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## Age differences in graduate employment across Europe

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November 2008

The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society  
– new demands on higher education in Europe  
(Report 5)

# Age differences in graduate employment across Europe

**Report to HEFCE by Centre for Higher  
Education Research and Information, The  
Open University**

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# Executive summary

This report is one of a series of reports commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England which draw on a recent European Commission Framework Project, 'The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society' (the REFLEX project). The project – undertaken in eleven European countries – was an investigation into the employment experiences of European graduates over the five years since graduation in 2000. By design, the UK sample comprised graduates who had completed a Bachelors degree in 2000. In most of the other countries, the samples comprised wholly (or mainly) those with a Masters degree.

This report looks at the differences between European and UK graduates' patterns of employment and characteristics of their current work when age differences are taken into account.

Overall, UK graduates were both younger and older at entry to higher education compared with Europe as a whole. Such differences, when aligned with the longer duration of courses elsewhere in Europe, result in UK graduates being much younger on graduation than European graduates generally.

Regardless of age on graduation, UK graduates were more likely to have been faced with changes in their workplaces – and were much more likely to supervise staff, and have responsibility for assessing other's work – than European graduates overall.

UK graduates were slightly less likely to be an authoritative source of advice and were slightly more likely to have their own work closely monitored than graduates overall. But in common with European graduates, mature UK graduates were slightly more likely to be seen as an authoritative source of advice and slightly less likely to have their work monitored.

Many of the overall similarities and differences between UK and European graduates' employment experiences since 2000 (reported in Report 1 of this series) remain, even when age on graduation is taken into account.

# 1 Introduction

This report is based on the results of a major international study of graduate employment. The study, 'The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society – new demands on higher education in Europe (REFLEX)' was funded by the European Commission as part of its 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme, Priority 7 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society' (and by several national funds). The study – undertaken by 11 European countries – was an investigation into the employment experiences of European graduates over the five years following their graduation in 2000. Details of the study are contained in Appendix A.

The main feature of the study was the application of a large questionnaire to nationally representative samples of the graduating population in the participating countries and, through this, the exploration of the kinds of work the graduates had obtained, how well they felt prepared for it, its relationship to their higher education studies, the competencies they felt that they possessed and were required of them, the nature of the organisations for whom they worked, the changes they had experienced over the five years since they had graduated, and their values and attitudes to the higher education they had received.

By design, the survey sampled graduates who had completed their studies with either a bachelors or masters degree (or equivalent) depending on which qualification was seen as the main 'exit' qualification with which graduates left higher education in 2000 and entered the labour market in each of the respective European countries. In the UK, the sample comprised graduates with a Bachelors degree. In most of the other countries, the sample comprised wholly (or mainly) those with a Masters degree.

This report is one of six commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to draw out the main differences and similarities between the experiences of UK and European graduates. Other reports in the series deal with subject differences, graduate competences, graduates' retrospective views of their higher education and contextual factors. There is also an overview report.

As noted in Report 3 in this series, the nature of graduates' subsequent employment is, in large measure, a function of the subject studied in higher education. But it is also noted that whereas some courses prepare students for quite specific jobs, others have a much looser link to the labour market. Moreover, labour markets themselves differ in the extent to which particular education credentials determine entrance to particular jobs.

But subject of study is not the only factor to affect graduates' transitions beyond higher education. Many other factors (for example, gender, age, type of institution attended) may have implications for graduates' subsequent employment and these various factors are themselves likely to be inter-related.

The aim of this short report is to examine differences between European and UK graduates in certain aspects of graduates' patterns of employment and characteristics of their current work when age differences are taken in account.

A further, more detailed analysis of age differences addressing more particularly mature graduates' experiences has also been undertaken<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Woodley, A. and Braun, E. (forthcoming) *Graduate employment across Europe – the case of mature students*. London/Milton Keynes: Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, Open University

## 2 The age profile of students on graduation

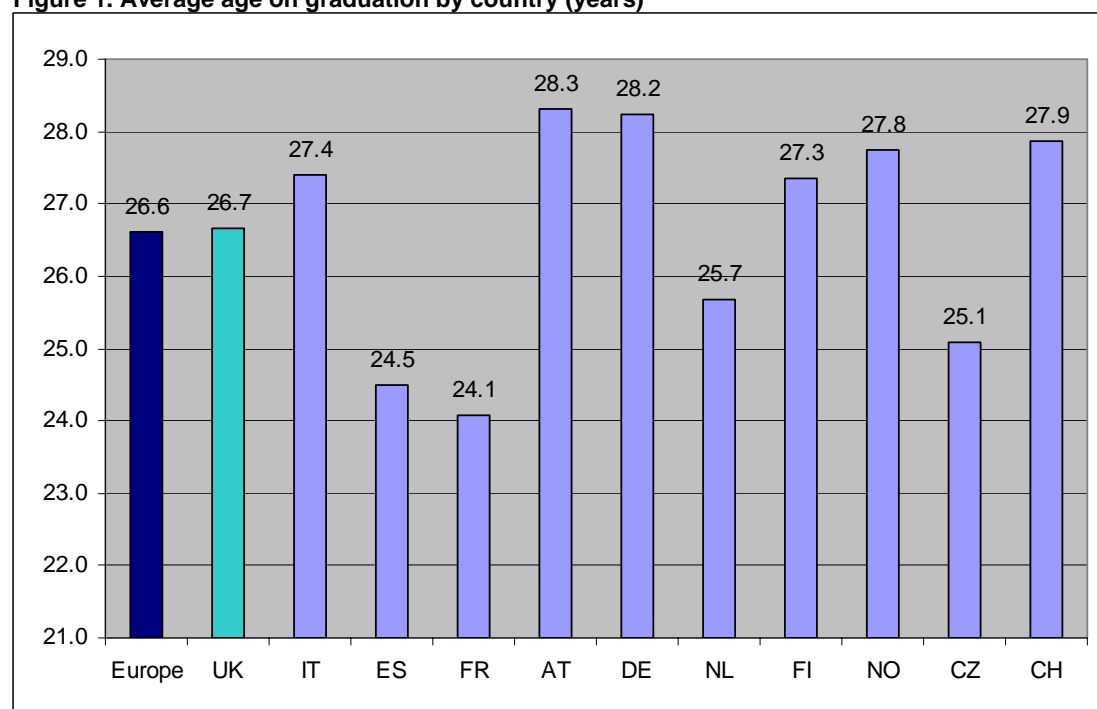
In Report 1 in this series, we noted that overall UK graduates were both younger and older at entry to higher education, with 66% in the 18--20 age group compared with 62% across Europe as a whole and with 22% in the mature (25 and older) age group compared with just 12% in Europe as a whole. Only Norway and Switzerland had similar proportions of mature students entering higher education.

Such differences are important to understanding different employment patterns and experiences, particularly when aligned with the longer duration of courses elsewhere in Europe. Thus, throughout this report, we use 'age on graduation' as the age variable – since the age (and maturity) at which a graduate enters (or re-enters) the labour market may have implications for how s/he is treated, for example, in terms of salaries and levels of autonomy and responsibility.

