YOUTH in ROUTE

Routes for fostering sense of initiative and active citizenship among disaffiliated youth

Train the trainers – Level 1 – BAO-Jeunesse Citizen Academy

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Level 1 focuses on theoretical contextualisation.

The Youth in Route project aims to strengthen the initiative, civic engagement and future prospects of young people at risk of dropping out of school and society in Belgium, France, Portugal and Serbia.

Inspired by the work of sociologist Robert Castel on disaffiliation, this project is based on **an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms that lead** to young people **dropping out** and becoming isolated.

This training course offers supervisors the opportunity to **engage** with Robert Castel's **key concepts in a theoretical and participatory manner**, enabling them to better analyse the situations encountered in the field and adapt their support practices.

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Making the concept concrete



Level 1 – Session 3

Linking Castel’s model to the Youth in Route project.

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Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, participants will be able to :

- **Skills**:

Apply the theory to a practical example

Identify the turning points and key stages in a process of disaffiliation and re-affiliation

Consider the impacts and prospects for young people

- **Attitudes**:

Be aware that the Castel model needs to be extended to current European realities



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Let’s play and discover Malik’s trajectory

Here is Malik !

Malik is 19 years old. Suffering from a learning disability, he left school at 16 without any qualifications. He has held a series of odd jobs (deliveries, manual labour) and is currently unemployed. He cut ties with his parents when they divorced and lives alone in a precarious single-room apartment. He is in regular contact with his brother and a few friends. A social worker tells him about the ‘Youth in Route’ project …



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1. Decide together which zone Malik is in at the start of the game.

