A high-angle, blurred photograph of a crowd of people walking on a light-colored pavement. The motion blur gives a sense of a busy, public space. The people are dressed in casual to business-casual attire.

“Taking over responsibility” as a subjective transition marker from youth into adulthood.

8th Congress of the European Society on Family Relations (ESFR)
Changing Family Relations – Gender and Generations
August 31 - September 3, 2016, TU Dortmund University

Andreas HEINEN, University of Luxembourg
Patrice JOACHIM, University of Luxembourg

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DEVELOPMENT

Institute for Research on Generations and Family:
Youth Research

The logo of the University of Luxembourg, featuring the letters 'uni.lu' in a stylized, colorful font (red and blue).

UNIVERSITÉ DU
LUXEMBOURG

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

Research focus

- **Youth** is a transition phase between **childhood and adulthood**
- **Developmental tasks:** Independency, autonomy, identity, change of status/roles (Havighurst, 1972; Hurrelmann, 2012)
- Societal **integration** and the construction of the **individual biography** (Mørch, 2003)



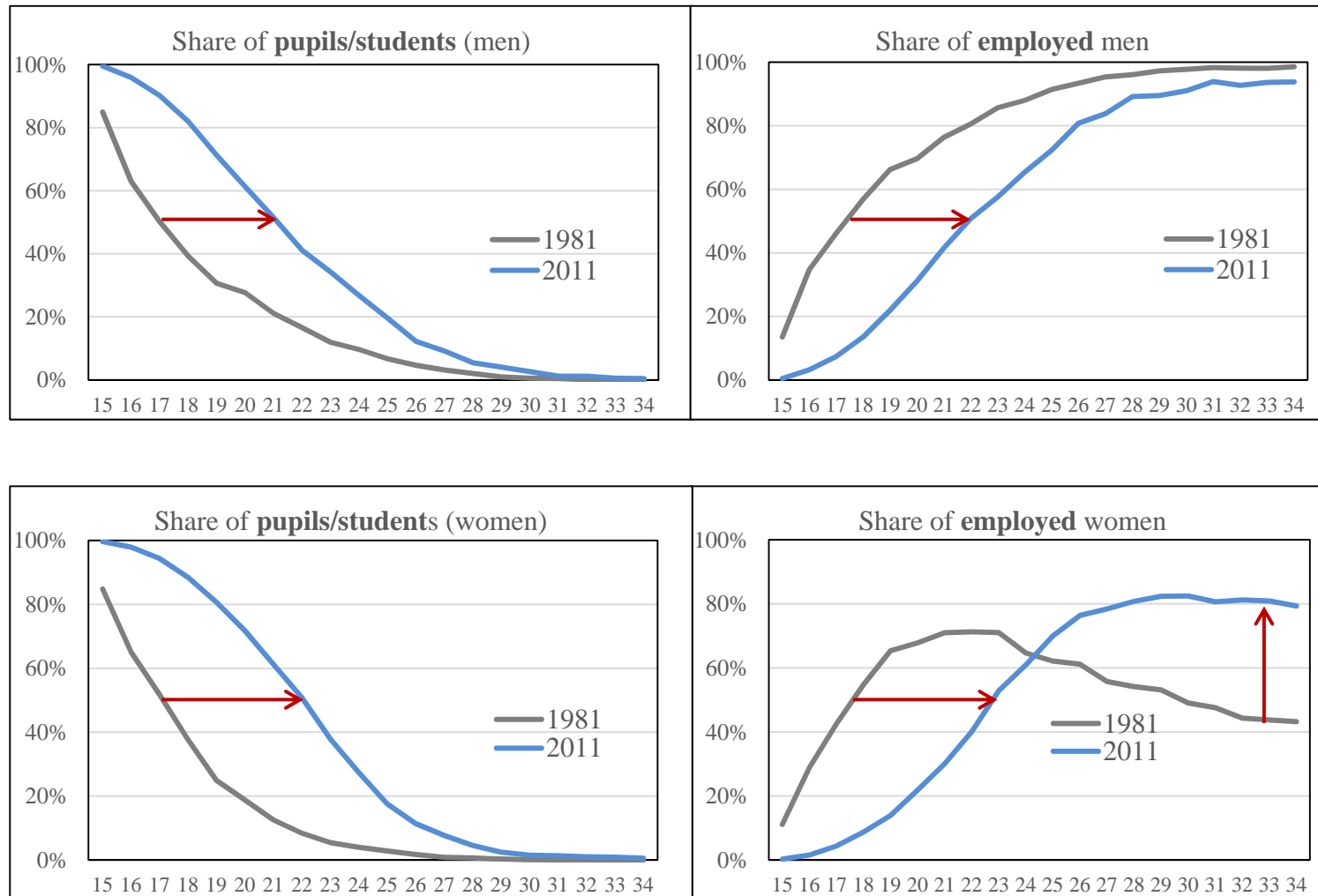
Research questions

- A) What are the current trends and developments of young people's transition to adulthood?
- B) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?
- C) What does responsibility mean for young people in their transition into adulthood?

1) Transition to adulthood in the age of individualization

- Youth phase has **extended**, age limits are hard to define (12...30+)
 - «post adolescence» (Galland, 2003); «emerging adulthood» (Arnett, 2000)
- Entry into adulthood marked by **five objective transition makers**:
(1) completing school, (2) leaving home, (3) career start (4) getting married, (5) becoming a parent
- **Prolongation, de-standardization, reversibility** of the transition to adulthood (Walther, 2006)
- “[...] adolescence today is characterised by **status insecurity** [...] it has **lost the notion of a secure and safe transition** from one social position to another.” (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013)

2) Postponement of school-to-work transitions



Census, 2011

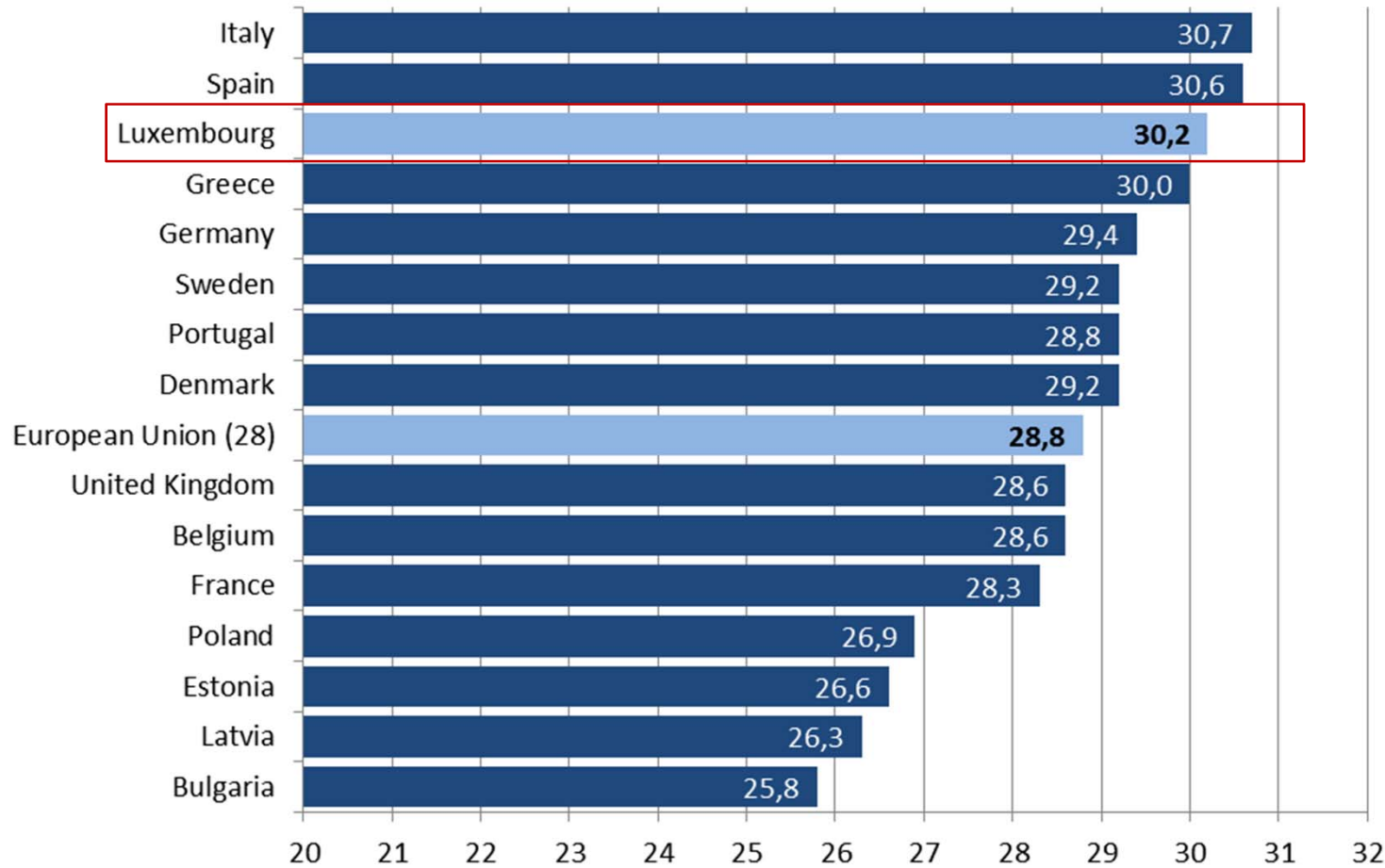
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3) Late timing of parenthood

