Combating Social Exclusion among Young Homeless Populations: a comparative investigation of homeless paths among local white, local ethnic groups and migrant young men and women, and appropriate reinsertion methods

Finalised project: 1st May 2008 – 30th April 2011

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE

SUMMARY

Objectives of the research

To gain in-depth knowledge of the life trajectories of homeless youth and those at risk of homelessness, and to explore the effectiveness of reinsertion programmes in the four participating countries.

Scientific approach / methodology

Methodologies in the first stage included literature reviews, secondary data analysis and expert interviews. In the second stage interviews were undertaken by young co-researchers (themselves currently or in the past homeless) with 54 young people in each of four countries based on quota samples. The final stage of the project involved the observation and testing of methodologies of key working and early intervention in different national contexts.

New knowledge and/or European added value

To support young homeless people and to prevent youth homelessness, it is necessary to promote the autonomy of young people at risk or already homeless by investing in their education, assisting them in schools and other (informal) learning environments, and providing them with effective partnerships with key workers and role models.
Key messages for policy-makers, businesses, trade unions and civil society actors

Seven out of 10 homeless young people in CSEYHP left school with an educational level of 0-2 (ISCTE); this disadvantage could lead to social exclusion and poverty all their lives. Young people require financial support to stay or re-enter education. Agencies working with homeless young people must be adequately resourced in order to provide education and training support as well as accommodation. The business community has an important role through offering mentoring and training opportunities.

Objectives of the research

The objectives of the CSEYHP project are fourfold:
1. To understand the life trajectories of different homeless populations in different national contexts
2. To develop the concepts of risk and social exclusion in relation to the experience of young homeless people and to the reinsertion process
3. To test how different methods of working contribute to the reinsertion process for young people
4. To investigate the roles of and relationships between the young person and trusted adults, lead professionals, peer mentors and family members in the delivery of these programmes across all four countries.
The young people in this study present huge challenges to the aims of the 2009 resolution of the Council of the European Union regarding European cooperation in the field of youth, and to the Europe 2020 agenda. The specific initiatives suggested in the resolution – including non-formal learning participation, voluntary activities and youth work – and the mainstreaming initiatives in education and training, employment, health and culture, are of particular importance to young homeless people. Young people interviewed for the CSEYHP Project had fewer opportunities and many born in the country had experienced social exclusion from an early age and all along their life trajectory. While the average proportion of early school leavers across Europe is 15%, in the CSEYHP sample 36% had left school at 16 years or below. Whilst the proportion of young people with higher education qualifications across Europe is 30%, among the CSEYHP sample only 4% had qualifications sufficient to allow them to enter higher education, or were in higher education.

Early school leaving in Europe is strongly linked to social disadvantage and low education backgrounds. Vulnerable groups are especially affected such as young people who have been in care and those with special educational needs. Early school leaving is influenced by educational factors, individual circumstances and socio-economic conditions. It is a process which often starts in primary education with first experiences of failure and alienation from school. The results of our survey confirm previous findings in this field. In this policy brief we address the challenges of the 2009 and 2020 objectives in the context of our study of homeless young people who have had even fewer opportunities than other young people and who are seriously deficient in social capital.

- **Addressing disrupted educational paths**

There has been a continuing upward movement in the proportion of young Europeans with higher qualifications. In the age group 25-29 years, nearly 80% will have completed formal education and 60% of young Europeans are still in formal education at 19 years of age (EYP, 2009: 25). By contrast the average proportion of early school leavers is nearly 15% and only one third of young people who have a disadvantaged socio-economic background complete higher education (EYP, 2009). Within the CSEYHP sample 4% had not completed primary school (ISCTE level 0) 18% had complete primary or first stage basic only (ISCTE level 1) and 48% had completed secondary or second stage basic (ISCTE level 2). Overall therefore 70% were at levels 0-2 educationally. Portugal demonstrated particular need in this area as 52% of young people in their sample were at education levels 0 and 1; 18 had left school at 14 years or under. At 16 years of age 61 of those who had left education had already done so in the CSEYHP sample.
Creating education opportunities is a key element to tackle informal ways of exclusion (lack of belonging, peer pressure and so forth) and more formal exclusion (lack of employment, poor level of income) in the future. Our findings highlight experiences at school that impact on early school leaving and absenteeism. Interviewees mentioned the following problems at school (% within country where interview was taken):