### 2.1 Age of graduates on graduation

The average age of UK and European graduates on graduation was 27; however, this figure disguises the variation which exists between the countries. Austrian and German graduates were the oldest, being on average 28 years old when graduating while French graduates were the youngest, at 24 (see Figure 1).

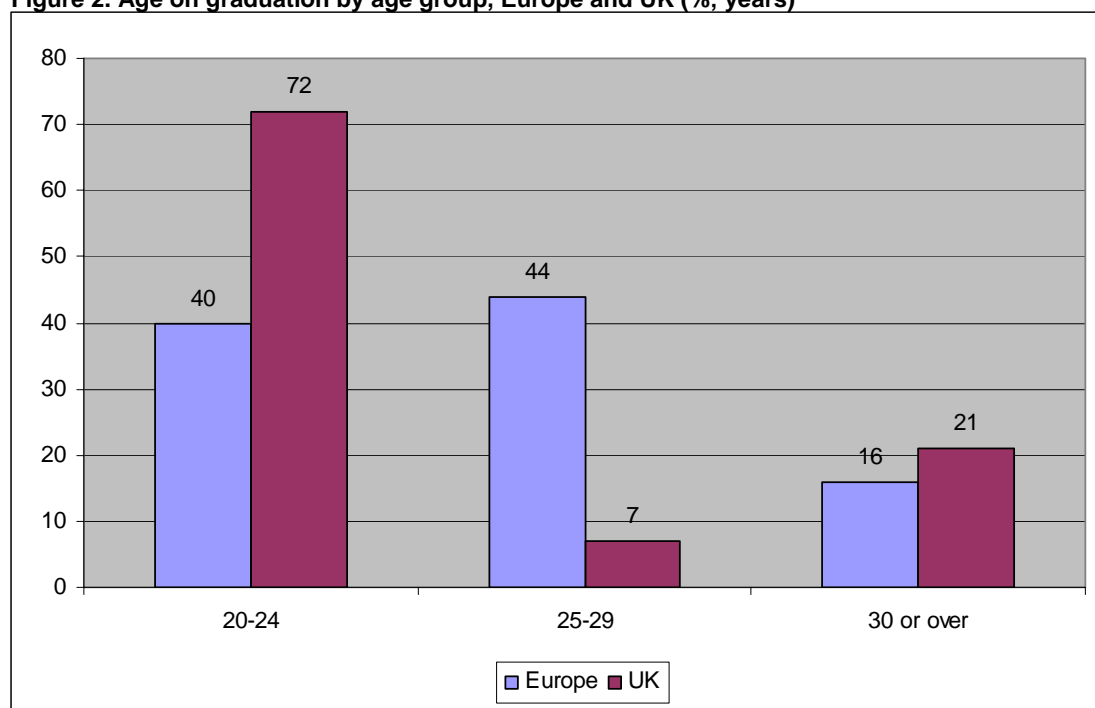
Figure 1. Average age on graduation by country (years)



But these averages also mask variations in ages within countries. Figure 2 shows that for European graduates overall, the 'age on graduation' distribution was fairly evenly spread between the younger 20-24 age group, and the middle 25-29 age group (44% and 40% respectively) with the remaining 16% of graduates being mature (aged 30 or over).

However, UK graduates tended to be much younger on graduation than European graduates overall: almost three quarters (72%) of UK graduates were aged 20--24 on graduation, reflecting both the younger age on entry to higher education, as well as the shorter duration of degree programmes within the UK. A considerably smaller proportion of UK graduates (only 7%) belonged to the middle 25-29 age group. There was also a slightly higher percentage of UK mature students aged 30 or over on graduation (21% compared to 16% in the sample overall). Table C1 in Appendix C provides the data on respondents' ages on graduation by age group for all countries in the study. From this we see that, as in the UK, in a number of other countries mature graduates (aged 30 or over) accounted for around a fifth of graduates (viz. Austria, Germany, Finland, Norway and Switzerland) reflecting a combination of older age on entry to higher education and the longer duration of programmes.

**Figure 2. Age on graduation by age group, Europe and UK (%; years)**



## 2.2 Field of study

As noted in Reports 1 and 3 in this series, European graduates overall were more likely to have studied arts rather than science programmes (60% and 40% respectively). This bias towards arts programmes was even more pronounced for UK graduates - 69% studied arts programmes. As can be seen from Table 1 (below) this bias towards arts programmes occurs in each age group of the whole sample, with mature graduates (aged 30 or over) being more likely to have done so. UK graduates were no different in this respect – with mature graduates more likely to have graduated from arts programmes (76% compared to 69% overall). The middle age group of UK graduates were less likely to have studied arts (though over half still did so).

**Table 1. Broad programme area, by age on graduation, Europe and UK (%)**

|         | Europe  |       |       |     | UK  |       |       |     |
|---------|---------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|
|         | Overall | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30+ | All | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30+ |
| Arts    | 61      | 61    | 57    | 68  | 69  | 68    | 56    | 76  |
| Science | 38      | 39    | 43    | 32  | 31  | 32    | 45    | 24  |



These broad programme areas can be broken down further into 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' (a typology used in Reports 1 and 3). Table 2 (below) shows the distribution of graduates into non-vocational and vocational arts and science programmes, by age on graduation.

**Table 2. Distribution of graduates by programme (%)**

|                        |            | Europe | UK |
|------------------------|------------|--------|----|
| Non-vocational Arts    | Overall    | 21     | 41 |
|                        | 20-24      | 19     | 40 |
|                        | 25-29      | 19     | 24 |
|                        | 30 or over | 29     | 52 |
| Vocational Arts        | Overall    | 40     | 28 |
|                        | 20-24      | 42     | 28 |
|                        | 25-29      | 38     | 32 |
|                        | 30 or over | 39     | 24 |
| Non-vocational Science | Overall    | 12     | 14 |
|                        | 20-24      | 14     | 17 |
|                        | 25-29      | 12     | 13 |
|                        | 30 or over | 8      | 8  |
| Vocational Science     | Overall    | 26     | 17 |
|                        | 20-24      | 25     | 15 |
|                        | 25-29      | 31     | 32 |
|                        | 30 or over | 24     | 16 |

For both arts and science programmes, European graduates overall were much more likely to have graduated from vocational, rather than non-vocational, programmes. However, within the UK the situation was rather different. Those taking arts programmes were much more likely to have graduated from non-vocational arts programmes; within science, similar proportions had taken vocational and non-vocational programmes.

Further, for European graduates overall, this pattern (between arts and science and vocational and non-vocational) was more or less the same, irrespective of age on graduation (see Table 2): mature graduates (aged 30 or over) were slightly more likely to have graduated from non-vocational arts programmes and slightly less likely to have graduated from non-vocational science (compared to the overall). However, for UK graduates there was more variation between age groups. As with European graduates overall, mature UK graduates were more likely to have studied non-vocational arts. In contrast, the middle age group (25-29) of UK graduates were much less likely to have studied non-vocational arts and much more likely to have studied vocational science (compared to UK graduates overall). In this respect the middle age group of UK graduates seem to be rather similar to European graduates overall, with their bias towards vocational programmes.

## 3 Employment outcomes

As noted in Report 3, the initial years after graduation can sometimes be a difficult period of transition for many graduates. This study provides an opportunity to look at graduates' employment situations five years after they have completed their first higher education degrees. In this section we look at four indicators of employment 'success' – earnings, avoiding unemployment, job security and job mobility.

