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### International career directions of young European graduates

Taillieu, T.C.B.

*Publication date:*  
1992

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Taillieu, T. C. B. (1992). *International career directions of young European graduates*. (WORC Reprint). WORC, Work and Organization Research Centre.

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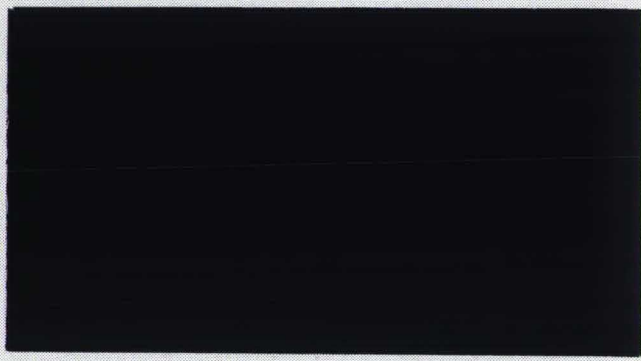
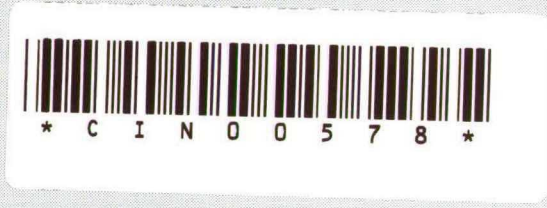
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REPRINT

*Tharsi Taillieu*

221

**International Career Directions of  
Young European Graduates**

92.02.006/3

Reprint from:  
European Management Journal  
Volume 10, Number 2, June 1992



K.U.B.  
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# International Career Directions of Young European Graduates

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From a large survey of graduate applicants to a pan-European Conference in 1990, Tharsi Taillieu has made an analysis of the views, aspirations and preferences of the young men and women concerning an international business career. He then matches these attitudes to profiles of the graduates — nationality, sex, educational and linguistic background and previous foreign experience. A picture is built up of a large pool of talented graduates looking for international careers, with appropriate backgrounds. The enthusiasm of young graduates for a transnational career in the Single European Market has greatly increased in recent years.

As part of a research project, 'Transnational Business in Europe'<sup>1</sup> research data were collected from applicants to the Euromanagers Forum,<sup>2</sup> an annual pan-European recruitment conference held in Brussels. Data concerning career aspirations and preferences were obtained from about 2,000 applicants in 1989 and about 3,500 graduates in 1990, all interested in attending the recruitment forum.

In this article we report the findings regarding characteristics, opinions and hopes of the young European graduates looking at international organisations. Who were they? What did they study? Why did they want to change jobs? What international experience did they have? What languages did they speak? When did they want to begin their transnational assignments and for what part of their careers? What preferences did they have about their future employing organisations? What were the underlying values which guided their careers? Based, for the most part, on the 1990 survey, answers to these questions are presented below.

## Introduction

European companies are rapidly completing their preparations for the Single European Market. By means of takeovers, mergers, joint ventures, minority participations, strategic alliances and related operations, a

large number of companies are trying to attain critical mass in view of the crucial deadline.

It would seem that issues such as market share, turnover, financial leverage, etc., are being watched closely. Less clear is the degree to which the Human Resource Management (HRM) function is ready for 1992. Bournois and Chauchat (1990) reported a joint investigation by the Groupe ESC of Lyon and Cranfield on the state of preparation for 1992, with regard to the human dimension. The majority of companies investigated claimed to resort more and more to Europe-wide recruitment of human potential. Parallel to the concept of an expatriate manager in a multinational corporation, some practitioners and researchers are already trying to develop a distinctive meaning for the notion of Euromanagers. As seen by one of the HRM directors, a Euromanagers can be characterised as: 'very open-minded, a good leader of subordinates and peers, (s)he has a particular sensitivity to foreign cultures, can speak or is ready to learn two other European languages in addition to his/her mother tongues, and is prepared to spend his/her career in Europe or beyond in which case (s)he is referred to as an international manager'. Although the concept is vague and unscientific, it is clear that a particular type of young manager is in the making and is widely sought after.

