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Intra-EU migration: Shedding light on drivers, corridors and the relative importance of migrant characteristics

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and the relative importance of migrant characteristics**

Working Paper

September 2020

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Abstract

Much of the existing literature on intra-EU mobility focuses on labour migration from the new Eastern to the old Member States and neglects the social and emotional dimensions of mobility and their interrelatedness with economic drivers. Using a dataset consisting of 98 interviews conducted in four destination countries (Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) with intra-EU migrants originating from EU15 countries (59 individuals) and CEE countries (39 individuals), this paper contributes to the understanding of the nature of individual mobility decision-making and the diversity of reasons that drive migration within the EU. Specifically, it provides an in-depth analysis on how intra-EU mobility decision-making relates to specific migrant characteristics such as country of origin, age, skill level and gender and the dynamics inherent to specific migration corridors. The qualitative data is analysed in the light of existing theories of mobility and their relative importance in predicting intra-EU mobility. The results show that intra-EU migration decision-making is a highly complex process and is seldom based on one specific driver. Rather, the decision-making process is, in most cases, based on several interrelated factors beyond purely economic considerations. This paper contributes to the understanding of emotional and social considerations in migration decision-making, which have largely been neglected in existing literature. Importantly, it also contributes to the understanding of different intra-EU migration corridors, such as the East-West, East-South, South-North and West-West corridors, which remain relatively under-researched, and how these relate to specific migrant characteristics. Understanding the migration decision-making of individuals is of pivotal importance for both scholars and specifically policymakers to attract and retain talent.

JEL Classification Codes: J61; R23; F22; J15; J23; 015

Keywords: High-skilled migration; Migration decision-making; EU mobility; EU migration corridors

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.Introduction..... | 6 |
| 2.Literature Review | 8 |
| 2.1. Theories on the drivers of migration..... | 8 |
| 2.2. Evidence on the reasons for intra-EU migration | 10 |
| 2.2.1. Mobility within the EU for economic reasons..... | 11 |
| 2.2.2. Mobility within the EU for family and love reasons..... | 14 |
| 2.2.3. Mobility within the EU for the purpose of study..... | 15 |
| 2.2.4. Mobility within the EU for lifestyle reasons..... | 16 |
| 2.2.5. Mobility within the EU for other reasons | 17 |
| 2.2.6. Further factors facilitating mobility within the EU | 18 |
| 2.2.7. Hypotheses | 20 |
| 3.Methodology | 21 |
| 3.1. Data Collection | 21 |
| 3.2. Descriptive Statistics | 23 |
| 4.Evidence of drivers of mobility within the EU | 24 |
| 4.1. Mobility within the EU for economic reasons..... | 24 |
| 4.1.1. Economic reasons for low-skilled migrants | 25 |
| 4.1.2. Economic reasons for highly skilled migrants | 25 |
| 4.2. Mobility within the EU for family and love reasons | 26 |
| 4.2.1. Family reasons | 28 |
| 4.2.2. Love..... | 28 |
| 4.3. Mobility within the EU for the purpose of study | 31 |
| 4.3.1. Degree mobility | 31 |
| 4.3.2. Language..... | 32 |
| 4.3.3. Lower cost of education..... | 32 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 4.3.4. | Prestige associated with universities | 33 |
| 4.4. | Mobility within the EU for lifestyle reasons..... | 33 |
| 4.4.1. | Lifestyle..... | 34 |
| 4.4.2. | Wanderlust..... | 35 |
| 4.5. | Mobility within the EU for other reasons..... | 35 |
| 4.5.1. | The Welfare System | 36 |
| 4.5.2. | Political dissatisfaction..... | 37 |
| 4.5.3. | A return to roots..... | 37 |
| 4.6. | Further facilitators for intra-EU mobility | 38 |
| 4.6.1. | Networks | 38 |
| 4.6.2. | Freedom of movement..... | 39 |
| 4.6.3. | Past migration experience | 40 |
| 5. | Discussion and Recommendations | 41 |
| 5.1. | Summary: Drivers of Intra-EU mobility | 41 |
| 5.2. | Recommendations for scholars and policymakers | 48 |
| 5.3. | Recommendation for future research..... | 50 |
| 6. | References | 52 |
| 7. | Appendix | 59 |

List of abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| CEE | Central and Eastern Europe |
| EIMSS | European Internal Movers Social Survey |
| ERASMUS | European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students |
| EU | European Union |
| EU15 | The 15 countries that formed the EU before the 2004 enlargements: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom |
| LFS | Labour Force Survey |
| NCM | Neo Classical Migration |
| NELM | New Economics of Labour Migration |
| UK | United Kingdom |

1. Introduction

The principle of “*freedom of movement*” is a remarkable achievement of the European Union (EU), allowing individuals to build lives – careers, networks, relationships, families – beyond the nation state (Favell, 2008). It has transformed the geographic region into a migratory space in which borders no longer function as boundaries in the same sense as they were established. This provides cultural, social, and economic advantages for both citizens and countries in the EU (Benton & Petrovic, 2013). On a macro-economic level, this has the potential to improve the efficiency of the European labour market, as it regulates labour shortages or surpluses between Member States (Boswell & Geddes, 2010; Strey et al., 2018), therefore “*ironing out inefficiencies in national [labour] markets and reducing unemployment*” (Boswell & Geddes, 2010, p.182). However, despite the general lack of legal mobility restriction for EU citizens, persistent socio-economic differences between Member States and skills shortages in numerous professions, for example in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and care (CEDEFOD, 2016), individual intra-EU mobility¹ has remained relatively low – currently: only 3.5% of EU nationals live in another EU Member State (as of May 2020) (Eurostat, 2020).

Academic research and public debates on intra-EU migration have largely been dominated by a focus on the large-scale movements from the new Eastern Member States towards the West. EU15 origin corridors (Baltruks, 2016; Kureková, 2011; Pichler, 2017), including South-North corridors (Bartolini, Gropas, & Triandafyllidou, 2017) which greatly expanded after the economic crisis in 2008 (Barslund & Busse, 2014; European Commission, 2011), continue to remain relatively under-researched, despite their prevalence amongst the top 20 intra-EU migration corridors (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Furthermore, existing academic research on cross-country movements within the EU is largely dominated by economic models explaining migration to be driven by relative inequalities and income differences, despite recent evidence that mobility decision-making often goes beyond economic drivers and includes more diverse factors (Benton & Petrovic, 2013; Hadler, 2006; Hoey, 2005; Schroedter et al., 2015), making it highly complex (Benton & Petrovic, 2013; Bonin et al., 2008; Verwiebe et al., 2014). Particularly young, mostly highly skilled, mobile EU nationals, who encounter relatively few restrictions to migrate between EU15 countries and who

¹ For the purpose of this study, the terms *migration*, *movement(s)* and *mobility* are used interchangeably (as are the terms *migrant(s)* and *mover(s)*) to refer to individuals changing their place of residence (further conceptual details, e.g. length, distance of move depend on the individual studies/data examined).

make greater use of this “*freedom of movement*” (Favell, 2008), tend to base their mobility decision-making on different interconnected factors, including, among others, lifestyle as well as social protection and family-friendly policies.

Table 1: Foreign-born EU28 stocks (2019) by country of birth: Top 20, total and sex breakdown

| Rank | Residence country | Country of birth | Size of stock | Sex breakdown | | | |
|------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|-----|---------|-----|
| | | | | Females | | Males | |
| 1 | Germany | Poland | 1,784,839 | 862,161 | 48% | 922,678 | 52% |
| 2 | Italy | Romania | 1,036,499 | 622,342 | 60% | 414,157 | 40% |
| 3 | United Kingdom | Poland | 845,007 | 444,015 | 53% | 400,992 | 47% |
| 4 | France | Portugal | 631,746 | 311,831 | 49% | 319,915 | 51% |
| 5 | Spain | Romania | 587,141 | 299,213 | 51% | 287,928 | 49% |
| 6 | Germany | Italy | 578,841 | 220,434 | 38% | 358,407 | 62% |
| 7 | Germany | Romania | 545,759 | 253,345 | 46% | 292,414 | 54% |
| 8 | Germany | Czechia | 502,609 | 278,009 | 55% | 224,600 | 45% |
| 9 | United Kingdom | Romania | 398,052 | 187,803 | 47% | 210,249 | 53% |
| 10 | United Kingdom | Ireland | 374,366 | 206,698 | 55% | 167,668 | 45% |
| 11 | Germany | Greece | 326,297 | 144,004 | 44% | 182,293 | 56% |
| 12 | France | Italy | 321,787 | 164,764 | 51% | 157,023 | 49% |
| 13 | United Kingdom | Germany | 313,575 | 174,590 | 56% | 138,985 | 44% |
| 14 | Germany | Croatia | 321,527 | 155,672 | 48% | 165,855 | 52% |
| 15 | Spain | United Kingdom | 290,244 | 145,538 | 50% | 144,706 | 50% |
| 16 | France | Spain | 278,804 | 155,772 | 56% | 123,032 | 44% |
| 17 | Germany | Bulgaria | 262,462 | 138,559 | 53% | 123,903 | 47% |
| 18 | United Kingdom | Italy | 256,947 | 115,353 | 45% | 141,594 | 55% |
| 19 | Germany | Austria | 238,191 | 115,129 | 48% | 123,062 | 52% |
| 20 | Austria | Germany | 232,236 | 122,196 | 53% | 110,040 | 47% |

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on Eurostat (2019) and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Population Division (2019).

Note: Germany does not provide data on residents by country of birth to Eurostat, therefore the data was supplemented with migrant stock data from UN DESA.

Against this background, the objective of this paper is to analyse the diverse and inter-related drivers of migration of EU15 and CEE migrants along different migration corridors, and to examine the manner in which specific individual characteristics may influence mobility decision-making. Drawing on in-depth focus group discussions and interviews from various *types* of migrants in several EU countries, this paper answers the following research question: “*How do migration drivers differ between migrants from EU15 and CEE countries and in what ways do potential differences depend on the respective migration corridor, skill level, gender and age of the migrants?*”

In answering this question, this study makes several contributions to the current understanding of the mobility drivers of intra-EU migrants. Firstly, exploring mobility patterns of skilled workers and dynamics along specific migration corridors is important to understand and facilitate the mobility of both high- and low-skilled workers particularly in areas where major destination countries in Europe experiences a skills shortage, such as medical doctors, ICT and STEM professionals, nursery and midwifery (CEDEFOD, 2016) and care workers (Anderson, 2012). Secondly, an in-depth understanding of specific mobility drivers of younger generations helps to address the demand for qualified young personnel from CEE countries in the light of an increasingly aging EU15 population (Anderson, 2012). Thirdly, the emigration of highly skilled professionals in CEE countries is a valid concern and not well understood so far. It is clear that it is not only caused by economic factors but also by various other factors; political dissatisfaction, for instance, is a crucial push factor for highly skilled migrants to leave their country (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003; Recchi, 2015). Lastly, the sex breakdown of the top 20 intra-EU migration corridors (see Table 1) highlights the importance of the gender aspect in intra-EU mobility with women overall being on par with male migrants in the top 20 corridors. Understanding the specific dynamics of intra-EU mobility decision-making of female migrants is relevant in light of labour shortages particularly in care professions such as health-care and care for the elderly.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The following Section 2 provides a review of the literature on migration theories and drivers of migration within the EU. Section 3 will then include an overview of the methodology used in this paper. The findings on the different drivers of intra-EU migration for different kinds of migrants along various migration corridors are presented in Section 4, before Section 5 concludes with a discussion and recommendations for policy and further research.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a summary of theories and empirical evidence that help to understand why people migrate between EU countries. It also gives a comprehensive overview of the key decision-making factors of mobility within the EU.

2.1. Theories on the drivers of migration

Earlier theoretical models in migration studies describe migration as driven primarily by income differentials and assume that migrants move to maximize their utility. More recent models draw attention to non-economic factors and factors on the household level, and involve a complex interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors, rather than one single driver (Arango, 2000; Benton & Petrovic, 2013). There is evidence that less traditional drivers, such as education, family or lifestyle, are of increasing importance in intra-EU migration (King, 2002).

Economic drivers

The first theoretical models to provide an explanation of international migration drivers were the *neo-classical migration* (NCM) models (Arango, 2000; de Haas, 2010; Harris & Todaro, 1970; Ranis & Fei, 1961) which theorize that migration is largely driven by labour market conditions and differences in income. Based on rational cost-benefit calculations, migrants move despite belonging to social groups like households, families, and communities. The existent wage differential between country of origin and country of destination is seen as the determining factor for migration. This approach has been extended by the *human capital theory* (Sjaastad, 1962) which proposes to view migration as an investment that increases productivity in the long term. This theory accepts the initial cost of migration in the mobility process with the hope to gain higher returns from the work in the country of destination (Sjaastad, 1962). As such, this theory is particularly relevant for student migration.