### 3.1 Success in terms of earnings from current job

Five years after graduation the monthly median income for full-time working European graduates was £1570; UK graduates were earning slightly more (£1690). As we see from Figure 3 (below) there seems to be 'age premium' in respect of European graduates' earnings, with young graduates (aged 20-24) earning £240 per month less than the overall average and mature graduates (aged 30 or over) earning £270 per month more. The gap between young and mature European graduates' monthly earnings was over £500 per month (and the biggest rise in earnings happened between the young and the middle age group). However, there seems to be no such age premium in relation to UK graduates' earnings, with very similar monthly incomes for each age group. Young UK graduates earned considerably more than their European counterparts (£350 per month more), but in each of the other two age groups UK graduates earned slightly less than the European average.

**Figure 3. Monthly gross median earnings of graduates in current full-time job, by age group, Europe and UK (full-time, Pounds Sterling)**

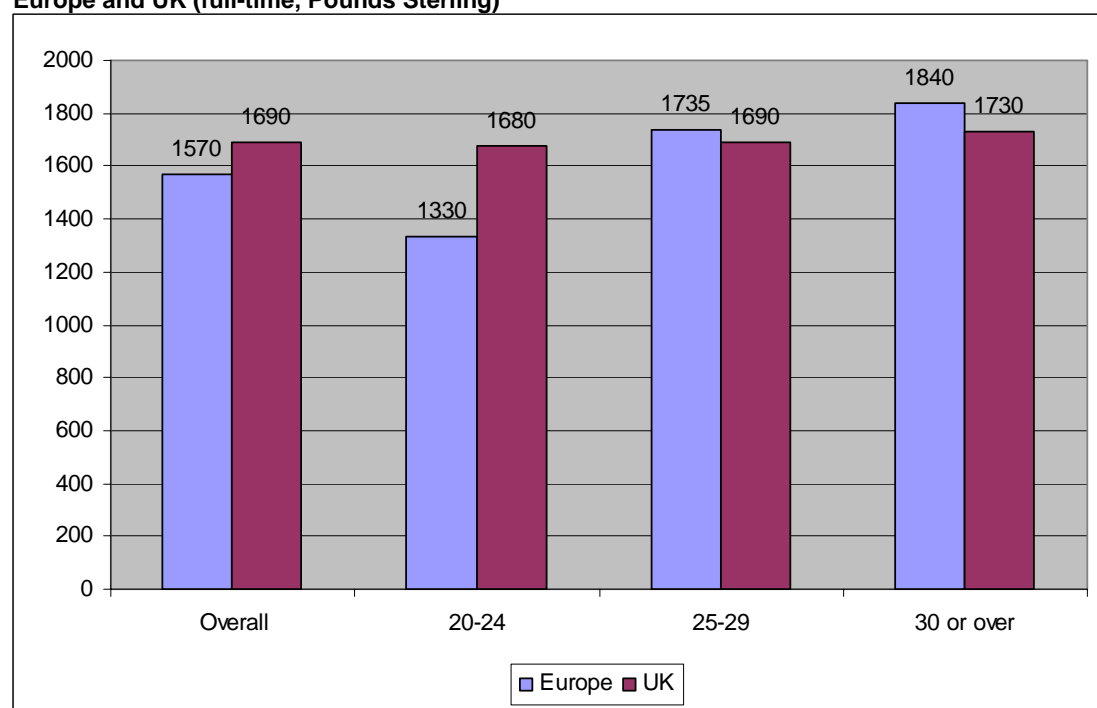


Table C2 in Appendix C provides details of monthly earnings for each age group for individual countries. In some countries (Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland) there seemed to be slight variations in monthly earnings by age, with the young graduates earning around £200 per month less than their mature counterparts.

### 3.2 Success in terms of avoiding unemployment

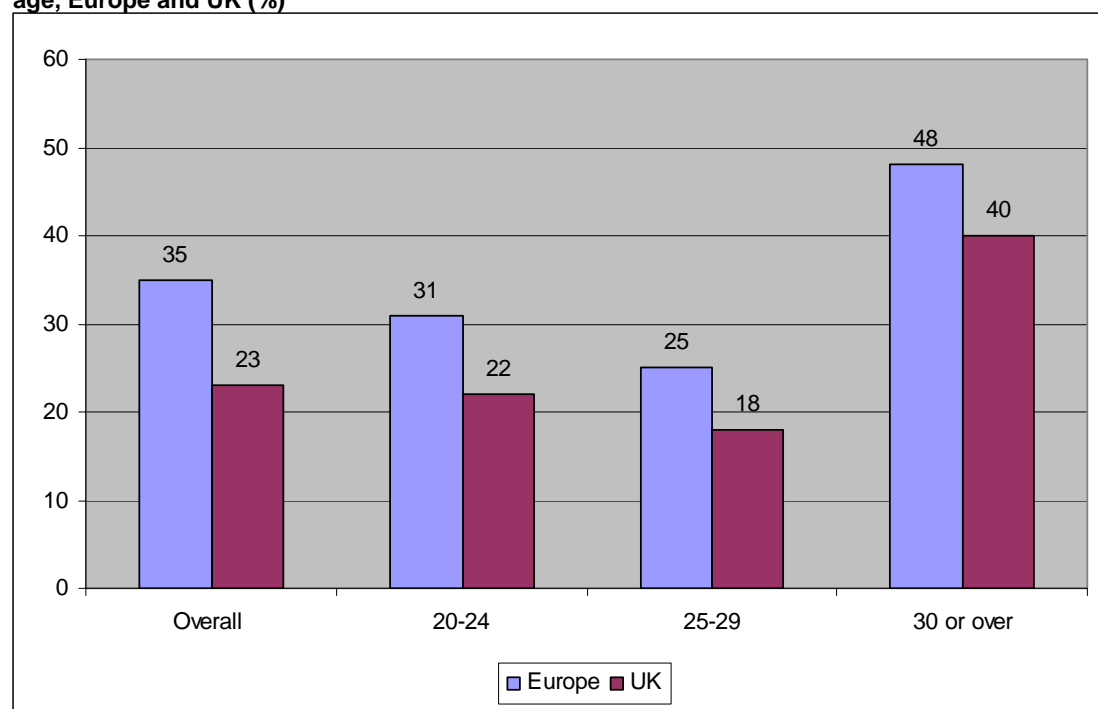
In Report 1 in this series, we saw that around a third of all graduates had experienced some period of unemployment since graduation, with UK graduates no different in this respect. But the average length of unemployment was higher for European graduates overall (7.9 months on average) than for UK graduates, for whom the average period was 6.3 months. When we look at the proportions experiencing periods of unemployment longer than six months (see Figure 4 below) we see that a third of all graduates had done so (35%) compared to only a quarter of UK graduates (23%).

Italy had the highest proportion of graduates unemployed for more than six months (58%), whereas the Netherlands and the Czech Republic had the lowest proportion (see Table C3 in Appendix C).

