives are important for young people who are in a precarious occupational situation. In fact, exclusion from the labour market is more likely to lead to social exclusion when there are no other status alternatives (Kronauer, 2010, p. 151). In the Viennese sub-sample, on the

contrary, active job search behaviour, i.e. trying out many different ways to overcome unemployment, was related to a higher reported level of stress and a lower belief in being able to achieve what one set out to. One of the explanations for these results is that in Austria labour market policies have been reshaped in an activation logic (Atzmüller, 2009). Usually activation policies are based on a contract whereby beneficiaries commit to look for a job and to increase their employability “in exchange for welfare benefits” (Leppänen, 2014, p. 1). The aim of these policies is to support beneficiaries to enter the labour market and to reduce their dependency on welfare institutions. However, if such measures are not accompanied by choice, resources and valid opportunities, they can increase young people’s vulnerability in the transition from school to work (Leppänen, 2014; Pohl & Walther, 2007). Another aspect that came to the fore in the analysis is that in the Viennese sub-sample voluntary work was more strongly confined to the private sphere. Voluntary work correlated with ‘being at home alone’, ‘doing housework’ and ‘helping other people’. It, thus, seems that in Vienna voluntary work is less capable of providing young people with a status alternative in the transition from school to work and of protecting them against social exclusion. In fact, according to the literature voluntary work develops its full potential only if it is recognized as a social act in the public sphere (Zamagni, 2007).

The discussion above highlights that there were factors that in both cities played a significant role (see Table 6.1). A higher educational level, a higher level of income, strong emotional support by parents and strong support by teachers were associated in both cities with higher subjective well-being. Repeating a school year and a longer duration of unemployment, on the contrary, were associated with lower well-being. Although many similarities could be observed between the two groups also important differences emerged. In fact, it can be assumed that the context in which young people are embedded considerably shapes their experiences in the transition from school to work. Of particular relevance in this regard is the institutional arrangement that characterizes a given context. On the one hand, institutions “provide resources for action to take place” (Kazepov, 2008, p. 8); on the other hand, they have a strong influence on how risks are distributed. Among the interviewed young people in Rome the level of income appeared to be a particularly crucial variable. While families to a

large extent are able to cushion the precarious occupational situation of their children, the limited access to financial support by the state is particularly penalising for some groups of young people. It, thus, appears that in Rome closer attention should be paid to securing young people's material well-being. Among the interviewed young people in Vienna the duration of unemployment appeared to be the focal point of their well-being. Although the overall youth unemployment rate in Austria is low compared to other countries, a long duration of unemployment seems to pose particularly high risks to young people. Hence, a more pronounced focus should be placed on the well-being of young people who cannot immediately enter regular pathways. Some aspects that come into view are to offer young people opportunities that are meaningful for them on the subjective level and to not mask the structural causes for unemployment.

Table 6.1 Overview of similarities and differences between Rome and Vienna

Variables	Subjective well-being	
	Rome	Vienna
Income (high)	↑	↑
Educational level (high)	↑	↑
Discontinuities in education (many)	-	↓
Repeating a school year (often)	↓	↓
Duration of unemployment (long)	↓	↓
Job search behaviour (active)	↑	↓
Following course or retraining (yes)	↑	-
Emotional support by parents (strong)	↑	↑
Emotional support by friends (strong)	↑	-
Financial support by friends (strong)	↑/↓ ^a	-
Support by teachers (strong)	↑ ^a	↑ ^a
Gender (female)	↓	-
Citizenship (other)	↓	-
Educational level of father (high)	↑	-

Note. Variables that were associated positively with at least one of the well-being measures are presented with an upward arrow; variables that were associated negatively with at least one of the well-being measures are presented with a downward arrow

^a Applies particularly to respondents with migration backgrounds

Besides looking at single factors, the present study also explored whether the context in which the interviewed young people were embedded contributes to explain differences in the reported level of stress and well-being. While no independent effect could be found in relation to the level of stress, living in Rome had a positive influence on the reported overall well-being. At first sight this result might seem counterintuitive since