Although NCM models help to explain labour migration to some extent, they fail to account for non-economic mobility drivers. This limits their ability to explain real-life migration patterns as individuals are viewed as purely rational actors and factors such as age, gender, level of education and the context in which migration decisions are made, are not considered (Arango, 2000; Castles et al., 2014). Based on these limitations, the more recent *New Economics of Labour Migration* (NELM) model assumes that migration is a family or household's attempt to diversify financial risks (Arango, 2000): to receive more economic security and to diminish the risk of losing earnings in the future (Bijak, Kicingier, & Kupiszewski, 2013; Stark & Bloom, 1985), by, for example, availing of social insurance in the country of destination (Arango, 2000). Consequently, superior market conditions in the country of destination are often a primary driver in the process of a migrant deciding to leave their own country. The NELM theory can be useful to explain migration of underprivileged groups into more developed countries, which, in the context of intra-EU migration, has been the case for multiple migrants moving from Eastern to Western Member States (Castles et al., 2014; Massey et al., 1993).

Social drivers

When it comes to social explanations of mobility, network theories help explaining migration patterns and the destination choices (Castles et al., 2014). Existing migration networks help migrants to gain access to essential resources (e.g. information on housing, employment, etc.) and therefore reduce the costs of migration (Castles et al., 2014; Massey, 1990). This phenomenon, termed *cumulative causation*, predicts that if migratory experience increases within a country, the likelihood that others from that country will also move rises (Massey, 1990). As such, emerging and existing social *migrant networks* increase the probability of international migration (Massey et al., 1993), also in form of family reunification (Fussell, 2010).

Emotions in mobility decision-making

More recent studies on migration reveal the influence of emotions on the migration decision-making process. Interdisciplinary literature on people's emotions covers topics such as their attachment to their country of origin (Marcu, 2012), their sense of belonging to their country of destination (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015), and their interaction with people throughout the process of migration (Svašek, 2010). Theories tend to focus on highly skilled migrants and/or young movers (Blackman, 2007; Collins, 2018; Marcu, 2012; Scotto, 2015) for whom mobility decision-making is often based on multiple factors and emotional factors tend to be of particular relevance in this process.

Overall, one model or theory is not able to adequately capture the multiple different drivers involved in migration decision-making (Arango, 2000; de Haas, 2010). According to de Haas (2010), several theories must be applied in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the migration process. In addition to this, these theories have to consider emotional and social considerations in human mobility decision-making to a greater extent (Bagnoli, 2007; Blackman, 2007; Fries-Tersch et al., 2018; Marcu, 2012).

2.2. Evidence on the reasons for intra-EU migration

Within the EU, the question of whether to migrate or not has predominantly been portrayed as being driven by economic factors based on a simple cost-benefit analysis. According to such an analysis, individuals in Europe weigh the more attractive economic opportunities, such as a higher salary or job security, against social and other relevant costs. These economic factors are often understood to be the main aspiration for East-West migration (e.g. after the 2004/2007 enlargements) and migra-

tion within some EU15 countries (e.g. South-North migration during and after the 2008 economic crisis).

Recent research, however, demonstrates that mobility decisions are in most cases not purely based on economic factors and aspirations. Recent cross-national studies exploring intra-EU migration (e.g. the 2014 ad-hoc module of the Labour Force Survey (LFS)) identify different key factors that drive migration within the EU, such as family, lifestyle and study (Strey et al., 2018). While these surveys assume that there is one administratively feasible reason for intra-EU migration, recent evidence suggests that mobility decision-making is a complex, multifaceted process based on multiple, interrelated factors which might also change over time.

The following sub-sections give a comparative summary of the main categories of factors driving intra-EU mobility identified in existing studies. Where available, the literature review highlights differences in the mobility drivers of EU15 and CEE movers. The review further investigates the extent to which these drivers are influenced by skill level, age and/or gender. The main drivers among Europeans are divided into five major categories: migration for the purpose of employment, migration for the purpose of study, migration for family reasons, migration for lifestyle reasons and migration for other reasons (such as cultural reasons and political dissatisfaction). Lastly, factors that facilitate or increase the capacity to migrate are discussed.

2.2.1. Mobility within the EU for economic reasons

The principle of free movement in the EU enables individuals to improve their wages, employment conditions and personal situations beyond the national borders of their own country of origin. According to the European Internal Movers Social Survey (EIMSS), a cross-national survey conducted in 2004 (Strey et al., 2018), the most important factors driving intra-EU migration are economic, in line with the predictions of the traditional neoclassical theory of migration. The majority of labour migration within the EU is directed to EU15 countries (as of 2017; Fries-Tersch et al., 2018), where the migration flows can be subdivided into an active East-West and East-South migration corridor and a less active South-North corridor, which emerged after the economic crisis in 2008 (Barslund & Busse, 2014). Accordingly, most research on labour mobility within the EU focuses on East-West migration and multiple case studies investigate economic drivers among selected migration corridors (e.g. from Poland and other CEE countries to the United Kingdom (UK) (Parutis, 2014; Pollard et al., 2008; Sporton, 2013)). The reason for this scholarly attention was the EU accession of CEE

countries which has led to increasing attention paid to the topic (e.g. effects of labour mobility on the labour market or the so-called “*welfare-magnet hypothesis*”) by policymakers and the general public in several EU countries. In comparison, relatively little is known about migration along North-North and West-West corridors.

Furthermore, labour related migration within the EU appears to be gendered. According to the LSF 2014 ad-hoc module (Eurostat, 2016), men are more likely to migrate purely for work related reasons, whilst women’s decision making is often times more complex. To that end, Bijak et al. (2013) argues that women’s motivations for migration are often based on the desire to help or join the family, or to escape gender-based violence, discrimination or structural inequalities. Literature investigating the effect of gender on cross-border movements posits that women are more sensitive to migration costs and often constrained by a lack of financial means, therefore they are more likely to rely on close family networks, whilst men tend to rely on less dense networks such as friends and acquaintances (Kuhnt, 2019).

Literature on the topic of economic migration drivers is plentiful and diverse, as scholars have paid most attention to employment related factors of migration (Bijak et al., 2013).

Economic reasons for low-skilled migrants

In existing research, migrants are categorized as *low-skilled* based on characteristics such as their level of education, their type of profession, their work experience (Iredale, 2000) and/ or their level of income (Williams & Baláž, 2005). Literature that explores low-skilled intra-EU migration is scarce and focuses almost exclusively on movements from Eastern to Western Europe (as pointed out above) and employs a neoclassical approach to explain such migration movements. Particularly when it comes to the EU labour shortages in care professions, migrant care workers have become essential in addressing labour market demands, especially in care for the elderly (European Commission, 2017). In this context, case studies reveal that there are strong gender differences among low-skilled migrants. For instance, female CEE migrants are more likely to work in domestic work or caretaking in Italy (Näre, 2013) and male Polish migrants are more likely to work in the construction sector in the UK. Furthermore, Italy and Spain face a continued demand for low-skilled workers in the construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors (Finotelli & Echeverría, 2017; Geddes & Scholten, 2016). Both countries were the main destination for Romanian and Bulgarian low-skilled migrants after the EU enlargement (Hanganu et al., 2014). After the financial crisis in 2010, however, the number of low-skilled migrants from these countries in Spain and Italy decreased, while it in-

creased in Germany (including onward migration from Spain and Italy) (Hanganu et al., 2014). Almost 80% of the rise of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in Germany can be attributed to the declining economic situation resulting from the economic crisis in 2008 in their previous main destination countries (such as Spain and Italy). In contrast to this, only 20% can be attributed to the labour market situation in Germany itself (Hanganu et al., 2014).

Economic reasons for highly skilled migrants

Research on the migration decision-making of highly skilled migrants within the EU is quite scarce (King et al., 2016). As is the case for low-skilled migrants, there is no general consensus on the criteria used to classify migrants as *high-skilled* in academic literature.

Several studies within the existing body of literature on labour migration within the European Union discuss the emigration of highly-skilled individuals (Teney, 2017; Teney & Siemsen, 2017) to economically more affluent Member States. This leads to skilled labour shortages in the sending countries (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008), whilst receiving countries benefit from the influx of skilled labour by making use of their qualification to balance labour shortages in the local economy (Teney, 2017). This is particularly the case for much sought after highly skilled professions within the EU labour market, such as medical doctors, other healthcare workers and STEM professionals (CEDEFOP, 2016). Germany, for example, attracts a significant number of highly skilled migrants from CEE states (from Romania and Bulgaria) (Hanganu et al., 2014). Recent evidence also points to an increasing number of young, highly educated Greeks, Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese that have moved to Northern European countries since the economic crisis to improve their quality of life and career opportunities (Bartolini et al., 2017).

In general, highly educated migrants within the EU tend to stay for a shorter period, and not necessarily permanently (Bijwaard & Wahba, 2019; Mayr & Peri, 2009). With a longitudinal contextual dataset Cebolla-Boado and Miyar-Busto (2020) argue that higher wages, a lower unemployment rate for university graduates, and a lower average duration of unemployment in the country of destination are among the crucial drivers for highly skilled migration. The UK as a destination country attracts European migrants particularly for temporary migration due to short-term contracts, flexible job market conditions and the general emphasis on education (Baltruks, 2016). A case study on skilled German emigrants within Europe (Santacreu et al., 2009; Verwiebe et al., 2010) also reveals that improved working conditions are a major pull factor for migration, while social networks are a comparatively weak factor in the migration decision-making of this group.

It is important to highlight that migration of the highly skilled may also result in *underemployment* in low-skilled professions in the country of destination (Kaczmarczyk & Tyrowicz, 2015). Barslund and Busse (2016) and Capuano and Migali (2017) elaborate that receiving countries in some instances fail to properly recognise professional education, qualifications and skills, which negatively affects migrants' employment status and wages, resulting in underemployment of these individuals

(Kaczmarczyk & Tyrowicz, 2015). Within the EU context, this experience is, for example, often faced by highly qualified Polish migrants moving to the United Kingdom (Kaczmarczyk & Tyrowicz, 2015; Teney, 2017) and migrants in Germany (mainly Romanian and Bulgarian nationals) (Jobelius, 2015).

2.2.2. Mobility within the EU for family and love reasons

Social factors, including migration for marriage, migration based on partnership, friendships or network relations, are also of particular relevance when investigating migration drivers within the EU (Santacreu, Baldoni, & Albert, 2009; Vandenbrande, Coppin, & Van Der Hallen, 2006; Verwiebe, Wiesböck, & Teitzer, 2014). The ad-hoc module of the LFS confirms that marriage and family-related migration, family formation, family reunification, and accompanying family members is the most often cited driver of intra-EU migration (Benton & Petrovic, 2013; Marchand et al., 2019; Valk & Medrano, 2014). Despite the significance of family and love migration, several related factors, such as family or partner reunification within the EU, have largely been neglected in academic and policy research (Kofman, 2004; Moskal, 2011; Valk & Medrano, 2014).

Family reasons

Family migration is defined as the migration of a nuclear family member for family formation or reunification to a destination country, where at least one family member is permanently residing (Benton & Petrovic, 2013; Kofman, 2004). In contrast, the broader concept of network migration is defined as interpersonal ties of friendship and shared community origin which influences the migration decision (as pointed out below). Over the last two decades, the topic of family migration has gained increasing attention for legal entry into EU countries (Kofman, 2004), where family reunification is based on normative policies of family rights (Battistella, 1995). These legal criteria are particularly important in defining the amount, composition, and gender distribution of family-related migrants into EU countries. Family reasons are therefore a predominant mobility driver for women (Mincer, 1978; Strey et al., 2018) and are anticipated to become more significant and diverse in the future (Moskal, 2011). Yet, research focusing on family migration within the European Union has been neglected empirically, theoretically, and methodologically (Kofman, 2004).

In family migration and reunification, women tend to be conceptualized as *tied movers*, highlighting the trade-off for tied movers between their own preference and the partner's location preference (Mincer, 1978). Thereby, "*the term tied migration refers to the situation in which a spouse moves along with*

his/her partner even though the individual gain from the so called “family optimum” is lower than the gain from the so-called “free-optimum”” (Åström & Westerlund, 2009, p.4). Even though the total family utility is maximised, the tied migrant must gain enough compensation from his/her partner to move, and also stay in the partnership (Mincer, 1978). Women tend to become so-called tied migrants, when the migration largely occurs because of the demand of the husband’s career (Nivalainen, 2004). Nivalainen (2005) examined that while the employment of most men is unaffected or even might be better after migration, women tend not to receive the same positive revision in their employment possibilities. Most couples migrated because of the husband’s opportunities, as a study of Taylor (2007) among UK immigrants confirms. Male migrants from CEE countries therefore are more likely to migrate as an independent subject when compared to female movers. The trend seems to shift slowly, as women are increasingly migrating alone (Slany, 2008).

Love

Similar patterns are visible when looking at partnerships of European bi-national couples, where mobility experiences of young adults increase the likelihood of intra-European partnerships (Schroedter et al., 2015). Even though “*intra-European love is (...) one of the driving forces behind individual intra-EU migration*” (Gaspar, 2008, p.14), research on the topic remains relatively scarce. As such, intra-EU partnerships might stimulate migration, while European migration often plays an important role in the formation of these relationships in the first place (Schroedter et al., 2015).