Several companies stated their belief that Europe's economic future was linked to the quality of transnational management skills. They design management trainee programmes on a European scale (e.g. Nokia uses the term 'Euromanagers') to meet the demand for those skills. In essence, these programmes provide a European framework in which the participants, after a short initial training, spend a twelve month assignment on-the-job in units abroad, working in different functions. At appropriate intervals, the trainees attend formal courses and convene to assess and evaluate their learning experiences from previous phases. Although recruitment and training of managers is organised at a national level, more and more multinational systems for basic and advanced management training are being

organised. Their aim is to foster the exchange of ideas between countries, to make different cultures meet, and bring young managers together to work on European projects.

## Personal and Professional Background of the Applicants

### Personal Background and Nationality

The Euromanagers Association, one of the originators of European-wide recruitment events, advertised in eight large European newspapers, and distributed posters in European universities. The 1990 forum called for graduates between 22 and 30 years old. Of the 3,586 who replied, 96% were within that bracket and 3% were older. The average age of all respondents was 26.1 years. Female graduates were on average one year younger (mean 25.2) than male graduates (mean 26.5). We found more women than men in the age category 22–24 and fewer in the age category 27–30. The sample was composed of 66.8% ( $N = 2,394$ ) men and 33.2% ( $N = 1,192$ ) women.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the graduates according to nationality. It shows that different nations were unequally represented in the survey. There are reasons for this. Invitations were published in eight large European newspapers; posters and announcements were made in universities all over Europe, and the Euro-manager's network used its different impact in different countries and on different segments of the graduate populations within each country or university. Interviews with conference participants show different patterns of motives: most Irish were keen to find employment abroad; Scandinavians felt their countries would join the EEC rather late, hence they wanted to develop their own network of contracts; British graduates were more often children of parents with international experience; Spanish and Portuguese graduates wanted to join multinational corporations (MNCs) for part of their careers to bring managerial and technical skills back home.

About 82% of the respondents were EEC nationals: Germans, Italians, French, Dutch, Belgians and British formed the largest group. The other EEC countries made

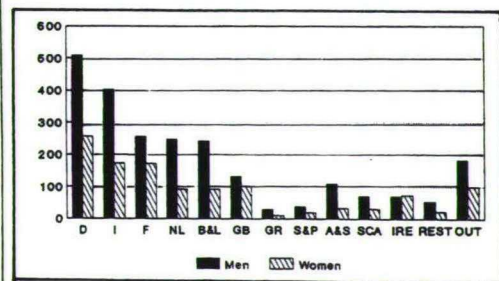


Figure 1 Nationalities by gender

up about 20%. The EFTA countries provided about 7% of the respondents (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland). A small number (0.7%) of graduates from East European countries applied. About 7.9% of the graduates had nationalities other than European, and 6.8% had dual nationality. The latter two categories represented about 15% of those applying.

Statistical analysis needed a regrouping of some nationalities. The following categories were formed: Great Britain (GB), Germany (D), the Netherlands (NL), Belgium and Luxembourg (B&L), France (F), Spain and Portugal (S&P), Italy (I), Greece (GR), Scandinavia (SCAN) — including Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland; Austria and Switzerland (A&S), Rest of Europe (REST) — including Malta, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia; and finally non-Europeans were grouped in the category Outside Europe (OUT) — this included Americans, Asians, Africans, some graduates from New Zealand and some from Middle East countries. Some nations deviated from the overall 67/33 proportion men and women; proportionally more British, Irish and French female graduates applied for the recruitment forum.

### Professional Background

In total, 75% of the respondents had actually completed their academic degrees. About 35% had also obtained a post-academic degree (e.g. MBA or PhD). About 15% indicated other forms of post-academic qualifications and specialisations. In line with the age difference, a smaller percentage of women had completed a postgraduate degree.

Fields of study were grouped according to the following broad categories:

%	Category
35.2	Humanities
2.0	Fine arts/Media
2.4	Education/Training
5.2	Humanities/Philosophy
15.8	Languages/Linguistics
7.5	Social/Political science
2.4	Communication/Other
8.0	Sciences
0.6	Architecture/Urban planning
1.8	Geography/Geology
0.8	Medical/Health sciences
4.6	Natural sciences
14.0	(International) Law
27.4	Engineering/Technology
17.4	Engineering/Technology
2.1	Agriculture/Food technology
7.9	Mathematics/Informatics
59.7	Business
12.4	Business/Management
18.4	Accounting/Finance/Taxation
10.4	Economics
18.4	Marketing/Sales

