



INCLUD-ED

Report 4:

The Role of Education in the European Knowledge Based Society

Slovenian Institute for Adult Education

WORKPACKAGE 10

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Project 3: Social and Educational Exclusion and Inclusion.
Social Structure in the European Knowledge Based Society

INDEX

Executive summary	4
Introduction	5
Methodology and Research Approach	9
The impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on their employment opportunities	11
Background	11
Exclusionary aspects	12
Transformative aspects	15
The impact of exclusion from the educational system of vulnerable groups on participation in the health system	17
Background	17
Youth	19
Exclusionary aspects	19
Transformative aspects	19
Women	20
Exclusionary aspects	20
Transformative aspects	21
People with disabilities	22
Exclusionary aspects	22
Transformative aspects	23
Migrants and ethnic minorities	24
Exclusionary aspects	24
Transformative aspects	25
The impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on the opportunities to provide a house	27
Background	27
Youth	28

Exclusionary aspects	28
Transformative aspects.....	29
Women	30
Exclusionary aspects	30
Transformative aspects.....	31
People with disabilities.....	31
Exclusionary aspects	31
Transformative aspects.....	32
Ethnic minorities	32
Exclusionary aspects	32
Transformative aspects.....	34
Migrants	34
Exclusionary aspects	34
Transformative aspects.....	35
Impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on their political participation.....	36
Background	36
Youth, women and people with disabilities	37
Exclusionary aspects	37
Transformative aspects.....	39
Migrants and ethnic minorities.....	41
Exclusionary aspects	41
Transformative aspects.....	42
Discussion and conclusion	44
Literature and sources	50

Executive summary

The Report 4 provides an overview of the challenges of the European Knowledge based Society, analyzing how educational exclusion and inclusion affects diverse areas of society (i.e. employment, housing, health and political participation) and what kind of educational provision contributes to overcome it. More specifically, it focuses on the review of the literature about the challenges of European knowledge based society (EKS) and the role of education in it. A particular attention was paid to vulnerability of youth, women, people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities. The Report 4 is based on the literature review, mostly provided by seven interim reports including policy and document analyses.

The main results of the literature review indicated that educational exclusion influences the situation and the status of vulnerable groups. On the one hand education provides knowledge and skills that are a condition for better opportunities in the labour market, enable better accommodation and health conditions and improve the interest for political participation. On the other hand educational inclusion is tied to other important life outcomes, such as better employment and income, higher quality of life and civic involvement, that have significant impact on the studied fields. It was stressed in this report that the relation between the educational inclusion /exclusion and the position of the vulnerable groups in the fields of employment, health, housing and political participation are not direct but carried out through the interrelated socio-economic and geopolitical variables. In this respect Mircea and Dorobanty (2008) speak about vicious circle of deprivation indicating that people living in poverty have limited access to appropriate knowledge and skills, and that the lack of both prevents improving their labour market, political, health and accommodation status and possibilities. Beside this, it should not be neglected that education has a value in itself and that it contributes to development and satisfaction of individuals (CREA, 2008). Vulnerable groups are specific in this respect and their access to those values and opportunities are often limited. That is why one of the key issues of the *Detailed Work Programme of Education and Training System in Europe (2002)* is to ensure equal access to acquisition of all citizens and groups in the society and to motivate them to participate in learning. Providing an equal access to educational resources and facilitating all citizens to participate in education and learning is one of the key objectives of the European Knowledge Based Society.

Introduction

Nowadays, there is a wide and common understanding that industrial countries are undergoing economic and social transformation in which people's knowledge and skills are visibly becoming the essential agent of effective organization and development of societies. The emergence of the knowledge based society is both, a prerequisite and a result of the rapid introduction of information and communication technologies as well as of the growth of global competition. At the same time the social and economic restructuring experienced in knowledge based society gives an impetus to the adoption of a new social contract creating higher level of welfare state, equity and equality among its citizens.

The notions of the knowledge based society are not new. They gained considerable attention in the policy debates in many countries, particularly after the appearance of the well known Faure's book 'Learning to be'. The author writes about the concept of knowledge and learning involving the entire individual life, in sense of both time span and diversity and all of society including it's social and economic as well as its educational resources (Faure, 1972).

According to Lundvall, the founder of the contemporary understanding of the knowledge based economy and society, in Europe, since the post war period, the production process has relied mainly on knowledge based activities. In this society the proportion of labour that handles tangible goods has become smaller than the proportion engaged in production, distribution and processing of knowledge. In the knowledge based society knowledge is becoming the main source of the wealth of nations, economies and people, but it can also become the main factor of inequality. He believes that knowledge policies should be more concerned to facilitate access to knowledge and enhance creative and learning capacities of people. "Knowledge policies are being reinforced in the general architecture of the European strategy for the economic and social development" (2003, p. xx).

The perception and reception of the concept of the European knowledge based society and the lifelong learning, as one of it's main features, coincides with the intensification of the EU enlargement and particularly of the inside-EU deepening of the integration. The EU countries have proposed and adopted several documents (strategies, declarations, directions, initiatives)

providing possibilities for carrying out the concept of knowledge based society and lifelong learning process. Some key contributions establishing the roots of the European knowledge based society are: '*Towards the Learning Society: The Commission White Paper on Teaching and Learning* (1995)', *The Bologna Declaration* (1999), *Lisbon European Council setting the strategic goal for 2010* (2000), *Feira European Council* (2000), *A Memorandum on lifelong learning* (2000), the document '*Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*' (2001), *Indicators on Lifelong Learning* (2001), *Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning* (2002), *Copenhagen declaration and the Council resolution on the Promotion of Enhanced co-operation in VET* (2002), *Benchmarks for education and training* (2002), *Joint Interim Report Education and Training 2010* (2004), *Maastricht Communiqué* (2004) and *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (2005).

At the Lisbon summit in 2000, an important idea of making Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy and society in the world was promoted. Many different ways have been proposed to fulfill that idea. *The Conclusion of the Lisbon European Council*, (2000) confirmed the fact that the advancement of the lifelong learning was seen as an essential component of the successful transition into knowledge based economy and society. European's education and training systems are the essence of the changes that we witness.

The *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* emphasizes that ***people themselves are the leading actors of knowledge societies***. "It is the human capacity to create and use knowledge effectively and intelligently, on a continually changing basis, that counts most. To develop this capacity to the full, people need to want and to be able to take their lives into their own hands – to become, in short, active citizens. Education and training throughout life is the best way for everyone to meet the challenge of change" (2000, p.7).

The key message of the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000) is that this **process should be the priority for the development of citizenship, social cohesion and employment**.

Considering the importance of the knowledge in the European knowledge based society, there is a danger that people who do not have access to appropriate knowledge and skills will be excluded from the knowledge based society. Without targeted efforts to enhance their knowledge and skills they will be in danger to become marginalized. In order to prevent them

of being marginalized, poor and socially excluded, EU countries identify the access to education as a fundamental right and also as an instrument for supporting social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

In the following Report 4, an attempt will be made to illustrate that **the access to education is linked to the possibilities of exerting one's right to learn together with the access to health services, appropriate housing conditions, political participation and the position in the labour market.** It is a sort of vicious circle in which all of the variables are interconnected. People living in material and social poverty have limited access to the appropriate knowledge and skills which is again an obstacle for better labour market opportunities, health care, housing conditions and political participation. Also children being exposed to poverty have limited access to education and training that diminishes their later opportunities for better social integration.

Considering the document *Detailed Work Programme on the follow up of the objectives of education and training system in Europe* (2002), EU countries should pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. One of the key issue for achieving that objective is ensuring fair access to acquisition of skills for the less privileged and motivating them to participate in learning.

According to the *Communication from the Commission* (2002) there are two key priorities related to educational systems to achieve these objectives: increasing the access of the most vulnerable groups and those most at risk of social exclusion to decent housing, quality health and lifelong learning opportunities and implementing a concerted effort to prevent early school leaving and to promote transition from school to work.

The INCLUD-ED research project, which is part of the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme analyses educational strategies that contribute to overcome inequalities and promote social cohesion, and educational strategies that generate social exclusion, particularly focusing on vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The Report 4 covers the issue on educational exclusion/inclusion affecting diverse areas of society (i.e. employment, housing, health and political participation) and the kind of educational provision contributing to overcome it. The main research question is, how does

educational inclusion/exclusion impact inclusion/exclusion from diverse areas of society such as employment, housing, health and political participation? The literature review focuses on the challenges of European knowledge based society (EKS) and the role of education in it.

This topic is addressed in seven chapters of the Report 4. After the introductory part explaining the background of the European knowledge based society and its connection to the problem of exclusion/inclusion of the vulnerable groups in the various field of society, the chapter describing the methodology and the research approach follows. The third part *Impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on their employment opportunities* focuses on the relationship between educational exclusion/inclusion and employment. The main idea is that education contributes to achieving two important objectives of the labour market: first is the development of the individuals and societies, since it has a value in itself and second to increase the employment opportunities of all social groups, promoting the sustainable development in the society. *The impact of exclusion from the educational system of vulnerable groups on participation in the health system* provides an overview of how educational exclusion affects health of youth, women, people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities. In average low educated people die younger and have more chronic diseases and injuries than better educated. Education is a way out of the vicious circle of poverty, disability and social exclusion. The next chapter *Impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on the opportunities to get house* is concerned with the question how European and international trends deal with housing issues and policies in Europe, taking into account the educational perspective. The aim of the chapter *Impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on political participation* is to examine, how educational exclusion affects the political activities of the vulnerable groups. The relationship between political participation and educational attainment does not always reflect the positive correlation. In the case of migrants the opportunities for the political involvement are often legally limited. Chapter seven summarizes the conclusions of the literature review, discussing the trends and perspectives of the vulnerable groups in regard to the European knowledge based society.

