

RAFA

Q&A

1. What is social exclusion and what factors influence it?

We understand that social exclusion is the process when entire individuals or groups are left out on the very edge of society with limited or no access to resources that are generally accessible to other members of society. These resources are: work, housing, social protection, health and education. Socially excluded people are characterised by poverty, long-term unemployment, low education and insufficient guidance on the rules which guides society. Social exclusion encompasses a broad complex of aspects for which are not always easy to understand.. Factors that condition the appearance of social exclusion can be generally divided into two groups: external and internal.

Amongst internal factors social exclusion comes first: the inadequate structure of the labour market (lack of job opportunities for people with low professional levels, discrimination), inappropriate housing policy (lack of social housing) and unequal opportunities in education (exclusion of children with special educational needs in conventional schools). External factors are represented by the actions of specific people. It is these actions that cause or deepen the exclusion - which, however, are very often consequences of external factors. We are talking mainly about the loss of work habits caused by long-term unemployment and an inability to manage money. People also want a quick solution to their problems which is not always available and this drives frustration and a low motivation to solve their own problem. They feel left behind and often blame society.

2. How many socially excluded people are there in Europe?

It's very probable that there is no unequivocal answer. The problem consists mainly in the definition of what we consider specifically under the term of "social exclusion" (we often also speak of income poverty, people living in poverty, etc.) and what we include under the mentioned term and how we calculate this value. Eurostat is responsible of keeping the statistics in the EU, however, the value of the results is more than debatable. The main issue is that the statistics do not take into account the group of people at risk of enforcement and insolvency. These people are at risk of falling into income poverty in a very short time if they lose their income. Additionally, the survey is conducted only in residential homes and completely ignores shelters and nursing homes. It is also very difficult to locate people living in different excluded localities and convince them to participate in the survey. Likewise, it is difficult to obtain information from the richest population.

3. What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

It is an international agreement that stipulates the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. This document was approved in 1989 in New York by the Assembly of the United Nations Organization in order to protect the rights of the child.

According to this document, the right to life is the fundamental right, which implies that the life of each child must be protected and that their parents have an obligation to care for their child. In case the child lives with only one of his parents, the child has the right to maintain regular contact with both parents. In addition, he/she has the right to express him/herself about everything related to him. Adults (for example, the court) have to take the child's opinion into account. Among other rights of the child is for example, the right to freedom of expression (however, the minor must at the same time respect the rights of others). The minor also has the right to freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation. Children have education rights (which means that basic education is free). Children under the age of 15 do not have to participate in armed warfare and are not allowed to be mobilized for war. In case the country goes to war, children are protected. Children with physical or mental disabilities have the same rights as other children.

4. What would happen to Rafa if his mother were in prison?

It is possible that he would become a street child surviving day to day. Eventually he could be at risk of being exposed to different socially pathological phenomena such as alcohol or drug dependence, homelessness, or prostitution, etc. Or he would end up being taken into care by one of the institutions dealing with children and adolescents in similar situations. Be that as it may, obviously Rafa does not attend school regularly and that will most likely determine his life in the future. Education is the value that unfortunately he is not receiving and that would in the future help him to fend for himself. It would help him find a stable job, adequate housing and solve his daily problems without the help of others.

5. Who could help Rafa in this situation, who can he turn to for help?

Generally speaking, a minor under 13 who is left without parents and without any means, such as Rafa's situation, is undoubtedly a serious case. He could be helped by a teacher from the school he attends. The teacher should notify the corresponding institutions that are in charge of the minor's protection. This may stop Rafa's momentary social downfall. The second level would consist on adjusting the handicap that Rafa, thanks to his situation, has already acquired. The classic example is the already mentioned education, which is the alpha and omega of everything.

Resources

Convention on the Rights of the Child

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

UNICEF

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

Save The Children

<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland Department of Education

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/united-nations-convention-rights-child>