

“You’ve got to do it on your own, right?”

The school to work transitions of lower educated young people in Flanders



Youth unemployment in Flanders

- High chances of entry + long duration of unemployment = dual labour market
(Sourbon & Herremans, 2013)
- A social paradise?
Youth unemployment is particularly problematic for the lower educated
- Number of young people (18-21) entering the labour market decreases
(from 23,5% in 2008 to 13,4% in 2013)
- Yet, number of ESL increases
(from 9,9% in 2008 to 11% in 2013)

Youth unemployment (>25) in Belgium	%
Flanders	13
Brussels	35
Wallonia	27

(Cockx, 2013)

Our study

- Public Center of Social Welfare
- 15 young people were interviewed
 - *aged 18-23; (m=20,5)*
 - *11 males; 4 females*
 - *living in or around the city of Ghent*
 - *mixture of 'stronger' and 'weaker' profiles*
 - *very diverse resumes*
- Leaving school/getting a job/getting support

Education: general observations

- Education plays a major part in their lives
- Returning to school always an option

- Nice

Yeah, school was quite nice. You're forced to go there, obviously. I liked to hang around with my peers... there were good days and bad days. But I had no problem going there. (Matteo, 23)

- Important

School was important to me, because I know I've got some qualities. I'm not really meant to spend all my days in a factory. (Henk, 23)

Academic disengagement?

- *In school I used to be bored a lot... but once I changed to Syntra (vocational track) everything changed [...] also in my behavior. So to be honest, it wasn't bad at all. (Michel, 20)*
- *Q: What are you looking for now?*
- *Well, I don't know. A job in which I feel good, that would be nice. I'll have the security of an income. But school has advantages as well and with a certificate you're so much stronger in the job market. So, I don't know. (Alice, 19)*
- *They all said I'd be sorry [for leaving the school], and they were right. (Charles, 20)*

Leaving school

- No eyes on the labour market
- Not a 'choice for', but a 'flight from'
- The idea of a job is very abstract

Some of my teachers wanted me to stay, they said they liked having me in class. But with all of these problems at home I was like: I want to get a job, [...] make some money, start living. (Joost, 18)

Q: Would you have gone back to school?

Hmm, yeah... if I had a better situation at home, maybe. It's hard to explain. The situation made me... I've been through some stuff that psychologically... that has traumatized me, in a way. (Ernest, 20)

Getting back on track

- Caught in a 'non-situation'
- Boredom, precarity, and stigma

At first you're like: wow, freedom. But pretty quickly... I had no desire to get out of bed, to do stuff. It was terrible. And I had so little money too. (Alice, 19)

I'll be honest with you, I want to get out of this situation, as soon as possible [Michel, 20]

Finding a job

- Interim-offices

- Employment Service/Agency

They only give you a list of vacancies: then it's up to you (Eddie)

- Staying 'alright' with the Agency

I could get a job easily, but it's risky. Because it's more than just a job. I'm 18 now, and it's undeclared work again. I need something that's safe. Undeclared work is not safe. (Joost).

Finding a job

- Informal circuit

“My friends, they don’t have a job either. So it’s all a bit the same situation...” (Charles)

- Dead-end jobs [Lawy, yr]

I find the [options for lower-educated] very minimal and demotivating [...] You need papers for everything. [...] Even if you have capacities, it’s hard to make promotion. You hear about it, of course, that some employers give you that opportunity. But I’ve never seen it. [Henk]

Job training and formal education

- Many job training programmes; still no work
- Paradox to the idea of (re-schooling)?
- Enrolling in formal (adult)-education very unsuccessful
 - *I really think I could do it, but I ran out of strength. At the new school was is so much distance between you and the teachers. At my old school [for secondary education] the teachers were so involved, that was a great school. (Lieve, 20)*

