

*Nota de investigación:*

## Nest Stayers and Boomerang Kids. A comparison between Spain and Germany

*Jóvenes que permanecen en el nido y jóvenes que regresan.  
Una comparación entre España y Alemania*

**Autora: Marta Donat López**

*Entidad:* University of Granada. Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología

[martalou@correo.ugr.es](mailto:martalou@correo.ugr.es)

**Autora: Anne Berngruber**

*Entidad:* German Youth Institute (DJI)

[berngruber@dji.de](mailto:berngruber@dji.de)

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### Abstract

In countries hit hard by the economic crisis, like many Southern European countries, it has become harder for young people to gain and maintain employment. This problem is particularly severe in Spain. Given this economic crisis, it can be assumed that an increasing proportion of young people in Europe are obliged either to delay their spatial independence from their parents or to return to the parental home. However, as previous studies have already shown, northern and southern European countries differ with regard to the process of achieving residential autonomy. The main focus of this article will be a comparison between Germany as a Western European country and Spain as a Southern European country with regard to the process of leaving and returning to the parental home and the various determinants which can influence the residential autonomy of young people.

**Keywords:** Spain, Germany, independence, transition to adulthood, return to the family home.

## Resumen

En los países afectados por la crisis económica, como son algunos países del sur de Europa, los jóvenes han visto más dificultades en obtener y mantener un empleo. Este problema es particularmente grave en España. Teniendo en cuenta la crisis económica, se puede suponer que una proporción cada vez mayor de jóvenes en Europa está obligada a retrasar su independencia residencial respecto sus progenitores, o bien, a regresar al hogar de éstos. Sin embargo, estudios anteriores ya han demostrado que los países del norte y del sur de Europa difieren con respecto al proceso del logro de una autonomía residencial. El objetivo principal de este artículo trata de realizar una comparación entre Alemania como un país de Europa occidental y España como un país del sur de Europa con respecto al proceso de salida y regreso al hogar de los padres. También se pretende constatar los diversos factores determinantes que influyen en la emancipación de los jóvenes.

**Palabras clave:** España, Alemania, independencia, emancipación, transición a la edad adulta, marchar y regresar del hogar de los progenitores.

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the major changes that occur in a person's life cycle is the transition from youth to adulthood (Gee et al., 1995; Lary, 2015; White, 1994). From a life-course perspective, several steps mark the process of becoming an adult: leaving the parental home, completing one's education, beginning a job, marriage and childbirth (Shanahan, 2000). The transition process in summary can range from the teenage years to the third or even fourth decade of life. Leaving the parental home is a developmental step which usually takes place during young adulthood after reaching the legal age in most western countries. However, differences in the age of a young person's first move-out from the parental home can be seen, especially between South and North European countries (Eurostat, 2018f). Living autonomously from the parents is seen as an important step towards taking on various adult roles and no longer being subject to regular parental supervision (Mulder, 2009).

The independence of young people from their parents' home is a phenomenon that has acquired an important role in youth research. This is due to the assumption that the age at which young people decide to live autonomously from the parents is delayed in countries such as the United States, Canada or Spain (Aday, 2015; Burn and Szoeki, 2016; Mitchell, 2004; South and Lei, 2015; Garrido et al., 1996; Moreno, 2012). In addition, nowadays the transition from youth to adulthood is coming to be understood as a longer and less definitive process. For example, Stauber and Walther (2002, p. 15) assume that the nature of the transition to adulthood has changed over time and they compare it with a "yo-yo": less linear movement, more diversified and reversible.

Huinink and Konietzka (2000) say that not only age affects the rate at which young people vacate the parental home, but also other life course events, statuses and the duration of these statuses. In this context, the authors talk about "multiple clocks" (Huinink and Konietzka, 2000, p. 7).

Leaving the parental home is not necessarily a one-time event in life; it can be a reversible process (Konietzka and Huinink, 2003). Young people can move out of the parental home and return again one or several times. In this context, the provocative metaphor 'boomerang' has become well-established in Anglo-Saxon literature as a term describing young adults who have left home and come back at least once, similar to the action of a boomerang, returning to the thrower (e.g. Mitchell, 2006; Kaplan, 2009; Stone et al., 2014). Returners are not a new phenomenon, as earlier established by Clemens and Axelson (1985), Hartung and Sweeney (1991), Mitchell et al. (1996) or Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1994), for example. Nevertheless, several studies from the UK and North America show an increase in the number of young people returning to the family home (e.g., Beaupré et al., 2006; Otters and Hollander, 2015; South and Lei, 2015 and Stone et al., 2014).