2. Whenever something positive or negative happens to Malik, consider how it affects his zone.

3. Move him to a different zone as many times as necessary.



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YOUTH in ROUTE

Integration zone

Vulnerability zone

Assistance zone

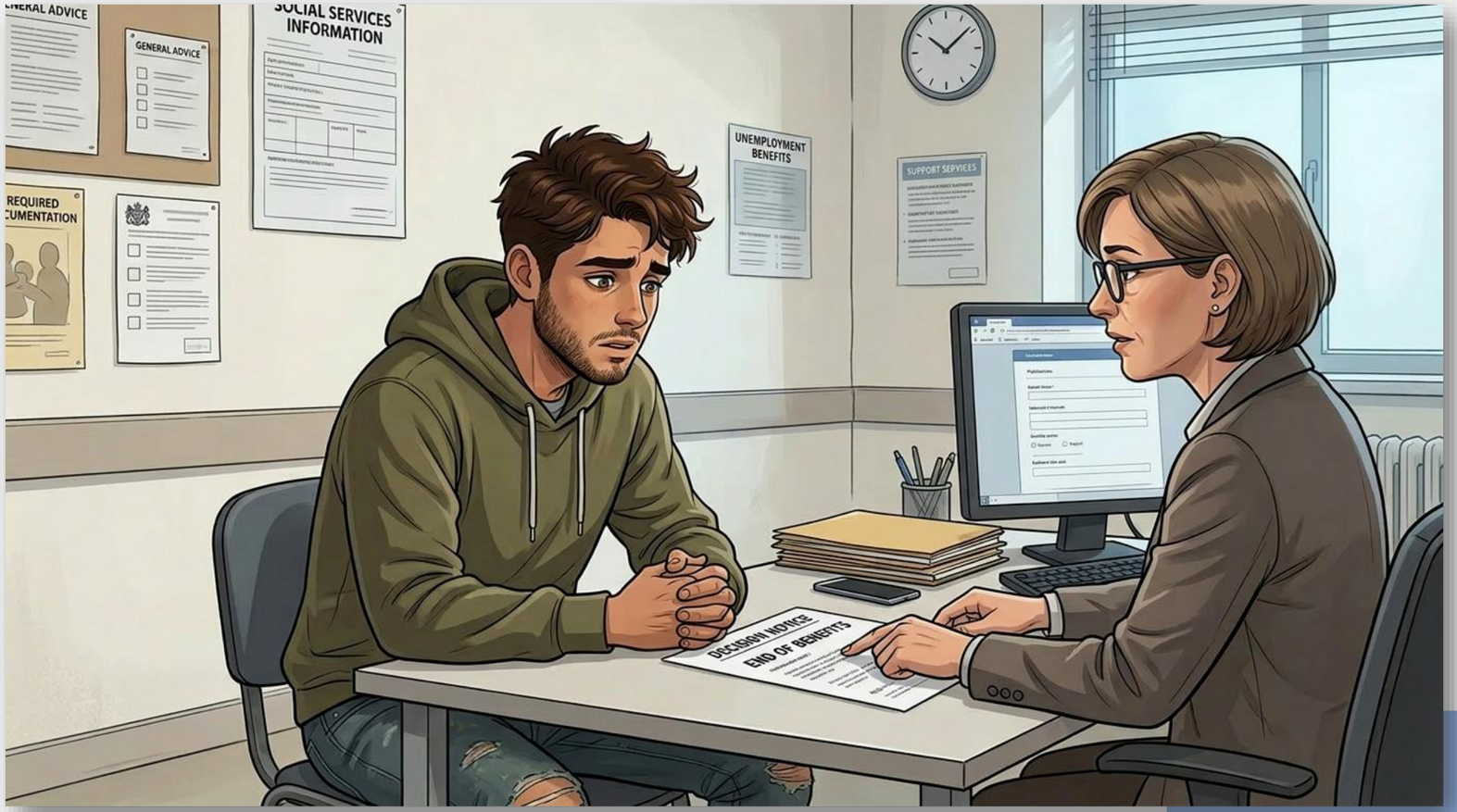
Disaffiliation zone





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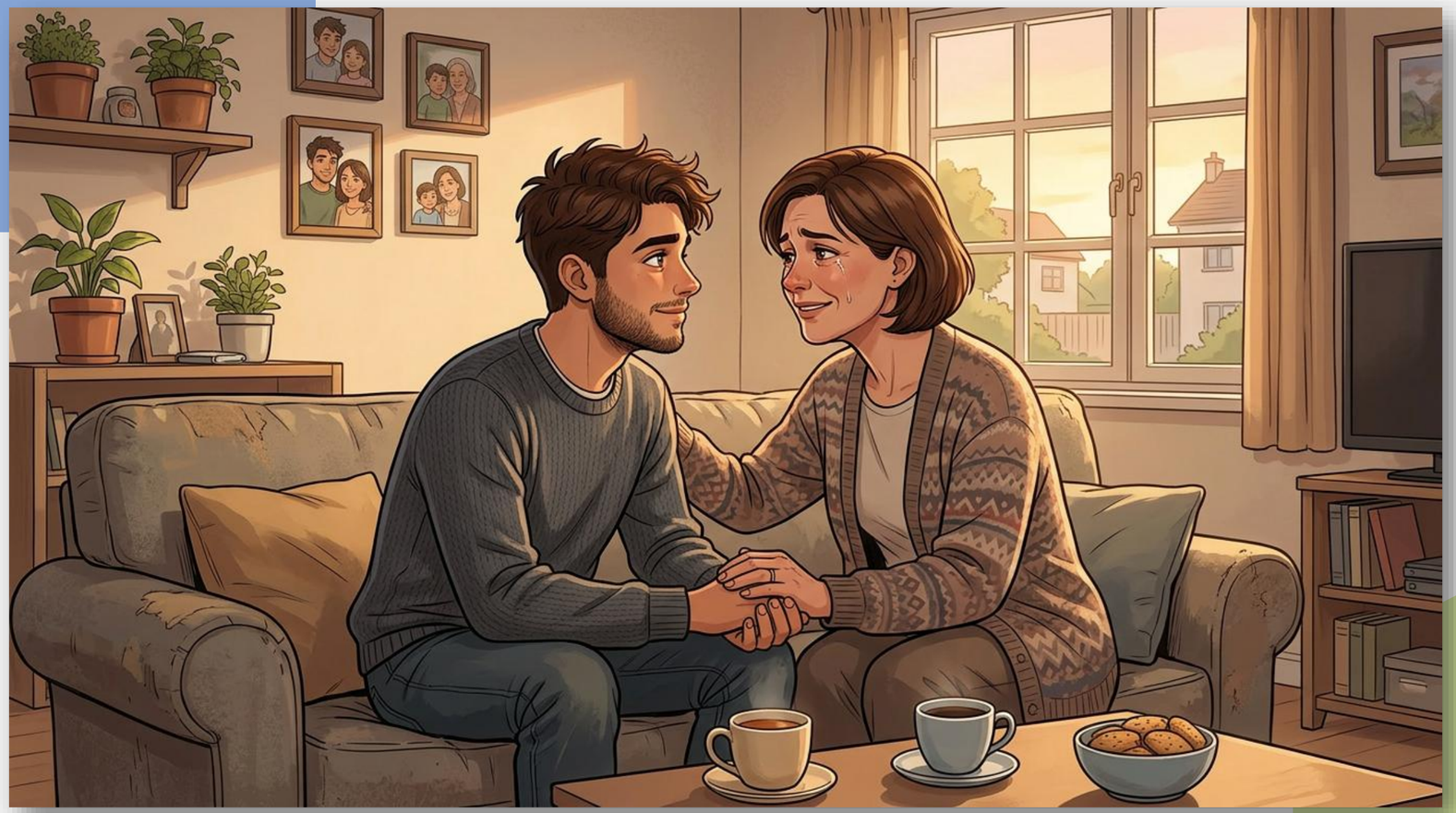
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Malik loses his entitlement to social benefits