2.2.3 Mobility within the EU for the purpose of study

Current literature on intra-EU international student migration is still scarce (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), even though student mobility is one of the primary drivers for intra-EU migration (according to the EIMSS (Strey et al., 2018)). Within the European Union, international student migration has experienced significant shifts, complemented by the increasing number of migration drivers between origin and destination country (Findlay et al., 2006). In terms of destination countries, the UK has been the main winner in the “*global higher education business*” on the European scale (Raghuram, 2013). Particularly after the EU expansion in 2004, student migration flows from Eastern European countries to the UK increased greatly with the newly gained access to university education in the UK (Akhurst et al., 2014; Rahimi & Akgunduz, 2017). At the same time, EU15 migrants moved predominantly to France and Germany (Baláz, Williams, & Chrančoková, 2018). In general, mobile stu-

dents tend to be more “*privileged*” and have a higher social background compared to the overall population (Findlay & King, 2010).

Student mobility of young intra-EU migrants is often interlinked with the chance to take advantage of the “*freedom of movement*” rights within the EU (see also Section 2.2.5). Furthermore, a sense of “*Europeanization*” of tertiary education is supported by considerable funding of the European Commission towards mobility schemes (e.g. ERASMUS and Socrates program) (Findlay et al., 2006; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2004; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Short term credit mobility (Byram & Dervin, 2009; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), language courses and internships further facilitate student migration within the EU. The number of intra EU students is constantly increasing and presents the main form of international human capital training (Baláž, Williams, & Chrančoková, 2018). Student migration also tends to trigger future migration (see Section 2.2.6). Both, temporary and degree mobility, which refers to students who obtain a complete degree in a different European country (see Findlay et al., 2012), make former students more likely to consider staying or moving abroad for work.

The reasons to study abroad vary between different demographic groups within the EU, although empirical studies investigating the detailed motivations behind student migration in Europe are quite consistent in their results (Strey et al., 2018). Firstly, looking at intra-EU student migration, the main motivations are to improve linguistic skills, personal development, and to gain cultural insights of living in a foreign country (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). A high standard of research and teaching, the quality of tertiary education (Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013; González et al., 2011; Wei, 2013) and the reputation of universities (Marginson, 2006) are other important pull factors for student migration, particularly for students from relatively developed countries. Students who moved abroad for a short term had a strong wish to experience living abroad, to meet new people and a desire to develop further “*soft skills*” from their stay in a foreign country (Vossensteyn et al., 2010).

2.2.4 Mobility within the EU for lifestyle reasons

Another important aspect of intra-EU movements is migration driven by lifestyle considerations (Benton & Petrovic, 2013). In a study of the European Commission (2013), 17% of Europeans stated that they considered working in a different European country in the future, even though economic conditions are not superior in the potential destination country. The term lifestyle migration refers to an analytical framework which helps to understand this form of migration, rather than try-

ing to identify and define a migrant group (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016). Existing research on the topic focuses on the motivation behind migration – in a broader sense defined as “*the search for a better way of life*” (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p.21) – and assumes that the motivational question of where to live is likewise one about how to live (Hoey, 2005). Whilst economic migration is also primarily motivated by a search for a better life, lifestyle migration prioritises quality of life, such as a preferred lifestyle, environment, and/or culture (Hoey, 2005), over economic factors (King, 2002).

Lifestyle migrants are comparatively privileged and wealthy individuals (Hoey, 2005) and therefore able to approach migration as a form of consumption rather than the more production oriented forms of other migration flows (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016). This can be a determining factor for intra-EU mobility among both high- and low-skilled migrants and across age groups (Dubow et al., 2019). Lifestyle factors such as better weather conditions show a slightly higher effect on the migration decision of female intra-EU migrants compared to male migrants (Alaminos et al., 2007). This is for instance the case for most migrants moving from Northern Europe to Southern Europe due to the better climate (Casado-Diaz et al., 2004), where the growing body of literature focuses on Spain as a destination country (Gustafson, 2008; Janoschka & Haas, 2013). In contrast to this, migrants moving out of a sense of “*wanderlust*” are primarily motivated to experience something new. “*Wanderlust*” tends to be more common among young EU migrants, who often regard mobility as a way of life (Dubow et al., 2019).

2.2.5 Mobility within the EU for other reasons

Political dissatisfaction

Political dissatisfaction in the country of origin (Bygnes & Flipo, 2016; Meardi, 2013; Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014) is another significant push factor of migration within the EU. Recent research by Bygnes and Flipo (2016) indicates that among the two relatively different European migration corridors, namely East-South (Romanian migrants in Spain) and South-North (Spanish migrants in Norway), migration motives such as economic conditions, career prospects and family life are frequently interlinked with a political dissatisfaction in the home country. Participants blamed politics for their bleak prospects and for the economic decline. Migrants from CEE countries are more likely to migrate when feeling a low level of life satisfaction (e.g. lower quality of institutions and business environment and development of social security systems) in the home region (Bygnes & Flipo, 2016; Otrachshenko & Popova, 2011). These political motivations, however, vary depending on the na-

tional background, and the educational and occupational background of the person (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Recchi, 2015). In recent research, political dissatisfaction appeared as a “*hidden motivation*”, while economic motivations were still cited as a primary migration driver (Bygnes & Flipo, 2016).

The welfare system

Since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, there has been a prevalent concern that CEE migrants move to other European countries to profit from a more generous welfare system (Giulietti & Kahanec, 2013; Remeur, 2013). Except for one paper supporting the so called “*welfare-magnet hypothesis*” (Razin & Wahba, 2015), existing empirical evidence for this hypothesis is rare (Barslund & Busse, 2014; Kahanec, 2014). In cases where some synergetic effect is found, the generosity of the welfare states attracts low-skilled migrants to a greater extent (Razin & Wahba, 2015). Yet, the effect of welfare considerations is relatively low compared to lower unemployment and increased salaries in the country of destination (Kahanec, 2014)– in line with neoclassical theory (Barslund & Busse, 2014). There is empirical evidence that access to welfare benefits, such as healthcare services and social security, are not among the main drivers for intra-EU mobility.

2.2.6. Further factors facilitating mobility within the EU

Freedom of movement

The chance to take advantage of their “*freedom of movement*” rights within the EU is a sufficient reason to move particularly for young, highly skilled EU nationals, making them more likely to have a higher degree of mobility than those with lower levels of education (Santacreu et al., 2009). When looking at “*freedom of movement*” for economic reasons, Dittrich and Spath (2016) stress the significance of separating the concepts of *de jure* “*freedom of movement*” and *de facto* mobility of labour within Europe. The former points to the legal rights of workers to move freely, while the latter refers to the structural barriers that impede the successful mobility of workers. A qualitative study conducted by Favell (2011) on highly mobile EU15 migrants finds that so called “*Eurostars*” (young movers) create new forms of labour mobility. For them, exceptional centres of European migration are pioneering new places of destination, the so called “*Eurocities*”: Amsterdam, London and Brussels (Favell, 2011). Even though young migrants experience excitement for professional opportunities when first moving abroad, they observe the practical challenges of their older peers when considering long-term affairs of life quality, fiscal planning, childbearing, and health care. These considerations explain why

settling abroad is an exception, and not the rule, due to the difficulties young movers experience in creating a denationalized and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Past migration experience

An additional supporting factor of mobility within the EU are previous migration episodes (Vandenbrande et al., 2006). Evidence from the Eurobarometer survey (European Commission, 2013) suggests that a personal experience abroad (or that of a relative or friend) increases the likelihood of people to consider migration. Intra-EU migrants who went abroad for training or for studies for a minimum of two months are two times more likely to envisage working in another country. Furthermore, when choosing the destination country for permanent settlement, previous holiday experiences also play an important role (European Commission, 2013). Lastly, long stays in another European country (for professional or study reasons) increase the likelihood of bi-national partnerships, which also may encourage future migration (Schroedter et al., 2015). Yet, the reason for migrating again tends to be different from the initial reason; for example, study reasons might be a driving factor for the first migration, the reasons for migrating again are different from the first reason to migrate.

Networks

A long observed factor in network theories of migration studies (Arango, 2000; Castles et al., 2014; Haug, 2008; Massey et al., 1993) is that once pioneer migration takes place, possible migrants in origin areas get interlinked to areas of destination through ties of friendship and a shared community origin (van Meeteren & Pereira, 2018). The set of interpersonal ties which connects migrants, non-migrants, and former migrants represents a valuable form of social capital (Ryan, 2011). This reduces various social, economic, and emotional costs for new migrants (Somerville, 2015), such as finding employment, housing, or obtaining supporting documents in the country of destination. This is commonly referred to as social facilitation (Garip & Asad, 2015) and describes webs of social ties between individuals in origin and migrants in destination, which are a key determinant of the magnitude and direction of migration flows, as well as migrants' adaptation outcomes. Scholarly research on the role of networks for intra-EU mobility is scarce and tends to focus on East-West migration (Kurekova, 2010) and specific migration corridors (e.g. Romanians migration to Spain (Şerban & Voicu, 2010)).

2.2.7. Hypotheses

Drawing on the conclusion of the review of existing literature regarding the multiple, interconnected drivers determining intra-EU migration, the following hypotheses are developed to guide the analysis in this paper in relation to the original research question.

- **Hypothesis 1:** Mobility drivers differ between migrants from EU15 and CEE countries. While CEE migrants are predominantly motivated by economic factors, EU15 migrants tend to base their decision-making on career development opportunities and non-economic factors.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Migration on corridors from economically less-affluent Member States (East-West, East-South and South-North (after the economic crisis in 2008)) to wealthier Member States is predominantly driven by job opportunities and income differentials. Migration on the West-West corridor, on the other hand, is based on a wider variety of drivers.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Mobility drivers differ between high- and low-skilled migrants. While the decision-making process of highly skilled migrants tends to be based on multiple factors beyond neoclassical theory, low-skilled migrants' mobility decisions can, to a greater extent, be explained by neoclassical and network theories.
- **Hypothesis 4:** Mobility drivers differ by gender. While female migrants are more likely to migrate as *tied movers* and for family related reasons, male migrants are more likely to move for work related reasons.
- **Hypothesis 5:** The principle of "*freedom of movement*" facilitates the mobility of young movers (below 36 years), who are more likely to migrate for work or study or out of a sense of "*wanderlust*" compared to older generations.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data used in this paper was collected as part of the REMINDER project funded through the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. The overall project aimed to further the understanding of free movement in Europe, one aspect of which are the determinants of

intra-EU migration.² To analyse these determinants, a mixed method, cross-country data set including focus group discussions, interviews and surveys was compiled. In line with the approach of the wider REMINDER project, the fieldwork was carried out in 2018 and 2019 in five countries: Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The target population included individuals who had migrated from another country (whether EU or non-EU) to one of the five focus countries within the last ten years at the time of data collection. To exclude individuals whose mobility decision-making was primarily determined by their parents or guardians, migrants that were below the age of 18 at the time of arrival in the respective country, were excluded.

To include a wide range of participants in terms of origin countries, migration drivers and demographic characteristics, such as gender and skill level, a purposive sampling strategy was employed. The research team relied on convenience and snowball sampling, mobilizing their social and professional networks to establish contact with potential participants. In locations where no such networks were available, the research team relied on cold calling and contacting gatekeepers such as NGOs, charities, migrant organizations, language schools, companies and organizations with a high proportion of international staff as well as university departments and student unions, embassies and cultural heritage houses. During fieldwork, researchers visited libraries and restaurants and cafés in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrant groups. To reach further potential participants, the team posted on social media platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Most of the data was collected in urban settings with access to large migrant populations, such as London, Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Malaga, Stockholm, Berlin and Aachen, but the dataset also includes a minority of participants from rural settings. The focus group discussions were of a semi-structured nature focusing on migrants' past migration decisions, current migration experience and future mobility decisions. Additionally, individual interviews were carried out on the same themes, both in the focus countries and remotely (via Skype or telephone), to reach a wider range of potential participants.

This paper focuses on a sub-sample of participants whose country of origin is either a EU15³ or CEE⁴ country and focuses specifically on past migration experiences to Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. Data that was collected in Sweden was excluded from the sample due to a bias in terms of skill-level and country of origin. The country of origin was defined as the country of birth. Where a

² <https://www.reminder-project.eu/>

³ The EU15 comprises the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (OECD, 2007).

⁴ CEE⁴ countries are EU Member States which were part of the former Eastern bloc. The following countries are included: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia (Statistics Netherlands, 2020).

participant was taken to another country as a baby, their country of origin was defined as the country in which they spent their childhood, mainly because it became apparent during focus group discussions and interviews that participants identified with the country where they grew up as their country of origin. The final sample used in the present analysis consists of 98 participants, 39 from CEE and 59 from EU15 countries.

