

# **Creating “Nomos”: Transition Strategies to Adulthood in the Post-Socialist Hungary**

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DRAFT VERSION

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## 1. Creating “Nomos”<sup>1</sup>

Usually everybody's life will reach a point when the society accepts him or her as an equal member. This phenomenon, the transition to adulthood is seldom one point, rather a process, spanning over a couple of years. The different fields of social science approached this period from a different view, emphasizing the biological, psychological or social aspects. Transition to adulthood is seen as a social evolution, based on the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984). The structural approach considers this phenomenon as a process of leaving the family as a dynamic system (Parsons, 1951; Parsons and Bales 1955). In this approach the successful internalization of cognitive and motivative processes makes the young adults able to perceive the social norms and play the adaptive corresponding social roles. Feuer (1997) argues that there are three major points of separation: a) the separation of the physical functions at the infant age; b) the separation of the psychic functions at early childhood; c) and the separation of intellectual functions at adolescent age. A source of conflicts can be the acceptance of new norms compared to the parents' norms and its consequence: the different behavior from the expected one, sometimes leading to disappointment from the parents.

According to Vaskovics's gradatory separations theory the sexual, intellectual and psychological maturity gained by the end of the adolescent period generates a certain need for autonomy, which in many cases conflicts with the dependent status within the family (Kiss, 2001). This "opposition" position creates a constructive impatience between the ages 14-18 (adolescents period), but this can easily turn into destructive impatience in the young adult age. This is related to the theory of symbolic interaction, where the experiences about the society are rooted in both the relationship to others and the interactions with others (Mead, 1970). A healthy self-esteem is necessary for the security required for fulfilling particular social roles (Barden, 1969).

In the separation process from the parents' life Vaskovics identified five main dimensions: a) separation in legal sense, b) moving out from the parental house, c) financial independence from parents, d) autonomy in decisions, e) subjectivity (Vaskovics, 2000)

The direct sources in the adolescents' imagination about the most important parts of the adult life course (family formation, choosing the profession, getting employed, childbearing, sexual intercourse, marriage) are the family and school, while the secondary sources are the indirect reality, like the media. According to the phenomenological sociology (Schutz, 1954, 1984b), and its most

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important successor, the phenomenological sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1966), these images are filled with experimental contents that significantly change the picture of reality even if the social environment remains unchanged. The changing of this “inner picture” was more radical during the post-socialist transformation in Eastern Europe (Sobotka, 2004; Kowalska and Wroblewska 2001) when during a couple of years the labor market was reduced, age-specific fertility rates decreased, divorce rates increased and house-prices skyrocketed.

In general the discovery of the values and social institutions is a continuous process, internalization on higher and higher level at the end of the adolescent period. The impact of the social consciousness can be found in the interiorization of values, leading to some sort of social assimilation (Hankiss, 1976). Socialization can be seen as the valuation of the adolescents' and young adults' decisions by the social environment. One particular decision cluster that is valued is the career planning and implementation (Gábor, 1992).

We argue that it is better to approach this question from the construction of the adolescents' knowledge than using the structuralist approach, since this can refer better to the frame of reference about the imagined but not experienced reality. Using the “Schutzian” terminology, this stock of knowledge at hand is the foundation of the projections about all future behavior (plan for the marriage, childbearing, choosing profession etc.) in other words the plans about the transition to adulthood are based on these current knowledge (Schutz, 1984:196).

Accepting that there are phases or events of socialization, we can ask how the construction of reality happens in each phase and what are the instruments of creating “nomos”, the preventative factor against the fear of the unknown adulthood. Marriage for example is a known instrumentality that creates nomos, social order in a given transition phase (Berger and Kellner, 1970). We consider three other events as fundamental for placing the individual into a certain social order: childbearing, the start of work and the creation of an autonomous and independent living space. We focus on these four events as the most important ones in self-realization and identity-creation. Obviously the importance and the actual realization of these events can change over time (e.g. cohabitation or being single vs. marriage, life long learning vs. finishing studies, childbearing vs. intended childlessness) but studying that change is over the empirical scope of this paper.

We can talk about successful socialization if there is a similarity between the objective and subjective reality and also identity. If this symmetry is missing, the socialization is unsuccessful (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Perfect symmetry is obviously anthropologically impossible however, as there is always some inconsistency between the two. The difference between the internalized subjective reality in the youths' mind and the imperfect realization of the roles (intersubjective reality) is the socialization deficit.

This socialization deficit is produced in a certain time frame. Socialization happens in a biologically and sometimes socially coded order. Adolescents have a certain time period to internalize the social roles and norms, and most of them are aware of this limit. The social environment has an important impact on this time frame, particular social settings can help the realization of the plans, while others can put serious burden on this process. Our chosen social setting, the post-socialist period is in the second group.

## **2. Conceptual background**

Many authors pointed out radical changes that occurred in Hungary in the past decade in the demographic behavior of the population especially in family formation. To understand this change we can evocate three major schools with regards to the explanation of the radical transformation in family formation. The first explains it with the transformation culture, social norms and values, the strengthening of individualization and the change of values affecting gender roles. In most of the countries of Western Europe changes in behavior began well before the 1990s, and Van de Kaa (1984, 1997) and Lesthaeghe (1986, 2002) introduced the term “second demographic transition” to describe these processes.

The second focuses on household economics and the deterioration of material conditions. This economic approaches stresses the change in environmental conditions and in particular the restructuring of the economy (labor market, housing market), and of the major service systems (education). The crisis hypothesis regarding the conditions in Eastern Europe is related to this group. In this sense the transformation has involved such an extensive restructuring of everyday relations and has caused such a radical deterioration of material conditions that the population of the countries concerned have postponed or renounced having (more) children in order to avoid an even greater decline.

The third approach emphasizes the social disintegration, widespread anomie and the difficulty of planning of the individual life course. While proponents of this view accept that both changes in individual values and the structural changes in the economy play a role in the changes in the characteristics of family formation, they attribute central significance to the integration of society. In very simple terms: the widespread social anomie and the impossibility of planning individual life careers play a decisive role in the fact that individuals do not commit themselves over the long term. That is, they do not form lasting partnerships and do not have children. (Kamaras, 2004; Speder, 2001).

Among the “old” internalized social norms is the accepted order of the events of the transition to adulthood. With the post-socialist transformation this order has been changed, placing the emphasis on two important components. One is the decreasing uniformity of this process due to the unpredictable

situation and the challenged traditional norms. The erosion of the traditional norms is indeed a gradual and natural process, but it was accelerated during the post-socialist transformation. The other component is the growing inconsistency in this order, like fulfilling multiple roles or the introduction of new norms in the post-adolescent period.

According to Keniston's concept of post-adolescence (Keniston 1968, 1989), during the transition to adulthood various traditional steps (finishing studies, entering the labor force, separating from the parental household, marriage, and childbearing) are realized to become an adult member in the society. Approaching this process from the standpoint of phenomenological sociology (Schutz, 1954; Berger and Luckmann, 1966), the emphasis is placed on the imagined reality, the construction and internalization of values and social institutions by adolescents. We can ask how the construction of reality happens in each phase and what are the instruments of creating "nomos". We focus on the following events as the most important ones in self-realization and identity-creation:

1. Acquiring the first profession
2. Finishing studies
3. Start of work
4. Marriage
5. Childbearing
6. Separation from the parental house – independent living space

Adolescents have to internalize the social roles and norms in a given period, which was extended in the past decades with the emergence of the post-adolescence in post-industrial societies. The social environment has an important impact on this process, helping or hindering the realization of the plans. If the society experiences a major transformation, the norms themselves can change. However, in post-socialist societies and in the post-socialist Hungary this traditional pattern has been changing rapidly. This transformation could easily lead to anomy, so the role of the instruments creating "nomos" became much more important.