Reflections

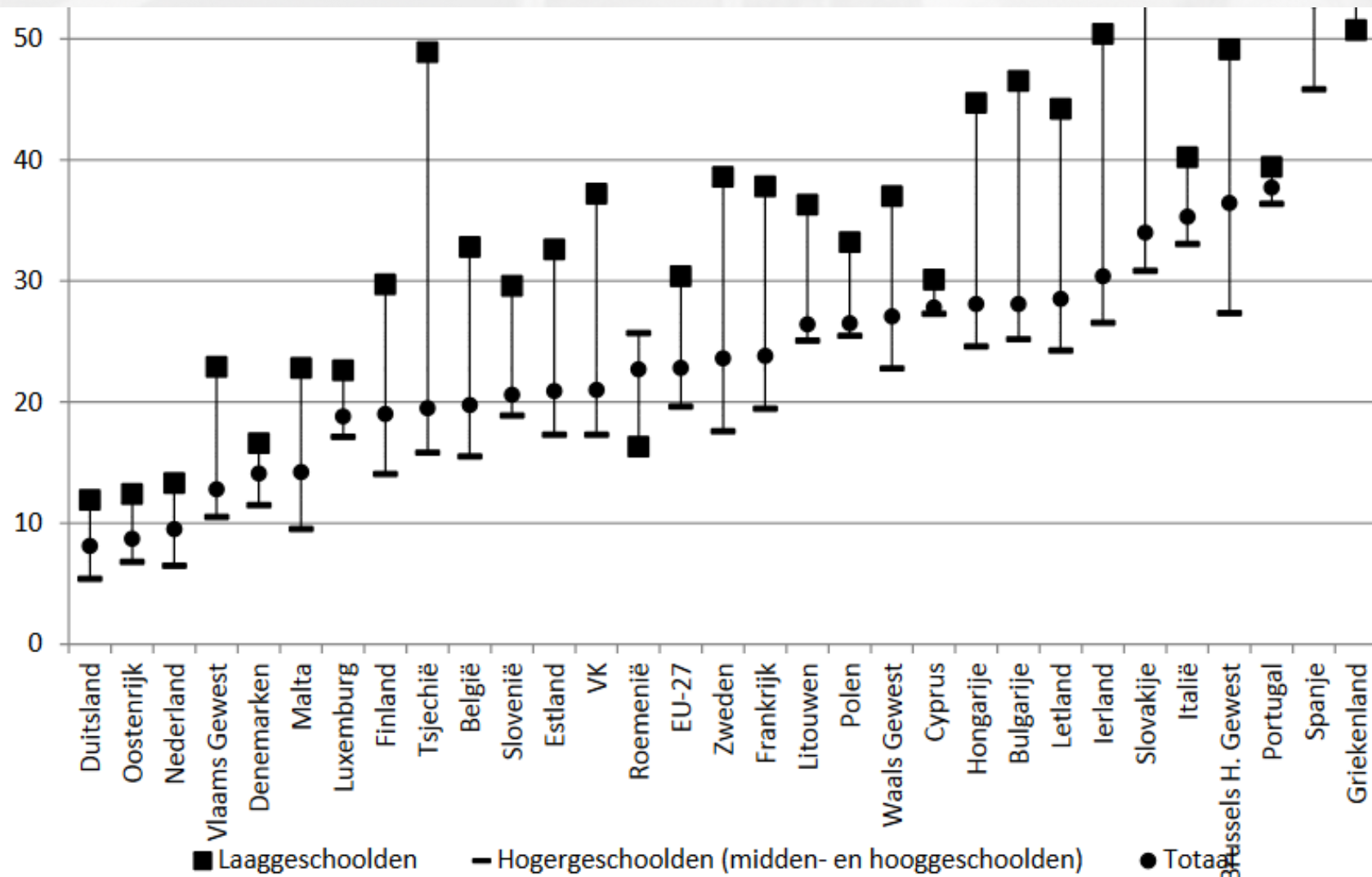
- Dropping out is a flight from a problematic situation
- Urgent need for more flexible ways to get 'back on track'
 - School...
 - But foremost employers
- Wider perspective
 - Fundamental inequalities
 - Youth as a cultural moratorium (Zinnecker, 1995)

Extra: Leaving school

- Misty: quitting school or getting kicked out?

And then I had this meeting with the principal, and together we decided: look, you're not motivated anymore. We can lie to each other and let this situation continue for two, or three months. But if you skip school this much, or not get any results, it's no use staying in school. Not for you either. (Matteo, 23)

Extra: youth unemployment in Flanders



Bron: FOD Economie - Algemene Directie Statistiek - EAK, Eurostat LFS (Bewerking Steunpunt WSE)