

SOCIAL POLICIES FOR INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS. HOMELESS PEOPLE

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Abstract: *The present article aims to highlight both the causes and determinants of social exclusion, of vulnerable groups, namely street people. To improve the quality of life of the target group, both the state and Non-Governmental Organizations work together to implement social policies and programs to rehabilitate, prevent, and combat social exclusion, marginalization, and poverty prevention. Social exclusion is seen as a process that leads to a situation in which certain vulnerable persons and groups are unable to perform certain functions, being led to a state of poverty, and the status of social exclusion can be defined as a combination of deprivations. Social exclusion can be the framework for the perception of deprivation and especially of two dimensions of deprivation: the fact that it has a multidimensional character and hidden social relations. Another issue addressed is the relationship between poverty and social exclusion, being valued as a tool for drawing social policies. The two concepts approached coincide, encompassing a complex area of poverty based on relational aspects, economic, social and political dimensions of social exclusion. Regarding poverty, there is a vast and pronounced literature that treats the problem as a macro phenomenon affecting large territorial areas, which tend to detect its cross-cutting aspects or, aims to capture its specific expressions. The prevalent approach to poverty seems to be on the one hand that of social control, and on the other hand that inherent in the economic problem.*

Keywords: *social politics; social inclusion; social exclusion; vulnerable group; poverty;*

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of homelessness is a dynamic and complex process, which affects people at different stages of life, for longer or shorter periods and in various ways. There are different types and target groups of homeless people such as: children and adolescents living on the streets; young people leaving placement centers who cannot be reintegrated into the natural or extended family; single mothers living on the streets; people with health problems such as alcoholism, addiction; people with mental health problems; homeless elderly people; families living on the streets; homeless people from ethnic minorities such as the *gypsies* or those with a nomadic lifestyle: homeless immigrants.

FEANTSA (European Federation of Homeless Organizations) has developed a typology of the phenomenon of homelessness and exclusion from housing, a typology called Ethos. Therefore, the categories identified by ETHOS try to cover all life situations and different forms of homelessness in Europe:

- without roof (without a shelter, harsh sleeping conditions)
- homeless (have a place to sleep in special institutions or shelters)
- insafe housing (threatened with exclusion due to unsafe rent, evictions, domestic violence)
- inappropriate housing (caravans, unsuitable housing, overcrowding)

Lack of shelter and lack of housing can lead to human degradation, physical, emotional and mental insecurity, illness (sometimes contagious or incurable disease), occupational or social exclusion, discrimination based on social belonging (to a disadvantaged group) and sometimes even death (especially in the very cold or very hot seasons). Homeless people are those who live on the streets, are children, young people, adults and the elderly who have become homeless due to natural disasters, who have been evacuated due to non-payment of housing maintenance or non-payment of loans, left without a work place, unschooled, people whose home is in an advanced state of degradation, deinstitutionalized young people whose family reintegration could not be achieved, people who lost their home to moneylenders, people with and without mental problems. Homeless people living on the streets are the most visible and extreme form of poverty and exclusion. Thus, according to the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (2015-2020), carried out by the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly Protection, at the last Census of Population and Housing (2011) were registered 1542 homeless people, at national level, while the estimates made by the Ministry of Regional Development in 2008 were three times higher.

2. The specific issue of homelessness

According to Victor Badea (2008), a street person is the usual name for "homeless adults" (PAFA) who make up a category of disadvantaged people, excluded from public social and medical services (social assistance, social canteen, insurance system health, etc.)”

Street people is the usual name for "Homeless Adults" (PAFA) or homeless who make up a category of disadvantaged people, excluded from public social and medical services (social assistance, social canteen, health insurance system, etc.).

In Romania, the legal definition of a 'homeless person' is provided by law 292/2011 on the National Social Assistance System, namely: homeless persons represent a social category consisting of single persons or families who, for single or cumulative reasons, social, medical, financial, economic or legal, live on the street, live temporarily with friends or acquaintances, are unable to support a rental property or are at risk of eviction or are in institutions or penitentiaries of where they are to be discharged or released within 2 months and have no domicile or residence.

Homeless people usually go through an experience that can be called trauma, marginalization and social exclusion generated by homelessness, lack of economic resources, loss of social support (especially family ties), poor health (often aggravated by a form of disability), addiction (alcoholism, drug addiction), prostitution, begging, theft, sexually transmitted diseases. Once in the critical situation of living on the street, people have low self-esteem, go into mental regression. Through psychological, medical and socio-professional counseling in a specialized center, obtaining a job and a living space, there is the reverse process of regaining self-esteem and self-identity, while returning to society.