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Malik reconciles with his mother

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Thanks to the support of his social worker, Malik obtains social housing with a long-term lease.

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Malik is getting into online gaming competitions and spending more and more nights on his game console.

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Malik ends social support

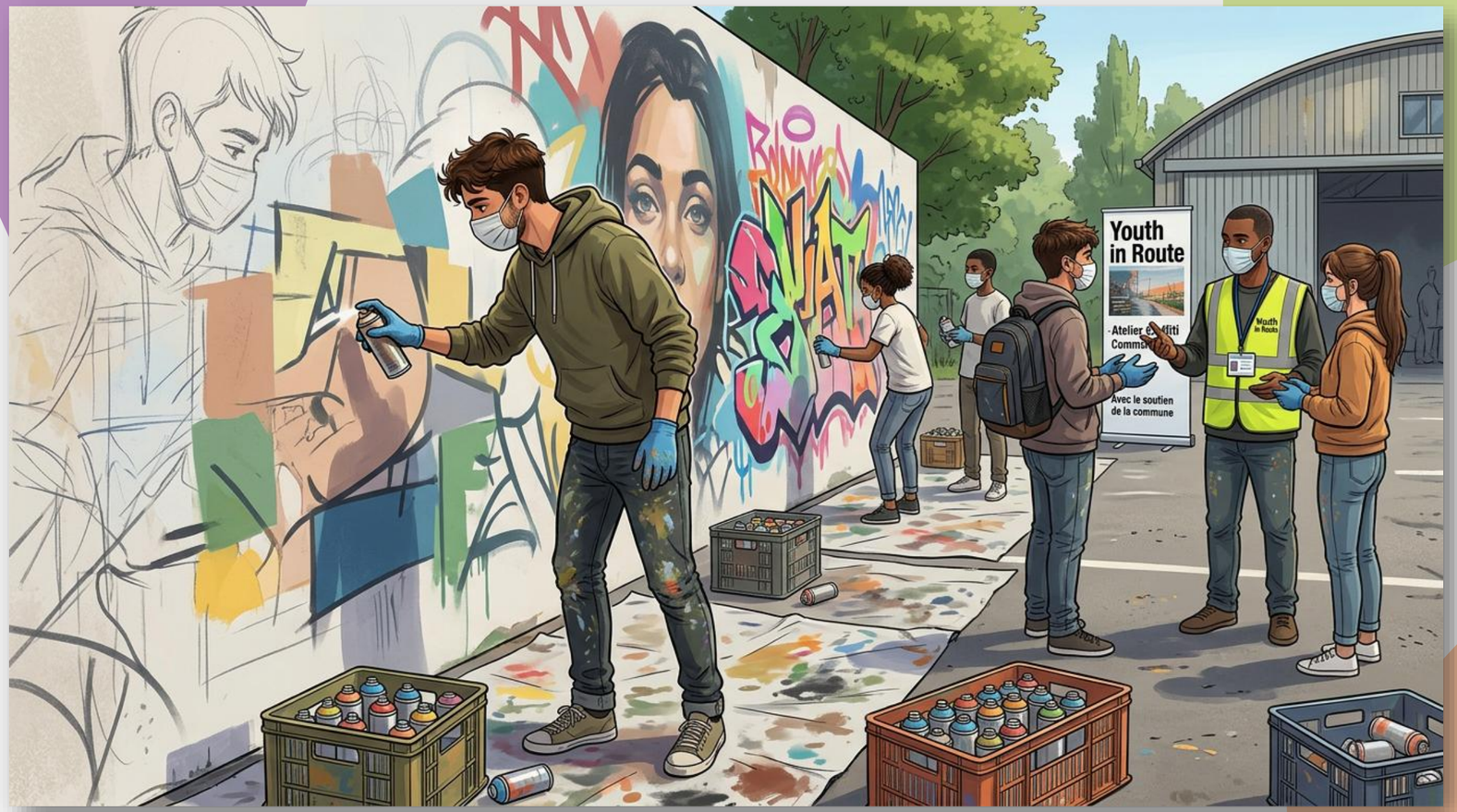
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Malik has been offered a professional integration contract

