



## **Thematic Report 2: Social exclusion and youth homelessness in Northern, Southern and Central Europe**

**July 2010**

***This report is one of the deliverables of the CSEYHP project: 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. The project is funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities theme.***

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This is one of the reports in a series produced by the Combating Social Exclusion of Young Homeless Populations (CSEYHP) project. There are four thematic reports:

- Trajectories into homelessness and reinsertion points
- Social exclusion and homelessness in Northern, Southern and Central Europe
- Capability and resilience among homeless youth
- Gender, ethnic group and migrant dimensions of homelessness

The four reports are complementary and it is recommended to read the full set.

Other CSEYHP publications include:

- Four national reports on the situation regarding homeless youth in Czech Republic, Netherlands, Portugal and United Kingdom
- A comparative Report on Youth Homelessness and Social Exclusion in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK
- Methodology Annex on Working with Co-researchers
- Methodology Annex on Life Trajectory Interviews

All of these publications can be downloaded from the project website at

[www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth](http://www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth)

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## **Executive summary**

The objective of this thematic report is to provide comparative information and insight into social exclusion among young homeless people in four European countries. In this study we focus on both the risk factors contributing to social exclusion, the process of social exclusion and the condition of social exclusion, according to the following causal chain: *Risk factors* → *process of social exclusion* → *condition of social exclusion*.

### *Condition*

Our study shows that young homeless people in all four countries suffer from different forms of social exclusion. A lack of a place of one's own and a lack of a stable home situation is one of the most elementary forms of social exclusion in all countries. In NL, the UK and PT, this rarely means that the young people actually have no roof over their heads; they manage to find shelter with friends, family or in social service facilities. Nonetheless, more than half of the young people who were interviewed did not have a place of their own. In CZ, many young people were living on the streets (60%), and social exclusion in terms of living accommodations was the greatest. Young people are also affected by social exclusion in terms of *material deprivation*. In the UK, PT and NL, between 50% and 60% of the young people interviewed did not have enough money to manage financially. Interestingly, in CZ, this applied to only one fourth of the young people, despite the fact that 80% of the young people in CZ reported having debts. The problem of debt is relatively significant in the other countries as well. In terms of *social participation*, the majority of the young people in all of the countries reported having a group of friends and someone to whom they could turn when they feel unsafe. It is also evident, however, that social contacts do not always have a positive effect on young people. The vulnerability of their positions places young people at risk of encountering people who will take advantage of them or lead them even further away from home. One important subjective indicator of social exclusion is the *sense of being unsafe* that many (between 48% and 75%) of the young people said that they had experienced.

### *Risk factors*

Studying risk factors for social exclusion, it was shown that problems faced by homeless young people are a continuum of related problems that influence each other, in which cause and effect aren't always easy to distinguish.

On a micro level a problematic family situation is a key risk factor for social exclusion. Two different routes can be identified: the financial-economic route and the socio-cognitive route into social exclusion. Briefly stated, homeless young people often didn't have a good childhood because their parents have insufficient financial resources or lack the necessary skills. Furthermore, arguments, physical aggression and neglect were no exceptions in these families. Family problems ultimately lead to losing or leaving their permanent place of residence. In all four countries, the problematic family situation and the discontinuity in their lives lead to high levels of mental problems among the homeless youth like stress, depression and anxiety. In NL, UK, PT these problems seem to decline over time, while in CZ the problems (including drug abuse) increase over time.

Ultimately we can conclude that the way social exclusion develops over time is to a large extent influenced by risk factors at macro and meso levels. High levels of risk for homeless youth can be found in PT and in CZ, where state intervention for youth at risk is less developed than in UK and NL. The high number of rough sleepers in CZ and the increasing mental problems and drug related problems in this country seem to be related to low levels of social security, social housing, and services for young homeless people. In PT low levels of social security and the lack of social housing for young adults, forces young people to stay with their parents, even if the situation is unbearable. Chances of living an independent life are very limited. In both CZ and PT chances on the labour market and earning a sufficient income are more limited because of lower levels of education, and badly paid cash-in-hand jobs. In UK and NL chances for young people to overcome their excluded position, seem to be somewhat higher. Social services and social security are more extensive, young people are better educated and can rely on benefits more often. Nevertheless, depending on social services also has its downsides. Young people experience a lot of discontinuity within homeless services and accommodations. This holds true for all four countries. In CZ institutions for young homeless people form a risk factor themselves. In UK

and to an even larger extent in NL the presence of an extensive safety net might for some people limit the incentive to look for work or future education.

### *Process*

The main risks for social exclusion for young homeless people arise at a micro level, especially as a result of a complexity of factors such as family situation, living situation and social network. This holds true for all four countries.

However, the way social exclusion of young homeless people develops over time is to a large extent determined by risk factors on a macro and meso level. Here we find interesting differences between different types of welfare states in the countries involved in this research. The lack of a sufficient social safety net in CZ and PT increases the risk of growing social exclusion and limits the chances of overcoming the excluded position, while in NL and UK the social safety seems to limit the risk of an increasingly excluded position of young homeless people.

## **1. Young homeless people at risk in European countries**

The 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009 resolution of the Council of the European Union proposed a new framework for European cooperation in the field of youth beginning this year, 2010, and continuing until 2018. The framework includes: mainstreaming youth issues into other policies, reaffirming the European Youth Pact (March 2005 European Council) and its role in promoting the Lisbon objectives for jobs and growth, and supporting the Renewed Social Agenda which targets youth and children as a main priority. Much of its evidence derives from the EU Youth Report 2009 <sup>1</sup> and Member States through the successful use of the open method of co-ordination. The two primary objectives of the resolution are to:

- '(i) create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and to
- (ii) promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.' (p3).

Whilst the resolution respects Member States' responsibility for youth and the voluntary nature of co-operation in the youth field, to achieve these two primary objectives requires a dual approach of both specific and mainstreaming initiatives. Both the specific initiatives – 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 people interviewed for the CSEYHP research project. The four thematic reports address the challenges of these objectives in the context of a study of homeless young people who have had fewer opportunities than other young people. These reports on the situation of young people experiencing homelessness in the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Portugal and UK form part of the evidence base for co-operation in the youth field.

The thematic reports are presented in the context of previous research into young people's transition to independent adulthood in Europe. The UP2YOUTH project (Youth – Actor of Social Change, funded under the Framework 6<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Referenced as 9008/9 ADD

Research Programme, [www.up2youth.org](http://www.up2youth.org)) brought together the findings of European research in the field of youth and reported on the difficulties facing young Europeans seeking to achieve the three traditional markers of transitions from youth to adulthood through success in the labour market, in family formation and active citizenship. The most recent European Youth Report of 2009 reports on the comparative situation of youth in member states based on data from European surveys and also reports previously funded European research projects.

Young people without family support – young people who have been in the care of government authorities and those who rely on formal and informal support structures outside the family setting – face even more difficulties in making these transitions. Questions to be asked include: Is their education level sufficient? Do they have training for work opportunities? How will they find and maintain low cost housing? Two current European Commission Framework 7 research projects are aiming to research and to address some of these issues: the YIPPEE project on young people leaving care and the CSEYHP project on young people who are homeless. The CSEYHP project has collected information on early life experiences, family and other support systems, experience of education, homelessness and work, and life aspirations and achievements and will test both early intervention methods and case work methods in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase.

### **1.1 The CSEYHP study in CZ, NL, PT and the UK**

*Phase I:* In the first phase of the CSEYHP project each team reported on the particular issues facing homeless youth in their country through a review of secondary literature and interviews with agency workers in the field of youth homelessness. Average European youth unemployment (15-24yrs) was 15.4% in 2008 but the Netherlands had the lowest rate of youth unemployment at 6%, then CZ at 11%, UK at 14%, and PT at 17% (EYP 2009). UK and NL have higher rates of people not born in the country (10.6%, OECD) and the UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy.

Each of the four countries has protective legislation for children and young people; in PT the core legislation was passed in 1911, in the UK in 1989, in CZ in 1991, and in NL new legislation has been passed recently to enable the Ministry for Youth and Families to support families through family and youth centres



(CJG). PT, NL and UK in particular have attempted to counter the risk of young people falling out of education. Both NL and UK have targeted pre-school children as well as school-age children in order to reduce educational disadvantage whilst in PT education support has concentrated on children aged 6-18. In CZ, high rates of educational engagement has led to policies that provide financial support for the poorest rather than general educational intervention.

Of the four countries the UK has the lowest age of criminal responsibility (England and Wales, 10 years of age) and imprisons more young people; CZ also has a punitive approach. Both NL and PT take a less punitive approach to young offenders; NL has developed early intervention programmes whilst PT has a small youth prison population.

Each country team also interviewed key workers and agency managers. Their understandings of the issues facing homeless youth in touch with or supported by their agencies are reported in the Comparative Report, Section 1.5. In CZ key workers reported that unemployment amongst their clients was not the most problematic issue (in 2009); the issues of most importance are the quality of the employment they achieve, their ability to maintain their employment and their lack of qualifications. The lower salaries that the young people receive because they are in poor quality employment leads them to a housing crisis; they cannot afford adequate housing in Prague and are living in squats, poor quality hostels, and other types of temporary accommodation.

Dutch key workers reported a major problem of insertion into adult life for young people in the Netherlands because of the break in social support that occurs at 18 years of age; leading young people to be seen as entirely responsible for their own situation in a country where the labour market has demanded greater levels of qualifications and more young people are living at home. Young people aged 19-24 years frequently move to or within the city.

Of the four countries Portugal has the lowest proportion of young people with secondary qualifications and the highest proportion of young people leaving school early, particularly young men. A large majority (80-90%) live with their parents and 18% of young people aged 20-24 years are supported by their families. Key workers in PT are particularly concerned by the situation of youth

living in social housing areas in which half the people are aged under 30 years, with few years of schooling, and many having been reported for youth crimes. Many of these young people have limited institutional connections having dropped out of school very early.

The UK presents a divided picture. The proportion of young people who complete secondary education is similar to NL (80%) but the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is the highest in this study. An important concern for key workers is the proportion of young people growing up in workless households (the highest proportion in Europe). Polarisation of opportunities is marked in all areas of life for young people in the UK. Those who can live at home stay at home for longer and longer periods but those who cannot must either find affordable housing in the private rental market or move into homeless hostels. The age at which young women have children has risen but the proportion of disadvantaged young women having children is the highest in Europe.

One manager of a supported housing project in the Medway towns (Thames Gateway, a predominantly UK born white ethnic area) identified a problem of motivating and engaging young people from family backgrounds in which no adult works and who live in areas of predominantly social housing among other workless households. But managers of Birmingham supported accommodation identified the same problem with black ethnic youth born in the UK. Key workers in the UK were more likely to identify young people not born in the UK as being more motivated to do well.

The other issue identified by key workers in the UK is the increasing number of young people coming into homeless hostels with a criminal conviction. Anti-social behaviour orders have been used to control the behaviour of people in communities, predominantly young people; these are civil court actions but if the young person breaches them they are taken through the criminal court. In CZ and the UK young people with criminal convictions are disadvantaged in finding employment.

*Phase 2:* The CSEYHP second phase included interviews with 54 young homeless people in each country undertaken by trained co-researchers who were themselves homeless or ex-homeless youth. As far as possible each country

sample was to include 18 young people from the dominant ethnic group of that country, 18 from minority ethnic groups, and 18 migrants including refugees – each quota should include equal numbers of young women and young men. Only the Portuguese sample achieved this precise breakdown (18,18,18). The Dutch sample interviewed more young people from the ethnic dominant and migrant groups, and slightly fewer from the ethnic minority group. The UK sample interviewed more young people from the ethnic minority group and slightly less from the ethnic dominant and migrant groups. The Czech sample – because of the particular circumstances of CZ- was predominantly composed of ethnic dominant youth.

**Figure 1.1. Structure of the Sample**

<b>Sample Quota</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Born in country/ethnic dominant</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>99</b>
	<b>(8F/9M)</b>	<b>(9F/9M)</b>	<b>(14F/30M)</b>	<b>(8F/12M)</b>	<b>(39F/60M)</b>
	<b>7,9%</b>	<b>8,3%</b>	<b>20,4%</b>	<b>9,3%</b>	<b>45,8%</b>
<b>Born in country/ethnic minority</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>(12F/9M)</b>	<b>(9F/9M)</b>	<b>(0F/3M)</b>	<b>(7F/8M)</b>	<b>(28F/29M)</b>
	<b>9,7%</b>	<b>8,3%</b>	<b>1,4%</b>	<b>6,9%</b>	<b>26,4%</b>
<b>Immigrant</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>(7F/8M)</b>	<b>(9F/9M)</b>	<b>(1F/6M)</b>	<b>(8F/11M)</b>	<b>(25F/35M)</b>
	<b>7,4%</b>	<b>8,3%</b>	<b>3,2%</b>	<b>8,8%</b>	<b>27,8%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 (25%) (27F/27M)</b>	<b>54 (25%) (27F/27M)</b>	<b>54 (25%) (15F/39M)</b>	<b>54 (25%) (23F/31M)</b>	<b>216 (100%) (92F/124M)</b>

Note: F - Female; M - Male

*Age and gender:* The UK and PT samples have equal numbers of young women and men, the CZ sample includes 15 young women and 39 young men and the NL sample includes 23 young women and 31 young men. Therefore the total survey population comprises 92 young women and 124 young men. A third of the sample are aged under 20 years, and two thirds 20 years and above, but 61% of the UK sample are aged under 20 years, a third of NL and PT (35% and

30%) and 7% of the CZ sample. Women are younger than men; 46% of women are aged under 20 years compared with 24% of men.

*Ethnic minorities:* Ethnic minority youth in three of our samples reflect the colonial pasts of those countries. Ethnic minority youth born in NL include those with Surinamese heritage (7 young people out of 15), in PT those with Cape Verdean heritage (4), and in the UK young people with Caribbean (11) African (2) or Asian heritage (2). Many young people in the NL, PT and UK samples are of mixed heritage either having one parent from the dominant ethnic group or from another ethnic minority group; in the UK the majority of the ethnic minority group (12 of the 21) are of mixed heritage. In PT and CZ the ethnic minority sample include young Roma: 8 in PT and 3 in CR.

*Not born in the country:* In CZ the large majority of young people (47) are born in that country: others are from Slovakia or Moravia. In the other three samples there is a variety of countries of origin among young people not born in that country. The Netherlands sample has the greatest range of birth countries including: other European (3), Turkey (2), North Africa (2), Horn of Africa (2), South America (2), other Africa (3), Indian Sub-Continent (2), and Suriname (1). In Portugal other birth countries include: other European (1), the PALOP countries of Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome - 13), South America (Brazil - 2), and 1 from Congo and 1 from Afghanistan. In the UK sample other birth countries include: the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia - 9), Africa (4, including one from Guinea Bissau via Portugal therefore a European migrant), St Lucia (2), and other European countries (1).