Mean age of women at birth of first child (2014)



Eurostat, 2014

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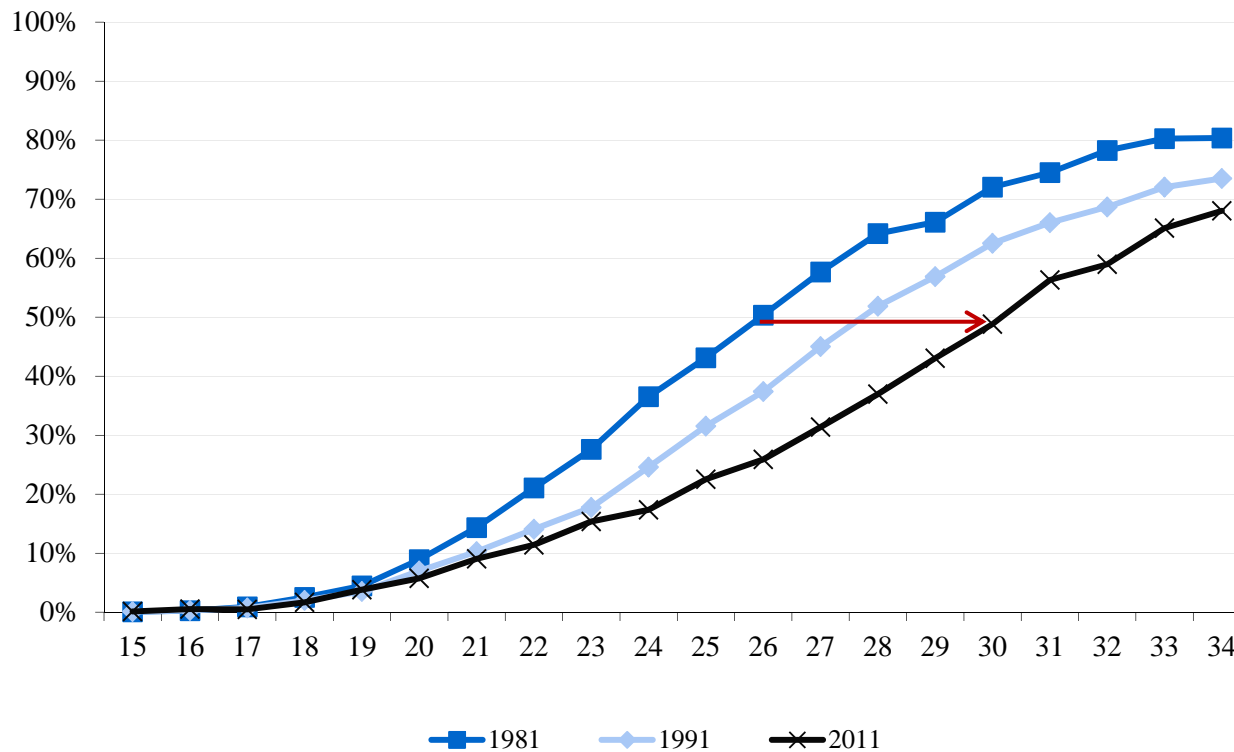
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4) Postponement of parenthood