Homeless people are those who do not have a home, live on the streets, in flood channels, in night shelters (such as "Casa Ioana" in Bucharest), under bridges, etc., and does not refer to those who live temporarily with friends / relatives, until they either find a definitive positive solution or become homeless. not having access to adequate housing is a serious manifestation of social exclusion. I could add that not having a

home and living in the open air is the harshest form of social exclusion, along with probably that of lack of identity documents.

In the quantitative social research *Assessing the phenomenon of children and young people on the street. (2014)*, Save the Children Organisation defines homeless people as people sitting permanently or only at a certain time of the day on the street (in the broad sense of term, including makeshift shelters, sewerage systems, abandoned vehicles or abandoned houses, etc.), procuring their means of subsistence alone or in groups, through legal or illegal activities. From a housing perspective, the sample included both people who spend the night on the street or in makeshift housing (sewerage system, abandoned cars, abandoned buildings, tents, etc.) - defined as permanently on the street, and those who have a home, but uses the activities listed above to raise money - defined as temporary on the street.

Homelessness and domestic violence have a serious impact on their health, education and well-being. These effects include higher rates of anxiety, emotional problems, behavioral and mental illness, depression, isolation, developmental delays, and learning difficulties.

The risks of life for children on the street are multiple, they are taking various forms, such as: chronic diseases, begging, school dropout, exploitation at work, sexual exploitation, prostitution, drug trafficking, dependence on illegal or legal drugs (tobacco and alcohol). Traumas, negative emotions, repeated family shocks, determine the appearance of feelings of fear and insecurity, social maladaptation, school dropout and serious attachment problems, lack of confidence in adults and in themselves. Therefore, children who have been traumatized by abusive parents experience a feeling of insecurity and inferiority, prone to anti-social acts, to acts of delinquency, to crime. The main aspect that needs to be studied is the fact that these people face especially the problem of housing, so it is necessary to study this topic, showing among other needs social support services, and ensuring access to housing services, services in particular for homeless people.

3. The determining factors of the street people phenomenon

Social exclusion refers to the multiple factors that have the effect of excluding street people from housing, education, health and access to services, forms of discrimination, marginalization and segregation (Commission of the European Communities, 1993):

Exclusion is a concept that covers many social issues. The key word in this is *participation*. Exclusion is the denial of participation in various aspects of social life, such as activation on the labor market, access to public services, political life, and various forms of discrimination, physical isolation from peers (Haralambos, 2008).

From the sphere of risk groups, the vulnerable group of people / street children, is represented by the group with the highest risk of social exclusion on all levels. The chance of total social recovery for the vast majority of these children is low, despite the programs designed to take them from the street. However, the main causes are poverty, poor social protection of large families and social disorganization. Another category subject to the risk of living on the streets, of social exclusion is represented by young people who leave the protection system at the age of 18, and who, at the time of deinstitutionalization have no institutional alternative, many of them having no ties to their biological family or the extended family that host them. Most of them do not know

how to practice a profession, they are not ready to lead an independent life, they have not developed independent living skills, they do not know how to socialize, to relate to those around them, to manage money, to make the right decisions. Therefore, this vulnerable group requires great efforts for social inclusion, being simultaneously needed to find a home, a job, interpersonal relationships, accommodation and adaptation to social life, outside the protection system, where they have spent his childhood.

In Romania, the legal framework for preventing and combating social marginalization was established by Law 116/15 March 2002.

The law defines *social marginalization* as "the peripheral social position, of the individuals or groups isolation with limited access to economic, political, educational and communication resources of the community." It is manifested by the "**absence of a minimum of social living conditions: work, health care, education**" (Revista de Asistență Socială - *The social work magazine*. Coord. Elena Zamfir, 2002) Marginalization has the effect of social isolation, alienation, maladaptation, social non-integration, family disorganization, aggression, violence, deviant behaviors. Marginal groups are usually composed of the poor, the unemployed, discriminated ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, the mentally ill, and delinquents. street people, maladapted people. Therefore, marginalized individuals and groups are deprived of minimal economic, political, educational resources, subject to constant discrimination, are deprived of real chances to overcome the state of marginalization. The law on preventing and combating social marginalization aims to guarantee effective access to these basic and fundamental rights, especially for young people / street people, because they are in the most vulnerable situation. They have no job and no home, they are in a situation particularly exposed to marginalization.

The policy of avoiding and absorbing of the social exclusion and social marginalization is to promote **social inclusion**. "The process of social inclusion is the set of multidimensional measures and actions in the fields of social protection, employment, housing, education, health, information-communication, mobility, security, justice and culture, designed to combat social exclusion and ensure the active participation of people to all economic, social, cultural and political aspects of society ". (according to art. 6, lett. cc of Law no. 292/2011 - Law of the social assistance)

The concept of **social inclusion** aims at the process of reintegration into normal life forms, in a normal social functioning of the people in such situations, or at high risk of marginalization, by developing capacities and building opportunities, aiming to equalize opportunities in all areas of social life "(Luana Miruna Pop (coordinator) Dictionary of Social Policies, 2002).