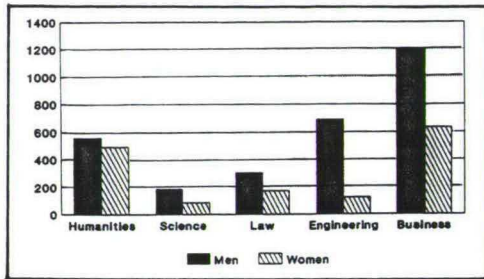


Figure 2 Fields of study by gender

The conference mostly attracted graduates with a background in Business (59.7%), especially the service-oriented part of it: finance, accounting, taxation, marketing and sales. The second largest category was formed by Humanities (35.2%), mostly people with an undergraduate background in languages and social science. The third largest category (27.4%) had a background in Engineering and Technology, while Sciences contained only 8%. About 14% had a background in Law. As Figure 2 shows, about 40% of the women had a background in Humanities versus 23% of the men. On the other hand, about 29% of the men had a background in Engineering/Technology versus 10% of the women. The other categories did not show significant differences between men and women.

Nationalities which dominated fields of previous academic study were: Humanities — British and Irish; Sciences — British, Spanish and Portuguese; Business — French, German and Scandinavian.

### Looking For a First or a Better Job?

About 32% of the graduates had no work experience, 21% worked for about one year, about 48% had between one and three years of experience, and 12% of the graduates had been working for five years or more. The (younger) female graduates had less work experience.

A total of 1,941 graduates were employed: 75% of the men and 29% of the women. About three-quarters of all employed graduates were simply looking for better opportunities. The rest indicated dissatisfaction with their current work, wages or employment conditions, or had personal reasons, like family matters, for moving. Female graduates, with mostly humanities backgrounds and therefore a weaker position in the job market, were more frequently dissatisfied with career prospects, wages and employment conditions.

The graduates were asked to show which factors they would weight when comparing job alternatives; 25 factors, organised into the five following groups, were offered: nature of initial assignment; system of pay and promotion; the nature of career development; company style or culture; company standing or image in the external environment. They ranked these factors as follows:

1. Early opportunities for trans/international responsibilities and assignments.
2. High autonomy and freedom of direction in assigned tasks.
3. Strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork.
4. Entrepreneurial style: integrative use of human potential across functional boundaries.
5. High involvement of organisational members at all levels in strategic matters.
6. Sound reputation in industrial relations and fairness to personnel.
7. Clear managerial growth possibilities in first job.
8. High standards with respect to environmental and ecological safety and protection.

Surprisingly, five out of the eight highest-rated job factors are matters of organisational style and standing, and only three directly deal with the immediate and personal conditions of assignments, pay and promotion.

Men differed from women in the importance they gave to factors in their job search. Men preferred individualistic factors, e.g. autonomy, risk, entrepreneurship. Specifically, they gave more weight to the following:

- Early responsibility for profit search in assigned operations.
- Sizeable portion of income based on incentives and merit.
- High involvement of organisational members at all levels in strategic matters.
- High autonomy and freedom of orientation in assigned tasks.

Female graduates gave importance to:

- Compliance with international political directives with regard to Third World countries.
- Solid financial position of the company.
- Widely-recognised management trainee programme availability.
- Close match between formal education and initial assignment.
- High standards with respect to environment and ecology safety and protection.
- Sound reputation in industrial relations and fairness to personnel.
- Well-defined job progression policy and practice.
- Regular feedback and progress system in use.
- Explicit articulation of corporate identity and company values in day-to-day behaviour.

When job criteria were matched with educational backgrounds of the respondents, it appeared that Science graduates were particularly sensitive to the environment and ecological standards of employers, and Law and Humanities graduates were concerned about the Third World.

In terms of nationalities, the Irish, Spanish, Portuguese and East Europeans favoured more responsibility and quick promotion. The British, Belgians, Dutch, Germans

and Scandinavians preferred greater security and were concerned about wages and employment conditions.

## International Direction and Preferences

### International Direction

Working for at least six months in another country is a good indicator of 'internationalism'. About 22% of the graduates had never done this; 38% had lived abroad in at least one other country, 26% in two, and 14% in more than three countries. Women were more international in this respect than men.

Humanities and Business graduates had lived abroad more frequently than graduates in other fields of study. In terms of nationalities, it was found that the French, British, Greek and OUT graduates were more internationally-minded. From interviews, it was discovered that incentives, like the ERASMUS programmes, and encouragement or example from parents and brothers or sisters made a noticeable difference.