Rome is characterized by many structural deficits such as the high youth unemployment rate and the difficult access to income support measures. However, well-being is a subjective measure which does not necessarily have to match systemic criteria (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 34). So, for instance, strong family cohesion in sub-protective transition regimes protects young people against the negative consequences of a precarious occupational situation (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, et al., 2001). Moreover, structure-related interpretations of youth unemployment and broad definitions of success in the transition from school to work alleviate the risks at a subjective level. Well-being also depends on the alternatives that young people without formal employment have. As noted above, among the interviewed young people in Rome voluntary work was grounded in the public sphere. It can thus be seen as an opportunity for young to actively do something. Interesting to note in this connection is also that a considerable portion of respondents in Rome reported incomes from odd and informal jobs. Such experiences can help young people to develop additional skills, to be in contact with others and to broaden their network of helpful ties. However, a word of caution is necessary. Work in the secondary labour market and in the submerged economy is not covered to the same extent as regular work by the social security system. Such experiences can, therefore, also further contribute rather than prevent processes of social exclusion. As noted by Borghi and Kieselbach “this depends on the kind of job done, the skills and training of the individual, the gap separating the irregular job a person in fact does and the regular one he hopes to find, and so on” (Borghi & Kieselbach, 2012, p. n.a.).

6.2 Human rights and young people’s empowerment

The lived experiences of the interviewed young people in Rome and in Vienna show that the practical vindication of human rights depends on a variety of different factors. In this regard the human rights framework presents itself as a possibility to promote young people’s well-being and their inclusion in society. In contrast to citizenship rights, “human rights are enjoyed by individuals by virtue of being human” (Isin & Turner, 2007, p. 12). According to Sen they “are best seen as articulations of a commitment in social ethics” (2007, p. 3). As such they can inspire and encourage

social as well as institutional change (Sen, 2007, p. 8). Based on the findings of the present study, some elements that contribute to empowering young people in the transition from school to work, will now be discussed in more detail.

First of all, the study shows that young people's education biography has a bearing on their well-being. This implies that there is a need to broaden access to recognized education and training. In particular, early tracking and dead-end programmes can reduce young people's future possibilities. "Second chances and opportunities for life long learning", instead, could mitigate the risks connected to the experience of discontinuities in education (Ingrid Schoon, Ross, & Martin, 2009, p. 239). Also, recognizing informal learning could contribute to making education systems more responsive to young people's lived realities.

Besides education, access to the labour market is an issue of particular importance. This would require focusing on "the long-term drivers of youth unemployment and on macroeconomic policy choices that can create sustainable solutions for young people" (European Youth Forum, 2014, p. 22). In this regard it is necessary to recognize that the welfare state does not only comprise "the traditional terrain of social amelioration" but also "issues of employment, wages, and overall macro-economic steering" (Esping-Andersen, 1993, pp. 1–2). Emphasis should be placed on how inclusive and good quality jobs can be generated for young people. Such an approach would require critically assessing the impact that policies such as the fiscal consolidation programmes implemented in response to the financial and economic crisis in Europe have on young people's employment opportunities (European Youth Forum, 2014).

Moreover, the results suggest that there is a need to secure young people's material living conditions in the transition from school to work. In the Roman sub-sample only a small proportion of young people was eligible to benefit from the welfare state. In Vienna, on the contrary, the influence of activation measures, which make the reception of benefits conditional upon active job search behaviour and participation in courses, could be identified. It, thus, appears that there is a need to think about new safety nets to support young people's transition to work and to adulthood more generally. In fact, several commentators propose that welfare states should place stronger emphasis on

“securing the multiple transitions that now exist throughout the work lives of citizens” (Evers & Guillemard, 2013, p. 17). Inspiration could also be drawn from Scandinavian countries where social protection is applied more universally. So, for example, in countries such as Sweden and Denmark all young people participating in education or training are individually entitled to welfare allowances (Walther, 2006, p. 125).

A last element that emerges from the study is that it is important to increase young people’s opportunities for choice and action. This means, first of all, to recognize that transitions from school to work nowadays occur in many different ways. For this reason it is crucial to broaden the notion of what constitutes a ‘successful’ transition (Ingrid Schoon et al., 2009, p. 239). In addition, when it comes to young people who are in a precarious occupational situation it is important not to mask the structural causes for unemployment since this can contribute to the individualization of risk. Especially when young people are confronted with institutional actors (e.g. public employment services, counselling centres) it is necessary that young people are provided with choices that are meaningful for them at a subjective level. This would mean to start from young people’s abilities and interests and not to exert pressure on them (Pohl & Walther, 2007, pp. 551–552). Lastly, it is also crucial that young people have opportunities to actively do something. One option in this regard is volunteering. However, in order that volunteering develops its full potential it needs to be supported, valued and socially recognized.