Methodology and Research Approach

The directions for the Project 3 ‘**Social and educational exclusion and inclusion. Social structure in a European knowledge based society**’ were set out in the Annex 1 ‘Description of work’. The preparation of the Report 4 is a part of Workpackage 10 (WP10) of the Project 3 ‘State of the art: European knowledge based society and the role of education’. During the development of WP 10, specific Guide for the literature review has been prepared. For the clarification of some specific questions, a team discussion and a virtual meeting has been carried out, too.

The Report 4 applies predominantly content analysis of the seven interim reports based on the literature analysis (policy and documents analysis) selected by the proposed criteria. Qualitative analyses of some additional sources and literature have been provided in the Review 4 as well.

The interim reports assessed the situation of five vulnerable groups: youth, women, people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities. They have been prepared by seven partner institutions involved in the Project 3¹.

The main resources for the preparation of the interim reports have been academic articles selected from journals on education, health, politics, social field, labour market as well as journals dealing with the significances of the proposed target groups in respect to the mentioned issues. The selecting criteria were:

1. The selection of the European Commission Documents. The most of them have been provided on the web site <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>.

¹ Partner institutions participating in the Project 3: CREA, Center of Special Research in Theories and Practices (University of Barcelona); Continuing Education Research Unit (Danube University Krems), Center for European Policy Studies in Belgium; University of Helsinki, University of Florence, IREA Research Centre, University of Timisoara; Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

2. The following databases were used: ERIC, JSTOR, ACADEMIC PREMIER, SOCIOFILE, WILSON, ECLAS (European Commission Libraries Catalogue) and other relevant national databases and sources of available documents.
3. Almost all of the articles were provided in journals from the ISI web of knowledge <http://www.isiwebofknowledge.com/>
4. Some useful books and articles and other internet resources and reports on good practices were considered as well.

The method of literature selection enabled high reliability and scientific approach in referring the literature authors. However, some of the authors of the literature interim report drew attention to the lack of significant literature, particularly in the field of housing related to education of the proposed vulnerable groups.

All the preliminary (interim) reports are written according to the communicative methodology and thus they include the exclusionary and transformative components indicating the elements leading to social inclusion and social exclusion. In reviewing the literature the communicative methodology was used also to focus on analyzing inequalities and contributing to solutions through dialogue among all agents involved. The Report 4 follows a similar structure of the interim reports summarizing the most important ideas, findings and conclusion of the preliminary reports.

The impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on their employment opportunities

Background

The promotion of employment and particularly the employment of vulnerable social groups, has been declared as an important social issue in the countries of EU. It is apparent that better educated individuals possess higher level of employability and that low educated individuals appear to be the most vulnerable group in this respect. The outcomes of low level of education, school drop out, low literacy skills and leaving education at a very early stage are associated with immediate difficulties in finding appropriate jobs, being exposed to long term unemployment and non-immediate consequences of unemployment as well. Some authors Hibbett, Fogelman & Manor (1990), Vries and Wolbers (2005), Hartley (1989) illustrated a clear connection between exclusion from education, and lower qualifications, job instability, lower salaries, nonstandard employment contracts and lower productivity. According to Atkinson (1998) **unemployment generates social exclusion, therefore employment is the best safeguard against social exclusion**. However, people who are employed often possess relatively low educational level, skills and qualifications and they are on risk to become unemployed.

In order to increase the extent of social inclusion, employability and competitiveness in the labour market and to reduce the poverty as well, the EU policy documents aim at promoting new skills, qualifications and professions. **The returns on public policies when investing in early education** has been emphasized in several European Commission Documents, such as: *Commission of the European Communities: Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training* (2008); *Commission of the European Communities: Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems* (2006); *Commission of the European Communities: Investing efficiently in education and training an imperative for Europe* (2003).

As exclusion of vulnerable groups from the labour market is not decreasing, special attention of the European Commission is devoted to equalising opportunities and increasing of their independence. In the document *Efficiency and Equality in European Education and Training System* it is stressed that many people in Europe leave compulsory education without sufficient level of skills or competences. To ensure equity of opportunity, targeted public interventions in particular within active labour market programmes are needed to ensure that the disadvantaged (e.g. low-skilled, vulnerable, unemployed young people) can access training and enhance their employment prospects. (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 29)

In this respect education is seen as an important investment strategy, for the entire population and particularly for the vulnerable groups, improving the possibilities for their social inclusion and their performance in the society. A well-known author Sen (1999) illustrated **that high quality vocational education in some countries increased the returns and decreased youth unemployment**. In the following chapter we are discussing some important exclusionary and transformative aspects on employment opportunities.

Exclusionary aspects

It is evident that several population groups in European societies face higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to the general population. The problems these groups experience are translated into poverty, unemployment, low education, and subsequently, their further exclusion from the society. As the positive association between education and the labour market participation is established, CREA (2008) identified the most significant dimensions dealing with the impact of the educational exclusion on employment opportunities.

- a. **Early tracking in educational system is viewed as a negative practice, since it is based on the division of students according to academic abilities.** Schwartz (1989) points the limitations of tracking system for providing knowledge and skills that are a condition for further learning. Also Sheppard and Witherspoon (1997) disagree with the application of the early tracking. They argue that this system prevents inclusion

into higher education and university, which decreases opportunities for achieving better quality and highly paid jobs. Tracing system creates prejudices and low expectations particularly for some vulnerable groups, like people with disabilities (Hehir (2002), Dupper and Poerter (1997)). That is why it intensifies difficulties in making a successful transition from school to employment.

- b. **School dropping out is the next obstacle for employment.** It refers to increasing unemployment rates Lisack, (1987), Pallas (1987), Sullivan (1988), limiting employment opportunities (Miller & Porter, 2007, Gilbert, 1993), producing longer periods of unemployment (Hartley, 1989) and being unemployed more times through their life. In the so called knowledge based societies and economies being grounded on knowledge and highly skilled jobs, school dropping out is particularly undesirable since it is associated with low level of literacy and manual occupations Descy (2002), the National Center for Educational Statistics (1996), Muller (1995), Hibbett, Fogelman, Manor (1990).
- c. **Education not considering the needs of vulnerable groups is an important exclusionary issue.** The literature reveals significant differences in the patterns of inclusion of the population and shows that the least active group of adults includes those who are already in an underprivileged position e.g. people with lower educational level, young drop-outs and adults with low working status (CREA, 2008). Regarding the working place status the literature indicates that the system of acquiring knowledge, skills and information is often reduced mainly to the group of managers, experts and other educated stuff, while those being less educated are not included in educational activities enough (Walther, 2005, Walther & Stauber, 2002). Beside the low level of educational participation of vulnerable groups, particularly minorities also have difficulties, since the programmes they are involved in do not respond to the labour market needs and developments, which is often the reason for becoming unemployed (CREA, 2001-2004)
- d. **Lower educational access related to low employment status is a significant hindering factor for inclusion in the labour market.** Kettunen (1997) argues that less educated people have worse employment opportunities and are more often unemployed. When they are employed, as a rule, they are badly paid (Lisack, 1987), have non standard and less stable jobs (Fogelman and Manor, 1990) offering lower control over their future and possibilities to improve their working status. Accordingly, their expectations and ambitions are lower as well.

- e. **Lower educational level, illiteracy and lack of relevant knowledge and skills of adults is associated with lower productivity and effectiveness of the companies and nonparticipation in economic activities.** In this respect Lisack (1987) argues that dropping out is a disadvantage in particular as it produces lower productivity, lower tax revenues, greater dependence upon social assistance and higher level of exclusion. That is why higher investment in education is viewed as a financial benefit in terms of increasing tax revenues and lower spending on health and crime (CREA, 2008).

Vulnerable groups (youth, women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and migrants) experience higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to general population.

Young people having low educational rate are identified as disadvantaged in almost all European countries. In the labour market low educated youth is often regarded as low skilled, low experienced, under motivated and violent (Kliksberg, 2008). Therefore the engagements of younger workers are often underestimated. The discrimination of low educated young people in the labour market is seen as a predictor of unemployment, social exclusion and inactivity as they are afraid of being rejected more times.

Although many developments and changes have been achieved for women in the labour market, the full equality between genders has not been achieved yet. Women are discriminated in the labour market and this discrimination is manifested in several ways: **Women are more likely to be unemployed than man, have fewer opportunities to find appropriate jobs** (Wolbers, 2000), **are paid less than man** (Snyder and others, 2008, McMillan and Marks, 2003) and report lower job satisfaction (Metle 2003). In regard to women's exclusion, an important conclusion reveals that gender segregation in schools leads to higher rates of gender segregation in the labour market (CREA, 2008).