However, for both European and UK graduates it is the older graduates (aged 30 or over) who were most likely to be unemployed for longer than six months (see Figure 4). Almost half of the European graduates who had experienced this level of unemployment were mature (48% compared to 35% overall) as were 40% of UK graduates (compared to 23% overall). As can be seen from Table C3, this pattern is repeated in many other countries. By comparison, for both European graduates overall and UK graduates, those aged 25-29 on graduation were less likely to have experienced periods of unemployment longer than six months.

This might suggest that mature graduates were less likely to appeal to employers than those belonging to the other groups (especially in the 25-29 age group) and therefore it might take them longer to find employment. On the other hand, mature graduates may be more willing to take some time securing employment which they consider best 'fits' their qualifications, knowledge, experience and maturity.

**Figure 4. Graduates who experienced more than six months' unemployment since graduation, by age, Europe and UK (%)**



### 3.3 Success in terms of job security

The majority of European and UK graduates had unlimited term contracts (78% and 83%, respectively). However, as Figure 5 below shows, Spanish graduates seemed to be the least likely to obtain this type of contract (60%), whereas Norwegian and Czech graduates were most likely to do so (86%).

**Figure 5. Graduates with unlimited term contracts by country (%)**

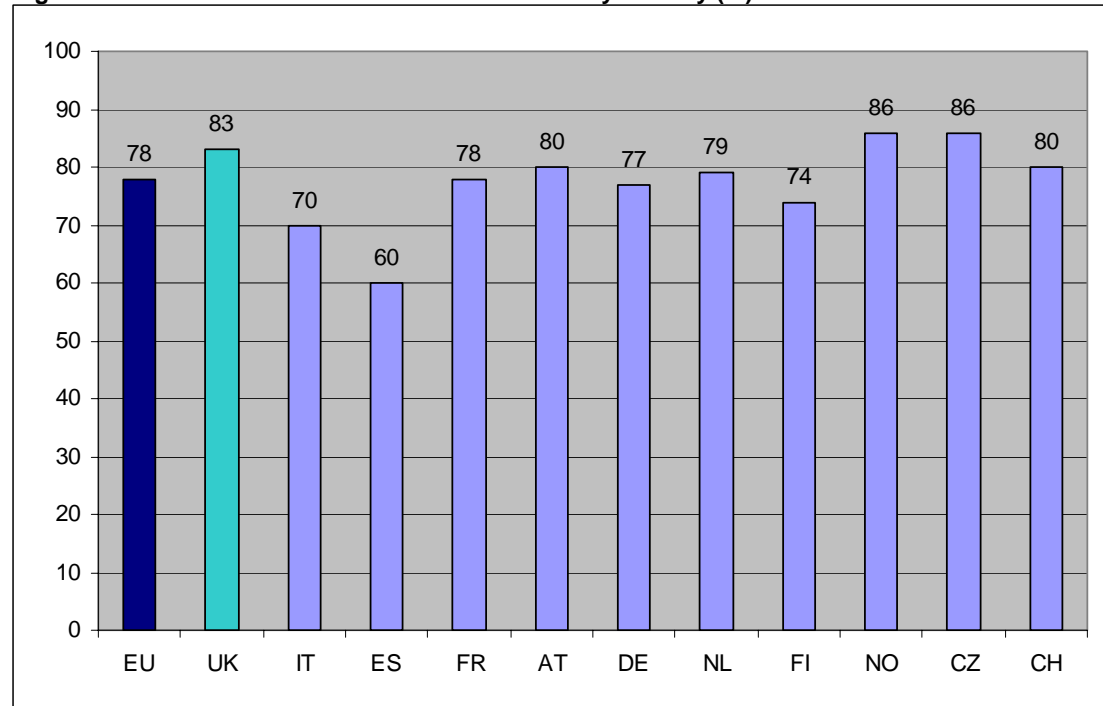
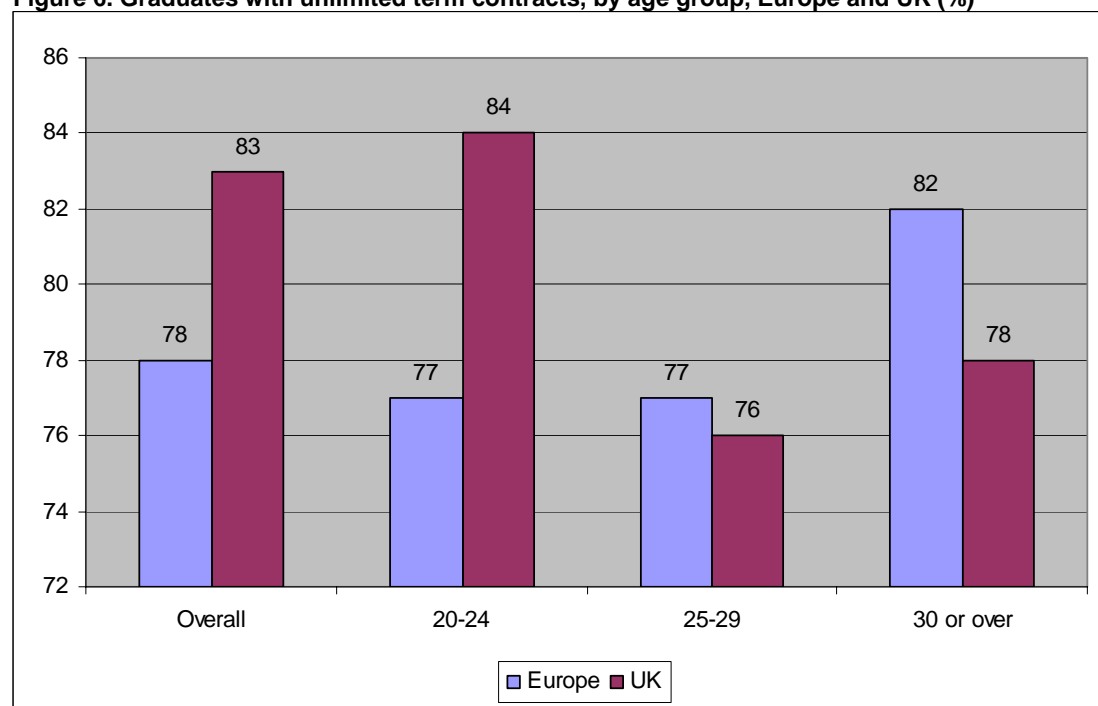


Figure 6 (below) shows the proportion of graduates with unlimited contracts, by age. Mature European graduates (aged 30 or over) were more likely to obtain unlimited term contracts (82%) than overall. In contrast, UK graduates in the middle age group and mature graduates were less likely to have unlimited contracts than their younger counterparts.

