

## **FROM EDUCATION TO WORK: A COMPARISON OF UNEMPLOYMENT PATTERNS ACROSS ETHNIC GROUPS IN GERMANY**

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### **Abstract**

The German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) with its 23 waves and an enormous oversample of migrants offers a unique opportunity to observe long-term processes in Germany. This paper focuses on one such case, the labour market integration of ethnic minorities - or the question if “comparable groups of workers [...] enjoy comparable opportunities and outcomes” (Böhning 1995: 2). We first briefly elaborate on the question which groups can be regarded as comparable and which characteristics should be taken into account for a comparison of ethnic groups.

Investigating unemployment patterns among young school leavers from different ethnic backgrounds, the study secondly discusses the factors smoothening the transition to the first job. Segregation, human capital and social reproduction serve as theoretical background for explaining the ethnic gap. In contrast to similar studies, unemployment here does not only include classical unemployment durations but also transition periods with small jobs, etc. The so-constructed spells are analysed with non-proportional Cox models allowing for different hazards functions across ethnic groups.

A third section makes an important distinction with regard to the type of employment taken up after. The results reveal that the greatest ethnic differences found do not exit in the unemployment duration and the transition to work in general but in the exit strategies: A much greater ethnic difference can be observed when looking at blue versus white collar work. Not surprisingly, the importance of the covariates differs. In other words, the mechanisms for both destinations diverge considerably. Pleading for an extended analysis, it is argued that a sole indicator of unemployment duration is not always appropriate for drawing conclusions on integration. Looking at particular destinations states, the term “unemployment patterns” is regarded as more suitable to cover these distinctive dimensions.

**Keywords:** Labour market integration, ethnic minorities, duration of unemployment, school leavers, Cox regression model, non-proportional hazards

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