Table 2 and the figures in the Appendix provide an overview of the characteristics of the participants such as their countries of origin, skill level, gender and country of destination. To differentiate between low- and high-skilled migrants, in this paper the latter are defined as individuals who have completed tertiary level education. The data was analysed using NVivo software. The coding framework was developed deductively based on the literature review and then revised iteratively, based on inductive thematic analysis.

Limitations

Due to the employed sampling strategy, which consisted of convenience and snowball sampling, there are some possible limitations in this study: a) a potential underrepresentation of participants from rural and smaller towns; b) an overall higher proportion of highly skilled participants, and younger participants, including students, without children; c) an underrepresentation of low-skilled participants and certain nationalities and d) of older participants. The sample does not include any retirees, which means that conclusions regarding intra-EU retirements migration cannot be made.

Figures 1 and 2 in the appendix further specify the nationalities of participants. As can be seen, there is an overrepresentation of EU15 participants (n=59) compared to participants from CEE countries (n=39). Additionally, participants from certain CEE countries are not represented in the sample and CEE participants overall have a lower skill level than sampled participants from EU15 countries. The sample is further skewed in its distribution across destination countries (see **Error! Reference source not found.** in the following Section).

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

An overview of key characteristics of the research participants is provided in Table 2. The 98 participants were living in four countries: Germany (11.2%), Italy (21.4%), Spain (14.3%) and the UK (53.1%). The data further distinguishes between low- (12.2%) and high-skilled (87.8%) migrants, and this includes both students and professionals. Among the participants 68.4% are female and 31.6% are male. Most research participants were below 36 years old (18-27 years: 21.4%; 28-35 years:

57.1%) and a small number of participants were 36 years and above (36-49 years: 13.3%; 50 years and above: 8.2%). A more detailed presentation of the participants' country of origin is shown in the Appendix (Figure 1 and 2).

Table 2: Skill level, sex, and country of destination of respondents

| | | CEE | % | EU15 | % | Total | % |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Skill level | Low-skilled | 10 | 25.6% | 2 | 3.4% | 12 | 12.2% |
| | High-skilled | 29 | 74.4% | 56 | 94.9% | 86 | 87.8% |
| | students | 5 | 12.8% | 18 | 30.5% | 23 | 23.5% |
| | professionals | 24 | 61.5% | 38 | 64.4% | 62 | 63.3% |
| | Unknown | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 1.7% | 1 | 1.0% |
| Sex | Female | 32 | 82.1% | 35 | 59.3% | 67 | 68.4% |
| | Male | 7 | 17.9% | 24 | 40.7% | 31 | 31.6% |
| Age | 18-27 years | 8 | 20.5% | 13 | 22.0% | 21 | 21.4% |
| | 28-35 years | 22 | 56.4% | 34 | 57.6% | 56 | 57.1% |
| | 36-49 years | 3 | 7.7% | 10 | 16.9% | 13 | 13.3% |
| | 50 years and above | 6 | 15.4% | 2 | 3.4% | 8 | 8.2% |
| Country of Destination | Germany | 2 | 5.1% | 9 | 15.3% | 11 | 11.2% |
| | Italy | 11 | 28.2% | 10 | 17% | 21 | 21.4% |
| | Spain | 4 | 10.3% | 10 | 17% | 14 | 14.3% |
| | United Kingdom | 22 | 56.4% | 30 | 51% | 52 | 53.1% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% | 59 | 100% | 98 | 100% |

Note: In the context of focus groups and interviews, in which discussions were less rigidly structured, it was sometimes necessary to make assumptions regarding participants' skill level and whether or not they had EU nationality, based on their accounts of their migration and educational/occupational backgrounds. In the case of research participants, who gave more detailed accounts of their migration histories, intra-EU migrants were counted as those who had moved between EU countries at any point in their lives, rather than just in their most recent migration.

4. Evidence of drivers of mobility within the EU

This section presents the findings on the main drivers of intra-EU migration along the lines of those identified in the literature review. The analysis further highlights the complex nature in which these drivers interact and intersect, including insights on further motivations for intra-EU migration. The qualitative data gathered indicates that the decision to migrate is often determined by multiple factors, which may be interlinked and may consolidate each other. Therefore, it becomes difficult to separate their respective relevance from one another. Participant typically stated that they migrated

“for work” (GE_INT15_France), “to study” (IT_FGP42_France), “to join the partner” (UK_FGP52_CzechRepublic) or “husband” (UK_FGP56_Romania). Yet, the identification of one main reason often oversimplifies the complex process of intra-EU migration decisions. For instance, one German highly skilled migrant in the UK stated that he moved mainly “for work” (UK_FGP05_Germany), to then further explain that multiple factors such as his partner and a joint sense of “wanderlust” influenced his mobility decision. In addition to this, some participants, particularly younger ones, were also aware of the multiple factors motivating their decision to migrate. For example, a Polish student’s decision to move to the UK “was kind of a lifestyle choice ... but also everything else” (UK_FGP03_Poland).

The data did not reveal consistent differences in the decision-making between migrants based on characteristics such as their country of origin (EU15 or CEE), age, gender, skill-level and migration corridor. Yet, some differences that were dependent on these characteristics were observed in the mobility decisions of EU15 and CEE migrants and in various migration corridors, and in particular where migration was driven by economic reasons, study, lifestyle, or where the migration was facilitated by networks. The skill-level influenced the migration decisions of migrants who were moving for economic reasons and for love. While gender strongly influenced love and family migration, age primarily impacted the mobility decision of research participants who were moving for economic reasons in connection with the “freedom of movement”, and return migration. When these differences were observable, they are explained in the following sections. In the cases where no reference to specific characteristics was made, no specific patterns could be identified.

4.1. Mobility within the EU for economic reasons

The data provided valuable insights into how economic reasons overlap with other reasons in the participants’ decision-making process and their choice of destination. The data also highlights specific employment-related motivations driving intra-EU migration and how they differ between migrants from EU15 and CEE countries, particularly across migration corridors, and between high- and low-skilled migrants. Even though existing literature indicates that male and younger migrants are more likely to move for labour-related reasons (Strey et al., 2018), the present data does not reveal firm gender and age differences when investigating work-related migration. Therefore, both the fourth and fifth hypothesis can only be partially confirmed.

4.1.1. Economic reasons for low-skilled migrants

As predicted by neoclassical migration theory, and in line with the third hypothesis, low-skilled participants from CEE countries often stated that they primarily migrated within the EU for reasons related to “*work*” (e.g. UK_INT28_Polish), although they tended not to specify the exact nature of the work they pursued through moving. They often moved in search of a job, without having a job offer before migration (e.g. IT_FGP55_Poland; UK_FGP40_Romania). This was rarely the case for highly skilled migrants from CEE countries (discussed further below).

More broadly, better economic conditions (or “economic reasons” (IT_INT04_Romania)) in other EU countries, were also mentioned repeatedly as the main driving force for low-skilled Eastern European migrants (from Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania) moving along the East-West and the East-South corridors, highlighting the importance of macro-level factors in individual mobility decision-making. Many of the low-skilled participants mentioned factors such as low income, a lack of jobs, or poor working conditions as push factors. As pull factors, these migrants cited improved salaries, better job opportunities, a higher likelihood of finding a job or improved working conditions in Western countries of destination. Overall, the migration decision of CEE migrants was much more often influenced by the wage disparities in the country of destination compared to EU15 migrants. For one Polish migrant, for instance, the income disparities were one of the main drivers for moving to Italy (IT_FGP56_Poland). She explained how the income there was three times higher than that in her home country. Motivated by higher income and the superior economic conditions in the country of destination, several CEE migrants gave accounts of having migrated to support their families back home, in line with NELM theory. These individuals make important contributions to the household income through sending of remittances into their countries of origin as further discussed in Section 4.2.1.

Additional specific push factors such as dissatisfaction with the working conditions and a certain sense of exploitation of the workforce motivated the emigration of some low-skilled participants from Romania. For instance, one Romanian participant explained that she left Romania despite her emotional attachment to her family back home. She moved mainly due to macro-economic factors: “*because of necessity, poverty...back home they don't pay well*” (IT_INT05_Romania). She further elaborated the exploitation of labour in her country of origin.

Onward migration within the EU for low-skilled CEE migrants was frequently motivated by a lack of work prospects in the country of previous destination, especially following the economic crisis.

For these participants, migration was thus primarily driven by the relative availability of work and superior labour market conditions in the destination country. For example, one secondary migrant from Romania explained how she moved onward – together with her husband - from Italy to the UK in search of a job. She stated: *“There are not job opportunities in Italy, (...) and in Romania. That is why we moved to Italy. Then from Italy we moved, because of the high cost there. We also had no jobs in Italy ...”* (UK_FGP40_Romania).

4.1.2. Economic reasons for highly skilled migrants

For highly skilled migrants, both from EU15 and CEE countries, it was not necessarily the availability of work that motivated their migration, but the prospect of a better job and possibilities for career development. For instance, one Polish participant decided to stay in the UK after her masters’ degree due to the *“better opportunities, job-wise”* (UK_FGP12_Poland). In addition, she decided that the comparatively higher income would enable her to pay back her student loan in a shorter time than would be possible had she returned to Poland.

Specifically for high-skilled migrants working in international professions such as academia or international development, migration was often perceived as an almost required or natural part of professional development; particularly in professions where work possibilities in highly specialized sectors are restricted. The UK (and particularly London) attracted a workers with a high skill-level – mainly migrants working in social science or academia - moving in search of better career opportunities in their field of expertise (e.g. IT_FGP46_Bulgaria). One highly skilled participant elaborated that she moved back to the UK for the third time. After finishing her studies, she returned to the UK due to the comparative abundance of jobs in the field of international development:

“Even though there are opportunities in my country, it’s just that the sector I work in, and I’m interested in, doesn’t really have any job opportunities back in Poland. So yeah, I’m very much open to migrate” (UK_FGP03_Poland).

In line with this, a highly skilled Italian migrant explained that he also moved to the UK because of the career opportunities: *“And in the field of development it’s definitely a destination where there are many opportunities”* (UK_FGP01_Italy). At the same time, participants within professions in high demand explained that due to the freedom to choose their next country of destination, they tend to be more selective in their decision-making. They took multiple factors into consideration when making their migration decision. For instance, a young couple which migrated for work opportunities from Den-

mark to the North of Germany decided to do so because of the closeness to the home country and several lifestyle factors, while their migration decision was supported by their existing network (GE_INT14_Denmark).

Compared to low-skilled migrants, purely economic drivers of migration were less frequently mentioned by highly skilled migrants, except for CEE participants that had migrated to Southern or Western Europe or participants from Southern European countries (Italy, Spain) that moved North in search for work. While many moved after the economic crisis, several participants felt forced to leave because of the scarcity of career opportunities in their sector and some participants left because of low salaries. Therefore, the first hypothesis, which suggests that CEE migrants are predominantly driven by income differentials, can only be partially confirmed. Migrants, that moved because of wage differences along the East-West, East-South and South-North corridor, were the exception rather than the rule. In contrast to hypothesis two, these participants did not only consider income differences but also working conditions and professional development.

In some cases, these highly skilled participants ended up underemployed, working in a profession that did not match their level of education. For instance, a young graduate from Italy moved to the UK (UK_INT03_Italy) where she was employed at a level below her capability. She explained how her qualification was not recognized at the same level in the UK as it would have been in Italy: *“I found out that it wasn’t regarded as equal as a British degree (...) though work-wise, it doesn’t really matter”* (UK_INT03_Italy). The participant ended up working for almost three years as a manual worker in a factory and as a chamber maid in a hotel after her arrival in the UK. In line with this, highly qualified research participants who migrated from CEE countries to Italy elaborated that the labour market discrimination towards foreigners limited their ability to find a job at a level appropriate for their qualification. One Polish participant explained that he was not hired because of the *“not positive label”* (IT_FGP12_Poland) which was given to foreigners, as the employers prefer Italians over foreigners.

In summary, while income differentials, as predicted by neoclassical migration theory, play an important role in explaining labour migration, the factors at play for high skilled migrants from both EU15 and CEE countries are often more nuanced, taking into consideration also the quality of jobs and opportunities for further career development. The third hypothesis is therefore partially confirmed, as highly skilled migrants’ decision-making is based on factors beyond the neoclassical theory. Specific work opportunities abroad that served as an important step in migrants’ career development often also largely determined the choice of destination country.

4.2. Mobility within the EU for family and love reasons

The present analysis also provides useful details about reasons related to love (to join a partner or spouse in another country) or family (family reunification and formation) for intra-EU migration including some insights into tied movers within the EU. Firstly, only a few of the participants from Eastern Europe migrated to Southern Europe for family related reasons. This was the case where participants had migrated to join their partner, often with a view to have children, or to be with or support their children in the country of destination or at home. Secondly, a handful of people, mainly low-skilled migrants from CEE countries, moved to accompany their partner or spouse. They moved because they decided to prioritize the career of their partner (accompanying partner's decision), rather than their own desire to migrate. In line with this, a low-skilled Romanian migrant explained: *"I came here because I met my husband on internet. So, I came here to meet him before I had a job"* (UK_FGP56_Romania). However, in most cases of those migrating for a relationship, the mobility decision of highly skilled migrants (from EU15 and CEE countries) was shared and based on jointly pursuing opportunities abroad.