The year 2007 was the start of the global economic crisis. As a result, young people's chances of finding and maintaining employment have declined, especially in Spain (Eurostat 2018a). The future has become more precarious and the security required to plan this with any measure of certainty is less than it was. The option of living with the parents can be understood as a form of familial "safety net" (DaVanzo and Goldscheider, 1990, p. 255). The option of free accommodation with the parents can be helpful in difficult situations such as unemployment or an insecure financial situation. In this context, it can be assumed that the economic crisis has forced an increasing proportion of young people to delay their spatial independence from the parents, or that those who have returned after a period of living more autonomously, in a separate residence, were obliged to return to the parental home. Especially in countries which were hit hard by the crisis, like many South European countries, a return of young people can be assumed. For Spain, Gentile (2010) indicates that, since the beginning of 2008 and due to the economic crisis, increasing proportions of young people are returning to their parents' home. But there is also evidence that the phenomenon of these so-called 'Boomerang Kids' is also occurring in other countries, such as Germany, which, up until recently, was not that much affected by the economic crisis (Berngruber, 2015a). Previous studies already show that northern and southern European countries differ with regard to the process of residential autonomy (e.g. Cordón, 1997).

The following article focuses on a comparison between Germany as a Western European country and Spain as a Southern European country with regard to the process of leaving and returning to the parental home. Germany functions as a reference here, as it has not been hit as hard by the financial crisis as Spain.

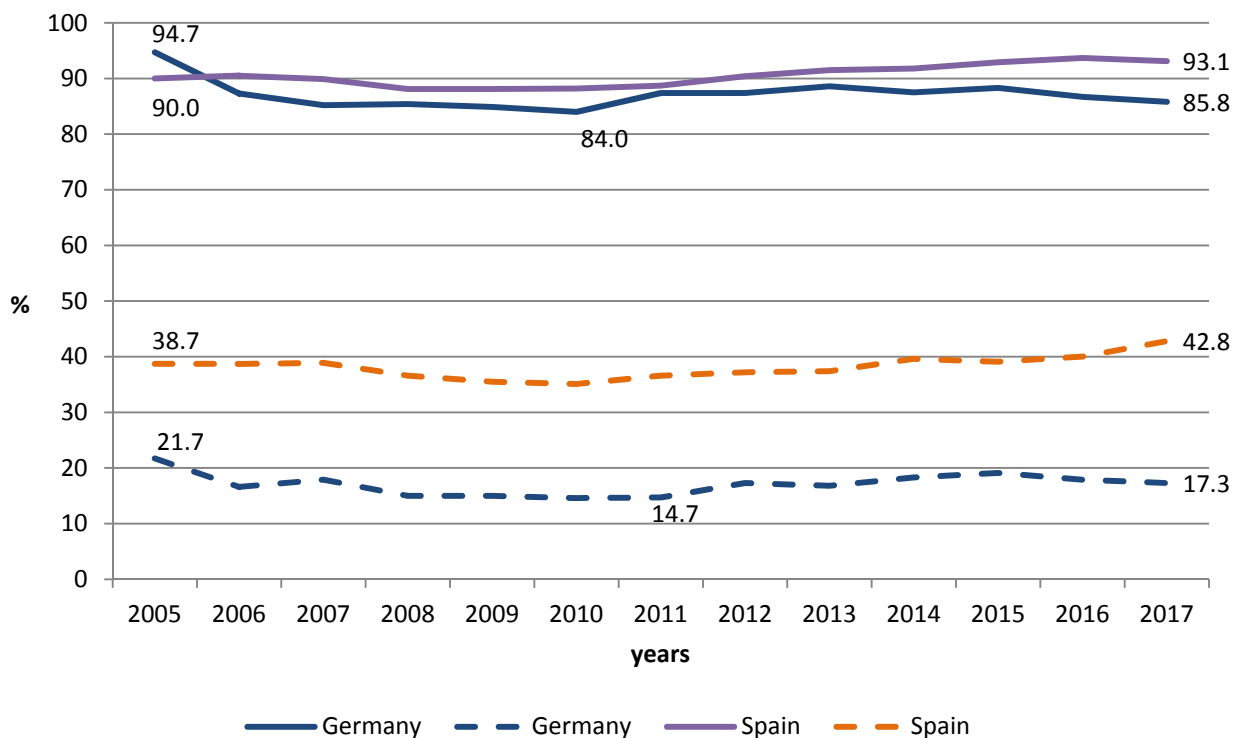
The first chapter focuses on the timing for young people leaving the parental home and on the returning rates in Spain and Germany. In the second chapter, the impact of several determinants, such as macro-structural factors, values, and the achievement of further life events, on the leaving home process, is described. In the final chapter, the findings are discussed and possible implications for the future are suggested.

