

# Transitions from Higher Education to Work

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## TRANSITIONS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION TO WORK

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The transition period (“rite de passage”) has traditionally been defined as an intermediate status between full-time schooling and full-time employment (Hannan and Werquin 1999). This traditional view has been abandoned as it became clear that the transition itself became more complex and precarious (OECD 2000). Since the eighties it has become more difficult for young people to integrate the labour market, as is reflected by longer periods of unemployment, job shifts and job mismatches. Moreover, the borderline between education, vocational training and work has become less clear, with mixed statuses (e.g. combining education and work as in the dual system), diversified pathways and more and more people crossing the line more than once in their working life.

Although the precariousness of the transition period expressed itself most clearly among those with low levels of education, the employment prospects of those with higher education also deteriorated as a result of the mass expansion of higher education in all Western societies (Teichler 1999). Concern was expressed about the effect of over-education on the returns to education (Halaby 1994). Moreover, concern has been expressed as to the long-term effects of transition problems. Does youth unemployment lead to social exclusion or is it a temporary phenomenon in the individual career? Does under-utilisation of skills lead to skills obsolescence?

Although many countries express the same concern about these issues, the problems are not universal, nor are the solutions. Some countries like the Netherlands, Germany and Japan seem to experience rather smooth transitions, whilst others like France and Spain face serious and lasting problems (Shavitt and Müller 1998; OECD 2000; Ryan 2001).

This chapter gives an overview of the transition from higher education to work in the 12 countries studied in the CHEERS project. In the first section we will concentrate on key indicators of the transition period: these include indicators of job search and job search behaviour of the graduates on the one hand and the selection criteria of the employers on the other. In the following section we will explore the relationships between the different indicators of the transition process. Finally, we will explore the effects of having a smooth or a difficult transition on later labour market outcomes.

## 2. KEY INDICATORS OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

2.1. *Job Search*

Graduating from tertiary education does not automatically imply a transition to work. In France, Japan, and Spain more than 10 per cent of the graduates initially embarked on some form of further education after graduation (see Table 1). In some countries a substantial proportion entered the labour market prior to graduation. This was the case for 15 per cent of graduates in Finland and 14 per cent of graduates in the Czech Republic. These anomalies notwithstanding, the vast majority followed the regular pattern of entering the labour market after graduation. About three-quarters of all graduates looked for work after graduation. This percentage varied quite considerably between countries, from 88 per cent in the United Kingdom to only 54 per cent in the Czech Republic. In the latter country, 22 per cent obtained a job without searching. This was also the case with a substantial proportion of graduates in Austria (14%) and Germany (16%).

Table 1. *Job Search Since Graduation, by Country (percentage)*

Job search since graduation	Country													Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP	
Yes	73	72	78	68	70	73	88	69	85	80	54	74	80	74
No, self-employed	2	2	0	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	3	1	0	1
No, job before graduation	6	6	1	6	3	5	4	15	3	4	14	6	1	5
No, study	9	12	19	9	7	6	3	2	5	5	4	7	12	8
No, job without search	7	6	0	14	16	13	3	12	6	7	22	10	4	9
No, other	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	2
Total*	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Question C1: Did you look for a job since graduation in 1994 or 1995?

\* Count by Country: IT (3048); ES (2977); FR (3028); AT (2278); DE (3334); NL (3065); UK (3433); FI (2656); SE (2630); NO (3303); CZ (3093); EUR (32844); JP (3402); Total (36246).

Source: CHEERS survey data

In discussions concerning the transition from school to work, a central role was assigned to the time it takes to obtain one's first job. This provides a first indication of the relative smoothness of the transition. There are different ways in which search duration can be measured. First of all, it needs to be decided what kinds of jobs are to be included under the definition of first job. The figures presented here refer to any job not considered by the respondent to be a casual job. Secondly, the search duration may depend on what point in time one considers to be the starting point of the search period. As will become apparent in the following section, there are great differences between the 12 countries in the percentage of graduates who start looking for work prior to graduation. Job search prior to graduation is fundamentally different from that after graduation for the simple reason that in the former case it is undertaken while study is the respondents' primary activity. In the latter case, a large proportion

of the graduates are unemployed during the search period, or at least they are not actively participating in the labour market or in formal education. In this chapter, we put emphasis on the job search period between graduation and the first job, since it is during this period that failure to find work quickly is most likely to give rise to high material and psychological costs for the graduates. A third factor to be taken into account is how to deal with graduates who obtain work without searching. They can either be left out of the analyses, or counted as having a zero search period. In this chapter, the latter strategy is applied, since graduates who find a job without searching enjoy the smoothest of possible transitions. Finally, those who were initially self-employed or engaged in study after graduation and those who continued to work in a job they already had prior to graduation were not included in the figures, since they did not have a (potential) search period immediately after graduation.

Table 2 shows the duration of the search after graduation for the first “regular” job. Spain and Italy had the highest percentages with a search period after graduation of more than six months. Respectively 41 per cent and 34 per cent of the graduates took more than six months to find a job (many of them more than a year). This percentage was also quite high in France (27%). At the other extreme, a very small proportion of graduates in the Czech Republic (2%), Japan (5%) and Norway (6%) required more than six months after graduation to obtain their first job. It should be noted that in the latter countries, as discussed, they often looked for a job for a few months prior to, or around the time of graduation.

Table 2. Length of Search Period After Graduation for First Job, by Country (percentage)

Search duration	Country													Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP	
0 months	19	21	23	40	48	39	32	46	46	52	60	40	86	45
1 to 3 months	28	22	31	27	26	38	41	31	32	34	33	31	5	28
4 to 6 months	19	16	19	16	14	12	14	11	11	9	5	13	5	12
more than 6 months	34	41	27	17	12	11	13	12	11	5	2	16	5	15
Total*	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Question C7: For how many months did you look for your first job after graduation in 1994 or 1995? In the table only the duration of a search period *after graduation* is taken into account. Graduates who started to look for a job before graduation and who reported a search duration which was shorter than the time span from the beginning of the search to the time of graduation are considered here as having a search duration of zero months.

