

Attitudes of young Italians towards mobility experiences

Anna Grimaldi^a, Giuliana Franciosa^b, Concetta Fonzo^b, Anna Iorio^b

^a *Responsible of Euroguidance Italy, Benevento, Italy, e-mail: a.grimaldi@isfol.it*

^b *Researchers of Euroguidance Italy, Benevento, Italy e-mail: info@euroguidance.it*

1 ABSTRACT

The research¹ carried out by Euroguidance Italy aimed at exploring behaviours, practices and meanings attributed by Italian young people to international and national mobility experiences, outside their regional areas, for studying and working reasons. A sample of 1787 individuals, between the age of 15 and 30, living in different Italian regions were interviewed through the CATI methodology. The outcomes show that only 16% of the sample spent a period in studying and working abroad and only 17% spent a period in studying and working in Italian areas different from where they live. The mobility experience for those that moved to an other Country was mainly linked to the interest towards a cultural exchange and involved mostly young people resident in Regions of the North and Centre; while, for those that leaved for other Italian Regions, the mobility experience was related to the need to find a job and involved mostly young people resident in Southern Regions and Italian islands. Besides, the effective mobility experience, the attitude towards that experience is much more marked concerning more then 60% of the interviewed sample. The motivation is related above all to cultural elements (to enrich the own knowledge, to learn a foreign language, to compare different cultures). All results gathered stress the importance to realise guidance actions aimed at fostering a mobility culture and to monitor the phenomenon throughout longitudinal studies in order to assess changes and diversities in the attitudes towards a similar experience and the consequent approach of the Italian population.

2 INTRODUCTION

The role of flexibility and knowledge acquires a strategic relevance in a fast changing society that requires people to adapt promptly to functions and positions which change quickly. Within an economic, social and occupational context characterised by an instable duration of the professional services, career guidance becomes even more a strategic element of the active labour policies; above all, if we look at it from two points of view: guidance as help for career development (personal and professional) and guidance as mean to face transitions that characterise people' life. On one hand, the guidance practices are based on the accepted meaning of the word 'career' which is completely new compared to the past, in view of the fact that it refers to a longer period of time compared to the one that characterises the word 'choice' of an occupation; the word 'career' indicates several kinds of activities that go from pre-professional periods to specific and formal educational-training pathways until to reach post-professional activities. So, besides, basic educational and vocational guidance, more and more 'guidance' appears to be finalised to support needs of. reconversion, career development, professional mobility within a labour market characterised by the need to rielborate paths of

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professionalization that change in times and by strongly innovative procedures used for the definition of work relations. In this context, career guidance should give an answer not only to the question: 'what to do' but above all to: 'how to do' these or those specific work activities. A fundamental function is not that to give advise or elaborate profiles but to foster into individuals, starting from the early beginning, the ability to face situations, to move in an easy and flexible way in order to find innovative solutions and methods. In this context, certainly the mobility experiences towards other countries represent an useful training channel (Euroguidance Italy, Vivere l'Europa and Stage in Europa. Guida per gli operatori. Guida per le aziende. Giovani in Europa. Guida allo Stage in azienda, 2006).

Encouraged by European institutions, thanks the introduction of community programmes that promote international mobility, all the mobility experiences implemented a learning potential also in terms of flexibility, attitudes towards changes, acceptance of cultural differences (Grimaldi, 1996). However, in Italy, although solicited, these experiences seem not to be very frequent and still prejudices and resistances remain.

3 RESEARCH

On basis of the above mentioned considerations, this research aimed at exploring not only the relevance, in quantitative terms, of national and EU mobility but also of the background and attitudes of Italian young people towards that international experience. This general objective can be divided into the following sub-objectives:

- dimension of the mobility phenomenon
- evaluation and satisfaction of that experience
- background and attitudes towards an experience of international mobility
- background and attitudes towards an experience of mobility in Italy outside the own Region
- knowledge of community programmes for studying/training and work

And at this end, throughout the CATI methodology, a sample of 1787 people, between the age of 15 and 30, living in different Italian Regions, was interviewed (264 Italian municipalities sample were selected). The sample, equally distributed within the sex variable, was composed by 50,6 % of males v.s. 49,4% of females. In relation to the age, the sample is distributed as follows: 21% are young people between the age of 15 and 18; 22,7% between the age of 19 and 22; 26,5% between the age of 23 and 26; and, 29,8% between the age of 27 and 30. The majority of the sample analysed (34,7%) got a diploma of higher secondary education (diploma or maturità); 25,3% achieved an university degree; 18,7% was graduated and 20,8% achieved a diploma of lower secondary education. Only 0,5% hold a diploma of primary education. The examined sample included very young people, from the age of 15, and for this reason the percentages must be analysed in relation to the age. Consequently, with regards to that personal data frame, the majority of young people interviewed are students (44,5% out of the total), 12,8% is employed and the remaining 42,7% unemployed or seeking for a job. The foreign language spoken by the young Italians is English, followed by French and few of them declares to know German and/or Spanish, as well. Anyway, less of 10% of the sample declares to have a good knowledge of a foreign language, the majority (percentage about 30%), sustains to have a scholastic level. In

relation to computer skills, more or less all the sample (percentage close to 90%) declares to use it for several reasons, among some of them: to surf in internet, to study, to seek friend, to work.