## II. LEAVING AND RETURNING TO THE PARENTAL HOME

Besides the fact that Spain and Germany have been affected differently by the economic crisis, former international comparisons between these two countries have already shown a strong difference with regard to the process of leaving home (e.g. Angelini and Laferrère, 2013; Moreno, 2012). Data from the “Centro Reina Sofía” (2016) show a large difference between the percentage of independent young people (20 to 24 years old) in Spain and Germany. While in Spain the total number of independent young people aged 20 to 24 is 7.97% (4.93% men and 11.10% women), in Germany the percentage is 47.75% (42.03% men and 53.96% women).

Young Spanish people leave the parental home later than those from Germany. Nevertheless, data from Eurostat (2018d) reveal that, in the age group of the 15 to 24 years old, the percentage of young adults living with their parents is very similar in both Spain and Germany: in both countries, about nine of ten young adults live with their parents, although Spain (93.1%) was still a little bit higher than Germany (85.8%) in 2017 (see figure 1). It should be noted that the data do not differentiate between those who have never left home and those who have returned, the so-called ‘Boomerang Kids’. Regarding young adults in the age group of 25 to 34, the year 2017 shows a different picture: whilst over one-third of young Spaniards live with their parents (42.8%), the percentage is just one-fifth in this age group for Germany (17.3%). Additionally, no substantial variation is visible in the co-residence over the last twelve years for young adults aged 15 to 34 years.

Figure 1: Share of young adults aged 15 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years living with their parents in Spain and Germany.

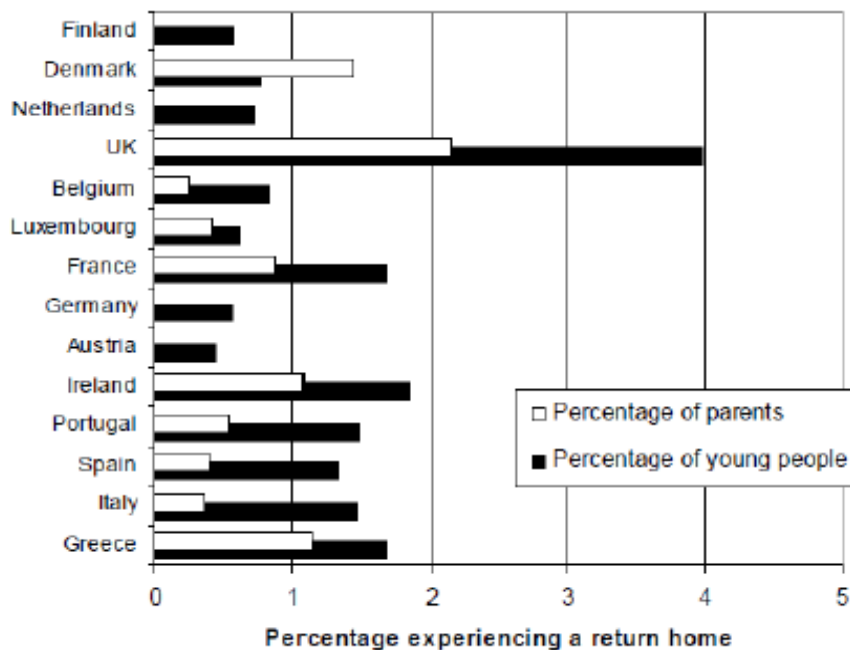


Source: Eurostat (2018d), EU-SILC survey

The timing of young adults leaving the parental home for the first time in life is affected by gender. In almost all European countries, young women leave home earlier than young men. Eurostat (2018f) shows that in the EU-28 countries young women leave at age 25.0 and young men at age 27.0 on average in 2017. For Spain, a higher age for the leaving home process is seen: 28.3 years for women and 30.4 years for men. In Germany, the average age for young women is 22.9 years and 24.4 years for young men. Also, regional differences can be seen: East Germans leave the parental home at an earlier age than West Germans (Berngruber, 2013). In contrast, the north of Spain has historically been characterized by a very early residential emancipation. In the case of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, the emancipation pattern is the earliest in Spain (EPA, 2018).

Notably, there are currently no official statistical data on our 'boomerang kids': young people in Spain or Germany who return to the parental home one or several times (with the exception of Gentile, 2010 and Berngruber 2013, 2015). Nevertheless, Iacovou and Parisi (2009, p. 70) using data from the European Community Panel (ECHP) for the years 1994 to 2001 identify strong differences in the returning rates between several European countries: Spaniards (the annual proportion is almost 1.5%) return more frequently to the parental household than Germans (the annual proportion is about 0.5%). The highest rate has the UK with an annual proportion of 4% (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Returners in several European countries.



Source: Iacovou and Parisi (2009, p. 70).

Note: The figure shows the annual proportion of young adults who have moved to their parents' home and the annual proportion of parents who experience a return of their children.

For some time already, the trend towards a higher proportion of returners has been recognised in the Anglo-Saxon research literature (e.g. Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999; Beaupré, et al., 2006; Jones, 1995). For Germany, Konietzka (2010) finds evidence that Germans of the Second World War generation had more often left the parental home at least two times, and, therefore, had more returns to the parental household than younger cohorts. For young people today, the number of returners can only be estimated.