The otherwise quite abundant literature of the post-socialist transformation did not pay much attention to the changes in the transition to adulthood, except noting the employment difficulties or the changing social norms. The corresponding demographic aspects in this literature focused on the general issues of declining fertility or delayed marriages, but there weren't any attempts to approach this transformation from the changes in the transition to adulthood. The demographic characteristics of the post-industrial societies were observed in most Eastern European countries from the 1960s, so they are

not the results of the post-socialist transformation. The importance of the last fifteen years lies in the increasing unpredictability of the transition to adulthood and the diversity of the transition strategies.

### 3. Methodology

Our study examines the transition patterns of adolescents to adulthood in post-socialist Hungary. We think the youth intention to family formation doesn't explained by a complex model, because the social and biological effects/circumstances modifies the individual life strategies in different individually way. Even so we hypothesize this can be classify by their attitudes and based on this can be draw careful projections. According to the conceptual background first of all we have to reveal the adolescents' transition strategies behind the post-socialist transformation. We focus on the internalization and the realization of the norms the society offers, and the social differences between groups of adolescents following the different strategies. After that we have to examine how works these strategies in the reality.

The project consists of three major parts. The first was a national survey of 2,065 adolescent respondents in 2001 representing the enrolled high school students in grades 11-12 about their transitional and career plans. These young peoples' socialization process (adolescent ages) started after the collapse of socialism and they will enter to the post-adolescent and to the adult ages during the post-socialist period. The adolescent survey serves as a base for revealing the various strategies with regards to the post-socialist transition to adulthood.

The second was a national survey of 1,000 adult respondents in 2004. In this survey we asked two different cohorts to compare the post-socialist youth strategies based on the national adolescents survey with the older generations' models. The first cohort was born after the WWII between 1950-1969 (socialist consolidation) and they started their adult life in the socialist period. The second one was born before the change of the socialist regime, between 1970-1986. This group grew up during the socialist period, but they entered to the adult ages in the post-socialist period.

	<b>1. cohort</b>	<b>2. cohort</b>	<b>3. cohort</b>
Born:	1950-1969	1970-1986	1984-1985
Socialization:	During the socialist period	During the socialist period	During the post-socialist period
Entering to post-adolescent ages:	During the socialist period	During the post-socialist period	During the post-socialist period
Entering to adult ages:	During the socialist/post-socialist period	During the post-socialist period	During the post-socialist period
Data source:	Echo Adult Population Survey, 2004-2006	Echo Adult Population Survey, 2004-2006	Echo Adolescent Population Survey (students in grades 11-12), 2001-2004
Dominant status at fieldwork	Adult	Post-adolescent	Adolescent

Both surveys were matched with data from the Central Statistical Office in Hungary about the basic demographic trends with regards to the various events in the transition to adulthood.

After that we had to examine how these strategies work in the reality. Using data from the Hungarian Social and Demographic Panel Survey from 2001 and 2004, we examined who could reach the adult status, forming a family in 2004 from those young people who were considered post-adolescent in 2001.

#### **4. Demography of the transition to adulthood in Hungary**

Not long ago, only few generations earlier (in the industrial societies), the human life course was built up of three periods, the childhood and juvenile period as a preparation, the active earning period and the more quite later life (Somlai 2002). A juvenile period could be partitioned within the preparation period. This division has changed to some extent during the post-industrial system, there appeared a young adult (post-adolescent) period wedged between the juvenile period and the adulthood (Vaskovics 2000). The constant extension of the juvenile period is a well-known sociological fact (Zinnecker, 1982; Vaskovics, 1993; Gábor, 1992; Somlai, 2002b), the main reason of which is the acceleration of the biological maturity and the expansion of school-age (the expansion of the secondary and later the higher education). According to the international literature, the main reason for the elongation of adolescence lies in the fact that due to the shifted years of studies, the choice of career is also postponed, just as childbearing (Hurrelmann, 1994). Nowadays a 12-14 years long childhood is followed by a similarly long juvenile period.

During the past 15 years, several social and economic changes led to the modern industrial society in Hungary. The expansion of higher education, the growing participation of women in the higher education, the expanding the career opportunities etc. had significant effect on changing of life-cycles: instead of marriage, growing numbers are cohabiting; the number of births has declined; within the number of births there has been a strong increase in the proportion of extramarital births; the age of mothers at the birth of the first child has risen; the divorce rate remains on a high level. Radical changes in a similar direction have occurred in the former socialist countries since 1990, although at slightly differing paces (Speder 2001).

As the result of fluctuation in the birth rates of past 20 years the number of the youth generations shows a diverse picture. Between 1980 and 1990 the number of 20-29 year-olds has decreased, by around 400,000 persons, however it has become 280,000 persons stronger by the start of 2004. [TABLE 1.] During the next decades a significant decrease is expected by the population forecasting, which will result in more than 500,000 people smaller population number of 20-29 year-olds in 2024 then their current population (Kamaras, 2004).

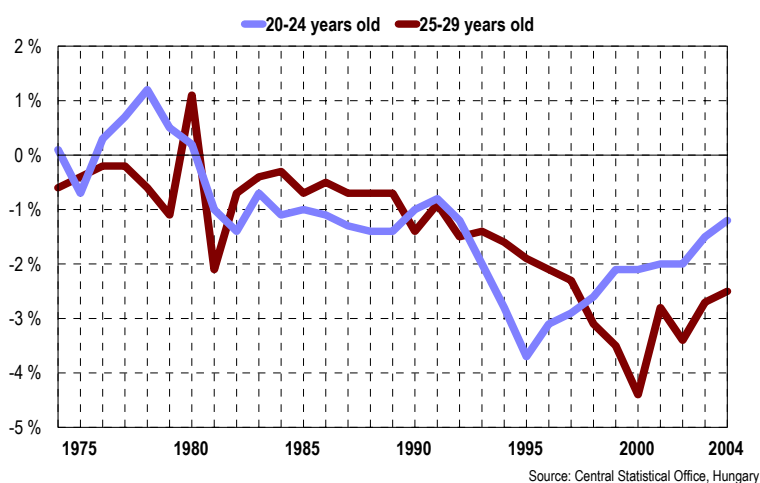
**Table 1. Number of generations by cohort**

Cohort	Number of birth (thousand)	
	During in 5 years	Average a year
1964-1968	707	141
1969-1973	766	153
1974-1978	912	182
1979-1983	713	143
1984-1988	634	127
1989-1993	615	123
1994-1998	531	106
1999-2003	481	96

Source: Central Statistical Office, 2004

There has been a significant modification in the demographic behavior of young people. The number of marriages is declining in the past decades: the number of annual first marriages fell back from 85,000 in 1975 to 43,000 in 2000. Corresponding with this, the proportion of married population under 30 declines since 1980, this decline was especially steep after 1990 [FIGURE 1.]. The mean age at first marriage increased among both men and women since 1990 [FIGURE 2.], and from the 1970s more and more young adults enter the first marriage with children [FIGURE 3.]. Marriages at a later age do not mean a more thoroughly considered choice of partners, because with the current divorces rate for every 100 marriages 42 expected to break up, and the stability of the cohabitation is unknown.