Most young people from other countries arrived through channels outside the asylum process. In UK 6 of 16 young people reported they had come as asylum seekers; in the Netherlands 8 out of 19, and in Portugal 3 out of 18. In the UK the majority arrived through family reunification.

*Religion:* The majority of young people in our sample report having a particular or a general faith (57% vs 43% none); 38% of the sample reported being Christian, Catholic or a member of an Evangelical Christian church, 8% are Muslim whilst 9% report a general belief in a God. In the CZ sample a majority of young people (55%) report no faith compared with 43% in the UK and NL samples and 32% in the PT sample. This is partly associated with different

number of migrants born outside Europe in the four samples. In the UK a majority of both the ethnic dominant and ethnic minority groups report having no faith (58%, 59%) whilst 100% of those born outside Europe report having a faith, and this samples includes 5 Pentecostal migrants persecuted in Ethiopia for their faith. In the NL a majority of ethnic dominant youth report having no faith (80%) but not the ethnic minority group (13% none) nor the migrant group (23% none). These differences are important when we consider the structures of support that can promote resilience.

*Current accommodation situation:* Another major difference between the four samples is the degree to which young homeless people were drawn from those currently living in the street or emergency accommodation or those living in long term accommodation. Within the CSEYHP project we are dealing with homeless youth and youth at risk of homelessness. Due to the lack of social provision specialised with young homeless (PT, CZ), the situations of homelessness are, in some cases, broader in terms of the roofless and houseless FEANTSA ETHOS categories. Young people were included for interviews if they were living in one of the following conditions: *without proper and/or legal housing, sleeping rough or sleeping with friends, in hostels or other accommodation intended for less than one year; depending on support services; living in care or move on support; social council tenant having experienced family homelessness (inadequate housing) followed by re-housing (PT).*

The sample of young homeless people recruited in CZ was drawn from young people either living in unfit accommodation such as squats or on the streets (88%) compared with 11% in NL (6 young people living on the streets), 9% in PT (6 young people living in shanty accommodation), 7% UK (4 young people living on the streets). By comparison the sample of young people recruited in the UK was drawn from young people living in long-term supported accommodation (foyers, hostels; 72%), compared with 17% in NL and PT and 0% living in that type of accommodation in CZ. These two samples demonstrate the extreme differences in provision in these two countries – almost no recognition of youth homelessness and provision for young homeless people in CZ and a recognition of the risks of youth homelessness and supported accommodation provision specifically for youth developed over 40 years (particularly in the last 25 years)

in the UK. Of the remaining UK young people, 20% were living in accommodation rented from a social landlord (municipal or housing association).

The two samples from NL and PT are more mixed but equally different. The NL sample includes young people who were living in short term accommodation (less than three months, 37% NL), long term supported accommodation (17%), rented from private landlord (9%), refuge (7%), living with partner (6%), social landlord (4%) and others. The PT sample includes young people who were living with parents in owner occupied accommodation (11%), social housing (19%), private rented (19%), long term facilities (17%), squats/shanty accommodation (9%), and living with a partner (7%).

**Figure 1.2. Previous Accommodation Arrangements**

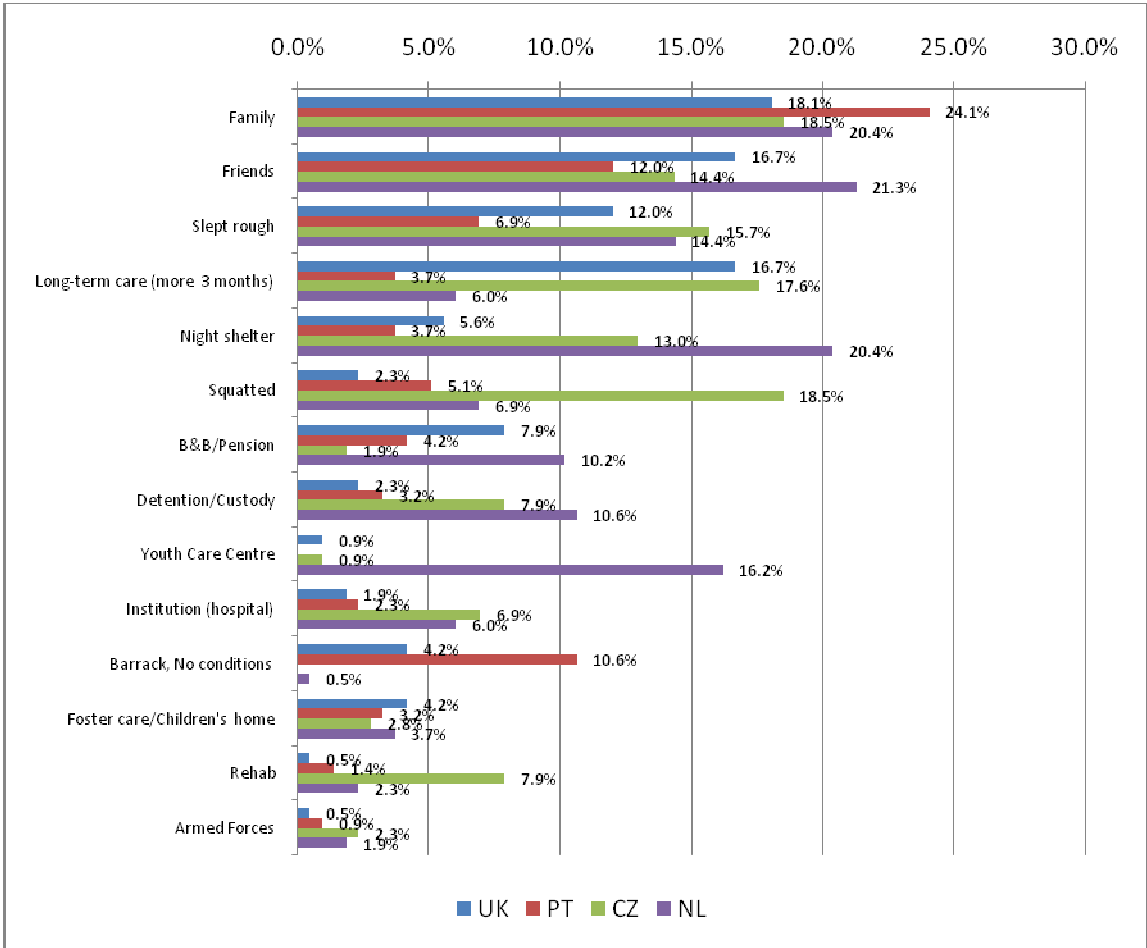


Figure 1.2 reports on all the different circumstances that our 216 young people have lived in after they left their last permanent home. Some had spent time living with family members, particularly in PT (24%) and NL (20%), whilst others had lived with friends (between 17%-21% in each country). Rough sleeping

squatting, as well as rehab are more common among the CZ interviewees (respectively 15,7%, 18,5%, 7,9% in CZ). Detention and custody have a higher presence in CZ (7,9%) and NL (10,6%). PT has a higher proportion of young people who lived in inadequate housing (houses without minimum comfort conditions, unfit for habitation) (10,6%).

*Current domestic situation:* Less than half of the PT sample reported they were single (44%) compared with 56% NL, 61% UK and 72% CZ. In total 50 young people identified they were parents, and 4 young women were pregnant and 5 young men reported that a partner was pregnant.

**Table 1.3: Age, partnership status, parenting status in percentages**

	Country sample				Gender	
	UK	PT	CR	NL	Female	Male
<b>Age</b>						
16-19 years, 33%	61	30	7	35	46	24
20 yrs & above, 67%	39	70	93	65	54	76
<b>Partnered</b>						
Single	61	44	72	56	46	68
Partnered	39	56	28	44	54	32
<b>Has child</b>						
No child, 72%	82	48	71	87	58	82
Yes, living with, 14%	6 (3 cases)	39	4 (2 cases)	7	28	3 (4 cases)
Yes, not living with, 10%	6 (3 cases)	7 (4 cases)	23	4 (2 cases)	9	11
Pregnant, 2%	4 (2 cases)	2 (1 case)	0	2 (1 case)	5 (4 cases)	0
Partner pregnant, 2%	4 (2 cases)	4 (2 cases)	2 (1 case)	0	0	4 (5 cases)
<b>Total cases – Has Child</b>	51	54	52	54	89	122
<b>Missing cases</b>	3	-	2	-	3	2

In all therefore 28% of the total sample reported they were a parent or about to become a parent, a similar result to a study of young homeless people in Birmingham, UK (Smith, 2000). But the pattern was very different across the country samples. Of the 29 young people who report that their child was living with them, 21 are in the PT sample; of the 21 who report that their child was not living with them, 12 were from the CZ sample. This pattern follows differences in levels of family support reported by the four country samples (see Thematic Report 3, Capability and Resilience), but also gender differences as just over a quarter of young women were living with their children but only 4 young men.

## **1.2 The four country samples in context: welfare regimes and young people at risk**

The sample of young homeless people in each country was not intended to be representative but to reflect the range of young people across Europe who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Quotas allowed us to ensure that, within a limited sample size, more young people born outside of the host country could be included. Including the full range of young homeless people allows us to reflect life trajectories of homeless youth, on processes of social exclusion, capability and resilience , and gender and ethnic differences across country samples but also between young men and young women, and young people from different ethnic and migrant backgrounds.

However, from this brief introduction it is apparent that the contexts in which young people become homeless are quite particular to each country. In 2008, the Up2Youth project compared the structure of welfare policies, education and training systems, labour markets, youth unemployment policies, gender relations and representations of youth across the EU27 countries. They argued that attaining adulthood has become more problematic, as has the timing with which it is attained. Many young people experience a reversible transition to adulthood, in which they may return to the parental home and become dependent once more; the current life courses of young people are destandardised, fragmented and diversified. Moreover these transitions take place within distinctly different welfare regimes for young people: Liberal (Anglo-Saxon); Universalistic (Nordic); Sub-protective (Mediterranean); Employment-centred (Continental) and Post-socialist (Central and Eastern European). In Figure 1.4 we reproduce the main characteristics of these five regimes which will be discussed in thematic reports 2 and 3.



**Figure 1.4 Transition regimes across Europe**

Dimension Regime	Country	School	Training	Social Security	Employment Regime	Female Employment	Concept of Youth	Concept of Disadvantage	Focus of Transition Policies	Policy Trend
<i>Universalistic</i>	Denmark Finland	Not selective	Flexible standards (mixed)	State	Open Low risks	High	Personal development, Citizenship	Individualised and Structure-related	Education Activation	Liberal (more labour market orientation)
<i>Employment-centred</i>	Austria Germany France Netherlands	Selective	Standardized (dual)	State / family	Closed Risks at the margins	Medium	Adaptation to social positions	Individualised	(Pre-) vocational training	Liberal (more activation)
<i>Liberal</i>	Ireland UK	Principally not selective	Flexible, low standards (mixed)	State / family	Open, High risks	High	Early economic independence	Individualised	Employability	Liberal (more education)
<i>Sub-protective</i>	Italy Portugal Spain	Not Selective	Low standards and coverage (mainly school)	Family	Closed High risks (Informal work)	Low	Without distinct status	Structure-related	Some Status (work, education, training)	Liberal (deregulation) and Employment-centred (training)
<i>Post-socialist countries</i>	Bulgaria Czech Rep. Romania Slovakia Slovenia	Principally not selective	Standards in process of transformation (mixed)	Family / state	Closed High risks	Low (except Slovenia)	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Liberal (deregulation) and Employment-centred (training) BG, RO: Employment-centred SK: Liberal SI: Universal

In our policy report we summarise our findings of the four thematic reports in relation to the fields of action identified in the November 2009 Council resolution: Education and Training; Employment and Entrepreneurship; Health and Well-Being; Participation; Voluntary Activities; Social Inclusion; Youth and the World: Creativity and Culture. We particularly emphasise the overall thematic priority for the youth field for the period 1 January 2010-June 2011: employment. Over half of our sample are unemployed and looking for work at time of interview and employment initiatives are of particular importance.

## **2. Young homeless people and social exclusion: Theoretical framework**

This study focuses on the process of social exclusion among homeless young people. In order to be able to measure social exclusion, we have tried to gain as clear an understanding of this phenomenon as possible. Although many academics have examined the issue of social exclusion, there is little agreement about the concept either at the level of policy or in the academic world. Partly because of this, there are no clear definitions or indicators. Jehoel-Gijsbers, Smits, Boelhouwer and Bierings (2009) conducted an extensive theoretical investigation to determine whether it would be possible to develop an effective instrument for measuring social exclusion. They propose a number of alternative empirical methods for measuring social exclusion.

### **2.1 Explaining the phenomenon of social exclusion**

#### *The various dimensions of social exclusion*

Social exclusion has been addressed widely in literature. The concept is similar in many respects to the notion of 'social division', which was used in politics during the 1980s. Social exclusion refers in part to a portion of the population that is becoming increasingly deprived relative to the rest of society. In academic literature, social exclusion is also often defined by comparing it to poverty. Although multidimensional definitions exist as well, poverty is traditionally regarded as a condition that is primarily related to a deficit in terms of financial and material resources. An examination of the various definitions of social exclusion shows that the concept (Jehoel-Gijsbers 2004) encompasses a wider area than material exclusion alone, as for example, in the definition developed by

Sen (1985): '*Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept that covers economic, social and political aspects: it deals with the failure to attain adequate levels of various functionings*'.

In addition to deficits in terms of material dimensions, the concept also refers to such relational and socio-cultural aspects as a lack of housing, social participation, education and healthcare. Scholars also emphasise that social exclusion may result from causes that are of a non-financial nature, such as discrimination, a poor living environment or chronic illness.

Jehoel-Gijsbers (2004) makes a distinction between two primary dimensions: a socio-cultural component, which refers to the non-material dimension, and an economic and structural component. The socio-cultural dimension of social exclusion primarily involves *insufficient social participation*. This means that people do not participate sufficiently in social networks, have few contacts with other people and limited social involvement. Second, *insufficient normative integration*, involves the failure of people to adhere to the standards and values that are accepted within society. The final two dimensions are types of economic and structural exclusion. *Material deprivation* relates to a lack of financial resources that people actually experience when they compare their own situations to the applicable societal standards. Finally, *insufficient access to basic social rights*, means that people cannot access adequate healthcare, education or a positive living environment.

