

Chapter 2

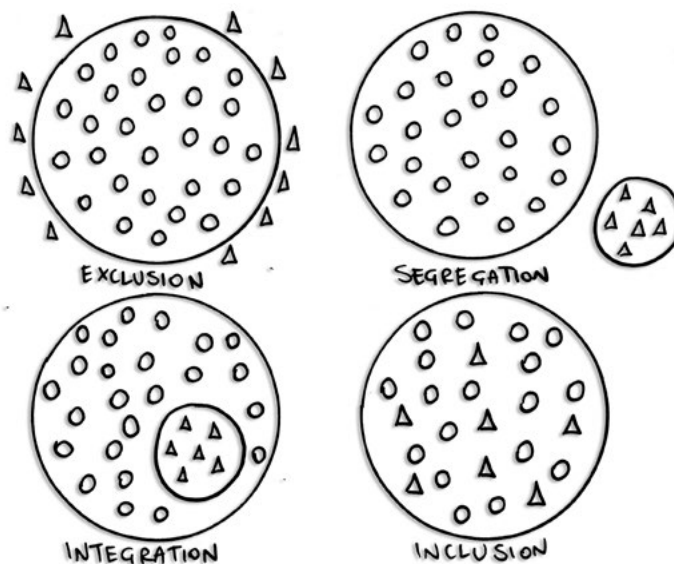
Definitions

This chapter aims to define the main terms used in working on social inclusion projects. After setting the main working terminology, the second part of the chapter is dedicated to identifying the main barriers that young people are facing in accessing their rights as well to defining the groups included by the concept “young people with fewer opportunities”.

DIFFICULTIES WITH WORDS

As youth workers trying to work inclusively we encounter many challenges. One of these is how to find the right words to refer to those young people whose inclusion we want to build our projects around.

There are four main concepts that will be operationalised in the T-Kit.

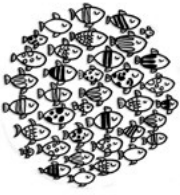


Inclusion

Inclusion is a term used widely in social and educational policy making to express the idea that all people living in a given society (should) have access and participation rights on equal terms. This means, on the one hand, that institutions, structures and measures should be designed positively to accommodate diversity of circumstances, identities and ways of life. On the other hand, it means that opportunities and resources should be distributed so as to minimise disadvantage and marginalisation. In the sphere of European youth work and non-formal education, inclusion is considered an all-embracing strategy and practice of ensuring that people with fewer opportunities have access to the structures and programmes offered.



Integration



Integration reconciles difference(s) in the sense of a synthesis that creates a coherent entirety – “wholeness”. Well-achieved, integration is pleasing in that it constructs a genuine harmony – an equilibrium – between disparate elements. In everyday use, the term nowadays frequently connotes the social integration of foreigners or of persons living with disabilities on equal terms with the mainstream or majority. Currently, European socio-political discourses on integration are focusing above all on linguistic and religious issues arising from immigration from third countries, especially (but by no means only) from world regions beyond Europe. But what is the reference point for integration? How is it possible to ensure that everyone can make an equally valued contribution to the integrative synthesis? Will or should the synthesis be a “melting pot” or a “mixed salad”? Typically, those who do not “fit” the mainstream or the majority have to assimilate, at least in part. This means they have to take on (some of) the values and practices of the mainstream or majority in order to be socially accepted. Depending on the circumstances, integration could become another word for assimilation. But integration is necessarily (at least) a two-way process, so minorities and majorities (whose composition shifts according to what is in the foreground) have to negotiate multiple reconciliations in order to create together a mutually pleasing synthesis. It would be difficult to argue that European societies are currently doing particularly well on this count, although most of them are making some sort of progress and some can reasonably claim to be well-established multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan polities.

Social cohesion



As understood by the Council of Europe, social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means.⁹

Whatever terms we use, we should acknowledge that:

- ▶ words are powerful and complex and are quite capable of giving offence, even when the thinking behind them is well intentioned and no harm or disrespect is meant by the speaker;
- ▶ words shape the way that we think and respond. Descriptive terms, such as “young offender” or “victim of abuse”, for example, often have associations that are not proven or justified but can be hard to shake off, once used;
- ▶ although words are important, we need not become too obsessed with them. If we spend too much time worrying about words we might not get anything useful done.

Given that there is no ideal language category for describing socially excluded young people, it makes sense to proceed with care to avoid developing views that are too fixed. It would also be wise to follow some broad principles:

- ▶ we should be as accurate as possible, without letting our vocabulary become technical or too difficult to understand;
- ▶ we should always be aware of the dignity of people we are describing. A simple test is whether we would ourselves like to be referred to in this way, or if we would be happy if this description was applied to someone close to us;
- ▶ we should be clear that a description refers to young people’s current situation, not to young people themselves. So if we do call someone “at risk” or “disadvantaged” we refer to their present or recent circumstances that affect their opportunities. It is not a label they will carry forever.

Social rights



Fundamental social rights mean rights to which the individual citizen is entitled, which he can exercise only in his relationship with other human beings as a member of a group and which can be made effective only if the State acts to safeguard the individual’s environment. Social rights are a necessary complement to civil rights and liberties, since the latter cannot be enjoyed without a minimum of social security.

– Hans-Jürgen Wipfelder¹⁰

9. See www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/RevisedStrategy_en.pdf, accessed 27 October 2016.
10. Wipfelder H. -J. (1986), “Die verfassungsrechtliche Kodifizierung sozialer Grundrechte”, *Zeitschrift für Rechtspolitik*, p. 140.