**Figure 1. Percentage change in the proportion of married population under 30 compared to the previous year**



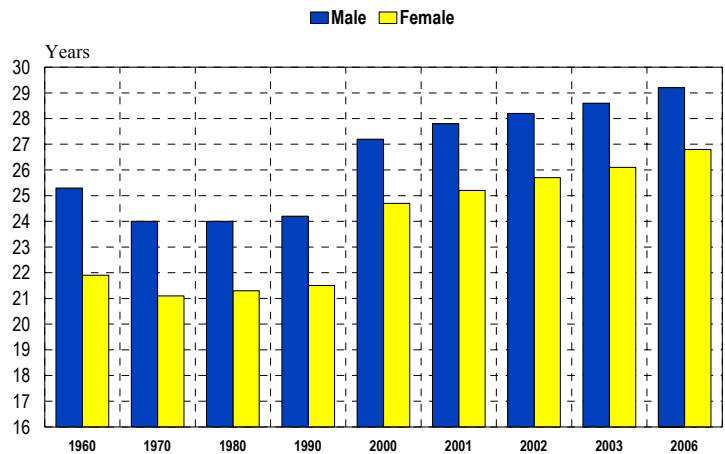
Corresponding with the general Eastern European pattern, childbearing have also changed and fertility is declining. This decline in Hungary started in the mid-1970s. In addition to the increasingly smaller childbearing ratios of mothers in their teens the fertility of 20-24 year-olds has also fallen almost a third of the 1990 ration. Parallel to the drop in fertility the average age of mothers has risen



significantly. The delayed childbearing in the 1990s overcomes the wave-effect of the relatively large cohorts.

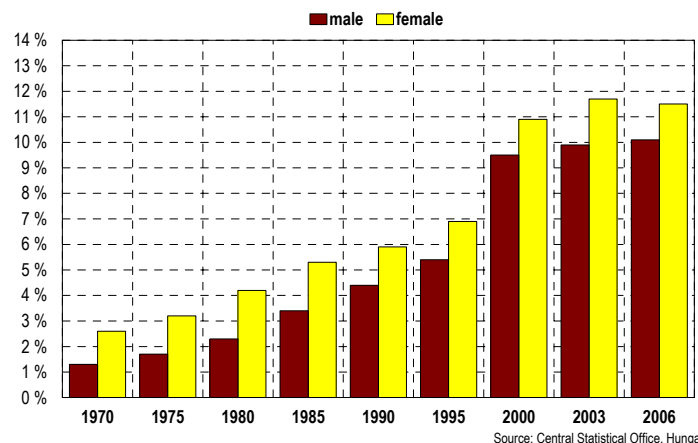
As a result of postponed childbearing the proportion of childlessness (intended or unintended childlessness) may rise and the “two child family model“ will probably loose its long held hegemony (Kamaras, 2004).

**Figure 2. Mean age at first marriage in Hungary, 1960-2006**



Source: Central Statistical Office, Hungary

**Figure 3. The proportion of those never married under 30 who had children before entering marriage**



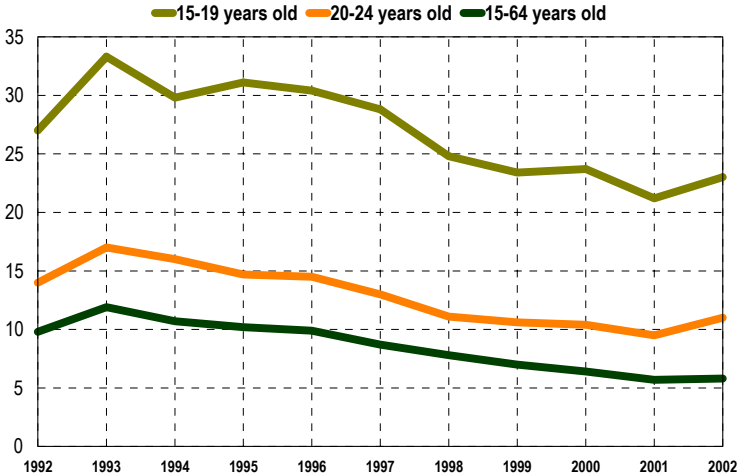
Source: Central Statistical Office, Hungary

Throughout the post-socialist transformation the enrollment in the higher education increases as a social response to the increased difficulties of employment and the changing roles of women. Housing shortages were a fundamental characteristic of the socialist period. During the post-socialist transformation it is even more difficult for young adults to separate from the parental household. Although the number of housing units increases with a slow pace since 1970, and the units with exclusively young adult residents is actually decreasing since 1980 [FIGURE 5].

The economic restructuring that caused large-scale unemployment had an even worse impact on the job opportunities for young adults. Youth unemployment in the 1990s is considerably higher than adult unemployment [FIGURE 4.].

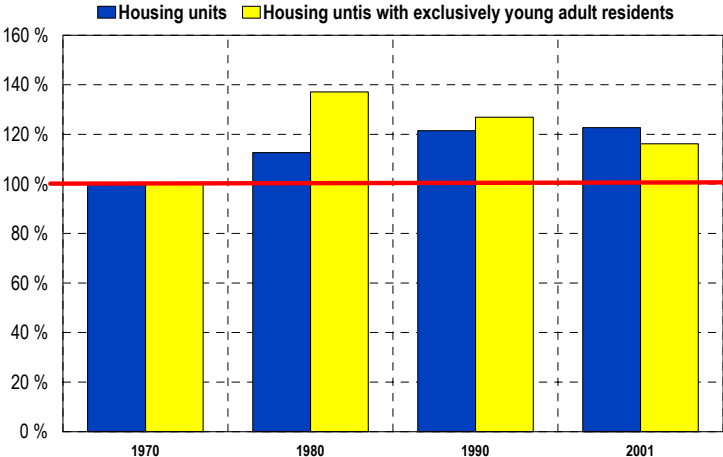
As a result of enrollment in the higher education and the difficulty for young adults to separate from the parental household, it seems that starting a family and childbearing have been ranked behind learning, work, carrier and creating livelihood on the importance scale.

**Figure 4. Unemployment rates in Hungary, 1992-2002**



Source: Central Statistical Office, Hungary

**Figure 5. Changes in the number of housing units, 1970-2001 (1970=100%)**



Source: Central Statistical Office, Hungary

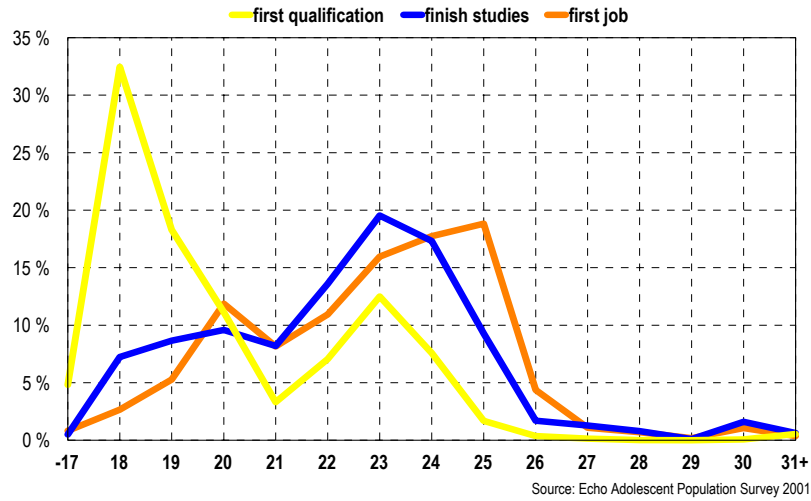
## 5. The order of the transition to adulthood

The empirical findings support that adolescents have socialized the preferred traditional order of the transition to adulthood. The first step is the first professional qualification (averaging at 20.2 years), then comes the finishing of studies (22.1) and the entering to the job market at 22.7 years on average [FIGURE 8.]. The next step is the separation from the parental household (23.1), followed by the marriage after two years (25.5.) and they plan the first child at 27.1 years on average [FIGURE 9.]. The transition to adulthood in this sense really happens in the post-adolescent period, between the ages 20 and 27 [FIGURE 10.]. With regards to the importance of the particular events, most young adults consider the separation from the parental household as the turning point in the transition to adulthood (32%), followed by the first job (28%), the first child (17%) and the marriage (11%).

