

**BREAKING
ISOLATION**

URBACT NETWORK OF EUROPEAN CITIES TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION

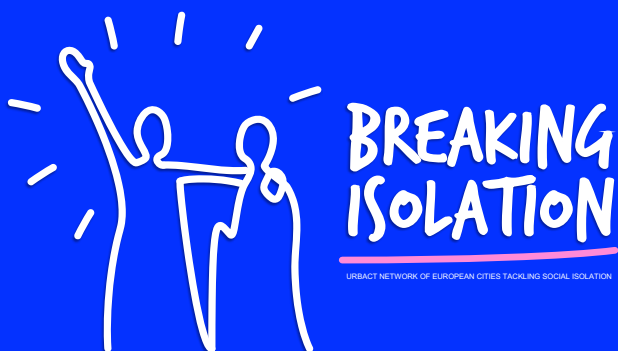
100 STORIES OF ISOLATION

**100 stories from 10 European cities
by the URBACT
Breaking Isolation Network**

URBACT



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Breaking Isolation Action-planning network

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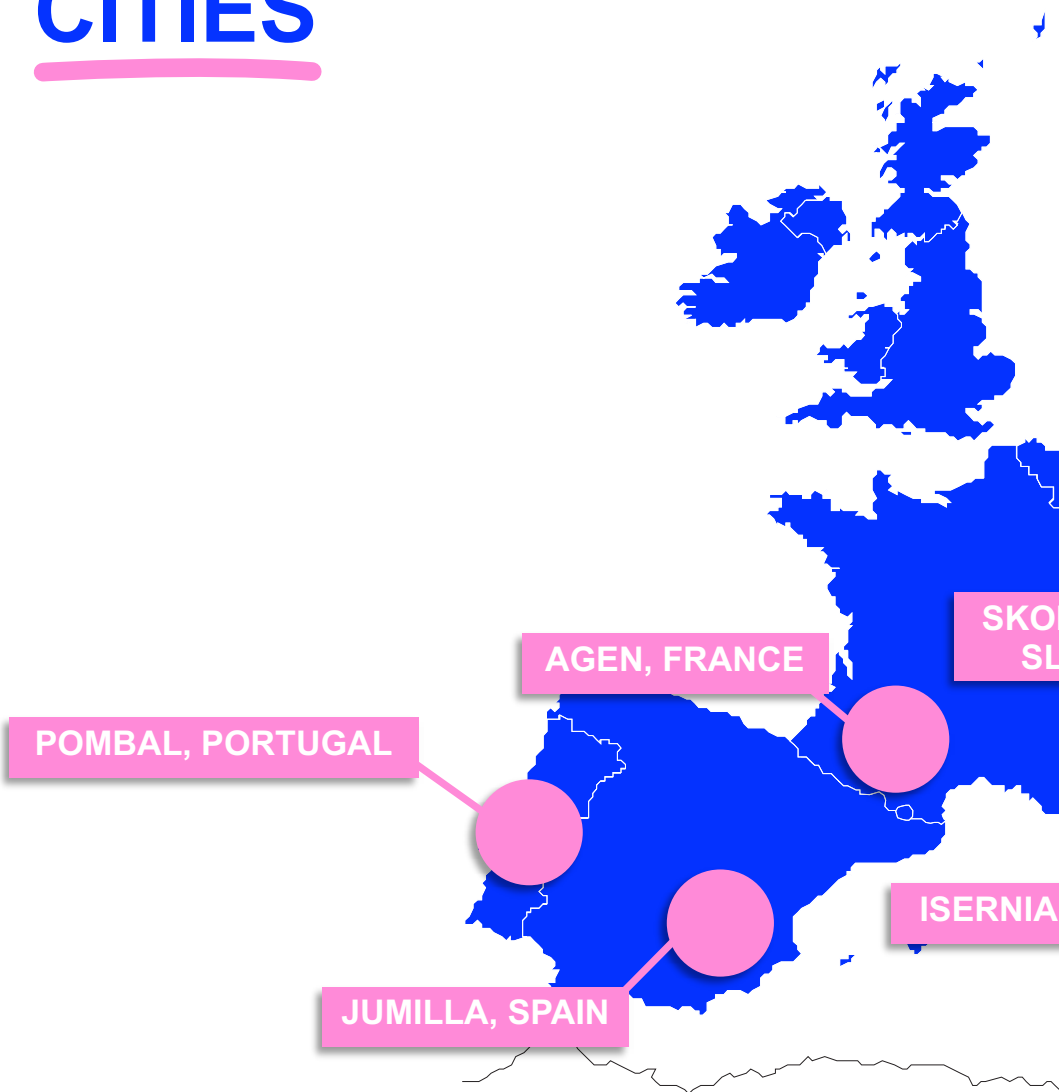
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Scenarios)

Final version - December 2024

Social isolation is a condition in which a person suffers from a long term lack of social relations both in quantity and quality.

Summary

10 EUROPEAN CITIES





TØNDER, DANEMARK

FÓT, HUNGARY

ROMAN, ROMANIA

FJA LOKA,
SLOVENIA

, ITALY

BIJELO POLJE,
MONTENEGRO

SERRES, GREECE

Foreword

A PROBLEM
RECOGNIZED
BY THE WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

'High-quality social connections are essential to our mental and physical health and our well-being. Social isolation and loneliness are important, yet neglected, social determinants for people of all ages – including older people.

Social isolation and loneliness are widespread, with an estimated 1 in 4 older people experiencing social isolation and between 5 and 15 per cent of adolescents experiencing loneliness. A large body of research shows that social isolation and loneliness have a serious impact on physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity. The effect of social isolation and loneliness on mortality is comparable to that of other well-established risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

Social isolation and loneliness are increasingly being recognised as a priority public health problem and policy issue across all age groups. During the course of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit will be addressing social isolation and loneliness as one of the themes that cuts across the four main action areas of the Decade.'



“Social isolation knows no age* or boundaries.”



Chido Mpemba, African Union youth envoy and co-chair of the World Health Organization Commission on Social Connection

* In the world, 1 out of 4 adults experience isolation and between 5% and 15% of adolescents suffer from isolation

ABOUT
THIS PUB-
LICATIION

Why this publication matters?

"100 Stories of Isolation" is a unique publication that showcases the diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals in European cities who experience and suffer from social isolation. This collection of stories was gathered through a participatory process involving URBACT local groups from 10 cities of 10 different European countries, each composed of stakeholders and citizens willing to fight social isolation.

Through those stories, this publication aims to raise awareness and stimulate dialogue on this pressing issue affecting more and more individuals across Europe as well as demonstrate that **everyone, regardless of its age, its socio-economic background, its gender, etc. may face, one day, social isolation.**

Also, as policymakers, this publication is a good reminder that behind any public problem, there are people, with real stories and lives, people who experience and suffer from isolation every single day. Social isolation is not a generic, abstract or technical problem to solve, it is affecting people.



Nicolas Castet, Breaking Isolation URBACT network coordinator, City of Agen

HOW DO
WE END UP
BEING
ISOLATED?

More and more people are isolated. It can affect anyone.

By Christophe Gouache, Lead expert of the Breaking Isolation network

Anyone can suffer from social isolation. Yet, specific factors increase the risk of finding oneself in social isolation. Browsing through scientific literature and crossing findings with the interviews conducted with practitioners in the 10 Breaking Isolation network's cities of the network allow us to identify about 10 groups of causes.

Warning: it is important to note that the listed causes are not necessarily leading to social isolation, but, when combined, they tend to increase the risk of experiencing social isolation.

In no particular order, here are the

10 causes identified within Breaking Isolation:

- Death of a loved one or couple break up: even though this situation is commonly experienced in most people's life, the situation can provoke, for some people, severe distress, depression and isolation.

- Mental health issues: this category gathers all forms of mental illnesses and/or mental particularities (either from birth or appearing in later stage of life) such as autism, asperger, bipolarity, schyzophrenia, etc. People living with those mental conditions of-

ten suffer stigma, discrimination and experience social exclusion.

- Physical impairments and long physical illness: physical handicaps (permanent or temporary) may reduce some people's ability to move and go out of their homes, often provoking a form of seclusion.

- Unemployment and pension: in a society where almost everything is built around work, people who are in situations of unemployment and/or pension may suffer from a feeling of uselessness, loss of confidence, and social inactivity. Moreover, unemployed people often face stigma and shame, while pensioners may experience a brutal break of nearly all of their social life (colleagues, clients, etc.) from the day of their retirement. Some people, in this category, find no more 'reason to wake up everyday'.

- Poverty: besides the strong social stigma and shame of being poor in a society still largely focused on wealth-making, people living in poverty are focused on securing their primary needs (food, housing, water, etc.) and have little resource to dedicate to mundane socialization (going out, bar, restaurant, cinema, etc.).

- Intimate partner violence (domestic violence) often isolates victims. Indeed, perpetrators of domestic violence tend to isolate the victim from its own family and friends, and in some cases, the victim ends up isolating herself/himself because of fear to get outside the house and speak up about her/his situation.

- Remote location: living far from family and friends, either abroad or hundreds of kilometers away often increases risks of social isolation. Similarly, living in a low density rural area, with no neighbour around, can increase the risk of isolation.

- Addictive use of social media: while social media can connect people and especially those who don't see each other often, addictive use of social media can reduce the amount of time that people spend outside and in real social environments that require direct face to face interaction. Addicted users may end up preferring digital interactions rather than having to manage real-world ones. Indeed, *'social media usage can help alleviate social isolation by connecting individuals because of their physical environment with others online. It can also facilitate the formation of support systems for individuals with rare or stigmatizing conditions. However, social media usage may also have negative impacts on social isolation by substituting social media usage for face-to-face social interactions, or by exposing individuals to unrealistic or distorted portrayals of connections' lives, leading to feelings of social isolation.'*(Regis College). When it comes to *'young adults with high social media use seem to feel more socially isolated than their counterparts with lower social media use'*. (Primack, B. et al.).

- Addictions to drugs, alcohol and gambling: addictive behaviours, in

general, tend to increase risk of isolation. When addictions are related to drugs, alcohol and gambling they tend to be even worse for social relations. Indeed, those addictions often modify reactions, mood, etc. (but also financial and health complications) and may lead to anti-social behaviours.

- Lack of social skills: not everyone is equally equipped with social skills when it comes to: empathy, attention, self-regulation or self-control, fluency, pertinence, concentration, open-mindedness, emotional stability, humor, etc. Those lacking of social skills often experience difficulties making new friends, maintaining relations, communicating with unfamiliar

individuals (new people, strangers), etc. and might find themselves socially isolated.

According to the Joint Research Center, when designing policies to combat loneliness, the complex interrelation of factors of social isolation need to be kept in mind.

‘Indeed, addressing individual risk factors in isolation will not be enough to tackle loneliness, and more holistic solutions will be needed.’ (Joint Research Center, 2022).



DEATH OF A LOVED
ONE (OR BREAK UP)



MENTAL HEALTH
ISSUES



PHYSICAL
IMPAIRMENTS/
LONG ILLNESS



UNEMPLOYMENT/
RETIREMENT



POVERTY



INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE



REMOTE LOCATION



ADDICTIVE USE OF
SOCIAL MEDIA



ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS,
ALCOHOL, GAMBLING



LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

The background of the entire slide is a repeating pattern of line-art portraits of children's faces. The faces are diverse in gender, ethnicity, and hair style, and are arranged in a grid-like fashion across the entire page. The word "CHILDREN" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered horizontally and partially overlaid by a red curved line.

CHILDREN

A thick, solid red curved line that starts under the left side of the word "CHILDREN" and curves upwards and to the right, ending under the right side of the word "OLD".

6-10 YEARS OLD

“Carlos is six years old and he has been in Spain for a year. He lives with his 10-year-old sister and his parents. Both are labourers who work all day in the fields. They leave for work very early and the children are left alone.

His sister is in charge of dressing Carlos. She prepares breakfast for both of them, and they go to school together. When they return from school, they reheat the food that their parents have prepared for them and stay at home all afternoon alone until their parents return from work. They barely have a relationship with anyone since they come from another country and do not know the language well yet, especially the parents. Even so, the children have improved thanks to the work they do at school.”