\* Count by Country: IT (1861); ES (1835); FR (1048); AT (1465); DE (2509); NL (2172); UK (1993); FI (1505); SE (1490); NO (1952); CZ (2065); EUR (19898); JP (2620); Total (22518).

Source: CHEERS survey data

In Table 3 we examine if a “long” search period after graduation (more than 6 months) is more prevalent in some fields than in others. Despite the large general differences between the countries, there were some fairly systematic differences between fields of study, which applied across most of the countries. Many graduates in the arts and humanities and social sciences seemed to take a long time to obtain their first job in most countries. A long search period after graduation was relatively rare for graduates in engineering, health, natural sciences and business studies, although there were some exceptions. In particular, health graduates in Spain had the highest percentage, with a long search period after graduation. Law graduates showed a mixed picture. In some countries (France, Austria, the United Kingdom and Sweden), a relatively high percentage had a long search period after graduation. By contrast, this percentage was relatively low in Germany and Finland.

*Table 3. Search Period After Graduation of More than 6 Months, by Field of Study (percentage)*

Field of study	Country												Total*	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR		JP
Arts and humanities	45	52	33	18	19	14	16	11	9	3	m	20	7	18
Social sciences	48	40	34	21	20	18	14	17	10	9	m	25	6	20
Business	31	42	16	15	10	5	11	14	17	3	m	16	5	15
Law	33	47	39	23	4	16	19	9	15	12	m	24	4	20
Natural sciences	41	37	23	10	14	10	11	14	13	15	m	19	3	18
Engineering	22	31	25	17	12	10	14	10	7	7	m	14	2	13
Health	25	41	25	16	6	10	5	8	4	1	m	8	3	8

Question C7: For how many months did you seek your first job after graduation in 1994 or 1995?

m = missing data

\* Count by Country: IT (1861); ES (1835); FR (1048); AT (1465); DE (2509); NL (2172); UK (1993); FI (1505); SE (1490); NO (1952); CZ (m); EUR (19898); JP (2620); Total (22518).

Source: CHEERS survey data

As indicated in the previous section, the timing of the job search differed significantly by country (see Table 4). In Japan, almost all graduates started to look for work at least 3 months prior to graduation (most for more than six months prior to graduation). At the other extreme, a relatively high percentage of graduates in Italy, France and Spain waited until graduation or even later to start looking for work. The other countries were in an intermediate position.

Table 4. Start of Job Search, by Country (percentage)

Start of job search	Country												Total	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR		JP
>3 months before graduation	11	17	8	19	29	21	35	26	25	24	29	23	96	31
1-3 months before graduation	5	6	9	12	19	21	13	18	28	39	19	18	1	17
At time of graduation	42	35	18	39	34	37	24	40	33	23	27	32	2	29
1-3 months after graduation	25	21	16	13	10	10	12	6	6	7	14	12	0	11
>3 months after graduation	17	21	48	16	7	11	15	10	8	7	12	14	1	13
Total*	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Question C2: When did you start looking for a job?

\* Count by Country: IT (2144); ES (2021); FR (1043); AT (1378); DE (2233); NL (2222); UK (2702); FI (1735); SE (2132); NO (2549); CZ (1669); EUR (21829); JP (2467); Total (24295).

Source: CHEERS survey data

Table 5 shows the differences in percentage of graduates who started to look for work before graduation by field of study. Although it varied quite strongly in many countries, there was no prevailing pattern across the 12 countries. Health and engineering graduates often started early in many countries, although in several countries they were among the least likely to do so. The proportion of law graduates who started to look for work prior to graduation was relatively low, particularly in Austria and Germany. In France, graduates in business studies showed a much stronger propensity to start searching prior to graduation than all other categories of graduates. In Italy, Spain, Austria and Japan, the differences between fields of study were quite small.

Table 5. Start of Job Search Before Graduation, by Field of Study and Country (percentage)

Field of study	Country												Total	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR		JP
Arts and humanities	20	17	15	32	30	33	41	46	49	73	m	39	97	45
Social sciences	15	29	16	39	39	46	40	28	46	56	m	34	96	46
Business	20	32	28	38	51	45	53	49	50	70	m	43	97	49
Law	16	19	15	7	13	36	54	39	39	30	m	24	98	36
Natural sciences	10	27	15	37	46	41	47	37	41	59	m	36	100	39
Engineering	15	27	17	30	56	44	58	54	59	66	m	47	98	52
Health	10	18	0	34	61	50	79	46	75	61	m	50	98	51

Question C2: When did you start looking for a job?

m = missing data

\* Count by Country: IT (2144); ES (2021); FR (1043); AT (1378); DE (2233); NL (2222); UK (2702); FI (1735); SE (2132); NO (2549); CZ (m); EUR (21829); JP (2467); Total (24295).

Source: CHEERS survey data

The search methods differed greatly by country (see Table 6). The “conventional” method of applying for an advertised vacancy was frequently used in all countries, although noticeably less in Italy than in the other countries. With the notable exception of German and Japanese graduates, contacting employers without waiting for a vacancy also proved to be a popular method. Placing an advertisement only seemed to be popular among German graduates. Not really a search method, but certainly a possible way of finding a job was to be approached by an employer. This only applied to a minority of graduates in all countries, although about a quarter of the Czech graduates and a fifth of the Italian, Dutch, Finnish and Norwegian graduates indicated that they had been approached by an employer. Public employment agencies were commonly used in almost all countries, although the percentage of graduates who used this particular channel was low in Japan, the United Kingdom and Norway. Commercial agencies seemed to be popular in the Netherlands, and to some extent in Spain and the United Kingdom.