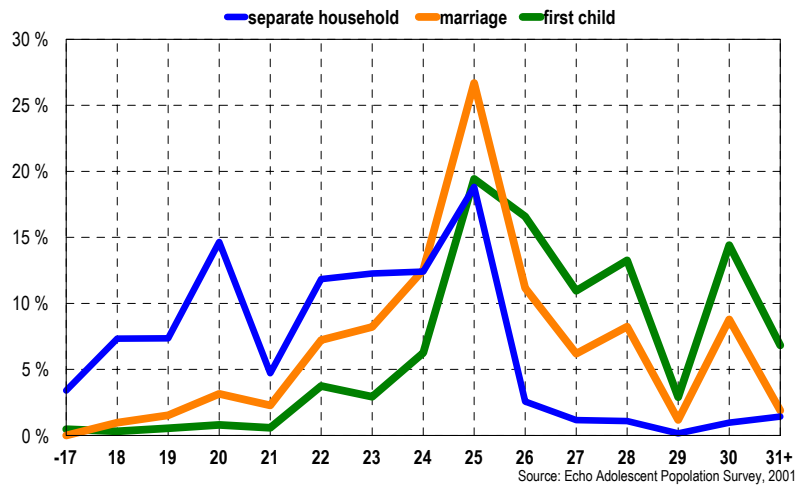
Comparing the planned timing of the transition events with the realized timing of the 1950-69 and 1970-1986 cohorts' transition the delay is clearly seen that even if the order is similar [FIGURE 10.]. In general, the most visible delay can be seen in the marriage, the finish studies and the timing of the first job, and first child, keeping the traditional gender difference. In some cases, however, these gender differences also change: they erode at the household separation as young women delay this with almost three years, but men follow the pattern of older; while in the education the increasing female participation creates a new gender difference.

The correlation coefficients in this planned timing show that in the adolescent age group (cohort 1984-1985) the strength of correlation between the events of transition declines, and in many cases it remains significant [TABLE 2.]. Exception is the marriage in three aspects: the finishing studies, entering to the labor market (first job) and the childbearing coefficients became lowers by the post-adolescent period, then by the adolescent plans. Especially important is the decline between the finishing studies – first job pair (from .635\*\* to .130).

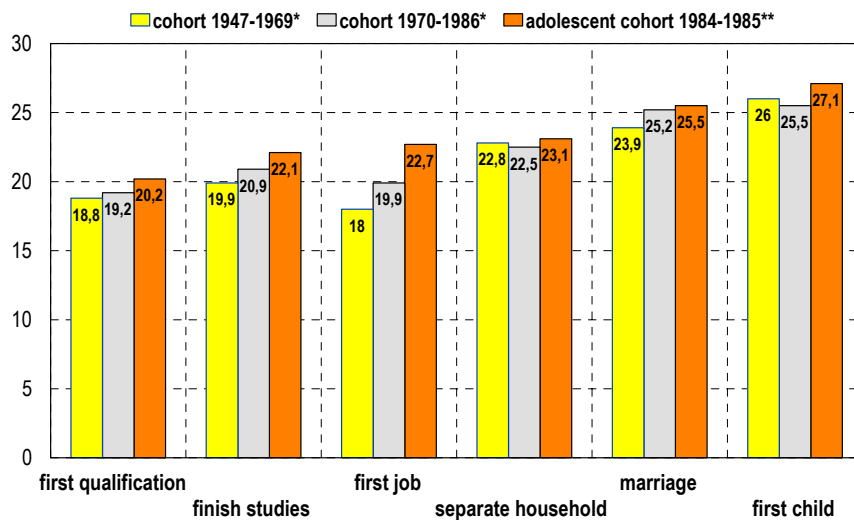
**Figure 8. The adolescents' plans about entering the job market, (Adolescent sample, cohort 1984-85, N=1146)**



**Figure 9. The adolescents' plans about family formation, (Adolescent sample, cohort 1984-1985, N=1146)**



**Figure 10. Mean age at transition events**



\* source: Echo Adult Population Survey, 2004

\*\* planned ages, source: Echo Adolescent Survey 2001

**Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficients**

Mean age at	cohort <sup>1</sup>		Mean age at				
			First qualification	Finish studies	First job	Separate household	Marriage
Finish studies	1950-1969	Coeff. N	<b>.307**</b> 323				
	1970-1986	Coeff. N	<b>.483**</b> 238				
	1984-1985	Coeff. N	<b>.433**</b> 997				
First job	1950-1969	Coeff. N	<b>.304**</b> 341	<b>.284**</b> 363			
	1970-1986	Coeff. N	<b>.278**</b> 206	<b>.103</b> 234			
	1984-1985	Coeff. N	<b>.416**</b> 925	<b>.635**</b> 812			
Separate household	1950-1969	Coeff. N	<b>.068</b> 305	<b>.140*</b> 327	<b>.186*</b> 349		
	1970-1986	Coeff. N	<b>.227**</b> 202	<b>.185**</b> 210	<b>.113</b> 225		
	1984-1985	Coeff. N	<b>.174**</b> 938	<b>.184**</b> 746	<b>.274**</b> 739		
Marriage	1950-1969	Coeff. N	<b>.129*</b> 300	<b>.214**</b> 324	<b>.246**</b> 341	<b>.432**</b> 316	
	1970-1986	Coeff. N	<b>.291**</b> 204	<b>.230**</b> 219	<b>.159*</b> 235	<b>.448**</b> 216	
	1984-1985	Coeff. N	<b>.123*</b> 784	<b>.303**</b> 668	<b>.327**</b> 732	<b>.269**</b> 687	
First child	1950-1969	Coeff. N	<b>.111</b> 282	<b>.116*</b> 300	<b>.146**</b> 319	<b>.406**</b> 315	<b>.457**</b> 295
	1970-1986	Coeff. N	<b>.256**</b> 201	<b>.295**</b> 205	<b>.053</b> 215	<b>.457**</b> 205	<b>.340**</b> 208
	1984-1985	Coeff. N	<b>.210**</b> 776	<b>.359**</b> 671	<b>.380**</b> 721	<b>.262**</b> 669	<b>.717**</b> 721

<sup>1</sup> In case 1950-1969 and 1970-1986 cohorts: Real age, In case 1984-1985 cohort: Planned age