In terms of specific preferences for countries to live and work in, France was nominated by 45% (popular among Humanities), the USA by 36%, Germany by 36% (Engineering/Technology), and the UK by 35% (Humanities) of the respondents. Less popular countries were Italy (20%), Spain (19%), Austria and Switzerland (16%), and Belgium (15%) (proportionally more Lawyers). All other countries were nominated by less than 10%.

We also made a study of the European languages (excluding mother tongue) spoken by the total group. Using a conservative criterion of fluency (speaking a foreign language almost as well as your mother tongue), we found that 89% spoke English very well, 50% were fluent in French, 46% in German. About 21% spoke Italian, 17% had a good command of Dutch, and about 12% spoke Spanish. Other languages were less common. The ability to write foreign languages followed the same pattern.

Applicants were also asked whether, when, and for how long, they would accept transnational assignments within the EEC or the European continent. In total, 73% of the sample was willing to start an assignment at any time, about 21% within one or two years, 5% within three to five years, and a small percentage later on. A smaller percentage of women felt ready to start at any time or would wait one or two years. About 40% of the respondents indicated their willingness to work internationally for a major part of their career. Assignments up to three years (26%) and five years (21%) were indicated twice as frequently as periods up to ten years (7%). As a comparison, Engering (1990), studying a heterogeneous sample of Dutch college students, found 61% willing to take up a foreign assignment some time during their careers, and 15% said that a period of five years or more was acceptable.

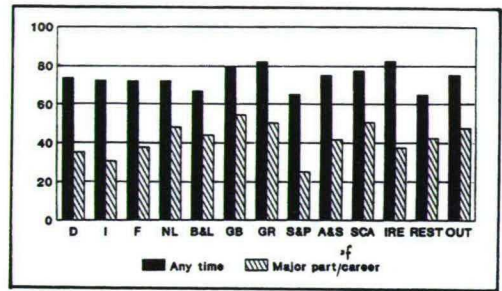


Figure 3 Preferred timing and duration of assignments by nationality

Our figures are comparable with data obtained by Teenie (1990), who obtained 171 replies from European MBA students in the European Partnership of Business Schools. About 78% of students were ready to take on international assignments; 34% for most of their careers, 20% for up to five years and 34% for periods of up to three years. Adler (1986) obtained data from 1,129 MBAs from seven schools, of which two had international management programmes. About 85% wanted an international assignment at some point in their career; 44% wanted an international career involving a series of foreign assignments. Adler's study (1984) showed no difference between male and female MBAs with regard to interest in international careers.

Female graduates in this study preferred shorter transnational assignments. About 38% of the women versus 28% of the men preferred assignments up to three years, 25% versus 29% five to ten years, and 36% of the women versus 49% of the men were willing to take up a full international career.

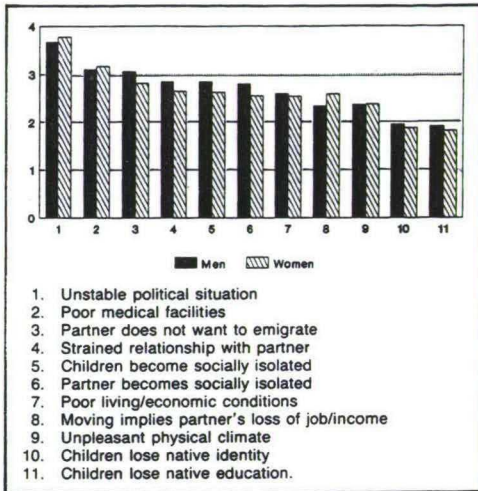
As one would expect, respondents in our survey who were willing to start an international career at any time were also those who preferred to spend a major part of their career abroad.

There was also a relationship between interest in an international career and the age and academic progress of respondents. Those who had not yet graduated were more interested in long international assignments. There was less interest by graduates with some years' work experience, and again more interest by graduates in possession of a postgraduate degree. Clearly, international experience or study produces graduates with a keen interest in international assignments.

### Likelihood of Declining or Ending a Transnational Assignment

The literature on human failure in international assignments reveals many causes and contributory factors (Tung, 1981; Harvey, 1985; Adler, 1986; Vansina and Saelens, 1986; Engering, 1990). The respondents were asked to comment on a list of factors which could lead them to refuse or end a foreign assignment. These





**Figure 4** Propensity to refuse assignments by gender

included external factors like political instability or health conditions (graduates ranked these as fairly important factors), living conditions and climate (average importance), and family situation (weak importance). Issues of children and their schooling were given very little weight. Compared to a recent study of Dutch nationals (Engering, 1990), the graduates in our study were well disposed towards foreign assignments. In contrast to Tung's findings (1981), our graduates ranked personal safety and health as more important than family situation (but then, most of our graduates were single).

