

Rethinking Youth Transitions: Values, Expectations, and Social Norms

Final Conference of the START project

Early-Career Researchers Session

4 November 2026

University of Turin

Call for abstracts

In recent decades, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged, destandardized, and socially differentiated. Growing attention has been devoted to **the role of cultural values, social norms, and future expectations** in shaping young people's life plans and trajectories. Understanding how adolescents and emerging adults form **expectations about education, work, family formation, and residential independence**—and how these are influenced by values, socialization processes, and contextual opportunities and constraints—represents a key theoretical and methodological challenge for contemporary research on youth and the life course.

The START – Surfing Transition to Adulthood: Resources and Timing – project addresses these questions through a **large-scale school-based survey of adolescents and parents** across Italy, combining survey data, survey experiments, and contextual indicators. On the occasion of the START final conference, we **invite PhD students and early-career researchers** to submit proposals for a research session devoted to new empirical contributions on youth transitions. To promote the use of the project's data and support emerging scholars, the START research team will make the survey **dataset available to selected participants**, who will develop and present an original empirical analysis at the conference. The START dataset offers a unique opportunity to investigate the **early formation of preferences, expectations, and life plans among adolescents**, as well as the role of cultural values, social stratification, and contextual opportunities in shaping youth transitions.

The **morning session** of the conference will feature invited speakers addressing key theoretical and methodological challenges in the study of youth transitions. Confirmed speakers include [Arnstein Aassve](#) (Bocconi University) and [Elisa Brini](#) (University of Florence), alongside members of the START project [Simona Guglielmi](#) (University of Milan), [Renzo Carriero](#) and [Sonia Bertolini](#) (University of Turin)—who will also present the project's main findings.

The **afternoon session** will be dedicated to **presentations by early-career researchers using the START dataset**, with the aim of fostering new analyses on the role of values, expectations, and social norms in the early formation of preferences about youth transitions, and of promoting exchange and network-building among scholars in the field. The authors of the most promising contributions will be invited to contribute to an **edited volume (in Italian) currently under preparation**.

The START Dataset

The START student-parent survey is based on a **stratified multistage probability sampling design** (79 schools and **161 classes** across all Italian regions), ensuring national representativeness of students in the first and fifth year of upper secondary education in Italy (approximately 15 and 19 years old, respectively).

The START final sample includes **2,538 students** (50.3% first year and 49.7% fifth year) and **812 parents**.

The **questionnaire** includes measures of:

- conceptions and meanings of adulthood
- social norms and expected timing of key life course transitions (education, work, leaving home, parenthood);
- educational and occupational aspirations
- value orientations, including gender and family norms, religiosity, attitudes towards immigrants and national identity, and socio-political attitudes
- intergenerational solidarity, parental expectations, and value conflicts
- experimental modules including a factorial vignette on co-residence with parents, a randomized split-ballot design on moral evaluations of deviant behaviours, and a randomized split-ballot design on attitudes towards ethnic groups.

The questionnaire includes items drawn from major international surveys—such as the **European Social Survey** (in particular the **Timing of Life module**), the **European Values Study**, and the **International Social Survey Programme**—making it suitable for comparisons with the general population and across countries. In addition to individual-level data, the research design integrates **territorial contextual information**, allowing analyses that combine individual attitudes, intergenerational dynamics, and local socio-economic conditions.

A **dedicated webpage** containing the START documentation (including the questionnaire in Italian and English language, sample description, and contextual data) is available [here](#).

Access to the data will be provided **after abstract selection**.

Suggested Topics

We welcome contributions addressing **the role of values and social norms** in shaping the early formation of preferences on youth transitions, addressing topics and perspectives such as:

- conceptions and meanings of adulthood, and expectations about the timing of life course transitions
- education, work, family formation, and leaving the parental home
- intergenerational transmission of values and norms, including parental expectations and value conflicts
- gender differences, social class, and inequalities
- migration background, intercultural dynamics, and value diversity
- the role of school/class environments and local contexts.

Submission Guidelines

Applicants are invited to submit:

- an abstract (maximum 2,500 characters)
- a short bio (maximum 1,000 characters) including academic background and affiliation.

Only abstracts that explicitly propose the use of the START dataset will be considered. Submissions should clearly state the research objectives, outline the main hypotheses, and indicate—at least in broad terms—the key variables and dimensions to be analysed.

To **submit your abstract, fill in the form** at this [link](#)

Submission **deadline: 15 May 2026**

Notification of acceptance: 15 June 2026

Provision of the START dataset to the selected participants: 22 June 2026

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