In addition to objective characteristics, social exclusion may also be defined subjectively. The way in which people actually experience exclusion may not necessarily correspond to the way in which it is measured in objective terms. Jehoel-Gijsbers (2004) stresses the importance of raising the level of government policy to reflect the world as it is actually experienced by citizens. Do they feel materially deprived relative to other people? Do they feel that others have discriminated against them and that they have insufficient access to the facilities they need?

#### *Relative position*

There is no defined boundary between social inclusion and social exclusion. Social exclusion must be regarded as a relative phenomenon that is defined in relation to other people. As people become increasingly deprived in several dimensions relative to other people, they become more excluded. Differences

between countries also play a key role in international comparative research, including this study. An income that may be sufficient to manage financially in one country could leave people on the brink of poverty in another.

#### *Social exclusion as a process or as a condition*

Deficits do not come about by themselves. Social exclusion involves a dynamic process in which people are excluded from society. In practice, the term social exclusion is used to describe both the *process* and the *condition* of social exclusion. Silver (1994: 545) highlights the importance of the difference between the condition and the process, referring to a 'state of social excludedness' in the defining the condition of social exclusion.

Jehoel-Gijsbers (2004) rightly stresses the importance of distinguishing between manifestations of social exclusion (i.e. as a condition, such as material deprivation) and risk factors that can lead to social exclusion (e.g. low income). The first of these manifestations may be seen as a result of social exclusion and the second as a cause of it. Empirical research can be used to determine the extent to which these risk factors actually result in the condition of social exclusion, according to the following causal chain: *Risk factors* → *process of social exclusion* → *condition of social exclusion*.

#### *Endogenous and exogenous causes*

Social exclusion often results from a deficit with regard to sources of assistance within the immediate environment (e.g. the local communities in which people live) – a deficit in terms of social security provisions. People who are excluded often have little influence on such exogenous factors. Although many assume that social exclusion is purely involuntary and not the result of people's own actions, Jehoel-Gijsbers and colleagues (2009) assert that this is not necessarily the case. They argue that drug addiction, leaving school early or criminality (as causes of social exclusion) may be based at least in part on people's own choices. People can also exclude themselves by engaging in behaviour that falls outside of the prevailing standards and values in society. Such cases involve insufficient normative integration.

#### *Various levels*

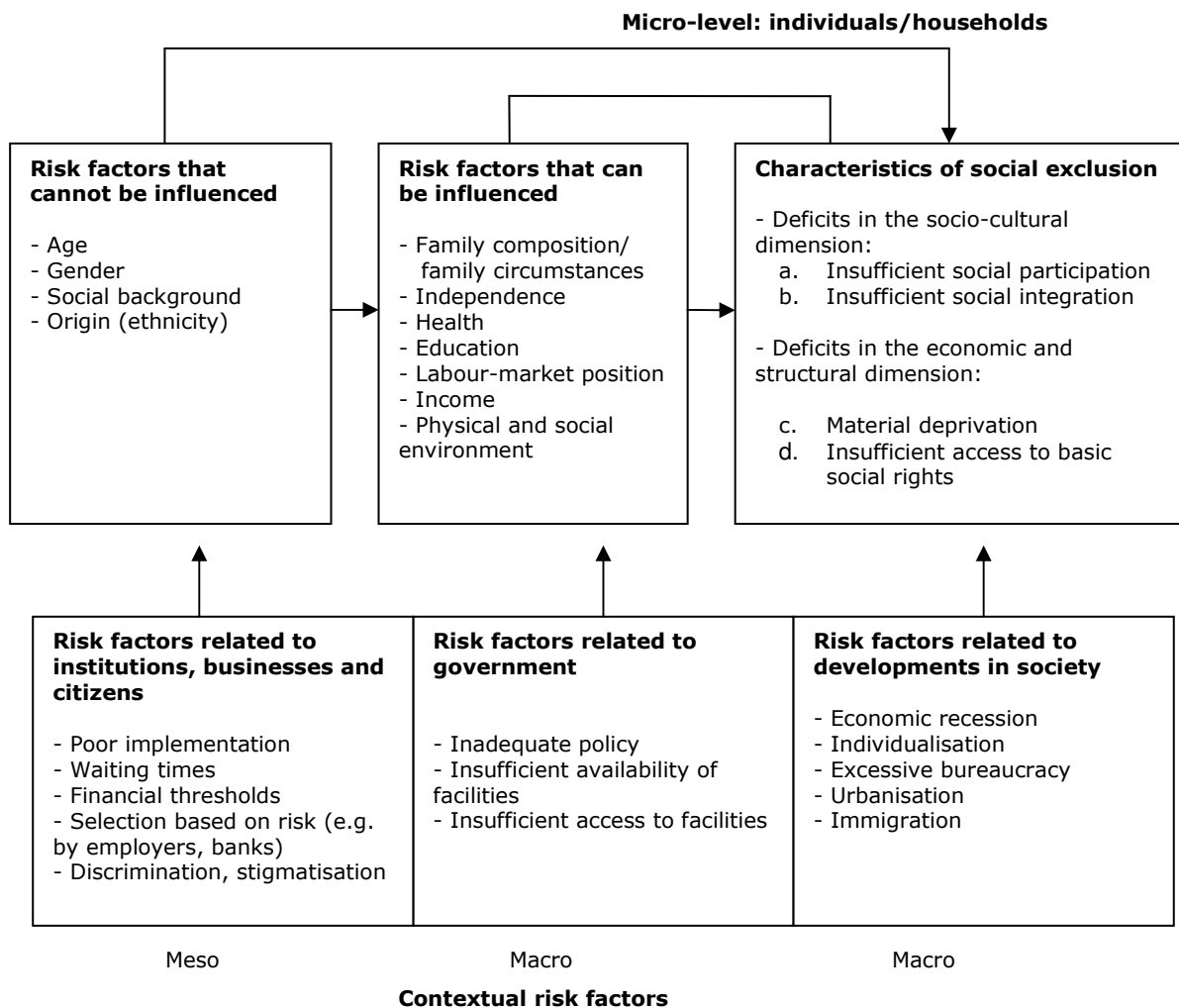
Jehoel-Gijsbers (2004) observes that the academic literature pays insufficient attention to the various levels of social exclusion and argues the importance of

understanding the levels at which social exclusion occurs. This is partly because such an understanding provides a better foundation for determining the level at which social exclusion can be addressed. Three levels can be distinguished:

- Macro: social exclusion at the level of society as a whole. Examples include exclusion as a result of legislation or an economic crisis.
- Meso: exclusion by businesses, formal institutions and networks. Examples include exclusion from employment, education or associations;
- Micro: exclusion from informal networks in the local community or from primary social networks

The figure below presents a diagram of the interaction that occurs at various levels between risk factors for social exclusion and the actual condition of social exclusion.

**Figure 2.1 Risk factors and characteristics of social exclusion and risk factors for homelessness**



(Source: SCP 2004: 39)

## **2.2 Risk factors and social exclusion at the international level**

Research conducted by Tsakloglou and Papadopoulos (2002, Table 2 p.216) shows that the level of social exclusion varies significantly according to the type of welfare state. Using the ECHP database, these authors constructed a static indicator of disadvantage based on income (poverty), living conditions, basic necessities and social relations. The proportion of the population in the Netherlands, the UK and Portugal that experienced two criteria were 5.6%, 13.2% and 15.9% (respectively). Tsakloglou and Papadopoulos identified high rates of social exclusion in Mediterranean welfare state (Spain, Italy and particularly Greece and Portugal) and 'Liberal' welfare-state regimes (Ireland and UK). Lower rates were recorded in the Continental Corporatist regimes (Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, and France), and the lowest were observed in the social-democratic regimes of Denmark and the social-democratic/corporatist regime of the Netherlands.

In analysing risk factors and social exclusion in different countries we take into account different theories on welfare-state regimes. Esping-Andersen (1990) was the first to elaborate profoundly on different regimes. He distinguishes three models: liberal, social-democratic and corporatist. This model is based on the role welfare state and market play in society and useful to analyse the findings in this research in a broad way.

But the rights and responsibilities that apply to adults are not always adequate to analyse the situation of children and young people. Their relationship to the welfare state is different from that of adults. For that reason we have also used the findings of the European Up2Youth network for the theoretical substantiation and operationalisation of Combating Youth Homelessness (see chapter 1). This model considers the exceptional position of children within the welfare state. The Up2Youth network identified five welfare regimes for young people: Liberal (Anglo-Saxon); Universalistic (Nordic); Sub-protective (Mediterranean); Employment-centred (Continental) and Post-socialist (Central and Eastern European). The model of the Up2Youth Network is complementary to the model of Esping-Andersen. Both are of use for this study.

### 2.3 The social exclusion of children

The dimensions of social exclusion for adults are largely applicable to measure social exclusion among children. However, the details of these dimensions are often different for children. Because our respondents are on the border between childhood and adulthood, it is important to take some of these differences into account. In 2010, the Social and Cultural Planning Office in the Netherlands (SCP) developed an instrument for measuring the condition of social exclusion among children (Roest, Lokhorst and Vrooman, 2010).

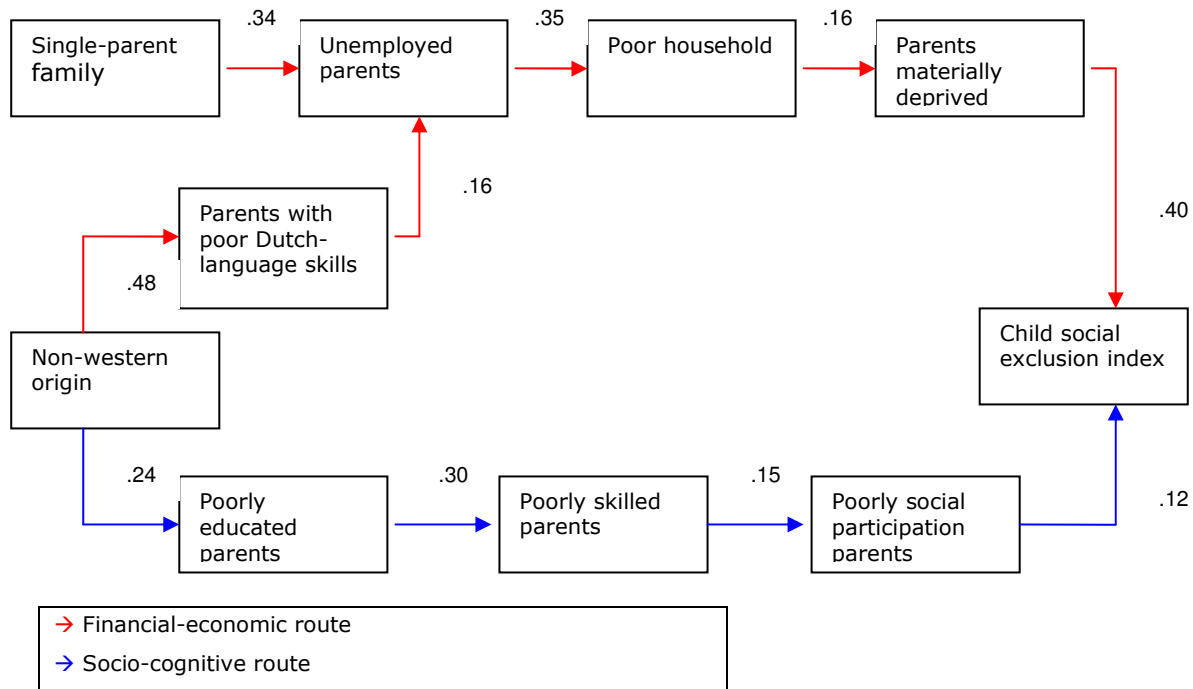
The *social participation* dimension primarily involves the way in which children spend their leisure time with people of their own age, along with the cultural and physical activities in which they participate. Sports and other activities can help children learn to work together as a team and to develop friendships. These encounters are important for the development of a strong social identity (Ridge and Millar 2000). With regard to the *normative integration* dimension for children, the SCP examines behaviour that goes beyond accepted standards and behaviour that undermines school performance (e.g. truancy and bullying), as well as delinquent behaviour (e.g. theft and vandalism).

In terms of *material aspects*, children's needs differ from those of adults in a number of respects. Children have no mortgages or monthly bills to pay. They do, however, need their own space, as well as adequate clothing and footwear. The final dimension, *basic social rights*, relates to such matters as housing, healthcare and social security. While not all of these basic rights apply to children between the ages of 5 and 17, others (e.g. a safe living environment) certainly do. According to the Dutch Ministry of Youth and Family's policy programme *Every opportunity for all children (Alle Kansen voor alle kinderen, J&G, 2007)*, children have a right to (1) adequate care and upbringing, (2) a safe living environment, (3) meaningful leisure activities, (4) education and (5) employment prospects.

The study conducted by SCP reveals two different routes that lead to social exclusion among children in the Netherlands: the financial-economic route and the socio-cognitive route (figure 2.2). With regard to the first route (financial-economic), social exclusion among children is caused in part by the material

deprivation<sup>2</sup> of their parents (i.e. their level of poverty and whether or not they are gainfully employed). The second route that can lead to social exclusion among children is the socio-cognitive route. In this route, the social participation of parents is an important direct determinant of social exclusion among their children. In turn, a lack of social participation is made more likely by a lack of skills among parents, which is also caused by their low level of education.

**Figure 2.2 Key causal routes accounting for social exclusion among children (general index; with standardised coefficients)**



Source: SCP 2010: 16

## 2.4 From theory to effective measurements

In addition to generating insight into the conditions of social exclusion and homelessness, this study aims to develop knowledge regarding the processes that lead to these conditions. We have examined the important risk factors in the lives of young people, the process that drives these factors in their lives and the condition of social exclusion that it ultimately produces.

To operationalise social exclusion, we used the dimensions of and risk factors for social exclusion that the SCP highlights as applicable to both adults and children (Jehoel-Gijsbers 2004; Roest, Lokhorst and Vrooman, 2010). We interpret these

<sup>2</sup> Material deprivation refers to financial deficits that people actually experience when they compare their own situations with the standard applicable within wider society (Roest, Lokhorst and Vrooman, 2010: 10).



dimensions in a slightly different way, however, partly because of the specific characteristics of our research group: homeless young people. Because the members of our study population are on the threshold between childhood and adulthood, both aspects of adulthood (e.g. the capacity to cope independently) and aspects of childhood (e.g. attending education) are applicable. In addition, they also face specific problems. Factors that are known to increase the likelihood of homelessness (including parental substance abuse issues) have therefore been taken into account as well.