Table 6. *Methods Used in Searching for First Job After Graduation, by Country (percentage)*

Search method	Country														Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP		
Reply to advertisement	48	61	75	64	74	84	69	73	78	84	62	71	73	71	
Contacted employers	70	43	79	65	60	69	40	62	61	41	63	57	13	52	
Public employment agency	40	52	63	32	40	42	26	43	48	23	38	39	13	36	
Personal connections	54	49	39	36	26	37	27	20	25	15	38	32	21	31	
Careers placement office	10	40	14	13	7	12	37	26	3	3	19	17	63	22	
Contacts during study	11	12	21	24	28	31	17	28	20	21	20	21	3	19	
Approached by employer	19	8	10	4	12	19	9	21	18	19	26	15	14	15	
Commercial employment agency	14	33	16	13	4	54	27	4	m	6	22	20	13	19	
Teaching staff	13	8	6	11	8	12	9	9	5	6	10	9	23	10	
Placed advertisement	10	10	24	13	11	1	1	11	1	1	7	7	1	6	
Self-employment	9	4	2	6	6	2	2	4	m	1	3	4	0	3	
Other	8	39	12	7	10	5	7	4	5	4	4	9	10	9	
Total	306	359	361	288	286	368	271	305	264	224	312	301	247	293	
Count	2143	2106	1122	1487	2284	2238	2889	1791	2181	2627	1672	22539	2671	25210	

Question C4: How did you try to find your first job after graduation?

Source: CHEERS survey data

The high percentage of Japanese graduates who started to search for work prior to graduation was reflected in the search methods. The most popular was the career placement office at their institution. This method was also quite commonly used in Spain and the United Kingdom, but very little in most other countries. Japanese graduates also made more use of the assistance of teaching staff at their school than graduates in other countries, although this method was much less popular than the

careers placement office. Interestingly, Japanese graduates were least likely to make use of other contacts established during their course of study. This method was most often used in Germany, the United Kingdom and Finland. A relatively high percentage of graduates in Italy and Spain made use of other personal contacts (family, friends, etc.) This percentage was relatively low in Germany. In this country, a relatively high proportion of graduates attempted to set up their own business as a way of finding their initial employment after graduation.

The use of a given method says little in itself about successful means of finding work. Therefore graduates were asked to state which method was the most successful for them. As Table 7 suggests the pattern changed. Application for an advertised vacancy and self-search were the most successful methods, as Table 7 shows, leading to success in the case of almost one third and almost one fifth of all the graduates respectively. Private contacts were decisive for one seventh. In contrast, search with the help of a public employment agency was crucial for only about one tenth of the graduates. Applying for an advertised vacancy was the most successful method of job search in seven of the countries surveyed, notably in Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Searching on one's own initiative was the most successful method in Austria, the Czech Republic and France, while private contacts were very important in Italy and Spain.

*Table 7. Most Important Method for Finding First Job After Graduation, by Country (percentage)*

Search method	Country														Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP		
Reply to advertisement	11	20	17	25	33	24	40	31	40	55	18	31	31	31	
Contacted employers	20	14	29	33	25	15	12	25	24	13	31	20	3	19	
Personal connections	31	28	19	16	11	8	12	7	7	6	20	14	13	14	
Contacts during study	4	4	7	10	10	11	7	11	5	10	7	8	1	7	
Approached by employer	8	3	3	2	4	7	3	8	12	7	6	6	6	6	
Commercial employment agency	1	4	1	1	0	21	11	1	0	1	2	5	5	5	
Careers placement office	2	4	3	2	1	1	6	2	0	1	5	2	21	5	
Public employment agency	0	5	11	2	3	4	2	6	5	2	4	4	2	4	
Teaching staff	3	1	1	2	3	3	1	4	1	2	2	2	9	3	
Placed advertisement	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	
Self-employment	4	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	
Other	14	13	8	4	8	4	4	3	6	2	2	6	8	6	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
Count	1841	1837	1023	1275	2164	2180	2718	1715	1941	2552	1620	20865	2546	23411	

Question C5: Which method was the most important for finding your first job after graduation in 1994 or 1995? Please fill in the item number from question C4.

Source: CHEERS survey data



In order to see the relative effectiveness of the methods employed, for each method the proportion of graduates who indicated that it was most important for obtaining their first job was calculated, expressed as a percentage of the number of graduates who used it. These percentages are shown in Table 8.

*Table 8. Efficiency Rate of Methods Used in Searching for First Job After Graduation, by Country (percentage of graduates who used a specific search method)*

Search method	Country													Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP	
Personal connections	62	58	47	42	3	23	42	34	28	38	55	42	63	44
Reply to advertisement	23	32	22	36	44	29	55	41	49	64	28	42	42	42
Approached by employer	31	27	32	35	27	34	32	35	53	35	23	34	37	34
Contacts during study	36	33	31	37	33	28	37	37	21	49	33	34	39	35
Contacted employers	28	31	36	48	1	21	29	40	39	32	49	31	23	31
Self-employment	41	44	59	23	14	39	35	30	m	26	20	31	73	31
Commercial employment agency	8	12	6	8	7	39	41	17	m	12	10	25	34	26
Teaching staff	24	16	11	14	40	26	12	40	25	29	25	24	37	27
Careers placement office	16	11	18	14	8	11	15	10	8	28	26	14	33	20
Placed advertisement	10	14	4	10	23	0	0	13	m	6	17	12	29	12
Public employment agency	1	9	17	6	7	10	8	14	10	9	11	9	18	10
Other	67	37	65	64	73	64	63	64	63	53	58	54	82	58
Count	1841	1837	1023	1275	2164	2180	2718	1715	1941	2552	1620	20865	2546	23411

Questions C4 and C5: see Tables 6 and 7.

m = missing data

Source: CHEERS survey data

In general, the most efficient methods were applications for advertised vacancies, direct contact with employers and use of contacts either established during the course of study or outside. Being approached by an employer and self-employment were also generally efficient, although less so than one could imagine. In about two-thirds of the cases when an employer approached graduates, this did not result in a job. It is not clear from the data whether this was decision on the part of the employer or of the graduates. Similarly, many attempts to set up one's own business failed. Public employment agencies showed a low efficiency rate in most countries, which may indicate that for many graduates they were not so much a search channel as a requirement for entitlement to unemployment benefits. Commercial employment agencies frequently found jobs for graduates in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom while, for a relatively high number of Japanese graduates, it was the careers placement offices at their school or the teaching staff that found them a job. These methods had a much lower success rate in most of the countries, which may indicate that they may play a different role in different countries. In Japan and some other countries, the educational institutions and/or their staff may see it as part of their task to

mediate between graduates and employers, whereas in other countries these activities may be restricted to those graduates who have trouble in finding work through other means. This also seemed to be the case for placing an advertisement which, judging by the low success rates in most countries, was a last resort when all else failed.