Several German studies show that about 10% of young Germans return home. Notably, these results are based on different datasets and different survey years (Konietzka, 2010; Scherger, 2007; Härtl, 1996). For the year 2009, Berngruber (2013, p. 250) identified that almost 12% of young German adults aged 18–32 years had left home at least once and were living with their parents again.

In Spain, there is not much information on the return of young people. However, a study of Spanish families from 'The Family Watch' (2014), in which 600 people over 16 were asked in 2014 whether any family member who had become independent at least once in the past had subsequently returned, showed that 8.2% had returned.

Other research in Spain, specifically in Catalonia, has described the return of young people aged 15–34 years, during periods of economic expansion (between the years 2003 and 2007) and recession (between the years 2008 and 2012). In the period of expansion, 7.8% of emancipated young people have returned to their parents' home. In the period of recession, the number of boomerang youth doubled (14.3%). Therefore, the importance of economic cycles can be seen (Serracant, 2012, p. 48).

### III. DETERMINANTS OF DOMESTIC EMANCIPATION

The decision to become residentially independent is influenced by various factors. Macro-structural factors, such as the labor and housing market of a country and access to welfare benefits, as well as values (e.g. family ties), the timing of further life events and socio-demographic factors can have an impact on residential independence.

Economic ups and downs affect the events in the transition to adulthood (Buchmann and Kriesi, 2011). First of all, the situation on the *labor market* plays an important role for young adults and their capacity to pay living costs and to be residentially independent of the family of origin. Analyses regarding the financial resources of the parents show inconsistent results with respect to the living situation of young adults. Being financially supported by the parents can either speed up a move-out from home or slow it down (Le Blanc and Wolff, 2006). Staying with the parents becomes less likely when young adults earn their own money and get a stable salary (Choroszewicz and Wolff, 2010). Looking for a job after a final degree or being in a precarious and temporary employment situation as a young professional makes a return more likely (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999; Stone et al., 2014), although it

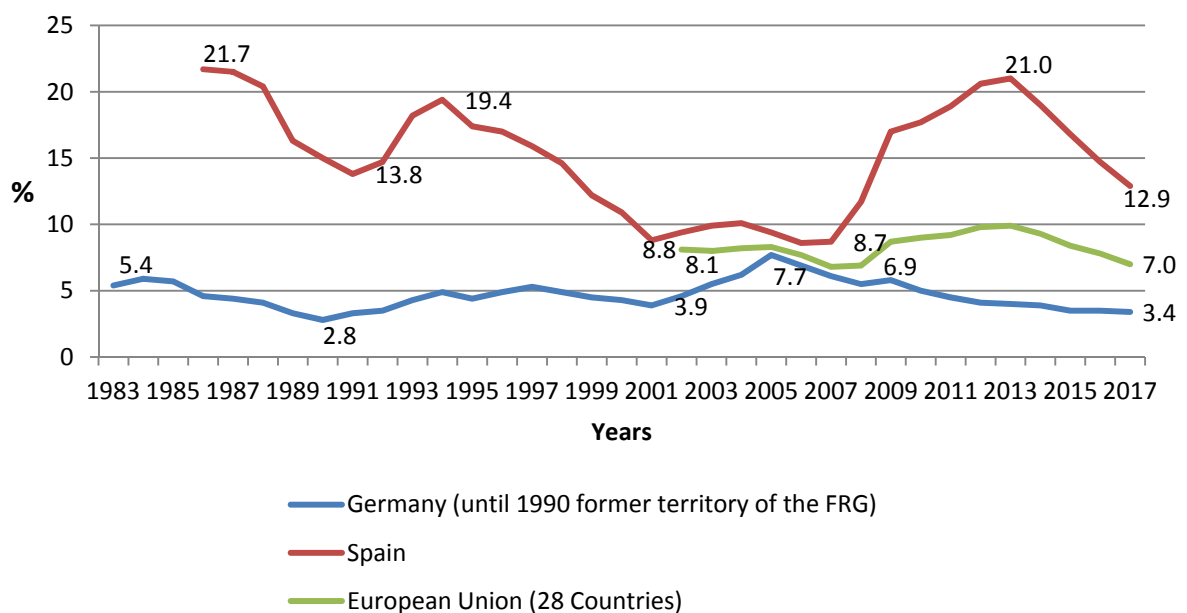
surely depends on the country-specific availability of social welfare benefits in case of unemployment.

Aassve et al. (2013) identify employment and income as two very important factors in the decision to leave the parental home for young people – especially from southern Europe. It has also been demonstrated that staying with the parents becomes more likely in the countries of southern Europe when combined with a low income (Parisi, 2008).