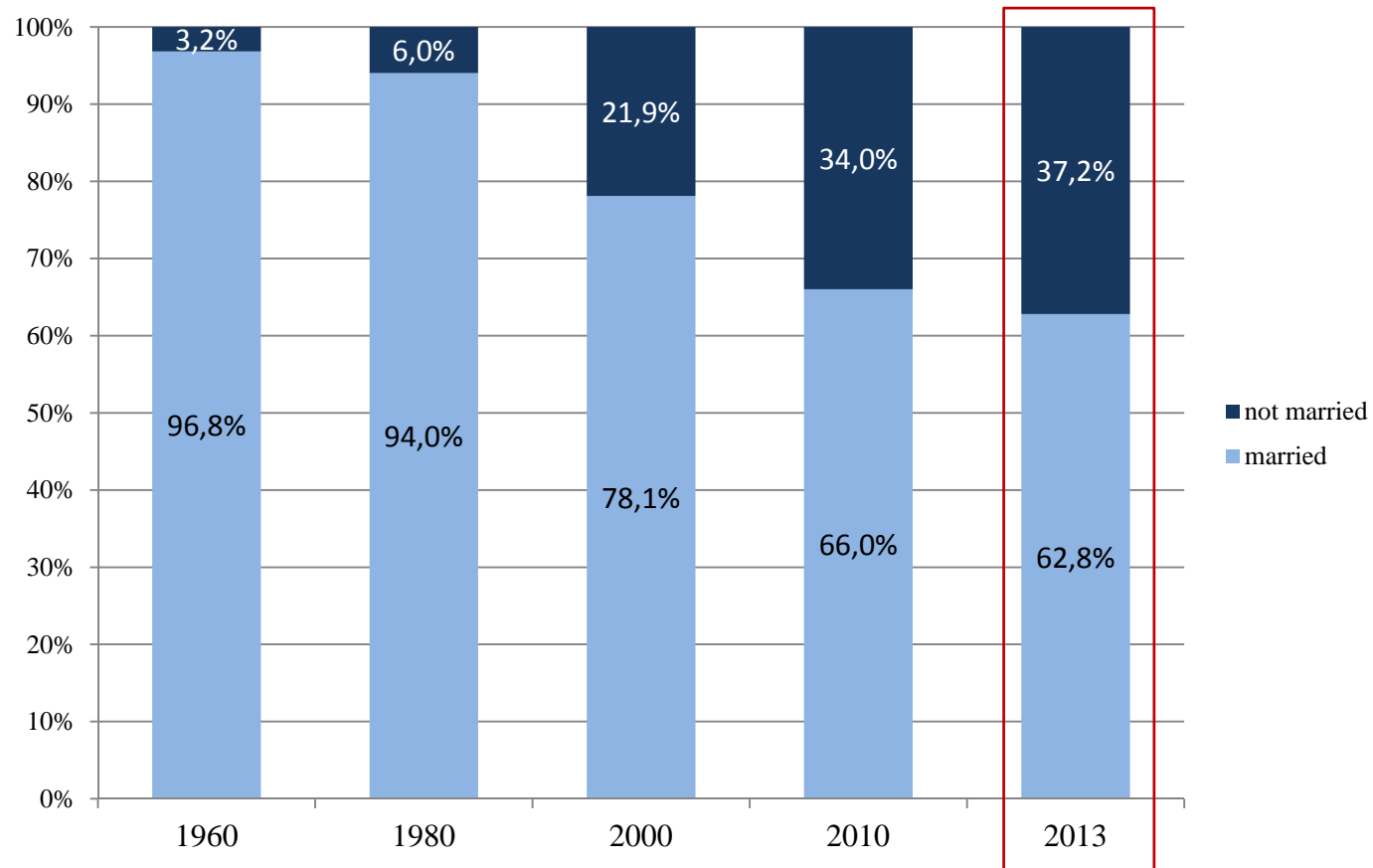
Share of women with one or more child(ren) in Luxembourg, by age (1981-2011)