It is interesting that female graduates were less concerned than men about their partner, family or children faring badly abroad. The reason may be that women are more confident in their ability to cope with the partners they (will) have and the family conditions they (will) create. These findings support those of Adler (1984). At the same time, we found that females conformed more to the traditional role pattern in showing a greater sensitivity to loss of a partner's job or income as a result of mobility.

Graduates who already had some considerable international experience were less worried about host country characteristics and more about partners and family conditions. Obviously, those respondents ready to start a long foreign assignment at any time were less inclined to refuse or end such an assignment. Men and women were the same in this respect, except that women were less worried about family or partner as a reason for being negative.

Taking into account educational backgrounds, Engineers were most worried about family, partner or children in a foreign assignment. Lawyers and Social Scientists

were least worried about host country background conditions, and graduates with a background in Humanities and the Arts were not worried about raising their children in a foreign culture.

The link between foreign assignment conditions and nationality was as follows: host country background conditions were of most concern to the Belgians, Greeks, Swiss, Austrians, Portuguese and Irish. Issues of children's education worried the Spanish and Greek graduates. The British and Dutch were the most concerned about a partner losing his/her job or income or becoming socially isolated as a result of mobility.

### Features Preferred in Employing Organisations

We followed a typology set up by Bournois and Chauchat (1990) of views about working in international organisations. We asked respondents if they would prefer to work for an organisation that:

- still operates in its parent country only;
- has a strong national base, but is actively striving for a supranational position in the European Community;
- operates on a worldwide basis, but is actively repositioning for Europe;
- operates on a worldwide basis and considers Europe as part only of its total operations.

About 53% of our graduates voted for (d), 36% for (c), 10% for (b) and 1% for (a).

This confirms our 1989 results when 75% preferred organisations of type (d) and 20% (c). Thus, the concept of a Euromanager still seems questionable. Women more than men favoured (c)-type companies. Lawyers also favoured (c) over (d) for obvious technical reasons. The Scandinavians favoured (d) and the Spanish, Irish and Portuguese favoured (c)-type companies. In general, we found the 1989 and 1990 recruitment forums tended to attract applicants more interested in joining well-established, internationally-operating companies than their native companies trying to enter the European market.

The graduates showed a marked preference when it came to the composition of managers in headquarters and foreign affiliates (parent company nationals versus host country nationals). 83% favoured HQ and affiliates staffed by mixed nationalities. Only 1% favoured HQ and affiliates staffed by parent company nationals only. That is, preference was shown for managerial competence outranking national origins; graduates tended to dismiss the older model of sequential development of international organisations.

The graduates showed few signs of chauvinism when it came to potential employers. 85% showed no preference for a foreign or native employer. But 55% of them would prefer a French company, followed by British

(43%) and German (43%). Least favoured were East European and Southern European companies (with the exception of Italy).

## Career Directions and Values

### Functional Interests

We found that graduates ranked the functional areas of management as follows: general management (58%), marketing and sales (47%), finance and accounting (26%), personnel (16%) and IT (13%). Their inclination towards the service sector is noticeable, with women having stronger preference than men. Men generally indicated a greater variety of interests.

### Career Goals and Values

We followed Schein's theoretical model for exploring career directions (1978, 1980). Schein conceives of a 'career anchor' as a set of needs, values and talents which a person is loathe to give up if faced with a choice. A career anchor is a person's self-image of what he/she excels in, wants or values, and through work experience acquires certain motivations, talents and values which guide and constrain his/her work career.