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.001

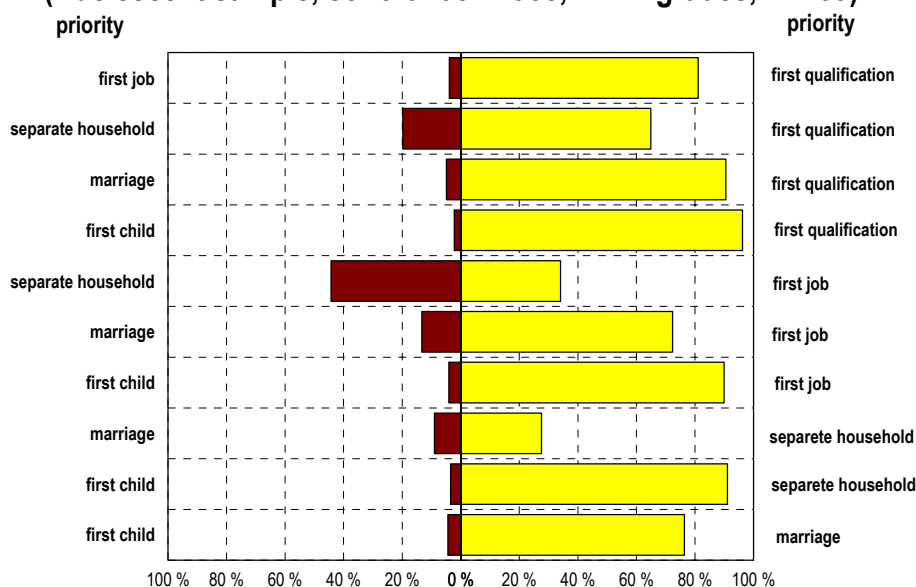
The high percentage of uncertain responses shows the unpredictability of the post-socialist situation with regards to the transition to adulthood, even if the traditional order is accepted. Not surprisingly young adults (cohort 1970-1986) are more certain in determining the time of these events than adolescents, but the gender differences are quite interesting [TABLE 3.]. Among the adolescents in the 11-12 grade predicting the time of the first job, separation, marriage and the first child was much harder for males, only less than half of them did choose a time. These differences remained in the post-adolescent period. The separation from the parental household seems more difficult for males.

**Table 3. The percentage of respondents who were unable to plan the transition events**

	Adolescent sample, 11-12 grades (cohort 1984-1985) N=2032			Adult sample (cohort 1970-1986) N=312		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
First qualification	22,7	21,0	21,9	5,2	2,3	2,7
Finish studies	45,5	39,2	42,6	8,3	2,0	5,2
First job	55,0	40,6	48,4	7,7	2,0	4,9
Separate household	52,7	37,4	45,7	16,7	4,8	10,8
Marriage	61,2	43,4	53,1	22,9	9,7	16,4
First child	62,8	42,4	53,5	23,2	9,2	16,4

Not all plans fit to the traditional order and norms. FIGURE 11. shows that 4 percent of the adolescents (cohort 1984-1985) plan to work and 20 percent wants to leave the parental home before the first professional qualification. Reflecting to the post-socialist reality, entering the job market is delayed: 44 percent wants to leave home and 13 percent wants to marry before applying for the first job. Also, as it can be seen in TABLE 4., some do not plan to experience particular events at all. About 4 percent of the male high school students in the 11-12 grades do not want to marry and have children. By the post-adolescent period some of them change their minds about the children, but the proportion who never wants to marry doubles. Females on the other hand change their plans in another aspect: while almost none of them in the 11-12 grades told us she will never leave the parental home, the post-adolescent sample contained 5 percent female never-leavers. Males are sure to leave the parents, they are just more uncertain about its timing as we could see before.

**Figure 11. Relative priorities in dichotom comparison,  
(Adolescent sample, cohort 1984-1985, 11-12 grades, N=739)**



Source: Echo Survey, 2001

**Table 4. The percentage of respondents who do not plan to experience selected transition events**

	Adult sample, cohort 1950-1969 N=378			Adult sample cohort 1970-1986 N=301			Adolescent sample, 11-12 grades (cohort 1984-1985) N=2032		
	Male	Female	Total	Female	Total	Total	Male	Female	Total
Separate household	8,8	5,1	7,1	17,3	13,8	15,4	1,0	0,6	0,8
Marriage	10,1	3,5	6,5	20,3	15,2	17,8	4,2	2,2	3,3
First child	12,4	3,0	7,6	15,9	6,3	11,2	3,9	1,6	2,9

The analysis of variance revealed those variables that bear significant explaining power with regards to the transition events. Among the adolescents school grades, the plans about college and the high school type makes difference [TABLE 5.]. The school type is an important factor in post-socialist societies (and in the socialist period), since the three major types of high schools work by very different curriculums, and they strongly determine the future career opportunities, recreating the inherited inequalities instead of compensating for them. The influence of these factors decreases as we go ahead in time and switch from the career events to the more personal events (separation, marriage, childbearing). High school education (degree) seems to be the most important about the career choices of post-adolescents too (cohort 1970-1986). However, at the events in the later half of the transition, gender, socioeconomic status and transition strategy also plays an important role besides education.

**Table 5. Analysis of variance, R Squares**

<b>Transition events</b>	<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Cohort 1 1950-1969</b>	<b>Cohort 2 1970-1986</b>	<b>Cohort 3 1984-1985</b>
First qualification	Gender	.017*	.001	.019**
	Degree/Type of school	.080**	.201**	.429**
	Parents' degree	.040*	.097**	.102**
	Economic activity	.001	.018*	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.006	.028	.085**
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.003	.031*	.065**
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.001	.007	.001
	School grades			.194**
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.004
	Plans about college			.124**
Finish studies	Gender	.001	.004	.012**
	Degree/Type of school	.281**	.353**	.167**
	Parents' degree	.097**	.177**	.047**
	Economic activity	.006	.004	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.095**	.240**	.147**
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.038*	.064**	.010
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.010	.013	.023
	School grades			.217**
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.011
	Plans about college			.306**
First job	Gender	.000	.010*	.010**
	Degree/Type of school	.312**	.219**	.130**
	Parents' degree	.139**	.111**	.046**
	Economic activity	.015*	.030*	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.203**	.110**	.028*
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.021*	.049*	.011
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.007	.006	.034
	School grades			.132**
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.000
	Plans about college			.204**
Separate household	Gender	.067**	.059**	.021**
	Degree/Type of school	.034*	.016	.001
	Parents' degree	.010	.011	.004
	Economic activity	.011*	.014*	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.008	.051*	.014
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.016*	.016*	.008
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.015*	.002	.037
	School grades			.003
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.002
	Plans about college			.013**



Transition events	Independent variables	Cohort 1 1950-1969	Cohort 2 1970-1986	Cohort 3 1984-1985
Marriage	Gender	.067**	.079**	.068**
	Degree/Type of school	.133**	.151**	.030**
	Parents' degree	.050**	.148**	.013*
	Economic activity	.020*	.003	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.039*	.176**	.023
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.042**	.030*	.051*
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.004	.039*	.056*
	School grades			.010*
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.027**
	Plans about college			.043**
First child	Gender	.032**	.041*	.047**
	Degree/Type of school	.041*	.011	.035**
	Parents' degree	.039*	.001	.020**
	Economic activity	.002	.035*	
	Socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	.001	.058**	.048*
	Self-comparison to the peer group	.006	.014	.067*
	Transition strategy cluster <sup>b</sup>	.022*	.058*	.139**
	School grades			.006
	Value cluster <sup>c</sup>			.039**
	Plans about college			.046**

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.001

<sup>a</sup> The SES variable was created from the parents' and the respondents' education, the expenditure structure and the employment experiences.