4 RESULTS

From the results analysis, an upsetting picture appears compared to the effective experiences of mobility. In fact, only 16% of the sample declares that they have spent a studying and working period abroad. If we analyse that data in relation to the resident population, the percentage rises to 21% taking into account young people of the North and Centre of Italy; and, the percentage decreases to 8% taking into consideration only the sample of Italian islands and the South of Italy. The research shows how 75% out of the above 16% of young people moved to a foreign country for studying reasons. The main destination is United Kingdom (57%), followed by France (25%) and Spain (16%). Young people stay abroad for about 5-6 months but, as expected, the period of stay tends to increase by age. The satisfaction rates are high. Holidays for studying reasons represent the main reason for staying abroad (46%); especially, until the age of 18. Only 14% of the sample composed by young people, with at least one experience of international mobility, realised that experience for working reasons. The data gathered show how 13% of those that spent a period abroad received a grant, in the majority of cases an Erasmus grant. The situation becomes better taking into account the inclination: in this context, more than 60% of those interviewed declare to be willing to get out and move abroad; even if only 30% is sure that they made the right decision. The interest into international mobility decreases by age. Majority of 'inclined' would be more willing to move abroad in order to experience a new context (29%), to work (24%), to improve language skills (21%) and foreign cultures (16%). Young people until the age of 18 mention mainly reasons linked to language knowledge and university studies. The average period of stay abroad that young people wish is about 1 year. The most attractive country is the United Kingdom (42%), followed by France (25%), Spain (24%) and North America (18%). Youths until the age of 18 are more interested, compared to the rest of the sample, to move to the countries of North America. Majority of 'inclined' would be willing to move abroad on a permanent basis when opportunities for a stable and attractive job come out (38%) or for larger profits as those in Italy (23%). People between the age of 15 and 18 are less encouraged to move permanently. The main explanations, in order to avoid mobility experiences (40%), are related to family reasons, but also a close bond of affection towards the own country represents an obstacle (32%). Analysing the data in relation to mobility experiences within Italian areas different from the own Region of residence, the frame appears to overlap; only 17% spent a period of mobility for studying and working reasons. There are several motivations: on one hand, if the experience of international mobility is mainly due to the attention towards cultural exchanges and involves mainly young people resident in Northern and Central regions of Italy; on the other hand, the experience of mobility towards other Italian territories is stimulated by the need to find a job and involves mainly not very young people, resident in Southern regions and Italian islands. All those that experienced that practice show high satisfaction. With regards to inclination, more than 70% of those interviewed is ready to move inside Italy; in the majority of cases, the reason is related to professional and economic improvement. The period of stay is about 2 years (that period increases by age and is longer compared to the period abroad within international mobility); but, there are few cases of young people, coming from Italian islands, who would like to move on a permanent basis when opportunities for a stable and attractive job come out. The knowledge of community programmes that foster international mobility shows an upsetting picture, as well: Erasmus is absolutely the most representative of the sample (40%), especially, for young people between the age of 19 and 26, followed by Socrates (14%) and Leonardo da Vinci (7%). Among those interviewed about 37% don't know any of the mentioned programmes, with a percentage that reaches about 51% for young people between the age of 15 and 18. The main information channels of those programmes are universities (50%) and informal

communications between friends and relatives (41%). Altogether, the results gathered suggest the need to realise and implement guidance actions aimed at promoting the culture of international mobility and, to monitor the phenomenon throughout longitudinal studies to assess changes and/or differences in attitudes towards a similar experience and in the consequent behaviour of the Italian population. On the basis of that considerations, in order to promote experiences of international mobility for both studying and working reasons, Euroguidance Italy has the following two goals that will be translated into two core lines of operational actions:

- To set up guidance actions for information and training in order to overcome prejudices about international mobility experiences. To this end, information materials will be prepared and disseminated into schools, universities and other working settings; and, at the same time, interactive working groups will be realised to work on the theme of international mobility. The end users will be not only young people, but especially teachers, trainers, parents and workers.
- To carry out longitudinal surveys in order to monitor the trends and to evaluate the learning outcomes that mobility experiences realise not only in relation to the knowledge but also the attitudes and the background of training, work and foreign cultures.

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