The above discussion highlights that young people’s well-being and their inclusion in society depends on many different social processes. Moreover, the actors involved comprise state institutions, profit and not-for-profit actors as well as reference persons in the immediate surrounding of the individual. The human rights framework could be seen as a possibility to “unify the efforts” of these different actors (Sen, 2007, p. 2). In particular, the evocative and aspirational power of human rights could guide these different actors towards empowering and strengthening all young people in the transition from school to work. This would enable young people to shape their own life course, to establish themselves as independent citizens and to participate in society.

6.3 Outlook

The present study focused on the factors that empower young people and the factors that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. It, thus, approached the subject of young people's well-being and their inclusion in society from an individual perspective. Well-being and inclusion can be considered to be important preconditions for people to be able to participate adequately in society. So, they are not only important for the individuals concerned but for society as a whole as they represent the "social basis for democracy" (Kronauer, 1998, p. 61). In fact, several commentators argue that being part of a community requires next to political membership also social membership, i.e. "the de facto right to social equality and full social inclusion" (Somers & Roberts, 2008, p. 413). In this connection it needs to be recognized that denying some people a fair share of the social heritage has wider repercussions. So, for example, if parts of the population have difficulties to achieve a secure and stable position in society, feelings of insecurity and vulnerability increase in general (Castel, 2000, p. 534). It, thus, appears that guaranteeing to everyone adequate life perspectives is a necessary prerequisite for a strong and resilient society. Future research could, thus, focus not only on inclusion and exclusion on an individual level, but also on how young people's social and material well-being is related to broader processes in society. Some topics that come into view are the inclusion of young people with migration backgrounds, questions of belonging in culturally diverse societies and young people's trust in political institutions. Although there are many sociological studies that deal with these topics, they often do not refer to the language of human rights. Yet, embedding research about young people and social inclusion into the language of human rights would have many beneficial effects. So, for example, it would place emphasis on the importance of social and economic rights and contribute to their further advancement. Moreover, the mobilizing force of human rights could be used to translate research into practical action.

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8 Abstracts

[EN] For many young people the transition from school to work does not follow anymore the standard life course model, in which finishing education and entering stable, full-time employment succeed each other smoothly. Transitions, instead, have increasingly been prolonged, fragmented and de-standardized (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 32). Today, it is not uncommon that young people start their career by shifting several times between education, non-standard employment and unemployment (Eurofound, 2014, p. 12). This diversification of transition patterns provides young people with greater opportunities to create their own individual trajectories. At the same time, however, the risk of marginalisation and social exclusion has increased (Walther, 2009, p. 121).

The transition from school to work is part of a wider transition to independent adulthood, which includes moving out from the parental home, cohabiting with a partner and having children. It is a time filled with many new demands but it does not guarantee effective entitlement to the full range of citizenship rights. It, thus, appears that there is a need to place a stronger focus on young people's human rights. Particularly relevant for young people is the right to autonomy. It draws attention on young people's possibilities to appropriate their own life course, to establish themselves as independent citizens and to exercise their human rights (European Youth Forum, 2012).

Moving from young people's lived experiences, the aim of the present thesis is to get a deeper understanding of the factors that empower young people and the factors that increase their vulnerability in the transition from school to work. For this purpose an empirical study was carried out among young adults living in Rome and in Vienna. In sum 160 face-to-face interviews using a standardised questionnaire were conducted with young people who at the time of the interview were not in employment. The study focused on two cities since the context considerably shapes the constraints and the enablements that young people encounter in the transition from school to work (Kazepov, 2005).

In the analysis it came to the fore that the context in which the interviewed young people were embedded was reflected in their living conditions. Moreover, a series of factors could be identified which had an influence on the respondents' subjective well-being in both cities. A higher educational level, a higher income and strong support by relevant others were associated in both cities with higher subjective well-being. Discontinuities in education and a longer duration of unemployment, conversely, heightened young people's vulnerability on a subjective level. Interestingly, however, the intensity and relative importance of these factors varied between the two interviewed groups. Differences could also be observed in relation to the space of action that the respondents had to overcome their situation and to actively do something.

The lived experiences of the interviewed young people in Rome and in Vienna bring to the fore that the practical vindication of human rights depends on a variety of different social processes. Based on the findings of the present study some elements could be identified that would contribute to empowering young people in the transition from school to work. These are access to education, employment and welfare as well as space for choice and action. Moreover, the support by parents, peers and teachers proved to be of relevance.