Migrant groups, ethnic minorities and other cultural groups also face higher risk of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination in the labour market. Among the ethnic minorities the situation of Roma population has been particularly exposed. Even though Roma population has lived in Europe for many centuries, they have rarely been accepted as full members and equally effective workers. Together with migrant workers they have the lowest employment status, incomes, are often unemployed and perform less prestigious jobs (CREA, 2001-2004).

EU has already accepted some measures for overcoming discrimination and increasing the inclusion of vulnerable groups. However the public at large is often unaware of the complexities of the problems faced by these groups.

Transformative aspects

The correlation of higher level of education and higher rate of participation in the labour force is explained by the **transformative aspects**. The referred authors agree that further education, higher educational level, inclusion in the lifelong learning process, and better literacy skills increase employment duration, chances of being reincluded into the labour market and higher quality and stability of employment as well.

The literature strengthens the positive correlation between the level of education and the labour market opportunities. Completed compulsory education increases the possibilities of individuals through their life. There is also an evidence that further education increases employment duration (Mansuy, 2001), lower unemployment rate and improves the participation in the labour force (McMillan and Marks, 2003). However, **beside the positive impact of education, better skills and knowledge in labour market, it is necessary to respect the value the education has itself**. Higher levels of education increase the life quality and the satisfaction of individuals (CREA, 2008).

Being more and better educated provides not only more but also better opportunities in the labour market. Higher levels of education contribute to more prestigious jobs, higher security, higher positions, better salaries and less poverty (Sen 1999, Brunello et al. 2007, Quinn and Rubb 2006). At the same time improving the educational level is important not only for the individuals but for the society in general. Those employed with higher education pay more taxes and thus they contribute to economic growth (Centre for the Study of Higher Education Management, 2007) and better educated have less criminal arrests and other delinquent behaviors as well (Weikart, 1996).

On the basis of the analyses made in 50 countries Legatum prosperity index for the year 2007 indicated that economies in the countries with higher average level of education are more developed, have faster growth, and the employed people in these countries are more used to

highly sophisticated technologies. An important finding of this study is **that more years of secondary education improves the economic prosperity of the country.**

In the context of improving the employment opportunities the entire concept of lifelong learning has been highlighted, as the most significant indicator determining the effectiveness of job creation policies, development of quality and quantity of the labour output and the achievement of the long term positive results. For example, several researchers and authors illustrate in different contexts that **higher education contributes to higher salaries, overcoming poverty and easy gaining of needed reading and numeracy competences for higher inclusion into the labour market** (Brunello, 2007, Quinn & Rubb, 2006, Marks & Fleming 1998). In addition Ross and Wu (1995) demonstrated that **higher education usually promises better job conditions, full time employment and higher job promotion.**

Providing knowledge and skills does not mean just access to formal educational opportunities, but to non-formal education and training (Kettunen, 1997) and local learning perspectives as well (Cruikshank, 2007). According to McMillan and Marks (2003) education and training, which are carried out when a person is full time employed protect this person from marginal activities and provide better job opportunities. The **inclusive dimension of lifelong learning concept pays particular attention to vulnerable groups and their right to achieve equal opportunities in the labour market.** It stresses some advantages of vulnerable groups, such as readiness to absorb new ideas (youth), to be more flexible (youth, migrants, women), to solve unconventional problems and possessing certain skills useful for the labour market demands (people with disabilities, minorities, migrants, youth, women) (CREA, 2001-2005). In this respect some companies foster a management system in which migrants and cultural minorities are particularly stimulated to occupy the leading positions.

Some successful companies like Microsoft or Mondragon try to promote the advantages of diversities, based on specific skills, experiences and backgrounds that ethnic and cultural minorities, women, adolescents and people with disabilities bring to their companies. For achieving the best outputs, the concepts of education and training in both companies provide activities directed to career development, support networking, mentoring, improved communication skills, innovation orientation of employees and higher efficiency and productivity of the system. Both companies function as a sort of learning organizations, facilitating learning for all their members and employees.

The impact of exclusion from the educational system of vulnerable groups on participation in the health system

Background

The following chapter provides a framework for understanding the association between education (socio-economic) status and health outcomes with respect to specific target groups (youth, women, and people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities). According to the determination of the World Health Organization (1946) health is a multidimensional and dynamic concept which incorporates the entire physical, mental and social well being of an individual or group. In contrast to the understanding of health almost as an exclusively biological process related to physical health and absence of disease or infirmity in the early fifties of the previous century, nowadays, it is understood as a function of social, economic and behavioural factors. Accordingly, the elimination of health inequalities requires significant changes not only in the treatment of the health status (health care delivery) but mainly changes in socio-economic conditions. House (2001) argues that improving the socioeconomic position of a broad range of disadvantaged people constitutes a major avenue for reducing exposure to and experience of deleterious risk factors for health and hence for improving the health of these groups and the overall population.

The literature suggests that socioeconomic inequalities in health are observable in all EU countries, although their magnitude may vary among countries (World Bank, 1993). In the document *Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health* Göran & Whitehead (2007) stress that **general improvements of the health status in the West mask considerable inequalities in health between different socioeconomic and occupational groups**. In the Eastern European countries the situation is even worse, since **the least privileged groups experience the greatest reduction of their possibilities to live a healthy life within the context of a general decline in terms of social and health development**. The

most deprived groups with respect to health status in the Western and the Eastern European countries are children of single parents with limited education, lonely elderly, migrant workers, long term unemployed and those working in high risk occupations. In addition Cavelaars et al. (1998) state that there is a general trend in the EU countries of reduced mortality. Nevertheless, many studies throughout Europe have reported a higher level of morbidity and mortality of people with a lower educational level (Elo and Preston in Deaton, 2003).

In order to increase the social inclusion and to reduce poverty conditioned health differences several policy documents have been adopted at the European level. The key strategy document for the development of public health in the EU countries is *Public health programme of community action in the field of public health (2003-2008)*. The objectives of this document are: to improve information and knowledge for the development of public health; to enhance the capability of responding rapidly and in a coordinated way to threat to health; to promote health and prevent diseases through addressing health determinants across all policies and activities. Considering the directions of this document, several programmes, initiatives and regulations on health issue for specific target groups have been produced. At the same time a health impact assessment has been proposed as a tool for justifying the direct or indirect impact of the EU policies on health (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

Almost all of the documents mentioned the investment in education as the most important mechanism for achieving health objectives. Grossman (2000) offered empirical evidence showing the considerable effect the education has on the general health status of the individual. He pays attention to the higher education level which affects better health behavior as well as higher wages and earnings and better person's general well being in terms of reduced pain, lower expenditures on medical care and even stronger predictors of national growth. At the same time he argues that education seems to be associated with social cohesion and lower inequality. That is why equality of opportunity and equal access to education and training programmes independent of student's circumstances as well as the equal treatment of all students is an important endeavor of the EU policy (*Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems*, 2006).

In the following chapter we focus on the impact of education on health situation of respective vulnerable groups.

Youth

Exclusionary aspects

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This transition involves substantial biological, social and psychological changes; the effectiveness of the transition significantly influences further health status and general well-being. Accordingly, education and health related practices of young people have positive or negative consequences of people's health in adulthood. There is quite a lot of evidence showing that educational exclusion is associated with risk related behaviour: more experiences with alcohol drinking (Sallona, et al. 2008), using drugs such as marijuana (Miles et al., 2001, Royo-Bordona et al., 1998) smoking (Laaksonen et al., 1999, Tschan et al., 1994) or insufficient physical activity of adolescents (Tuinstra et al., 1998).

Teenage pregnancy is a problem that prevails among young people from lower socio-economic status of the student's family. In early experiencing of sexual intercourse there are differences between boys and girls. According to the United Nations (2003) the rate of people aged 15 having sexual intercourse is 24% for girls and 30% for boys. There is also an evidence showing that boys more often than girls use protection during their sexual intercourse.

Some research evidence also indicates that self perceived health significantly declines with lower socio-economic position. Abernathy, Webster and Vermaulen (2002) discovered that people in the lowest quintile are five times more likely to rate their health as fair or poor than people in the highest.

Transformative aspects

It has been well established in the research literature that educational achievements and academic outcomes in the period of adolescence are important predictor of later health

condition (Nedham, Crosnoe, Muller, 2004). Education of youth affects the health status directly through health education at the primary or secondary schools or indirectly. In this respect health education provides some knowledge and teaches certain habits on nutrition, safety, hygiene, physical activity, smoking etc. On the other hand academic outcomes are tied to other important life outcomes such as employment, income, longevity and civic participation.

The literature review provides several aspects supporting the transformative educational impact on health. **A common finding in the following contributions is that more years of schooling produces more health.** Schooling provides general skills, values, behaviors and dispositions conditioning higher control over events and outcomes, lower morbidity, better physical and mental functioning, higher satisfaction with health, lower anxiety or depression (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2006) and higher engagement in positive health behaviours (Ross and Wu, 1995, Ross and Mirowsky, 1999). The explanation that Berkman and Syme (1979), Eckenrode (1983), Gore (1978) gave is that better educated have numerous supportive and informative associations with family, friends, and others in their community influencing positively the health. According to Nunn, Crockett and Williams (1978) and Human et al. (1976) higher education enables people to think logically and rationally, to become more analytical and to have better control over events and outcomes in life.