In the previous section, we saw that great differences between countries existed in the search period after graduation. It is interesting to see how active the graduates were during this search period and the number of employers contacted. Table 9 shows the mean number of employers contacted by graduates prior to obtaining their first job. Because these figures may be influenced by the length of the job search after graduation, they are broken down accordingly.<sup>1</sup>

Table 9. Number of Employers Contacted Before First Job, by Length of Search Period After Graduation and Country (mean)

Search duration	Country													Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP	
1 to 3 months	12	31	33	15	20	8	21	8	9	12	6	15	11	15
4 to 6 months	19	45	75	28	28	19	33	16	17	35	12	30	16	30
More than 6 months	23	59	140	44	57	31	70	19	27	50	12	52	23	51
Total	18	48	75	25	26	13	32	11	14	15	6	24	20	24
Count	1477	1451	874	994	1845	1694	1798	1164	1137	1680	1336	15449	2417	17866

Question C6: How many employers did you contact before you took up your first job after graduation in 1994 or 1995?

Source: CHEERS survey data

In general, the number of employers contacted increased with the length of job search after graduation. There was without exception a positive relation between the length of search after graduation and the number of employers contacted. However, in Italy, Spain, Finland, the Czech Republic and Japan, this increase tapered off as the length of search after graduation grew, which may suggest that in those countries a high search intensity was effective to help graduates to obtain work quickly. In the other countries the number of employers contacted continued to rise quite sharply, even for those who had searched for quite a long time. This was especially noticeable for French graduates: those with a search period of six months or more after graduation had contacted an average of 139 employers before obtaining their first job.

<sup>1</sup> Graduates with zero search duration after graduation were not included in the table. Many had had a substantial search period *prior to graduation*, during which time they had contacted a large number of employers. Important for our purposes is the development of the search intensity over the time *after graduation*.

## 2.2. Employers' Selection Criteria

Graduates were asked to rate the importance of various selection criteria for employers in their initial job after graduation. Table 10 presents the percentage of graduates who indicated that a given criterion was "important" or "very important" for the employer who recruited them. In general, "personality" and "field of study" were most often quoted by graduates as being (very) important. The importance of these two criteria differed however from country to country. "Personality" was least important in the Czech Republic, Italy and Spain and most important in the Netherlands. Japan had a relatively low percentage of graduates who mentioned "field of study" as an important criterion. This percentage was also quite low in the United Kingdom, and very high in Finland. "Main subject or specialisation" was also an important criterion in most countries, although there were great variations. This percentage was especially high in Finland and France, whereas Japan and the Czech Republic showed relatively low scores.

Table 10. Importance of Recruitment Criteria According to the Graduates' Perception, by Country ("important" percentage, answers 1 and 2)

Recruitment criterion	Country													Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP	
Personality	58	61	74	80	78	83	81	75	81	m	57	73	80	74
Field of study	70	68	69	77	77	68	54	85	78	m	78	72	37	68
Main subject/ specialisation	38	62	66	46	51	36	45	73	57	m	28	49	32	47
Work experience during studies	21	20	52	49	55	50	41	54	29	m	31	40	16	38
Computer skills	35	42	40	47	44	36	40	37	19	m	57	40	17	37
References	21	29	26	29	27	28	45	32	49	m	29	32	27	32
Exam results	37	24	8	17	42	11	39	34	24	m	25	28	28	28
Work experience before studies	10	29	18	16	29	17	30	22	23	m	15	22	5	20
Reputation of institution	19	16	19	17	16	15	23	24	23	m	26	20	41	22
Experience abroad	11	11	21	16	13	13	10	17	17	m	15	14	8	13
Foreign language skills	25	26	28	31	24	20	9	40	23	m	42	26	13	24
Count	1791	1983	1030	1664	2602	2527	2832	1997	2040	m	2281	20784	2475	23273

Question C8: How important, according to your perception, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you for your initial employment after graduation? Scale of answers from 1 = very important to 5 = not at all important.

m = missing data

Source: CHEERS survey data

“Work experience during study” also varied greatly by country. About half the graduates in Germany, France, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria thought that this criterion was (very) important. By contrast, in Italy, Spain and Japan less than a quarter thought so. A third study-related criterion which varied greatly in its importance was exam results. The percentage of graduates who felt that this was an important criterion was relatively high in Germany and the United Kingdom, but very low in France and the Netherlands. “Reputation of the educational institution” only seemed to be important as a selection criterion in Japan, where it was slightly more important than “field of study”. “Computer skills” seemed relatively important as a selection criterion in the Czech Republic and relatively unimportant in Sweden and Japan. “References” were relatively important in the United Kingdom and Sweden. “Foreign language proficiency” was quite often quoted as an important criterion in Finland and the Czech Republic, and was not at all important in the United Kingdom and Japan. The low score in the latter two countries reflects their strong focus on their own language. “Work experience before study” and “experience abroad” were generally rather unimportant as selection criteria in the majority of cases.

In looking at the configuration of the criteria, we noted that the combination of specific knowledge (field of study and additionally the area of specialisation) and personality were at the top of the list in all European countries, whilst, in Japan, personality stood out and the reputation of the higher education institution came next. Other major criteria were computer skills in the Czech Republic as well as work experience during one’s studies in Germany, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria.

Table 11 shows the variation between country in the importance of three distinctive selection criteria. The first is field of study, the second the reputation of the educational institution, and the third the personality of the graduate.