**Figure 6. Graduates with unlimited term contracts, by age group, Europe and UK (%)**



### 3.4 Job mobility

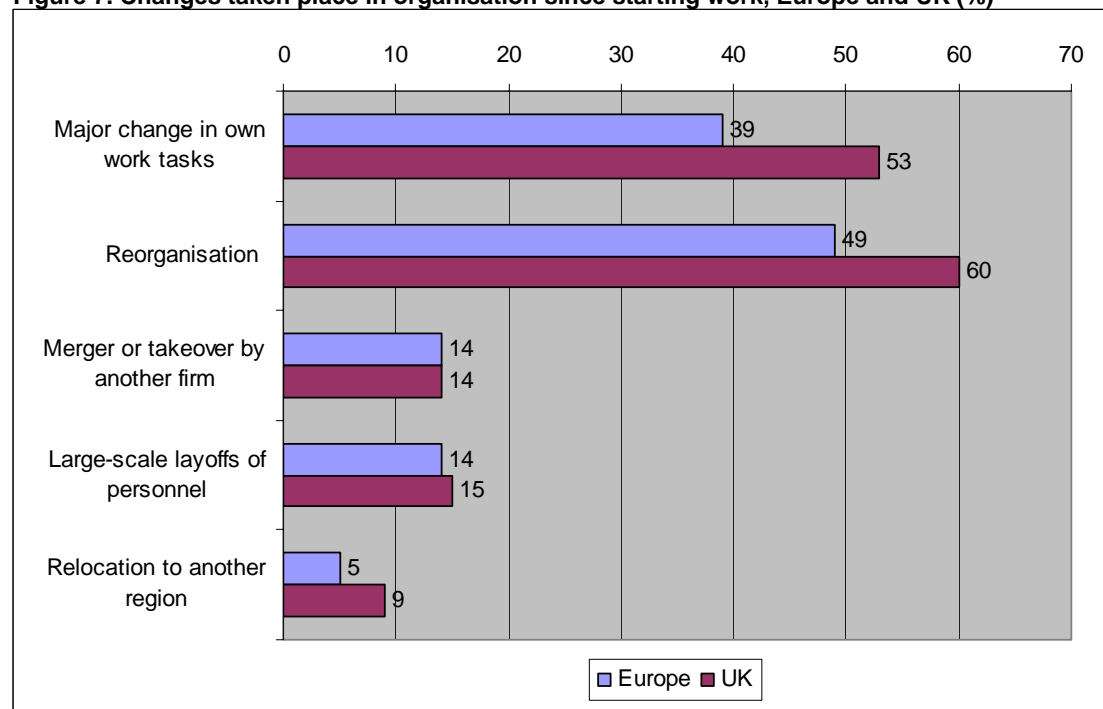
On average, European graduates had had 2.3 employers during the five-year period since graduation and the UK average was very similar (2.6 employers on average). The European average varied little by age (see Table C4 in Appendix C) but for UK graduates those in the middle age group (25-29) were likely to have had rather more employers and mature graduates rather less (3.4 and 2.0, respectively). Spain and the Netherlands were the only other countries where the average number of employers varied by age.

## 4 Workplace features

### 4.1 Changing contexts

As noted in Report 1 in this series, UK graduates were more likely than European graduates overall to have been faced with changes in their workplaces since starting work (see Figure 7 below). Over half (53%) had experienced major changes in their own work tasks (compared to the European average of 39%); and 60% had experienced reorganisation (compared to 49% of European graduates).

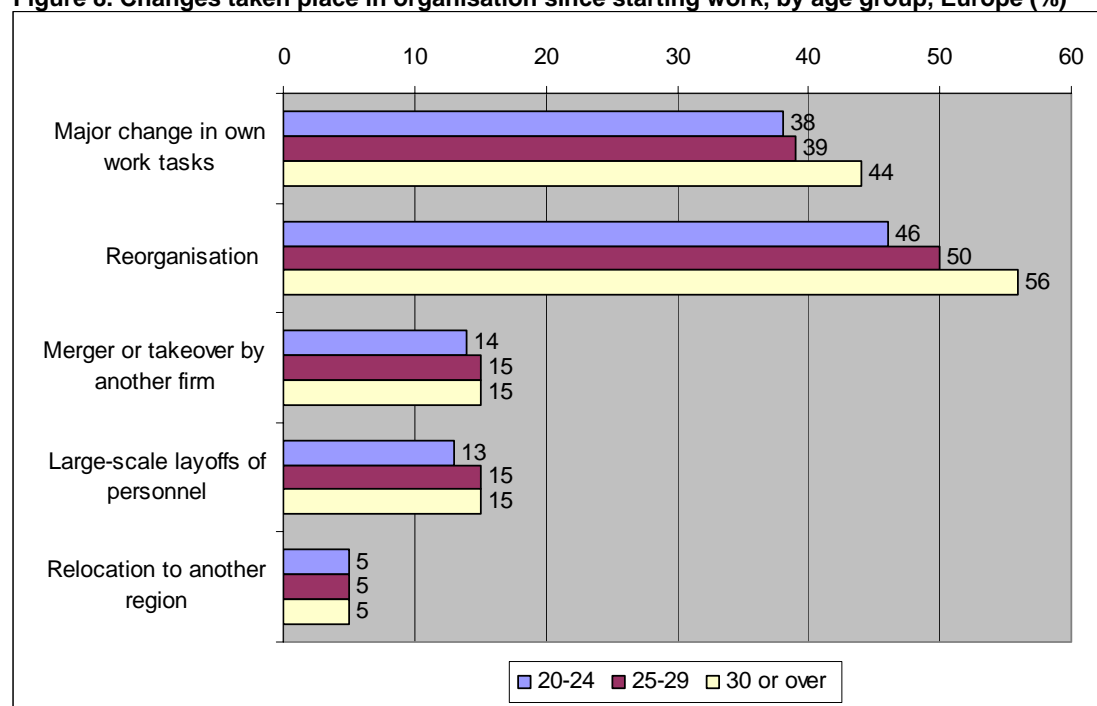
**Figure 7. Changes taken place in organisation since starting work, Europe and UK (%)**



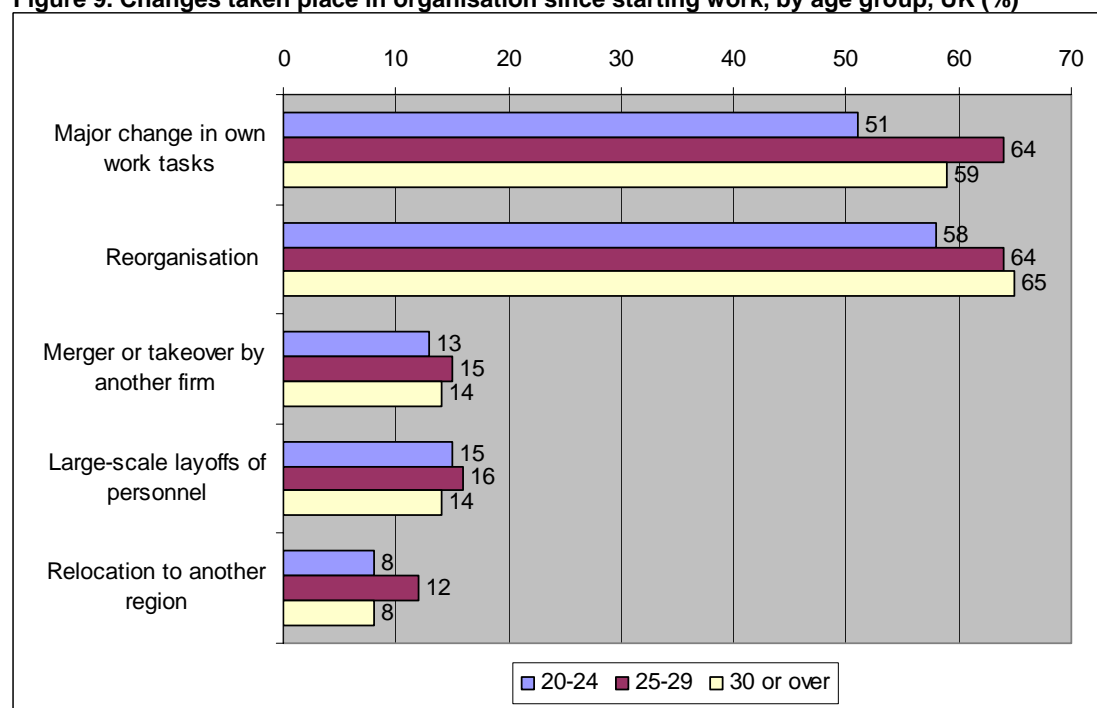
When we look at these work contexts by age for European and UK graduates (Figure 8 and Figure 9) we see that these overall differences are maintained. Irrespective of age on graduation, it seems that UK graduates were more likely to have to be rather flexible in their attitudes towards work to cope with changes in work tasks and reorganisation.

