

BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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ABSTRACT:

THE GENERAL TREND WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION, IS TO DIRECT THE ATTENTION TO A PERSON'S STATUS ON THE LABOR MARKET. IT IS TRUE THAT THE EXCLUSION FROM THE LABOR MARKET HAS EFFECTS ON SEVERAL PLANS: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION, HOUSING, LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, SOCIALIZATION, BUT JUST THE EFFECTS OF THIS DISCRIMINATION ARE THOSE THAT CONFER "POWER" OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION. WE CONTINUE TO RESEARCH THE SUBJECT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION BECAUSE, DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF NATIONAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING EXCLUSION, THIS PHENOMENON STILL PERSISTS.

WE CONSIDER THAT GREATER FOCUS IS ONLY ON SOME OF THE AREAS OF EXISTING NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS, SUCH AS QUALIFICATION / REQUALIFICATION OF PERSONS. IN PRACTICE, WE FIND SEVERAL PROJECTS / INITIATIVES THAT HAVE AS PURPOSE THE QUALIFICATION / REQUALIFICATION OF PERSONS BELONGING TO VULNERABLE GROUPS, AND FAR LESS INITIATIVES IN TERMS OF SCHOOLING / ADULT LITERACY. WITHOUT FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, AS IN THE CASE OF QUALIFICATION / REQUALIFICATION COURSES, PROGRAMS LIKE "THE SECOND CHANCE", ARE SOMETIMES DOOMED TO FAILURE, STILL FROM INCIPIENT PHASE. IN ORDER TO COMBAT EFFECTIVELY THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION, WE MUST IDENTIFY THE AREAS IN WHICH IS NEEDED THE CHANGE OR THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORKING METHODS, OR THE VERY AREAS NEEDED TO BE ADDRESSED, IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS / INITIATIVES IN AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY.

KEY WORDS: SOCIAL EXCLUSION, LABOR MARKET, NATIONAL STRATEGIES, NATIONAL PLANS

INTRODUCTION

Why social exclusion and why not housing discrimination, educational discrimination, discrimination in health care? The phenomenon of social exclusion can be quantified, we consider, in the cumulative effects that these situations of discrimination have. Educational discrimination, is not just about the lack of access to education, its effects are going up to the absence of adequate housing. We consider that the process of social exclusion represents a vicious circle of processes discriminatory, which can be represented as follows: the lack of identity documents - impossibility to access to education / qualification - lack of a

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job - lack of access to medical services - lack of access to housing - lack of proper diet - decrease of the socialization - the emergence of the phenomenon of social uselessness. We do not consider this representation a complete one, which could cover all affected areas, but were represented some of the most significant.

We could look at these shortcomings as the consequences of the lack of a job, and so we could understand why the emphasis in the programs, projects falls on training / retraining / employment section. But not all projects have as objective employment, which leads to the inefficiency of the programs and projects. Qualification / requalification does not guarantee employment, what we can conclude that such programs are not effective, even if we refer to the implementation of social inclusion measures or at the programs to reduce poverty. Illiteracy, school non-participation and non-completion of compulsory education, represents phenomenons that the Roma population face. Being confronted with this phenomenon, the subsequent difficulties encountered in accessing a job have a justifying base of the problems faced, namely lack of qualifications or insufficient qualifications. And from here, we raise the question on insufficient emphasizing of solving the problems as the lack of a job and the effectiveness of this method, in the reduction or eradication of social exclusion.

1. SOCIAL EXCLUSION, FROM ECONOMIC EXCLUSION TO EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION

When we talk about social exclusion, adjacent to the concept of income, we also refer to networks and prospects and opportunities in life. Is considered to be a very modern problem, and which, compared to material poverty is more harmful to the individual, more damaging to self-esteem more corrosive to society as a whole, and more likely to be passed on from generation to generation. Social exclusion, by incorporating of a broader understanding of social processes and their consequences, it expands beyond the concepts of poverty and deprivation. Deprivation can exist separately from the concept of poverty by restricting the access to certain goods or services, while poverty can be both a cause and a consequence². The concept of social exclusion incorporates more than strictly financial side of the concept of poverty, "social" means more than the economic side, although the financial shortages is causing limited access to other areas. Here we can add the social relationships that can occur at school, at work, in the social relations / leisure.