Our graduates were questioned on how important a number of goals and values were to them in guiding their careers. The results gave the following rank order:

1. *Service and dedication.* The use of one's interpersonal and helping skills in the service of others; commitment and devotion to an important cause in one's life. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern to achieve some valued results, e.g. making the world a better place in which to live, helping others, improving harmony among people, teaching, etc.
2. *Managing people.* The process of supervising, influencing, leading and controlling people at all levels and integrating their efforts. The corresponding career anchor, managerial competence, reflects a primary concern to integrate the efforts of others, to be fully accountable for the total results, and to tie together the different functions in an organisation.
3. *Lifestyle.* Developing a lifestyle that balances career and family needs; being able to lead one's life in one's own way. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern to make all the major sectors in one's life work together in an integrated whole, such that neither family nor career concerns dominate one's life.
4. *Pure challenge.* Confronting, working and solving tough problems, no matter what they are. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern to solve seemingly unsolvable problems, to win over tough opponents and to surmount difficult obstacles. The process of succeeding is more central than success in a particular field or skill area.
5. *Autonomy.* Concern about freedom and independence, not being constrained by organisational rules, doing things one's own way. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern in action and choices to free oneself from constraints and restrictions in favour of developing a career in which one can choose when to work, on what to work and how hard to work.
6. *Entrepreneurship.* Working with one's own products and ideas; being on the look-out to start to build one's own enterprise. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern to create something new, involving the motivation to overcome obstacles, the willingness to run risks and the desire for personal prominence in whatever is accomplished.
7. *Job security.* Concern for stability and guaranteed employment, security, benefits and good retirement conditions. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern for stability in one's career, such that one can relax and feel successful; being loyal and accepting whatever is required in exchange for job tenure.
8. *Technical-functional expertise.* Concern for developing one's expertise and specialisation; building a career in some specific technical or functional area. The corresponding career anchor reflects a primary concern to exercise one's talents and skills in a particular area, to derive one's sense of identity from that competence and to be challenged by further growth in it.
9. *Geographical stability.* Being able to remain in one's country or geographical area for a full career. This aspect normally is also brought under the security-stability anchor.

Figure 5 shows differences between men and women in their career (directions) goals and values, except for the categories Autonomy and Life Style. Men favoured

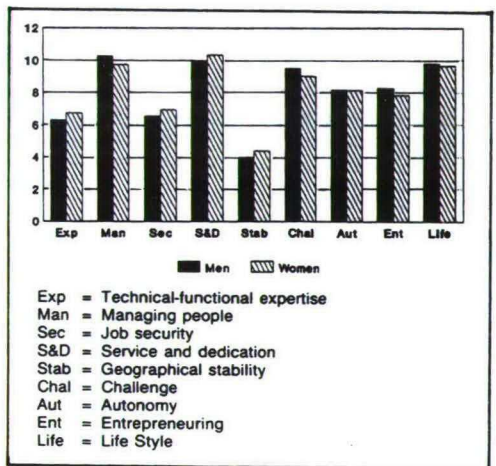


Figure 5 Career orientation values by gender of respondents

Managing People, Pure Challenge and Entrepreneurship, and women Service and Dedication, Technical-Functional Expertise, Job Security and Geographical Stability. Teenie (1990) obtained similar but less marked results.

As one might have expected, respondents who opted for long international assignments in the near future favoured Challenge, Service and Dedication.

Graduates with different educational backgrounds had varying views on career directions. Humanities graduates favoured Service-Dedication and Job Security. Not surprisingly, Science graduates gave more importance to Technical-Functional expertise and Job Security. Law graduates emphasised Security and Geographical Stability, and Engineers/Technologists favoured a balanced Life Style, Managing People and Entrepreneurship. The Business-Economics group placed the highest value on Entrepreneurship and Challenge. Our 1989 and 1990 results show little difference in this respect. What is worth noting is the weak international orientation of Science and Engineering/Technology graduates, who otherwise have the strongest position on the job market.

The link between career directions and nationality of graduates was interesting; again, the 1989 and 1990 results show the same picture. The following career directions are shown against nationalities who gave them high ratings:

- Technical-Functional — Spanish, Portuguese, Geographical Stability — Greeks
- Entrepreneurship — Greeks, Italians
- Autonomy — Italians, French, Scandinavians
- Challenge — Greeks
- Balanced Life Style — French
- Service-Dedication — Dutch, Germans
- Managing People — Greeks

Career directions and lowest preferences by nationalities were:

- Geographical Stability — French, British, Scandinavians
- Entrepreneurship — Germans
- Autonomy — Dutch
- Challenge — British
- Balanced Life Style — Belgians, British
- Service-Dedication — Scandinavians

There are clearly deep cultural differences accounting for different career directions by graduates.

### Discussion

The career outlooks, and particularly views on international careers, of graduates seeking employment have changed noticeably over the last two decades. This can be shown in statistical terms by figures given in the 1969 study by Vansina and Taillieu (1971), a survey undertaken at the very time the European Common Market

idea was being developed. Data were collected from 216 Flemish Business and Economics graduates planning their future careers in national and international organisations.