CARLOS, 6 YEARS OLD

Situation: Schoolboy

Location: Jumilla, Spain



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LAACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ DIFFICULT CULTURAL INTEGRATION

+ PARENTS' WORKING HOURS

“Alex is a migrant child who spends most of his free time at home and alone. His parents are employed and have long working hours.

He is very fond of new technologies, especially online games, a practice he developed during periods when he wasn't at school and was alone due to the lack of a family and/or friend support network as a result of his migration. He became addicted to online games, taking every opportunity to play, including during school breaks, and ended up not socializing with his peers.

Alex became more and more socially isolated, even becoming aggressive and showing signs of hyperactivity whenever he was deprived of the chance to play.

His mother was alerted by the school to the situation of social isolation in which her son found himself and has been looking for ways to integrate and include him ever since.”



ALEX, 10 YEARS OLD

Situation: Immigrant student

Location: Pombal, Portugal 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORK



TEEN- AGERS

11-18 YEARS OLD

"Iulia is a 12-year-old girl living with her parents and younger brother in an apartment located in a bustling neighborhood of the city. Although she is a diligent student with good grades, Iulia faces significant difficulties in socially integrating with her classmates.

In recent months, she has begun to spend more and more time alone, both at school and at home, preferring to take refuge in reading or drawing instead of interacting with other children her age. Iulia spends her school breaks reading in the school library or drawing in a secluded corner of the playground, rather than playing with other children. Initially, she tried to approach groups of classmates but was often ignored or rejected, leading to a decrease in self-confidence and withdrawal from any further attempts at socialization. At home, Iulia spends most of her time in her room, and interactions with her family are limited and often boil down to discussions about school or daily activities. Although Iulia is a diligent student, feelings of loneliness and isolation are beginning to affect her concentration and academic performance. Iulia's passions, such as reading and art, are not shared by most of her classmates, making it more difficult to find common ground for friendship.

Iulia is experiencing feelings of loneliness, sadness, or even depression due to the lack of significant social connections. Social isolation at a critical stage of development negatively affects the development of social skills and self-confidence. Although she is a diligent student, social isolation negatively impacts her motivation and academic performance in the long term. The lack of communication and interaction within the family amplifies feelings of isolation and irritability in the family."



IULIA, 12 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student, living with her family

Location: Roman, Romania

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

↓ LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ REJECTION BY PEERS

+ SHYNESS AND SOCIAL ANXIETY

+ LACK OF SUPPORT PERSON

Twins who grew half a meter in one year and each gained 10 kilograms. They are 12 years old. Their parents are workers and their mother doesn't speak Slovenian.

At home, they eat a lot of bread, potatoes and cheap salami. Their father works three shifts and their mother helps in a laundry and sleeps all afternoon. The twins mean everything to her. All she can do for them is cook and wash their clothes. She knows they have a gang in the center and hopes they won't succumb to alcohol.

The school doesn't get involved; no one deals with the boys because it's not worth it. Schools don't have enough staff for all the borderline cases. Where parents don't cooperate, the school steps back too.

Marko and Zoki can do whatever they want. When they turn 18, they will go to the factory and earn a decent living. Until then they are the kings of the street.



MARKO & ZOKI

12 YEARS OLD

Situation: In a gang

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



BOJANA, 12 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student

Location: **Bijelo Polje, Montenegro** 

Bojana is a Muslim Roma child, she started school late. In her class, she sits alone on the bench, because no one wants to sit with her. It is often unprovoked, the object of ridicule and unsavory jokes from the children in the class. She started begging for money on the street, getting bad grades, missing school despite the efforts of teachers and parents to get her back.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ RACISM

+ BULLYING

+ LACK OF SUPPORT PERSON



AMIR, 13 YEARS OLD

Situation: Risk of dropping out of school

Location: Jumilla, Spain



“Amir is a child with mild cognitive disabilities. From the age of seven, he has attended school on his own, returning home afterward to have lunch and then spending the rest of the day alone until his mother returns from work. With no siblings or close family nearby, Amir's daily routine leaves him largely isolated, with few opportunities for social interaction or support.

When he entered secondary school, Amir began skipping classes. He struggles to understand the lessons and feels disconnected from his peers in the classroom. Instead, he spends his mornings with a group of friends who also avoid school, passing time in the park or playing video games at home. However, these interactions are often shallow and sporadic, leaving Amir without meaningful companionship or guidance.

His mother, facing financial and personal challenges, is focused on waiting for him to turn 16 so he can accompany her to work in agriculture farms and countryside. This prospect limits Amir's hope for a future that might offer him opportunities for growth, and he remains withdrawn, with little encouragement to pursue his own interests or to connect with others.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF SUPPORT IN TRAINING

"Vanessa is a young girl studying in elementary school. She is Gypsy and she has many typical signs of this heritage. Due to the Gypsy origin, it is exposed to racist attacks every day in the school. Her classmates bullying her. That's why she has headphones in her ears and listens to music all day. Due to this she doesn't try to make connection with the others.

Vanessa has no partner to sit next to her in the class; she has no friends, and she is always alone, so she can't participate in the project works too. Because of the abuse, she misses a lot of school, often for no reason. Therefore, her grades are getting worse. Because of all this, she becomes more and more shy and closed and cannot live her inherent talent and desire to learn. Those days when she misses from the school, she is in bad gang. These young people have been influencing her in a worse direction."



VANESSA, 13 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student

Location: **Fót, Hungary** 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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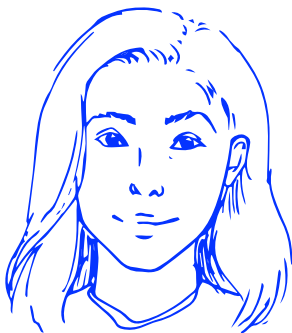
LAACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ RACISM

+ BULLYING

+ LAACK OF SUPPORT PERSON

A girl from a large Albanian family. She is 13 years old. Her mother is unemployed, mostly taking care of their small apartment and her five daughters. The older ones are already married and Alisa is the youngest among the girls. Because she spends a lot of time with boys, she has a bit of a rough edge. She loves playing football. Sometimes she takes the elevator to the library and plays shooting games. Her mother can't control her and her father even less. Her father is an alcoholic who spends all his days in various Albanian cafes and pastry shops around the town. Alisa will eventually get a job in one of them and earn a decent living. Until then, she will reign over the streets.



ALISA, 13 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed mother, alcoholic father

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ ALCOHOLIC PARENT



MARTA, 14 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student

Location: **Jumilla, Spain** 

“Marta studies at a public High School in Jumilla. Before the pandemic, she had close friends and good social relationships. However, after the pandemic, her friends suddenly stopped talking to her, and without any explanation, began to mistreat her through insults, mistrust, and comments about her physical appearance.

Marta didn't share her struggles at home, but over the past year, the impact has been significant. Her social interactions dwindled, she stopped studying despite having been a good student in the past, and she developed anxiety and depression. Her mental health suffered greatly, especially as she rarely left the house, as social interactions cause her to suffer from anxiety.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

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UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ BULLYING

+ LOW SELF-ESTEEM

+ LACK OF FAMILY ATTENTION



AISE, 15 YEARS OLD

Situation: Refugee

Location: Serres, Greece



“Last year I was in an integration class at a high school in our city. There, I met a student, Aise, who spoke Greek very well as she had already been in Greece for 3 years. But I noticed that during the breaks she was alone and that, in the classroom, she sat alone at the desk. **After discussions with colleagues, I realized that the children from her country don't want her, as she was the only girl, neither the children from Ukraine, nor the Greeks.**

Aise was sitting with me during the breaks and talking about her country and her dreams. I asked her at one point why she doesn't go out with the other guys and she said she got tired of trying to fit in. Her compatriots do not want her because of her gender, the Ukrainians because of her origin and the Greeks because of her religion. So she decided to stay alone.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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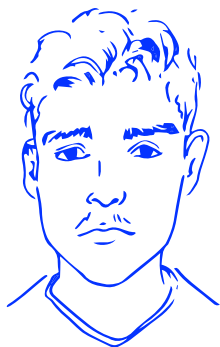
ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ RACISM

+ GENDER DISCRIMINATION

“John lives in a rural area, in a single-parent family, with his mother, his grandmother and his teenage sister. His mother is a care worker, but she is having major financial problems and is out of work. John is out of school because his mother doesn't get up to take him to the bus, so he stays all day in front of the TV (not playing games because he doesn't have the means), he doesn't wash, he doesn't go out and he is aggressive. Social workers came once, but no solution could be found, no further visits were made because they are afraid. Only a home nurse visits regularly to take care of the grandmother.”



JOHN, 15 YEARS OLD

Situation: Out of school, in a single parent family



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ AGGRESSIVENESS

"I met Yrsa in an educational setting when directing a theater production. She was flighty, loud, and reactive with seemingly no regards for the people around her. She clearly expressed that she wanted an important lead role in the final performance, but she did not want to participate in the social aspect of the process. I tried to socially integrate her into the group, which only partially succeeded, as she did not want to participate in anything besides expecting the lead role. It was my experience that Yrsa did not have the social skills to interact in a social setting, nor did she understand why she was not included by the other young actors. I meet her again six months later, and she's since been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder and schizophrenia. She now resides in a residential facility with limited social interactions outside of professionals."



YRSA, 16 YEARS OLD

Situation: Caught between
parents



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



SAFET, 16 YEARS OLD

Situation: In a gang, parents living abroad

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia 

A tall and gloomy boy who is always dressed in black. He smokes an electronic cigarette and looks seriously at the world. His mother returned to Bosnia, and his father is always absent, working on a construction site. Safet is not an only child; he has two younger sisters who went back to Bosnia with their mother. Marko and Zoki bring him salami and bread from home if they don't eat it all themselves. Safet plans to open a car wash. He still has two years until he turns 18. Marko and Zoki say they might help him, and their mother too, since she works in a laundry and has connections. Safet's real family is in Bosnia; here, he has no one. Except for his gang of friends. The streets are his territory.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



CARLOS, 16 YEARS OLD

Situation: Secondary school student

Location: **Pombal, Portugal**



“Carlos is a 16-year-old student from a middle-class family, with whom he has a good relationship. Apparently, he has no trouble communicating with his classmates, but he is quite reserved in his relationships. His overly restrained attitude caught the attention of the Head of Class, who tried to find out from Carlos if there was a problem. In a two-way conversation, the young man said:

«I'm fine! Sometimes... I feel sad, deeply sad and I don't know why. My grades are reasonable and I get everything I ask my parents for. I don't know what I'm missing, sometimes I feel lost! I have no interest in anything. My classmates look down on me, some tell me that what I'm missing is problems. I feel lonely and I can't explain why.»

After this conversation, the Head of Class spoke to Carlos' parents, who were very worried about the situation because they didn't know what they could do to eliminate this sadness and loneliness from their son's heart.”

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

A 16-year-old boy living in a residential community. His mother is a single parent and on disability pension. Stefan never liked studying and he finished primary school because they wanted to get rid of him. An overwhelming number of unexcused absences, conflicts and peer violence brought him to the edge. The school reported him to the community because his mother couldn't take care of him. The mentors at the community can only manage him with threats. Stefan thinks he will become a successful football player, as he kicks the ball into goals and dribbles all day long. He is always dressed in a tracksuit and keeps his hands in his pockets.



STEFAN, 16 YEARS OLD

Situation: Single mother on a disability pension

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia 

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ ABANDONMENT

"Márta's mother died 3 years ago. The grieving process is still ongoing, she has not processed the death, she has not mourned the loss of the person so close to her.

Márta has not spoken to her father since the death (she probably blames him for what happened), has difficulty keeping in touch with her friends, and pushes them away from her.

Every summer she spends her holidays in Transylvania with her maternal grandmother, who tunes her out against her father, strengthening the already bad relationship. She got into bad company in Transylvania. After each summer, she becomes more and more withdrawn, and her behaviour becomes more and more destructive. She doesn't have afternoon programs, she doesn't play sports, she doesn't socialize. According to her father, she does not help with housework at home either. She used to play with her phone a lot, but now she just lies on the bed and stares in front of her, impossible to get out of. She refuses to accept the help of a specialist, so this condition can be expected to worsen further."