- 63% truanted (80% CZ; 70% NL; 57% PT; 46% UK)
- 53% had problems with teachers (74% NL; 56% CZ; 48% PT; 35% UK)
- 37% were school excluded (48% NL; 43% UK; 30% CZ; 26% PT)
- 41% were picked on by other kids (46% NL; 41% UK; 39% CZ and PT)

Schools frequented by disadvantaged youth tend to concentrate in segregated neighbourhoods and are often a high pressure environment, where young people perpetuate the aggression they experience at home. Lack of motivation is also a serious problem that calls for investment in teaching techniques and stimulating environments to compensate, instead of aggravate, the problems of exclusion. Some early intervention methods train young people in conflict resolution with their peers as well as with their parents (see DVD ‘Early Intervention Methods in the UK’)

Young people in the CSEYHP study experienced disrupted educational paths for several reasons. Interviewees gave the following reasons for not achieving what they would have wished at school:

- 21% no motivation to continue education (32% PT; 22% UK; 17% NL; 13% CZ)
- 15% lack of money (26% PT; 13% UK; 17% CZ; 6% NL)
- 10%, (girls) having a child (20% PT; 9% UK; 7% CZ; 4% NL)
- 10% problems with mathematics, which contributed to them leaving school (22% PT; 9% CZ; 7% UK; 0% NL)
- 9% no information services to support (22% PT; 9% UK; 2% CZ and NL)

Further, some stated that the lack of a place for themselves in which to study, had a bad influence on their school and career.

Poor school outcomes and school exclusion in turn lead to family trouble creating a vicious circle of school failure and family arguments. Family problems can increase the chance that peer influence becomes more important than parents, exacerbating school truanting, school exclusion and even joining a gang. Eventually this causes young people to break with their families or to be turned out of their family homes.
Poor families can also directly lead to poor schooling. In the sample of young people from Portugal, several reported they had to leave school early against their will, because of family poverty. Early education is needed to support failing children. Early intervention in the family should include financial support to enable children to remain in education. However, national policy tends to go the other way. A successful programme in the UK which gave a weekly allowance to less well off 16-19 year olds continuing in education covering their food, travel and book costs (the EMA - Educational Maintenance Allowance) has recently been reduced from covering 45% of pupils to covering 16-17%.

- **Work aspirations and work outcomes**

Although educational achievements were low, it does not mean that young people did not have their own aspirations. The proportion of young people who wanted to work professionally, mostly in caring professions such as social work, youth work but also as lawyers, was highest in the UK (29%). In the total sample this aspiration was highest among non-EU migrants (32%) and among women (26% women vs 9% men). Conversely UK men from the dominant ethnic groups aspired to vocational training – skilled manual work, IT and security (army and police) (26%). Young people from CZ were more likely to aspire to working in a hostel, as a cook, and in construction, despite generally having higher qualifications than other homeless youth. Nearly half the youth in our sample from PT (44%) reported they aspired to ‘any job’ reflecting the very difficult labour market for young people with low educational standards in PT. There was also evidence of the impact of the media on young people’s aspirations in the UK; 18% aspired to work in the media, as a performer, in football, or just to ‘be famous’. In the total sample this aspiration resonated most with young people from ethnic minorities born in the country (23%). A handful of young men in the NL and CZ samples aspired to their own business or to ‘be rich’.

Young people’s aspirations were in strong contrast to outcomes. The majority of young people, 69%, worked or had worked in jobs requiring minimum training. A further 21% had never worked, had worked as street traders/cleaners or had work placements for experience only. A further 2% had returned to education. In the UK, many young people’s work histories are very poor, and do not match their aspirations.

In our four samples, 33% of UK young people had never worked compared with 17% NL, 6% PT and 2% CZ. A further 30% of the PT sample and 22% of the UK sample have only had one job. Young people in UK and PT samples who had worked in more than one job mostly had worked in low skilled occupations. The high number of young people with no work experience in the UK is partly related to the age of the UK sample (61% of the UK sample
are aged 16-19 years), and partly to UK government legislation banning asylum seekers from working. Eight of the eighteen young people with no work experience in the UK sample are non-EU migrants. Similarly, in NL young migrants without legal papers can neither work nor study.

The situations in the four countries with respect to disadvantaged youth are very different. The CZ sample has higher educational levels, but within a society with general high levels of education they are as disadvantaged in achieving work. The PT sample includes many early leavers who left because of family pressure as well as their own disengagement and a lack of information about how they could proceed in education and training. The UK sample includes many young people who were school excluded and disengaged and lacked skills and training, particularly young men who aspired to skilled work rather than professional employment. The NL sample had the disadvantage that half of them were living in social care for part of their lives.