The analysis of the literature also shows that educational level has a significant impact not just on people's own health but on the one of their children as well (Wickrama, Conger, Lorenz, Elder, 1998). These authors believe that less educated parents are less informed about children's health, more often reject children for activities viewed as inappropriate and are more often exposed to stress.

Women

Exclusionary aspects

It would not be easy to provide a general overview of women's health situation, since women make more than half of the world's population, having most diversified group position, characteristics, interests and desires. In developed countries women have longer life

expectancy than man, therefore one may doubt about their vulnerability as a group in respect to health. However Mackintyre & Hunt, 1997, Denton, Prus, Walters, (2004) argued that women, as a rule, experience lower health quality and are more exposed to higher level of depression, psychiatric disorders, and to a variety of chronic illnesses. It is also a fact that women in impoverished countries suffer greatly in terms of health. Worldwide, each year, over 585.000 women die from causes related to childbirth and at least 30 million more suffer childbirth – related morbidities. About one million children lose their mothers each year from maternity related death (UNICEF, 1996). According to Stein (1997) diseases and illnesses are not only results of transitional stage or on the distribution of diseases among countries, but are also founded in variations related to gender, race and ethnicity, geographical location and social class. An important conclusion is that the necessity to consider the medical and biological aspects of health determinants should be close to paying attention to holistically defined role of gender in the entire society.

Transformative aspects

Education is an important instrument empowering women's health, directly through providing them with knowledge and problem solving skills for improving health, and indirectly through providing better jobs and making better their economic conditions, social, psychological resources and lifestyle (Ross, Wu, 1995).

The literature offers quite a lot of examples showing the exclusionary outcome of educational deficiency with respect to gender's health. It indicates that less educated and socially deprived women are more likely to report poorer health status, have more often first pregnancy at the age of 20, rarely join physical activities and have lower life expectancy (Krieger, Chen, Selby, 2001). Two important findings have been supported: **childhood education significantly influenced later gender health status** (Hayward, Gorman, 2004, Hammarstorm and Janlert, 2005) and **mother's level of education has an important impact on the health status of their children** (Wickrama, Conger, Lorenz, Elder, 1998; Zill, 1996, Schultz, 1996). The former statement shows that childhood socioeconomic and family disadvantages condition socioeconomic and lifestyle events influencing negatively the rates of mortality. The latter statement points out that low education and insufficient literacy skills of mothers are associated with inadequate supervision, higher risk behaviour of children and lower family

support. As a solution some good practices contributing to transformative aspects have been offered. Harris and Cale (1997) argue that more educated people experience much more health education at school as a part of regular curriculum. Miers (2002) added that education has played an essential role in changing women's experience of the public world, through improving the access to employment, and reducing social dependency and risk behaviour. Finally Zill (1996) argued that mothers with higher levels of education may be more likely to practice good health habits themselves and to insure that their children's surrounding is safe and supportive.

An important conclusion is that women's health is a holistic issue and education is an important mechanism for its improvement. **However, educational programmes should not focus exclusively on women's health problems but on wider question on gender.**

People with disabilities

Exclusionary aspects

Disability can be elaborated as individually created problem, in which case the focus is typically on the aspect of those individuals and the question of their better functioning (medical model of disability). In this context the notion of a social model is more relevant, viewing disability as a socially created problem and a matter of full integration of individuals into society. In this respect the issue of disability should become a responsibility of the society providing circumstances for the full participation of the people with disabilities in the social life (Bolt, 2005, Brisenden, 1986).

All over the world people with disabilities face barriers to their participation in society, are often unemployed and frequently live on the margins of a society. The literature offers quite a lot of examples of educational exclusion of people with disabilities, affecting additionally their health. Camargos, Machado and Rodrigues (2007) showed that persons with lower education attainment had a higher prevalence of disability. Bebbington (in Valkonen, Sihvonon and Lahelma (1997) argued that people having higher occupational status and being most educated had higher life expectancy and longer disability-free life expectancy. The same author also stated that people with lower socioeconomic status live shorter and have more

disabilities. There is also an evidence that disability is least prevalent among managers (usually having high educational level) and quite frequent among manual workers (French National Institute of Economic and Statistical Studies). The study carried by Cambois, Robine and Hayward (2001) analysed French population between 1980 and 1991 measuring three major occupational classes.

Disability and lower level of education are related to poverty as well. Since many people with disabilities have limited access to educational sources, they hardly find employment, which is the reason for poverty. The socioeconomic exclusion of people with disabilities might cause poverty of their families as well (Department for International Development, 2000).

Transformative aspects

Ivančič, Mirčeva, Vrečer (2008) enumerated numerous contributions showing the positive correlation between higher level of education and health status of people with disabilities (Camargos, Machado, and Rodrigues, 2007; Bossuyt, Gadeyne, Deboosere, van Oyen, 2004 at al.). They all **support the assumption that education is the essential way out of the vicious circle of poverty and disability**. Better educated people with disabilities are better informed and have more knowledge and skills guaranteeing several positive effects on health. This is the reason that the education is one of the most important issues according to the *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities* (2006). According to this document, the State shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to full development of human potential and sense of dignity, and strenghtening the respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity's feature; development of personality, talents and creativity and enabling an effective participation in the society.

An important recommendation coming from the literature review **is that the increasing of general educational level to upper secondary school should be compulsory for the entire population**. This measure would contribute to higher quality of life of people with disabilities, more healthy aging and prevention of disabilities.

Migrants and ethnic minorities

Exclusionary aspects

The treatment of the issue of inter-ethnic relations and the creation of policies is a sensitive subject and is of great importance for the development of any modern, multi-ethnic and pluralistic society (Jelenc, Mirčeva, Janko, 1997).

European Union is a place of intensive migration. According to Rammel (2008) despite the European endeavor to reduce the discrimination of immigrants and ethnic minorities, through the strategies aiming at ensuring effective legal protection (*Directive 2000/43/EC*), quite little has been achieved in the process of its reduction. The following citation of FRA shows the ignorant attitude and a lack of political awareness in regard to this issue. “With few exceptions there is a general lack of data on structures and practices that produce and reproduce inequality. Many member states have not yet brought themselves systematically to explore the presence and causes of discrimination in and through education system”(FRA, 2007:32).

The prevalence of strong correlation of completed educational level and the health status is significant for the migrant population, too. However, Rammel (2008) argued that many migrant workers have either low educational status or they lack the possibility to have their educational status within their country of origin accredited in the current country of living. The consequences of their unsatisfying educational achievement are visible in poor or unhealthy working conditions (monotonous and hazardous work, jobs with high stress level, lack of social and financial recognition), high unemployment level (loss of income, increased poverty risk, rare social contacts) and limited access to mainstream labour markets and prevalence of the employment in low skill jobs and higher rates of part time jobs. (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). Work related problems have negative impact on migrant health status and their access to healthcare.

In addition to educational and health related problems of immigrants, the unsatisfying status of ethnic minorities of Roma, Sinti or Traveler background and those with Jewish and Muslim religious background is often revealed in the literature (FRA, 2007,).

Rammel (2008) emphasizes two reasons for the inferior status of the vulnerable groups: discrimination in education and health system. In regard to the first, she argues that **highly differentiated education systems tend to reproduce social inequalities**. In practice children of asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities have the most problems to participate within the existing educational system and the access to it is often limited. Quite a lot of Roma and Sinti children even do not attend regular schools. However schools for children with special needs, remedial special schools (significant for Hungary and Bulgaria), special schools for underachievers (significant for Germany) lead to discrimination, isolation and intolerance on a higher level. Also the Lisbon educational indicators focusing on the elite education and lack of indicators tracking segregation, exclusion and other discriminative outcomes should be reviewed as well. In this respect anti-discrimination strategies should be created in a sensitive way, **furthermore, considering the health status it could not be neglected that migrants and other minorities face specific problems caused by their inadequate living conditions, psychological pressure and language problems**. The general health status of migrants and other minority groups is not unique, however the evidence reveals that the majority of them are often inferior in this respect, Roma and Sinti have shorter life expectancy, use drugs more often and do not practice preventive medical procedures (Commission of the European Communities, 2004).

Transformative aspects

Health inequalities between host populations and migrants, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities demand a need for international and national protection in terms of health status and access to health services of equal quality. According to the report Health and Migration in the EU, a general diversity approach² has to be considered in improving the health of migrants and other ethnic minorities (2007). World Health Organization in addition emphasizes that education is consistently recognized as having a significant bearing on health status (WHO, 2007).

² A general diversity approach should have the following characteristics: the ability to create additional value by taking into account national policies towards health systems and migrant statuses; consider the idea that health disparities result more from socioeconomic factors than ethnic group origin; to be able to manage migration flows, taking into account the disconnection between restrictive national frameworks, national labour market needs and the increase in irregular migration; reduce the lack of integration of migrants and their descendants; account for the need of international cooperation between country of origin, transit and descendants; to be able to optimize current policy instruments (Health and Migration in the EU, 2007).