MARTA, 17 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student

Location: **Fót, Hungary**



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF A RELATIVE



ANNA , 17 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student, teenage mom

Location: **Serres, Greece** 

Anna is 17 years old and a high school student. She is growing up in a single-parent family along with her siblings. When Anna realized she was pregnant by her young love, she decided to keep the baby (with her mother's consent).

However, due to her family's financial difficulties and the lack of social support in schools, Anna is at serious risk of dropping out of school, as she has started working simultaneously to help her family cope financially with the new member.

Both Anna and her newborn baby are in need of support from local services and organizations in the municipality of Serres. Anna needs help not only as a student to cover her learning gaps (as she risks falling behind in her studies) but also as a young mother who may struggle to manage the significant responsibilities she now faces.

She is at serious risk of isolation, as she has stopped behaving and socializing like a young girl and now lives only to work, trying to cope with school and take care of her child.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

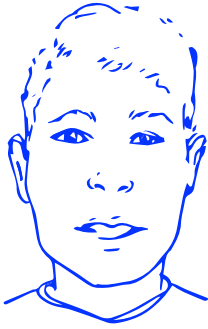
PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ YOUNG PREGNANCY



GYURI, 17 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student, addicted to drugs

Location: **Fót, Hungary**



"Gyuri is a 17-year-old young boy, studying in high school. His relationships with his classmates are weak. He is a drug addict. His old friends oppose his drug use, but he sees it as an attack, not a help. He distanced himself from them, he does not seek contact with them.

His new friends are also drug addicts, and he likes to meet them, but the joint programs often end in trouble and turns into crime. He turned to drugs because of his parents' divorce, after his mother forbade him to see his father, whom he loved very much. His father is not really looking for a relationship with Gyuri. It seems that he let go of the opportunities and relationship with his son. The boy found refuge in drugs, this is the "solution" that gives Gyuri comfort.

He works alongside school to have money, but he spends every last cent on drugs. His school performance is getting worse, his parents and teachers are unable to motivate him."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Dad came home sober one day and announced he got a job in Germany. He promised a better life and said I'd join him there soon. I felt anxious and overwhelmed by the changes, unsure of what to expect.

After Dad left, I struggled with school, often missing classes and receiving warnings from teachers. I told my friends Tina and Iva about moving to Germany. They were excited for me, but their enthusiasm didn't ease my anxiety. I moved in with Dad's friends, who had a daughter named Tara. Despite Dad's reassurances, I felt lost and had frequent nightmares.

Communication with Dad was inconsistent. He sent messages on Viber, expressing love and sharing pictures from Germany. He kept promising to send a train ticket, but his paycheck delays left me in limbo. Social services got involved, pressuring me to make decisions about living arrangements and schooling. They suggested youth programs, but I felt overwhelmed and resistant to their help.

I skipped school for a week, feeling it was pointless since I wouldn't finish the year anyway. My classmates looked at me differently, knowing I lived without my parents. Tara's mom tried to help, but I felt increasingly isolated. I waited for Dad to send for me, uncertain and anxious about the future.



, 17 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student, living alone

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LIVING ALONE

"Petros is 17 years old and lives with his family in a provincial town. At the age of 5, he was diagnosed with Autism and since then his parents have been trying to help him to "come out of his shell" with alternative and conservative treatments.

Petros had behavioral problems from a young age, since his autism did not allow him to express feelings and thoughts in the "proper" way, causing irritation and discomfort to those around him. And while one would expect him to show a significant talent, in the end no, he was just autistic with no particular inclination. He attends a mainstream school with private parallel support and is doing well in lessons with a lot of help outside of school.

However, Petros' biggest difficulty is company. Even now, at 17, he has not been able to join a group, be accepted and enjoy social interaction despite the fact that his past outbursts and "inappropriate" behavior have greatly improved. Petros, therefore, is forced to spend most of the day with his family, even though a teenager usually devotes himself to peers. He has no company to go out with, so he stays alone in his room. He doesn't even have any activity to do, as in the city where he lives, autistic people are not -yet- included in the active population. Petros lives in isolation."



PETROS, 17 YEARS OLD

Situation: Autistic

Location: **Serres, Greece**



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



João, 18 YEARS OLD

Situation: Autism, parental divorce

Location: **Pombal, Portugal**



“João went to secondary school in a small village until he was 18. Diagnosed with autism, he lived his childhood and youth in a "bubble" of protection from his parents.

At the age of 16, the pillar of his life "broke down" as his parents divorced. Emotional stability is severely shaken and João goes through a troubled phase, unable to deal with the underlying emotions. Secondary school becomes difficult for João, with several episodes of decompensation, trips to the emergency room and no record of friends and/or social relationships.

Given this phase that João is going through, his mother leaves her job and personal activities to devote herself exclusively to her son, and she also ends up changing her routines and interpersonal relationships.

At the age of 18, João decides to set up his own business, but the need to deliver daily to customers is a "burden" and he ends up distancing himself from it and from people, with the responsibility for management falling almost entirely on his mother. Nearing his 19th birthday, João left his mother a letter and went out for a bike ride. He took a cab to the nearest train station and killed himself..”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ FAMILY LIVING ABROAD



JOANA, 18 YEARS OLD

Situation: Out of school

Location: Pombal, Portugal 

“Joana started a romantic relationship a year ago. From the beginning of the relationship, she began to identify some behaviors of isolation and withdrawal from her social and family network.

Her boyfriend began to show controlling and austere behavior when contradicted. Joana ended up cutting ties with her family, dropping out of school and moving out of her parent's house. She currently lives with her boyfriend in an unknown location, with no contact with family and/or friends.

Joana has been the victim of aggression (physical and verbal) on several occasions, but remains completely isolated in the relationship.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

The background of the entire image is a grid of approximately 40 white line-art portraits of young adults, both men and women, with various hairstyles and facial features, set against a solid blue background. The portraits are arranged in a roughly rectangular grid, with some faces partially obscured by the text.

YOUNG ADULTS

19-29 YEARS OLD

“My name is Antonio, I'm a young freshman. I left my small hometown to go to study in Milan. I didn't expect anything else: to leave to escape from a small province that is too small for me to discover the world and have new experiences. When I thought all this, I didn't think about leaving my family and my closest loved ones. I didn't think I had to live alone. I didn't think I'd have to start all over again, looking for trusted friends. Everyone thinks for themselves, in the total fragmentation of hit-and-run virtual relationships. it seems impossible to form bonds”



ANTONIO, 19 YEARS OLD

Situation: Freshman- moving house,
loneliness, depression

Location: **Isernia, Italy** 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Vili, reaching out to our kindergarten for employment, came from a strict Jehovah's Witnesses background, seeking to break free. Despite his initial struggle with communication and a basic education, we decided to give him a chance. He took on gardening, janitorial duties, and helped with children's activities. Despite facing exploitation and abuse from some colleagues, Vili persevered silently for two years.

Vili shared glimpses of his challenging family life—his parents' strict adherence to religious doctrines meant no social life, restricted education, and a life solely focused on religious texts. He was the eldest, burdened with responsibilities and longing for independence.

One day, he quietly informed me he was leaving for abroad, feeling he could never achieve true independence here. He left behind a postcard from Florida, expressing gratitude for the job opportunity that brought him to America. In his note, he mentioned feeling like a new person in his new environment. Vili's journey stands as a testament to resilience and the pursuit of a better life beyond adversity. His story continues to inspire us.



VILI, 19 YEARS OLD

Situation: In a religious fanatics family

Location: **Sofja Loka, Slovenia** 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ FAMILY IN A RELIGIOUS SECT



MILOJICA , 19 YEARS OLD

Situation: Bad relations with the family,
gamer



Milojica lives with her two sisters and her parents, who fight regularly. Milojica's mother accuses her husband of fraud, but he denies the guilt and quarrels are regular and increasingly frequent. Unable to take anyone's side, he chose to stay in his room and play video games. Over time, he began to leave the room less and less, except when invited to a meal, and more and more to change day for night. He stopped thinking about employment and heard less and less from his friends.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF SUPPORT PERSON



STEFAN, 19 YEARS OLD

Situation: Single mother on a disability pension

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia 

A 16-year-old boy living in a residential community. His mother is a single parent and on disability pension. Stefan never liked studying and he finished primary school because they wanted to get rid of him. An overwhelming number of unexcused absences, conflicts and peer violence brought him to the edge. The school reported him to the community because his mother couldn't take care of him. The mentors at the community can only manage him with threats. Stefan thinks he will become a successful football player, as he kicks the ball into goals and dribbles all day long. He is always dressed in a tracksuit and keeps his hands in his pockets.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ ABANDONMENT

“Paola was a young transgender student who began her transition in high school. Her classmates made school life unbearable, subjecting her to verbal and physical abuse.

Her family, being ultra-conservative and deeply religious, did not support her decision. Paola sought therapy to cope with her situation, but public healthcare only provided her with a psychologist appointment once every two months.

While she was undergoing hormone treatment, the COVID-19 lockdown began, leaving her isolated both physically and emotionally.

Fortunately, Paola eventually found a supportive social circle, which helped her move forward. However, she still struggles to find employment, as her identity continues to be a barrier.”



PAOLA, 20 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Jumilla, Spain



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

✚ GENDER-BASED BULLYING

✚ LACK OF FAMILY AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

"In a quiet town in the south of Italy lived a girl named Emily. At 21, she was a silent, reserved student, longing for connection but unsure how to find it. Raised in a close-knit family, Emily had always relied on her parents, but as she grew older and sought her independence, she found herself struggling to form bonds outside of her home.

She moved away from her town to study and social interactions became a source of anxiety. Her attempts at conversation often ended awkwardly, leaving her feeling misunderstood and disconnected. As her isolation grew, Emily withdrew further, finding solace in the familiar worlds of books and video games, where she could escape and feel a sense of belonging without the pressure of real-life interactions. The growing distance between her and the outside world left a lingering emptiness that even her quiet comforts couldn't fill."



EMILY , 21 YEARS OLD

Situation: Hikikomori – social isolation, depression

Location: **Isernia, Italy** 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



BENJAMIN, 21 YEARS OLD

Situation: Lost his mother

Location: **Tønder, Denmark** 

“Benjamin is a sensitive soul with a lot of demons to handle. Benjamin's mother lost her life to alcohol abuse. The loss of his mother at an early age led Benjamin to turn to hard drugs to cope with the unresolved emotions.

Benjamin struggles to maintain meaningful relationships, employment and housing due to his drug abuse. Often, he goes days without food due to financial constraints. Currently Benjamin receives assistance to process the loss from a local art project to help children and young people in homes with alcohol abuse to express and handle their emotions through arts and creativity.

Even though he participates in the project, Benjamin remains lonely and isolates himself from others. Despite his sensitive nature, Benjamin finds it challenging to find meaning in life in the middle of loss, drugs and financial troubles.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF SUPPORT PERSON



JULIE, 22 YEARS OLD

Situation:

Location: Agen, France



“Julie lives in an apartment in a rural area. She is a young girl whose life is marked by an experience of emotional deprivation and intra-family violence. She escapes from this situation thanks to a professional training. But she undergoes a repetition of traumatic experience in her professional situation, because of relational isolation and financial insecurity. She makes attempts to extricate herself from this difficult situation, but she encounters difficulties in using institutional resources due to the feeling of not being understood and the precariousness of her cultural and relational knowledge. She is isolated, far from the city center, she lives in permanent precariousness of rent, precariousness of her ability to move (she has a driving license and a car but she can't afford gasoline). She encounters difficulties in setting up her personal project of life and she is re-exposed to sexual exploitation. She asks for help but receives a precarious support from the adolescent centre, for her relational, financial and social issues.”

I skipped school for a week, feeling it was pointless since I wouldn't finish the year anyway. My classmates looked at me differently, knowing I lived without my parents. Tara's mom tried to help, but I felt increasingly isolated. I waited for Dad to send for me, uncertain and anxious about the future.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ INTRA-FAMILY VIOLENCE

+ SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

“The pandemic turned Ryan's life upside down. Once a social and driven university student, the isolation of lockdowns and distance learning caused him to retreat into himself. At first, he skipped a few online classes, but soon he withdrew from university entirely. He stopped seeing friends, ignored their calls and rarely left his room.

