

Transition to Adulthood in France, Estonia and Russia (GGs data)

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The conceptualization of a stage between childhood and adulthood appeared only in the 20th century. Human longevity started to increase intensively, and a new stage began to appear. The transition to adulthood (i.e., late adolescence, early adulthood, young adulthood or emerging adulthood) is the stage of the life course when individuals experience biological, emotional, cognitive and social maturation (Grob, 2001; Steinberg, 2001). Demographers generally agree that the following biographical events may serve as the markers of becoming an adult today: completing education, entering the work force, first leaving the parental home, first partnership (unregistered union), first marriage and the birth of the first child (Billari et al., 2005; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Buchmann, 1989; Liefbroer, 1999).

Based on social and demographic approaches, we compared timing, tempo and sequencing of the occurrence of five sociodemographic events marking the transition to adulthood: first leaving parents, completion of education, first partnership, marriage and childbirth. We analysed data of Generations and Gender Survey for France, Estonia and Russia using Sequence Analysis.

Our analysis revealed that the changes in these three countries generally go in one direction (towards a "late, protracted and complex" transition to adulthood), but the patterns that youngest generations demonstrate still return us to a Western vs. Eastern European nuptial and reproductive model: marriages and childbearing are occurring in Russia and Estonia at much younger ages and among a bigger share of the population than in France.

France showed more modern behaviour than the other countries: more than 70% of youngsters have a first partnership, when only 30-40% have a first marriage. The number of children born outside of marriage is approaching the number of children born within wedlock. All the demographic events are postponed for two years among youngsters in comparison with older generations. Young people are starting families after age 25, but they obtain socioeconomic events before 20. The interval between all socioeconomic and all demographic events is about five years for men and three years for women. The interval between leaving parental home and becoming a parent is seven years for men and five years for women.

Russia showed very traditional behaviour in all the generations. Only 50% of youngsters have a first partnership, and 60-70% have a first marriage. The number of children born outside of marriage is much smaller than the number of children born within wedlock. The demographic events are occurring two years earlier in the youngest generation than in the oldest one. Young people are starting families at ages 20-23, but they obtain socioeconomic events at ages 19-20. The interval between all socioeconomic and all demographic events is about three years for men and one year for women. The interval between leaving parental home and becoming a parent is three years for men and two years for women.

Estonia clearly lies between France and Russia. About 60-70% of youngsters have a first partnership, and only 30-40% have a first marriage. The number of children born outside of marriage hardly compares with the number of children born within wedlock. All the demographic events occurred in the youngest generation about two years earlier than in the oldest generation. Young people are starting families at ages 20-23, but they obtain socioeconomic events at age 18. The interval between all socioeconomic and all demographic events is about five years for men and three years for women. The interval between leaving the parental home and becoming a parent is six years for men and four years for women. Thus, the timing of the onset of events

in Estonia is more similar to that of Russia, but the tempo and the sequencing is closer to that of France.

Thus, we can confirm the assumption of the de-standardisation of people's life courses which many scientists expected (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Mayer & Müller, 1986). In the case of France, Estonia and Russia, the main factor of the increase in the variety of life-course tracks is the appearance of a new type of matrimonial behaviour – partnership – and the increasing importance of early career building rather than early family formation.

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