Our interpretation of the dimensions of and risk factors for social exclusion also relates to the research method adopted. In our endeavour to generate insight into the process of social exclusion, we did not aim to obtain a wide-scale dataset of quantitative data. Instead, we combined a quantitative dataset with a qualitative approach in which respondents were asked to reflect on their own youth and the various themes and events that occurred in it. The list below provides details regarding how the risk factors and the characteristics of social exclusion were operationalised in this research (table 2.3). In Chapter 3, the variables listed for each theme will be discussed and the differences in social exclusion in the four different countries will be revealed.

**Table 2.3 Social exclusion and homelessness variables**

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***Variables for social exclusion and homelessness as a condition***

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**Dimension 1: Social and cultural exclusion**

**a. Social participation**

- The presence of friends (group)
- Someone to turn to when feeling unsafe
- Taking part in social activities/recreation

**b. Cultural normative integration**

- Delinquent behaviour/criminal activities
- Bullying, truancy, suspension from school

**Dimension 2: Economic and structural exclusion**

**c. Material deprivation**

- The capacity to cope financially
- Debts
- Access to communication resources

**d. Access to basic social rights**

- Having no fixed abode, living on the streets
- Unfulfilled need for the social facilities/assistance
- No effective care and upbringing

**d. Subjective indicators**

- Feeling of safety
- Feeling homeless
- Having nowhere for oneself

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***Variable risk factors for social exclusion and homelessness***

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**Risk factor 1: Family circumstances****Disrupted family situation**

- Grew up with single parent
- Time spent in care/foster care

**Social exclusion parents**

- Income of parents
- Problems of parents (physical health, mental health, alcohol/drugs, aggression)

**Dysfunctional relationship (parents)**

- Fights with physical/verbal aggression

**Risk factor 2: Health and independence**

- Health problems before/after 16
- Disabilities
- Psychological problems experienced
- Alcohol/drug use

**Risk factor 3: Education**

- Highest level of education completed
- Problems completing a course

**Risk factor 4: Employment market position**

- Unemployment
- Problems finding a job

**Risk factor 5: Income**

- Source of income
- Level of income

**Risk factor 6: Living environment**

- Number of different places lived
- Running away
- Perceived risk for becoming homeless

**Risk factor 7: Institutions/government**

- Assistance in finding a home
- Availability of social facilities for homeless young people
- Availability of key worker for homeless young people
- Satisfaction with social facilities/key worker

**Risk factor 8: Developments in society**

- Migration
  - Economic recession
  - War
- 

*Methodological note*

Because of the mixture of a quantitative and qualitative approach, the diversity of our sample and the relatively small sample size per country, this study is not designed to make an index of social exclusion and risk factors for the four countries. Still we designed a scale for social exclusion, to test the coherence of the chosen variables by means of reliability and factor analyses in SPSS. As expected Cronbach's alpha didn't reach the necessary level to use the index for further analysis. Attempts to provide an index through Structural Equation Modelling (using latent variables) in AMOS confirms the incoherence of the variables chosen for the index. Consequently, in this study we compare the four

countries on specific themes of social exclusion in a descriptive rather than an inferential way.

### **3. Research results: social exclusion and risk factors**

#### **3.1 Family life**

The foundations for the problems faced by homeless young people are often laid at an early age. Various studies show that the source of the problems encountered by homeless young people lies in the family situations in which the children were raised (Edgar et al. 2005; Shelton et al. 2009; Bijvoets 2006). The data from our research confirms this view. Many of the young people we interviewed were raised in family situations that could be described as problematic in a variety of ways. The two routes to social exclusion among children found by SCP: the financial-economic route and socio-cognitive route, can also be identified in the data of this study (Roest, Lokhorst and Vrooman, 2010).

##### *The financial-economic route*

The interviews revealed an image of parents struggling to survive financially. Particularly in the UK and CZ, the majority of our respondents reported that their parents were living on benefits (see figure 3.1). Many of the respondents in the UK (70.3%) and PT (57.4%) stated that their parents did not have an adequate income and/or employment. When families face a daily struggle to make ends meet, the financial situation often has an impact on family life. One boy, Kubilay (male, 18 years, ethnic minority) explained how his problems started when the family was no longer able to pay the rent: *'Everything was fine to begin with, until my mother got into trouble with past-due rent and we were evicted. We had to move out and that's when my problems started'*.

Despite the obvious role of poverty in the family in many of the accounts we heard, the lack of money and its consequences were not prominent features in the stories that young people told about their families. This may be because children and young people do not fully understand their parents' financial situation. Social and emotional problems within the family situation were

mentioned far more frequently, and they appear to have had a greater impact on the young people.

### *The socio-cognitive route*

In addition to the day-to-day struggle to make ends meet, the parents of some of our respondents faced social difficulties and found it difficult to function effectively in wider society. A significant proportion of the parents had problems with substance abuse and displayed aggressive behaviour. It is interesting to note that parents in NL and CZ were particularly likely to face psychological problems (see table 3.1).

Many of the families had experienced one or more significant events. Examples include separation, job loss, divorce or one of the parents becoming ill, causing the family situation to deteriorate. As problems accumulate, many parents become unable to offer their children what they need. As the interviews showed, this can often lead to harrowing situations. Mariana (female, 23 years, ethnic dominant, PT) tells how repeated setbacks made it very hard to grow up in a normal way: *'When I was 8 years old my mother was arrested, then in my teenage years my father died. I lived with my aunt for a while. [...] Then I started working and got pregnant. My aunt evicted me.'*

Almost all of the families had experienced tensions and conflicts between relatives. Some young people reported that they had been neglected at home or that their families had been evicted. The worst cases involved serious abuse, death threats or even enforced prostitution by the parents. Some of the young people reported having been forced to assume the role of caregiver in the home, as their parents were unable to care for their siblings or run the household. Young people whose parents do not speak the language well or who are illiterate (some of whom are from ethnic minorities) are often forced to take on a range of responsibilities at an early age. Anya (female, 20 years, migrant, NL) recalled, *'I had to do all sorts of things for my father, including his finances and paying the bills, because he cannot read. From as early as the age of eight, I had to read his letters aloud to him'.*

It is interesting to note that only a small proportion (26.4% average at the age of 12) of these young people were raised in two-parent families. Especially in UK and NL respondents said that they had been brought up by a single parent. This was the result of the death of a parent or separation, which left one of the

parents (in most cases, the mother) with responsibility for raising the children. In many families, the arrival of a new partner or stepparent created new tensions. A number of studies have found that female-headed households are at greater risk of poverty (United States Department of Commerce, 1999) and are subsequently more likely to become homeless (Caton et al., 1995; DiBlasio & Belcher, 1995). In PT, where family relations have not become so fragmented, there are fewer divorces or separations. In addition, grandparents or other family members often take on the responsibility for caring for the children.

**Table 3.1 Family situation**

<b>3.1.1</b>	<b>% Parents living from benefits</b>	<b>3.1.2</b>	<b>% Parents lacking income/work</b>
UK	42.3%	UK	70.3%
PT	22.6%	PT	57.4%
CZ	26.4%	CZ	27.8%
NL	41.57%	NL	35.2%

<b>3.1.3</b>	<b>% Drug problems in parents</b>	<b>3.1.4</b>	<b>% Alcohol problems in parents</b>
UK	9.3%	UK	14.8%
PT	20.4%	PT	38.9%
CZ	11.1%	CZ	48.1%
NL	20.4%	NL	33.3%

<b>3.1.5</b>	<b>% Mental health problems in parents</b>	<b>3.1.6</b>	<b>% Physical aggression by parents</b>
UK	16.7%	UK	40.7%
PT	5.6%	PT	42.6%
CZ	37.0%	CZ	40.7%
NL	46.3%	NL	46.3%

*Escaping domestic problems*

There is no doubt that many of these young people had grown up in situations that were far from ideal. The accounts related by the young people show that this resulted in a lack of the support, structure or social and cultural capital they needed in order to function effectively within society at a later age. The poor situations at home led to psychological problems among many of the young people, including depression, anxiety and problems in developing relationships (See section 3.4). A significant proportion had taken it upon themselves to escape the situation and leave home. In the UK, CZ and NL, between 60% and 78% of the young people had run away from home or an institution at least once. In PT, this percentage was considerably lower (30%).

### *Problems not caused by the family situation*

Although the majority of the young people had experienced problematic family situations, it is important to emphasise that some of their parents had very good intentions. Although they had done their best to provide the basics for their children, they were unable to do so. They were overcome by their own problems or were simply unable to raise their often difficult children successfully. In this respect, a distinction can be made between two situations. In some cases, parents faced problems of their own that prevented them from raising their children properly. In other cases, the children were so difficult to handle that their parents found it impossible to guide them successfully towards adulthood. Either of these possibilities can obviously occur to different extents and in various combinations.

Some of the young people told us that they came from 'good' families and blamed themselves for their problems. One respondent spoke of his loving but passive single mother who had problems raising her 'difficult' son. The mother lost control, the boy went his own way and started engaging in criminal activity: *'It was really my fault that things went wrong. I should have tried harder. I just didn't care about anything. I stopped going to school. I refused to listen to anyone. I broke the rules every day. Yes... I was a textbook example of a criminal, a young criminal.'* (Wim, male, 21 years, ethnic dominant, NL)

For some of the respondents, care organisations had intervened at an early age. When the home situation became unbearable, they had been placed under supervision or sent to live with foster parents or in a children's home. Although it would be logical to assume that these young people were spared some of the problems they would have faced at home, they do not appear to have fared any better than those people who stayed with their parents longer. For a large proportion of young people, the problems actually emerged within a care setting. This issue is examined in more detail in Section 3.6

### *Refugees and Romanies*

For a portion of the young people we studied, the problem of homelessness started in a different way. This group consists largely of young refugees who had fled their home countries because they were in danger or had no prospects for the future. The problems that these young people experienced did not necessarily originate within the family situation. Some of them had endured a

war or had been persecuted for political reasons. Others had experienced less danger, having come to their new home country for economic reasons, in the hope of building a better life. Most of these young people met with only limited success in this endeavour. Because they were unable to secure legal residency, they had no permanent home. These young people felt socially excluded, as they did not have the appropriate residence documents that they needed in order to participate properly in society.

Some of the young people were Romanies or travellers, particularly in CZ and PT. The problems experienced by this group are also of a different origin. For a detailed description of the problems faced by these specific groups, we refer to the thematic report: Gender, ethnic group and migrant dimensions of homelessness.

### **3.2 Living**

#### *Lack of stability and a place to call home*

One characteristic shared by all of these young people is a lack of continuity or stability in their lives. This was reflected in the family situation, as well as in the many changes in the places they have lived during their years. When the home situation becomes unbearable, many young people drift between temporary accommodations with family members, friends, care facilities or on the street. This means that many of the young people examined in this study have lived in numerous different places despite their young age (see table 3.2.1). The respondents in NL were the most likely to drift around between different forms of accommodation. The number of different places of residence among these young people varied between 3 and 15, with an average of 7.5. This result is partly due to the large number of temporary care facilities. In addition to asking the young people about the number of different places they had lived, we asked about the extent to which they considered their lives to be 'settled' (see table 3.2.2). This concept may relate to the level of stability in terms of living accommodation, but it can also refer to financial security and a sense of security and stability in terms of relationships. Approximately one third of the young people in the UK, PT, CZ and NL described their lives as largely unsettled. Interestingly, this percentage was significantly higher in PT (51.9%). Despite the relatively low average number of places where they had lived, the young people in PT experienced less

stability in their lives relative to the young people in the other countries addressed in this study. This reflects an instability in other fields like jobs, income and education (see section 3.4).

**Table 3.2. Stability of living**

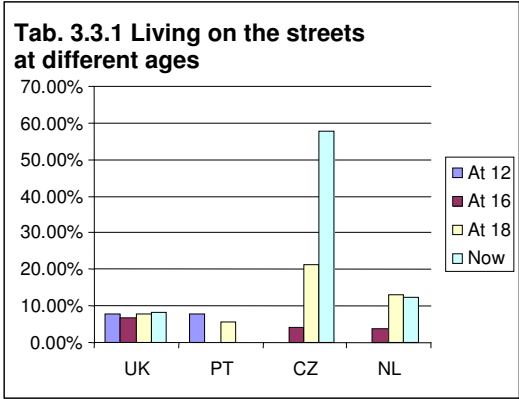
<b>3.2.1</b>	<b>Average number of places ever lived</b>	<b>3.2.2</b>	<b>% Describe life as unsettled</b>
UK	4.4	UK	25.9%
PT	4.2	PT	51.9%
CZ	6	CZ	34.0%
NL	7.5	NL	36.5%

*Homeless or living on the streets*

In the UK and NL, only a small proportion of the respondents were currently living on the streets (8% and 12% respectively). Most of the homeless young people in the UK and NL (approximately 80%) had found accommodations in care facilities. None of the respondents in PT was living on the streets at the time of the interviews; one fourth of them were living in care facilities, and the others had found somewhere to live or a place to sleep with family, friends or a partner. Unlike the other countries, a significant number (almost 60%) of the young people in CZ were living on the streets, and only 6% had found accommodations at care facilities. Figure 3.3.1 shows a remarkable difference between CZ and the other countries. In CZ, the older the youths become, the more likely they are to end up on the streets. This correlation was not evident in the other countries. In fact, we observed that an increasing number of young people move into care facilities at the age of 18. In CZ, the low level of social care facilities and support could explain why a relatively large number of homeless young people in that country end up on the streets at the age of 18. This implies that, in CZ, it is possible to identify the direct impact of a lack of material support for young people, in addition to a more indirect route to social exclusion caused by the parents' circumstances.



**Table 3.3. Living on the streets**



Tab 3.3.2	% Currently living on the streets
UK	8.2%
PT	0%
CZ	57.6%
NL	12.2%

Tab 3.3.3	% Currently feeling homeless
UK	41.5%
PT	20.4%
CZ	46.2%
NL	42.6%

The interviews show that living on the street is not necessarily accompanied by the feeling of being homeless. In the UK, CZ and NL, a little more than 40% of the people reported feeling homeless, despite the fact that the percentage of young people living on the streets was much higher in CZ and much lower in NL and the UK (see figure 3.3.3). The descriptions provided by the respondents demonstrated the variety of interpretations that exist for the concept of homelessness. For example, Nina (female, 19 years, ethnic minority, NL) explains, *'I do feel homeless, because I have never actually felt at home anywhere and don't think I ever really will. But I am not without shelter, since I have my own room.'*

Some young people described themselves as homeless even though they were living in a hostel. Although they may have had a roof over their heads, they had no certainty regarding how long they would be able to stay there, and it did not feel like home. They were therefore referring to the psychological dimension of the concept of homelessness. Other young people in hostels did not consider themselves homeless, as they had a roof over their heads and a bed in which to sleep. The accounts of these young people demonstrate the complexity of the concept of homelessness. It can refer to a lack of place for one's self and a lack of privacy, as well as to a feeling of insecurity and uneasiness, uncertainty about how long one will be allowed to stay in a particular place and about the restrictions or rules that may be imposed. Other young people spoke of a lack of a stable base where they could concentrate on studying or work on their future. In the current situation between 48% and 67% of the young people feel that they have a place for themselves.