For improving the health status of migrants and ethnic minorities several initiatives within the educational system have been proposed:

- Participation of teachers of ethnic and religious minorities and of migrant population as well within the educational system (FRA 2008:24);
- Early involvement of migrant and minority parents in the process of promoting language skills (FRA 2008: 24);
- Achieving equality and social cohesion in schools enabling immigrants and minorities to join ordinary and not reception classes for immigrants (FRA 2007 : 26);
- To develop policy issues that can be part of strategies strengthening equality (FRA 2007: 35);
- To introduce integrated changes accompanied by selective support measures directed to promotion of educational success (FRA, 2007: 37)

For achieving better health of migrants and minorities Rammel (2008: 23, 24) writes about two initiatives of the European Commission:

- European initiative for migrants directed towards improving services for migrants and minority groups;
- Development of harmonized indicators for Roma and Sinti population (Commission of the European Communities 2004: 29)

There are some outstanding examples of good practices dealing with migration and ethnic minorities and their health throughout the EU context showing a useful way to take advantage of what has proved to be successful. However, in the case of migrant and ethnic minorities' health, structural **changes and particularly regulating their legal status in the receiving countries might be the best preferred long term solutions.**

The impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on the opportunities to provide a house

Background

Access to decent housing conditions is a fundamental need and right. Ensuring that this need is met is a challenge in almost all EU countries. Nevertheless, a lot of people and social groups in the European countries are excluded or are at risk of being excluded from the housing market. The housing problem is worst in the developing countries.

Disadvantaged groups, particularly young people, women, people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities have often been described as a vulnerable group in terms of housing opportunities. A segregation between newcomers and resident population also persists, as a rule in large urban concentrations. Almost all of nonresidents, experience this exclusion as discrimination in the allocation of housing, the consumption of poor quality housing and the high cost of housing relative to their income.

Education is a significant element that might influence the access to better housing conditions. Powell at al (1997) stress that there is high correlation between where we live and what kind of education we have. However the literature indicates that the two **variables, ‘education’ and ‘housing’, are not connected in a linear way, but through the variable ‘poverty’**. The authors of the report – Impact of education in terms of housing opportunities – migrants and ethnic minorities (2008) Mircea and Dorobantu, found out that **access to education for some vulnerable groups is not so much conditioned by their housing situations but more by their socio-economic status and linguistic skills**.

In order to improve social inclusion, to reduce big disparities and to provide decent housing conditions for the entire population, several measures and documents have been supported and adopted, at the national and international level. Reviewing the national housing policies

Campani et al. (2008) argue that in many EU countries (Italy, United Kingdom, Netherland and Germany) the main trend is state disinvestment in social housing. Selling of social housing to private owners is not interesting only for poorest and vulnerable groups, but also to middle class people interested to solve their housing problem for lower expenses.

In regard to the housing legislation two important documents of the United Nation, have been proposed: *the Declaration on cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium* (2001) and the *UN-HABITAT annual report for 2008 Housing for all: the Challenges of Affordability, Accessibility, Sustainability*. They encourage all governments to implement the existing legal obligations concerning human rights to adequate housing and to refrain from violating the human right to adequate housing. The documents emphasize that improving the access to information on the housing opportunities (information on housing legislation, legal rights etc.) would enable the poor and vulnerable groups to overcome housing problems more easily.

Youth

Exclusionary aspects

In the period of adolescence people face several life changes also related to housing issue, such as leaving home, leaving regular education and finding employment. These life transitions can be challenging if they have a supportive social and educational background and enough information on housing options and affordability.

The literature review suggested that differences in housing structure and neighbourhood might cause risk behaviours among young people living in poor neighbourhoods (MacDonald, Shildrick, Webster, Webster and Simpson, 2005), rural youth living in remote regions (McGrath, 2001) and youths living in low income urban communities (Li, Stanton, Black, Romer, Ricardo and Kaljee, 1994). Poverty and social inequalities are often reproduced among people growing up and living in deprived and locally embedded social networks.

On the one hand it is expected that young people living in rural and remote regions have less opportunities, encounters, events and experiences in terms of education, work and housing (Mc Grath, 2001). In order to find jobs youth growing in rural area is often pushed to move in

suburban areas. On the other hand living in urban environment does not guarantee access to better life chances. On the basis of data provided from a community based survey carried in major eastern metropolis Li et al. (1994) exposed some risk behaviours (early sexual intercourse, drug-substance use, trafficking and high school drop out) of youth living in low income urban communities.

Due to the low salaries, housing crisis and limited accommodation possibilities a large amount of young adults live still with their parents. Berberet (2006) argued that this situation is particularly common for youth in Southern European countries in which the family intervention counterbalances the weak welfare state and policies offering equal housing opportunities. This situation causes difficulties in becoming independent and establishing medium term life plans. According to Albarracin (2003), in Campani et al. (2008) this situation is grounded in increased educational requirements and low quality of created jobs. At the same time young workers living independent life in suburban areas, where rental costs are more affordable, face time problems of the transport solutions that worsen their living conditions. In respect to unsettled housing questions children and young people living out of home care experiencing premature and abrupt responsibility of independent living are in particularly deprived living circumstances (Dainig and DePanifilis, 2007).

In the course of exclusionary dimensions of housing policy (issue) among people Albarracin, (2003); Davy & Guigou, (2006) revealed some irrationality and contradictions in the housing market. The rising of the accommodation prices causes serious problems in paying the high prices particularly for young people from lower socio-economic and educational background, at the same time a large number of flats and houses remain unoccupied.

Transformative aspects

In order to increase independency and integration of young people into the wider community and society, some policy initiatives and good (educational and learning) practices have been proposed or illustrated. Equal access to adequate education is a driving force behind desegregation and higher social inclusion. Therefore, Gordon (2008) proposed the development of integrated schools that would overcome the social isolation and exclusion of young people living outside the urban areas. His idea was to give an opportunity to middle

class families to live in urban areas and thus to reduce social isolation. This concept should have a positive effect on the occupational aspirations of students' education and college attendance, social networking and mobility of youth.

For strengthening the inclusion process of young people from poor and socially deprived environment MacDonald et al. (2005) and Berberet (2005) mentioned the role of social networks and social service programs. Both are designed to change high risk human behavior and to improve the quality of life in deprived local communities. Following the idea of bettering living circumstances through education and learning processes, Jones and Lansdverk (2006) presented residential education as an alternative measure for fostering youth. The main objective of the programme was to provide stable living conditions through comprehensive educational programme for emancipation. The evaluation of the output of the residential education suggested its positive impact on school completion, reduced criminal justice involvement and victimization.

Finally, the improvement of social integration was proposed through social reintegration of homeless children and youth. The authors Gerwitz et al. (2008) argued that strategies for preventing long-term homelessness of children and young people are often not successful in supporting their mental development. That is why cognitive and mental health screening should be incorporated into the intervention programmes for social reintegration of homeless children and adolescents (Parks, Stevens, Spence, 2007).

Women

Exclusionary aspects

Women's vulnerability to exclusion in housing in many European countries reflect broader inequalities, even at the institutional level. Market based solutions for housing issue value paid employment far above unpaid labour such as child care. Despite the endeavor of the national social policies in many EU countries to reduce the gender inequalities in regard to housing, the inferior status of some groups of women in this field remains. Smith argues that the relative financial advantages of single men are sustained throughout the housing system and that some gender discrepancies in the families are reduced after the housing costs are taken into account (1990). However several women's categories, like single mothers are in

deprived situation due to the disproportionate loss of disposable income through housing expenditures. Their family responsibilities make it difficult to earn a decent income.

Transformative aspects

The balance among urban planning, housing design and work-family responsibilities would considerably improve gender integration in society. Silbaugh (2007) argues that the division of family responsibilities, is still an important obstacle in the labour market, educational possibilities, restricting options and limiting earning capacities of women.

Dealing with the issue of fertility and its impact on the housing matter, the authors Kulu and Vikat (2007) found out that there has been a greater impact of fertility on housing conditions than the educational level of the couple.

An important literature conclusion **is that in the period of higher integration of mothers into the labour market, housing design responsive to women's evolving roles is not on developer's agenda. In order to achieve greater independence of gender in housing opportunities, this matter should be considered in the process of policy planning.** Directions of the international documents should be now followed by national policies and practices identifying the national priorities and challenges.

People with disabilities

Exclusionary aspects

Being independent is one of the most important endeavors of people with disabilities, particularly of those living in inadequate housing conditions, as a precondition for achieving better position on the social hierarchy scale. Some authors (Imrie, 2006; Milner, Madigan, 2004; Karn, Sheridan, 1994) examined that the inadequate housing design and urban planning problems cause vulnerability among people with disabilities, since they can not achieve (afford) independence and self-sufficiency. Campani et al. (2008) resumed that access standards are generally low and costs may be high: both can exclude people with disabilities.

The vulnerability is common for children with disabilities, too. In addition to the difficulties caused by inadequate accommodation conditions, they are also excluded from the mainstream education (Hendey, Pascal, 2004). Within the regular educational system due to their specific needs they are as a rule treated as children longer in comparison with other children, which makes difficulties to become independent. This starting point is associated with later poverty, unemployment, accepting low quality jobs and becoming householders.