Social exclusion is a concept partly derived from, and overlaps with several other constructs, particularly from poverty and deprivation. Poverty was considered to be the lack of a minimum income required to meet basic human needs. The World Bank has established poverty rates at a "dollar a day" and "two dollars a day" as a measurement standardized system of poverty, in its calculation being used the consumption of a basic package of goods and services, tailored to purchasing power parity of various countries³. Poverty rate per capita for Romania, currently set by the World Bank, is \$ 1.90 per day⁴. The consumption of "one dollar a day" of subsistence sustains life at a minimal level, but is not considered a viable long-term solution; the consumption of "two dollars a day" can support life by adapting other essential basic needs, such as land, farm tools, and part of access to education and health; although it remains at a level associated with relatively low life expectancy and high infant mortality and maternal⁵. The guaranteed minimum income in Romania, for a single person is

²Ronald Labonté et al., *Indicators of Social Exclusion and Inclusion: A Critical and Comparative Analysis of the Literature* (Ottawa, ÉL Exchange Working Paper Series, 2011), 19.

³ Ronald Labonté et al., *Indicators of Social Exclusion and Inclusion*, 14.

⁴ The World Bank, Country Dashboard, available at: <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/ROM>, accessed on 22.06.2016.

⁵Ronald Labonté et al., *Indicators of Social Exclusion and Inclusion*, 14.

142 lei / month⁶, equivalent to \$ 35.37 / month or \$ 1.60 / day⁷, this income is located somewhere in the middle of the thresholds "a dollar a day "and" two dollars a day " does not represent a viable solution in the long term, however, many persons, and it is believed that most of the beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income are Roma population, become dependent as source of income for long periods of time. Another negative point is the lack of opportunities for training / retraining, their exclusion from the labor market is maintained, in the absence of abilities and knowledge required in accessing jobs. The lack of an income to ensure a decent living, the lack of opportunity for socializing, represents contributory elements to the installation of social exclusion phenomenon among the beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income.

Ever since the emergence of the concept of relative poverty was highlighted the idea of fully participate in the society in which individuals live, in social, economic, political, cultural, recreational plan, but the indicators of income are those upon whom it is directed attention regarding the study of poverty. A deeper analysis of the effects of poverty, the lack of freedoms and violation of some rights, due to belonging to a particular group, to whom the rights and freedoms are violated, led, we consider, at the emergence of the concept of social exclusion.

In 1989, the negative effects, affecting the lives of a growing number of people, the phenomenon of social exclusion drew the attention of the European Commission, which adopted a resolution to fight "social exclusion" and the adoption of "integration". Within a short time this term of social exclusion has replaced, or at least threatened to replace as the dominant concept, the concept of poverty in the development and social policy speech in Europe. The spread on a large scale of the phenomenon of social exclusion, the analyzes of its effects, prompted the European Commission to "define social exclusion primarily in relation to the social rights of citizens", underlining the idea that every citizen has the right to a certain standard basic life and the right to participate in major professional and social institutions of society - employment, housing, healthcare, education etc. Social exclusion occurs when the citizens suffer from disadvantages and are unable to provide these social rights⁸. For a society to function, it is necessary that the components sectors, the economic one, the educational, the medical, the occupational, to provide equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in the society's life. Obstruction of access to one of the components sectors of society, has as well repercussions in the rest of the sectors, from financial repercussions, to the ones of psychological nature, affecting both the person and his family.

High prevalence of lack of employment and professional inactivity is the most important contributor to the persistence of widespread social exclusion. The effects caused by the lack of a job, beyond the financial and the actual loss of employment can be useful analyzed using idea of social exclusion.

The lack of professional activity contributes to the deterioration of professional abilities, loss of cognitive abilities due to lack of confidence and lack of control, determining the installation of a sub-qualification phenomenon, the risk of an exclusion from the labor market being higher because of these valoric de-appreciations. The exclusion from social relationships, from the community life, is another effect of the lack of a job, at the

⁶Law no. 416 din 18 iulie 2001 (updated) on guaranteed minimum income, published in Official Gazette no. 401 of 20 July 2001.

⁷ Romanian National Bank dollar exchange rate, available at <http://www.cursvalutarbnr.org/curs-dollar.html>, accessed on 22.06.2016.

⁸Rajendra Pradhan, *Understanding Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion in the Nepalese Context: Some Preliminary Remarks*, (Paper presented at the workshop "Understanding Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Theories, Methodologies and Data", Kathmandu, June 3, 2006, organized by Social Science Baha and the Social Inclusion Research Fund Secretariat/SNV), 3-6.

psychological level are installed feelings of insecurity, lack of self confidence, in their own abilities, in the system that does not offer opportunities to lead a decent life, imbalance in family life and in social relationships, by setting up a sense of dependency continues from others, from the insured income, where there is unemployment benefits, feelings that are sometimes taken to extremes, up to suicide, these relational failures lead to the installation the phenomenon of social exclusion, exclusion which can lead to privations in daily life⁹.