Certainly, young adults can still be financially dependent on their parents after moving out of home, but regular employment increases the likelihood that they are in a position to pay their own living costs and to live away from the parental home permanently (Konietzka and Huinink, 2003). In this context, successful school-to-work transitions and the availability of qualified training positions as well as permanent jobs are important for a young person's living decision. A high youth unemployment rate in a country can lead to a high level of uncertainty in planning and can influence the decision to live with the parents.

Nevertheless, comparisons between several countries during the current economic crisis show that the impact of the youth unemployment rate on housing transitions is in some cases contradictory. The trend for Southern European countries like Spain and Greece, which were heavily hit by the crisis, is not as clear because the rate of young adults living with their parents was already very high before the crisis (e.g. Berngruber, 2013). Specifically, for Spain, figure 3 shows that in other periods prior to the economic crisis the level of youth unemployment was already quite high: in 1986, the percentage of youth unemployment was 21.7% and in 1994 19.4%. In the years between 2001 and 2007 youth unemployment fell to the lowest level (with a percentage of just under 9%). During the current economic crisis, the maximum percentage reached so far was 21.0% in 2013. Therefore, a delay in residential independence cannot be attributed solely to the economic crisis, but rather to a multiplicity of factors.

**Figure 3: Percentage of youth unemployment people aged 15 to 24 years old in Germany, Spain and the EU.**



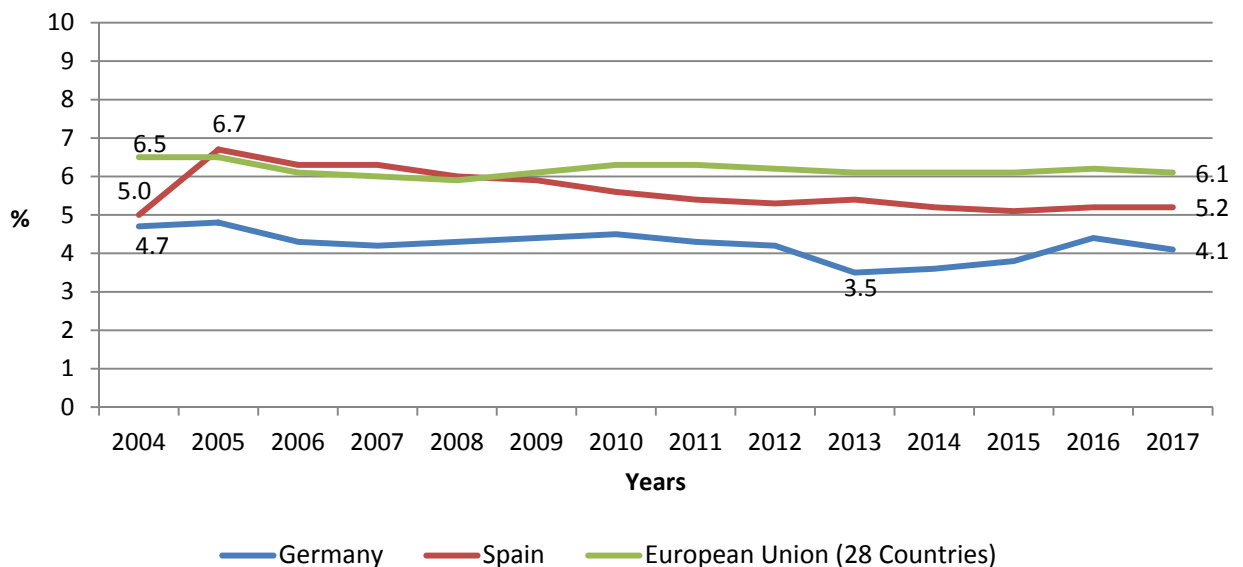
Source: Eurostat (2018a)

It can be seen that, in regions where vocational training is higher, the level of unemployment is lower (INEE, 2018). There are notable differences between Autonomous Communities in Spain regarding vocational training and employment. The highest unemployment rates occur in the south, while the lowest unemployment rates occur in the north and in the Balears Islands (EPA, 2018). In the communities of Northern Spain, young people are more highly educated than in the communities of the south, with the exception of the Balears Islands, where the unemployment rate is the lowest, but where school drop-out rates are higher (INEE, 2018). One explanation for this apparent disconnect between education and employment could be the high development of the tourism sector of the Balears Islands, presumably offering employment to young people in this area.