*Table 11. Importance of Selected Recruitment Criteria, by Field of Study  
(percentage of “important”, answers 1 and 2)*

Field of study	Country													Total	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP		
<i>Recruitment criterion</i>															
Arts and humanities	52	66	57	71	69	69	44	88	80	m	m	67	33	62	
Social sciences	40	66	51	58	74	60	35	78	73	m	m	58	21	50	
Business	76	66	80	76	74	64	53	76	72	m	m	71	23	66	
Law	76	62	78	86	83	63	67	92	76	m	m	76	23	67	
Natural sciences	69	78	73	76	73	77	57	88	82	m	m	72	51	71	
Engineering	83	76	77	75	78	68	71	86	78	m	m	77	66	76	
Health	90	61	47	94	92	74	82	94	85	m	m	80	74	80	

to be continued

Table 11. Continued

Field of study	Country													Total	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP		
<i>Reputation of institution</i>															
Arts and humanities	11	10	9	8	8	14	19	21	17	m	m	15	40	18	
Social sciences	8	16	8	9	11	11	19	15	19	m	m	14	47	21	
Business	25	15	28	24	18	17	15	28	21	m	m	21	33	22	
Law	22	10	13	24	3	14	33	20	17	m	m	18	41	22	
Natural sciences	14	17	25	16	15	18	22	16	18	m	m	19	40	20	
Engineering	28	25	25	27	25	18	30	40	36	m	m	28	44	30	
Health	16	15	16	10	10	12	42	17	22	m	m	22	34	22	
<i>Personality</i>															
Arts and humanities	56	57	73	75	65	83	83	78	80	m	m	74	84	76	
Social sciences	60	68	73	85	89	83	87	81	79	m	m	78	84	79	
Business	63	74	79	95	76	88	84	83	93	m	m	82	85	82	
Law	62	60	77	78	55	91	78	86	51	m	m	70	82	72	
Natural sciences	51	61	65	75	76	78	80	64	74	m	m	70	72	70	
Engineering	54	64	78	81	83	77	80	70	82	m	m	75	67	74	
Health	56	50	100	67	88	86	81	55	76	m	m	64	76	64	

Question C8: How important, according to your perception, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you for your initial employment after graduation? Scale of answers from 1 = very important to 5 = not at all important.

m = missing data

Count by Country: IT (1791); ES (1983); FR (1030); AT (1664); DE (2602); NL (2527); UK (2832); FI (1997); SE (2040); NO (m); CZ (m); EUR (20784); JP (2475); Total (23273).

Source: CHEERS survey data

“Field of study” was generally an important selection criterion for graduates in health, law and engineering, and not for graduates in social sciences and arts and humanities. There were, however, notable exceptions. It was relatively unimportant for health graduates in Spain and France and law graduates in Japan.

“Reputation of institution” was generally very important in engineering and business, although in the United Kingdom and Japan business graduates were least likely to quote it. In general, graduates in social sciences, arts and humanities, and health were fairly unlikely to quote it as an important criterion. One exception was the United Kingdom where health and law graduates were most likely to find it an important criterion.

Social science and business graduates were likely to mention “personality” as an important selection criterion. Few graduates in arts and humanities and the natural sciences regarded this criterion as important.

### 3. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TRANSITION CHARACTERISTICS

In this section we shall try to determine how different aspects of the transition are related. Do graduates who started to look for work before graduation search differently from those who started around or after graduation? To what extent do the timing and the intensity of the job search affect the duration of the search? Do graduates who took a long time to find their first job encounter different selection criteria from those experienced by graduates who found their first job quickly?

Two key indicators are the start of the job search and the number of employers contacted. Graduates may try to improve their chances of a successful transition by starting early in their search, or by approaching a large number of employers. It is of interest to see to what extent the use of one of these strategies also implied the use of the other. The two strategies may be complementary, may substitute each other, or may even be unrelated. In Table 12 the mean number of employers contacted per month of job search (subsequently called “search intensity”) is presented separately for those who started searching before, around and after graduation.

*Table 12. Number of Employers Contacted per Month, at Time of Starting the Job Search and by Country (mean)*

Start of job search	Country												Total	
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR		JP
Prior to graduation	3.7	7.5	10.9	6.6	5.7	3.8	12.2	3.9	5.8	4.7	2.5	5.8	4.4	5.4
Around graduation	4.4	8.3	16.2	5.0	5.9	3.5	7.1	3.2	4.5	4.8	3.5	5.3	1.7	5.3
After graduation	3.5	7.5	12.8	6.1	5.3	2.7	8.7	3.7	2.8	4.6	3.5	6.2	3.9	6.2
Total	3.9	7.8	13.0	5.8	5.7	3.5	9.7	3.6	4.8	4.7	3.0	5.8	4.4	5.6
Count	1472	1459	853	994	1838	1692	1804	1145	1134	1683	1336	15413	2230	17643

Questions C2, C6 and C7: see Tables 2, 4 and 9.

Source: CHEERS survey data

In most countries there was little difference in search intensity between those who started to seek before, around and after graduation. This suggests that the two strategies were not closely related. Those who started searching early were not necessarily likely to contact a large number of employers. There were some exceptions, which however did not conform to any general pattern.

In France, search intensity was highest among those who started searching around graduation and lowest among those who started prior to graduation. This may indicate that the two strategies were to some extent substitutes for each other. Those who did not start to look for work until around the time of graduation may attempt to compensate for this by approaching more employers. However, this fails to account for the fact that the large proportion of French graduates who waited until after graduation searched less intensively than those who started around the time of graduation.

The opposite pattern was observed in the United Kingdom. The highest level of search intensity was found among graduates who started to look for work prior to graduation, and lowest among those who started to look at the time of graduation. This seems to indicate that timing and intensity may be to some extent complementary, since an early start was often accompanied by a high number of job applications. A clearer pattern of complementarity was found in Sweden, and to some extent also in the Netherlands, where search intensity was negatively related to the start of the job search.

Table 13 shows the relationships between the duration of the job search after graduation and the most successful method in obtaining the first jobs. Since graduates were free to use any or all of the methods, a long search period only indicates that the method in question was disproportionately successful for graduates who failed to find work quickly. This could mean that the method itself was not very effective, or that it was a last resort for graduates who had trouble in finding work by other means.

Graduates who successfully contacted employers without knowing about a vacancy generally had a relatively short search period after graduation. The same applied to those who obtained their first job through the careers placement office at their institution, through contacts established during the course of their studies, as a result of being approached by an employer, or, as in Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic and Japan, through the teaching staff at their institution.