The causes that lead to the specific problems of children / young people / people on the street are:

Poverty, lack of income, loss of housing, loss of employment, the divorce, as a result of which one of the spouses was forced to leave the marital home; gambling, quarrels and misunderstandings with family and relatives, who cut off all ties with them, expelled them from home or they left on their own initiative; victims of real estate scams; excessive alcohol and drug use that led to the loss of housing and identity documents, the family environment of origin, the rupture of relationships with relatives and family; school dropout, domestic violence, abuse, prostitution, deinstitutionalization, release from detention and loss of property held as a result;

accumulated and unpaid debts for communal services; emigration, without success, to work abroad; following long-term cohabitation and their breakup. Also, the causes of children's presence on the street are multiple and there is a perception that they are relatively deductible: conflicting relationships with parents or one of them (usually the father), neglect, physical abuse, sexual poverty, acute poverty, deinstitutionalization, improper conditions and insecurity in placement centers, etc (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2017).

In Romania, **extreme poverty** is associated with long-term unemployment, work in the informal sector, lack of skills, single-parent family or other atypical forms of family, social marginalization, social disintegration.

The European Platform for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion was launched in 2010, which is also active in 2020. This is one of the major initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth.

The family environment, the family climate, the family of origin, is a major cause for the child to end up living on the street. Most of the families they come from are poor, they do not meet their needs, but poverty is not the only cause. Poverty, misunderstandings, domestic violence, abuse, lack of communication between family members, unfavorable living conditions, lack of affectivity, attention, indifference and lack of supervision and control from parents, cause them to run away from home, cause children to end living on the streets.

According to Adrian Dan, (2003) the determining factors of exclusion from housing in Romania are classified into four categories: socio-demographic, socio-economic changes, deficits in the provision and distribution of welfare and the traditionally vulnerable groups. He also states that housing poverty is a cause that causes constant effects on housing, meaning sleep deprivation, poor hygiene, lack of privacy (with an effect on health and favoring conditions for sexual abuse), severe disruption or lack of information processes, diminished capacity to accumulate resources to ensure survival and development (food, clothing, etc.). They end up in this unfavorable situation due to family conflicts, divorces, real estate scams or job loss.

There are different types of vulnerability factors:

-structural: the economic process, the immigration, citizenship, the lack of adequate and affordable housing, high rates of credit and unemployment, the social impact of homelessness in Europe, the economic crisis.

-institutional: main social services, the mechanism of allowances, institutional procedures (lack of adequate assistance services, for example when leaving prison or a hospital for mental illness).

-personal: disability, education, dependency, age, the situation of immigrants (divorce, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, death of a partner, loss of a job, drug use, human trafficking).

4. Policies and strategies

The mention of the vulnerable group of homeless people can be found in legal documents adopted in the last 5 years and in Programs of special national interest addressed to this social category in Romania.

The same documents set objectives, indicators to measure the achievement of these objectives and proposals for measures to address the specific problems of people

belonging to this vulnerable group, to which is added information on budgets allocated to activities in national programs for homeless people.

In the second half of 2009 the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection announced the launch of the national program Combating the social exclusion of homeless people by creating emergency social centers "meant to run for a period of 6 years, starting with 2007. The notice of intent was launched in September 2009 and will be accompanied by project submissions for funding. The program was designed to have the following purposes:

- a) social integration of homeless people;
- b) increasing the responsibility of local authorities towards homeless people;
- c) improving the quality of social services provided;
- d) increasing the accessibility to the services directly oriented towards the social reintegration of the persons in the street and the prevention of abuse and violence;

- e) increasing the number of emergency social centers for homeless people.

The objectives were:

- a) prevention of social exclusion and ensuring the social protection of homeless people;

- b) the creation of emergency social centers for homeless people, which will provide, mainly, accommodation and care services;

- c) creation and development of long-term support and counseling centers, in view of the social integration of homeless people;

- d) elaboration and implementation of a methodology for identifying and evaluating people living on the street;

- e) monitoring, based on real data, the number of homeless people, as well as the percentage of solving existing cases.

The aim of this program was:

- a) establishing or expanding the capacity of a number of 50 emergency social centers for homeless people, located in cities of each county and in each district of Bucharest, by rehabilitating appropriate spaces and providing them with the furniture and the equipment necessary for their functioning;

- b) providing social services within the emergency social centers for a number of approximately 10,000 homeless people;

- c) increasing the number of homeless people who benefit from social services.