In contrast, Germany (until 1990 territory of the FRG) shows a significantly low percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 years who have been unemployed in the last 30 years. During that period, the highest youth unemployment was 7.7% in 2005. Since then – during the economic crisis – it even fell by more than half to 3.5%. This low rate of youth unemployment can be attributed to demographic changes and the dual education system, i.e. the combination of educational and vocational training. Nevertheless, educational and regional differences can be seen: the majority of unemployed German youth has not completed vocational training (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2016, p. 33). Youth unemployment is higher in East Germany than in West Germany (Brenke, 2013, p. 6-7). With regard to youth unemployment throughout the European Union as a whole for the year 2017 (7.0 %), figure 3 also demonstrates that the percentage is lower than Spain, but higher than in Germany.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 years old who are neither in employment nor undertaking education or training (NEETs): The percentage of young people in this situation is slightly higher in Spain (5.2%) than in Germany (4.1%), although both countries were below the EU average (6.1%) in 2017. In the last decade, the percentage has decreased slightly.

**Figure 4: Percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 years old who are neither in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEETs)**



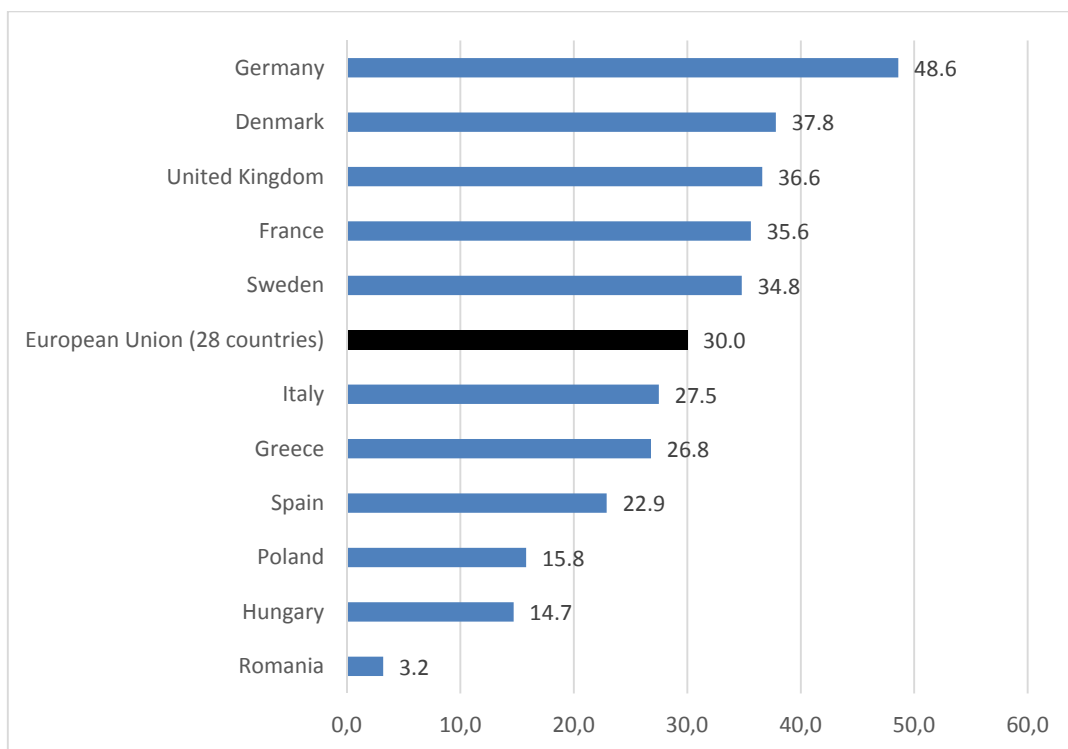
Source: Eurostat (2018b)



Another important factor is the diverse *housing market* of the countries. Martins and Villanueva (2006) show that limited access to mortgage markets and problems with this system of borrowing money for housing explain why young adults live with their parents (Chiuri and del Boca, 2010). West and North European countries have a large rental market, while Southern and East European countries are more characterised by homeownership (Dol and Haffner, 2010, p. 64).

As shown in figure 5, a comparison between European countries shows that Germany has the highest percentage of renters on the residential market, where 48.6% of the population rents a house or a flat, as opposed to buying it. Spain is one of the countries with a high owner market. Just 22.9% are tenants. In general, in Southern and East European countries the rental market in housing is smaller than in West or North European countries. This substantial difference in the housing market might also explain why Spanish young people take more time to become residentially independent and live together with their parents for a longer time. Renting a flat makes it easier for young people to leave the parental home because buying a house requires more financial resources and it is more of a permanent commitment than renting a flat.

**Figure 5: Percentage of people who are tenants in selected EU-countries (in 2017)**



Source: Eurostat (2018c), EU-SILC survey.

To finance housing and living costs, the availability of *welfare benefits* plays an important role in the young adults' dependency on the economic situation of their parents. According to Esping-Andersen (1999) there are four different welfare regimes in developed countries: social-democratic, liberal, continental and southern regimes. In Germany and France, which are classified as conservative welfare states, various forms of public assistance, like financial benefits in case of unemployment and student loans for young people undertaking higher education at university, are available.