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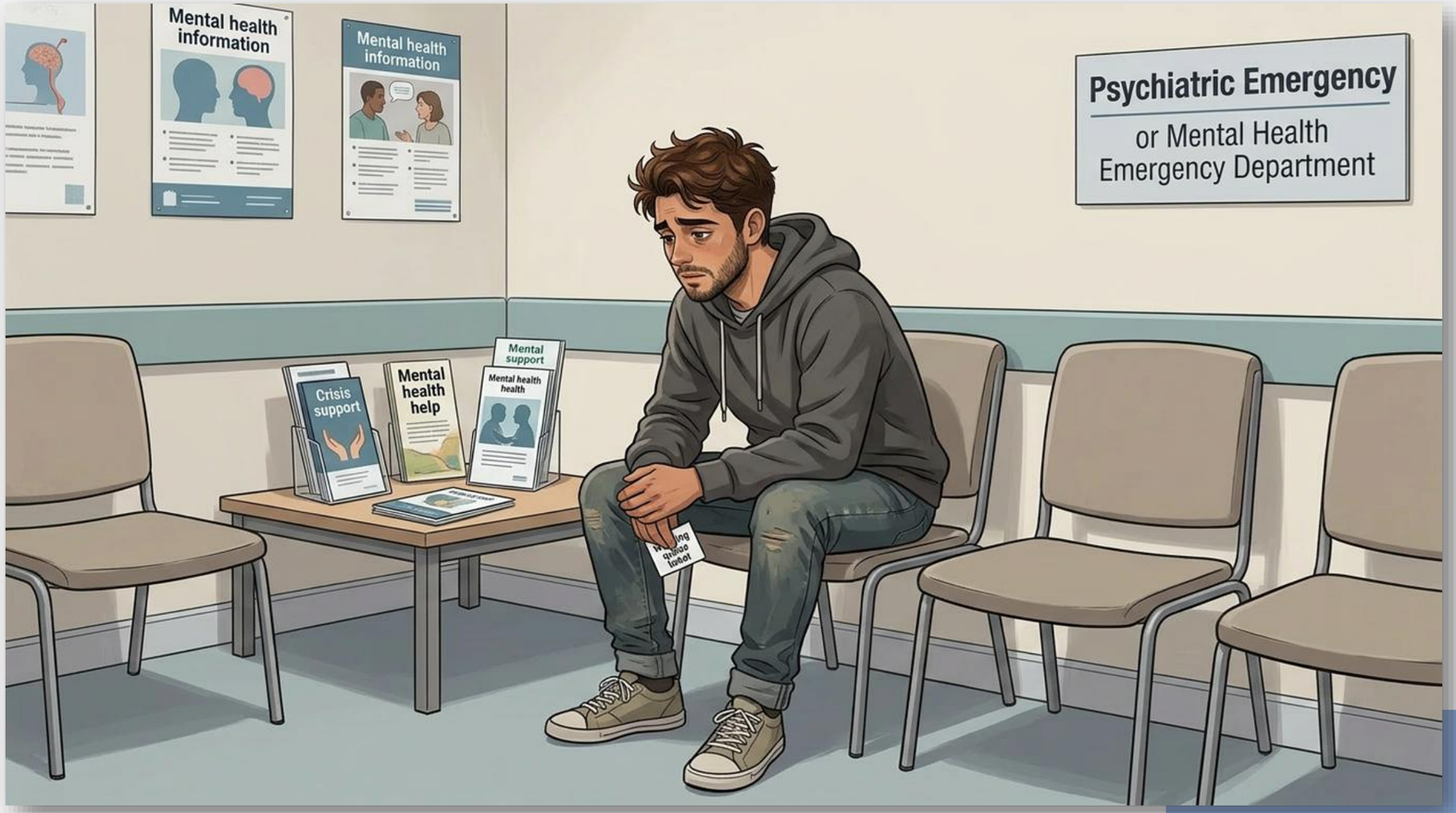
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Malik is participating in a graffiti workshop subsidized by the local authorities.