### *Assistance in finding living accommodations*

Although the problems faced by most of these young people involved far more than just accommodations, the lack of affordable housing did constitute a significant part of their problems. Even young people who had managed to get their lives back on track had difficulty finding independent living accommodations. In all of the countries, the number of affordable homes for young people is limited, and this can hinder them in setting up an independent household. In the EU-27 countries, only the most generous Scandinavian welfare regimes have adequate or nearly adequate supplies of social housing for young families or young individuals. The Netherlands can be placed between Scandinavia and the other European countries. Although social housing offers options for young people moving out of their parents' homes, the waiting lists are long. In the UK, home ownership is the predominant form of tenure, but the majority of poor households live in social housing, and local authorities are increasingly placing poor and/or homeless households in private rented housing. The dominant form of tenure in PT is also home ownership, and three fourths of all poor households currently live in private rental housing. Social housing in PT is only available for 26,8% of the poor households. Social housing is lacking in CZ, and municipal authorities are hostile to such provisions.

In order to identify the extent to which young people can count on the assistance of public or other bodies in finding accommodations, we asked the young people whether they had ever been offered a home by an organisation and whether they had used the services of a housing corporation (see figures 6.1 and 6.2). In NL and CZ, around 40% of the young people had been offered a home. According to the interviews, these homes were often temporary facilities that young people were required to leave after a specific period for various reasons. In the UK and NL, more than half of the young people had used the services of a housing council; this applied for slightly less than one third of the young people in PT and CZ.

Subsequently, about one third of these young people in UK and PT were offered a dwelling by a housing council (see figure 3.4.3). This happened significantly less often in CZ (14%) and in NL (17%). In CZ, there is a lack of social housing and municipal authorities are hostile to this provision. In view of the relatively high percentage of subsidised rental accommodations in the Netherlands (34% of

the total housing stock), the low percentage of young people who were able to rely on subsidised housing is remarkable. This result is due in part to the long waiting lists and stricter rules regarding the allocation of housing in urgent circumstances. In order to be eligible for accommodation, it is often necessary to be on a waiting list for years. This implies that young people are unlikely to secure housing (especially in the major cities). In serious cases, it is possible to plead urgent circumstances. People who urgently require living accommodation because of special circumstances are given priority on the waiting list. As illustrated by the case of Simone (female, 22 years, ethnic dominant, NL), however, urgent circumstances are not always recognised: *'I did plead urgent circumstances on one occasion, but was unsuccessful. It could have changed everything. I was almost 20 at the time and very pregnant'*.

**Table 3.4 Support with finding accommodation**

<b>3.4.1</b>	<b>% Home offered by organisation</b>	<b>3.4.2</b>	<b>% Contacted housing council</b>
UK	31.4%	UK	61.1%
PT	27.9%	PT	28.6%
CZ	40.7%	CZ	25.9%
NL	45.1%	NL	50.9%

<b>3.4.3</b>	<b>Housing council offered dwelling</b>	<b>Housing council: on waiting list/might obtain dwelling</b>	<b>Housing council: no dwelling offered</b>
UK	31.3%	25%	43.8%
PT	25%	25%	50%
CZ	14.3%	0%	85%
NL	17.2%	48%	34.5%

**3. 3 Physical and mental health**

*Mental problems*

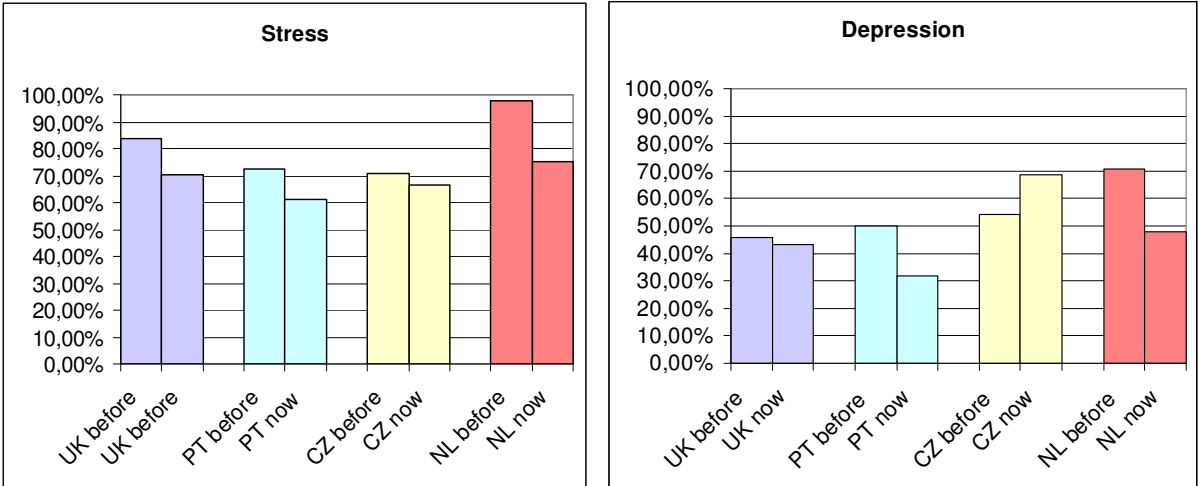
Problematic family situations and the lack of a home or stability are reflected in the lives of these young people in numerous ways. One of the most obvious consequences is the wide range of mental issues that these young people had developed during their lives. In order to gain insight into the course of these problems, we asked the young people to tell about the problems they had experienced before leaving their last place of residence and which problems they faced in the subsequent period. Table 3.5 shows that many of the young people experienced stress, depression and anxiety before leaving their last permanent place of accommodation. The ratings for stress are high, with percentages between 90% and 70%. In CZ and NL, a remarkably high percentage of the

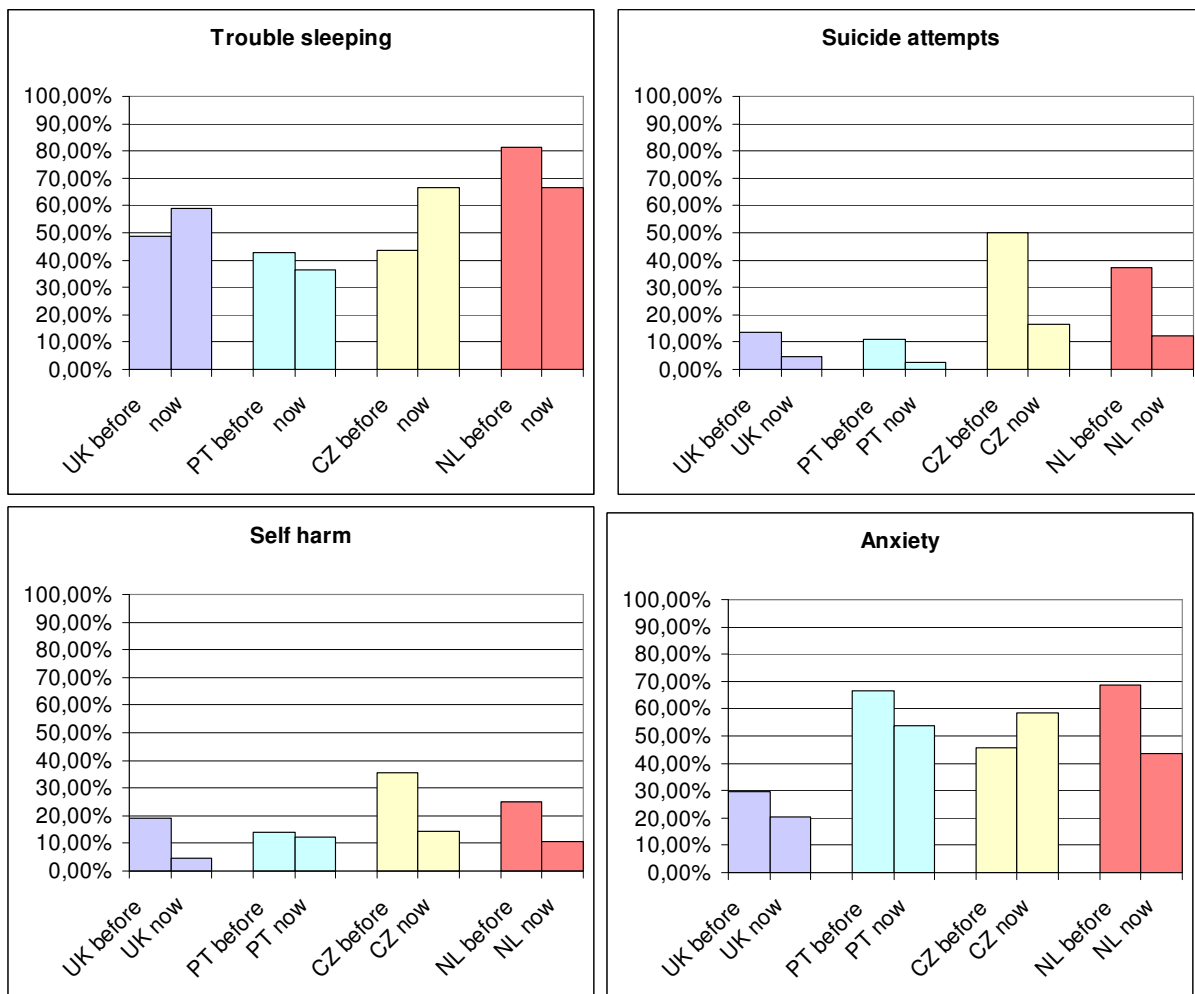
young people (approximately 40%) said that they had attempted suicide before leaving their last place of accommodation. The situation was so insufferable that this was seen as the last resort. Patty (female, 23 years, ethnic dominant, NL), explained, *'At the age of 17, I left my mother's house because I was being physically and mentally abused. At that time, I was extremely depressed; I tried to commit suicide at the age of 10. I also had a small brother and sister who I always had to look after. My mother spent her time in the pub playing darts or with other men.'*

A study of homeless and run-away adolescents found that more than one in four had attempted suicide during the previous year (Yoder, Hoyt & Whitbeck, 1998). The frequent characteristics of homeless people (social isolation, mental illness, substance abuse and poverty, combined with previous attempts at self-harm) represent high risk factors for suicide (Christensen & Garces, 2006).

Another reflection of the mental health of these young people is their feeling of safety. Many of the young people in the four countries said that they had felt unsafe at some point in the past (between 50% and 75% in all of the countries). The reasons for these feelings of insecurity varied. In some cases, they were related to the threat of mistreatment by parents, but they could also be related to the risks of sleeping on the street or in a squatter dwelling, or of becoming a victim of crime. In this respect, the types of risks that girls face differ from those faced by boys. Girls are at greater risk for becoming victims of sexual abuse. Kozato (female, 24, ethnic dominant, CZ) tells: *'They wanted to sell me as a prostitute. They were interested in young girls on the street.'*

**Table 3.5 Mental problems before and after leaving the last permanent residence**





A key question involves whether psychological problems actually precede homelessness or whether they are a consequence of it. Research conducted by Martijn and Sharpe (2006) shows that many homeless young people have faced a trauma in their early youth and that the number of psychological disorders they have increases when they become homeless. Martijn and Sharpe conclude that psychological disorders develop initially because of traumas that precede homelessness (often in early childhood), but that they are exacerbated by the effects of homelessness. They further highlight the importance of early diagnosis and treatment in order to prevent problems from escalating.

Remarkably, in NL – and to a lesser extent in PT and the UK – there is a marked decrease in most of the mental problems faced by young people after they have left their last place of residence (see table 3.5). This means that their current situations are largely an improvement over their earlier situations. This says a great deal about the severity of the situations that they were escaping: for some

young people, a life of homelessness is a better option than life in the situations that they interpret as their last permanent places of residence. In many cases, the last place of residence was related to their family situations.

This result may also reveal something about the quality of the housing and services that are currently available. At the time of the interviews, many young people in NL and the UK were living in care facilities with which they are reasonably satisfied. In many cases, they had their own rooms and a key worker who was helping them to get their lives back on track. In general, the young people appeared to be satisfied with the assistance offered by their key workers (see Section 3.6).

In CZ, depression, anxiety, insomnia and similar issues actually increased rather than decreased when the young people left their last place of residence. As young people reach adulthood, their responsibilities increase, but support from parents and family disappears. As we saw earlier, the older they become, the more likely these young people are to be living on the streets. In CZ, there is a major lack of care facilities specifically focused on young people. Young people have little or no support from professional bodies they can rely on. Young people end up in facilities for homeless adults, many of whom are facing severe problems. Interestingly, most of the problems actually decreased in PT, where the support and assistance offered are extremely limited. This result may be related to the stronger family bonds existing in PT.

#### *Behavioural and personality disorders*

In both NL and the UK, professionals who work with homeless young people report an increase in the number of young people with behavioural disorders (e.g. ADHD, ADD) and personality disorders (e.g. BPD and schizophrenia). In NL, the focus on problems related to mild mental disabilities has increased in recent years. Young people with this type of disability are relatively prominent among homeless young people.

In NL, boys were particularly likely to report that their ADHD made it difficult for them to function effectively. Some of them explained that their problematic behaviour had made them unmanageable at home and at school. The stories told by the young people we interviewed suggest that young people with this type of disorder are more likely to become involved in criminal activities and develop problems with substance abuse.

Although the diagnosis of and support for behavioural and personality disorders are apparently crucial, the services that have been offered to these young people have often been inadequate. In many cases, the behavioural and personality disorders of these young people went undiagnosed (or they were identified too late), and there was a lack of expertise to provide them with effective support. As a result, young people with complex problems can fall through the safety net; there is nowhere for them to turn to with their problems. Simone (female, 22 years, ethnic dominant, NL), who was sexually abused as a girl and is now the mother of a baby, explains that her disorders will soon cause her to be on the streets again: *'I've had borderline personality disorder for quite a while, but it's only just been diagnosed. It's an attachment disorder, which means you don't dare to get close to people. Partly because of my psychological problems, I will have to leave my present home in December. They can't offer me the support I need, because they are not specialised in it, so I will have to leave. I am not sure what will happen to me then'*.