- **Current engagement**

  Young people in the UK were most likely to report there were no training options for the job they wanted (15%), whilst young people in PT reported a lack of money, lack of information or having a child as a reason for not finding work they wanted. However other young people from PT (32%) and UK (22%) reported having no motivation.

  Young people reported their main activity at the time of the interview, and other activities as well. But the 30% of young people who reported being unemployed, looking for work, as their main activity, understates the proportion who are unemployed. Overall 52% of young people reported they were unemployed and looking for work at the time of the interview, but they were also in part-time education or on a government scheme, for example, and reported this as their main activity. PT had the lowest proportion looking for work (44%) but otherwise the results were similar across country, ethnic group and gender. However it would be wrong to view these young people simply as not in employment, education or training – although at different times in their lives the majority will have been so and half are currently classified as unemployed and looking for work. Their work aspirations compared with their work experiences (as above) tell us a different side of the story.

  In the CZ sample, young people generally received a better education than young people in other samples and had a much wider range of job experiences associated with a closed labour market; they worked in warehouse and driving, construction, fruit picking, army/security guard. Only NL young people had nearly as great a range of employment. By comparison, young people in the
UK sample, living in a liberal regime experienced both an open labour market and high risk; 33% had never experienced real work. They were younger than the CZ sample but young people can work from 16 years of age in the UK; they also included non-EU migrants who could not work whilst being assessed. However, the young people in the UK sample also had poor qualifications and were competing for work in a labour market which was open to better qualified migrants from across the EU.

Young people in the PT sample reported they lacked knowledge of where to obtain services and also identified a greater need for employment, education and learning, creative learning and even physical health services. In UK and NL some young people had voluntary or work experience placement experiences whilst in PT and CZ they did not; given the range of work experience in CZ this particular form of support may not have been necessary, but given the need for further training identified by young people in PT it is apparent that PT agencies should develop this as a priority. NL young people were more likely to identify a need for support in relation to money management and mental health; because their material needs were met through welfare many young people had disengaged temporarily from the search for work.

There are work aspirations among the majority of the young people in our samples which have not been fulfilled. Partly this is an issue of social factors affecting whole generations of young people – changes in the labour market and closed and open labour markets (young people from the UK were particularly disadvantaged) – but partly it relates to personal factors including their own level of resilience and lack of family support.

In our four samples different types of assistance were required. PT young people required information and training options and financial support. In the UK some aspirations required management through programmes that built other skills besides those aspired to - for example electrical, electronic and computing skills alongside media and performance skills for young people with these aspirations. In the UK key workers were often at a disadvantage in building realistic expectations because of the lack of training options and constraints on undertaking paid work whilst maintaining welfare payments to meet housing costs. In CZ young people found the greatest variety of employment, but many were employed below their educational level. Only in NL did young people report they were not constrained by a lack of training options. One striking difference across the total sample is the desire of some non-EU migrants and some women to become professional workers. By comparison young men from the ethnic dominant groups wanted to become skilled workers.
• **Effective civil society and state support for educationally disadvantaged young people**

The EU Strategy for Youth “Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities” (COM(2009) 200 final) establishes the need for ‘joined-up policy’ for investing and empowering youth. This situation is being aggravated under the current scenario of economic crisis (“Many investment plans, talents and ideas risk going to waste because of uncertainties, sluggish demand and lack of funding”, Europe 2020 Strategy).

Engagement with ‘trusted adults’ is of particular importance for disadvantaged youth with family problems. The CSEYHP project findings corroborate the EC guideline for mobilising all actors involved in the life of youth (parents, teachers, social workers, health professionals, youth workers, young people themselves, police and justice, employers) to prevent social exclusion. Young homeless people and young people at risk of becoming homeless identify an overwhelming range of physical and mental health threats and service needs.

The CZ sample had the highest proportion reporting current attempted suicide (15%), self harm (13%), problems with alcohol (32%) and problems with drugs (44%). Young people in the CZ and NL samples also were likely to identify a need for mental health services.

Whilst young people in CZ were least likely to identify the need for education support (6% vs 38% total sample), they were equally likely to want employment support (56% vs 51% total sample). Young people in the Portuguese sample were most likely to need employment support (65%), education/learning support (74%) and physical health support (35%). These findings demonstrate the role that school could or should have played in providing counselling services and the need for additional support from ‘trusted adults’ after school life.

Half of young people in the UK sample reported they were still attending education and this is associated with the support they receive whilst living in supported accommodation; a fifth of NL young people were still attending education and 17% of PT. There is an important role to be played by the private business sector.

