

Chapter 3

Forms of exclusion

ZERO STATUS YOUNG PEOPLE? SOCIAL EXCLUSION V. SOCIAL INCLUSION

This chapter explores the main dimensions in conceptually approaching social exclusion as well as identifying the main determinants of youth social exclusion. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to stating the role that youth workers have in combating youth social exclusion.

"In order to function as an active citizen today, you need to be part of the community, and to be included in today's community, you need a job which also allows you the economic resources, time and energy to participate in these other roles. Identity – who you are in today's society – is often reflected by what occupation you have. To be unemployed has a low social status and often creates low self-esteem. In today's increasingly individualized world, it is young people themselves who tend to be blamed for unsuccessful transitions to the labour market. The need for reasonable and sustainable employment is clear, so why not simply focus now on employability?"¹²



14. Williamson H. (2007), "Social exclusion and young people: some introductory remarks", in Colley H. (2007), *Social inclusion for young people: breaking down the barriers*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

In general terms, social exclusion refers to the process that prevents individuals, groups or communities from accessing the rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration.¹⁵ Even if normally associated with poverty and lack of financial resources, social exclusion is also determined by a multiplicity of factors: gender, disability, status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc.

MacDonald and Marsh (2005) list six components shaping social exclusion:

- ▶ social exclusion is more than just income poverty: beyond economic marginality, there are political and cultural dimensions;
- ▶ social exclusion is manifested through a combination of linked problems, and is the accumulation of interrelated difficulties that typify the condition and experience of certain groups;
- ▶ social exclusion is not characterised by random distribution across individuals or households but is concentrated spatially. It is a product of increased social polarisation between neighbourhoods;
- ▶ social exclusion is a consequence of a political economy by which some groups secure privilege and power at the expense of others;
- ▶ social exclusion is a dynamic process that takes place over time;
- ▶ social exclusion risks producing intergenerational effects as cumulative disadvantage is passed on from one generation to the next.

For young people, poor education and unemployment seem to be the main determinants of social exclusion. A summary report on social inclusion conducted by the youth partnership highlights several major predictors of social exclusion for youth (Pantea 2014):

- The socioeconomic situation of parents (work status, financial resources, education, single parenthood, including the absence of family support)...
- The ethnic-cultural background, often in combination with religion (especially given the backdrop of rising discrimination, racism, xenophobia and antigypsyism)
- Young people's own educational attainment
- Disability, chronic illness and substance misuse, early pregnancy/ motherhood and sexual orientation.

Social exclusion of young people leads to deep and long-term damage to their social and economic participation, to their physical and mental health, as well as their general living conditions. In communities seriously affected by economic and social problems, social exclusion can mean the younger generation is trapped in a cycle of poverty wherein they suffer from insecure living conditions, unhealthy lifestyles they are compelled to adopt, and social and political isolation.

Youth work can have a great impact on preventing the transmission of poverty and remedying the vicious circle. Youth workers can offer:

- ▶ targeted support;
- ▶ opportunities for non-formal learning, and information on health and well-being;
- ▶ opportunities for positive integration into the local community.



15. Pantea M. -C. (2014), "Summary report on the 2013/14 social inclusion country templates", Youth Partnership, available at http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/7110690/Summary+Report_Social+Inclusion_2014.pdf/11362dce-b78b-4ddb-9528-e90c487dd3fc, accessed 27 October 2016.