*Problems with alcohol and drugs*

Problems with drugs and alcohol before leaving the last stable living situation are reported most frequently in CZ (51,9%) and NL (44,4%). Strikingly this percentage declines in NL to 22,2% and increases in CZ to 63% after leaving the last 'steady' living situation (see table 3.6). This makes CZ the only country where alcohol and drug problems increase over time. In UK and PT the alcohol and drug problems decrease slightly less after leaving the last place of residence. Although we have no figures about specific types of drugs, the life stories of the respondents show that the use of hard drugs is often linked to living on the streets or mental disorders. Considering the high percentage of rough sleepers in CZ the high level of drug users is not surprising.

**Table 3.6 Alcohol and drugs problems**

<b>3.6.1</b>	<b>Alcohol or drugs problems before leaving last steady living place</b>	<b>3.6.2</b>	<b>Alcohol or drugs problems now</b>
UK	20.4%	UK	18.5%
PT	18.5%	PT	14.8%
CZ	51.9%	CZ	63.0%
NL	44.4%	NL	22.2%

Most respondents make a distinct difference between soft drugs (cannabis) and hard drugs. It seems that some of the young people don't consider their use of

soft drugs problematic. Using cannabis is part of their daily life. They don't think that it affects their functioning in a negative way. People working with homeless youth in NL and UK have a different opinion on this, it seems. Many young people have difficulty regulating their use. Furthermore, cannabis became much stronger in the last years, a senior manager at DePaul UK, tells: *"I know it's just increased in strength over the years [...] the issue around cannabis use is so challenging and getting people to change their behaviour – we have to almost take a harm-reduction approach with it. We're just trying to get people to manage that, manage their use and say to them 'don't go out of the hostel, go down the road and smoke one in the street at 8 o'clock in the morning when you get up', try and manage it in that way."*

### **3.4 Education and employment**

The problematic and unsettled lives led by the young people we interviewed had an impact on their educational careers. The lack of a permanent home is a risk factor that has a negative impact on school performance. Young people with no basic qualifications are in a weaker position on the labour market, which increases their risk of unemployment, criminality and social exclusion (In 't Veld et al., 2006, in SCP).

The interviews with the young people show that the lack of a stable home situation negatively affects school performance. Many are tired at school, due to lack of sleep, and find it difficult to concentrate, and many have no quiet place where they can do their homework. Furthermore, many lack parental support to encourage them in their development and to take action when things go wrong at school. In addition to learning problems, many young people encounter other problems during their school careers, including conflicts with teachers, truancy and suspension (see Table 3.7). In the four countries addressed in this study, three quarters of the young people we interviewed had truanted. Almost half had been suspended from school. Interestingly, this occurred most often in the UK and NL. Half of the respondents reported having been bullied by other children at school. Talina (female, 18 years, migrant, NL) recounts, *'All my problems made me really aggressive, so if anyone said the wrong thing, I would simply explode. I was often in fights at school'*.

The interviews also show that special needs (e.g. ADHD and dyslexia) can play a significant role in school-related problems faced by some of the young people in



the study. Early diagnosis of these special needs and specialised support are extremely important, according to the young people themselves. As Jim (male, 23 years, ethnic dominant, NL) explains, *'They only discovered at a really late stage that I was actually dyslexic and it wasn't until I was 21 that I was diagnosed with ADHD, or ADD in my case. If these kinds of things had been identified sooner, things might have been different, even at school'*.

**Table 3.7 Problems at school**

<b>Problems ever experienced at school</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>
<b><i>Suspended from school</i></b>	60.5%	29.2%	32.7%	52.0%
<b><i>Truant from school</i></b>	65.8%	64.6%	87.8%	76.0%
<b><i>Bullied by other kids</i></b>	57.9%	43.8%	42.9%	50.0%
<b><i>Bullied other kids</i></b>	21.1%	37.5%	12.2%	52.0%
<b><i>Problems with teachers</i></b>	50.0%	54.2%	61.2%	80.0%

### *Education*

In order to gain insight into the educational level of the young people, we asked them to tell us the highest level of education they had completed (see Table 10). The table reveals major differences between the levels achieved in different countries. The educational levels were the highest among the respondents in NL and the UK. In NL, 63% of the young people had completed lower secondary or basic education and the figure for the UK is 50%. In the UK, a relatively large number of the young people had completed upper secondary education (37%); whereas in NL this figure was considerably lower (11.1%).

The largest percentages of young people with a low level of education were found in PT (42.6%) and CZ (52.8%), where the greatest proportion had completed only primary, first stage or basic education. The largest proportion of young people who had not even completed primary education was found in PT (9.3%). In NL and the UK, only a few respondents had not completed primary education; most of these young people, however, had entered the country as refugees. The homeless young people in PT and CZ entered the labour market with the fewest qualifications. The likelihood that homeless young people are destined to take on low-skilled and poorly paid jobs appears to be highest in these countries as well. Whether the risk of unemployment is higher than it is in the UK and NL depends

on the nature of the jobs that are available. If plenty of low-skilled jobs are available, a lower level of qualifications need not lead to unemployment. Nevertheless, having a low-skilled job doesn't necessarily mean having sufficient income.

We also asked the young people if they were currently participating in any kind of educational programmes. The percentage of respondents who were involved in education or training was the highest in the UK, where half of these young people were attending some type of educational institution. This result is due in part to the compulsory nature of the educational programmes offered to young people living in hostels. In PT and NL, approximately one third of the young people were attending courses at the time of the interview. None of the young respondents in CZ was currently participating in any educational programme.

**Table 3.8 Education level**

<b>Education level</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>
<i>Did not complete primary education</i>	1.9%	9.3%	0%	5.6%
<i>Primary or first stage of basic</i>	5.6%	42.6%	52.8%	20.4%
<i>Lower level secondary or second stage of basic</i>	50.0%	27.8%	35.8%	63.0%
<i>Upper secondary</i>	37.0%	18.5%	11.3%	11.1%
<i>Post-secondary, non-tertiary</i>	1.9%	0%	0%	0%
<i>First stage of tertiary</i>	3.7%	1.9%	0%	0%

In all of the countries, approximately 90% of the young people had a goal in mind after leaving school. These goals varied considerably, and the feasibility of some of them may be open to questioning. Some of the young people wanted to become professional football players or choreographers, and others aimed to become construction workers or to continue with their studies. Whether realistic or unrealistic, the majority of young people admitted that they had not achieved their goals. In NL and the UK, a lack of motivation was cited as the most important reason for not achieving the goal, followed by the lack of a stable living situation (NL) and a lack of training options and money (UK). For some young people, the lack of a stable home base has a major impact on the career

plans of the respondents. One boy, Bruninho (male, 21 years, migrant, PT), explained, 'without my own space I cannot think and rest properly to have energy the next day to find a job'.

In PT and CZ, a lack of money was cited as an important reason for not achieving the goals. In PT, teenage pregnancies (26%) and lack of information services (28,6%) were a major reason preventing young people from achieving their ambitions. This situation leads to low income and creates dependence on social benefits and family support.

**Figure 3.9 Limitations for studying and career**

<b>% Problems receiving training</b>		<b>Country</b>	<b>% Did not achieve goal</b>
UK	35.2%	UK	69.8%
PT	37.0%	PT	77.8%
CZ	39.6%	CZ	73.5%
NL	22.2%	NL	72%

*Employment*

In all of the countries, a considerable proportion of the young people were unemployed and dependent on benefits. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the relatively high level of education, the largest percentages of unemployed young people were found in NL (57%) and UK (55.6%). These high percentages are not the result of higher unemployment among the working population in the UK and NL, as compared to PT and CZ. There could be other causes: in NL and the UK, the level of support and assistance provided to homeless young people is reasonable, and the social safety net is wider than it is in the other countries. Many young people receive benefits. Most homeless young people are provided for in terms of their basic living requirements (e.g. shelter and food). Many care facilities also provide additional support in the form of daily activities and reintegration programmes. Even without work, the young people who participate in these programmes are able to keep their heads above water. This raises the question of whether young people living in situations in which their basic needs are met actually are actually motivated to do low-skilled or low-paid work.

In addition, the standards required for participation in the labour market in NL and the UK are high; fewer low-skilled, or cash in hand jobs are available, and poorly qualified young people have difficulty finding work.

The situation is probably different in PT and CZ, where it is essential to work in order to survive. More than one third of the respondents said that they had one or more jobs. A large proportion of the employed young people in these countries held a variety of black-market or side jobs with which they earned the money

needed to live on. Unfortunately, many of these jobs offered low pay and poor employment conditions.

**Table 3.10 Unemployment**

	<b>% Unemployed</b>
UK	55.6%
PT	44.4%
CZ	50%
NL	57%

*Most important sources of income*

Figure 3.11 shows that the highest percentage of young people dependent on benefits was found in the UK (87%). This result is not surprising, as young people living in hostel accommodations rely on benefit payments in order to meet the cost of their rent and support. In NL, more than half of the young people were dependent on benefits, as were one fourth of the respondents in PT. In CZ, only 4.4% of the young people were living on benefits, as unemployment benefits in this country are paid only to people who have previously worked for three years or longer, which is not the case for most of the young people included in this study. The largest percentage (15%) of young people who earned their income through illegal activities was also found in CZ. In PT, a relatively large proportion of the young people (15%) were able to count on money from their families, which was extremely rare in the other countries.

This is partly caused by the composition of the PT sample which included young people that experienced family homelessness and are currently living with their families. The life story of Patricia (female, 16, migrant, PT) shows that receiving money or support from an acquaintance isn't always for free: *'I got money from my friends or from my boyfriend, but it wasn't fixed. I always had to give something in return though, by sleeping with him.'*

**Table 3.11 Sources of income**

<b>Receive money from</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	87.0%	24.5%	4.4%	50.9%
<b>Family</b>	1.9%	15.1%	4.4%	5.7%
<b>Begging</b>	0%	0%	4.4%	0%
<b>Employment</b>	5.6%	30.2%	22.2%	11.3%
<b>Part-time education</b>	0%	5.7%	0%	13.2%
<b>Illegal activities</b>	0%	5.7%	15.6%	1.9%
<b>Charitable support</b>	0%	0%	2.2%	0%
<b>Borrowing</b>	1.9%	1.9%	2.2%	1.9%
<b>Other</b>	3.7%	17.0%	42.2%	15.1%

*Difficulties making ends meet*

Many of the young people indicated that the income they receive is not sufficient to make ends meet (see Table 3.12). They were leading lives of chronic poverty. Partly for this reason, they had trouble paying for health insurance, mobile telephone charges, rent or for their basic daily needs. The proportion of young people who had debts was high, particularly in CZ (79.6%) and NL (61%).

In addition to insufficient income, some of the young people said that they lacked the skills or discipline needed to handle money. Many of them found it difficult to set the right priorities. For example, many were in debt because they are unable to pay their telephone bills; they had signed up for plans and made more calls than they were actually able to afford. One boy from NL told us that he had 'stopped paying for health insurance for a while', because he wanted to invest this money in a good life for his daughter. He did not fully realise that by doing so, he was actually accumulating debt (due to the compulsory nature of health insurance in NL). In the end, this debt will possibly prevent him from investing more in his family life. In CZ, the fact that health insurance for young people is paid for by government up to the age of 18 plays a significant role.

After that, young people must pay for the insurance themselves, unless they are students. This leads to problems for many homeless young people; they accumulate debt and lose their entitlement to healthcare.

**Table 3.12 Money**

<b>3.12.1</b>	<b>% Too little money to live on</b>	<b>3.12.2</b>	<b>% Debts</b>
UK	47.1%	UK	38.9%
PT	60.4%	PT	38.9%
CZ	25.5%	CZ	79.6%
NL	61.5%	NL	61.1%

In both NL and CZ, care workers highlight the role played by the consumer society. Young people are tempted to purchase luxury products or to take out loans that are extremely easy to acquire once they have reached the age of 18. In CZ, care workers blame this situation on the rapid transition from communism to a consumer society. According to one care worker, *'The communist state trained people to be dependent. The state always calls for people to behave responsibly – behave responsibly, or it is your own problem if you become homeless. At the same time, we are under constant attack from advertisements pushing us to behave irresponsibly. And then what happens with those young people who do not resist this pressure? What about the poor ones who told me*

*they didn't want to play the gambling machine, but before they reach the facility have to pass 50 places loaded with gambling machines?'*

### **3.5 Social networks and leisure time**

#### *Supportive or corrupting contacts*

In all of the countries, most of the young people said that they had a group of friends whom they saw regularly. They engaged in various activities with these friends: hanging around on the street, going out, playing football, chatting or shopping. It is interesting to note that many of the young people in NL and CZ reported using alcohol and drugs with their friends.

The accounts provided by the young people indicate that the presence of a social network is not necessarily a positive thing. In all of the countries, a distinction can be drawn between supportive contacts and corrupting contacts. Supportive contacts are people who make a positive contribution to the lives of the young people. They are people with whom they enjoy spending time, with whom they can talk or to whom they can turn if they need help. Respondent Wim (male, 21 years, ethnic dominant, NL) explained that his friends were an alternative to his family: *'It's a really close-knit group, you know. It's actually quite important. We are like family to each other. The people I hang around with care more about me than my own relatives do'.*

Many of the young people said that they had one specific person in their lives to whom they could turn whenever they feel unsafe. This percentage was the lowest in the Netherlands (70%) and the highest (90%) in Portugal, where family bonds are the strongest.

It is also the case, however, that the vulnerable position of homeless young people increases the risk that they will encounter people who may take advantage of them. Young people who spend considerable time on the street are more likely to encounter street gangs or criminals. Young people who sleep on the streets face additional risks. They are more likely to encounter drugs dealers and homeless adults who are addicted to alcohol or drugs. There is also considerable theft and manipulation on the streets. In many cases, girls develop relationships with untrustworthy boyfriends who abuse them sexually or physically.

In many cases, the homeless young people were not certain whether their social contacts were supportive or corrupting. During the interviews, however, they did indicate that some contacts that they initially saw as being supportive (e.g. because they provided support, distraction and a sense of belonging to a group) ultimately turned out to be the opposite. These kinds of contacts can lead young people even further away from their homes, both literally and metaphorically speaking. Christina (female, 25 years, ethnic dominant, PT) tells about her life in the streets: *'I went in there as a girl, I left there as a woman. God I was with all types of people. I was with people who had killed, people who had raped and people like me who dealt in drugs.*

The young people interviewed also acknowledged that they had been guilty of inappropriate behaviour towards others from time to time. Because homeless young people are facing difficult situations and cannot always provide for their basic needs, they occasionally place their own interests above the interests of those around them. Because of their vulnerable position, homeless young people live in a world in which trust and distrust are never very far apart.

*Activities*

Despite their difficult situations, the young people reported engaging in a range of different activities (see figure 3.13). Especially in the UK and NL, the young people engaged in many physical activities, including sports, cycling or walking. In the UK, PT and CZ, more than half of the young people visited community centres or facilities, where they can use the internet or engage in other activities.