<sup>b</sup> The transition strategy cluster refers to our three model transition strategies: family-, society- and autonomy guided.

<sup>c</sup> The value cluster refers to three groups of students: (1) the active, self-promoting leaders; (2) the conform executers; and (3) the undetermined but unsatisfied students.

The one-way ANOVA analysis showed that the transition strategy classification has explained 2% variance from the timing of first child at cohort 1950-69, 6 % at the cohort 1970-1986 (post-adolescents) and 14 % variance at cohort adolescent. Transition strategy has no explaining power from the first qualification, first job and finishing studies, while the economic activity variable has shown limited influence.

## 6. Transition strategies

The main supporting pillars of young peoples' endeavors for autonomy show a varying picture across Europe. The labor market, the family and the social transfers are the three main pillars ensuring the required resources necessary for the independence of young people. The role of these three factors varies across European countries. In the northern countries, the financial welfare of post-adolescents youth is mostly supported by the state. In the UK this aspect is mainly dependent on the market. In the Mediterranean and Eastern European countries it is guaranteed by the family background (Gasperoni and Schizzerotto, 2001).

Based on the literature, our hypothesis was to find the two distinct transition strategies: traditional early and delayed family formation, with most of the young adults choosing the second one during the post-socialist transformation (Toth, 2002). Using K-means cluster analysis on a long list of attitude and preference questions in the adult sample and in the adolescent sample we differentiated between three groups or transition strategies: family-guided, autonomy-guided and society-guided [TABLE 6.] in both sample.

The group with the FAMILY-GUIDED strategy accepts the orienting role of the family, the extended dependence on the parental household, and highly appreciates the marriage and childbearing. These are mainly males, respondents with higher educational attainment, but also more inactive young adults can be found here. The AUTONOMY-GUIDED strategy emphasizes the early separation, accepts the childbearing out of wedlock as natural, and rejects the parental patterns. In this group we can find more relatively older young people in post-adolescent period, economically active respondents with average educational level. The third is the SOCIETY-GUIDED strategy, this is the ideal/traditional model of transition emphasized by the society with some inertia from the socialist period. In the post-adolescent cohort these are younger people, with a higher proportion of students (referring to less life experience), and also more of them come from a lower social strata. This strategy accepts the emphasized model of socialization and does not require any significant adjustment to the post-socialist environment, but in a paradox way this inevitably leads to socialization deficit in the post-adolescent cohort, with its delays and disappointing experiences. This reveals another inconsistency: while most of the young adults follow the traditional way, on the other hand 67% of them are not satisfied with their parents' life course.

**Table 6. Cluster definitions (Adult population, 2004)**

	Cluster 1 Family-guided	Cluster 2 Society- guided	Cluster 3 Autonomy- guided	F
One has to live in marriage to have children.	4,35	4,46	1,86	731,64**
Marriage is an important social institute, cohabitation does not offer the same family feeling.	4,31	4,34	2,05	522,31**
It is a good thing that young adults live together before they commit themselves for a deeper relationship.	2,56	4,04	4,33	202,51**
There is no shame in divorce, it is a natural end of a marriage if things turn out that way.	2,84	4,16	4,48	174,19**
No one should have children until the separation from the parental house.	2,04	3,44	2,55	104,82**
Just because our parents lived by certain norms, we don't need to follow those.	3,13	4,20	4,21	98,69**
The first child should come only if I have a secure job.	3,17	4,44	3,75	98,21**
Abortion on social grounds should be condemned.	2,99	2,31	1,45	91,25**
We have to separate from our parental household as soon as possible.	3,24	4,34	3,93	89,04**
There are no longer jobs for life, one should acquire new skills continuously.	4,31	4,83	4,80	55,02**
What we achieve in life is fundamentally depends on the family background.	3,99	4,43	3,77	41,45**
It's not worth to plan the family life and career ahead, since there is much uncertainty in life.	3,26	4,11	3,66	36,32**
The skills given by the school are not sufficient for starting an independent life.	3,59	4,28	4,10	31,41**
During socialism the transition to adulthood was much easier.	3,57	4,02	3,25	21,99**
Cohort 1950-1969 (adult)	23,1% N=91	40,9 % N=161	36,0 % N=142	100% N=394
Cohort 1970-1986 (post-adolescent)	16,9 % N=53	33,3 % N=104	49,8 % N=155	100% N=312
Cohort 1984-1985 (adolescent)	24,7 % N=62	40,2 % N=101	35,1 % N=88	100% N=251

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.001

The explaining power of the transition strategy cluster variable is the largest in the marriage and the first child events. However, if we include the gender, the degree and the transition strategy variables in the model, the interactions increase the explained proportion by the model at all dependent variables [TABLE 7.], especially in the case of first child.

**Table 7. Explanatory model of the transition events - (Adult population, 2004)**

	cohort <sup>1</sup>	Variables in common model			Main effect	Model
		Gender	Degree	Transition strategy		
		Beta			R <sup>2</sup>	E <sup>2</sup>
First qualification	1950-1969	.122	.270	.051	.091**	<b>.134**</b>
	1970-1986	.019	.300	.077	.095**	<b>.143**</b>
Finish studies	1950-1969	.047	.497	.030	.250**	<b>.286**</b>
	1970-1986	.004	.590	.050	.353**	<b>.397**</b>
First job	1950-1969	.048	.572	.025	.330**	<b>.393**</b>
	1970-1986	.041	.462	.064	.221**	<b>.268**</b>
Separate household	1950-1969	.272	.200	.059	.119**	<b>.146**</b>
	1970-1986	.256	.119	.194	.076**	<b>.156**</b>
Marriage	1950-1969	.293	.337	.048	.183**	<b>.249**</b>
	1970-1986	.310	.212	.261	.278	<b>.308**</b>
First child	1950-1969	.179	.178	.100	.074**	<b>.088**</b>
	1970-1986	.236	.128	.232	.110**	<b>.217**</b>

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.001

Now we can examine how these clusters work as explanatory variables in relation with transition events as a dependent variable. First of all we can see that all variables in the models had significant explanatory power at the 1% level in all the six dependent transition events variables. The timing of first qualification, finishing studies and first job are explained best with the degree (education level) in both cohorts. In the case of separate household, the gender was the most important variable, but the strategy had the second largest beta coefficient. The first child in the post-adolescent cohort was determined by the transition strategy, while the marriage was determined by the degree.

Since the interaction effect is significant in the model, we can use E<sup>2</sup> to present the explanatory power of the full model.<sup>2</sup> Our models with the new transition strategy cluster have explained 30,8 percent of the variance in the marriage at post-adolescent cohort (1970-1986) and 24,9 percent variance from the marriage at the older cohort (1950-1969). Compared to the cohorts, it can be seen that the transition events can be better explained by the complex model (the models' value higher than the main effect). Also it is important to note that these indicators explained better the transition events in

<sup>2</sup> There are actually six models for the six independent variables.

the cohort 1970-1986 than in the cohort 1950-1969. This means that the post-adolescents cohort is more sensitive to the transition strategy.