Interestingly, those who obtained their first job by enlisting the help of social contacts who were not related to their studies had a relatively long search period after graduation on average. This suggests that this form of "social capital" may be more of a remedy than a choice used to ensure a smooth transition. Graduates whose first job was obtained by enlisting the help of public employment agencies had a relatively long search period on average. This did not apply to those who obtained work through a commercial agency: in several countries, the search of these graduates was quite short. The most commonly used method that of replying to an advertisement, occupied intermediate position in most countries.

*Table 13. Search Duration After Graduation, by the Most Important Search Method and Country (mean)*

Search method	Country												Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	JP	
Careers placement office	4.1	7.7	4.7	3.4	3.4	2.4	2.4	5.1	m	0.5	1.4	0.7	2.0
Teaching staff	7.2	5.3	7.8	3.0	2.2	4.0	2.0	6.0	2.5	2.7	1.3	0.4	2.6
Placed advertisement	9.4	11.0	2.6	3.9	2.5	1.0	m	2.7	m	m	1.5	1.3	3.0
Contacts during studies	6.6	8.7	2.6	4.2	2.3	3.2	2.3	3.4	1.5	1.2	0.9	1.8	3.1
Reply to advertisement	7.8	8.4	7.7	5.0	4.2	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.6	1.6	1.5	1.0	3.4

to be continued

Table 13. Continued

Search method	Country												Total
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	JP	
Contacted employers	7.2	7.3	5.7	4.8	3.4	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.3	1.9	1.3	0.4	3.9
Approached by employer	6.4	6.6	4.0	3.5	4.0	2.9	4.7	4.1	4.1	1.5	1.2	0.5	3.4
Commercial employment agency	6.4	11.6	5.3	7.3	2.4	3.2	2.9	1.9	m	2.9	1.3	0.2	3.4
Public employment agency	20.0	10.4	7.9	6.6	5.3	4.3	4.6	6.2	4.1	4.7	2.1	4.4	5.8
Personal connections	8.0	10.8	7.9	7.6	6.5	4.5	3.8	5.8	2.7	4.1	1.9	1.4	5.9
Self-employment	10.6	13.1	7.6	10.7	5.1	9.1	8.8	2.7	m	2.3	3.0	0.9	6.7
Other	11.0	14.7	7.4	4.5	5.8	6.7	3.0	4.3	5.5	3.7	0.6	3.2	7.8
Total	8.1	10.0	6.6	5.3	3.8	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.6	1.9	1.5	1.1	4.1
Count	1633	1630	896	1060	1919	1781	1882	1178	1193	1712	1398	2471	18753

Questions C5 and C7: see Tables 2 and 7.

Source: CHEERS survey data

A number of multivariate (ordinary least squares regression) analyses were conducted in each country to determine the relationship, if any, between search behaviour and the time taken to obtain work. The dependent variable in each case was the natural logarithm of the search period in months after graduation.

Two indicators were used: the moment when graduates started looking for work (before, around or after graduation), and the search intensity in terms of the number of employers contacted per month of job search. As was the case for the search period, the latter variable was also included in logarithmic rather than linear form.

In order to properly assess the effects of search behaviour, it is important to take into account the characteristics of graduates at the time of graduation. The relation between search behaviour and search period may be a spurious one because both are influenced by graduate characteristics. In the analyses, we included as control variables field of study (with arts and humanities as reference category) and type of studies (at universities or other institutions), grades upon entry to higher education, age, gender, work experience obtained during study, work placement during studies, duration of studies, and hours per week spent during the course on studies and on extracurricular activities. For each country two analyses were conducted. First, a model was estimated which contained only the graduate characteristics, and subsequently a model was estimated in which the indicators of search behaviour were added. In this way we could not only determine whether search behaviour had an effect, but also whether this effect in any way altered or accounted for the relation between graduate characteristics and search duration.



Table 14. Determinants of Search Duration, by Country

	Country											
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	JP
1 Field of education (humanities = reference cat.)												
Social sciences				+/0				+/+	+/+	+/+		
Business		-/0		+/0		-/-	-/0	+/+	+/+	0/+	+/0	
Law								+/+	+/0	+/+		-/0
Natural sciences		-/0				-/0				+/+	+/0	
Engineering	-/-	-/0				-/0			0/+	+/+	+/0	-/0
Health	-/-			0/-	-/-	-/-	-/-		-/0			-/0
2 Type of education (university type = ref. cat.)												
Non-university	m	m		m	-/0		+/0	m	m	-/-	m	m
3 Grades (ref. cat. = low grade)												m
High		-/0	-/-		-/0		-/-					m
Medium							0/-					m
4 Age					+/0							
5 Gender (ref. cat. = male)												
Female		0/+	0/+		+/0							+/0
6 Experience during study	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/0	-/-	-/-			0/-	-/0	-/0	
7 Work placement		-/0										m
8 Study duration									m		m	m
Up to 1 year too long			0/+		+/0				m		m	m
More than 1 year too long					+/+				m	+/0	m	m
9 Study intensity (hours per week)				0/+								m
10 Extracurricular activity (hours per week)							-/0			0/-	m	
11 Start of job search (ref. cat. = around graduation)												
Prior to graduation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
After graduation												
12 Search intensity	-	-		-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-

+ significant positive effect; - significant negative effect; m = variable not included; +/- signs before slash: significant effect before the search variables are included, and after the slash after they were included; 0 and blanks: no significant effects.

Source: CHEERS survey data

Table 14, which gives an overview of the significant outcomes of these analyses, shows that field and type of education are related to search duration in many countries, although the pattern of effects is not generally consistent across countries. Exceptions were graduates in the social sciences, who searched for a long time in

several countries, and health graduates, who often seemed to have a shorter search period. High grades on entry to higher education were associated with a shorter search period in several countries. Women sought longer than men in some countries. In many countries, work experience acquired during the course of study reduced the search period. This may to some extent be due to increased market value through acquired experience, but also to the contacts that experienced graduates had established with employers.