His parents, trying to reach out, offered support and encouraged him to talk about his feelings, but Ryan found it difficult to open up. Their calls often ended in silence as he struggled to express the turmoil inside him. His days became an endless cycle of inactivity: no classes, no studying, no socializing. Ryan had become a “hikikomori”, completely withdrawn from the world. He felt trapped in a self-imposed isolation he couldn't escape”.



RYAN, 23 YEARS OLD

Situation: Hikikomori - anxiety, isolation, depression

Location: Isernia, Italy



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Mihai is a 23-year-old computer science evening student, known in the online community for his passion for gaming. Although he has an impressive number of followers on streaming platforms and frequently participates in online tournaments, his offline life is significantly different. Mihai lives alone, far from his family in a small town, and has found that most of his social interactions take place in the virtual environment.

While these activities bring him satisfaction and recognition in the gaming community, they isolate him from the outside world and the opportunities to form significant interpersonal connections in real life. He rarely makes time to go out with friends, participate in university events, or engage in activities unrelated to gaming. Mihai experiences feelings of loneliness, depression, or anxiety, due to the lack of significant social interactions. The excessive focus on gaming has negatively affected his academic performance, falling behind with courses and grades, in the desire to make money for a house in the university town. Social isolation has limited his opportunities for personal development, such as improving social skills, building lasting relationships, and gaining new experiences. Long hours spent in front of the computer have led to health problems, such as sleep disorders, obesity, and spine issues.”



MIHAI, 23 YEARS OLD

Situation: Student, gamer

Location: Roman, Romania 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ MOVING TO A NEW CITY



DRAGICA, 23 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widow

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro



After the traffic accident in which her husband was killed, Dragica was left a widow with two small children. His close family promised to help, but everything remained an empty story. Every morning, she gets up at 5, takes the children to kindergarten, and then cleans private houses and public rooms for 10 hours, so that she can feed herself and her children and pay for the rented apartment. Tired and depressed, often sad and tearful, with an uncertain future on the brink of poverty, this woman spends her days in social isolation

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



MIRKO, 23 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro 

"Mirko graduated from college, he studied very hard because he comes from a poor family. Although he tried, he has no opportunity to get a job and live with his parents. Over time, he became withdrawn and rarely leaves the room. He also became aggressive and turned to alcohol. He often falls into bad company, so after physical confrontations he ends up in the local police station."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"George is a young man who enthusiastically and perhaps fanatically loves his favourite football team, PAOK. A few months ago, he was involved in an episode of fan violence with youths from another team, at which point he was arrested. He was charged, tried and finally released with restrictive conditions after spending a few days in police custody.

Coming out, he found that his life had changed these days! His employer, as soon as he heard the news, fired him, his friends moved away, he was suddenly stigmatized, he didn't want to share what was happening to him with his family because of shame. He was isolated. Changed. Not even his favourite team gave him joy. Little by little he withdrew into himself, his financial situation had become difficult. The hours inside his house were now more and more..."



GEORGE, 24 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Serres, Greece



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



ADAM, 24 YEARS OLD

Situation: Out of school, unemployed

Location: Fót, Hungary



“As a teenager, Ádám lived a balanced life among his family. He didn't have many friends before Covid-19, but as a result of the pandemic, he was completely alone and turned into himself. Neither the parents nor the extended family encouraged him to change this and start in the direction of the solution. He dropped out of school and refuses to work.

He plays on the computer or watches TV all day. His almost exclusively his relationships with his mother and grandmother, with whom he lives in the same house. His connections are also limited to his fellow players on the computer, he has no need for programs that require a personal offline presence. It is getting narrower and narrower, he has no goals, no vision for the future. His has smaller and smaller needs, he is often dirty and spends his all day in pyjamas. He tells that he doesn't need any relationships.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ COVID-19

+ DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

“Elena is a Roma woman living in a traditional settlement where patriarchal culture is dominant. Coming from a poor family, she was married at a young age according to the traditions of her community, and is now a mother of four children. She faces severe social isolation, being subjected to domestic violence from her husband and ostracism from the community.

Elena is forced to submit to the traditional Roma restrictions, which significantly limit women's freedom and autonomy. She takes care of the household and raises the children. Her husband strictly controls her, forbidding her from leaving the settlement, socializing with others, or participating in cultural or educational activities outside the home. She dreams of going to school, reading, and helping her children learn, but her responsibilities as a mother and wife leave little room for personal aspirations or developing social ties outside the family context.

Elena is frequently subjected to physical and verbal violence by her husband. She lives in constant fear of being attacked and has nowhere to take refuge. The lack of support from her family and community makes her feel completely isolated and hopeless.

Elena suffers from severe psychological trauma as a result of domestic violence and social isolation. She has frequent panic attacks and feels constantly worried about the future. Lack of medical care and constant stress have led to health problems such as malnutrition, exhaustion, and chronic diseases..”



ELENA, 24 YEARS OLD

Situation: Married, mother of 4 children,
living in a traditional Roma community

Location: Roman, Romania



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ COMMUNITY OSTRACISM

“Per moved to Denmark from Germany 10 years ago. He never adjusted to life in Denmark, never fully learned the language and lacks a network of peers.

Per is diagnosed with a mental illness, which leads him to isolate himself in his home. He spends most of his time online gaming at night and sleeps through the daytime.

Even though he lives near his family, he only interacts with his social, psychiatric contact person.

Despite offers of visits from family or offers from the municipality to get help with practical activities like cooking, Per does not want to socially interact with anyone. The few, superficial relationships he keeps are online gamers as himself, but he does not have any deep connection with anyone.”



PER, 25 YEARS OLD

Situation: Moved to Tønder 10 years ago, mentally ill

Location: Tønder, Denmark



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LAACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LAACK OF NETWORK (ONLY ONLINE)



ANA, 26 YEARS OLD

Situation: Single parent family,
unemployment

Location: Pombal, Portugal



“Ana became pregnant and, without the support of her parents and without any relationship with the baby's father, she was taken in by a Life Support Center, which aims to temporarily house pregnant or postpartum women with newborn children, without a family environment and who are at emotional or social risk. She is later taken in by an aunt who tries to help her become independent and finds her a place to live, but it is far from her district. The rent is financed by her aunt, which is the only support she has.

Ana lives with her baby in a village far from public transportations and with walking access to a mini-market and a health center. The nearest daycare has no vacancies and, as a result, she is unable to enter the job market, because not only does she have no way of getting around (transport), but she also has nowhere/no one to leave her baby. So she stays at home all day with the child, with no financial autonomy, no contacts and no social network. In this situation, both the mother and the child are in a situation of social isolation due to the lack of relationships and social ties.

In fact, Ana has never been part of any cultural, sporting, religious or volunteer group that would allow her to establish quality and quantity connections in order to create a support network at this point in her life. Ana is without any support from her parents or the family of the child's father, so she feels alone and no direction in life.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ SINGLE MOTHER



ELENA, 27 YEARS OLD

Situation: Young psychology graduate, living alone



"Elena spends most of her time at home, working remotely, and her social interactions are limited to online meetings and occasional calls with her family and old friends. During her university studies, Elena had an active social circle and participated in various extracurricular activities.

After graduation, she moved to start her career but found it difficult to make new friends or maintain ties with colleagues due to her busy schedule and the global pandemic that limited social interactions.

Although she wishes to expand her social circle, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and her anxiety about meeting new people in a new city have limited her chances of forming significant connections.

The prolonged isolation and lack of direct social support have had a negative impact on Elena's well-being, increasing her feelings of loneliness and anxiety."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ MOVING TO A NEW CITY

+ COVID-19

+ TELEWORKING



ADULTS

30-59 YEARS OLD

“Britney was born in Nigeria and from a young age she dreamed of becoming a doctor. When she was still a child, her family moved to Italy, seeking better opportunities and a new start. Life in this foreign country wasn’t easy (cultural differences, language barriers and prejudice marked their early years). Still, with her parents by her side, Britney felt secure, as though they could face anything together. Tragically, when Britney was just 14, both of her parents passed away, leaving her alone. The loss was devastating, not only because of the emotional pain but also because of the isolation it thrust upon her.

Without the comfort and guidance of her family, she suddenly had to navigate life alone, in a society where she often felt like an outsider. At school, she faced racial prejudice and discrimination, enduring both subtle exclusion and overt hostility from classmates who saw her as different. This toxic mix of grief and constant social challenges deepened her isolation. She found it difficult to connect with others, not just because of the color of her skin, but because her loss created an invisible wall between her and the world. Her peers, who had stable families and familiar surroundings, couldn’t understand the depth of her pain or the complexity of her situation.



BRITNEY, 30 YEARS OLD

Situation: Doctor - discrimination,
loneliness, depression

Location: Isernia, Italy



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ DIFFICULT CULTURAL INTEGRATION



MARIA, 30 YEARS OLD

Situation: Employed, leaving a toxic relationship



“Maria lives with her two children (including a baby), and her husband. The entire group of friends in which she evolves is in the same stage of life: young children, a busy professional life. But Marie gives less and less news. Her friends learn, almost by chance, that her life as a couple is going badly, and that she is leaving home, with the support of her brother and her parents. She ends up saying that she was unhappy, totally absorbed by the logistics of the house and that her partner was increasingly absent and aggressive, even violent. She ends up telling her friends that she was in a tunnel and apart from her work, she had no social ties because it was impossible.”

So she stays at home all day with the child, with no financial autonomy, no contacts and no social network. In this situation, both the mother and the child are in a situation of social isolation due to the lack of relationships and social ties.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

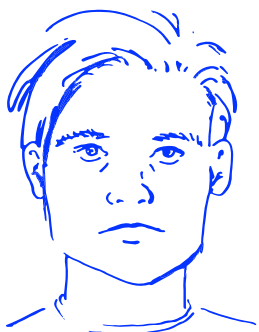
ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"Luca, a young artist, felt trapped in the confines of his small, conservative town. Raised in a family that valued practicality over creativity, he was always the odd one out. While others followed predictable paths, pursuing steady jobs and traditional roles, Luca saw the world differently. His mind was alive with vivid colors, abstract shapes and emotions. His paintings became his only refuge. Each stroke of his brush was an attempt to escape the suffocating monotony surrounding him. But outside his studio, Luca's work was met with rejection.

The townspeople, steeped in tradition, scoffed at his abstract and contemporary art. To them, his creations were not expressions of beauty or emotion but misguided and frivolous pursuits. As the years passed, the weight of this disapproval, also from his family and friends, began to take its toll.

This disapproval deepened Luca's sense of isolation, creating a rift between him and the few connections he had left. Loneliness became his constant companion. Cut off from both familial support and social acceptance, Luca withdrew further into himself."



LUCA, 30 YEARS OLD

Situation: Artist - lack of comprehension, loneliness



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"Ioana B. is a 32-year-old young woman who, after finishing high school, began to associate with a social circle where drug use was present and gradually became addicted. Initially, she started with so-called "soft" drugs, but her addiction evolved to more dangerous substances. This began to seriously affect her life, leading to job loss and deterioration of relationships with family and friends.

Ioana B. gradually withdrew from the lives of those close to her and began to spend time predominantly with other drug users or alone. Healthy relationships were replaced with connections based on drug use. Her social isolation was exacerbated by the stigma associated with addiction, as well as personal shame and decreased self-esteem. Now, she rarely participates in family or social events and has limited her communication to superficial interactions necessary to obtain drugs.

The isolation worsened existing mental health symptoms and led to new problems, including deep depression or even suicidal thoughts. Without a support network, the risk of a fatal overdose increased, as there are no people to intervene in an emergency. Isolation made Ioana more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation by those around her."



IOANA, 32 YEARS OLD

Situation: Hikikomori - anxiety, isolation, depression

Location: Roman, Romania 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ STIGMATIZATION



ALINA, 35 YEARS OLD

Situation: Employed, single mother of four children

Location: Roman, Romania 

“Alina P. is a 35-year-old single mother fully dedicated to raising her four children, aged between 1 and 8 years. She works as a nurse, which consumes much of her time and energy. Alina struggles to maintain a balance between her demanding job and parental responsibilities, leaving little time for social life or personal activities. Her husband, an engineer, works long hours at a company in the city, leaving Alina P. to take care of the children and household most of the time. The family home is full of life and activity, but Alina P. often feels the weight of her responsibilities. Her days are a continuous whirlwind of activities - from preparing meals and caring for the baby to helping with homework and organizing games for the older ones. Although Alina considers herself a sociable and open person, in recent years, she has noticed that her social interactions have become increasingly rare.

