

Faculty of Social Studies University of Ostrava



**POPULATION GROUPS AT RISK  
OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

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# POPULATION GROUPS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Imagine: A person is dismissed from work because of the closure of an industrial plant. As a result of his unemployment, disagreements in his partner life are deepening, resulting in the divorce. This human is leaving the flat so that the partner with children can live there. He's leaving for the lodging house.

Or: In a partnership, domestic violence occurs. After even the children become witnesses, the victim decides to leave the violent relationship. However, he/she does not have enough funds or the support of his/her wider family. So, he / she finds him /herself with the children in the asylum house.

In our lives, we face many difficult situations that can result in a threat of social exclusion. As part of its research, the Faculty of Social Studies analyzes the causes and impacts of the social exclusion and seeks the solutions enabling the marginalized people to reintegrate back into the society.

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## POPULATION GROUPS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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A social exclusion, a cohesion of society, a multidimensional phenomenon, a multidisciplinary approach, a social inclusion... are you also confused? OK, so from the beginning. What life situations does it involve and who is affected?

The research covers two main lines: the people excluded from housing and the people at risk of social exclusion mainly due to their age or health. On one hand, a difficult housing situation, and on the other hand the seniors, minors or people with health disabilities at difficult moments of their lives. However, there is no strict dividing border between these two areas. The lines mutually overlap, e.g. in case of threatened children and their families due to the insufficient parental competences, the situation of their exclusion from the normal form of housing can happen at the same time.

*“The overarching theme is, therefore, the social elimination, by another name, the exclusion. But it is also about inclusion, i.e. the social integration of individuals, groups, communities and their including into the society. Preventing social exclusion or supporting social inclusion are two sides of the same coin. On one hand, the person is for some reason excluded from the social system, social networks, and bindings, and on the other hand, the social work through its interventions is supporting his / her inclusion,”* doc. Mgr. Soňa Vávrová, Ph.D., research team leader, explains. As an inclusion, we can consider also a situation where we contribute to maintaining the life of elderly people, dependent on the help of others, at home in their natural social environment, and where we prevent their institutionalization in residential social services,

such as the homes for seniors. This can also be done by newly developed assistive technologies, which, for example, can be used to call an assistant using a pager in case of need.

The social work has been changing over the decades, too. Currently, we can face also the e-exclusion in practice. Because of poverty, some families with children may not always have access to information and communication technologies, which are, however, a part of everyday life now. These children then do not have comparable conditions as their peers, e.g. they are less involved in the functioning in the virtual world, and therefore they can be excluded from peer groups. The impact of new technologies on social work interventions is a new topic within the main research direction, that is dealt also by doctoral students in their dissertations.

*“With the social work we do not flatten the child’s social status, it is not about having the most modern phone model for the child. But the obstacle arises in the cases when the school itself is giving those tasks that require the pupils to use the Internet or other new technologies. Today, electronic pupil’s record books are used at many schools, which has an impact on parents again. If the family is at risk of poverty and does not have the permanent access to the Internet, it may also be a problem to make an appointment with a doctor or at authorities that often operate through electronic communication,”* doc. Vávrová adds.

The social exclusion from society can, therefore, take different forms and may not always have one reason. Being a person with a health disorder does not necessarily mean that he/she is being excluded from society. But if there are more reasons, his/her family does not provide him/her with a supportive social network, he/she has no social services contracted to help him/her to compensate his/her handicap, then for such a person, it is more difficult to overcome his/her disadvantage. In all those cases, the research team effort is to contribute by the results of its activities to the integration into society’s daily life. Exclusion is a wide term that is going across the society in many areas.

## PROJECTS AND GRANTS

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### **The Social Adjustment of Homeless Children with the Experience of Domestic Violence in the city of Ostrava**

Research leader: doc. Mgr. Soňa Vávrová, Ph.D.

This project, supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (GACR), is the most important for the research direction because it connects both areas of the research and links precisely to the main topic. Ostrava, in the frame of the Czech Republic, has the highest number of people excluded from housing, including children. The researchers focused on children aged 8 to 15 living in housing distress (e.g. in asylum houses and in lodging houses) and developed a tool (inventory) to measure their social adjustment rate. The non-standard form of housing has an impact on their future life situation and social adaptation at school as well as among their peers. Such children also often experience domestic violence, either as participants or witnesses.

Above the frame of the project contents, the research team has created a comic book as a support tool for social workers and their work with children during talking with them about how they are feeling in different social situations. And, to prevent the stigmatization deepening, the researchers use the international name of „social adjusting“ instead of „adaptation“ in their professional outputs. That one, unlike the Czech terminology, does not evoke a possible “non-adaptation”.