Looking at the search behaviour, it was apparent that an early start to the job search greatly reduced the duration of the search after graduation in all countries. But it did not seem to make any difference whether graduates started to seek around the time of graduation or thereafter. A high search intensity, in terms of employers contacted per month of job search after graduation, reduced search duration in most countries. These results show that graduates had some influence over the time taken to obtain their first job. By starting earlier and by seeking more intensively, they increased their chances of finding work quickly.

Table 15 (see next chapter) shows the relationships between the duration of job search after graduation and the perceived importance of various selection criteria for obtaining the first job after graduation. There is obviously no question of a causal relation here.

In general, most criteria were more important for those with a short search duration after graduation than for those who sought for a longer period. This seems to suggest that after failing to find work quickly, graduates “lowered their sights” and applied for vacancies for which the requirements were less stringent. The differences varied considerably between countries and between criteria. The difference in employer requirements was most pronounced in France and Germany, and least in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The difference between short and long duration was generally great for the field of education and main subject or specialisation criteria. By contrast, employers of graduates who found work quickly hardly differed from those of graduates who took longer to find a job in terms of the importance they attached to the experience prior to study, experience abroad, foreign language proficiency, computer skills, references and personality.

#### 4. JOB SEARCH AND LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

In this section, we shall examine how far the smoothness of transition affected the graduates’ later labour market outcomes. Notably, the duration of the job search after graduation was taken into consideration. In a number of multivariate analyses, we tried to establish the effects of (the natural logarithm of) search duration on the probability of finding a job for which one’s own level of education was a minimum requirement, the probability of having a temporary job and on the (natural logarithm of) the hourly wage in the current main job. The former two analyses comprised logistic regression analyses, the latter ordinary least squares regression. As in the analyses of the previous section, we verified the effects of graduates’ characteristics at the time of graduation.

Table 15. Importance of Recruitment Criteria, by Search Duration and Country (percentage)

Recruitment criterion	Country												Total*		
	IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	CZ	EUR	JP		
<i>Field of study</i>															
Short	75	70	73	79	79	68	50	87	78	m	78	73	37	68	
Long	62	58	59	71	62	66	47	72	77	m	66	63	27	61	
<i>Main subject/ specialisation</i>															
Short	41	63	69	48	53	35	43	73	58	m	27	48	32	46	
Long	30	52	58	39	37	36	39	58	57	m	18	44	25	43	
<i>Exam results</i>															
Short	38	26	7	16	43	12	39	35	24	m	24	28	29	28	
Long	36	20	7	15	37	6	30	24	17	m	19	23	20	23	
<i>Experience during studies</i>															
Short	22	20	58	50	57	51	38	53	29	m	30	41	16	38	
Long	19	20	41	44	43	47	29	48	23	m	25	30	24	30	
<i>Experience prior to studies</i>															
Short	10	29	18	15	31	16	29	22	20	m	14	21	5	19	
Long	9	24	14	14	23	20	27	20	24	m	14	19	11	18	
<i>Reputation of institution</i>															
Short	22	19	24	19	18	15	21	23	24	m	27	21	42	24	
Long	14	9	9	12	9	9	15	21	21	m	13	12	29	13	
<i>Experience abroad</i>															
Short	12	14	25	15	14	14	10	17	19	m	14	15	8	14	
Long	10	8	10	19	10	10	9	16	17	m	17	11	4	11	
<i>Foreign language proficiency</i>															
Short	26	30	33	31	25	20	10	40	23	m	42	28	13	26	
Long	23	21	15	33	25	19	8	43	22	m	42	23	15	23	
<i>Computer skills</i>															
Short	37	45	44	47	44	35	43	38	18	m	57	42	16	39	
Long	33	42	36	45	49	33	42	41	26	m	48	39	23	38	
<i>Recommendations/ references</i>															
Short	21	32	25	28	27	27	44	33	46	m	29	31	28	30	
Long	23	29	24	30	25	34	43	28	48	m	40	29	27	29	
<i>Personality</i>															
Short	58	66	76	80	79	84	81	77	80	m	56	74	81	75	
Long	57	62	68	83	78	80	77	73	75	m	71	68	80	69	

Questions C7 and C8: see Tables 2 and 10.

m = missing data

\* Count by Country: IT (1635); ES (1696); FR (890); AT (1389); DE (2332); NL (2120); UK (1915); FI (1436); SE (1131); NO (m); CZ (2034); EUR (1673); JP (4233); Total (218940).

Source: CHEERS survey data

Table 16 shows that the probability of holding a job which is at (at least) one's own level differed strongly by field of study in most countries, as well as by type of degree programme, age and gender, as will be discussed in another chapter. In some countries, significant positive effects were also observed for the grades and work

experience aspects, which were seen to be important selection criteria for many first employers (see Table 10). Moreover, a long search reduced the probability of finding a job at one's own educational level in most countries. This also accounted for some of the effects of graduate characteristics, particularly age and study duration.

Table 16. Effects on Probability of Finding a Job at or above Owns Level of Educational Attainment, by Country

		Country										
		IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	JP
1	Field of education (humanities = reference cat.)											
	Social sciences					+/+						-/-
	Business	+/+										
	Law	+/+			+/+	+/+	+/+					
	Natural sciences	+/+		+/+			+/+					
	Engineering	+/+	+/+						-/-			
	Health	+/+	+/+		+/+	+/+	+/+		+/+			+/+
2	Type of education (university type = ref. cat.)											
	Non-university	m	m	+/+	m		+/+		m	m		m
3	Grades (ref. cat. = low grade)											
	High		+/+	+/0								m
	Medium											m
4	Age		-/0			-/0			-/0	-/-		
5	Gender (ref. cat. = male)											
	Female					-/-	0/-		-/-			-/-
6	Experience during study		+/+			+/0						
7	Work placement							+/+				
8	Study duration											
	Up to 1 year too long									m		m
	More than 1 year too long		-/-						-/0	m	-/0	m
9	Study intensity (hours per week)					-/-						
10	Extracurricular activity (hours per week)											
11	Search duration (log)	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-

+ significant positive effect; - significant negative effect; m = variable not included; +/- signs before slash: significant effect before the search variables were included, and after the slash after they were included; 0 and blanks: no significant effects.