One example is the UK Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) which supports homeless people through Ready for Work programmes and seeks to develop training programmes with the homeless sector.

The extreme exclusion of the young participants in the CSEYHP project (often from family and community as well as from work and education) makes clear that they present needs in different social domains that need to be addressed in an integrated and sustainable way. For instance, having a job and living at a night shelter while waiting for private housing can lead to regressive
trajectories, due to a lack of rest and privacy. The young homeless feel they are trapped and find it hard to see "light at the end of the tunnel". The project tested the transferability of the Dutch key working methodology called the '8 steps model' used in half of Dutch hostels. This is a strengths-based model building on the abilities of the person and sharing with them every aspect of the action programme that is being devised. The action programme works across eight domains of the life of the person ranging from family through to education and work. This model, introduced in PT, CZ and UK, will continue to be used by agencies in PT and NL, and to adapt existing practice in the UK in at least one agency.

If the EU aims not just at anti-discrimination, but also wishes to promote equality, this calls for a broad array of services and supports which together allow disadvantaged youth to construct their autonomy, independently from social benefits and housing services. It is important that services are designed that positively address the challenges attached to the multiple key transition moments that are part of this life period, from leaving education to living independently.
The findings of the CSEYHP project demonstrate the necessity to promote integrated family support, not only financially, but also working on the relational aspects that constrain school attendance and/or school achievements. The school domain is a privileged field for early intervention and for building, together with disadvantaged youth, the motivation they need to prepare for and enter the labour market and adult life as partners and parents. School can play an important role in diminishing intergenerational poverty and exclusion.

Young people in our total sample, when asked what they would have changed about their pasts, were most likely to respond that they would have liked to have changed their families and/or their educational experiences. Schools have an important role to play here – both an opportunity and a responsibility. This response also underlines the need for the reinforcement of prevention and early intervention measures. Having counselling services at schools is crucial to give young people with problematic family backgrounds an opportunity to voice their problems and seek support to avoid future ruptures (runaway, early school leaving, etc.) and the aggravation of psychological problems. For young people who have already left school, or been excluded from school, it is important that these services also be provided in their communities.

The Platform against poverty initiative of Europe 2020, while targeting the growth of jobs and its distribution, does not include in its scope some of the needs of the young homeless and their families. Data shows clearly that this population lacks economic resources but also health and psychological conditions to dynamically work towards their own inclusion. Member States need to invest in education and employment based on a holistic approach that includes early intervention and ‘trusted adult’ support for other life domains. Further, the target of 20 million fewer people at risk of poverty needs to include the objective to balance the asymmetries in life conditions that exist between and within Member States.

The EU Committee on Culture and Education in its 19th session reflects on the ‘youth divide’: “The transition of young people to adult life is not always an equal and smooth process: some benefit from new opportunities whilst others experience vulnerability and exclusion.” The Committee recognizes “the need to invest in youth work and youth policy to develop a framework capable of delivering programmes and practice which will produce positive outcomes for these young people and develop their self-belief and confidence. The main purpose of these projects and working methods developed by local and regional authorities, by youth NGOs and by young people themselves, is to lift young citizens out of the social exclusion in
which they live and to empower them to reach their full potential, as well as to take their proper place and play a meaningful role in society." (Committee on Culture and Education on 1 October 2010 - 19th SESSION).

The CSEYHP project findings corroborate this statement and call for support, integrated assistance and partnership touching all domains of the life of young homeless people. Young people who are trying to re-establish themselves need support to get jobs. Young people in CZ could find work but not shelter they could afford; in PT and the UK it was very difficult to find work; apprenticeships through housing associations, NGO’s and employers are important. However, young people in the UK sample living in supported accommodation also were disadvantaged if they sought work as their wages would be too low to pay for their accommodation; therefore they were most likely to be unemployed. Housing and welfare support should not require that young people move out of or refrain from work engagement. A need for consistency within national policies is called for.
## PROJECT IDENTITY

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| Website     | [www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth](http://www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth) |
| Further reading | All national, thematic and comparable reports related to the CSEYHP project can be downloaded from this website.  
Related websites

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP)
http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/

European Commission – Youth
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index

European Commission – Education and Training
http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.htm

YIPPIE project on participation in further or higher education for highly disadvantaged young people.
http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee/

EDUMIGROM project on ethnic differences in education and diverging prospects for urban youth
http://www.edumigrom.eu/

INCLUD-ED project on educational strategies to overcome inequalities and promote social cohesion
http://www.ub.edu/includ-ed/about.htm