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**Titel:** Leaving home in Europe: A first look at Eastern Europe

**Abstract:** For young people, leaving the parental home is an important milestone in the transition to adulthood. Not only does it imply a degree of financial independence for the young person from their parents, but it also may coincide with other key life course events, such as the start of the young person’s own family. As well as leaving home being a significant step in the lives of young individuals, it also has important policy implications, particularly in terms of poverty risks and the demand for housing.

Studies which have examined home leaving behaviour in the pre-enlargement European Union find two distinct patterns of home leaving behaviour across the region: a Northern European pattern, where home leaving happens at an early age and is often linked to continuing education or to take up employment; and a Southern European pattern where young adults leave home much later and the process is closely linked to marriage (Jones, 1995).

Factors such as the limited access to affordable housing, higher unemployment rates and lower wages in the South have been used to explain this observed difference in home leaving behaviour.

However, at least part of the difference may be related to cultural variations in preferences for ‘independence’ versus ‘togetherness’ between the two regions, which affect the age at which children leave home. Given that parents can use their resources either to assist their children with leaving home (e.g. by subsidising their living costs outside of the parental home), or to encourage them to stay (e.g. by providing them with comfortable living accommodation, meals and washing clothes), then the relationship between parental income and the propensity of a young person to leave home can be used as an indicator of such cultural preferences. Indeed, Iacovou (2010) finds a positive relationship between parental income and home leaving in the Nordic countries, and those in North-West Europe, whereas in Southern Europe a negative effect is found - implying a preference for family togetherness in Southern European countries and a preference for independence in Nordic and North-Western Europe.

Although a sizeable body of research exists on home-leaving in the pre-enlargement EU, very little is known about the determinants of the home-leaving decision in the New Member States of Eastern Europe. This paper uses longitudinal data collected by the EU Statistics on Income and Living conditions (EU-SILC) to examine home-leaving behaviour across the enlarged EU. We focus particularly on the effect of parental income on the home leaving decision, as well as considering how the individuals own income, their family situation and their health and the health of their parents might influence this process.