Access to social rights

By “access” to social rights we mean the ability of individuals to enjoy a right fully. Access to social rights depends on:¹¹

- ▶ how a right is formulated, so it can be claimed;
- ▶ procedures, information and how the right is implemented and how resources are being made available for the realisation of that right;
- ▶ the situation of, including the capacities and resources available to, the potential claimants of the right(s).



WHO ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES?

Double jeopardy

In much academic or policy work there is a tendency to focus on identifying and describing vulnerable groups. This categorising can be useful. It is a necessary tool for quantitative research and for statistically evaluating the impact of policies and programmes. The trouble is that overly used, such an approach can place a rather distorting lens on young people and their situations.

The thing about grouping young people is that they can fall into more than one group at the same time. They may even only identify themselves as belonging to some of those groups or even to none at all. However, the realisation that someone can belong to more than one vulnerable group at the same time can lead us to a deeper understanding of exclusion itself. What, for example, does it mean if you belong not only to an ethnic minority but are also living in long-term poverty? Or if you are a young single mother, on a very low income and rurally isolated? If all these groups are at risk of exclusion in our society are you doubly or triply at risk? This idea of “double jeopardy” or “multiple insecurity” is the basis for a more holistic understanding of exclusion and its causes and consequences.

Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles mentioned in the non-exhaustive list below. In certain contexts, these situations or obstacles prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large. When we speak of exclusion, we would normally refer to reduced access to:

- ▶ housing;
- ▶ economy/work;
- ▶ health;
- ▶ culture;
- ▶ education.

Consequently, young people with fewer opportunities are the ones facing social, economic or geographic obstacles, dealing with educational difficulties or cultural differences, having health problems or disabilities and having limited access to social rights.

No youth policy can ignore the situation of young people, particularly those at greater risk of exclusion, poverty and marginalisation. Consequently, the Council of Europe, through the Enter! project (initiated in 2009 and aiming at the development of youth policy and youth work situations of exclusion, discrimination and violence affecting young people, particularly in multicultural disadvantaged neighbourhoods), aimed at promoting young people’s access to social rights as a means for their inclusion and participation in society. Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, due to precarious conditions, lack faith in a promising future, are far from institutions and are outside of

(Salto Resource Centre)



11. Daly M. (2002), *Access to social rights in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

the mainstream. Without intervention, they will always stay trapped in a cycle of poverty. Moreover, social exclusion will also lead to discrimination and intolerant attitudes, especially when it comes to minority and migrant groups living on the outskirts of the big cities. But youth workers and youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can fundamentally contribute to ensuring the access to social rights of young people.¹²

As in every community, the situation is different: who are young people with fewer opportunities in your community?



Exercise:

Most of the time, these social rights are interdependent and not accessing one right has effects on access to other rights. The following invites you to reflect on the basic human rights young people need to have a good life, as well as to identifying those youth groups that have limited access to those rights.

What basic human rights do youth need to have a good life?

Which are the groups experiencing limits with respect to basic human rights?



After identifying the basic human rights that would ensure access to social rights and the groups that are facing limitations to accessing these rights, we invite you to reflect on the profile of the youth groups you work with. Here follows a non-exhaustive list of obstacles to inclusion included in this T-Kit:

- ▶ social obstacles;
- ▶ economic obstacles;
- ▶ disability;
- ▶ educational difficulties;
- ▶ cultural differences;
- ▶ health problems;
- ▶ geographic obstacles.



When assessing the obstacles that young people are facing, youth workers should also have in mind the “intersectionality” concept: understanding that young people’s identities have different aspects, and discrimination may affect them on several grounds. For example, social exclusion and discrimination may have a higher influence on the lives of young people in relation to aspects such as social status, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, etc. Intersectionality refers to the situation when young people are at risk of exclusion and discrimination on several grounds.



Questions:

- ▶ What are the predominant obstacles to inclusion that young people face in your community?
- ▶ Do these obstacles vary across time and space?

A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

Three important aspects of people’s situations are to be underlined:

- ▶ multiple insecurities: the most vulnerable young people are often facing a number of different insecurities in their lives at the same time, for example: unemployment, discrimination and isolation, or inadequate housing, health problems and inconsistent education and training;

12. ENTER! brochure, available at <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680462f84>, accessed 22 October 2016.

- ▶ persistence: if such multiple insecurities endure over the long term they can build up and compound one another, for example: inadequate housing can lead to poor health; discrimination can lead to unemployment or problems at school; family break up to isolation;
- ▶ erosion of rights and responsibilities: eventually people's basic social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights and responsibilities are undermined or under threat wholesale. It is difficult to succeed at school if you face discrimination on a daily basis. Without a basic education how will you find a decent job? Without a decent job how will you afford adequate housing? When your confidence is shattered and people do not understand your situation it is very difficult to join in cultural or civil activities. All these pressures can put intolerable strain on family life. This sort of vicious circle can go round and round, in the end affecting every part of a person's life.

In these kinds of circumstances life becomes a daily struggle to meet responsibilities and enjoy fundamental rights that most of us take for granted and this means exclusion from society and its projects.

The main determinants of social exclusion are usually rooted in social inequalities (namely obstacles to accessing quality education and training, and securing adequate employment), discriminatory practices and attitudes, or being subject to exclusionary processes based on residence and/or citizenship. As social rights are an integral part of human rights, ensuring the access of young people to basic rights is at the core of youth work activities and practices. Consequently youth workers, by offering young people support tailored to their needs and learning opportunities – especially access to non-formal learning settings, information on health and well-being, and opportunities for positive integration into the local community – are essentially contributing to reducing the risk of social exclusion. Moreover, youth workers are pioneers of inclusion processes as they reach those young people who are the most disconnected from support services, due to their immigrant and often illegal status, or stateless or homeless condition. Youth workers can develop support networks for these groups.¹³

13. EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, EKCYCYP webpage with glossary on youth: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>.