**Table 3.13 Social activities**

<b>Social activities</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>
Clubs or societies	30.4%	9.7%	34.0%	33.3%
Physical activity	52.2%	35.5%	29.8%	64.4%
Creative arts	21.7%	22.6%	25.5%	44.4%
Learning activities	41.3%	41.9%	4.3%	13.3%
Day/leisure centres	54.3%	48.4%	46.8%	20.0%
Other	13.0%	12.9%	51.1%	28.9%

*Communication resources*

In all of the countries, almost all respondents reported having a range of possibilities for maintaining contact with their social networks (see figure 3.14). The vast majority of the young people had mobile telephones, access to the internet and accounts on social networking sites. Access to these various media

was the greatest in the Netherlands. A slightly smaller proportion of the young people in CZ (around 40%) had mobile telephones and accounts on social networking sites.

**Table 3.14 Communication resources**

<b>Communication</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>NL</b>
Mobile telephone	98.1%	95.9%	44.7%	94.3%
E-mail account	84.6%	79.6%	76.6%	94.3%
Access to the internet	65.4%	79.6%	91.5%	81.1%
Access to computer equipment	69.2%	79.6%	85.1%	83.0%
A social networking site	63.5%	71.4%	38.3%	73.6%

**3.6 Social services**

The social services offered in NL and the UK differ considerably from those that are offered in PT and CZ. The vast majority of homeless young people in NL and the UK come into contact with youth care facilities at some point. This is much less common in PT and CZ, where there is a significant lack of care facilities specifically targeted at young people. The young people in these countries generally resort to the facilities aimed at adults. Such facilities tend to concentrate largely on providing shelter and food. In NL and the UK, extensive and differentiated care facilities are available. Some facilities provide young people with overnight accommodations only, and others provide a place where young people can stay for extended periods and receive personal counselling. In addition to providing for their basic subsistence needs, the support offered in these countries also focuses on helping young people to acquire the skills they need in order to live independently.

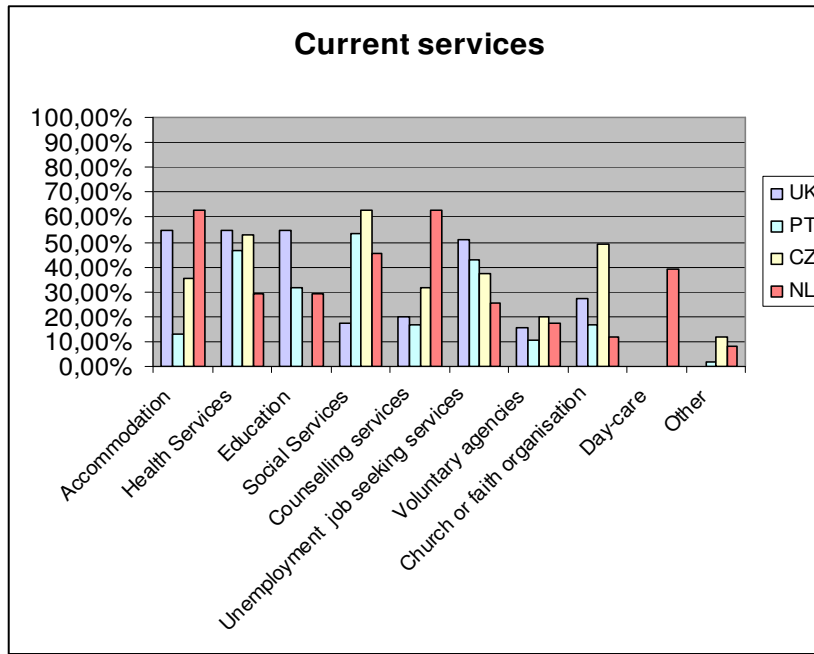
An examination of the various facilities that the young people were using at the time they were interviewed reveals several key differences between the various countries (see figure 3.15). In the UK and NL, more than half of the young people were using accommodation facilities. This figure was significantly lower in PT (13%) and CZ (36%). The low percentage can be explained by the fact that many of the young people studied were still living with one or more relatives.

In the UK, half of the respondents were using job-seeking services. This percentage was the lowest in NL (25%). This result is remarkable, given the high



percentage of unemployed young people. A remarkably high percentage of young people in NL were using counselling services (63%); this figure was significantly lower in the other countries. In CZ, a relatively large number of the young people were receiving support from churches or religious organisations (50%).

**Figure 3.15 Current services**



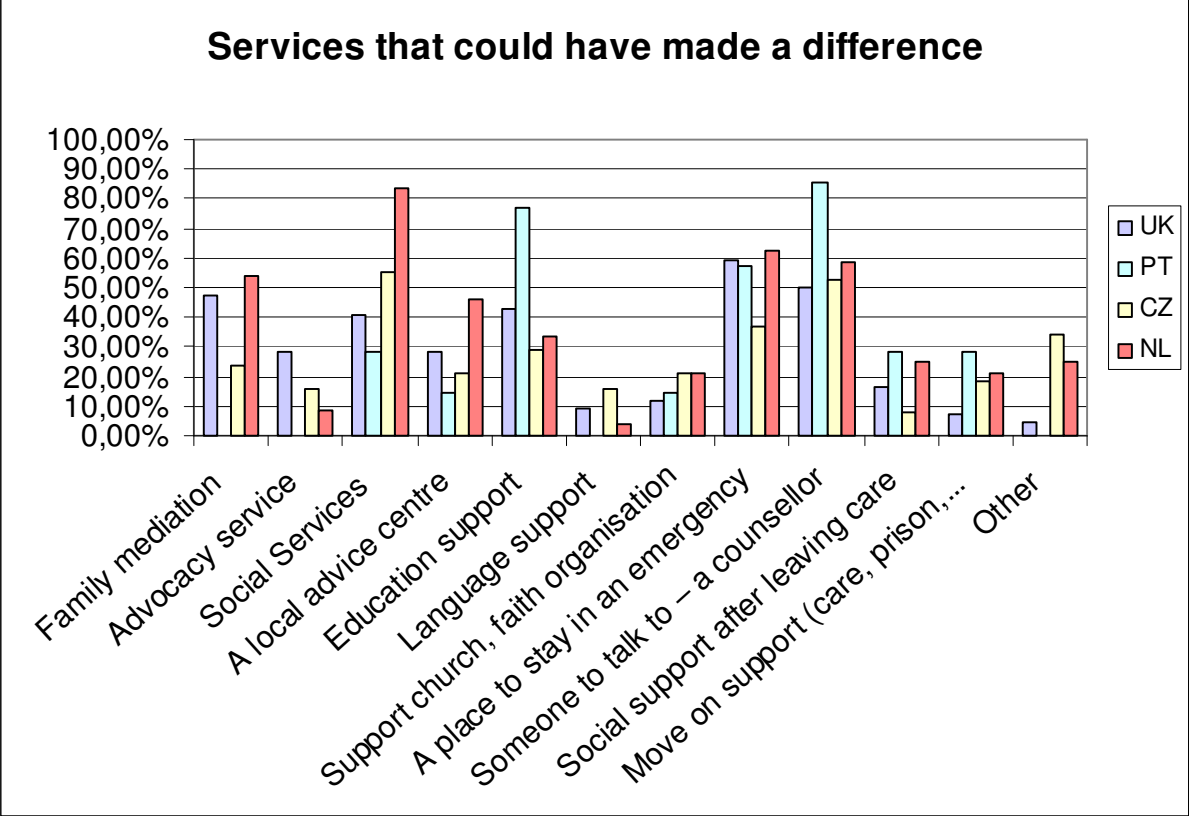
The intensity of social services is illustrated by the high percentage of young people in NL (83%) and the UK (76%) who had key workers. These key workers help young people with a range of issues, including sorting out their finances, arranging educational programmes or employment, learning to live independently and finding somewhere to live. A smaller portion of the young people in PT (45%) and CZ (48%) had key workers. Respondents in all of the countries were highly satisfied with their key workers.

The significant reduction in psychological problems observed in the UK, NL and PT after the young people had left their last place of residence could be an indication that the social services and key workers had a positive effect on their psychological welfare. It is important to note that the elimination of the continual pressure of dealing with the family and the opportunity to have their own living space in a care facility could also have generated an increased sense of well-being among these young people. Further research should reveal if and how services effect psychological wellbeing

Although the majority of the young people were satisfied with their key workers, they had a great deal of criticism concerning the support and assistance that they or their families had received from various agencies over the years. We asked the young people to identify the services that could have made a difference to them when they were younger. A large number of the young people said that they could have benefited from a range of different types of support in their earlier years, including social services, a counsellor with whom they could talk, family mediation and educational support (see Table 3.16). A remarkably high percentage of young people in NL explicitly indicated that social services could have made a difference for their parents, many of whom had faced psychological problems. During his interview, one respondent whose mother had experienced depression explained that he might have been able to stay in the home if his mother had been offered psychological support.

In addition to the services that could have made a difference in the past, we also asked the young people about their current needs. An important requirement indicated by the young people in all countries was the need for support in finding somewhere to live (between 59% and 72%). The second most important in UK, PT and CZ was the need for support in employment and reintegration (between 59% and 67%). The percentage of young people expressing a need for educational support in PT was very high (77%). In NL, where many young people face problems with debt, almost 60% expressed the need for support in financial management. In PT, where the respondents included a relatively large number of young mothers and pregnant girls, the need for sexual health information was relatively high (19%).

**Table 3.16 Services that could have made a difference in youth**



*Improving services*

We also asked the young people to highlight any areas for improvement in the care services that they have experienced during their lives. In the UK, the young people would like to see care workers with better listening and communication skills who offer more personal attention and work more quickly. Similar criticisms were voiced in CZ, where the young people primarily commented on the attitudes and communication skills of their key workers and the lack of personal attention or a customised approach. Areas of criticism highlighted in NL included a lack of continuity and continually changing social workers, bureaucracy and incomprehensible rules, counsellors who talked too much and did too little. In PT, criticism regarding the lack of specific services for young people was of a more general nature, with a focus on general facilities. Respondents complained about poor access to medical assistance, poor service and long waiting times at various agencies and the poor general social security system in their country.

*Lack of continuity and safety*

Despite the wide variety of care facilities available in NL and the UK and despite the fact that many of the young people had key workers at the time of the

interviews, the respondents in these countries also reported that, during their youth, they had lacked a stable caregiver or counsellor and continual support to help them on their way towards an independent life. Particularly in NL and the UK, many of the young people had spent a significant part of their lives in some kind of social service programme, most of which are of a temporary nature. This means that the young people were often moved from place to place, in addition to being shifted among continually changing social workers and social contacts. These circumstances had a very disruptive influence on the lives of the young people included in this study. Social workers in the UK acknowledged the lack of continuity. According to one social worker, *'You've got young people who are usually confused because they've got no family and then they are pushed from pillar to post, they have different social workers every time we have a meeting, so they've got no constant model. They will send them down late at night without the social worker so that we will take them in. It shouldn't work like that ... what they need is constants in their life'*.

In CZ, the young people had little personal counselling on which they could rely. This is a result of the limited services available and the consequently high case loads of the social workers. Young people who become homeless are assigned to youth curators, who are responsible for coordinating with other responsible departments to support young people in the areas of employment and education. Each curator has several hundred cases to manage, however, and individual casework suffers.

In NL and the UK, where a relatively extensive level of social services is offered, problems tend to arise with regard to connecting the various forms of services or after care. Because most facilities are temporary, many young people are continually in search of suitable new facilities. They are not always available, especially for young people with complicated problems. For example, a young mother in NL told us that she could have obtained a temporary placement in a centre for mothers and children. Because of her psychological problems, however, she would have had to leave the centre after just a few months. The fact that she had a child made it difficult for her to find a place in another type of facility.

A further disadvantage of care facilities is that they bring together large numbers of problem cases. Young people with minor problems come into contact with

those who are in serious trouble. As a result, some of these facilities are extremely unsettled and even unsafe. Respondent Johnny (male, 19 years, ethnic dominant, NL) explained how he soon lost his innocence when he was placed in a hostel: *'I was only there for two weeks. In that time, I smoked my first joint, drank alcohol and lost my virginity. All in the space of just two weeks. It's a terrible environment to have to live in'.*

Wim (male, 21 years, ethnic dominant, NL) provides another example. He told about his negative experiences at the Glen Mills school, an institute that applies a controversial American re-education method: *'I spent some time at Glen Mills. It is an American system, you know, with a system of drills and all that. I don't want to be too negative about it, but they are just not very good. They take a really hard-line approach to people, really hard. After that, I really did have psychological problems. It made me think differently and look at things from a different perspective. With all these psychological problems, I even managed to obtain benefits'.*

Facilities that also house homeless adults appeared to be the least safe of all the care facilities. Because of the lack of specialised facilities for young people in PT and CZ, the young people in these countries seemed to face the most risks when residing in social service facilities. One boy, Ivo (male, 20 years, migrant, NL), told us about his life amidst the homeless adults in the shelter: *'It really is a terrible life. I sleep in the night shelter, which is no place for young people. You're in among the junkies, where you can learn quite a lot, you know. But also bad things – if you're not careful, you can take on some of their bad habits. They offer to share a joint with you and you start joining in. On the positive side, you also see how these people live and realise that it is no life for you'.*

#### *Living in care from an early age*

In all of the countries, a difference could be observed between young people whose first experience with care facilities had taken place during their adolescence and those who had been under the care of social service agencies from an early age. Many of the young people in the latter group had been placed in foster homes, hostels or continually moved from one care facility to another. One boy, Victor (male, 20 years, ethnic dominant NL) (20) told us about his life in social service facilities, which sadly did not effectively prepare him to lead an independent life later: *'It was when I was about 12 that I started being moved*

*around all over the place. The social services removed me from my home because my mother's psychological problems made it impossible for her to care for me, my brothers and my sister. Since then, I have lived in various different institutions, including treatment groups, crisis care and various types of halfway houses. And when I had completed the whole juvenile care programme, I went my own way. That's when everything went wrong, I made a few bad choices and ended up on the streets'.*

According to the counsellors from various facilities in the UK and CZ, young people who have been in care since an early age develop specific problems. They often grow up in an unsettled environment in which there are many other problem children and in which it is often not possible to develop a relationship with an adult caregiver. This institutionalised environment, where much is prearranged for the young people, also often fails to have a positive effect on the independence and communication skills of the young people. The project manager at St. Basil's in Birmingham (UK) explained, *'The ones who've been in care tend to have very little in the way of life skills, have no concept of how to communicate. What my mum would call home training, which is general manners: say please, thank you'.*

In CZ, the situation for children who grow up in childcare institutions is serious. According to a counsellor in DOM, the large impersonal children's homes in CZ are actually instrumental in causing many of the problems of homelessness among young people: *'The absolutely crucial thing is to change the social policy so that children don't grow up in those institutions. If this happened, we would not need to exist, it would be empty here. The developed countries abolished such institutions – these "containers" for children – 30 years ago'.* For young people who have spent their childhood in these places, the chance of leading a normal life is much smaller. These kinds of children's homes actually constitute a risk factor for young people.