Old friends and colleagues seem to distance themselves, as her free time is extremely limited. Alina spends most evenings and weekends at home, taking care of the children's needs, with few or no opportunities to meet other adults or to relax and enjoy group activities.

Alina P. experiences feelings of loneliness, isolation, stress, and exhaustion, which have affected her mental health. Social isolation has impacted Alina's ability to maintain and develop new or existing relationships. The lack of social interactions and a support system has indirectly affected the well-being of her children as well.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ DEMANDING WORK SCHEDULE

+ PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



EMA, 35 YEARS OLD

Situation: Ex drug addict, abused

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro



"In a rural area, far from the busy city life, lived a young woman named Ema. Alcoholic father, mother regularly suffered violence, Ema suffered from drug addiction for years, but life in the countryside did not offer many opportunities for timely and effective support. She withdrew into herself, thinking about suicide, without finishing school and without any perspective..."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

“Monica got married young. Very quickly after the arrival of her two children, her husband became violent. She decides to divorce. She returned to professional activity, working in the fields and factories to provide for the needs of her family.

During her life, she did a lot of agricultural work, which caused her health problems, which gradually prevented her from working. She finally found herself to become a stay-at-home mother without a job. She became depressed and obese. She isolated herself and only went out to go shopping. She took the habit of ordering a lot from remote websites. Today, she lives alone and her children visit her from time to time.”



MONICA, 35 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed single mother

Location: Agen, France



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Andrei is a 36-year-old young man who, after graduating from university, began working in a design office. In the last two years, he started to consume alcohol regularly and excessively, initially as a method to cope with work stress and social pressures. His alcohol consumption gradually increased, starting to interfere with his professional and personal life.

Andrei began to isolate himself from friends and family, preferring to spend time alone, often consuming alcohol. His social interactions became limited to visits to the bar or being alone at home, consuming alcoholic beverages. This behavior led to the loss of friends and estrangement from family, as they unsuccessfully tried to convince him to seek help for his addiction. Andrei's isolation is amplified by the shame and stigma associated with alcoholism, making him avoid situations where his alcohol consumption could be questioned or condemned.

The isolation led to an exacerbation of depression and anxiety, as well as feelings of loneliness and despair. As the isolation increased, Andrei lost important relationships, leaving him without support when he needs it most. Social isolation and the problems associated with alcoholism have led to the loss of professional and personal opportunities.”



ANDREI, 36 YEARS OLD

Situation: Young man struggling with alcohol addiction

Location: Roman, Romania



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ STIGMATIZATION



GYÖNGYI, 37 YEARS OLD

Situation: Employed at home

Location: **Fót, Hungary**



“Gyöngyi has been living alone in her own home in orderly conditions. She started working in home office at the beginning of Covid-19. The management of the company reorganized the attendance work, so even after the pandemic ended, she did not have to go back to the office, and she has been doing her work from home ever since. She doesn't make mistakes in her work, but she has lost her enthusiasm for it, she does it mechanically.

After 2 years, she developed severe depression symptoms. She hardly ever leaves the house, she also does her shopping online. Her friends slowly drifted away from her; they are going to her less and less.

She is afraid to go to the community. She cancels the planned programs one after the other, her only entertainment is watching movies at home.

Because of her symptoms, her doctors recommended medication. Today, medicine has become part of her everyday life; she doesn't want to give it up, even though it has little effect. Her brother wants to surprise her with a pet, to see if the care and responsibility would shake his sister out of this sleeping state, but Gyöngyi protests to the idea of a pet, seeing only the problem in it.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ COVID-19



ORESTIS, 40 YEARS OLD

Situation: Homeless

Location: Serres, Greece



"Orestis was a person with intellectual disabilities and psychological issues, well-known in the city of Serres. For years, he had a regular spot on a pedestrian street, with a bench that served as his bed—he never parted from it. As a homeless man, Orestis couldn't bathe or take care of his appearance. This frightened passersby, which is why they avoided him. The only people who occasionally looked after him were a few locals who would bring him food, coffee, and cigarettes.

Orestis loved that bench so much that, whether during the sweltering heat of summer or the freezing cold of winter, he would sit there for hours (sometimes his long beard would even gather frost from the cold). We always assumed that Orestis came from an impoverished family that either couldn't or didn't know how to care for him. These were just assumptions, though, as we didn't know much about him.

Two years ago, we heard that Orestis passed away on his beloved bench, falling asleep forever..."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"I recently met a man, who was assisting me with my work. Upon seeing my phonescreen indicating that I was going on a trip to Copenhagen, Kim told me, that he was from Copenhagen. This sparked a conversation, where he opened up about how he moved his entire life hours away from everything he knew to Tønder to be with his then-wife. They had children together and started a life together in her hometown Tønder.

He told me, that they are now divorced and he remains living in Tønder solely to be around his children even though everything he knows and everyone he has a relation to is in Copenhagen hours away. The few new relationships he had started building all fell apart, as they are part of his ex-wife's family.

Kim expressed that he did no longer care for his own well-being, feels alone and socially isolated living so far from all meaningful relationships. He mentioned how he neglects his appearance and gains weight. Kim also told me, that he is only counting the days until his children are older, so that he can get on a boat and sail far away from everything."



KIM, 40 YEARS OLD

Situation: Divorced, staying in Tønder for the children only

Location: Tønder, Danmark



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

+ GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED

“Pepe lives alone and is suffering from alcoholism. He has two siblings: one does not want to know anything about him and the other comes one day a week to wash his clothes and bring him food.

Pepe doesn't leave the house, he doesn't go to the doctor, he doesn't have friends, the neighbours don't help him. When he was working on a construction site, he suffered an accident and lost his motivation for life, taking refuge in alcohol.

He doesn't want help from anyone. He doesn't care what happens to him, he lives on a small pension in his deceased parents' house and his brother wants to evict him to sell the house.

He feels guilty but does not look for solutions.”



PEPE, 40 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed and pensioner

Location: Jumilla, Spain 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



ELPIDA, 40 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unmarried

Location: Serres, Greece 

Elpida is a 40 years old Roma woman who was born and grew up in Serres. She is a person with a serious mental health condition (schizophrenia). Elpida has been taking medication on a regular basis for a long time. Elpida lives at the same house with her father and her 2 brothers who both of them have mental health issues too.

Elpida is single and has no friends. Her social life is limited because of the schizophrenia which causes severe emotional changes. She wants to feel free and alive but she lacks social skills and does not get help from anyone. Elpida is currently unemployed though in the past she worked as a laborer in the public sector. She was happy with that job because she had the chance to interact with other people, earn some money and help her family as well. Smoking is a consolation to her during these hard times.

Elpida is a religious person and she believes in afterlife. She smiles rarely but she is having a good laugh every time she plays with her dog, a female golden retriever. Her dream is for social justice to become true for the people of her group in the near future and poverty to be vanished around the world as soon as possible.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



TOMÁS , 42 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Jumilla, Spain 

“Tomás is a man who was unemployed. The City Council offered him the opportunity to train and work at the same time, learning a profession where, in addition to learning, he had a salary and assisted with a group of people in a similar situation. Every day he went to a place where he shared eight hours between work and training with other people.

After several months of attendance, with ups and downs and little desire to learn, he left the program before finishing, despite all the team's efforts to keep him there.

The reason for his abandonment was that he did not want to work or be subject to a strict schedule. He preferred not to have a job and live off of charity and aid. By not trying hard, he has isolated himself socially, probably due to personal problems and lack of sacrifice.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF WILL

“Helle, a modest 54-year-old woman, is the youngest of six siblings and grew up in a family where threats and violence were part of daily life. She was never allowed to express thoughts, feelings or opinions and had to priorities others over herself. This dynamic persisted in her adult relationships.

Finally, after many years in an unhappy marriage, she found the courage to get divorced. She now lives alone, but faces conflicts with her siblings and struggles with guilt and shame over "destroying" the family unit by choosing divorce. Her children also blame her for leaving their father and their contact is limited. To avoid all the conflicts in what she previously thought to be close relationships and due to her disability, she isolates herself more and more over time. This isolation affects her ability to manage daily tasks, and part time work is the only stable aspect of her life. She does not have any close meaningful relationships without conflicts.

On top of all the conflicts and guilt, her disability and very tight budget also causes her to be ashamed as it prevents her from buying gifts around holidays or do activities with her children and grandchildren. ”



HELLE, 42 YEARS OLD

Situation: Early retirement - Divorced, childhood neglect

Location: Tønder, Danemark



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ NO SELF-ESTEEM

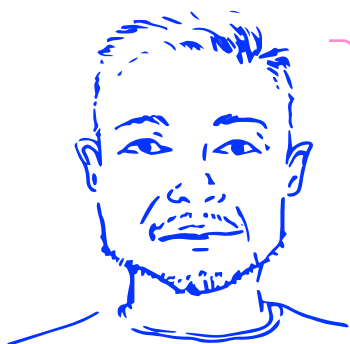
+ MISTRUST OF PEOPLE

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

I am 42 years old, residing with my parents, supported by them and state aid. Life has slowed to a crawl since my diagnosis of manic depression. High school was manageable, surrounded by a few friends who formed my sense of belonging. But bipolar disorder gradually revealed itself—manic highs leading to impulsive moves and drastic lows of despair.

Attempting university in Japanese language and philosophy was ambitious but unsustainable. Manic episodes saw me studying intensely, partying wildly, and wandering to distant towns. Eventually, my father intervened, leading me to the Center for Mental Health. Denying my condition, I struggled with pills and reality, alienating friends and retreating into deep depressions.

Once, lost in depression, I rode off on a bike, found later by firefighters near a riverbank, dehydrated and hopeless. The news of my disappearance shocked everyone. My parents, both hardworking, had hoped for a different life for me—one with a career, a family, happiness. Now, I trudge slowly past their bedroom to my own, once filled with childhood dreams now overshadowed by stagnation. My mother also battles depression, our home a sanctuary turned stagnant. Life feels like suspended animation, a womb that holds us without deliverance. He doesn't want help from anyone. He doesn't care what happens to him, he lives on a small pension in his deceased parents' house and his brother wants to evict him to sell the house. He feels guilty but does not look for solutions.”



WOMB, 42 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed, bipolar

Location: Sofia Loka, Slovenia



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



PAUL, 42 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed - no family, depression and loneliness

Location: Isernia, Italy



"Paul lost his job suddenly that year. His boyfriend left him because he had no intention of being with a penniless man. And Paul began to hole up at home. Initially he saw it almost as an opportunity. He could have resumed his ancient passion for painting. And so he took out the canvas and easel but when he placed himself in front of it for the first time he burst into tears.

Where was Eric? He missed him. He couldn't really have abandoned him. "I'll wait for him" he thought. And waiting became a constant condition. His boss would certainly contact him again, he was sure of it. He would never have left him in that situation. He told himself that he had to wait, that he had to be patient. But that wait became emptiness, silence, loneliness. He couldn't do anything. Depression had taken him"

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



MILORAD, 45 YEARS OLD

Situation: Disabled, depressed

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro



"Milorad suffered from paralysis from a young age, so he was condemned to spend his entire life in a wheelchair. While his parents were alive, he had all the care he needed. After their death, he was left alone, and despite the modest income from the state, he is unable to pay for a personal assistant. He lives in a small apartment, surrounded by loneliness and anxiety. He has no close relatives."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"Elsa lives in my neighborhood. I have known her for 15 years. She lived with her mother and father. At a young age she lost her father and at a teenage age she lost her brother, to drugs. This marked her for the rest of her life. She started having psychological problems and was always attached to her mother. She had no friends while treating everyone around her with suspicion and negativity. She is uneducated, has no social skills, and is a heavy smoker. After the death of her mother, she was completely alone.

In an attempt to escape her loneliness, she got married. Her husband lives with her but Elsa continues to walk around alone, with a cigarette in her hand and muttering that "everyone wants to harm me".



ELSA, 45 YEARS OLD

Situation: Married

Location: Serres, Greece



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

"Anastasia is a middle-aged mother who, until recently, was in an abusive marriage. He constantly accused her of provoking him and used his power to harm and control her.