### **How does such research work?**

The research such as the mentioned project of the social adaptation of homeless children, contains both a qualitative and a quantitative part. The researchers collected a batch of questionnaires from all over the Czech Republic, evaluated them and validated the measuring tool. Based on the analysis, they identified fourteen factors influencing the social adjustment of children. Subsequently, they began to collect the data in the Ostrava city. In the meantime, they conducted a robust qualitative survey based on observations and statements of children, their parents and social workers who have experience in supporting the threatened families in non-standard forms of housing. In Ostrava, mainly lodging houses, asylum houses, and so-called socially excluded localities represent a problem there. The research team cannot do their job without going to these areas, so the experts must have experience in social work and they should know how to work with the target group. The research design is flexible, and the researcher must be able to respond to the running changes. When the number of older children living in asylum houses was higher than the number of the younger ones, the age limit had to be shifted in the whole research to avoid unnecessary discarding of large amount of the information needed. The obtained qualitative and quantitative data are the basis for the creation of a mathematical-computer model that can be used as a predictive one in the future. The researchers from FSS and from the Institute for Research and Applications of Fuzzy Modelling of the UO cooperate on its creation.

## The Research and Development of Support Networks and Information Systems for Informal Carers for Persons after Stroke

Research leader: doc. Mgr. Lenka Krhutová, Ph.D.

Other important applied research projects include the following ones supported by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TACR). One of them is the research and development of support networks and information systems for the informal carers for persons after stroke; this project is being solved in cooperation with VSB-TUO.

What can we imagine by the term informal carer? The person who is dependent on the care of the other person may receive the care contribution according to the degree of dependence, which has four degrees and which is regulated by the Social Services Act. That person receives an amount for which either he/she buys social services from the organization or he/she can give a part of that amount to the family member taking care of him. And just this family member is that informal carer.

In recent years, the needs of informal carers have been increasingly taken into consideration, and their support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has been increasing. Support for informal carers is also a prevention of the exclusion of persons into large residential facilities. European population is aging and life expectancy is increasing. The question is the quality of life, so that life is full-fledged as long as possible, and that the seniors are not excluded into the institutions such as homes for the seniors. That's why social work is increasingly focusing on informal carers. There is a considerable imbalance in the statistic data showing how many people want to die at home (in the natural social environment) and how many of them are actually „successful“ in that respect.

More about this research: [visnep.osu.cz](https://visnep.osu.cz)



## The Community-based Participatory Planning in Urban Areas

Research leader: doc. Mgr. Marie Špiláčková, Ph.D.

A multidisciplinary approach means a collaboration of people from different areas. In this specific case, it regards a connection of experts from technical and non-technical fields. In the frame of the project of the community-based participatory planning in the urban areas, the cooperation with researchers from the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Civil Engineering, VSB-TUO has occurred. The research is focused on the experimental investigation in the specific locality, in Hlavní třída in the city district Ostrava-Poruba. Another objective of the project is to also involve those target groups into the participatory planning process, that are traditionally excluded from it.

More about this research: [kopr.osu.cz](http://kopr.osu.cz)

## The Development of Software for Responsive Evaluation and Planning of Community Work as a Tool for Developing Efficient and Effective Practice in the Area of Social Inclusion

Research leader: doc. PhDr. Alice Gojová, Ph.D.

In this project, too, it is visible that a multidisciplinary approach is a future. In this case cooperation with experts from various areas crystallized in the cooperation with the Institute for Research and Applications of Fuzzy Modelling of the UO. The developed software will enable a responsive evaluation of community social work, which, in Czech context, is still a little-used intervention to solve the problem of a spatial social exclusion. The use of the evaluation software will contribute to the effectiveness of community work in the field of social inclusion.

More about this research: [evkp.osu.cz](http://evkp.osu.cz)



## Desired Future and Related Factors of Change as a Tool of Application of the Recovery Concept in Individual Planning with Shelter Users in the Czech republic

Research leader: doc. Mgr. Lenka Krhutová, Ph.D.

Supervisor: doc. Mgr. Soňa Vávrová, Ph.D.

This applied research is unique in its focus. In the collaboration with the Institute for Research and Applications of Fuzzy Modelling of the UO, the researchers have developed a software to identify the desired future and related hope sources that will enable to improve the individual planning and refining the targeting of provided social services in the asylum houses, so that the re-integration of their residents into stable housing can happen.

The use of the measuring tool, of software and of the methodology for social workers is free.

More about this research: [ipad.osu.cz](http://ipad.osu.cz)



## Pilot Testing of Rapid Re-Housing for Families with Children

FSS researchers: Mgr. Eliška Černá, Ph.D. and Mgr. Štěpán Ripka, Ph.D.

The project of rapid housing created for the city of Brno, so-called Rapid Re- Housing, won the first prize in the prestigious European competition of the innovation projects SozialMarie 2018 in Vienna, as well as the European prize RegioStar Awards, awarded by the European Commission and by the European Federation of National Organizations working with the homeless people Feantsa. The city of Brno itself addressed the researchers in solving the issue of the housing emergency of its inhabitants. Thanks to the „housing first“ model, it means housing primarily, the homeless families can get the opportunity to start again. By its participation, such a family undertakes to pay properly the rent, to keep the cooperation with a social worker, and to have a trouble-free co-living with the neighbors. The placed homeless families have shown a high success rate in the keeping of the housing after 12 months (48 of 50 families). In this way, the project prevents homelessness, improves the health of families and enables children to return from institutional care, which is more economically advantageous than the life of families in lodging houses in the result. In the long perspective, there may also be shown an improvement in school results or an increase in the employment of family members.





## CONTACT PERSONS

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