Source: CHEERS survey data.

The analysis of factors contributing to obtaining a temporary job presented in Table 17 also provides findings which are discussed in another chapter. In addition to the influence of field of study, type of degree programme and gender, we noted that the search duration significantly increased the probability of holding a temporary job

in less than half the countries. However, this hardly accounted for any effects of graduate characteristics.

Table 17. Effects on Probability of a Temporary Job, by Country

		Country										
		IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	JP
1	Field of education (humanities = reference cat.)											
	Social sciences		-/-		-/-						0/-	
	Business	-/-			-/-	-/-	-/-		-/-	-/-	-/-	
	Law		-/0				-/-				-/-	
	Natural sciences			-/-								
	Engineering	-/-	-/-		-/-	-/-		-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	
	Health				+/+	+/+	0/+		+/+			
2	Type of education (university type = ref. cat.)											
	Non-university	m	m	-/-	m	-/-	-/-		m	m	-/-	m
3	Grades (ref. cat. = low grade)											
	High			-/0								m
	Medium											m
4	Age											
5	Gender (ref. cat. = male) Female	+/+	+/+			+/+			+/+		+/+	+/+
6	Experience during study								+/+			
7	Work placement											
8	Study duration									m		m
	Up to 1 year too long									m		m
	More than 1 year too long											
9	Study intensity (hours per week)											
10	Extracurricular activity (hours per week)											
11	Search duration (log)	+		+			+		+		+	

+ significant positive effect; - significant negative effect; m = variable not included; +/- signs before slash: significant effect before the search variables were included, and after the slash after they were included; 0 and blanks: no significant effects.

Source: CHEERS survey data

Finally, Table 18 shows the effects of graduate characteristics and search duration on the graduates' income, calculated in terms of hourly wages. In addition to the effects described in another chapter we noted that a long search duration after graduation led to lower wages in most countries. This hardly accounted for any of the effects of field of study and other characteristics.

Table 18. Effects on Hourly Wages, by Country

		Country										
		IT	ES	FR	AT	DE	NL	UK	FI	SE	NO	JP
1	Field of education (humanities = reference cat.)											
	Social sciences								-/-			
	Business	+/+			+/+		+/+			+/+	+/+	
	Law					-/-	+/+			+/+		
	Natural sciences			+/+			+/0			+/+	0/+	
	Engineering	+/+	+/+							+/+	+/+	
	Health					0/-		+/0		+/+		+/+
2	Type of education (university type = ref. cat.)											
	Non-university	m	m		m	-/-	-/-		m	m	-/-	m
3	Grades (ref. cat. = low grade)											
	High		+/+					+/0				m
	Medium											m
4	Age		+/+				+/+				+/+	
5	Gender (ref. cat. = male)		-/-	0/-		-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
	Female		+/+				+/0			+/0		
6	Experience during study								-/-			
7	Work placement											
8	Study duration					+/+	-/-			m		m
	Up to 1 year too long		-/-			0/+				m		m
	More than 1 year too long											
9	Study intensity (hours per week)											
10	Extracurricular activity (hours per week)											
11	Search duration (log)	-		-			-	-	-		-	-

+ significant positive effect; - significant negative effect; m = variable not included; +/- signs before slash: significant effect before the search variables were included, and after the slash after they were included; 0 and blanks: no significant effects.

Source: CHEERS survey data

Taken together, the results of the analyses in this section show that a long search after graduation was linked to a lower quality of work which graduates could expect about four years after graduation. In all the countries, graduates who had a long search period after graduation had, on average, either fewer chances of finding a job

which was at least at an appropriate level, a higher chance of having a temporary job, or a lower wage than comparable graduates who obtained work more quickly. With the partial exception of the job level, the effects of a longer search on future job quality were largely independent of the effects of graduate characteristics.

## 5. CONCLUSION

What do the findings presented in this chapter tell us about the transition from higher education to work in the participating countries? On the one hand, there is evidence that the transition has become more complex for some tertiary graduates, just as it has for school-leavers at lower levels of education. A considerable proportion of graduates delayed the transition, moving on to further education rather than entering the labour market immediately. Others were already in employment prior to graduation. On the other, such “anomalies” notwithstanding, a clear majority of graduates in all of the countries showed a very simple – almost “traditional” – pattern of transition: leaving higher education and then immediately offering their services in the labour market.

With respect to the question of whether the transition from higher education to work has become highly precarious, the findings are mixed. A relatively large group of job-seeking graduates in several countries – notably Spain, Italy and France – failed to find work within six months after graduation. As Chapter 5 makes clear, the employment situation of graduates in these countries about four years after graduation still lags beyond that in the other countries in some respects. Further-more, as is apparent from the analyses in Chapter 3, the situation at the time the survey was conducted, i.e. about four years after graduation, is partly – though not entirely – influenced by the smoothness of the transition. However, even in these countries, a clear majority of graduates did find work quickly, many virtually immediately upon graduating. The conclusion seems justified that while the transition is somewhat precarious for a minority of graduates, most graduates enjoy a rather smooth and successful transition.

Apart from the time taken to find work, there are some clear qualitative differences between the countries involved in the pattern of the transition process. For example, each country showed its own quite a distinctive pattern of search methods. German graduates often placed their own advertisements, commercial employment agencies were mainly popular in the Netherlands, Japanese graduates engaged the services of the career placement office and teaching staff at their own school, and graduates in Italy and Spain made the most use of personal contacts. A similar story can be told for the selection criteria applied by the graduates’ initial employers. “Main subject or specialisation” was especially important in Finland and France, “work experience during study” in Germany, France, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria, “exam results” in Germany the United Kingdom and “reputation of the educational institution” in Japan.

Despite these and other differences, in most respects the pattern of transition was surprisingly similar across the participating countries. This is particularly the case for the European countries: in almost all respects, these countries resembled each other

much more than they resembled Japan. In as far as there were real systematic differences between the European countries, it would appear that the southern European countries (Spain, Italy, and to some extent France) also have a somewhat distinctive pattern, which may in part be related to their somewhat poorer labour market prospects.

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