Moreover, for the whole sample, it is the mature graduates (aged 30 or over) who were slightly more likely to have experienced major changes in their own work tasks and reorganisation. But for the UK graduates, it is those aged 25-29 on graduation who were more likely to have encountered major change in their work tasks (64% compared to 53% overall), while young graduates (aged 20-24) were slightly less likely than their older UK counterparts to have experienced reorganisation.

**Figure 8. Changes taken place in organisation since starting work, by age group, Europe (%)**



**Figure 9. Changes taken place in organisation since starting work, by age group, UK (%)**

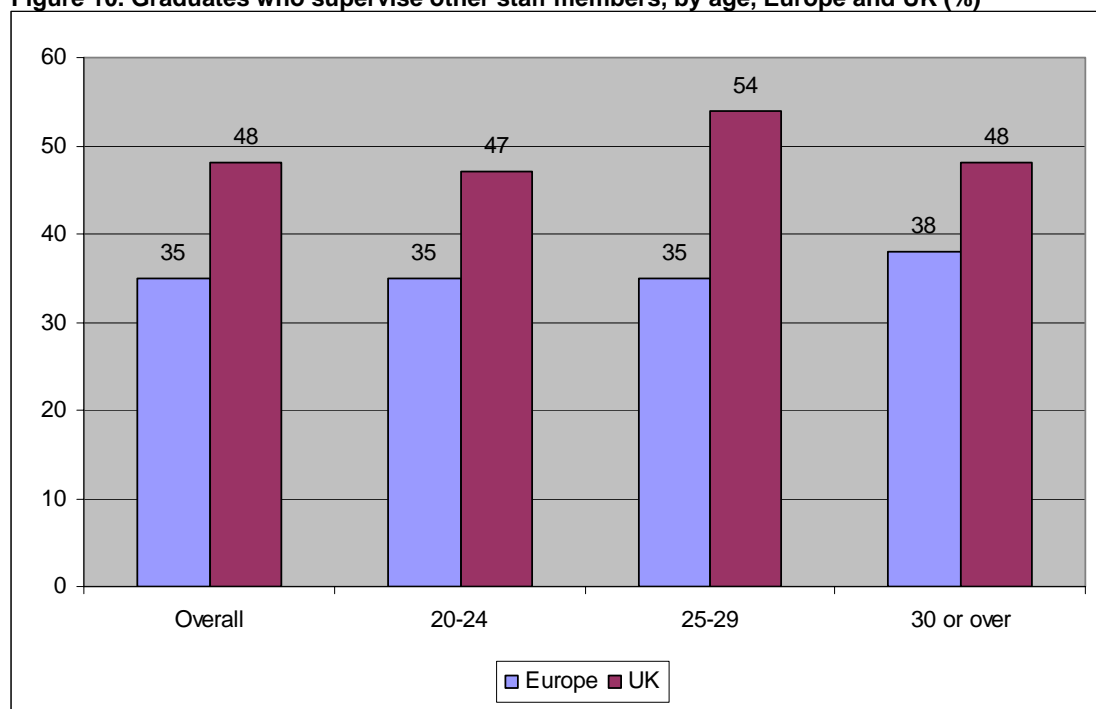


## 4.2. Professional and supervisory roles

Five years after graduation, UK graduates were much more likely than European graduates overall to state that they supervised staff – 48% did so compared to only 35% of European graduates overall. As we see from Figure 10 (below) this higher incidence of supervisory roles is irrespective of age. The biggest difference between UK and European graduates was found between those in the 25-29 age group, where

more than half of UK graduates were in a supervisory position (54%) compared to a third of European graduates overall (35%).

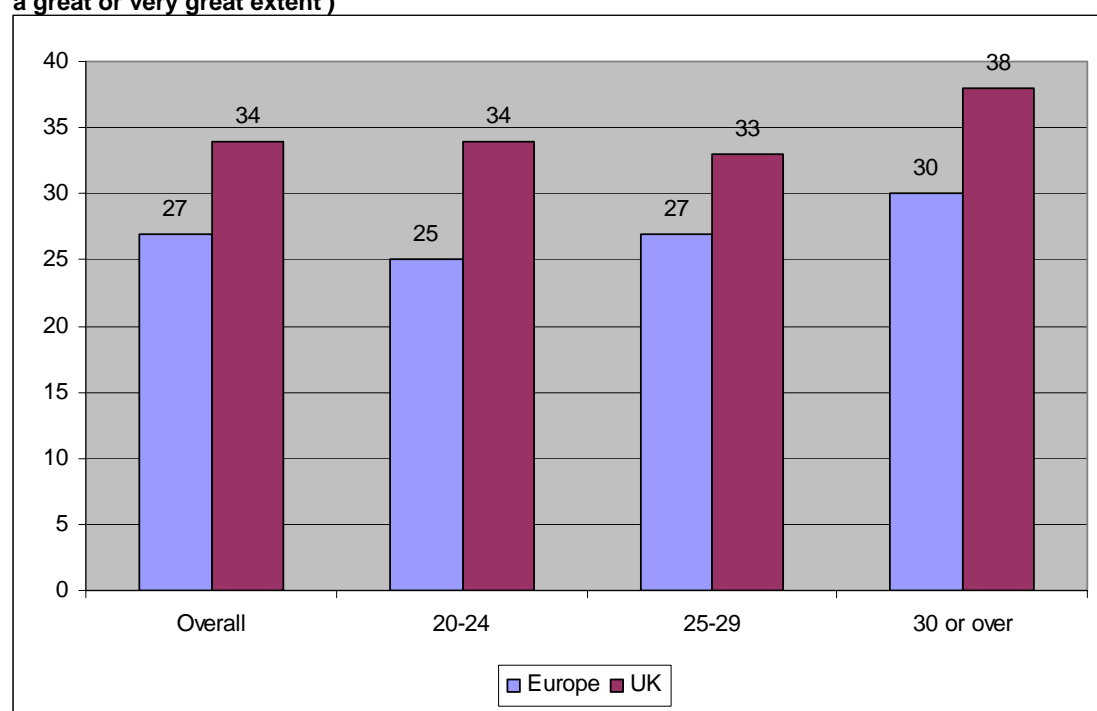
**Figure 10. Graduates who supervise other staff members, by age, Europe and UK (%)**



Similarly, a larger proportion of UK graduates than European graduates overall stated that they were responsible for assessing the work of others (34% compared to 27% of the whole sample). Again, this greater level of responsibility seems to be irrespective of age (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Graduates responsible for assessing the work of others by age, Europe and UK (%; 'to a great or very great extent')**



### 4.3 Other aspects of graduates' work performance

Table 3 below sets out graduates' responses to a set of statements relating to their work performance. European graduates were more likely than UK graduates to state that their colleagues rely on them as an authoritative source of advice (60% compared to 51%) and were less likely to state that their performance was closely monitored by their supervisors (37% compared to 46% of UK graduates). Age seems to make a slight difference in both these aspects: for both European graduates overall and UK graduates, the mature group (aged 30 or over) were slightly more likely to be relied on as an authoritative source of advice and slightly less likely to have their own performance closely monitored.