4.2.1. Family reasons

Several female participants mentioned that they migrated specifically for family reasons – either to join family living in the country of destination or to become able to support their own children financially and/or socially (to live with them and/or care for them). Both low- and high-skilled female participants who moved along the East-South corridor explained that their migration decisions were supported by an aspiration to join family members such as their mother (IT_FGP55_Poland; IT_FGP56_Poland; SP_INT01_Romania), sister (SP_INT01_Romania), or children (IT_INT04_Romania) in the destination country. As one female low-skilled migrant explained, she left from Poland to Italy due to the fact that her mother had been living there already: *"So, my mother was already here, my mother was already here because I'm not brave that I come without someone covering my shoulders"* (IT_FGP55_Poland). The importance of maintaining family structure as a reason for migration was further exemplified by one particular case, where an Italian mother explained that her decision to migrate to the UK was to some extent made jointly with her ex-husband, who was moving to the UK for work, to ensure that they could still raise their children together (UK_FGP44_Italy).

Several research participants also stated that they moved to support their own children. As discussed above, some migrants were motivated to move by the possibility to make a higher income, which

allows them to make important contributions to the household income through remittances. For one Romanian participant, the prospect to send financial support to family members back home was her main driving factor to move abroad for work. This encouraged her to stay in Italy despite the strong family ties she had with her children who were still living in the country of origin. Another low-skilled mother who moved along the East-South corridor migrated specifically to support her son financially. The higher income in the destination country enables her to pay for all of her son's expenses at university: *"I came for my son to Italy to allow him to go to university. He started university but he didn't manage to pay for tuition and books (...) With Romanian salary I couldn't afford to pay for the university. I said to myself: 'I will go to Italy for one year'"* (IT:INT06_Romania). In all these cases, family-related reasons had a stronger impact on the decision to migrate among female participants, which confirms the study's fourth hypothesis.

4.2.2. Love

Migration for reunification between married and unmarried couples from EU15 and CEE countries took mainly place from East to West (UK_FGP56_Romania; UK_FGP61_Poland) and from West to West (GE_INT08_France; SP_FGP26_France; SP_INT08_Belgium). It was based either on concrete career opportunities for one partner, or better general opportunities for both partners. While research participants moving for love reasons represented all age groups, most of them were female. The study's fourth hypothesis is therefore partially confirmed. Women are more likely to move for love related reasons, even though skill level and migration corridor further influence the likelihood to migrate as a tied mover. Four participants said that they had joined their spouse because of superior career opportunities, and the potential to earn a higher income in the country of destination, illustrating the interconnectedness of factors and their relative importance. In other cases, low-skilled women's mobility decision-making for love was solely based on the prioritisation of their husband's career rather than wanting to move themselves, in line with Mincer's (1978) conceptualisation of the *tied mover*. To this end, women, one from Poland and one from Romania, explained that their main reason for moving to the UK was based on purely economic considerations, specifically their husbands' access to better career opportunities and higher income (UK_FGP56_Romania; UK_FGP61_Poland). Equally, a female participant from France said that her migration decision was mainly based on her husband's desire to *"go back to the family roots"* (SP_FGP26_France). However, contrary to the general assumption that the gender of the tied mover is female, one highly skilled

male migrant from Denmark stated that he followed his wife to Germany to pursue a career opportunity his wife had been presented with (GE_INT14_Denmark).

In contrast to the tied-mover theory, multiple participants stated that their migration decision-making was a joint decision based on a shared interest in pursuing opportunities abroad. Particularly, younger, highly skilled couples, from both EU15 and CEE countries, often based their joint decision on study or career opportunities, mainly in the UK because of the common language. Several participants also reported that they had met their partner during their first period abroad, and they either returned to the country of destination or extended their time there for this reason. For example, two interview participants explained that they had fallen in love during an ERASMUS exchange, which had led them to extend their time in the countries (Germany and Spain, respectively) (GE_INT08_France, SP_INT08_Belgium). Further, an Italian student migrant explained in a focus group discussion that he fell in love with one of his course mates while studying in the UK; after they finished their studies, they got married and decided to stay in the country. He described living in the UK as advantageous for him and his wife because it is a “*neutral country*” for them:

“We both use English (...), which we have in common. But my first language is obviously Italian, and her first language is [another foreign language]. So, the UK becomes somehow a neutral country (...). The [UK holds the most] potential to develop a career and income (...) in comparison to the other two [countries]. So, it seems most convenient to stay for an indefinite period until we sort a better plan” (UK_FGP32_Italy).

In most cases, however, romantic relationships are not the main driver of migration for young EU nationals. Rather, they were an additional interrelated push factor determining the migration decision.

4.3. Mobility within the EU for the purpose of study

Data collected through the focus group discussions and interviews makes clear that intra-EU migration for the purpose of study can involve various motivations. Most students from EU15 and CEE countries had migrated within the EU for degree mobility, that is, aiming to gain a higher degree. Degree mobility tends to be interlinked with further drivers, such as access to a (perceived) better education system in the country of destination and the desire to improve language skills in a foreign language. Several undergraduate students from EU15 countries migrated as part of EU exchange programs like ERASMUS or MobiPro-EU, which in this case were an important facilitator for in-

tra-EU mobility and also for subsequent migratory episodes. A few students from EU15 and CEE countries studied abroad at schools or universities mainly to improve their English-language skills. Mainly students coming from CEE countries migrated because country-specific scholarship programs provided a reduced cost of education. This attracted students to study in the UK or Germany in particular. Lastly, particularly British universities were appealing to students because of the prestige attached to them.

4.3.1. Degree mobility

As seen in the literature review, an important pull factor for student migrants is the quality of education (Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013; González, Mesanza, & Mariel, 2011; Wei, 2013) and the reputation of universities (Marginson, 2006). Among the migrants in the present study, degree mobility influenced migration decisions at bachelor's, master's, and PhD level. The majority of participants that had migrated for a bachelor's degrees had moved from CEE countries to EU15 countries along the East-West corridor (e.g. GE_INT17_Bulgaria, GE_INT22_Bulgaria, UK_FGP12_Poland). Among master's and PhD level students, migration more often took place between EU15 countries, including along the South-North corridor (IT_FGP42_France, SP_FGP29_Portugal, SP_FGP37_Italy). As a driving factor, several students cited higher quality of education in the country of destination, on the one hand, and dissatisfaction with the education system in the country of origin, on the other (GE_INT20_Spain, UK_FGP28_France, UK_FGP32_Italy, UK_FGP50_Germany). For instance, a German student explained why he chose to obtain his PhD in the UK rather than in Germany: *"I also wanted to leave the German academic system because I think it has some major flaws when it comes to PhDs. And I wanted to pursue some new fields, some new ideas, some new directions (...). So I went to the UK, or to the English PhD system"* (UK_FGP50_Germany).

4.3.2. Language

Several participants mentioned skills in a foreign language as a primary motivating factor for migrating. For most students, this was a language they already knew at an advanced level – either the official language of the country of destination or the language of instruction at the respective university. The existing language skills of these students determined their choice of destination, leading research participants from EU15 and CEE countries to study either in the UK or in Germany (e.g. GE_INT17_Bulgaria, UK_FGP76_Spain). Students whose mobility decision was driven by language reasons primarily migrated along the East-West and South-North corridor. One focus group partici-

participant from the Czech Republic explained why he decided to study in the UK: “*Well, I think in general the UK is more appealing for someone like us, people speak English, and I speak English, so it’s quite nice to be in a country where you already speak the language, obviously*” (UK_FGP52_CzechRepublic). Another focus group participant explained that she moved from France to study in Spain in order to gain an international master’s degree and a PhD at an English-speaking university. She stated that she wanted “*to study [on] an MA program in English because in France they don’t have a lot*” (SP_FGP38_France). Some participants also mentioned that they moved in order to learn the language of the destination country. For instance, one participant mentioned that he primarily migrated to the UK to study English (UK_FGP76_Spain).

4.3.3. Lower cost of education

Besides language, the cost of education is another factor determining students’ choices of destination for higher education. Reduced financial burden was mentioned by students from both EU15 (France, Spain and Italy) and CEE countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland) as a supporting factor in their decision to study abroad. Several students from Eastern Europe and France migrated to the UK because of the availability of country-specific student loans and scholarships (UK_FGP03_Poland; UK_FGP28_France; UK_FGP30_Slovakia; UK_FGP52_Czech Republic). One Slovak student explained that he had sent applications to institutions in various countries, but selected the UK due to the scholarship he was offered there: “*I got a scholarship here, so they paid me to study; so, it was a natural choice*” (UK_FGP30_Slovakia). Similarly, accessible study financing played an important role. One French participant in the UK stated that: “*The fact that you can get a student loan here quite easily also played into my decision, I think*” (UK_FGP28_France). While those students studying in the UK had been attracted by the financial support available there, students moved to Germany because education there is free. One Bulgarian student elaborated: “*So Germany was a combination of I speak the language and education is free; it is affordable*” (GE_INT17_Bulgaria).

4.3.4. Prestige associated with universities

When considering potential countries of destination, another factor influencing participants from EU15 and CEE countries is the prestige associated with universities and the availability of courses corresponding to their academic interests. Research participants stated that the “*good ranking*” (GE_INT08_France) and “*reputation*” (UK_FGP32_Italy) of universities were attractive factors to move and made the UK to the most attractive country of destination. For instance, a Romanian stu-

dent explained that to study abroad was “*perceived as being something of a goal, because I think everything that’s you know foreign, especially Western Europe, it’s considered better*” (UK_INT22_Romania). He further added that individuals who study in a foreign country are “*going to be perceived in a better way, than staying in Romania*” (UK_INT22_Romania). Moreover, two participants (from Italy and Spain, respectively) decided to study in the UK for the sake of their general long-term career prospects. British universities in particular appealed to students because of the prestige which would then give them better chances in the job market in their origin country after return. This driver confirms the *human capability theory* (Sjaastad, 1962), which explains why student invest into higher education to increase productivity and to gain a greater return in the long term, where both investment and return are particularly high when student migrate to high ranking and prestige universities.

In several cases the decision to migrate was influenced by the fact that the country of destination offered a specific study program which suited the student’s academic interests or future career goals. For instance, one Polish student mentioned that his current studies in the UK would help him to increase his “*quantitative background*” (UK_FGP10_Poland), helping him to obtain a PhD afterwards. Similarly, a German student was eager to be accepted into a specific PhD program in the UK, as his interest in “*cancer research and biological research*” (UK_FGP50_Germany) is minimally covered by courses in Germany.

4.4. Mobility within the EU for lifestyle reasons

Lifestyle motivations (related to cultural and quality of life advantages) and “*wanderlust*” (the desire for new opportunities, cultures, and experiences) are extremely important factors in explaining intra-EU mobility of mainly highly skilled young (between 28 and 35 years) migrants from EU15 and CEE countries. According to Favell (2011), migration for lifestyle reasons is especially relevant for young European movers (below 36 years) and affect both the decision to migrate and the choice of country of destination. Lifestyle reasons represent different motivations at different phases of life. The qualitative data reveals that some highly skilled migrants (from EU15 and CEE countries) moved for an improved quality of life, based on their lifestyle factors which they perceived as offering greater well-being, such as improved weather conditions or alternative social and natural environments. A preference for another lifestyle is often connected to dissatisfaction with lifestyles in the country of origin or the previous country of residence. Lifestyle motivations influence both departing and returning movements and often underpinned a migration decision for study or work-related reasons. Yet, several intra-EU migrants moved not for a preferred lifestyle, but rather out of a desire to experience

something new, instead of following a lifestyle they are already familiar with. This sense of “*wanderlust*” was particularly influential, though not the only driving factor, in the migration decisions of young and highly skilled EU nationals migrating between the EU15 countries.

4.4.1. Lifestyle

Three highly skilled research participants migrated from Western Europe to Southern European countries (Spain and Italy) due to the weather conditions there. All of them associated the warmer temperatures with a warmer and more welcoming culture in general. For one French ERASMUS student, the “*Southern mentality*” (IT_FGP22_France) was an important motivating factor in his decision to extend his time in Italy. He explained:

“But the weather is an important factor for waking up – having the sun, blue skies... Even if it is not too much. I mean, waking up to sun and blue skies instead of rain is, like, very good for the morale... There is also a kind of warmer weather that we get. When you go in the street you will always find someone who will help you and be super-welcoming with you. I mean, here in Italia I have really met some people [who] are really very nice. I mean, I think that is a southern mentality” (IT_FGP22_France).