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YOUTH in ROUTE



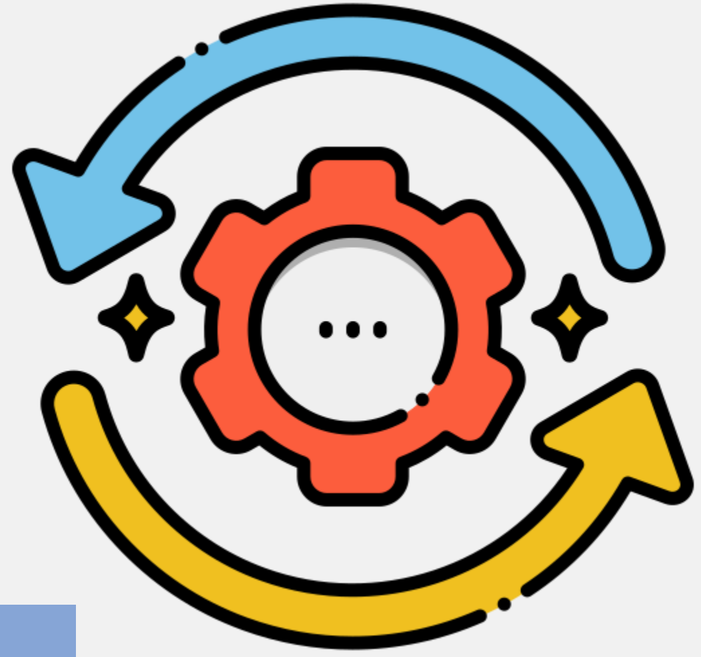
Malik attempted suicide

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An update of the Castel model

Disengagement, scattered vulnerabilities and fragmented trajectories…



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A vulnerability that has become widespread



Recent graduates

Unstable entry into the job market despite a degree



Platform delivery drivers

Work is plentiful but protection is poor
Often self-employed status



Vulnerable self-employed workers

Real work, uncertain security



Young people in training

Delayed or interrupted educational pathways



A weakened middle class

Less secure material support

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Work no longer automatically provides protection

Platforms

- Economically integrated activities
- Lower social protection
- Often self-employed status



Digital exclusion

- Inadequate equipment
- Limited or unreliable connections
- Uneven digital skills



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Discontinuous trajectories



We no longer see a linear decline, but rather successive fluctuations between the different zones.

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New aspects to be taken into account:

Migration and asylum

Rights are theoretically secured, but the prolonged wait often keeps people vulnerable.



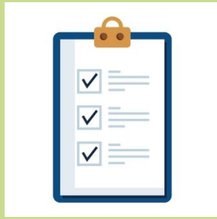
Mental health

Stress, anxiety and mental fragility are key to understanding people's life journeys.



Activation of rights

Obligations, sanctions and conditionality can increase feelings of insecurity and guilt.



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Castel remains central but needs to be expanded

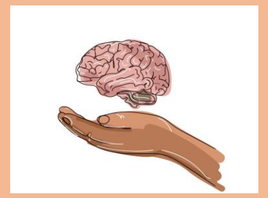
Migration

Unstable conditions



Mental health

Mental state and self-confidence



Work

Activation and conditionality: Work no longer provides full protection



Digital divide

Barriers to employment and social inclusion



The grid allows you to read routes, not just situations.

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Key concept: digital divide

Definition: The digital divide refers to inequalities in access (equipment, connectivity), skills (knowing how to use digital tools) and use between different population groups.