Educational exclusion can be both a cause and an effect of exclusion from the labor market. As a cause of the exclusion from the labor market, educational exclusion causes lack of qualifications, hindering the process of qualification / retraining, and subsequent hindering of obtaining a job, and here we refer to a stable job, with a contract work, and we do not mean at the day laborers works, where qualification is not required. As an effect of exclusion from the labor market, social exclusion is due to lack of financial support to support access to education. Practically it becomes a vicious circle, of cause and effect, but not being single causes for social exclusion. Since 1992 the field of education represented a stringency problem, the study carried out in that period showed a weak participation of Roma children at the educational process¹⁰. We can deduce that those children participating in the study, now adults are most likely socially excluded with little or no chance of integrating in the labor market. Educational exclusion brings the exclusion from social relations and then the exclusion from community life and by the lack of a circle of knowledge to socialization, exclusion also applies to labor market exclusion.

The two types of exclusion, the educational exclusion and exclusion from the labor market are not the only determinants of social exclusion, our goal is to emphasize the idea that, solving or trying to solve the lack of a job, without being solved one of the most important causes, such as lack of education, the efforts are doomed to failure.

2. WHAT DO WE CHOOSE FIRST, QUALIFICATION PROGRAMS OR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS?

The measures adopted at EU level have been transposed into normative acts at national level. Poverty, social inclusion, the socio - economics gaps between the Roma population and the rest of the citizens, labor market inclusion of the Roma minority, improving access to all levels of education, supporting farmers specific activities, the economic and social cohesion in order to promote social inclusion, represents some of the areas for which measures have been adopted by national legislation in the process of social inclusion and combating social exclusion.

At the national level the Romanian Government took a number of legislative initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, in short, the fight against social exclusion. We are not going to detail these laws exhaustively, being available to the general public, but we will pursue which were their objectives and the current situation of the Roma population.

To achieve the purpose of the 2001-2010 period Strategy for improving the situation of Roma, inclusion measures have been established in ten sectorial areas: Administration and Community Development; Housing; Social security; Health; Economic; Justice and public order; Child protection; Education; Culture and Cults; Communication and civic participation¹¹. Lack of an budget allocations have hampered the implementation of the

⁹Amartya Sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny*, (Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2000) 18 – 22.

¹⁰Cătălin Zamfir, Marin Preda coordinators: *Romii în România* (București: Expert, 2002), 291-292.

¹¹ *Decision no. 430 of 25 April 2001 on the approval of Romania's Government Strategy for improving the Roma situation*, published in the Official Gazette no. 252 of May 16, 2001.

measures provided in these areas. As a positive result of the implementation of Strategy measures, was the creation of posts at central, county and local level, where they were employed Roma persons¹², where salary funds were allocated. In 2006, the Strategy has undergone a change by reducing to six of the structural areas, being maintained their content, being specified the establishment of budgetary resources from the budget of responsible institutions for implementation and realization of the measures of the Strategy¹³.

In 2002, the Romanian Government approves by Decision no. 829 the National Plan against poverty and promoting social inclusion, having a distinct chapter intended for the Roma (Chapter 14). The strategic objectives were aimed at solving the problems faced by the Roma communities regarding: solving the lack of legal identity, access to reproductive health services, insuring the access to a minimal package of health care services, increasing school attendance of children from Roma population, stimulating employment of the Roma population into the formal economy, juridical regulation of housing / land situations without title deeds, fighting resolutely all forms of discrimination against Roma and promotion of a collective supportive attitude, rehabilitating the collective self and public image of population Roma¹⁴.

In 2003, Romania joined together with 8 other states from Central and Eastern Europe, the international initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (the Decade). The Decade is designed as an political commitment assumed at international level by governments of nine countries in the region (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Hungary). Their common goal is to reduce significantly, during ten years, social and economic gaps which separate the Roma population from the rest of the citizens, by promoting active policies for social inclusion of Roma, oriented towards four priority areas - education, health, jobs and housing in parallel with the transverse domains - the fight against poverty, discrimination and gender inequality, included in an action plan of each country. In terms of employment, the central goal proposed by the Romanian Government is to increase the number of Roma persons (becoming economically active) to be officially employed or run their own businesses¹⁵.