In Romania, there is already a wide range of policies, programs and interventions aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion, and the tools and experience needed to identify poor people and areas have improved in recent years. The key element that can be improved is the coordination between these policies, programs and interventions. Given the strong correlation between poverty and social exclusion, achieving results in policies to combat these phenomena requires an integrated set of social policies designed to facilitate people's access to jobs, forms of financial support and social services. It is also essential to increase the capacity to assess needs at all levels and to coordinate social services, employment services and health services, in order to determine the employment of people who do not work but are fit for work. Thus, this approach to poverty and social exclusion is based on the concept of providing integrated services and on ensuring that different programs and interventions are harmonized, aligned and provided, both at the individual and

community level, by social workers. responsible and well trained. Also, identifying the specific needs of street people, of these poor and vulnerable groups is a key element in implementing effective social inclusion policies. An analysis of the trends in poverty and social exclusion of street children and people is needed. According to the definition provided by law, social marginalization is the peripheral social position, isolating individuals or groups with limited access to economic, political, educational and communication resources of the community.

In order for social marginalization to be prevented and combated, the participation of public institutions, local communities, representatives and employers and trade unions organizations and representatives of civil society is required. The state must guarantee access to basic and fundamental rights, such as access to employment, access to housing, access to health care, access to education, ecc.

Going also in the direction of practical applicability, I will present a concrete case that had an impact in excluding the social marginalization of street people.

The *Carousel Association* launched in 2019 a new project addressed to homeless people in Bucharest - Dusul Mobil. The initiative is carried out by the Carousel Association and supported by ING Bank Romania and Kaufland Romania, representing a unique approach in Romania.

The mobile shower offers the possibility of performing personal hygiene for over 200 homeless people, who will be able to use this service regularly. Also, the project aims to facilitate access to services, facilities and materials for maintaining personal hygiene for 850 homeless people or living in inadequate spaces in Bucharest.

Dr. Marian Ursan, Executive Director, Carousel Association states in an interview: "Through this project we aim to contribute to the recovery of well-being, even the dignity of people who face significant difficulties, and a first step is to perform body hygiene and washing clothes. Of course it is not enough, but we believe that together we can go towards increasing the access of homeless people to the labor market, public spaces or other services." The mobile shower is based on a van specially built, adapted and approved to provide facilities for body hygiene. It is built to work by connecting to street hydrants, and water heating is achieved through an advanced LPG-based system, the installation being so nature-friendly. The van is also equipped with two washing machines and tumble dryers, as well as razors for shaving, trimming and drying hair. People who will access the services of the mobile shower will receive clothes and shoes from donations, but also other personal hygiene materials (absorbents, underwear, etc.), will be able to charge their mobile phones and will have access to the Internet through a free Wi-Fi network.

At the Sustainable Development Summit in New York in 2015, was presented the program - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - which aims to address a set of socio-environmental and economic issues related to both countries. developed from a global perspective as well as those in development.

The 2030 agenda involves overcoming two important challenges. The first refers to the "Leave no one behind" commitment, that means to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people, offering them adequate services to guarantee emancipation and social protection. In this regard, the United Nations (UN) recognizes the dignity of each individual and, through this premise, commits itself to those who face greater difficulties, literally "to get the farthest behind the first" (UN, 2015, p.5). The second, which we focus on in this study, aims to achieve 17 Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs): these goals must be completed in 2016-2030 involving both governments and the entire United Nations system, as well as the private sector and society. civil. The aim generally announced in the introductory part of the official document is, in fact, to end the problem of world hunger and poverty, to eliminate internal inequalities in a geographical and social context and between different areas of the planet, to promote peace and social justice, defending human rights and gender equality, strengthening the female figure, ensuring environmental well-being, economic growth and better working conditions (UN, 2015, p. 4).

5. Conclusions

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union on social security and social assistance states: *In order to combat social marginalization and poverty, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including adequate food and nutrition , clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services.*

For the rehabilitation and socio-professional reintegration it is necessary to create as many social protection and support services for this socially vulnerable category of welfare beneficiaries, to create mobile teams to work directly in the street, to regularly monitor each case and the early intervention are more than important. As a solution to this problem, the objectives of the emergency social centers for homeless people are: preventing social exclusion and ensuring the social protection of homeless people; monitoring the number of homeless people, as well as the percentage of existing cases; ensuring normal living conditions, respectively hosting; counseling, support for social integration, for combating the social marginalization of this category of people, solving problems related to the lack of identity documents; facilitating access to medical services; identifying a job; identifying a living alternative; professional training by enrolling the beneficiaries according to studies and potential in qualification courses; providing counseling services and reinsertion or social reintegration, in accordance with the identified individual needs.

Homeless people are not a "lost case" or a dispensable resource. Their value is equal to that of any ordinary person, with family, home and a job. They have equal rights and opportunities with other citizens.

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