Although she had once enjoyed the company of her friends, she had now limited her social life, fearing that people would gossip about her family, look down on her, or try to confront her husband, which would only lead to more anger from his side.

She didn't feel comfortable at work either, as she earned her living through the family business. Remembering that her husband had once told her not to provoke him because if they divorced, she would lose everything, including her child, she didn't know how things would work out legally. However, she knew she had to leave this marriage immediately!

Even though she had become somehow estranged from her family, one day she called her mother, unsure of where to begin. In the end, she found a glimpse of hope awkwardly paired with guilt. Her mother, who didn't know much about the procedures, had read in a local newspaper about an organization dedicated to women's empowerment. She contacted them and at a moment's notice they guided her and helped her."



ANASTASIA, 45 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed, single parent family

Location: Serres, Greece 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



PEDRO, 46 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed - divorced, alcoholism

Location: Pombal, Portugal 

“Pedro had a stable life. He was married, worked in the construction industry and lived in his own house, which he had bought with a mortgage.

At a certain point, his life took a huge turn: his partner wanted to go in another direction and filed for divorce. Alone, discouraged and with no motivation in his life, he started drinking and missing work, and ended up losing his job.

With no money and no network of family or friends, he stopped paying his mortgage to the bank. In view of his failure to meet his financial responsibilities, one day an enforcement agent went to his home accompanied by the police to forcibly hand over the property.

As Pedro was alone and had no one at his side to defend him or try to negotiate the delivery of the property, his meager possessions were taken from him and he was left on the street.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



MARIA, 46 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed - divorced,
with a chronic illness

Location: Pombal, Portugal



"She'd had a stable job for around 12 years, a job she really enjoyed, where she had good relationships with her colleagues and with the patients she looked after; what could be considered a second family. When she lost her job, a number of social ties were lost... She went home, actively looked for a job and there were no answers... she looked and couldn't find one, she "fell apart" and sadness set in... and with it, depression.

The marriage can't take the pressure and she goes through a complicated divorce. Her health suffers even more and she has a stroke. She's hospitalized for a while and she's left with after-effects that she tries to minimize over time, physiotherapy, consultations, pain appointments. There's another presence in her life, a chronic illness on top of the depression.

The family moves away... there's no more patience... Friends move away... there's no more patience... and all the other lives go on. At the moment, she doesn't have the health to work, when she seems to want to... she tries but there are no opportunities for her. Her isolation is increasing. Sometimes she says she doesn't feel like doing anything. Not even to look after herself. He has a constant presence in her life: pain. The surrounding community doesn't even notice she's gone..."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

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ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Linda is 49 years old and moved to Fót a few years ago. She is her husband's second wife. Her husband's 2 children are raised together since Linda has no children of her own. Linda has few connections, no friends.

Her husband has several friends, but they are not shared with Linda, since they were friends with her husband and his ex-wife. She often feel that the friends compare her to the ex-wife, and the teenage children don't simplify everyday life either.

She works as a teacher. She arrives home at 4 p.m., takes care of the family and is alone, she feels alone. The free weekends, that the children spend with their mother, are extremely short according to Linda's feeling. After completing her tasks, there is rarely an opportunity for a joint program with her husband or at such times she also tries to visit her elderly parents - who live far from Fót- and help them. She has no roots and meaningful, strong connections and communities in Fót. She has no time for hobbies, she expresses her creativity in cooking.”



LINDA, 49 YEARS OLD

Situation: Employed

Location: Fót, Hungary



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



ERIC, 50 YEARS OLD

Situation: In conflict with his family

Location: Agen, France



"Eric lives on his own because he thinks other people are "assholes". He is in conflict with his mother because he believes she prefers his brothers, whom he is truly jealous of. He is mad at our society, which he describes as "not working properly". He hates politicians, "all rotten" in his opinion, just like the journalists. He only feels a sense of comfort and happiness when he is alone and at home. He spends his days locked in his house.

One day, his landlord set up a lease procedure to get his accommodation, but Eric refuses. After a long judicial procedure, the landlord won, and Eric was forced to leave the apartment. Still angry and decided not to leave, he threatened to death the bailiff that came to notify him of the said decision. The police was then called and as soon as they arrived, Eric set fire all over the house."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Franco is 51 years old with borderline intelligence. He is unemployed, without family, with drug problems and toxic relationships, without training and with a lack of social skills.

As a child he lived in a multi-problem family. He had problems at school because he was bullied. He left school very young and went to work. He entered into the dynamic of working in submerged (undeclared, grey) economy jobs. He began to sign documents referring to fraudulent companies, he entered into the dynamics of trials, seizures, debts, etc.

He was orphaned at a very young age and the rest of his family did not take him in. He also never asked for help and the case was only detected because the neighbours filed a complaint about the bad smell coming from the house, the dirt, etc.”



FRANCO, 51 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed - single

Location: Jumilla, Spain



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

“Ion, aged 54, with secondary education and seemingly healthy, is unemployed and earns a living from the social aid provided by the city hall. He has never been married, has no children, and no extended family. His parents died 20 years ago, and since then, he has been living on the streets because they did not own a home and lived in rented accommodation. For 4 years, he lived in a Collective Housing Unit, a social housing property owned by the Municipality of Roman, but could not adapt due to conflictual relationships with neighbors and unfavorable living conditions. He lived at the mercy of citizens, collecting food and bottles from the trash.

For about 11 years, he has been receiving a daily hot meal at the canteen, where he also benefits from counseling to overcome his crisis situation, provided by the center's specialists.

Currently, he is staying at the night shelter in the Municipality of Roman, where he interacts very little with his roommates, being an introverted person. He reluctantly accepts the center's social, medical, and psychological counseling services.

He is not a religious person and does not belong to such a community that could offer him moral support.

He has poor communication with state institutions and non-governmental organizations that have offered their services for his rehabilitation.”



IOAN, 54 YEARS OLD

Situation: Free man on the streets, without occupation nor support

Location: Roman, Romania

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ HOUSING INSTABILITY

+ NO FAMILY



ÉVA, 54 YEARS OLD

Situation: Divorced, single parent, multiple jobs

Location: Fót, Hungary



“Éva divorced in her 30s and lived alone with 2 children. The relationship with her husband was completely broken, he did not look after the children, and did not financially support their life. Éva's parents lived in the countryside, so she was left alone with all the tasks. She always worked multiple jobs to support her children. Because of this, she could not meet her friends, her relationships deteriorated and grew cold.

She didn't even have a chance to form a new relationship. Now her children are grown up and live separately. One of her children has moved abroad, the other to a big city in the countryside, so they rarely have the opportunity to meet.

In the meantime, Éva lost her parents and was left alone again. She is not open to new relationships and finds it difficult to establish relationships. Her hobby is gardening, she fills herself with this activity, but it also ties her to her home. Your child would love to move closer to them, but she is unable to give up her home and create a new home. She wants to live out her life here.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



MARCO, 55 YEARS OLD

Situation: Homeless and unemployed -
lack of help, depression

Location: Isernia, Italy



"Marco, a 55-year-old former business consultant, once lived a life of stability and structure. For years, he thrived in his career, but everything changed when he unexpectedly lost his job. With limited savings and no opportunities to re-enter the workforce, his life quickly spiraled. Unable to afford rent, Marco found himself homeless and for the past three years his only shelter has been his car.

Living on the streets, Marco faces daily risks—physical danger, health issues and the harsh realities of survival. But what weighs on him most is the profound social isolation. Cut off from the professional networks and friendships he once had, he now navigates a world that seems to look past him. People avoid eye contact, and conversations that once filled his days have been replaced by silence. The feeling of being invisible, disconnected from the rest of society, has deepened his sense of loneliness. Without a home, a job, or a community, Marco exists on the margins, struggling not just with his physical needs but with the emotional toll of being completely isolated".

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Gergely lives in a family, with his wife and children. As a child, he saw a tough father model with very high expectations. He felt good when he was young, but after starting his own family life, the responsibility weighed more and more on his shoulders, family needs and expectations were too big.

By age 50, he was professionally burned out and lost his job because of his attitude. He could not find work for a long time, which made him sick.

He fell into a deep depression from which he finds no way out. He finds difficult to accept the advice of his doctors and family. He is currently under medication and unable to work.

He does chores and physical tasks around the house but only after numerous requests. His family is showing signs of falling apart, his wife is trying to escape the marriage by divorcing him, but she fears that Gergely will commit suicide after that. They experience this state as a complete stalemate.”



GERGELY, 56 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Fót, Hungary 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Artur was being monitored by the Pombal Specialized Technical Treatment Team of the Leiria Integrated Response Centre, with methadone for heroin consumption. He had been abstinent for 10 years, but had severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and refused oxygen (machine).

He lived alone on the 3rd floor, without an elevator, and his health condition deteriorated to the point where he could no longer get to the Specialized Technical Treatment Team service, where he went every week.

The Team's Social Worker made arrangements with Pombal City Council and Social Security to find alternative housing, since living on a 3rd floor with no elevator, dependent on an oxygen machine that wasn't portable and was only powered by electricity, made Artur's life very lonely. At the same time, he looked for a home care service, which he always refused and which he later realized was because he was ashamed of the unhealthy state of his home. Artur's relatives lived far away from Pombal and the life he had led with drugs also ended up driving them away.

When everything finally seemed to be on the way to finding a housing solution, Artur didn't show up at the Specialized Technical Treatment Team's office at the scheduled time for his medication and appointments. After several unanswered telephone calls, the team's social worker reported the suspicions to the authorities, who found Artur dead at home.”



ARTUR, 56 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired on disability - former drug addict, divorced

Location: Pombal, Portugal 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



ELENI, 56 YEARS OLD

Situation: Early retirement - married

Location: Serres, Greece 

"Eleni lives with her 64-year-old husband in Serres. She had to retire quite early as she needed to care for her husband, who now suffers from dementia. A year ago, she also lost her son in a car accident. At this moment, she is trying to balance between supporting her husband and grieving the loss of her son. She has completely isolated herself from her family and social circle, and she rarely leaves her house.

At the same time, she is searching for ways to support her husband's dementia, as she is unaware of any structures that could provide her with immediate help. Additionally, she needs psychological support to cope with the daily struggle of caring for her husband and dealing with the loss of her son.

The local church approached her and tried to offer emotional support. This gave her a small boost, and three months ago, she started attending the church's charity events."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ SICK RELATIVE



OSTOJA, 56 YEARS OLD

Situation: Depression - lack of family support



“After a severe infection with COVID-19, she retired early. He lives in the suburbs with a modest income. His two sons live far away in another country, rarely come and have to take care of their families. She rarely goes out, she doesn't want to hang out with anyone, she's afraid to leave her safe corner in fear of a new infection. He fell into depression and claims to be sick with all possible diseases.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“I met Mrs Martin in November 2023, and at that time she was living in an apartment in the city centre. She has been living without electricity for a week because her electric meter has tripped. Living alone and nobody ever visited her. Her disability forcing her to stay in bed, she was unable to reset the circuit breaker. In order to eat and drink, she had a cooler, a jug of water and carrots placed at the bottom of her bed. She had medical prescriptions on her coffee table that had been staying there for days.

No health or social professionals knew about her situation. When I contacted her children, they all refused to come and take care of her. After her children's refusal to come and take care of her, I contacted her family doctor to inform him of his patient's state and he immediately organise a visit to her apartment.

She now has a daily visit from a nurse and the social services of the city have been contacted.”



ANNE, 58 YEARS OLD

Situation: Disabled person, not
independent

Location: Agen, France



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

“Ana, aged 59, a vocational school graduate, worked in commerce for a few years. At 25, she was diagnosed with epilepsy and has never been classified as having a disability; now, she has no income. She was married, but the marriage ended in divorce due to her illness 20 years ago. The marriage produced a daughter, now an adult, who, because of her mother's illness, was placed under the care of her father. Ana maintains no contact with her ex-husband or daughter, as their relationship is conflictual. The daughter does not understand her mother's situation, her behavior in crisis situations, and refuses to be there to help her. Ana lives alone in the city of Roman, in a two-room apartment under unfit living conditions, in a building no longer connected to utilities: water, gas, and electricity networks. The building belonged to her deceased parents, and the inheritance was not settled, with the right to the property also belonging to her sister, Maria, aged 54, with whom she has a tense relationship, and who threatens to evict her or sell the property.