Transformative aspects

There is an evidence that more inclusive housing policy and environment could improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. Some minimum requirements for improving the mobility and living standards have been established as well. For example according to Imrie (2004) for wheelchair accessibility in dwellings and the main features for access and facilities for disabled people: a level or ramped approach to the house, a toilet in the entrance storey that wheelchair users can access, corridors and hallways in the entrance storey sufficiently wide to allow circulation by a wheelchair user etc. The concept of lifetime homes grounded on requirements that the new houses should meet the agreed standard of ‘visit ability’ might remove the physical obstacles in the housing structure. For example, where the lift is not provided the common stairs to be designed to suit the needs of the disabled people should be provided. There is also a remarkable initiative based on the interrelation between labour force participation of people with mental disabilities and the question of their accommodation. Goldman (2003) for example, pointed out the positive impact of the public intervention through supportive treatment, services and environments on living and employment opportunities of people with mental health problems. He proved that people with mental problems are more successful if they receive treatment and support while living in buildings that are in good condition and in welcoming neighbourhood.

Ethnic minorities

Exclusionary aspects

Access to decent and affordable housing is an important mechanism of immigrants' and ethnic minorities' inclusion into society and their integration into receiving country. In the *Community Action Programme on Social Exclusion* it is written that "in all European countries people from an immigrant or ethnic minority origin tend to be overrepresented among groups facing housing hardship and exclusion. People from minority ethnic communities and immigrants are more likely to live in deprived areas and in poor quality, overcrowded and unpopular housing and to pay a higher proportion of their household income to occupy that housing" (2005, p. 1, 2). It is also stressed in this document that access to housing information and advice during the early stages of arrival is lacking, which is a reason for quite a high level of homelessness among recent immigrants.

Reasons for social exclusion of ethnic minorities are complex and interconnected. It is known that people living in poverty face the lack of educational abilities, professional qualifications and that they have few opportunities for the development and arranging adequate housing in the communities they live. In terms of ethnicity this correlation of social exclusion is sometimes problematic, since it does not exclusively mean that all people of ethnic minorities are socially excluded (or/and that they feel the problem of unsettled housing question). However, reasons like language problems, prejudices, lack of knowledge and access to more promising educational opportunities often give rise to exclusionary consequences of these groups. The *Resolution on the European Strategy on the Roma* (2008) stresses that about 10 million of Roma living in the European Union, suffer discrimination and in many cases are subject to severe structural discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, as well as multiple discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability and sexual orientation. In the same document it is stressed that for the Roma and Traveller minorities high level of poverty and social exclusion, segregated systems in housing, education and social welfare are particularly significant. Mircea and Dorobantu (2008) illustrate that the problem of housing and property rights of the Roma and travelling communities are affected by traditional discrimination and exclusion in education influenced by overall conditions. In regard to education the lack of permanent and suitable living conditions affects school access, attendance and having more serious educational learning ambitions. At the same time the lack of experiences of Roma parents prevents them to support their children in achieving higher educational results.

Transformative aspects

Achieving higher quality of life, stability and decent housing conditions are still challenges in almost all EU member states. In regard to educational influence enhancing higher living standards several (some) transformative ideas have been offered:

- Language of the ethnic minorities should be available as an optional programme of courses for all pupils living in areas with predominant ethnic population;
- Local authorities should support successful individuals to find an appropriate employment in order to show the links between educational attainment and improved life chances;
- School authorities should attract parents of deprived ethnic minorities in learning activities in order to enhance their understanding;
- Pupils from deprived ethnic minorities, having some learning difficulties should share some additional learning support that would enable better learning results and integration in the local surroundings. (in Mircea and Dorobanty, 2008)

The possibilities to appropriate housing and to obtain environmental support (good quality living conditions in well-located and sustainable environment) are fundamental for higher school participation and achievements in order to prevent the consequences of the magic circle influence, maximizing the provision of affordable and higher quality housing should remain the priority of EU and national policies.

Migrants

Exclusionary aspects

The *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families* (1990) states that migrant workers shall enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of the state in relation to housing, including social housing schemes and protection against exploitation in respect to rents. However in almost all EU countries migrants tend to be overrepresented among people facing housing hardship and exclusion. Recent immigrants are the most vulnerable group since they miss some important housing information and knowledge for easier integration. This deprivation in housing is structural,

institutional and individual. According to Mircea & Dorobantu (2008) the housing issue of migrants is a multidimensional problem related to the complex of social, economic, traditional, cultural and political factors.

Immigrant children and youth are particularly in undesirable situation, since growing up in inappropriate housing conditions affects access to education, attendance and achievements. Dropping out, absenteeism and participation in lower quality educational programmes are frequently registered among them. In achieving educational objectives immigrant children in almost all EU countries experience some legal limitations. Some illustrative examples come from Greece or Sweden, where immigrant children without documents can not enroll in schools. (in Mircea and Dorobantu, 2008)

Transformative aspects

The general European experiences, trends and examples of some good practices show that certain progress has been done. In respect to education the implementation of the multicultural education has a positive impact on wider social inclusion of students of immigrant origin and some immediate results, too. The immigrant participants of multicultural education feel that they are more accepted, easily express their opinions, attitudes and feelings and are more active in achieving the educational outputs. The multicultural education also enhances the consciousness of the majority population regarding the dimensions of multiculturalism, as a key component to preserve a heritage of multicultural society. Because of the complexity of the immigration issue, Collicelli (in Mircea and Dorobantu, 2008) offered a heuristic approach for overcoming the particular problems of migrant population. In defining the well being of immigrant population she proposed the interconnection among redefined indicators: material well-being, health, delinquency, community participation and education. Considering the educational issue, she suggests that special attention should be paid to: enrolment, choice of schools, drop out and expulsion rates, discrimination results, career advice and achieving higher education of immigrants and ethnic minority population.

Impact of exclusion of vulnerable groups from the educational system on their political participation

Background

The phenomenon of political participation relates to the extent to which citizens as a group are active in politics and society. It is closely connected with the concept of citizenship anticipating belonging to a specific political community. Participation in its economic and social life and expectation of its support in the case of need is an essential component of the concept. Modern dimension of citizenship denotes a form of social citizenship, which is based on the concept of human rights respect and equality, and explains the possibilities or boundaries of social inclusion/exclusion (Byrne, 1999).

Democratic political systems mostly favour egalitarian patterns of relations, which means that each individual should have more or less equal position and influence on the political and social issues (state of art). However, the reality is quite different indicating that there is a wide variation in the political influence experienced by citizens. Marginalized and vulnerable groups are often underrepresented, or not represented at all, in political structures and processes, which affects their quality of life (Sidney, Norman, Jae-on, 1979). Sometimes the opportunities for participation of some vulnerable groups (for example migrants) are legally limited (*Interim report on the impact of educational inclusion/exclusion on political participation of migrants and ethnic minorities*, 2008). This highlights the importance of promoting equality in the full range of human and political rights.

In regard to education there is an assumption of positive correlation between educational inclusion and the level of participation in the society. Education has an important impact on the process of democratization and human rights. According to the Commission of the European Communities (2006), the most important fields of political reality that are influenced by education are: the process of democratization, the development of civic institutions, human rights and political stability (Commision of the European Communities,

2006). There is also a strongly supported assumption that higher levels and quality of education increase the opportunity to develop the learning outcomes of civic competences such as participatory attitudes, social justice values, citizenship, at the same time more educated people are more informed about election procedures, candidates and outputs etc. (Hoskins et al., 2008). This raises a crucial question about the distribution of educational goods and access to them.

Youth, women and people with disabilities

Exclusionary aspects

In the document *Learning for Active Citizenship: A significant challenge in building a Europe of Knowledge* (2005) the European Commission stated that practicing active citizenship means empowering individuals, enabling them to feel comfortable in democratic culture, and feeling that they can make a difference in the community they live in. The importance of skills and competences is associated with active citizenship, since one needs to know how to participate. Schools have a significant role providing knowledge and skills for active citizenship through formal curriculum (information could be provided through specific school subjects), informal curriculum (involvement in the institutional governing processes, like elections and volunteering) and development of learning and teaching climate supporting certain political and civic reflections (Ojala, Kaalikosi, 2008). However, the attitudes, competences and patterns required for higher citizenship participation are not provided only through regular school participation but mainly informally, through socio-institutional and cultural processes (Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe ETGACE, 2003). All of them provide important opportunities to experience democratic processes and to acquire competences needed for active involvement in the society (team work, communicative and leadership skills) and sense for responsibility.

Educationally deprived groups are often excluded from the decision making processes. Ojala and Kaalikoski (2008) exposed two key reasons conditioning the exclusionary dimensions of insufficient knowledge and skills in the sphere of political participation. First is that less educated individuals are not enough informed about the political problems and issues,

democratic processes and actors, and the entire concept of the individual participation in the political life. Analyses in some countries (USA, GB) demonstrated that people having lower educational level feel inconvenient with procedures of the election processes (Milligan, 2004). **In order to improve the representation of all strata and social groups in the political life, higher transparency and better acquaintance with the political and social processes and events should be provided.**

The second reason explaining the exclusionary aspect of the political processes is the insufficient integration of democratic practices in regular educational systems. The predominant school practices illustrating this reason are: a lack of dialogue between students and teachers, insufficient practice of supporting discussion, exchange of opinions, expression of attitudes, tolerance, respect and justice in the classroom as well as inadequate teacher preparation.

Young people have been considered as politically marginalized population group whose interests have not been considered adequately. Dropping out from high school and early parenthood are additional factors hindering active citizenship of young people. Jenkins (2005) argues that young people being excluded from the educational system are particularly deprived in using political voice or taking part in petitions and boycotts. Some young people are simply ignorant of participating in political affairs, either as a result of lower interest and trust or inappropriate knowledge for higher social engagement.