Another highly skilled participant from Greece left his previous country of residence (the Netherlands) to migrate to Spain, in pursuit of what he perceived as a better lifestyle. He described the trade-off between improved career conditions in the Netherlands and his hope for an improved subjective sense of well-being in Southern Europe, based on an enhanced social life and weather conditions. He wanted to escape the lack of social integration and the “*coldness*” in the Netherlands; this motivated his move to a “*warm culture*” where he is “*able to go out [and] meet people (...)*” and enjoy a “*warm country, sun [and] beach*” (SP_INT21_Greece).

4.4.2. Wanderlust

Intra-EU migrants moving out of a sense of “*wanderlust*” are primarily motivated by the desire to experience something new. This tends to be more common among young EU migrants, who often regard mobility as a way of life (Dubow et al., 2019). Moreover, the mobility decision of highly skilled EU15 migrants moving within the EU15 countries (along the West-West corridor) is often motivated by the desire for new opportunities, environments and experiences – a sense of “*wanderlust*”. The data highlights that the pursuit of quality-of-life and cultural advantages often went hand in

hand with the desire for education or career opportunities. Hypothesis one is therefore partially confirmed.

A young highly skilled French research participant, for example, migrated onwards to Germany after his studies in the Netherlands. This decision was mainly driven by the desire to experience a new environment, as he explained: *“It was the step for me to try something new. So, I think no matter what would have happened, I would have moved out of the Netherlands and moved somewhere else, just to try something new”* (GE_INT15_France). Similarly, a German undergraduate student who migrated to the UK for study reasons explained that his desire to experience new cultures will motivate him to migrate onwards in the near future. He described:

“Just to experience different cultures. Because I think it is not like... you should not be limited to one country itself, that you only have this perspective of this one country. But it’s very important to see other parts of the world, just to see what makes other people tick, what they think about your culture, for example, as well, and to see how... just to get a feeling of how to understand them” (UK_FGP51_Germany).

4.5. Mobility within the EU for other reasons

During the interviews and focus groups, participants discussed several other factors that motivated their migration within the EU. Firstly, high- and low-skilled migrants (mainly from Southern European and CEE countries) mentioned that political issues, such as corruption, made them decide to move away from their country of origin. In contrast, a better welfare system – social protection and social security policies – motivated migration to a specific destination country. This was particularly the case for highly skilled migrants from EU15 countries. Secondly, social reasons like the desire to return to their roots encouraged high-skilled EU15 migrants to move back to their home country in some cases.

4.5.1. The welfare system

According to the Welfare Magnet Hypothesis, the generosity of a welfare state affects the mobility decision of migrants from less developed countries (Razin & Wahba, 2015). Study participants rarely indicated access to social protection and social security as a main driver for intra-EU migration. However, for a few highly skilled intra-EU15 migrants, who moved along the South-North corridor, it supported their migration decision and/or determined their country of destination. In this study,

the EU 15 country most frequently considered to have an attractive welfare system was Germany. For instance, a highly skilled worker from Spain chose to work in Germany for the social security which was not existent in her home country: *“There is no support from the state, especially since 2008. So, I don’t know if I idealize as it is different in the rest of the world, but I want to experience it”* (GE_INT20_Spain). Similarly, a highly skilled British migrant who decided to settle (indefinitely) in Germany, paid special attention to public services in Germany such as the healthcare system (GE_INT12_England).

In contrast to this, another French high-skilled migrant decided to move back to Spain, together with her husband. Among the factors supporting their stay in the country, she stated her preference for the social security and particularly the lower expenses:

“Also, the proximity to France, the work, social security is less expensive here. If we go back to France, I do not know how we would keep up to such high costs of social security. Here social security is better because in France you need a private insurance” (SP_FGP26_France).

When research participants were directly asked whether policies to protect and support workers had influenced their intra-EU migration decision, they rarely made a comment. Only a few said that they had a limited awareness of their rights to access benefits for housing at the point of considering migration. The few who were aware of these benefits often explained difficulties in the bureaucratic process. Therefore, social security was considered a motivating factor for intra-EU migration only by a few female participants. And if so, migrants focused on policies to support (e.g. parental leave (GE_INT12_England)) and protect labourers (see Section 2.2.1) rather than state benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits (GE_INT12_England; UK_FGP44_Italy)) which they might receive even without a job. This study therefore finds limited evidence of the welfare magnet hypothesis (Giulietti & Kahanec, 2013; Razin & Wahba, 2015) often mentioned in relation to CEE migrants moving West.

4.5.2. Political dissatisfaction

The current political situation, and more specifically political corruption, in the country of origin is an important motivating factor in the migration decision of highly skilled participants moving from Eastern Europe to both Western and Southern EU15 countries. They spoke of their disappointment in the political institutions of their home countries, where they perceived there is a high level of corruption (GE_INT22_Bulgaria; SP_INT01_Romania) and a significant degree of nepotism

(SP_INT01_Romania). One participant stated that this “*rules out going back*” (UK_FGP12_Poland). A female migrant from Romania explained the situation in her country as follows:

“Well, in political terms, in Romania there is a lot of corruption and nepotism. It is extremely difficult. You can force yourself, but in the end, there will always be people that come and... You need to pay to get your job. I know people who paid in order to be policemen, or healthcare assistants... So, either you pay, or you stay out” (SP_INT01_Romania).

However, political reasons are a motivating factor not only for highly skilled participants. A male low-skilled migrant from Greece also talked about his dissatisfaction with the political system in his country of origin. He explained how the “*horrible level of corruption*” in Greece made him “[dis]satisfied with the system there, with how it is now” (IT_INT08_Greece), leading him to decide to migrate to Italy.

4.5.3. A return to roots

Highly skilled research participants, mainly above 35 years, from EU15 countries explained that personal or family ties in the country of destination were emotional factors that influenced their migration decision. For instance, one female French migrant agreed to move back to Spain with her Spanish husband, mainly to allow him to go “*back to (...) his Spanish roots*” (SP_FGP05_France). This was central to the choice of destination: “*It was really Spain or nothing*” (SP_FGP05_France). Similarly, one French highly skilled participant chose to migrate partly because of a work opportunity offered to her, but also in order to go “*back to [her] roots*” (SP_FGP27_France).

4.6. Other facilitators of intra-EU mobility

Several participants discussed their decision-making process in a way that highlighted several other facilitating factors of intra-EU mobility. These include social networks, the freedom of movement and previous migration experiences. In line with network theory, networks of family and/or friends in certain countries encouraged the migration decision of (high- and low-skilled) Eastern Europeans who moved to Southern European countries in particular. Moreover, for young and highly skilled migrants from both EU15 and CEE countries, the “*freedom of movement*” between European countries was reason enough to move. Lastly, a previous migration experience encouraged both EU15 and CEE migrants to move again.

4.6.1. Networks

The participants' personal relationships and friendships were often (one of) the greatest facilitators of their intra-EU movements, particularly for high- and low-skilled CEE migrants moving along the East-South corridor. Hypothesis three is therefore partially rejected, as the findings show that network theory does not explain migration of migrants with a certain skill level, but rather along a specific migration corridor. CEE migrants are more likely to migrate for network-related reasons than EU15 migrants. At the same time, the decision to migrate and the destination country for migrants moving along the East-South corridor is not only based on income differentials, but is also determined by social networks. Hypothesis two is therefore partially rejected. Even though some participants from Eastern countries (Poland and Romania) migrated to Southern countries (Italy and Spain) primarily for economic reasons, all participants mentioned that having close or extended family members in the receiving country was the main factor influencing their choice of destination (IT_FPG55_Poland; IT_FPG56_Poland; IT_INT04_Romania; SP_INT01_Romania). The latter highlights the importance of social networks as a deciding factor for mobility decision-making and the choice of destination, particularly amongst CEE migrants.

Family members and friends influenced the decision-making process of migrants and supported them in practical ways by helping them to find a job (IT_FPG56_Poland; SP_INT01_Romania) or by offering them financial help (IT_INT04_Romania) after arrival in the country of destination. The existing social network decreased the informal cost of migrating to the country of destination. In a few cases, migrants considered moving abroad because of family members or network they already had there. For instance, one young highly skilled Romanian migrant moved to Spain even though she “*did not have any intention to move to Spain*” (SP_INT01_Romania), when her aunt convinced her to work overseas. In other cases, existing networks influenced the choice of destination. A Polish student stated that his decision to migrate was influenced by “*a friend in Scotland*” who recommended “*coming over and applying for higher education in Scotland*” to him (UK_FGP03_Poland). This instance shows that networks also are important in terms of information provision that may determine which destination is chosen.

4.6.2. Freedom of movement

According to Favell (2011), “*freedom of movement*” reduces migration restrictions (such as legal and administrative barriers) within the EU and encourages particular young movers to migrate to or within

EU15 countries. In other words, they create a greater sense of a “*European identity*” (see also Section 2.2.3). The results confirm that the right to freely migrate was considered to be a sufficient motivator for migration among young students and highly skilled professionals from both EU15 and CEE countries. It was also a factor that facilitated further migration in connection with a sense of “*wanderlust*”. The data therefore confirms the fifth hypothesis: The freedom of movement affects the mobility decision of young movers (below 36 years). As one highly skilled French citizen who migrated onward from the Netherlands to Germany with the offer of an internship, stated: “(…) *because being in the European Union it was quite easy to make the move from the Netherlands to Germany*” (GE_INT15_France). The explanation of a young Italian participant highlights how free movement is almost a lifestyle, where he cannot see himself settled at one particular place: “*So we are used to moving, and so I don't really see a life that is fixed in one place, one city, one country*” (IT_FGP20_Italy).

A young German student was explaining how the “*freedom of movement*” did not only determine his last migration decision but also influences onward migration:

“Just because I really want to use the options we have as European citizens to move around freely and to experience other countries. Yes, so, as long as I'm young and not fixed to a specific place, I really want to make use of it” (UK_FGP48_Germany).

This example further illustrates, that for most of the young movers, free mobility is not the main reason to migrate within the EU, but an important interrelated factor in mobility decisions.

Free movement not only reduces migration costs, but also simplifies the process of moving to other EU countries compared to migration to countries outside the EU. For instance, the migration decision of one young French migrant, who migrated to Italy primarily for studying the language and for lifestyle reasons, was primarily driven by the fact that “*I can move without any problems because I'm a European citizen, so no bureaucracy, unlike moving to Latin America for example or somewhere else*” (IT_INT01_France). Furthermore, two young Bulgarian students, who primarily moved for study reasons, explained how the legal and administrative advantages of the European Union, supported their migration decision:

“So yeah, I graduated from a school in Bulgaria, and I came to Germany. Germany was one of my options, it was easy for me because Bulgaria is in the EU so I did not need a visa or any kind of paper, I could just move” (GE_INT22_Bulgaria).

4.6.3. Past migration experience

An earlier migration experience encouraged several research participants (from EU15 and CEE countries) to migrate again, as it gave them the desire and confidence to do so. For instance, a young Irish national, discussed how his onward migration decision was motivated by his positive past mobility experience. He elaborated that even though *“I didn’t see myself sort of jumping from country to country, [...] I just sort of broke the mould by going to [country of previous migration episode] and said, I may as well continue on the journey and see what else is out there really”* (UK_INT31_Ireland). In some cases even short stays may motivate further migration, such as in the case of a Bulgarian migrant who reflected that his positive impression of Italy - the *“beauty of the country”* (IT_FGP46_Bulgaria) - during a vacation there determined his choice of migration destination.

As pointed out above, for young Europeans who migrated (often multiple times) between EU countries, the concept of free movement within the EU becomes a specific lifestyle. For example, a German participant in the UK explained that after her past migration experience within the EU, she became more flexible and open towards her next country of destination: *“Everything is open – I’ll go here for studying and I’ll see what happens – I’ll see what I am interested [in] next”*. She added that she had *“no hesitation to move somewhere else in the EU”* (UK_INT33_Germany).

Some participants had their first experience in their destination country during an international exchange program. For example, a Bulgarian student moved back to Germany to study there, after he first went to Germany for an international exchange program. He reflected, that he *“kind of liked it there”* and therefore it was *“pretty clear to me that I would like to go back to Germany afterwards”* (GE_INT17_Bulgaria). In line with this, young movers decided to migrate for employment to the same foreign EU country which they went to previously for their studies (UK_FGP03_Poland; UK_FGP52_CzechRepublik). Participants moving to different countries as part of the ERASMUS exchange program (to Italy, the UK and Spain) came from various EU15 countries (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and France). For several participants, their first experience spending time abroad (within the framework either of ERASMUS or of other short-term exchange programs) influenced their subsequent migration decision (IT_FGP21_Netherlands, UK_FGP29_France, SP_INT08_Belgium, SP_INT21_Greece). In three cases (IT_FGP21_Netherlands, SP_INT21_Greece, UK_FGP29_France), the experience of studying abroad motivated them to move overseas again to begin studying for an additional degree. One French student explained his decision to move back to the UK after his first ERASMUS experience,

“I mean, probably I would have [travelled] at some point. But having this opportunity at a very young age, made me realize that [this] was something I enjoyed (...), living abroad...” (UK_FGP29_France). This clearly highlights the importance of mobility programs to facilitate further intra-EU movements.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

This paper contributes to an increasing and recent body of literature which seeks to examine the various mobility drivers of intra-EU migrants. Moreover, it fills a gap in existing research by investigating the way that mobility decisions differ between old and new EU Member States, and the extent to which the potential differences depend on individual characteristics of the mobile intra-EU migrant. To this end, using the information obtained from a set of interviews and focus group discussions with 98 research participants, this study reacts to the need for qualitative data, required in order to produce rich, in-depth, and nuanced analysis on intra-EU migration which is of relevance for both academia and policymakers.