In 2005, the Romanian Government and the European Commission signed the cooperation agreement on the Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum (JIM), elaborated in accordance with the Accession Partnership, for the period 2005-2010. As regards of the Roma, the main challenges of JIM make reference to poverty and social exclusion approach, by completing the implementation of Government Strategy and in particular to the elimination of cases of people without identity papers, supporting training and employment, education, healthcare, infrastructure development programs and housing, and continuing the fight against discrimination. Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum (2005) provides measures to support for the development and the labor market inclusion of the Roma minority: the development of economic opportunities and create jobs salary; improving access to all levels of education, supplemented by the access to minimum educational level for younger generations; identification and allocation of agricultural land in rural areas and land for

¹² 2003 Regular Report on progress achieved by Romania towards accession Available at www.anr.gov.ro/docs/rapoarte/Raport_periodic_privind_progresele_Romaniei_pe_calea_aderarii_183.pdf, accessed on 21.05.2016.

¹³ Decision no. 522 of 19 April 2006 amending and supplementing Government Decision no. 430/2001 on the approval of Romania's Government Strategy for improving the Roma situation, published in the Official Gazette no. 371 28 April 2006.

¹⁴ Decision no. 829 of 31 July 2002 on approval of the National Anti-Poverty Plan and Social Inclusion, published in Official Gazette no. 662 of 6 September 2002 Cap. 14.

¹⁵ Roma Inclusion Barometer, Open Society Foundation, (Bucharest, 2007).

housing construction in traditional or modern system; supporting the activities with farmer specific by providing low-interest loans and other forms of support¹⁶.

In 2005 have began the preparations for drafting of the National Development Plan, for the period 2007-2013 (NDP). NDP is the strategic planning document and multiannual financial programming, which aims to guide and stimulate by 2013, economic and social development of Romania, towards the goal of achieving economic and social cohesion. NDP provides the responsible structures at national, regional and sectoral level, and a national mechanism to promote social inclusion in Romania, formed by Government Decision no. 1217/2006. The Roma community represents one of the vulnerable groups to whom they are addressed explicit (Axis 6) and implicit measures¹⁷.

Romania's Government Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012 - 2020, is experiencing financial difficulties in terms of implementation of the measures, as well as in case of the Strategy for the period 2001-2010¹⁸.

We can observe how, in all documents adopted by Government of Romania, the focus is on the economic side, on the development of this sector, stimulating and increasing employment in the formal economy, support for the development and labor market inclusion of the Roma minority. We do not wish to contest the fact that this would not be a viable solution in the "struggle against" social exclusion. We would like, however, to emphasize the need for an educational training first, before the forming professional direct. Also in this case, the access to professional trainings is conditioned by the access to educational training, as access to type of training.

Currently we can find people without identification documents, without access to minimum income guarantee system due to the lack of such acts, illiteracy among children and adults, which prevents access to a professional qualification to a stable job. Following the adoption of these measures of the Romania's Government, we could discuss in terms of the number of people affected, not of the disappearance of the difficulties faced by the Roma population. Lack of income in the family, a large number of members, leads the family in a state of severe poverty, in support of which the local authority may come more often by granting social benefits consisting of guaranteed minimum income and family support allowance, for the latter, with the condition that none of the children must not have repeated the school year or has dropped out of a form of compulsory education. We can see how the "school is conditioning' the successes or the alternative to a life without severe shortages.

CONCLUSION

The measures adopted so far have mainly been directed towards the employment segment, but without the expected results, taking into account the large number of people which still faced with the phenomenon of social exclusion and severe poverty. The years of practice in implementing the measures of reducing poverty, social inclusion and fight against social exclusion, it should serve us as a model of good practice or failure. We consider to be necessary the implementation of some projects and integrated measures encompassing both educational field as well as that of the labor market, also the adaptation to the labor market requirements which is in a continuous change, changing the educational offer, and new ways of attracting towards the educational system.

¹⁶ Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum, available at:

http://www.mmuncii.ro/pub/imagemanager/images/file/Domenii/Incluziune%20si%20asistenta%20sociala/Proiecte_cu_finatare_externa/2%20-%20JIM_Romania.pdf, accessed on 27.05.2016

¹⁷ *National Development Plan for the period 2007-2013*, the Government of Romania, (Bucharest, 2005).

¹⁸ *Decision no. 1221 of 14 December 2011 on the approval of Romania's Government Strategy for inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012-2020*, published in the Official Gazette no. 6 of January 4, 2012.

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