In terms of the other aspects of graduates' work performance (viz. results of own work dependent on others' performance; results of others' work dependent on own performance; objective assessment of individual's performance by others) European graduates overall were less likely to agree with these statements than UK graduates – and this was irrespective of age.

**Table 3. Graduates' work performance, by age, Europe and UK (%; 'to a great or very great extent')**

|   | Overall |    | 20-24  |    | 25-29  |    | 30 or over |    |
|---|---------|----|--------|----|--------|----|------------|----|
|   | Europe  | UK | Europe | UK | Europe | UK | Europe     | UK |
| Professional colleagues rely on me as an authoritative source of advice     | 60      | 51 | 54     | 49 | 64     | 46 | 67         | 58 |
| Own performance is closely monitored by own supervisor                      | 37      | 46 | 42     | 47 | 35     | 50 | 31         | 41 |
| Results of own work depend on the performance of others in the organisation | 47      | 56 | 47     | 56 | 47     | 54 | 48         | 56 |
| Results of the work of others in the organisation depend on own performance | 47      | 55 | 45     | 56 | 48     | 48 | 49         | 52 |
| Individual performance can be objectively assessed by others                | 61      | 73 | 62     | 74 | 61     | 75 | 59         | 71 |

#### 4.4 Graduates' responsibility for aspects of work

As can be seen from Table 4 (below), there are only small differences between European and UK graduates when it comes to their responsibilities at work. Graduates in general enjoy a great deal of independence in terms of how they do their work, with more than three quarters (overall and UK graduates) being responsible for setting goals for their own work and deciding how to do their own job. But only a small minority of graduates enjoy the authority of making decisions relating to their organisation – with less than a quarter of European graduates overall (and less than a fifth of UK graduates) having responsibility for setting goals for the organisation and deciding work strategies for the organisation.

There was little variation in such responsibilities by age. For European graduates overall, there was no difference in terms of setting own work goals, though we see that for UK graduates those in the middle age group (25-29) were more likely to be doing so (85% compared to 79%). Further, mature European graduates (aged 30 or over) were slightly more likely to be responsible for setting the organisation's goals (28% compared to 22% overall) but this age difference was not apparent for UK graduates.

**Table 4. Graduates' responsibility for aspects of work, by age, Europe and UK (%; 'to a great or very great extent')**

|   | Overall |    | 20-24  |    | 25-29  |    | 30 or over |    |
|---|---------|----|--------|----|--------|----|------------|----|
|   | Europe  | UK | Europe | UK | Europe | UK | Europe     | UK |
| Setting goals for own work                    | 75      | 79 | 73     | 78 | 75     | 85 | 79         | 77 |
| Deciding how to do own job                    | 82      | 78 | 81     | 77 | 82     | 78 | 84         | 83 |
| Setting goals for the organisation            | 22      | 17 | 20     | 17 | 23     | 14 | 28         | 19 |
| Deciding work strategies for the organisation | 24      | 21 | 22     | 21 | 24     | 21 | 28         | 21 |

## 5 Summary and conclusions

Other reports in this series have highlighted a number of distinctive features in the experiences of UK graduates, in particular the ways that subject of study or programme type influences employment in the initial phase of transition to the labour market.

UK graduates' age on entry to higher education can be seen as a further distinctive feature, with UK graduates being both younger and older on entry than European graduates overall. However, when duration of study is linked to age on entry to create the 'age on graduation' variable, then the nature of this distinctiveness alters –the younger age group (aged 20-24 on graduation) becomes particularly distinctive for UK graduates, and the mature group (aged 30 or over) loses some of its distinctiveness in relation to European graduates overall.

In this short report we have looked at graduates' employment experiences some five years after graduation, in relation to differences in age on graduation.

In relation to current employment, UK graduates:

- earn slightly more than European graduates. But whereas there is little evidence of an age premium for UK graduates' earnings, young European graduates tend to earn much less than their older counterparts;
- are less likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than six months. But both UK and European mature graduates are more likely to experience such periods of unemployment than their younger counterparts;
- have had a similar number of employers since graduating as European graduates. The number of employers for European graduates did not vary by age, but mature UK graduates had rather fewer and those in the middle age group had rather more employers than the UK average.

As far as workplace features are concerned, UK graduates:

- are more likely to have been faced with changes in their workplaces, regardless of age on graduation. UK graduates in the middle age group are more likely to have encountered major changes in work tasks; but for European graduates overall, it is mature graduates who are slightly more likely to experience such changes;
- are much more likely than European graduates to supervise staff and have responsibility for assessing others' work, regardless of age;
- are slightly less likely to be an authoritative source of advice and slightly more likely to have their own work closely monitored than European graduates. But in common with European graduates, mature graduates were slightly more likely to act as an authoritative source and slightly less likely to be closely monitored.

There is little difference between UK and European graduates with regard to other aspects of their responsibilities at work (for example, independence in setting work goals, deciding work strategies for the organisation) and these did not vary by age.

Thus we see that many of the overall similarities and differences in employment experiences of UK and European graduates reported in other reports in this series remain, even when age on graduation is taken into account. We can also see that age mediates certain aspects of employment in rather different ways for UK graduates and for European graduates overall.

## Appendix A: Background to the study

This report is based on the results of a major international study of graduate employment. The study, 'The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society – new demands on higher education in Europe (REFLEX)' was funded by the European Commission as part of its 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme, Priority 7 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society' (and by several national funds). The study was carried out collaboratively by research groups in thirteen European countries (Austria, Belgium-Flanders, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and Japan. It was co-ordinated by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market from Maastricht University in the Netherlands. The UK part of the study was undertaken by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information at the Open University.

The study had three strands:

- A country study highlighting the main structural and institutional factors that shape the relationship between higher education and work;
- A qualitative study on graduate competences in the knowledge society;
- A survey of higher education graduates five years after graduation.