She is often seen on the streets, poorly dressed, does not socialize with people, and refuses help from neighbors or others, reasoning that she does not want to inspire pity. Neighbors harass her, humiliate her, and mock her. When she has seizures, no one looks after her. Sometimes they call an ambulance to help her.

She refuses social assistance offered by the city hall, which could also cover medical insurance in case of need. She does not benefit from the support of non-governmental organizations that could assist her in obtaining the desperately needed medication for addressing her health problems.”



ANA, 59 YEARS OLD

Situation: Divorced, with epilepsy without support

Location: Roman, Romania



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

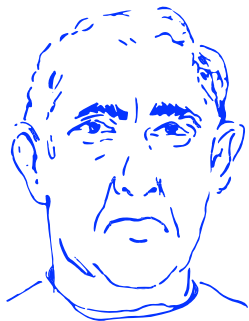
ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ FAMILY TENSIONS

+ STIGMATIZATION AND DISCRIMINATION

+ LACK OF MEDICAL SUPPORT



ANTONIO, 60 YEARS OLD

Situation: Long-term unemployed

Location: Jumilla, Spain



“Antonio is a separated, a childless man who has been unemployed for several years. He lives in a rented accommodation, but covering rent and basic expenses is challenging since he only receives unemployment benefits for individuals over 52.

Due to health issues, he is unable to perform physical work. With no family nearby, he spends most of his time alone. Although he has a few friends, he rarely sees them because they usually want to meet for drinks in restaurants or bars, which he cannot afford. As a result, he often declines their invitations.

Antonio's education level is limited to primary school, which further complicates his ability to access job training and certain employment opportunities..”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF EDUCATION



SENIORS

60-75 YEARS OLD

"Marika is a farmer who lives in a village not too far from the city of Serres. Her children live abroad, and a few years ago, she lost her husband due to the pandemic. As a result, she now lives alone in the village, without friends or relatives. At the same time, the financial difficulties she faces do not help her socialize, as she cannot frequently travel to and from the village.

Marika feels truly trapped in her small village, as she is far from social services, activities, and any social events that would make her feel useful, helpful, and that she is not alone. She would like to contribute to volunteer groups and attend cultural activities..."



MARIKA, 62 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widow

Location: Serres, Greece



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



AUGUSTO, 63 YEARS OLD

Situation: Mental health issues

Location: Pombal, Portugal



“Augusto worked for more than 20 years in the same company. He never formed close ties or bonds with his work colleagues. He left home for work and returned home as soon as the working day was over.

He became unemployed due to collective redundancy. He sometimes visited his family, traveling by train as he didn't have a driving license.

Around the age of 40, his father died and from then on, he began to reject family invitations to go out. Twenty years later, his mother died. He closed in on himself even more, as if he lived in a bubble.

He needed medication, which was first prescribed by a general practitioner and then by a psychiatrist. He was diagnosed as schizophrenic and didn't always take all his medication (sometimes he didn't take any at all) because he thought he was being persecuted. He left the house less and less. Eventually, he lost his mobility and lost his hygiene and eating habits. His health condition got worse and after a trip to the emergency room, he ended up being institutionalized.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

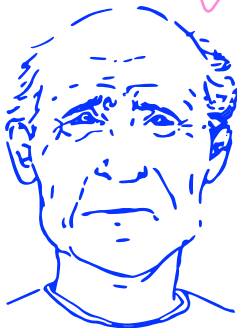
ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Preben lost his first wife to cancer after a long period, where Preben was the caregiver of his wife. Their son subsequently developed mental illness, which leaves Preben with many worries. After his wife's death, Preben got a new girlfriend, although their relationship remained superficial and never really became truly meaningful.

Through those years Preben spend his time in the home with limited social interaction outside of the wife and son. A few years later, Preben himself fell ill with prostate cancer, which made him unable to work or pursue his hobby of rifle shooting and hunting. His relationship with the new girlfriend also suffered and they broke up.

Preben physically recovered from the cancer, but was left with the responsibility of a mentally ill son on top of the loss of his job, relationships and joys from his hobbies. Preben reunited with his former girlfriend, but soon after they reunited the girlfriend became seriously ill. Preben is deeply affected by everything and has no one to talk to outside of the sick girlfriend. He fears a repeat of his previous situation as he yet again sees himself as a caregiver isolated in the home.”



PREBEN, 64 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widower, relatives suffering from illnesses

Location: Tønder, Denmark 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ FEAR OF LOOSING A LOVED-ONE AGAIN

“Milos lives in a village that is kilometers away from the city. His wife died last year and he was left alone in the house. He has two sons and a daughter, who started their own families and live in another city. After the death of their mother, the children invited Milos to move in with them so that he would not be alone, but he refused. Milos is in relatively good health, but he is very lonely. He misses his wife with whom he spent 40 years very much.”



MILOS, 65 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widower, bad health condition

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



BÉLA, 65 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Fót, Hungary 

“Béla is an aging man, lives by begging and has a serious underlying disease. He has a nasty tumor on his face that disfigures him. It repulses both children and adults, its unkempt appearance and bad smell create fear in addition to its disfigurement.

He is often seen begging in the city, especially in front of the Catholic church. He also participates in the Holy Mass several times, not necessarily out of conviction, but rather based on the willingness of Christian people to donate. He always walks alone, always accepts food and clothes. Basically, he seems like a well-intentioned person, not aggressive. Maybe existential reasons led to his current isolation.

We don't have strong connections with him, but we are trying to talk to him so that we can decide what we can do to help him. Based on his physical condition, he could undertake minor garden work, but his repulsive appearance prevents the citizens from employing him.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



JOHN, 65 YEARS OLD

Situation: Long-term unemployed

Location: Tønder, Denmark 

“John, a former colleague I've known for almost 25 years, was sharp, energetic, the life of the party with many relationships in the professional setting. However, he struggled with alcohol, which became increasingly difficult for him to manage and hide. Looking back, I realize the happy colleague and life of the party with all that energy might have been more of a desperate façade than a personality trait.

John ended up being fired and has been unemployed ever since. As his entire identity and a significant part of his relational life were tied to his professional life, he faces further challenges on top of the alcohol abuse. He transformed from being an ambitious businessman with a busy lifestyle to living a life at home where only his wife sees him most days. His social isolation is intertwined with a denial of his addiction, but he seems at a loss of what to do.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ DENIAL OF ADDICTION

“Maria is a woman who apart from having a physical disability, is also living in a social house, in the outskirts of Roman, about 4 km away from the town centre. She is struggling with walking and with managing to procure the necessary goods for her living. Where she lives there is no public transport, therefore it's quite impossible for her to get to the town, to the market, to the pharmacy or GP, and so on. Even the taxi drivers refuse to go there.

Some 5 months ago, her “disability income” stopped because previously the mail-delivery person did not dare to go to the slum where Maria lives and hand her the letter in which she was informed that she had to go to another town and show herself to a commission that decides whether she was entitled to get the pension for another year or not.

Considering the fact that she never got hold of that letter, she missed the appointment with the commission and therefore her pension was cancelled. Apart from that, also her medical insurance was stopped, and she found herself in the impossibility of getting the compensated medicine.

For her to be entitled to get the pension again and be medically insured it is completely out of the question because many journeys have to be made, and paperwork to be done and unfortunately, she is a very simple woman who would never be able to do all this if she would not receive support from professional people and help with the journeys to the hospital, to the commission in the other town and to the other offices that she has to visit in order to receive her rights again.”



MARIA, 68 YEARS OLD

Situation: Physical disability, living far away from the city center in a slum

Location: Roman, Romania



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

+ STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

“Elena, aged 68, lives alone in a modest apartment on the outskirts of a city. She has been a widow for five years, having lost her husband with whom she shared a life full of love and companionship. Her children are settled in other cities, and visits are rare and usually brief. Elena worked as a librarian, and although she has a pension that provides for her basic needs, she does not have the financial resources for costly activities.

Elena spent most of her adult life caring for her family and working. Now, in the absence of her husband and with a limited social circle due to retirement, she often feels lonely and isolated. The recent pandemic has exacerbated this situation since support groups and community activities were suspended or restricted.

Elena faces feelings of loneliness and depression, which have affected her mental health. Isolation has also had a negative impact on her physical health, as it has led to the neglect of personal care and a lack of motivation for physical activity. The absence of social interactions and support has led to a decrease in self-esteem and a sense of lack of purpose.”



ELENA, 68 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widow, retired, living alone on the outskirts of the city

Location: Roman, Romania



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

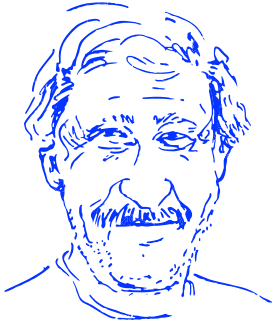
PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ COVID-19



CHRISTIAN, 68 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, living alone in a small apartment



“Christian is my former classmate from college, where we studied to become teachers together.

He struggles with anxiety and has been medicated for decades. After finishing our education, our friendship mainly revolves around our shared interests in music and birds.

Over the years, our relationship has evolved into me continuously providing support, when life gets tough for him. I believe his medication causes him to have very little empathy and thoughts for anyone other than himself. I also believe I am his main source of social interaction, even though our relationship mainly happens through phone calls and emails, which can be few and far between most times. The anxiety and medication cripples him into a personality which unfortunately is very hard to find likeable. ”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



AMEDEJ, 68 YEARS OLD

Situation: Unemployed

Location: Skofja Loka, Slovenia 

My apartment is cluttered with cabinets, tables, and dusty objects—a stagnant reminder of my isolated life. It hasn't been repainted since my hospitalization two decades ago, when my brothers briefly intervened, saying, "Now you can start over."

No one believed my illness. My brothers dismissed it as mere spoiled behavior, urging me to tough it out in the adult world—to work, endure, and find happiness. None of their promises materialized for me. I yearned for human contact, waiting for calls or visits that never came.

Last May, I booked a seaside retreat at the Little Dolphin Hotel—a place of solace where the sea's call still echoes in my memories. But alcohol and despair sabotaged my plans, and I canceled the visit, left with emptiness and regret.

Days passed in solitude until I finally reached out to my brothers and nephews, inviting them to lunch with me at the hotel, using the deposit for the occasion. It's a chance to reconcile, to show gratitude despite their lack of understanding. They painted my apartment long ago and occasionally leave food at my door.

As I stand by the road, waiting for them to pick me up for our lunch by the sea, I feel a glimmer of hope. The sound of waves will cleanse my spirit, and when I return, I'll clear the dust from my home, inspired by the memories of that seaside escape.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Georges is diagnosed with colon cancer. The oncologist gives him the treatment schedule for chemotherapy and issues him the prescriptions. Georges is single, he lives alone on the outskirts of his village that has no local shops. He waits three weeks, for the new course of chemotherapy, to say that he suffers from chain nausea, aphthosis and diarrhea leading to an accentuation of his weight loss and anorexia. He lost 8kg in 3 weeks times.

The doctor prescribes a home nurse twice a week to support him. She manages taking medication, washing and the rest... but she does what she can. Hospitalization of George is necessary but it reduces his autonomy. No longer having a taste for this way of living, he is opposed to continuing his treatment, but he is not able to return home either”



GEORGES, 69 YEARS OLD

Situation: Alone, suffers from an illness

Location: Agen, France



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ NO FAMILY

A retired married couple lives in the historic center of Isernia: Attilio, a former prison officer and Rosina, a former kindergarten teacher. They are around 70 years old and they still have a fair reserve of physical strength and full self-sufficiency. Their children work far from Isernia and have their respective families. Unfortunately the world that has emerged from the pandemic is not the same as before and Attilio, who has lost some friends, begins to have joint problems and has to give up his beloved forest excursions while Rosina becomes over-protective and tends to keep him at home. Rosina, for her part, with the problem (or the excuse) of her eyesight, has put away the crochet hook, which she enjoyed so much. Then, with her hearing problem, she distanced herself from her friends.