**Table 8. Comparison of the post-socialist transition with the parental generation by transition strategies by cohort**

	Transition strategy	1950-1969 coh. (n=394)				1970-1986 coh. (n=309)			
		Harder now	No differ.	Easier now	Cramers'V	Harder now	No differ.	Easier now	Cramers'V
First job	Family-guided	74,7%	18,7%	6,6%	<b>.145*</b>	78,0%	16,0%	6,0%	<b>.181**</b>
	Society-guided	90,1%	6,8%	3,1%		92,8%	2,1%	5,2%	
	Autonomy-guided	90,8%	5,0%	4,3%		85,7%	10,4%	3,9%	
Entering college	Family-guided	14,6%	23,6%	61,8%	<b>.126*</b>	11,5%	21,2%	67,3%	.091
	Society-guided	30,2%	11,3%	58,5%		20,4%	11,2%	68,4%	
	Autonomy-guided	20,9%	18,7%	60,4%		17,5%	11,0%	71,4%	
Separation from the parental house	Family-guided	46,0%	43,7%	10,3%	<b>.121*</b>	46,2%	40,4%	13,5%	<b>.156**</b>
	Society-guided	65,0%	23,8%	11,3%		64,9%	23,3%	11,7%	
	Autonomy-guided	60,9%	28,3%	10,9%		57,9%	30,9%	11,2%	
Childbearing	Family-guided	44,4%	47,8%	7,8%	<b>.134*</b>	37,3%	56,9%	5,9%	<b>.245**</b>
	Society-guided	68,3%	26,1%	5,6%		72,4%	24,5%	3,1%	
	Autonomy-guided	58,7%	34,8%	6,5%		60,1%	34,0%	5,9%	
Finding the spouse	Family-guided	15,6%	75,6%	8,9%	.074	11,8%	70,6%	17,6%	<b>.185**</b>
	Society-guided	22,5%	67,5%	10,0%		24,5%	71,4%	4,1%	
	Autonomy-guided	25,9%	63,0%	11,1%		17,0%	69,9%	13,1%	
Family support for the transition to adulthood	Family-guided	50,0%	41,1%	8,9%	<b>.118*</b>	52,0%	38,0%	10,0%	<b>.107*</b>
	Society-guided	67,3%	23,3%	9,4%		60,4%	21,2%	18,4%	
	Autonomy-guided	58,5%	28,1%	13,3%		50,7%	39,3%	10,0%	
Self-realization	Family-guided	25,6%	36,7%	37,8%	.064	21,6%	35,3%	43,1%	.109
	Society-guided	34,4%	33,8%	31,8%		33,0%	30,9%	36,1%	
	Autonomy-guided	32,1%	29,9%	38,0%		19,7%	30,9%	49,3%	
Change of residence	Family-guided	20,5%	51,1%	28,4%	<b>.107*</b>	15,1%	45,3%	39,6%	.110
	Society-guided	37,7%	36,5%	25,8%		32,3%	28,3%	39,4%	
	Autonomy-guided	33,1%	38,1%	28,8%		28,2%	36,9%	34,9%	
Acquiring the proper qualifications	Family-guided	7,9%	28,1%	64,0%	<b>.129*</b>	13,2%	18,9%	67,9%	.086
	Society-guided	25,8%	20,8%	53,5%		18,8%	14,9%	66,3%	
	Autonomy-guided	16,5%	24,5%	59,0%		11,7%	23,4%	64,9%	
Possibility of foreign career	Family-guided	5,6%	14,4%	80,0%	.097	1,9%	13,5%	84,6%	<b>.181**</b>
	Society-guided	8,9%	8,9%	82,3%		9,4%	3,1%	87,5%	
	Autonomy-guided	10,8%	5,0%	84,2%		6,6%	4,6%	88,8%	

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.001

Youngest adults (cohort 1970-1986) (22%) think that the transition to adulthood is not explicitly harder or easier in the post-socialist period, there are certain aspects that are easier and others harder. 44% considers the contemporary situation harder, while 13% easier. Most adults (70%) in the older cohort (1950-1969) considered the contemporary situation harder. The different transition strategies, however, have a strong influence on these opinions [TABLE 8.]. The largest differences can be found at the society-guided strategy: these young adults consider the first job, the parental separation and the

childbearing even harder than the average, but also acknowledge the easier family support for the transition to adulthood after 1990.

## **7. Change of the transition status**

In a post-socialist society the adult community has to face the fact that the life course of young people is not progressing in the earlier, controlled order, the transition occurs from a predictable social environment to a uncertain one. This phenomenon brings the whole family to uncertainty, though this experience is yet not able to overwrite the value-systems of the social actors socializing the young people to traditional life courses. It only disengages the evaluation of career-plans of young people (behavioral control) from the process.

In the course of growing up, people socialize a sort of specific chronology (the order, how the life-course events should follow each other), which they transmit to their children (Berger-Luckman 1966). However, this “compulsion of chronological order” was spoiled by the post-socialist transition, and though the chronological order remained an important element of the knowledge about the everyday world, the everyday world (empirical experience) could even progress against this knowledge.

The final part of our analysis is to examine how these strategies work in reality. Using data from the Hungarian Social and Demographic Panel Survey from 2001 and 2004 we examined who could reach the adult status, forming a family in 2004 from those young people who were considered post-adolescent in 2001.

Examining, to what extent the transition status of the post-adolescent period is typical of the given cohort, we have to look at which members of a cohort are through with the different transition events. The 85-96 % of the 1950-1969 cohort has finished studies, got the first job, moved to separate households, got married and have children. 62 % of the whole cohort has followed this life course (that is members are over all the five events), and other 25 % is also reached four steps of five (in general finish studies, first job, separate household, marriage). While 69 % of the 1970-1986 cohort has finished studies by 2001, 80 percent has even gained work experience, though only 38 % managed to move to separate household, 31 percent got married and 29 percent have children. 10 % has completed all the five „milestones”, 17 % is over four events out of five [TABLE 9.].

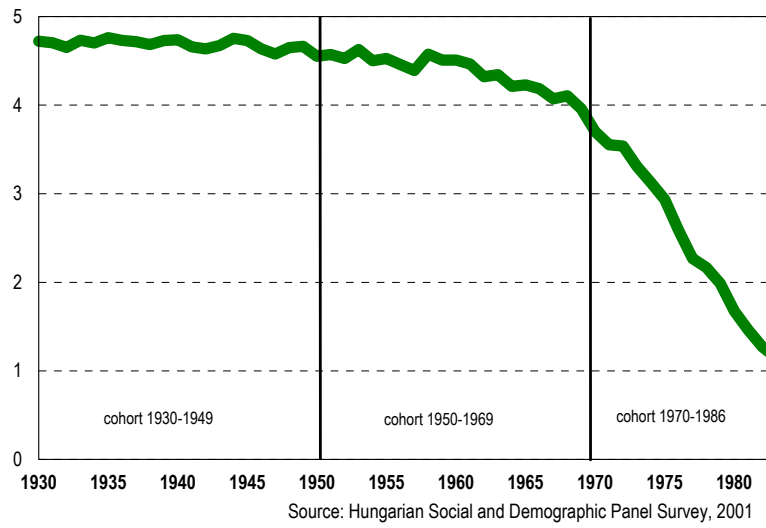
**Table 9, Percentage of respondents who reached the transition events before 2001 by cohort and mean of transition status index by cohort, based on the reached events**