The results of the survey which are presented in this report covered graduates from eleven of the countries involved in the study, viz. Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the UK. The graduates were selected from the 1999/2000 graduating cohort and were contacted by means of a mailed questionnaire (with the option of completing a web-based questionnaire) in the spring of 2005. Overall, 33,832 questionnaires were returned from these 11 countries, including 1,578 from UK graduates. For the UK sample this represented a response rate of 23%. The overall average response rate was 30%, varying from 20% in Spain to 45% in Norway. (See Appendix B for detail of case numbers for each country.) The samples were selected to be representative of the various national higher education (HE) populations of students enrolled on 'first degree' or equivalent programmes considered to be the main 'exit' qualification with which graduates left higher education in 2000 and entered the labour market in that country. In the case of the UK, this was taken to be a Bachelors degree, but in very many other countries the 1999/2000 graduating sample comprised wholly (or mainly) those with a Masters degree. The UK sample also included a (very) small number of graduates from taught masters programmes who had previously completed a first degree in the same broad subject area, had enrolled on a taught masters programme (at the same institution) without loss of time and graduated from that programme in 1999/2000.

Due to data protection issues in the UK it is generally not possible to contact graduates directly. Hence, broad population data for graduates in the year 1999/2000 was provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The sample itself was drawn either by HESA or the institutions themselves and was broadly representative of the first degree graduating population.

Key sampling variables were field of study and type of institution. The UK sample was drawn from 43 higher education institutions covering a range of types of institution and locations. The achieved sample (i.e those responding to the survey) was also broadly representative of the graduating population, though females were slightly over-represented, as Table A below shows:

Table A: Comparison of graduating population, initial sample and achieved sample

|            | Population, % | Initial Sample, % | Achieved sample, % |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Full-time  | 90            | 89                | 88                 |
| Female     | 55            | 53                | 61                 |
| Non-white  | 12            | 12                | 8                  |
| 23 & under | 70            | 69                | 64                 |
| 24-27      | 12            | 12                | 14                 |
| 28 & over  | 19            | 19                | 23                 |

The extensive questionnaire comprised 11 sections as follows:

- A Study programme completed in 1999/2000
- B Other educational and related experiences
- C Transition from study to work
- D First job after graduation
- E Employment history and current situation
- F Current work
- G Work organisation
- H Competences
- I Evaluation of study programme
- J Values and orientations
- K Socio-biographic data

A copy of the UK questionnaire is available for download from the HEFCE web-site.

This study followed on from an earlier study, Higher Education and Graduate Employment in Europe (CHEERS) also funded by the European Commission (see for example, Brennan et al., 2001<sup>2</sup>; Schomburg and Teichler, 2006<sup>3</sup>; Teichler (ed) 2007<sup>4</sup>)

As in the previous study, the data collected have gone well beyond the topics usually covered by national surveys of this kind. For example, they included questions about the higher education experience and attitudes, values and competences in relation both to employment and to other areas of life. Extensive and complex data checking and cleaning processes have been time-consuming. However, given that the research teams involved were already highly experienced and most had been involved in the earlier CHEERS study, the project was able to build on previous work. Once again, this large-scale European study of graduate employment used a common cross-national research methodology.

This report is one of six reports commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The full set of reports comprises:

- 1 The employment of UK graduates: comparisons with Europe

<sup>2</sup> Brennan, J., Johnston, B., Little, B., Shah, T. & Woodley, A. (2001) *The employment of UK graduates: comparisons with Europe and Japan* London: The Open University

<sup>3</sup> Schomburg, H. and Teichler, U. (2006) *Higher education and graduate employment in Europe – results from graduate surveys from twelve countries*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer

<sup>4</sup> Teichler, U. (Ed) (2007) *Careers of university graduates – views and experiences in comparative perspectives*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer

- 2 The context of higher education and employment: comparisons between different European countries
- 3 Subject differences in graduate employment across Europe
- 4 Competences possessed and required by European graduates
- 5 Age differences in graduate employment across Europe
- 6 Graduates' retrospective views of higher education

## **Appendix B: Case numbers of respondents for each country**

|    |                 |       |
|----|-----------------|-------|
| UK | United Kingdom  | 1578  |
| IT | Italy           | 3139  |
| ES | Spain           | 3916  |
| FR | France          | 1700  |
| AT | Austria         | 1821  |
| DE | Germany         | 1700  |
| NL | The Netherlands | 3424  |
| FI | Finland         | 2676  |
| NO | Norway          | 2201  |
| CZ | Czech Republic  | 6794  |
| CH | Switzerland     | 4882  |
|    | Total (Europe)  | 33832 |

## Appendix C: Tables

**Table C1. Age on graduation (%)**

|            | Europe | UK | IT | ES | FR | AT | DE | NL | FI | NO | CZ | CH |
|------------|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 20-24      | 40     | 72 | 15 | 63 | 75 | 16 | 11 | 55 | 30 | 28 | 60 | 17 |
| 25-29      | 44     | 7  | 68 | 32 | 18 | 60 | 64 | 35 | 51 | 50 | 33 | 62 |
| 30 or over | 16     | 21 | 17 | 5  | 7  | 24 | 25 | 10 | 19 | 22 | 7  | 21 |

**Table C2. Median gross monthly earnings of graduates by country, current full-time job (Pounds Sterling)**

|            | Europe | UK   | IT   | ES   | FR   | AT   | DE   | NL   | FI   | NO   | CZ  | CH   |
|------------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| Overall    | 1570   | 1690 | 1020 | 950  | 1270 | 1700 | 2086 | 1630 | 1670 | 2240 | 468 | 2820 |
| 20-24      | 1330   | 1680 | 1020 | 880  | 1250 | 1700 | 1840 | 1560 | 1430 | 2150 | 450 | 2640 |
| 25-29      | 1735   | 1690 | 1020 | 990  | 1350 | 1700 | 2180 | 1730 | 1750 | 2270 | 480 | 2910 |
| 30 or over | 1840   | 1730 | 1020 | 1090 | 1430 | 1630 | 2040 | 1770 | 1740 | 2280 | 480 | 2715 |

*Question F7: What are your gross monthly earnings (from contract hours in main employment)? (Exchange rate £1=€1.47)*

**Table C3. Graduates who experienced more than six months unemployment since graduation (%)**

|            | Europe | UK | IT | ES | FR | AT | DE | NL | FI | NO | CZ | CH |
|------------|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Overall    | 35     | 23 | 58 | 46 | 49 | 29 | 37 | 21 | 30 | 27 | 19 | 31 |
| 20-24      | 31     | 22 | 49 | 46 | 46 | 24 | 25 | 15 | 23 | 18 | 17 | 26 |
| 25-29      | 25     | 18 | 57 | 45 | 56 | 25 | 34 | 23 | 32 | 25 | 21 | 29 |
| 30 or over | 48     | 40 | 60 | 57 | 68 | 47 | 46 | 58 | 43 | 46 | 30 | 41 |

*Question E3: Have you been unemployed (that is, not employed and seeking employment) since graduation in 1999/2000?*

**Table C4. Average number of employers since graduation (%)**

|            | Europe | UK  | IT  | ES  | FR  | AT  | DE  | NL  | FI  | NO  | CZ  | CH  |
|------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 20-24      | 2.4    | 2.6 | 2.3 | 3.2 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2   | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 2.1 |
| 25-29      | 2.3    | 3.4 | 2.3 | 2.9 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 1.7 | 2.2 |
| 30 or over | 2.0    | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 2.0 |

*Question E1: How many employers have you had altogether since graduation in 1999/2000?*