5.1. Summary: Drivers of Intra-EU mobility

Complexity and inter-relatedness of motivations that drive mobility

This study has highlighted that the considerations that shape intra-EU migration decision (for EU15 and CEE migrants) are driven by various factors and that there is seldom one single driver for an individual’s intra-EU mobility decision. Even though administrative data typically categorizes mobility drivers in order to explain mobility for one singular reason such as *“for work”*, *“to join partner”*, or *“for study”*, this simplification fails to grasp the diversity of factors in which labour markets and higher education institutions interact with present migration cultures at all stages of life. The data highlights that the motivation to study or work abroad may not be the main reason to migrate, but that they might present a possibility through which someone is able to achieve other objectives or ambitions. Intra-EU mobility can therefore be highly multifaceted and contradicts the traditional understanding of migration as being mainly dictated by economic and family reasons. In fact, highly relevant to intra-EU migrants’ mobility decisions are multiple interlinked mobility drivers such as: career development, study opportunities, the desire to explore new cultures and a sense of *“wanderlust”*, where a dissatisfaction with a specific lifestyle and/or social norms may push people to leave their home country or previous country of residence. Further, in cases where the main driver was of economic

nature, this study found that the factors involved in the decision-making were much more nuanced than previously assumed. Apart from income differentials, employment conditions, worker protection and career opportunities are some factors that are often considered in labour migration decision-making.

Moreover, these multiple different factors involved in mobility decisions are not static and are liable to change during the process of the individual migrant's decision-making. After the first migration decision, different influencing factors may arise and determine onward or return migration, whilst the primary reason for migration may no longer be relevant. Overall, the results of the hypotheses testing (summarized in the Table 3 below) highlight how drivers not only differ depending on the migration corridor, but how they are also subject to migration characteristics such as skill-level, age, or gender.

Table 3: Hypotheses results

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| <p>H1:</p> <p>Mobility drivers differ between migrants coming from EU15 and CEE countries. While CEE migrants are predominantly motivated by economic factors, EU15 migrants tend to base their decision-making on career development opportunities and non-economic factors.</p> | <p><i>Rejected</i></p> <p>While low-skilled migrants from CEE countries indeed often indicated that higher wages influenced their decision to migrate, the migration-decision making of highly skilled CEE migrants is similar to that of EU15 migrants in that multiple factors, including career development, are taken into account. As such, the motivations for migration are not based on the origin of these migrants, but rather depend on other characteristics (see the other hypotheses).</p> |
| <p>H2:</p> <p>Migration on corridors from economically less-affluent Member States (East-West, East-South and South-North (after the economic crisis in 2008)) to wealthier Member States is predominantly driven by job opportunities and income differentials. Migration on the West-West corridor, on the other hand, is based on a wider variety of drivers.</p> | <p><i>Partially confirmed</i></p> <p>The complexity and interrelatedness of multiple drivers of migration is observed among migrants in different migration corridors. Although participants that did move mainly because of income differentials indeed moved along the East-West, East-South and South-North corridors, these were the exception rather than the rule. And even in these cases, income differentials alone were not the determining factor, but the migrants also considered working conditions.</p> |
| <p>H3:</p> <p>Mobility drivers differ between high- and low-skilled migrants. While the decision-making process of highly skilled migrants tends to be based on multiple factors beyond neo-classical theory, low-skilled migrants' mobility decisions can, to a greater extent, be explained by neo-classical and network theories.</p> | <p><i>Partially confirmed</i></p> <p>Looking specifically at economic reasons for intra-EU migration, differences between high- and low-skilled can be observed. While low-skilled migrants mainly move based on the availability of jobs and higher incomes, in line with neoclassical theory, highly skilled migrants often choose migration destinations based on possibilities to develop their career.</p> <p>However, for both skill groups, love and family reasons are equally important considerations in their mobility decision-making. The importance of networks as a decisive factor in mobility decision-making is likewise not dependent on the skill level, but rather on</p> |

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|--|---|
| | migrants' origin and the specific corridor: networks were mostly cited by CEE migrants moving along the East-South corridor. |
| <p>H4:</p> <p>Mobility drivers differ by gender. While female migrants are more likely to migrate as <i>tied movers</i> and for family related reasons, male migrants are more likely to move for work related reasons.</p> | <p><i>Partially accepted</i></p> <p>Gender influences the decision-making process for family and love migration; however, it does not show significant influence on work-related reasons for migration. Nevertheless, gender differences for migration were only significant for low-skilled CEE migrants, making female migrants more likely to be tied movers by joining their partner for superior job conditions.</p> |
| <p>H5:</p> <p>The principle of "<i>freedom of movement</i>" facilitates the mobility of young movers (below 36 years), who are more likely to migrate for work or study or out of a sense of "<i>wanderlust</i>" compared to older generations.</p> | <p><i>Accepted</i></p> <p>"<i>Freedom of movement</i>" was only mentioned by young, highly skilled mobile EU citizens as a supporting factor to migrate abroad for study or work-related reasons.</p> |

Finding differences between EU15 and CEE countries related to specific characteristics and motivational factors

In order to analyse the inter-related motivations underlying the decision to migrate within the European Union, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing understanding of the complex nature of the mobility decision-making process within the EU and sheds light on the different mobility drivers between EU15 and CEE migrants, considering skill level, age, gender and migration corridors (Hypotheses 1-5). The academic discourse on mobility drivers to date focuses on the broad terms of economic factors and East-West migration, while literature on further intra-EU corridors like East-South, South-North and West-West is scarce. Even though this research is restricted because of the over-representation of highly skilled participants, both the literature review and qualitative data provide indications that migrants originating from EU15 countries tend to have a higher level of education and show less diversity among the destination countries within the EU compared to migrants originating from CEE countries (Findlay & King, 2010).

Labour migration is particularly (but not exclusively) relevant when considering migration drivers on specific corridors such as East-West, East-South, as well as South-North (after the economic crisis in 2008). In line with the first hypothesis, this study finds that income disparities are more often mentioned as a mobility factor by nationals from the new Eastern Member States of the EU (mainly low-skilled), when compared to EU15 nationals (mainly high-skilled). This is particularly the case for mi-

grants migrating along the East-West and East-South corridor, yet not so much of relevance for migrants moving along the South-North corridor, partially confirming the second hypothesis. Contrary to this, more specific factors play a crucial role in explaining the migration decision of EU15 migrants. EU15 research participants often placed more emphasis on their career development, lifestyle migration (North-South), “*wanderlust*” (West-West) or the desire to return back to their roots. This shows how EU15 migration is based on a wider variety of drivers. Overall, the results show how the economic cost benefit analysis, in alignment with the neoclassical migration theory, is mainly relevant for CEE migrants moving along both the East-West and East-South corridor and low-skilled migrants. Moreover, it highlights how the complex decision-making process often differs depending on the skill level of the intra-EU migrant.

In relation to the third hypothesis, substantial evidence was found to prove that highly skilled migrants tend to base their decision on factors beyond the neoclassical theory. In accordance with the literature, this is also the case for labour related migration where highly skilled migrants moved for improved career prospects, while low-skilled migrants considered migration more often for income-related aspects. Highly skilled migrants from EU15 and CEE countries moving for economic reasons within the EU primarily migrated in search of a “*better job*” (from EU15 and CEE countries) or “*specialized job*” (from EU15 and CEE countries). While some migrants originating from Eastern Europe moved to receive a higher wage, for migrants coming from EU15 countries mobility was perceived as a natural part of professional development. Migration for professional development is particularly relevant for highly skilled migrants (from EU15 and CEE countries) working in international professions where career opportunities in highly specialized sectors are limited (e.g. academia or international development). Because of the rise of professional specialization which enhances the migration of individuals striving to fit their specific skills and preference to specific profession, the *aspiration and capability model* is of particular relevance when explaining why intra-EU mobility remains high among highly skilled migrants (Castles et al., 2014).

In contrast to this, low-skilled workers from Eastern Europe moved primarily for the availability of work or income differentials towards Western countries, while the lack of career opportunities and the poor working conditions pushed them to leave their country of origin. In line with the NELM theory, participants frequently stated that the household was at the centre of the decision-making process in aiming to maximise income. Remittances by female migrants from CEE countries were used in several instances to support family members back home. Whilst low-skilled migration from Eastern Europe to Southern and Western Europe is caused by the high demand of low-skilled work-

ers in these countries of destination, dissatisfaction with the working conditions in Southern European countries (e.g. Italy, Spain) often times motivated their onward migration to Western European countries (e.g. Germany and UK).

Another commonly discussed type of mobility in existing literature is “*love*” and “*family*” migration which includes migration for marriage, partnership and family reunification. In part, the results confirm hypothesis four, which suggests that female intra-EU migrants are more likely to be tied movers, as predicted by Mincer’s (1978) theory. As such, several low-skilled female CEE migrants followed their male partner to Western countries, because of the partner’s superior career prospects and increased earnings in the destination country. In these cases, the migration decision was primarily based on the prioritization of the husband’s job opportunities at the time, where the women moved to be with their partner independent of their own prospects. In contrast to this, several young, highly skilled couples of EU15 and CEE origin decided jointly to move abroad for study or career opportunities. It was rare that these migrants moved only “*for love*” reasons, but instead they migrated together “*as lovers*”. These findings confirm the interconnection between love migration and intra-EU mobility among EU15 and CEE migrants and further the understanding of the way partnerships influence migration decisions.

The topic of family migration has been particularly neglected empirically when looking at intra-EU mobility (Kofman, 2004; Moskal, 2011). This study shows that migrants from CEE countries (high- and low-skilled) were influenced to move to another EU country if and where they had close or extended family and fellow compatriots in the country of destination. That is to say, social networks were the greatest facilitators of their intra-EU migration and often influenced the choice of destination. In general, intra-EU migrants (mainly from CEE countries) moved to join family in a new destination country as it offered them greater opportunities at the family level (e.g. preferred educational opportunities or improved lifestyle) rather than at the individual level. In case where research participants moved to join extended family, this importantly lowered their informal migration costs and highlights the importance of network theory in predicting migratory movements particularly of high- and low-skilled CEE migrants. Therefore, hypothesis three is partly rejected, as both low- and high-skilled migrants’ mobility decisions were based on existing networks. The applicability of network theory rather seems to depend on the migration corridor and show the differences between EU15 and CEE migrants.

Focusing on the role of student migration, the literature review revealed various motivations behind student mobility (Findlay et al., 2012). This paper highlights how study related intra-EU mobility drivers differ between students from EU15 and CEE countries. Student migration is importantly driven by the quality and reputation of the qualification (see also Marginson, 2006) and higher standards of tertiary education in the chosen country of destination (see also Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013; Rodríguez González et al., 2011; Wei, 2013). Country-specific scholarship programs were another crucial factor in choosing the country of destination and led to reduced cost of education as they encouraged students particularly from Southern and Eastern Europe to study abroad (mainly in the UK or Germany), whereas undergraduate students from EU15 countries moved with the support of undergraduate exchange programs (e.g. ERASMUS). Mobility programs are therefore an important facilitator of intra-EU migration and also drive further migratory episodes. In addition, students from both EU15 and CEE countries were motivated to study at schools or universities which enabled them to use already existing and/or to improve linguistics skills (mainly of English language). Importantly, student mobility can in many cases not be perceived as a distinct type of migration as it is strongly interconnected with a desire to experience new cultures and lifestyles, a decision to join a partner, and/or future career ambitions. After graduation, young movers who studied abroad are more likely to be mobile. This is thought to be caused by their acquired “*European identity*” (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

This study also contributes to a growing understanding of lifestyle migration, motivations related to personal development and self-fulfilment, going beyond the “*classical*” migration drivers. Literature shows that different countries attract different kinds of lifestyle migrants, who move in various geographical directions for different kinds of experiences. The qualitative data highlights that the desire for a higher quality of life is often connected to dissatisfaction with the lifestyle in the country of origin or previous country of residence. This was for instance the case among young highly skilled EU15 migrants who moved to Southern countries because of the dissatisfaction with the weather conditions in their home country. Furthermore, a sense of “*wanderlust*” - the desire to experience something new - was particularly influential in the migration decision of young and highly skilled EU15 nationals.