Results taken then showed that 34% would prefer to work for a US company and 32% for a Flemish company. No country of the current Single European Market was nominated by more than 5% of the graduates, with the exception of Germany (14%). Those countries which were most strongly rejected were Japan (22%), Italy (20%) and the Netherlands (17%). The principal reasons given, then, for these rejections were social climate and management values.

*Today's graduates are much more internationally-oriented in their job searches than 20 years ago*

The situation is different today. A pool of talented male and female graduates is ready to take on the challenge of the European Single Market. Our current survey shows there are sufficient of them experienced in working and living abroad to be prepared to spend long assignments in transnational companies in other countries. Some of them (in fact, those mostly interested in traineeships) prefer medium- to large-sized companies from their own native countries. Others plan to start straight away with foreign companies (often encouraged by the absence of a national alternative). It appears that a small majority of all of them would prefer service-sector companies.

The graduates in our survey were not interested in national companies striving for a supranational position; they would prefer either to join fully-fledged multinational companies that are either repositioning for Europe or, better still, to join companies that are operating worldwide. The graduates displayed strong preference for organisations whose HQ and affiliate staffing was by managers of various nationalities. It is unfortunate that this is not the case with most companies today, although things are beginning to change. As well as this preference for working with managers of other nationalities, the graduates appear to be motivated towards service and dedication to an important cause, managing people and integrating the efforts of others, working on challenging problems and developing a balanced life style.

Views on an international career differ according to graduates' previous field of study. Those with Humanities or a Business background seem better prepared for international careers than those from the Sciences, Engineering or Technology. The latter graduates — who often undergo longer and more difficult courses — need more encouragement; they appear to aspire to managerial roles, their skills and training are in strong demand by industry, and yet they are less motivated towards international work.

As far as young women graduates are concerned, many are hoping for an international career, although the functions and sectors of work they favour are still somewhat traditional. Their preference for internationalism is similar to that of men, but they would seem to be more self-sufficient should conditions prove difficult. In other ways too, they differ noticeably from men.

Generally, the differences between men and women in terms of anticipated career development seem to fit the model developed by Gallos (1989). Gallos argues that men first see themselves primarily as individuals and emphasise accomplishment at work. Later, they explore relationships with others and finally regard others as having the same importance as themselves. For women, they see the sequence of career development in an opposite way. Women begin from the assumption of relating to others and having attachments to them. Gradually, they find ways of attenuating the relationships and being more separate until they see themselves as equal to others.

Therefore, Gallos argues, women are more likely to define themselves in an inter-personal way and in a context of inter-dependence. This may result in them defining themselves more tentatively, with the result that they may look less professional than their male colleagues. Many of the observations of our latest survey fit into this model. Women graduates favoured the context of work; they were less inclined than men to reject foreign assignments except when their partner's career or income was affected. They consistently valued dedication and service more than men. Their higher valuation of job security and desire to maintain their own expertise could be said to follow on from this, but other explanations could be the still-strong attachment by women to their traditional roles, and their educational backgrounds which put them in a weaker position in the job market. In general, as with Adler's study (1986), we found strong interest in international careers among women graduates.

Culture as a determinant of career choices seems an undeveloped area of research. Derr and Laurent (1989) have developed a theoretical model of different cultural views of careers. It is based on Schein's concept of different layers of organisational culture. Derr and Laurent believe there are invisible, unconscious and intuitive factors in society which determine how members of organisations think, feel and perceive, which are in turn rooted in national cultures. These two authors' evidence suggests that company culture matters less than national culture when it comes to peoples' views about successful careers.

In our research we found recurring differences in the way different nationalities regarded values in careers. Conclusive results need more research than there is at present.

Laurent (1986) has pointed out the important implications of such national differences for managers: 'If we

accept that the approaches of human resource management are cultural and man-made, reflecting basic assumptions and values of the national culture in which organisations are imbedded, international human resource management becomes one of the most challenging tasks of multinational organisations.'

## Notes

1. The research project is reported in Van Dijk, J. (1991). *Transnational Business in Europe*, Tilburg: Gianotten. The technical reports of both surveys (Taillieu and Mooren, 1989; Taillieu and Franchimont, 1990) of career orientations of young European graduates can be ordered from the author.
2. The Euromanagers Forum is organised by EMDS International, 48 Av E. Verhaeren, 1030 Brussels.

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