Census, 2011

5) Parenthood, disconnected from marriage

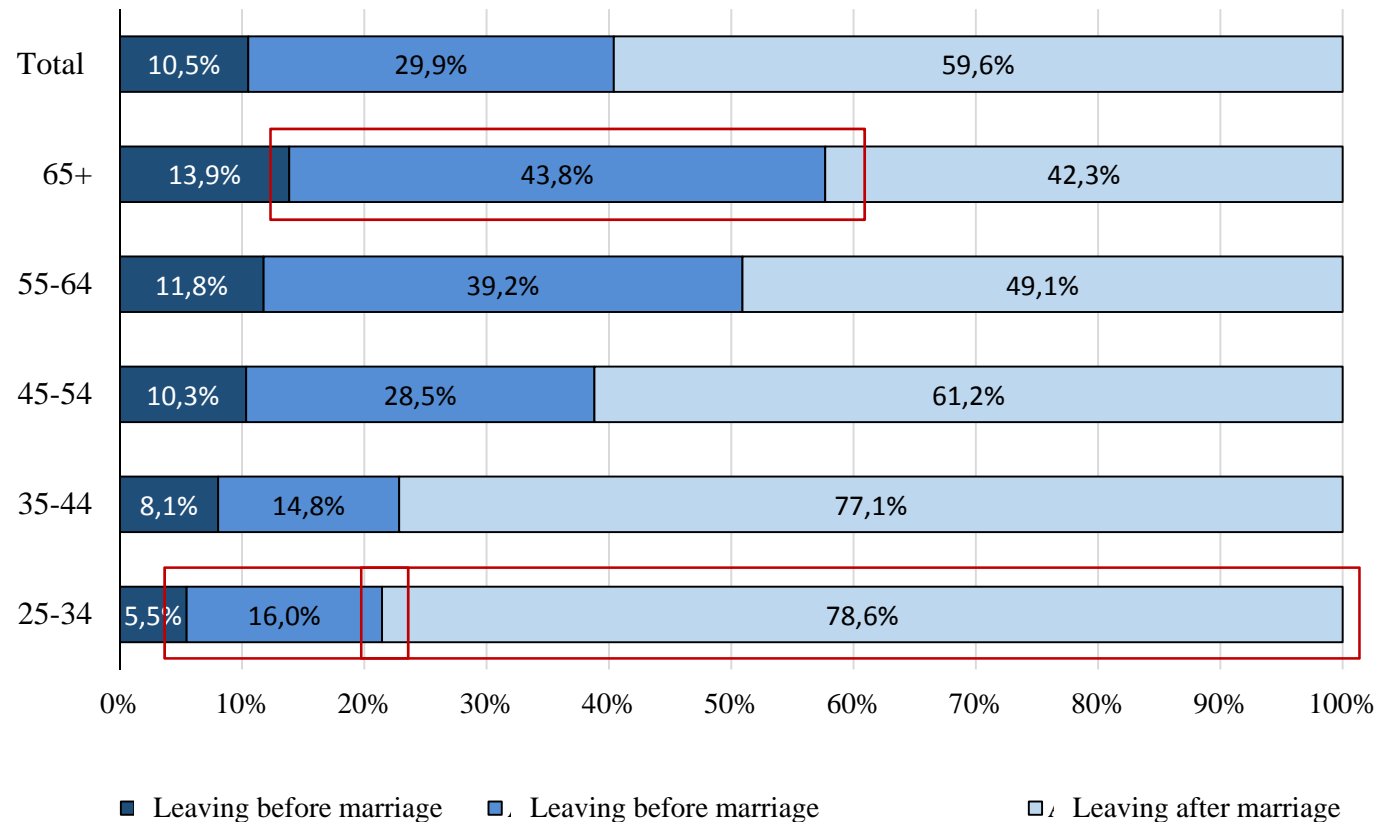
Share of newborns by mother's marital status (1960-2013)



Census, 2011

6) Leaving parental home, disconnected from marriage

Share of people by marital status and leaving parental home (2013)



Research questions

- A) What are the current trends and developments of young people's transition to adulthood?
- B) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?
- C) What does responsibility mean for young people in their transition into adulthood?