Lifestyle migration often goes in line with further supporting factors of intra-EU mobility such as the “*freedom of movement*”, where mainly highly skilled young EU-nationals perceive mobility as a way of life. According to Favell (2011), this new form of mobility reduces migration restrictions (such as legal and administrative barriers) within the EU and encourages young movers in particular to mi-

grate between EU15 countries. As a result of this, they build a greater sense of “*European identity*” (see also student migration). The results confirm the fifth hypothesis, which states that mobile, highly skilled and young (below 36 years) intra-EU movers (mainly students and young professionals) are more likely to make use of the “*freedom of movement*”. A greater sense of European identity or *Europeanness* makes this group more likely to move compared to older generations. Making use of their mobility rights, intra-EU migrants tend to migrate temporarily as the “*freedom of movement*” decreases the need for long-term planning and administrative and legal migration barriers. In contrast, work-related factors and supporting factors such as returning to roots played a significant role in the migration decision of older generations (above the age of 35).

This study also contributes substance and nuance to our understanding of other factors influencing intra-EU mobility decision. Firstly, the common EU concern about welfare-driven mobility cannot be confirmed, in line with the majority of existing literature. The data used in this study suggests that access to a better welfare system is not one of the main reasons for intra-EU mobility; however, for some highly skilled EU15 migrants, social policy and access to social security determined their country of destination and/or supported their migration decision. This is contrary to existing literature which assumes that the welfare hypothesis has a greater influence on the mobility decision of low-skilled migrants within the EU (Razin & Wahba, 2015).

Beyond the welfare system, aspects of the political situation in the home country emerged as an important mobility decision factor for highly skilled migrants from CEE countries. The low regard for political institutions caused by relatively high levels of corruption or nepotism motivated several (highly skilled) participants to move abroad. This is in line with research by Otrachshenko and Popova (2011) which indicates that migrants from CEE countries are more likely to migrate when feeling a low level of life satisfaction. Lastly, a few highly skilled EU15 citizens decided to return to their roots and migrate back to their home country because of personal or family ties.

Further supporting factors for migration

It is important to note that secondary to the main drivers of mobility within the EU, participants stated how multiple interlinked factors, such as “*freedom of movement*” (see above), previous migration experiences and networks, influenced both their decision to migrate and their destination choice. In line with existing literature, the qualitative data revealed that a previous migration experience in the country of destination for work, study or leisure was a primary influence in the choice of the country

of destination. This was the case for both EU15 and CEE migrants (mainly young movers below the age of 36) at different skill levels.

5.2. Policy implications and recommendations

The “*freedom of movement*” within the EU is an important facilitator of intra-EU migratory movements. This includes temporary migration, return migration, and circular migration of both high- and low-skilled individuals. It covers multiple countries and migration corridors across a lifetime of female and male migrants. Yet, in policy debates, intra-EU mobility still tends to be perceived in a static view where migration is a linear, one time and long-term process. Policymakers and academic communities need to move beyond such traditional static approaches to migration and towards an understanding of intra-EU mobility as a dynamic process. In doing so, it is important to emphasize that there is in most cases not one single “*reason*” for an individual’s migration decision, but rather there are multiple interrelated motivations that underpin a decision to move. To unfold intra-EU mobility drivers, it is useful for scholars and policymakers to understand both the individual decision to move and the reason to move to a specific country of destination. The decision to migrate might be based on multiple factors, while the factors that determine the choice of destination may be different to those which initiated the migration.

Because of the complexity of intra-EU mobility decision-making, scholars and policymakers should be careful to avoid oversimplifying migration based on rational economic cost-benefit analysis, which does not take into account individual and changing character traits, aspirations, and emotions. Variables such as migrants’ countries of origin as well as the skill level, age, and gender are in most cases not systematically assessed, even though they shape the decision-making process. As elaborated above, ignoring such differences underestimates the complexity of intra-EU mobility decisions. Furthermore, this simplification overlooks the challenges individual migrants often face when making migration decisions, highlighting the unpredictable and unclear nature of a migrant’s migration decision.

The need for long-term high- and low-skilled workers has increased in many countries due to demographic change and structural labour market demands. This calls for a policy debate informed by a clear understanding of this subject (Anderson, 2012; CEDEFOP, 2016). With regard to labour migration, several factors could support Member States in attracting a higher number of EU migrant workers helping to ease labour shortages in both high-skilled (e.g. medical doctors and STEM pro-

professionals) (CEDEFOP, 2016) and (low-)skilled professions (e.g. home based care workers, workers in the construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors) (Finotelli & Echeverría, 2017; Geddes & Scholten, 2016). This study finds that a lack of recognition of professional qualifications, skills and education as well as labour market discrimination and underemployment within the EU (mainly in EU15 countries) adversely affects individuals' employment status and salary levels, and might be an important predictor of onward migration. Firstly, highly skilled intra-EU migrants from CEE countries experience “*down-skilling*”, or employment below their qualification level. Countries of origin and destination should therefore further facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills gained in a foreign country. Secondly, to attract highly skilled migrants from other European countries, policymakers need to consider lifestyle factors, as well as social protection and family friendly policies. These factors influence the extent to which young, highly skilled migrants who make greater use of the “*freedom of movement*” consider not only staying for short-term contracts (Favell, 2011), but also working abroad for a longer term. Thirdly, low-skilled workers in Southern European countries often reported poor working conditions, even though the national labour market of these countries reported to face an increasing demand for domestic work, social care and elderly care professions (CEDEFOP, 2016). In order to attract and keep low-skilled migrants, policymakers should ensure the protection of workers' rights and consider supporting immigrants in building sustainable livelihoods that help them to meet their economic needs (Dubow et al., 2019).

Furthermore, an in-depth understanding of the mobility decision-making of CEE migrants is relevant for policymakers in CEE countries to retain or regain highly skilled professionals, as political dissatisfaction in the country of origin is a considerable push factor for highly skilled migrants (from Eastern and Southern Europe) to leave their country of origin (Beine et al., 2008). Moreover, due to the cumulative effect of mobility, many countries have introduced policies to attract and retain intra-EU students. To facilitate international student mobility, it is important to further support mobility programs and scholarship programs. Mobility programs like ERASMUS are of particular relevance to encourage the mobility of students coming from CEE countries due to reduced costs of migration. Furthermore, student recruitment in key origin countries can increase degree mobility from EU15 and CEE students. Lastly, offering more courses in English in non-English speaking countries of the EU would attract more international students.

5.3. Recommendation for future research

This paper aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by investigating differing intra-EU mobility drivers of migrants from EU15 and CEE countries, and analysing the relation of these drivers to the respective migration corridors and skill levels of migrants. While intra-EU mobility has long been a popular topic of research, studies that focus on the motivations behind movements across the EU remain rare. In general, current literature sets a strong focus on one type of migration, namely migration for economic reasons. This type of migration has been investigated more frequently and more deeply than any other type of intra-EU migration, particularly with regards to migration after the enlargement of the EU. Even though an increasing amount of literature goes beyond the “classical” migration drivers such as work, love, or education to look into factors connected to lifestyle or personal fulfilment, only a few published studies investigate the multiple and complex motivations driving the migration decision-making process within the EU, especially taking a comparative approach. In addition to this, existing literature places particular emphasis on the movements from CEE countries directed toward EU15 countries, while the South-North, or intra-EU15 migration corridors are generally overlooked. Lastly, existing literature on mobility drivers rarely investigates the dependency of migration drivers on personal characteristics such as gender, skill level, or age. This limits the understanding of how these features influence the mobility decision-making process of intra-EU migrants. Therefore, future research should further investigate the multiple and interconnected mobility drivers of intra-EU migration and differentiate the mobility drivers depending on migration corridors and characteristics of these migrants.

The EU, a highly globalized social and economic environment, gives its citizens unique opportunities to move freely. Yet, there is limited research investigating how the “*freedom of movement*” facilitates intra-EU mobility. Our current understanding on the phenomenon relies on a few studies by Favell (2008), which observe specific migrant groups and destination countries and cities. Further topics to enrich the existing body of literature on the “*freedom of movement*” should differentiate between different skill-levels and analyse why low-skilled EU15 workers are less likely to migrate compared to other groups. In addition, there might be other characteristics that make otherwise similar individuals more or less likely to take advantage of the freedom to move, which so far is not an area that is well understood. Apart from the aforementioned issues, no existing research known to the authors investigates the effect of “*freedom of movement*” at different stages of life, along various migration corridors and the effect on various migration strategies (short vs. long-term). Furthermore, topics such as retirement

migration still tend to be overlooked in existing research due to the difficulty in gaining data that provides an accurate reflection of such trends (Benton & Petrovic, 2013).

6. References

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7. Appendix

Descriptive statistics: Qualitative data

Figure 1: Countries of origin for EU15 origin qualitative research participants

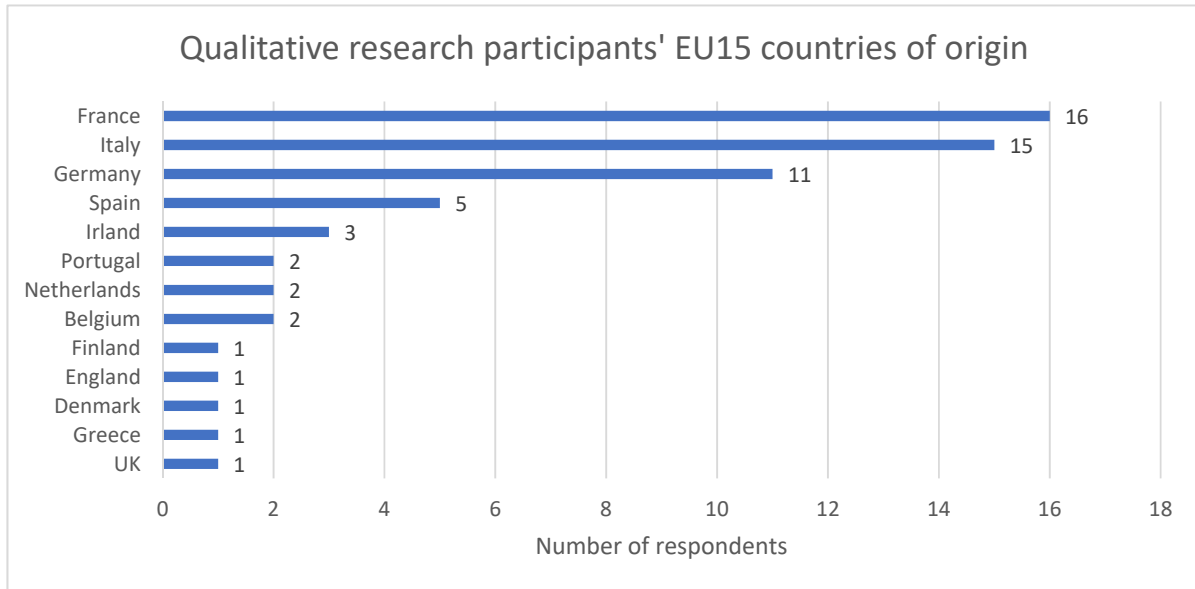
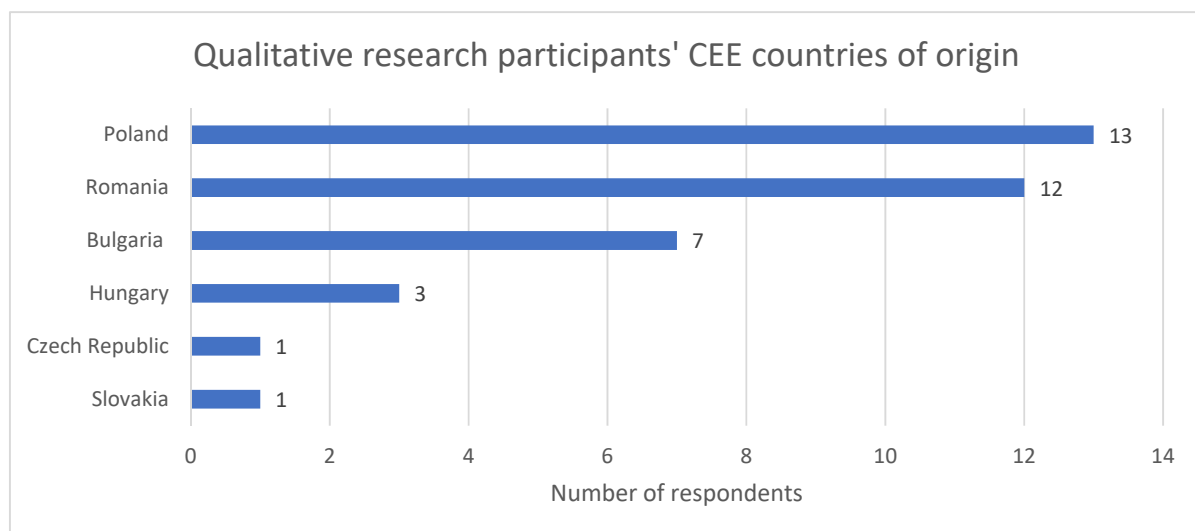


Figure 2: Countries of origin for CEE-origin qualitative research participants



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