A stereotype exists that women are less interested in politics. It is partly true due to the fact of underrepresentation of women in the official political bodies. The reasons for the underrepresentation of women in politics are complex. Rosenthal and Rosenthal (2003) argue that the gender gap in the political sphere is closing as far as the educational gap between men and women has been reduced. The opinion of these authors is that in politics the interests of men and women are differentiated, women are more often involved in social welfare issues and men in foreign policy issues. However, the fact that low educated women are underrepresented and less active in politics still exists.

Ojala and Kaalikosi (2008) link the lower political activity of people with disabilities with their lower educational level, level of employment, civil knowledge as well as insufficient

literacy skills. There is an assumption that overcoming the educational gap would have a positive impact on economic, political and social activities of this vulnerable group.

Transformative aspects

The assumption that **transformative aspects** of education in the field of policy are important for the development in this field, is illustrated by the national and international analyses supporting the correlation between education and political socialization (European Social Survey, 2006/2007, Milligan, Morretti and Oreopoulos, 2004). According to Ojala, Kaalikoski (2008) they prove social and individual outcomes of adult political development.

- Social outcomes are most feasible through voting experiences, political participation and community services. Hart and his colleagues (2007) found out that civic knowledge provided in schools is a precondition for latter voting, volunteering and becoming members of political parties. Beside civic knowledge and skills provided by schools, higher political interest and engagements of educated people are associated with their higher social trust. Hoskins et al. (2007) discovered that the probability of becoming a member of a political party or to take part in a protest activity increases each additional year of education. In addition to educational outputs, community service in adolescence is a good prediction to later civic engagement. Through volunteering young people become aware of developments and problems in their surrounding and gain a sense of responsibility for their achievements and overcoming.
- Individuals can easily make decisions and participate in society, when they are acquainted with the social matters and follow the entire political climate. More educated develop more trustful attitudes and they are more positive about the impact they could have on many questions raised in the civil sphere. At the same time they are more prepared to actively oppose to negative political expressions, like the use of violence and government repression (Hall, 1986)

The concept of social and political participation stresses the need to guarantee the civil, political, cultural and social rights, which are an imperative for promotion and protection of the vulnerable groups. The literature review showed that previously provided education,

knowledge and skills encourage different groups to claim participation and development as their right (Ojala, Kaalikoski, 2008).

In regard to young people the researchers showed that they are less likely to engage in political activities (e.g. to vote, to attend political meetings, to join political parties). However, participatory political culture involves more than just being involved in the aforementioned activities. In the document Political participation of youth –A remedy against marginalization and social exclusion it is emphasized that the wide variety of forms of participation presently existing should be promoted to reach many different young people. Special support should be given to action oriented participation of youth. Education, knowledge and skills gained through nonformal learning settings are essential in providing competences needed for enhancing the role of young people.

Improvements in education and economic development of women have increased their political participation in the developed countries. Women's social involvement is sometimes less visible due to their specific interest in politics (high interest in volunteering and less in international affairs). There are quite a lot of good practices and examples, particularly in developed countries, illustrating that women are becoming more active in the mainstream forms of politics (Lauglo, Qia, 2008). Political activity of women is associated with their higher knowledge. According to Dauphinais et al. (1992) the educational features and attitudes of typical feminist activists exceeds the significances of average American women. "They are highly educated, involved in labour force, concerned about women's rights and belong to more voluntary organizations" (Dauphinais in Ojala, Kaalikoski, 2008: 19).

Educational achievements and developments are desired in the process of political participation of people with disabilities, too. There are a few research analyses indicating the positive correlation of the two variables for this marginalized group. The existing fund of analytical indicators, showed that people with disabilities continue to face significant barriers that restrict their political participation. Closing or decreasing the disability gap should consider the advancement of the educational attainment of this vulnerable group, making space for higher social status and political outcomes. An important educational contribution for people with disabilities is, among the rest - enhancing argumentative writing skills, which are a precondition for their involvement in the political life (Ferretti et al., 2007)

Migrants and ethnic minorities

Exclusionary aspects

The status of migrants and ethnic minorities in the context of educational inclusion /exclusion and its impact on political participation is quite specific. Unlike the other vulnerable groups, whose political equality in the society is legally guaranteed, the equal status of migrants in the receiving countries is often limited. Discrimination to the access to political rights is common practice in the countries of EU and broader in which quite a lot of long term settled people without having a legal status remain. In spite of the fact that the concept of citizenship is evolving and is not basically limited to nationals, in many cases or circumstances, numerous migrant groups are still discriminated or not considered as full citizens. There are also other barriers (insufficient language skills and other social and cultural skills and competences) preventing them to become equal members and policy actors in communities or in the society as a whole (Wihtol de Wenden, 2004).

The bulk of the research endeavours in regard to education of minority groups is devoted to inclusionary aspects into the labor market. There is a deficit of literature dealing with immediate interconnection of political participation and educational attainment of ethnic minority and migrant groups, pointing to the marginality of this topic within the European political landscape. Immigrants who are not naturalized and refugees are particularly deprived in this respect.

Although political participation has never been conditioned by educational attainment, the constrains in language skills and the lack of knowledge on the predominant cultural, social and political processes appear to be a barrier to political participation (Geyer, 2007). That is why Martiniello (2005) views educational attainment and higher literacy level as an argument supporting the active dimension of citizenship.

In regard to the group of migrants and ethnic minorities there is now clear interrelation between educational attainment and policy issues, which appear to be more dependent upon other socio-economic and normative factors.

Atger (2008) gave an evidence asserting that exclusion from the education system does not always prevent political participation, showing that migrants and ethnic minorities who have been excluded from the host countries educational system may be very active politically. Very illustrative is the example of North African migrants in France in 1990s. Despite having a low level of education they participate in a series of protestation acts expressing their specific claims in respect to national politics of the countries they were living in (Blane-Chaleard, 2006). The next example of high political activity of low educated is the one of the leaders of the community based Mexican organizations in New England. Montero-Sieburth (2007) discovered that only one third of the leaders continued their studies beyond bachelor degree. The low educational rate did not prevent them to determine some important issues like promotion of social, civic and cultural elements.

There are also other examples expressing the exclusionary aspects of the migrants, in the political life. Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw (2006) analyzed the activities of Turkish-origin minorities in the civil and political sphere in Belgian. They discovered that despite of their high involvement in the civil processes, they have been underrepresented in the political life. Their exclusion from the decision making in this country was caused by legal and not educational limits. All these examples show that in the improvement of the political status of migrant and ethnic minority groups education is not the predominant determining factor but the regulation of their legal status. Other aspects influencing minorities' and migrants' political engagements are length of residence, the circumstances which brought them to the country (Barreto, 2003), their political ideas and values, their acquaintedness with political system and institutions and the feeling of belonging to the society (Martiniello, 2005). Providing knowledge and skills of these groups is viewed as an additional supportive factor in this respect.

Transformative aspects

In regard to transformative components Atger (2008) selected a group of authors arguing that education is a powerful agent to promote democracy providing immigrants and ethnic minorities with tools for socialization and political activity. Schiffauer (2004) states that schools should be a key component of state building and the citizenship formation. In this context one should not neglect that the lack of education can be viewed as a legal barrier for requiring citizenship.

In measuring the political participation of migrants and minority groups Adamson (2006) discovered strong correlation between its rate and length of education. According to Jacobs (2006), the significant impact that the education has on political participation is due to its role in enhancing language and citizen skills, which are essential inclusionary elements. Beside schools and other educational institutions language competences can be supplemented by other non-formal and informal learning activities, such as reading newspapers, following the political events in the media or being active in religious institutions.

According to Swynggedouw (2007) and Garcia (1987) the level of political inclusion of migrants is conditioned on whether they attended their regular education in the countries of origin or in the countries of residence. Immigrants who have received education in the host country are less tied to their home politics and have been better informed about the political events in the host country, which is often the reason for higher civil (political) activity. Higher political participation corresponds to inclusion of immigrants and minorities in civil initiatives in the receiving countries as well. Fennema (2003) thinks that being a member of voluntary association creates social trust and self-confidence. However, it should not be disregarded that immigrants and ethnic minority actors in civil initiatives have higher educational level in comparison with those who are not members.

In order to make room for ethnic minorities and migrants and to reduce inequalities of representation in the political landscape **it is important to analyse civic and educational possibilities for providing competences for citizenship and political participation at school and public spaces. At the same time the role of education for creating a culture of tolerance for the political involvement of this population and more openness of politics and media to this matter should be guaranteed.**

Discussion and conclusion

There is no doubt that the successful performance of the concept and policies of knowledge based society is an unavoidable condition for promoting employment, economic prosperity, democracy and social cohesion. There are plenty of documents at European and broader international level that refer to the relevance of this concept and guide the provisions for a knowledge based society. Some of them are more general (*A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000), *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001), *Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning* (2002)) providing common principles of the concept in the society; the others are more specific assuring the foundations for its progress in individual fields, such as economic development, employment, educational, social policy, health or regional development. Following the EU policy directions on knowledge based society, EU member states adopted several documents, measures and reforms to make the national strategies working for the implementation of its key principles.