Practical example: Imagine a 19-year-old looking for a job: he has a smartphone with a limited data plan, no computer and an unstable Wi-Fi connection at home. Job vacancies are online. He is asked for a CV in PDF format, a professional email address, a LinkedIn profile or to create an account on a platform. He doesn't know how to convert a document to PDF, send an attachment or fill in an online form without it 'crashing'.

The result is that certain jobs remain out of reach for them. In the eyes of the authorities, they may appear 'unmotivated' or 'absent'. Gradually, they withdraw from the system…

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Key concept: mental health

Definition: Mental health is the ability to think, feel, act and interact in a sufficiently stable manner to cope with the challenges of daily life, to learn, to work, to plan for the future and to form relationships.

Practical example (real-life scenario): A young person is experiencing significant family tensions, sometimes involving violence or addiction. They develop anxiety, sleep disturbances and dark thoughts; they start missing school, racking up late arrivals and disciplinary measures. He eventually drops out, withdraws into himself or turns to excessive screen use. Lacking confidence, he does not dare to ask for help, and psychological distress becomes a key factor in his path towards disengagement. Mental health is not a ‘side issue’ but a central element in the processes of disengagement.

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interactive question

1. What are the key stages in the process of disaffiliation?

→ turning points in a young person's journey, where a combination of difficulties (family, educational, institutional, mental health, financial, etc.) leads to a shift from simple vulnerability to a more profound breakdown in relations with institutions, rights and social ties. Implicitly, the question for practitioners in the field is: at these pivotal moments, are we able to establish a 'connection' (support, continuity, follow-up) to prevent the young person from sliding into disaffiliation?



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interactive question

2. In what ways does Castel’s model need to be updated?

→ taking into account key factors such as the digital divide, mental health, migration policies and the conditionality of rights



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Assessment quiz: choose the right answer

1. “Malik’s story illustrates that dropping out is mostly:

A. An individual choice driven by a lack of willpower

B. The result of a combination of material, institutional and psychological vulnerabilities

C. Simply a problem at school

→ Correct answer: **B**
The result of a combination of material, institutional and psychological vulnerabilities. Explanation: Malik faces a combination of dropping out of school, job insecurity, family isolation, unstable housing and potential mental health problems; it is this combination that leads to social disaffiliation, not simply a lack of willpower or a single academic problem.

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Assessment quiz: choose the rignt answer

2. Which of the following negative events is the most critical turning point leading to disaffiliation?

A. Loss of the right to social security benefits

B. Stop of social support

C. Attempted suicide

→ Correct answer: **C** Suicide attempt
Explanation: A suicide attempt marks a major psychological breakdown and a rupture in one's relationship with the future; depending on how it is (mis)managed, it can lead to a profound breakdown in ties with school, work, institutions and loved ones.

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Assessment quiz: choose the right answer

3. Which of the following indicates that employment no longer automatically protects people from social exclusion?

A. Full-time permanent contracts are guaranteed for everyone

B. The emergence of precarious platform jobs (delivery work, vulnerable self-employed workers)

C. The disappearance of periods of unemployment among young people

→ Correct answer: **B** The growth of precarious platform jobs (delivery, vulnerable self-employed workers)

Explanation: these forms of work (Uber, Deliveroo, etc.) are economically integrated but offer little protection (unstable income, precarious status), which confirms that ‘having a job’ no longer guarantees social integration.

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Assessment quiz: choose the right answer

4. Which of the following best illustrates an update to Castel’s model in 2026?

A. Work still protects against precariousness

B. Trajectories lead in a straight line towards exclusion

C. Digital precariousness obstructs progress and inclusion

→ Correct answer: **C** Digital divide is an barrier to progress and inclusion.
Explanation: Digital vulnerability (equipment, internet connection, skills) is a recent factor that was not considered by Castel in the early 1990s, but is now central to access to rights, employment and resources.

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Assessment quiz: choose the right answer

5. In what ways can the ‘Youth in Route’ project act as a catalyst for Malik’s reintegration?

A. By replacing all professionals with volunteers

B. By providing support (guidance, activities, networking) at key moments

C. By limiting itself to administrative follow-up from a distance

→ Correct answer: **B** By creating points of support (guidance, activities, networks) at pivotal moments.
Explanation: the project aims to establish concrete forms of support (collective support, personalised guidance, networks, mediation) specifically at turning points, to prevent a slide into disaffiliation and to support remobilisation trajectories.

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