[DE] Viele junge Erwachsene erleben heute keinen kontinuierlichen, an der Normalbiographie orientierten, Übergang von Schule zu Beruf. Die Übergänge sind zunehmend länger, brüchiger und unübersichtlicher geworden (Walther & Pohl, 2005, p. 32). Oft ist bereits der Berufseinstieg von mehrfachen Wechseln zwischen Bildung, prekärer Beschäftigung und Arbeitslosigkeit geprägt (Eurofound, 2014, p. 12). Die größere Vielfalt bietet jungen Menschen die Möglichkeit ihren Übergangsverlauf individuell zu gestalten. Gleichzeitig ist es wichtig zu erkennen, dass das Risiko von Marginalisierung und sozialer Exklusion gewachsen ist (Walther, 2009, p. 121).

Der Übergang von Schule zu Beruf ist eng verbunden mit Übergängen in anderen Lebensbereichen, wie z.B. Übergänge im Bereich Wohnen und Partnerschaft oder Übergänge in die Elternschaft. Einerseits, sind junge Erwachsene in diesem Lebensabschnitt mit vielen neuen Aufgaben konfrontiert, die sie Großteils alleine bewältigen müssen. Andererseits, können sie oft aber nicht auf die volle Bandbreite der Staatsbürgerrechte zurückgreifen, da sie nicht ausreichend im Erwerbssystem eingebunden sind. Um diesen Herausforderungen gerecht zu werden, ist es wichtig einen stärkeren Fokus auf die Menschenrechte dieser Gruppe zu legen. Von besonderer Bedeutung für junge Erwachsene ist das Recht auf Autonomie. Es lenkt den Blick auf die Möglichkeiten, die sie haben, ihr Leben zu gestalten, an der Gesellschaft teilzuhaben und ihre Menschenrechte zu verwirklichen (European Youth Forum, 2012).

Ausgehend von den persönlichen Erfahrungen junger Erwachsener, möchte die vorliegende Arbeit einen tieferen Einblick und ein tieferes Verständnis darüber gewinnen, welche Faktoren im Übergang von Schule zu Beruf stärkend und welche hingegen schwächend wirken. Empirische Grundlage der Arbeit ist eine standardisierte Fragebogenerhebung unter insgesamt 160 in Rom und in Wien lebenden jungen Erwachsenen. Da junge Menschen ohne Beschäftigung eine besonders vulnerable Gruppe darstellen, konzentrierte sich die Studie auf diese Arbeitsmarktlage. Zwei Städte wurden in den Blick genommen, um den Einfluss von strukturellen, institutionellen und kulturellen Rahmenbedingungen im Übergang von Schule zu Beruf analysieren zu können.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Lebenssituation der befragten, jungen Erwachsenen die kontextuellen Rahmenbedingungen in den zwei Städten widerspiegeln. Weiters, weist die Analyse darauf hin, dass bestimmte Faktoren in beiden Städten bedeutend für das subjektive Wohlbefinden der befragten, jungen Menschen waren. Ein höherer Bildungsstand, ein höheres Einkommen und starke Unterstützung von Bezugspersonen ging mit höherem Wohlbefinden einher. Diskontinuitäten im Bildungsverlauf und eine lange Dauer der Arbeitslosigkeit hingegen schwächte die jungen Menschen subjektiv betrachtet. Trotz selber Zusammenhänge variierte die Intensität und relative Wichtigkeit dieser Faktoren zwischen den zwei Städten. Unterschiede zeigten sich auch im Hinblick auf den Handlungsraum der den jungen Menschen offen stand um ihre Situation zu überwinden und aktiv tätig zu werden.

Die persönlichen Erfahrungen der jungen Erwachsenen weisen darauf hin, dass die praktische Umsetzung von Menschenrechten von vielen sozialen Prozessen abhängig ist. Ausgehend von den Ergebnissen der Studie, konnten einige Elemente herausgearbeitet werden, die dazu beitragen, junge Erwachsene im Übergang von Schule zu Beruf zu stärken. Neben einem breiteren Zugang zu Bildung, Arbeit und wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Institutionen, ist die Eröffnung von Wahl- und Handlungsräumen von Bedeutung. Weiters, spielt die Unterstützung von Eltern, Freunden und Lehrern eine wichtige Rolle.