### *Becoming an adult*

The transition between the ages of 17 and 18 is a crucial phase in the lives of or many homeless people. In most countries, this is the age of legal adulthood, and it is accompanied by all of the duties and responsibilities that society expects of adults. Young people are no longer governed by juvenile legislation. In CZ, they have to pay for their own health insurance; in NL, they are often no longer

entitled to claim any youth social services (at least if they were not already part of a care programme before reaching the age of 18).

Eighteen is also the age at which young people are expected to be able to care for themselves in many countries. They are expected to be able to live independently, work or study and to run a household. Unfortunately, young people who lack the support of parents and a stable home base often appear to be incapable of doing this. In many respects, these young people are not yet equipped to lead independent lives in society.

In NL and the UK, the number of young people living in care facilities increases significantly from the age of eighteen. In CZ, the number of young people sleeping on the streets increases sharply from this age. Social service agencies do not sufficiently acknowledge that the services provided to young people after they have reached the age of eighteen should be just as extensive (if not more so) in order to help them cope with all of the duties and responsibilities that are suddenly put on their shoulders. A project leader from a juvenile intervention team in NL told us: *'When young people turn 18, there's in fact nothing for them. After their 18th birthday they don't qualify for anything, even though they face a mountain of developmental tasks. The young person comes of age and needs help to become independent. After youth care, there's a gap. Another regular feature is that young people 'drop out' after an intake with other organisations. The problem is that youngsters are unable to formulate a request for help, even though they're expected to do just that. They face an enormous task regarding how to get through the bureaucracy of the Netherlands.'*

#### **4. Conclusion**

The objective of this report is to provide comparative information on social exclusion and insight into high-risk situations for young people (including young homeless people) in four European countries.

We examined social exclusion both as a condition and as a process, based on interviews with homeless young people. In this discussion, we highlight the similarities and differences between the four countries, as these insights can enhance our understanding of social exclusion of homeless young people. The

key question is the identification of aspects in these countries that contribute to social exclusion, as well as those that can help to reduce it. In considering this question, we return to the welfare-state models that we introduced in Chapter 2 in order to substantiate our operationalisation.

#### *A comparison of social exclusion as a condition*

According to our operationalisation of social exclusion, the *condition* of social exclusion certainly applies to homeless young people. International differences in the extent of this social exclusion exist along different dimensions.

In terms of *economic and structural exclusion*, we see that the lack of a place of one's own and a stable home base is one of the most elementary forms of social exclusion. In NL, the UK and PT, this rarely means that the young people actually have no roof over their heads; they manage to find shelter with friends, family or in social service facilities. Nonetheless, more than half of the young people who were interviewed did not have a place of their own. In CZ, many young people were living on the streets (60%), and social exclusion in terms of housing was the greatest. Young people are also affected by social exclusion in terms of *material deprivation*. In the UK, PT and NL, between 50% and 60% of the young people we interviewed did not have enough money to manage financially. Interestingly, in CZ, this applied to only one fourth of the young people, despite the fact that 80% of the young people in CZ reported having debts. The problem of debt is relatively significant in the other countries as well. In terms of *social participation*, the majority of the young people in all of the countries reported having a group of friends and someone they could turn to when they feel unsafe. This suggests that there is less social exclusion in this regard. It is also evident, however, that social contacts do not always have a positive effect on young people. The vulnerability of their positions places young people at risk of encountering people who take advantage of them or lead them even further away from home. One important subjective indicator of social exclusion is the *sense of being unsafe* that many (between 48% and 75%) of the young people said that they had experienced.

#### *A comparison of risk factors for social exclusion*

In addition to the condition of social exclusion, we also examined important risk factors for social exclusion. These risk factors operate at various levels: micro, meso and macro. Macro-level factors create the framework within which meso-



level and micro-level factors operate. In Chapter 2, we outlined the following causal chain: risk factors → process of social exclusion → social exclusion as a condition. In practice, however, this causal chain appears to be more complex. The problems faced by homeless young people seem to be a continuum of related problems that influence each other.

### *The macro and meso level*

There is no doubt that PT and the CZ differ from the UK and the NL in a number of important ways. In PT and the CZ, young people make less use of social services, and the available social services are more limited and less differentiated.

CZ is seen as a society that still has little idea of how to address its group of homeless young people. This is reflected by the increasing percentages of young people living on the streets and using drugs. As they grow older, they run a greater risk of living on the streets. Starting at the age of 12, the trend rises remarkably quickly, ultimately reaching more than 60% of the people we interviewed. In this respect, CZ differs from the other three countries, where no such increase is evident. These statistics and the accounts of our respondents leave little room for doubt: these young people are often left to fend for themselves. Sufficient social security and emergency assistance are lacking.

In PT the lack of a social safety net for young people is partly compensated for by the fact that the family plays a more important role than it does in the other countries. Families supply money and shelter more commonly than in the other countries. Yet the disadvantage of this situation is that young people are dependent on their families, even if family relations are bad or they would rather live independently.

Situations in NL and UK as reported by our respondents differ from those in CZ and PT. NL and UK have better social benefits and an extensive and differentiated system of social services for homeless youth. This is reflected in the fact that there has been no increase in the number of young respondents living on the streets over the years and in the high percentage of young people with a key worker. It is also reflected in the relatively small percentage of young people living on the street in general.

Nevertheless, being dependent on social services also has its downside as our study shows. In spite of the higher educational qualifications in NL and UK the

employment participation of young people was lower than it was in either PT or CZ. This may be related to the lack of suitable opportunities on the labour market in NL and the UK . It may also be related to the presence of a safety net that eliminates the necessity of finding work. In the longer term, this could mean that young people in NL and the UK will continue to be excluded, despite their better prospects on paper. Comparing UK and NL with PT and CZ reveals a tension between opportunities that are available and those that are actually taken up. This situation, however, does not detract from the fact that the employment prospects of the young people in PT and the CZ are also far from positive. Many of these young people are working in poorly paid jobs with far from adequate secondary terms and conditions of employment.

Furthermore, many young people experience a lot of discontinuity within (youth) homeless services. Shelters and other accommodations for homeless youth aren't always safe and mostly temporary. Some of the young people reported that this actually exacerbated their problems. Another danger lies in the coordination of the services provided. A differentiated system makes it possible to respond effectively to the problems faced by different groups of homeless young people, but can also lead to problems in coordinating the various provisions and result in a lack of continuity for the young people they intend to serve. The criticism and preferences expressed by the young people who were studied can be seen as a call for social services that reflect normal family life, in which age-appropriate freedom is accompanied by a safe and educational environment and in which instrumental support goes together with emotional and appraisal support (see House, 1981).

### *Welfare-state regimes*

In Chapter 2, we highlighted the fact that the type of welfare state people live in significantly affects the level of social exclusion (Tsakoglou and Papadopoulous 2002). Our study underlines the influence of welfare state regimes on social exclusion of young homeless people.

The summary of differences between the various countries reflects the workings of different types of welfare states. In his path-breaking study entitled *The three worlds of welfare capitalism* (published in 1990), the Danish sociologist Esping-Andersen distinguishes three different models of the welfare state: liberal, social-democratic and corporatist models, focusing on the way in which countries

organise solidarity between citizens and the relationship between the welfare state and the market. The central question is: if and when the state intervenes when the market does not provide an income.

After Esping-Andersen various authors elaborated this model, added new models, refined them with different aspects for different aims and target groups. Nevertheless Esping-Andersen's broad outlines of market, care and solidarity, still prove useful to consider the main lines of exclusion of homeless young people.

Applying the models of Esping-Andersen to the research results, CZ and PT reflect the liberal model, in which government does not intervene and citizens have to rely on the market to provide an income. There are very few government provisions or subsidized social services aimed specifically at young people. In NL and UK social provisions are more extensive for young homeless people. Not everything is left to the market. The government intervenes or gives room for interventions. Esping-Andersen's social-democratic welfare state model provides the most accurate reflection of the current situation for young people in these countries.

As we saw in chapter 1, the Up2Youth Network compiled an additional categorization of welfare-state models, which incorporates a detailed consideration of the specific position of young people (see figure 1.4). In the five welfare regimes identified by the Up2youth project CZ is identified as a post-socialist country with a welfare system based on the family and the state, but in our CZ sample young people not only received little support from the state, largely living in temporary squats or on the streets, but also had little support from their families and were largely not in contact with any adult family member. This means that the post-socialist regime as defined by Up2youth does not correctly reflect the situation of homeless youth.

PT is defined as a sub-protective regime, with social security mainly based on family. This is a useful addition, although one might discuss whether family should be included in a theory of welfare-*state* regimes. This depends on the state support given to the family. The role of family in PT must certainly not be underestimated.

The categorisation of NL as employment-centred with state and family support seems to be adequate for state-support, but much less for family-support, especially as compared to PT. UK is described as liberal based on early economic

independence, constrained state support and supplementary family support. This fits the picture taken from the study. Social security offered to young people in UK is generally slightly lower than in the Netherlands. But on the whole the situation in UK seems to offer as much opportunity to escape social exclusion as in NL.

The results from our project findings show that the welfare states in which the young homeless people live do play an important role in their daily lives. In simple terms every welfare state gets the (amount of) homeless young people it 'deserves'. When young people do drop out, the nature of the welfare state is instrumental in determining the opportunities that will subsequently be offered to them.

*The chain of risks: multiple problems at a micro level: Family problems*

Family problems ultimately form the foundation for the issues facing homeless young people. Financial problems, conflicts, divorce and abuse were often mentioned in relation to their family life. The family problems originate in and follow two different routes: the financial-economic route and the socio-cognitive route. Briefly stated, homeless young people do not have a stable childhood because their parents have insufficient financial resources or lack the necessary skills.

The families in which these young people were raised definitely do not represent a cross-section of society in the four countries. The parents of these young people were more likely to be living on benefits than is the general population of working age. Almost all of the families of these homeless young people were characterised by conflicts. Some of the young people were ignored, mistreated or abused at home. In most cases, a stepparent (usually a stepfather) played a role in this situation. It is because of the close bonds that these young people have with their natural parents that their experiences in such family situations can seriously damage their trust in other people. The impact of family experiences on these young people should not be underestimated. These experiences were highlighted repeatedly throughout the interviews.

It is not the case, however, that none of the parents in these families had good intentions. Some of the parents were simply incapable of raising their children effectively. In many cases, psychosocial problems played a role. The young people could only stand by and watch. They felt guilty, and their status as

children or adolescents meant that they were incapable of intervening or finding appropriate help. In hindsight, some young people did emphasise that assistance to their parents might have made difference.

In any society, there will always be parents whose own problems are so serious that they are unable to pass on to their children the skills they need for a good start in life. If there is no effective response in these situations, society will continue to create new generations of young people with problems. This form of social exclusion need not be related to a culture of poverty, as portrayed by Oscar Lewis (1969), in which social and cultural poverty is passed down within families from generation to generation. Acute problems faced by parents can also lead to problems for children and young people, regardless of the family's cultural history. A remarkable common factor shared by the countries can be seen in the responses of the young people to the question about their well-being (including psychological) before and after they left their last permanent places of residence. With the exception of the CZ (in which the responses produced a more mixed image), the young people reported that their well-being had improved *after* leaving their last permanent place of residence. This means that they felt better after taking leave of the last place that they had experienced as a stable form of shelter. This result suggests that these young people were actually better off after leaving the final remnants of family life and all that preceded it. They felt less anxious and depressed, had fewer problems sleeping and were less likely to harm themselves or attempt suicide after leaving their last permanent places of residence and becoming homeless. This raises the question of how beneficial it actually is to attempt to keep children and young people in problematic family situations as long as possible. It is to be recommended that these kinds of family problems be identified early and that effective response measures be taken. Indeed, this applies to the issue of family problems in general. For these young people, early prevention and intervention could have prevented the chain of risk factors that led towards their social exclusion.

One group forms an exception with regard to the issue of a poor childhood. A number of the young refugees actually reported that they had come from 'good families'. These young people moved from being 'normal' young people to homeless ones because of problems associated with illegality. They ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time. They must survive – regardless of the

welfare-state model that is in place – in many cases, by relying on their social networks, which may also involve illegal elements.

### *Shelter*

The interviews we conducted demonstrate the close links between difficult family circumstances and the lack of stable shelter. Family problems, for these young people, ultimately lead to losing or leaving their permanent place of residence. This may be the crux of the problem faced by homeless young people. When problematic domestic situations make it difficult for young people to find a stable place of their own or even lead to periods (possibly temporary) of complete homelessness, circumstances can become unmanageable for young people who have not been taught at home to cope and look after themselves. This sets the scene for a disordered existence in which it is no longer possible to get back on track (Hoogenboezem, 2003). The literature on homelessness shows that the longer people are homeless, the more difficult it becomes for them to find their place in society again. Homelessness is one of the risk factors for homelessness (Van Doorn, 2002).

### *Education and employment*

Education and employment form an important subsidiary area in this discussion. They offer a potential escape route to these young people. In all four of the countries addressed in this study, we have seen that homeless young people do not make the same progress as others of the same age, and that the extent of their progress varies by country. Family problems, combined with the lack of a place of their own, make it even more difficult for young people to attend school, complete their education and find employment.

After they have passed the age of compulsory schooling, many of these young people leave school without obtaining the qualifications they need for an effective start in the labour market. In NL and the UK, this means that many homeless young people are dependent on benefits. In PT and the Czech Republic, where no substantial benefits are available, many young people become dependent on poorly paid, cash-in-hand jobs. This worsens their position in society, especially if they remain outside the regular employment process for a long period.

*In general*

Concluding we can state that main risks for social exclusion for young homeless people mostly arise at a micro level, especially as a result of a complex of factors such as family situation, living situation and social network. This holds true for all four countries.

However, the way social exclusion of young homeless people develops over time is to a large extent determined by risk factors on a macro and meso level. Here we find interesting differences between different types of welfare states in the countries involved in this research. The lack of a sufficient social safety net in CZ and PT increases the risk of growing social exclusion and limits the chances of overcoming the excluded position. Especially in CZ, the risk of being caught in a downwards spiral is high for young homeless people.

In NL and UK the social safety seems to limit the risk of an increasingly excluded position of young homeless people. A broad network of social services offers chances to surmount their homelessness and social exclusion.

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