	2001			2004
	1920-1949 n=5639	1950-1969 N=6107	1970-1986 n=4616	1970-1986 n=4339
Finish studies	99,7 %	96,5 %	69,0 %	84,3 %
First job	96,0 %	84,8 %	79,6 %	78,5 %
Separate household	89,3 %	85,7 %	38,4 %	57,6 %
Marriage	95,7 %	87,2 %	30,6 %	51,0 %
Childbearing	88,2 %	85 %	28,6 %	48,3 %
<b>Transition status index (0-5 scale)</b>	<b>4,68</b>	<b>4,39</b>	<b>2,46</b>	<b>3,20</b>
<b>Analysis of variance on Transition status index, R Squares</b>				
Gender	.000	.012**	.010**	.011**
Degree/Educ. Level	.004*	.023**	.062**	.025**
Age	.005	.039*	.402**	.292**

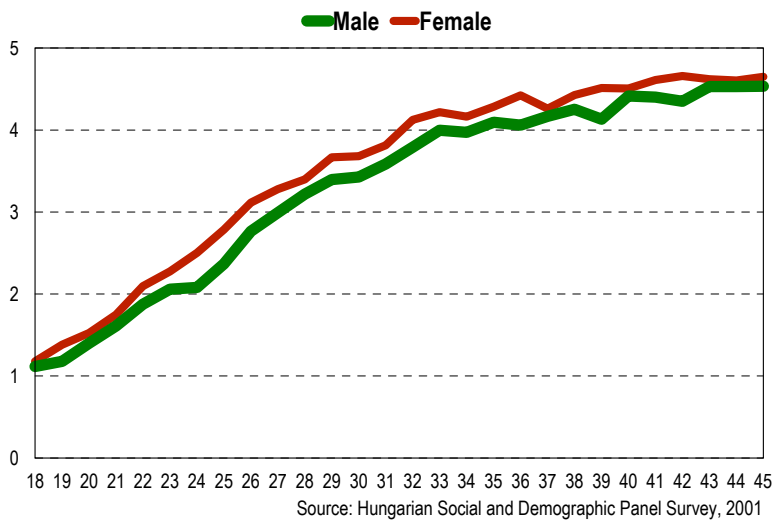
\*p<.05 \*\*p<.001

As means of comparison, we created a simple index concerning the attainment of the five events, giving a score after each fulfilled steps. Thus the 0 value of the index between 0 and 5 shows, that the respondent has not yet attained any of the “nomos”-creating events in the post-adolescent period, while the 5 value shows, that a respondent has reached all the five important milestones, according to the examined dimensions in demographic sense he or she is completely grown-up (finished studies, job, separate household, marriage, childbearing). This “transition index” is 4,39 at the cohort of 1950-1969, and 2,49 at the younger post-adolescent cohort (1970-1986). The index is basically dependent on the age ( $R^2=.591^{**}$ ) [FIGURE 12]. Typically, the value of the transition index is constantly higher among the women population until the age of 45, after this age the difference between the two genders diminishes [FIGURE 13]. The effect of qualification is also demonstrable, although it has much less influential force. The influential force of both the gender and the qualification turns out to decrease vigorously with the age, as the comparison of the cohorts shows.

**Figure 12. The transition status index in 2001  
by year of birth**

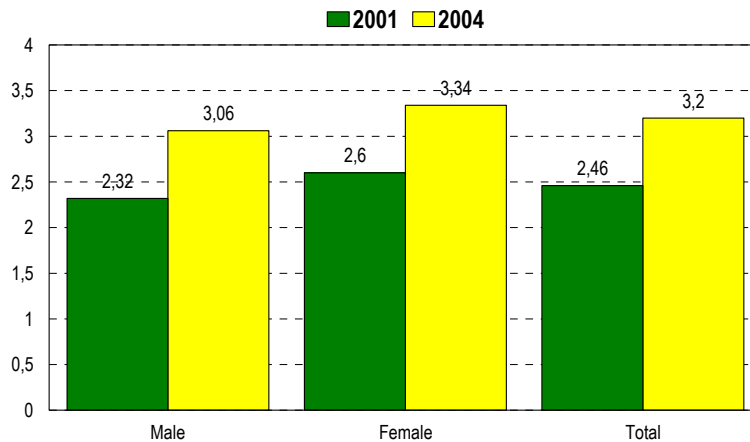


**Figure 13. The transition status index in 2001  
by age and gender**





**Figure 14. The transition status index in 2001-2004 in cohort 1970-1986 by gender**



Source: Hungarian Social and Demographic Panel Survey, 2001, 2004

We examined the situation of the 1970-1986 cohort both in 2001 and 2004. According to this in three years the mean of the transition index has risen with 0.7 score from 2,5 to 3,2, [FIGURE 14] that is to say, everyone has made maximum one step forward on average. The rate of those married has increased from 31 % to 51 %, those having children from 29 % to 48 % and the rate of those moving to separate households exceeds 50 % within the cohort. If we look at each age-group within the cohort, we can see that the rate of marriage has significantly increased at those born in 1980, the rate of separate households and childbearing at those born in 1981, adjusting to the special situations of the age-groups.

While analyzing the occurred changes we have to draw attention to two factors regarding the young people's transition to adulthood: 1) several components of the life course became modifiable (e.g. marriage with divorce, employment status with choice of career) and 2) inconsistency became common, since the earlier interrelated regularities of the life course became spoiled by the diversification.

## Summary

Whichever way we interpret the transformation of youth (new life stage, prolongation, economical force etc.), instead of the clear trajectory, the so-called structural determination of reaching adulthood, we find an increased proliferation of individual routes, which also entails the growing burden of multitude of options to choose from (Biggart et al., 2002). The choices are restricted by the resources available to people in the post-adolescent ages, based on the transition strategy. In Hungary when trying to achieve independence, young adult people can depend on the market beside the transfers received from the family, and also to lesser degree on diminishing state support.

We can derive the following conclusions of the previous analysis. First of all, the post-socialist transformation significantly modified the conventional way of starting adulthood. Now we can observe a "socialization deficit": adolescents learn the adult behavior from a society, which was socialized by the traditional adulthood-starting norms, but now this way is often unviable because of the social transformation.

However, this "socialization deficit" does not have the same impact on all adolescents. Their behavior reflects different strategies that are more complex than just a simple delay in family formation. We can identify three different groups or strategies: family-guided, autonomy-guided and society-guided plans about starting adulthood and family formation. These strategies are based on socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescents and young adults and also their families.

Young adults do not necessarily consider the transition to adulthood harder in the post-socialist period. They are aware that certain aspects of the process are actually easier, especially the opportunities in education. But on the other hand they believe that the traditional events of the transition are more difficult to achieve now than before 1990.

We identified the intended childlessness and remaining single in the post-socialist context, two modern phenomena that have considerable occurrence in Western Europe. These two new patterns transform the concept of post-adolescence and might lead to radical changes in adult demographic behavior. This phenomenon is understudied in Hungary and this is a very important further research direction.

The policy implications of these changes are interacting with family formation, fertility behavior, labor mobility and various other social services. There has been a significant shift in emphasis in demographic behavior of young adults. The disposition towards marriage has weakened, partnership outside marriage have gained ground. However, late marriage does not necessarily mean a more thoroughly considered choice of partners. We have little knowledge on the stability of cohabitation.

Adolescents and young adults have to face many inconsistent situations during the transition to adulthood. They are forced to carry out this transition under unwanted and unfavorable conditions. While many of them practices the socially accepted way of family formation, the society and the family in most cases cannot provide the resources for the proper transition.

Policy makers in most cases account only for the traditional transition events (first of all the marriage and the fertility) and could be misguided by that. We think that a further elaboration of socialization deficit and the change of transition events can have a significant contribution to transition to adulthood studies.

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