Otherwise, scholarships are not as generous as in Scandinavian countries, which are representative of the social-democratic welfare regime. In liberal welfare regimes like the USA, Canada or the UK, the safety net, such as the option to make use of unemployment benefits, is not as well-established as in conservative and social-democratic welfare states. In Spain and Italy, which are examples of family-oriented welfare regimes, the familial and kinship networks are strong sources of assistance and these structures take responsibility for financial and social support where required. Post-socialistic countries like Estonia or Poland are still characterised by the transition from a planned economy to a market economy (Mills and Blossfeld, 2005).

Thus, an essential circumstance to be taken into account is that public politics favor the independence and autonomy of young people in countries like Germany, whereas Spanish social politics does not (Conde, 1985). Consequently, the family is needed as a source of additional support when public assistance is insufficient (Attias-Donfut et al., 2005).

Reher (1998) describes a "northern" group, which includes the Nordic countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and much of Austria and Germany, characterized by weak *family ties*, leaving the parental home earlier and a sense of solidarity focussed on other types of social networks (e.g. friends), rather than family. It then identifies a "southern" group, which includes the Mediterranean countries including Portugal, which is characterized by a stronger family tie and more familial solidarity (Iacovou and Parisi, 2009). Other authors call this "southern" group a "European Mediterranean model", characterized by intense family support, sometimes referred to as solidarity (Albertini, 2010; Martín-Lagos, 2014; Van de Velde, 2005). According to Aasve et al. (2013), in regions with weak family ties, where individualism predominates, young adults leave the parental home at a younger age (Chiuri and Del Boca, 2010).

The strong institutional character of the family in Spain and other southern countries is characterized by strong familial *values* and a culture in which the family seems to have more importance than in other European countries. The World Values Survey (2018) shows how family values are reflected in different countries: Spain (91.1%) and Turkey (95.4%) attach greater importance to the family than other European countries during the period of the 2010 to 2014 wave. The same survey shows similar differences regarding the importance of confidence in the family: Spain (93.6%) and Turkey (93.7%) have a higher percentage compared to Germany (75.9%) and the Netherlands (58.6%) (World Values Survey, 2018).

While residential support is the strategy most often used by parents to help their adult children in the countries of Southern Europe, in Northern European countries such as Germany or Denmark, young people are more likely to receive economic support (Albertini, 2010). It has also been noted that in the countries of northern Europe parents' support for children is not conditioned by a situation of need. In contrast to that, in Southern Europe, financial support from the parents is directed to the children who need it the most (Albertini, 2010).

According to Arnett (2014), young people consider three criteria as the most important measures of adulthood: personal responsibility, independent decision making and becoming financially independent. In this context, the following question can be asked: is independence as important in Spain as in Germany? According to data of the World Values

Survey (2018), during the period of the 2010 to 2014 wave, only 43.1% of Spanish people over 18 years old believe that independence is an important quality for children, while in Germany 73.5% of the people think so.

Additionally, regarding life-course research, the timing of leaving the parental home is dependent on the *achievement of further transitions*. In Germany, the reasons for the timing of leaving the parental home changed over several cohorts: Whilst, in the past, young adults in Germany were more likely to leave home when they experienced social transition markers like marriage or having children, moving out is now more closely linked to economic transition markers like finishing school, beginning vocational training or beginning a job (e.g. Konietzka, 2010). Today, young Germans generally live separately from their parents before starting their own family (Scherger, 2007). Prior to that, different modes of residence are chosen: living alone, with a partner, in a shared flat with friends or in a hall of residence (Berngruber and Gille, 2012). Nevertheless, young people do not live too far away from the parental home after they have left: Three out of four home leavers live one hour travel time away from their parents' home (Leopold et al., 2012), although young people with a higher school degree are more likely to live further away than those with a lower school degree.

The connection between leaving the parental home and other life transitions differs decisively according to the young adults' educational qualifications (Berngruber, 2015b): Young people with a university entrance degree are more likely to move out of home when they start vocational training or studies at university. Therefore, leaving home happens at a time when they are mostly still financially dependent on their parents (e.g. financing university studies or living costs). In comparison to that, young adults with a lower school degree are more likely to decide to live independently from their parents when they are already employed and are able to stand on their own two feet financially. The lower the educational level, the more often residential emancipation is connected to cohabitation with a partner.

In the same study (Berngruber 2015b, p. 57), young adults aged 18 to 32 years who had already left the parental home were asked to name their motives for moving out. A wish to be independent was stated as the most important aspect by over two-thirds of these young adults. No significant difference was seen among several different educational levels. Vocational training or studying at university is stated as a motive for leaving home, along with an increase in the educational level, and this is most prominent amongst those with a university entrance degree. In contrast, cohabitation with a partner is more relevant as a reason for leaving home amongst young adults at the lower end of the educational scale. Occupation is more often named as a contributing factor by young adults with a secondary school degree than by those with a lower or higher school degree. Therefore, the subjective motives and the linkage between the timing of several life transitions are in harmony with each other.