7) Increased importance of «subjective markers»

- **Subjective markers** as the “new” markers (Shanahan, 2005; Furstenberg et al., 2004)
- **Cognitive, emotional and behavioral requirements** for adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 2001)
- (1) accepting **responsibility** for one’s self, (2) making **independent decisions** (Arnett, 1998)
- “Successful functioning in adulthood is marked by [...] the acceptance of **responsibility for others as well as oneself.**” (Zahn-Waxler, 1996, p.571)

8) Notions of adulthood: Young people's ideas about becoming an adult

- Objective transition markers play an important role (having a secure job, moving out, starting a family)
- However, young people associate becoming adult with changes in **lifestyle, inner attitude, autonomy and responsibility** (e.g.):



Research questions

A) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?

B) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?

C) What does responsibility mean for young people in their transition into adulthood?

- responsibility for oneself
- responsibility for others

9) Taking over responsibility for oneself

- Taking over responsibility for oneself is related to the development of autonomous decision making
- «since I am 18 years old, I take all my decisions on my own. I made mistakes...., I passed some hard times : no fix job, no driving license, no partner... but **I always tried to manage my problems on my own** and looked ahead, focusing on the future. That's why I consider myself as an adult » (Jeanne, f, 33 years)

..... responsible behaviour

- «with 18 years, your are **responsible for your own actions**, not your parents» (Joana, f, 28 years)
- «to assume responsibility for my own actions and **not to blame someone else for it**» (Henri, m, 32 years)
- «there is **nowbody who is solving my problems** for me» (Angela, f, 34 years)
- «I became self-employed with 25. From that moment on, **I went out less and I took more care about my appearance and image (...)**» Claudine, f, 34 years

10) Taking over responsibility for oneself

Taking over responsibility for oneself is also related to the feeling of independency from the parents

- «to **manage money** and to do the shopping» (Amélie, f, 22 years)
- «to **do things on my own**, sign papers, gain practical and life experience» (Marta, f, 18 years)
- «to get up in the morning (...), to realise that the food does not grow in your fridge» (Rebecca, f, 29 years)
- « to find out if someone is an adult or not, is to **check if he has a a washing machine**. I have a washing machine» (Tiago, m, 25 years)
- ...

11) Taking over responsibility for others

- Responsibility for others, means mostly for children (parenthood)

«...being responsible because of work...the house and **the child**.» (Françoise, f, 30 yrs)

«Also a family and seriousness, and responsibility. Well, I have responsibilities already, but further responsibilities...for **children**.» (Lara, f, 22 yrs)

«Yes, I can be adult since I'm here and I have children. And I have a responsibility for them and all the decisions I take with my husband have **consequences not only for us but also for others** that's growing up.» (Angela, f, 34 yrs)

...is related to the concept of maturity

«If I wouldn't have had my children [...], I wouldn't have developed the **maturity** I have today.» (Maria, f, 27 yrs)

...and change of priorities

«For me, it's since I have children, since they were born, than you must become adult [...] You **feel different** you know that we **have other priorities now than going out**. We have to take care about our children, that nothing happens to them. (Patricia, f, 29 yrs)

12) Conclusion

- The study indicates that besides the objective markers, **subjective markers** are important in order to understand and conceptualize the transition from youth into adulthood
- The importance of subjective markers (e.g. autonomy, responsibility) reflects the **individualized** and **de-standardized** transition from youth into adulthood; the „**inconsistency** as hallmarks of modern adolescence” (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2015)
- Responsibility for oneself is highly related to the notion of adulthood and is important for **identity** and **personality** development, it “reflects the current values of the Western culture [...] that emphasize individualism” (Arnett, 2002)
- Responsibility for others is related to new commitments (e.g. responsibility for children) in order to assure **social integration and societal reproduction.**



**Thank you for
your attention!**

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www.jugend-in-luxemburg.lu

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