As it was highlighted in the introductory part, knowledge based society could be achieved only if all citizens are supported to permanently update their knowledge and skills and to think, act and be involved in the everyday processes. Our analysis, relying upon literature review, has shown that in reality no country has truly reached the equity and equality in education among all its citizens. Eurostat data (2005) showed that those most in need of expanding their knowledge and skills received the least education. International adult literacy survey, 2001 indicated that in all European countries there are several population categories, that do not achieve the lowest literacy level (IALS 3), desired for the functioning in the knowledge based society.

The vulnerable groups (youth, women, people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities) are among those most excluded from the educational and learning processes. In the literature review, we identified several **exclusionary dimensions** regarding the education and training that prevent each vulnerable group to become an equal member of the knowledge based society.

In the **labour market** one can notice a clear connection between educational exclusion, expressed either through low educational level and achievements or low rate of educational participation and low employment opportunities, CREA, 2008. From the individual's point of view unsatisfactory education increases possibilities to become unemployed, but also affects the quality of work and possibilities for job promotion. The employers feel the unfavorable output of educational exclusion on low productivity and work quality. In the economy and society several undesired consequences of unemployment, difficulties in economic rise and productivity are reflected as well. Possessing knowledge and skills has also value itself, which can not be measured through pure labour market achievements.

Also in the sphere of **health care** the exclusionary dimensions are more often revealed by those reporting lower educational achievements. Physical, psychological problems, lower life expectancy and lower well being are in average common to those being less educated. The findings of this report indicate that the rates of mortality and poorer self assessment were substantially higher in groups of lower educational and socio-economic status (Ivančič, Mirčeva, Vrečer, 2008).

The **housing and housing provision issues** are not an exception in this sense. The authors of the interim report 'Main results from the literature review on impact of education in terms of housing opportunities for vulnerable group' (Campani et al. 2008, p.5) point out that *“different housing conditions have been perceived both as the cause and/or the consequence of low educational attainment, related to social and economic deprived background”*.

In regard to **political participation** there is evidence that educational exclusion in the population leads to political ignorance and civic isolation. Particularly people from the vulnerable groups are absent from the democratic dialogue (Ojala, Kaalikosi, 2008). Nevertheless this correlation is not significant for all marginalised groups in the society. Atger (2008) speaks that the absence of education was rarely considered as an exclusionary factor from political participation of some migrant groups.

We can summarise that the low socio-economic background and educational deficiency are correlated in various sectors of society. It is also indicative that major geographic, geopolitical and socio-group varieties in the European area and vulnerability of specific social groups are

often linked to significant environmental, economic, mental and cultural factors. The studied vulnerable groups are particularly affected by the combination of these variables, which make their inclusion and position in different spheres of the society more difficult. Of course, not all vulnerable groups are equally affected in the subsystems under research. For example, people with disabilities and young people are particularly absent from the public sphere and are rarely involved in the democratic dialogue. People with disabilities also face explicit difficulties, while acquiring appropriate accommodation. Migrants are the most marginalised in respect to employment opportunities in the labour market. However, the reasons for their absenteeism in various parts of the society are not always accompanied by lower education achievements and vulnerability, but by unsettled legal status in the host countries. In addition to the analysed vulnerable groups, the literature review highlighted also the position of some other groups that have been particularly marginalised, such as: children of single parents, lonely elderly, long term unemployed, those working in high risk occupations and refugees. Their position and status are particularly deprived in the Eastern European countries. (Göran and Whitehead, 2007)

The European knowledge based society could be built up only when the knowledge is created, shared and used as a primary production resource and directed to the prosperity and well being of all its inhabitants. In respect of the vulnerable groups the implementation of this concept imposes certain measures, activities, initiatives that might enhance the process of social inclusion. The overall assessment of conceptual, analytical and empirical findings was supported by large fund of evidence, either more general or specific, indicating the positive impact of education in enhancing the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The growing importance of the contribution of skilled labour in the knowledge based society signifies the fundamental shift from the industrial developmental phase, in which mechanical technology increased demands for unskilled labour. Under such circumstances education, training and acquiring higher literacy level of the active population increased job opportunities and access to higher quality, stable and durable jobs as well as to more desired structure of wages. Since many people and vulnerable groups are excluded from the learning opportunities, and because providing appropriate knowledge and skills are a prerequisite for full participation in knowledge based society, assuring the right to equal educational opportunities for all the members of that society should be a challenge. For the needs of the labour market, some specific advantages of the vulnerable groups (solving some

unconventional problems, readiness to absorb new ideas, possessing specific skills), should be considered and developed. Through some positive practices of some successful organisations (Mondragon and Microsoft) CREA (2008) illustrated that education can be conceptualised in such a way which fosters democracy, diversity and success which are in line with the business organisation and the strategies of the enterprises.

Report 4 reveals that education is protective of health, more years of schooling produces more health and reduces the mortality rate (Elo and Preston in Deaton, 2003). People, who are more acquainted with health issues, are more likely to initiate preventive behaviours. Nunn, Crockett, Williams (1978) and Hyman et al. (1976) (in Ivančič, Mirčeva, Vrečer, 2008) found out that higher educated people think more logically and rationally, more easily analyse and solve problems and have more control over the conditions of their life. But education has also an indirect influence on health. Namely, it is an important mechanism for improving the social and economic status of vulnerable groups, which is often a primary cause of their health problems (Ross and Wu, 1995, Ross and Mirowsky, 1999). In order to improve the potential for better health it must be proved that they have an equal access to the educational resources.

Mircea and Dorobantu (2008) state that appropriate housing and supportive living environment complement the efforts for better educational achievements. Nevertheless, the authors stressed that the relation between the two variables was not direct but through the variable poverty. They illustrated that access to education of migrants and ethnic minorities is not so much conditioned by their housing but socio-economic status and linguistic knowledge. Therefore all the factors that contribute to the improvement of the socioeconomic position of the vulnerable groups indirectly contribute to their better housing and living conditions.

Campani et al. (2008) suggested that several aspects regarding the housing possibilities, improve the inclusion and the social cohesion of vulnerable groups. Since the vulnerable groups have bigger problems in access to the housing market, two important initiatives of the United Nations (2001) have been proposed. According to the first, the local policies should enable low economically situated people to access bank loan. The second suggested policies of social housing, avoiding the concentration on marginalised groups in some areas as far as possible. Also an important recommendation coming from the urban sociologists is the promotion of the mixed housing policy and foundation of the integrated schools, designed to

prevent the concentration of poorest population strata living in the same neighbourhood and attending segregate educational institutions. Also some additional educational programmes (Independent living programmes) are important for social inclusion of the vulnerable groups.

Knowledge based society should have a greater potential to facilitate higher level of political participation, too. Ojala and Kaalikoski (2008) argue that higher education is strongly related to active citizenship through selecting more competent leaders, understanding the voting issues and procedures, paying higher attention to public affairs and higher engagements against inequalities and not responding to human rights. In creating the democratic values schools as institutions are important places where the people can experience the democratic processes through the school curriculum and the learning and teaching climate. Additional citizenship education is important as well. Since the vulnerable groups, especially young people and people with disabilities, express lower levels of political interests, it is important to stimulate their activity particularly in the period of regular education.

The reasons for the exclusion of migrants in the political processes are quite different. The low rates of political participation of migrants and ethnic minorities are as a rule, not so much conditioned by certain level of educational exclusion but more to legal barriers preventing them to have access to citizenship. In order to increase the inclusion of migrants into the society Atger (2008) exposed two concepts. The first is the **identificational dimension** of migrants in the host country through the legal regulation of their rights and the second is the **structural dimension** defined by social and economical denomination and including the education as well. The author stresses that these two dimensions should not be interconnected and civil activity should not be conditioned by certain literacy or educational level and knowledge competences.

EU countries have achieved a long chain of favourable results in the development of the knowledge as a prerequisite for higher social inclusion. Nevertheless, this concept will be illusionary if it is not accessible to all its members.

It is obvious from the literature reviewed that educational inclusion contributes towards higher level of employment, better health status, housing opportunities, more activities in the political life and in general higher quality of life. In this respect it particularly improves the inferior status of the vulnerable groups in different areas of the society. **That is why**

higher investment in education is regarded as financial benefit leading to a reduction in social expenditures.

The EU and international institutions have prepared and adopted quite a lot of documents, strategies, action plans, which contribute to higher integration of the vulnerable groups in different parts of the society. However, socially constructed inequalities are essential in determining whether these groups will become able to realize their opportunities for achieving higher quality of life and wellbeing. The notion of vulnerability and marginalization is a complex issue and better output and efficiency might be achieved only if educational systems and the entire living environment do not consider just their specifics, but also their general effects in equality and social cohesion.

In the light of progress and the implementation of the knowledge based society for all the citizens and groups in the society it is necessary to harmonise or adapt the national legislation, organisation, funding and educational and learning practices implementing the leading trends in the EU community and broader. In the process of adaptation and harmonisation the participation of all the partners at local, regional and national level should be encouraged, as well as the participation in NGO's and the representation of the all vulnerable and marginalised groups in the countries.

The last but not least of the important factors in this respect is the promotion of some good practices and projects aimed at motivating the vulnerable groups which are particularly hard to reach, identifying key factors for their reintegration into the labour market and the society and enhancing their self esteem.

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