Spain, in common with other southern European countries, is traditionally characterized by residential emancipation linked to cohabitation (Garrido and Requena, 1996). Nevertheless, for Spain, this reason has also changed in recent years. According to the Spanish Youth Report (INJUVE 2012, p. 55), the main causes of youth emancipation for young people aged 15 to 29 years old were the acquisition of independence (32.7%) followed by studies (22.5%), the formation of their own home and/or the formation of a family (14.7%), the achievement of

economic autonomy (11.7%) and work (7.3%). A differentiation of those reasons by social class demonstrates that the acquisition of independence is for about one-third a reason among almost all social classes – except for the lowest class (19.3%). The higher the social class, and therefore the educational level, the more often study is named as a reason for leaving the parental home. On the contrary, the lower the social class, the more often the formation of their own home and/or the formation of a family is named. The achievement of economic autonomy is named the most often by the lowest social class (19.3%), while for the other classes this is just a reason for about one out of ten young people. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the lower the social class, the more important work becomes as a means to afford residential independence.

It should be noted that a direct comparison between both studies (Berngruber, 2015b; Moreno et al., 2013) is inadvisable because of different samples, age groups and times of interview. Nevertheless, similar patterns in the reasons for leaving the parental home can be identified for both countries, in the following order of priority: independence, higher education or vocational training, cohabitation respectively formation of a family and financial autonomy by occupation.

The likelihood to return is also influenced by the achievement of further transition markers. If these are delayed or reversed, it is supposed that this situation also affects the spatial detachment from the parents. Stone et al. (2014) identify some 'turning points' in life (e.g. unemployment, break-up of a relationship, postgraduate studies) as important predictors for the decision to return. Da Vanzo and Goldscheider (1990) also show that the dissolution of a relationship is an important catalyst for returning home, as well as the lack or loss of a job and going back to school.

Returning to the parental home in difficult situations at any age in life is surely an option when the relationship between the young adults and their parents is good. Against this, there is evidence that moving back becomes less likely when young adults are older and further markers, such as family-oriented or working-life transitions have been achieved (Berngruber, 2015a; Mitchell, 2004). Possible reasons for this could be the experience of taking over some adult roles, the support of new social networks and more eligibility for social welfare benefits.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Residential independence from the parental home – leaving and returning home – in Spain and Germany is the focus of this article. Both countries have been differently hit by the recent economic crisis. Nevertheless, in both countries, residential emancipation is an important topic in the transition from youth to adulthood. The article takes into account several determinants which might lead to faster or slower residential independence, or a more reversible process.

Macro-structural factors like the housing market and youth unemployment show that residential emancipation is not only dependent on the young adults' own decision, but also on several other conditions. Therefore, young people are also dependent on the society they are living in and their opportunity to fulfil transition markers in an appropriate time during the status passage from youth to adulthood. Living with the parents can be a 'safety net' in difficult situations in life. In this case, living with the parents indicates that intergenerational solidarity works well.

Nevertheless, living with the parents does not mean that young people are fully dependent on their family of origin. They can be encouraged to do household chores and to contribute to the familial living costs. On the other hand, living away from the parents does not exclude the possibility that parents will provide the financial support required to enable separate housing. Especially young people who go to university are mostly still financially dependent on their family of origin. Little wonder then that completing studies at university increases the likelihood of a return to the parental home (Stone et al., 2014). Such partial detachment from the parents should be paid increasing attention in future youth studies.

Although young adults can still be financially dependent on their parents after moving out of home, an increasing degree of financial independence via regular employment increases the likelihood that they will pay their own living costs and live away from the parental home permanently. In this context, the availability of stable employment on the labour market for a qualified training position, or a permanent job, is an important factor in the young person's decision not to return.

In contrast to that, living away from the parental home does not mean that the parents are no longer called on for advice and support (Berngruber, 2013). Intergenerational solidarity functions over separate households as well.

Unfortunately, there are some limitations to the available data, making a cross-country comparison difficult, especially with regard to returning home and the reasons for this. It would be good if in the future a greater amount of data were available on returners as part of the social reality.

There are several interesting factors which could be examined in future studies, such as the influence of public financial support on young people who are looking for work and would like to be economically independent. More attention should be paid to differences between social welfare systems in the different countries, as this is an important consideration for young people looking to become residentially emancipated.

Prospective research could also focus on questions about the duration of returns in both Germany and Spain. Are returns in southern countries like Spain more stable than in western countries like Germany or are they both just temporary in most cases? Furthermore, the question of whether a return to the family home is really motivated by financial necessity, or whether there is a voluntary element to this, in other words, whether it is just more comfortable to live with the parents again, might also be explored.

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