The quality of life of Attilio and Rosina is rapidly deteriorating, reaching a state of suffer that is perceived by their children. They realize that something must be done and that the solution cannot be an hourly domestic worker, both because it is certainly not acceptable to the couple and because it would solve some effect, not the cause of the problem. Children are determined to protect their parents' physical and mental health and for this reason they are active in finding local channels through which to ensure they can remedy the situation created. Unfortunately Attilio and Rosina are not beneficiaries of specific social protection policies: they are not that old, they do not have disabling pathologies, they are not eligible for any social protection program. And yet, if you look at it, their situation is very widespread...”.



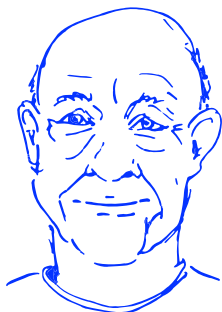
ATTILIO AND ROSINA

70 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired - disappointment, isolation and depression

Location: Isernia, Italy

- DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)
- MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- POVERTY
- REMOTE LOCATION
- UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT
- INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
- PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS
- ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
- ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING
- LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



KARL, 70 YEARS OLD

Situation: Divorced and became less outgoing afterwards

Location: Tønder, Denmark 

“Karl was married for 35 years, but then his wife left him. She was always outgoing with lots of friendships and was always eager to experience new things and he joined her in all those activities despite his introverted nature.

When Karl got divorced and retired, his world became very small and lonely. He still had a few old friends he occasionally met, but he spent most days at home with few opportunities to go out in a social setting.

He has two children and two grandchildren, whom he cares deeply for, but they have their own lives with limited invitations to join them. His children suggested he participate in activities in town, like croquet, but he refuses, as he considers the activities to be for the elderly. He claims to be fine, but from the sidelines, it seems like a lonely life.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ DIFFICULTY EXPRESSING EMOTIONS



BENT, 72 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widower with no children/family

Location: Tønder, Denmark 

"Bent, originally from Zealand (a few hours from Tønder) worked for Danish Railways his whole life. He moved to Tønder, because of his wife, who felt bullied where they lived in Zealand. They bought a house in the countryside between two small towns.

Bent's wife suddenly fell very ill and passed away. They had no children and hardly any family relations. They had talked to a few of their new neighbors, but after his wife's death, one neighbor couple moved, and the others ended up in nursing homes or passed away. Bent receives check-in-calls from the care service (NGO), but otherwise manages on his own, although he has no visitors and is reluctant to accept invitations.

He enjoys solitary outings but misses having someone to experience the outings with, as he has no close relationships anymore."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ STUBBORN AND PRINCIPLED

+ NO FAMILY OR ASSISTANCE

“She is living with sister 5 km away from the city, with a minimal income, with health problems, no offspring and other the torments of their old age. She fears that she may be infected with the new COVID- 19 virus is quite pronounced, and avoids going for a walk, as well as going to the doctor, in order to reduce the possibility of being infected with the aforementioned virus. As a result, the sisters are almost completely isolated from all forms of socializing. Both sisters have particularly impaired health..”



SVETLANA, 72 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, hypochondria

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

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UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ HYPOCHONDRIA

"I met Mrs Nicolas during a theatre festival where she was a volunteer helping the touring teams. Her husband had died two years before, and she was in conflict with her children. She was spending her holidays on her own, but she was keeping a strong bond with her grandson by calling him daily. She felt like she was not fitting in her surrounding social groups. She didn't get along with the people around her, especially the other volunteers. She, on another hand, still enjoyed welcoming people at her house and was seeking new contacts, new interactions.

Mrs Nicolas did not want to join a senior association or any other activity club, but she would have enjoyed helping others or simply pass down her skills and expertise, but she told me she did not know how she could do that. I gave her the contacts of a friend of mine who volunteers in an association which offers classes to children with school phobia."



CLAUDETTE, 74 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, widowed, on bad terms with her children

Location: Agen, France



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



JEAN, 74 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired - separated and

Location: Agen, France



"Mr Jean is 74 years old, retired, separated and homeless. He has been living in his car for two years now, after having been evicted from his home. The social services of his town have never been informed of his situation and he was left alone in a deeply difficult situation. He remained invisible for two years, until one day the police found him wandering in the streets and decided to inform the social services that this man was dealing with a precarious life situation. When social workers approached him for the first time after discovering the news, they met a man in a complete denial phase, refusing to accept the truth and any kind of help.

For an entire year, the social workers kept visiting him at least once a week, to talk to him, offer him some help but he stayed in a complete denial, the only thing he would accept being drinking a coffee with them. All along those few months, social and medical workers kept explaining to him how important it was for him to understand and accept his situation but more importantly how necessary it was for him to accept their outstretched hand.

For now, Mr Jean is sheltered in a medical home, after a severe health problem forced him to be hospitalised."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



LENA, 75 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, widowed, living far from her children

Location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro



“Lena spent her entire life on her family's farm. She had three sons and three daughters with her husband, who died early from cancer. Life in the countryside is made up of laborious cultivation of the farm.

The sons and daughters left and formed their own families in distant cities, lack of family support poverty remote location of her kids lack of communications and Lena was left alone. Sick, with a disturbed balance center. The children send their mother some money, but they do not come.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



ELDERLY

75+ YEARS OLD

"Kinga is an old lady, she lives alone in Fót. She lost her husband many years ago, and her children live on the other side of the country. Her old friends have passed away, she doesn't know about the programs organized in the old people's daily care centre and in the town for her age group, or she only finds out about them too late. Even then, she doesn't join this programs. Her grandchildren live in London and therefore see each other very rarely.

She had to leave her own apartment because she could not maintain it alone, so she moved into a friend's apartment as a tenant. Some social workers tried to help her but were unsuccessful. There is only one inspiration in her life: the "family time" with her main tenant's grandchildren. When the landlady's family comes to visit, Kinga is same as in the past, happy to talk and tell stories about her youth and the happy moments of her life. However, the family is a little worried that their own family member is relegated to the background in this way, as Kinga demands all the attention from them."



KINGA, 80 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired

Location: Fót, Hungary 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Arminda, 81, has been living alone for over five years. As a result of the frailty inherent in age and some health problems that have arisen, she has lost some dexterity and mobility.

Living in a city, on a fourth floor with no handrails and no elevator, she soon found herself trapped in her own home, far from services, people and the support she needed to be happy and have a decent life.

She has no children and her contact with distant relatives is very sporadic. She only has the support of a neighbor, also elderly, who is willing to bring her some meals and help her buy essential goods and medication. She went four years without seeing a doctor and without the sun shining directly on her face.

Used to that reality, when she was referred to social services she refused, saying that nothing was worth it anymore, having lost the meaning of her life over the years.”



ARMINDA, 81 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, physical illness, no family support network

Location: Pombal, Portugal



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



MARIA, 81 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, separated and visually impaired



"I live in the central area of Jumilla and have limited financial resources. I have 13 children—seven sons and six daughters—but I have little to no relationship with them. Some of them I haven't seen in over 20 years, and I've never met my grandchildren. Occasionally, my daughters visit, but they only come to criticize and blame me. One of my daughters lives in Jumilla, but she won't accompany me to the doctor or go shopping with me because she feels embarrassed to be seen with me.

Only one of my friends has a key to my house in case something happens to me, so she can come in if needed.

I endured gender-based violence for 40 years. We lived in the countryside, where I worked in the fields tending goats. I feel unsupported by public resources, the health department, and social services. I have become a very negative person, physically limited due to visual impairment."

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT



ADELE, 83 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired - widow living far away from the city center, loneliness

Location: Isernia, Italy



"Adele worked all her life as a farmer. During her life she met her husband and together they built a house, an isolated villa. Adele has a daughter whose studies led her to work outside Italy. As the years passed, Adele became a widow and, living in an isolated area. The sparsity of homes in the area led to infrequent interactions and, over time, many of her neighbors moved away or passed, leaving the area even more desolate.

Adele has a daughter, whose academic pursuits led her to seek opportunities abroad so the physical distance made regular visits very rare. Adele tried to turn to local social institutions for support but the limited access to public transportation and community services in her rural area further restricted her ability to participate in social activities or reach out for help.

Adele's social and physical isolation has made her life challenging: the lack of regular interaction with others has taken a toll on her mental and physical well-being"

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

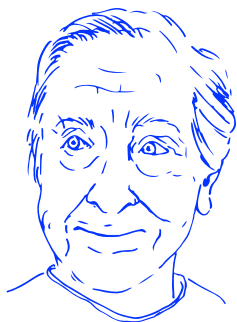
ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

“Eva is my mother. She lives alone in Tønder, while her two children live abroad, which limits their ability to visit her. Two years ago, Eva suffered a stroke, severely limiting her mobility and exacerbating a pre-existing depression. Before the stroke, Eva often visited local friends and enjoyed various outings and trips, which she cherished.

Her physical disabilities, coupled with the care she needs and her current depression, prevents her from venturing out on her own. While old friends visit her a few times a week, they often spend many hours together in silence, yearning for conversation and activities. Eva is fortunate to attend a weekly "open lunch" at the local nursing home, which is the highlight of her week. Although Eva does get visitors and weekly outings and although Evas physical and practical needs are met, Eva is in a situation where her zest for life simply disappears due to feeling lonely day in and day out.”



EVA, 83 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, seriously ill, requiring physical assistance

Location: Tønder, Denmark 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ FAMILY ABROAD

"Berthe is an isolated elderly person, she lives in a big city, Paris. She is single and has no children, no family and no friends. She has very few resources and she is a cantankerous person. She lives on the top floor of a bourgeois building in a confined space. She is a former household staff.

Her only outing is to go shopping once a week at her neighbourhood grocery store according to a ritual. A volunteer visits her every week to make connections and try a little socialization. For example, they will see a show together or participate in a free meal. She finds interest in youth and early childhood."



BERTHE, 85 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired, no family

Location: Agen, France



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



LUCIA, 85 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired - widow living far away from the city center, loneliness

Location: Isernia, Italy



“Lucia had spent her life in a small mountain village, where the once lively community gradually disappeared as people left for work in the cities. After her husband passed and her children moved away to start their own families, Lucia found herself alone.

Though her children called and visited occasionally, the distance made their support feel far away. Local institutions, like the church and social services, offered sporadic help, but it was rare due to the village's isolation. As she gazed out her window, all she saw was emptiness. The isolation, both physical and emotional, weighed heavily on her, leaving her feeling forgotten in a place that had once been full of life”.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



NIKA, 85 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widowed, 1 son living abroad

Location: Sofja Loka, Slovenia 

Every week, we gather in a room for elderly meetings. The room is cozy, with a table, benches, a kitchen, and a refrigerator. On Tuesdays, the regular attendees—Tatjana, Majda, Marija, Krista, Rada, and Berta—arrive, bringing bags and boxes, brewing coffee, and setting out cookies. Today, the ladies notice that Nika is missing and speculate about her whereabouts.

Tatjana wonders if Nika is sick, Majda suggests she might be ill, and Marija thinks she could be at her senior yoga class. Krista jokes that Nika might be visiting Tone, a man who helps her with repairs. Rada believes she could be at a new culinary course her son gifted her, while Berta laughs, suggesting Nika simply overslept. They all laugh, hoping Nika is okay and planning to call her after the meeting.

I, the organizer, listen quietly while planning next month's meetings. They don't know that I've just sent condolences to Nika's family. Nika passed away, found dead in her kitchen. Her son, unable to reach her, called me as I had a spare key. I discovered her and called paramedics, but it was too late. Nika lived alone, with her son far away, and she insisted on managing independently. She was active and well-liked by the group.

Now, I must sit at the table and inform Tatjana, Majda, Marija, Krista, Rada, and Berta about what happened to Nika.

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

REMOTE LOCATION

UNEMPLOYMENT/RETIREMENT

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

"Born in a family of two children, Ioan graduated from the military school and over time held the highest positions in the Romanian Army. He married young, and from his first marriage, he had a son who also joined the army. After the birth of his son, he divorced, leaving his only child in the care of his mother, maintaining contact only through the child support paid until the end of his studies. He remarried and moved in with his second wife. His brother died young, before having any descendants, making Mr. Ioan the sole support of his parents and the heir to their estate. He retired at the age of 60 and spent time with his wife. He became a widower at the age of 81. He doesn't have much interaction with his neighbors, most of whom are unknown or elderly.

Over time, age took its toll, and his strength and health declined. Visits to the market became rare, with purchases made by two young neighbors, who, taking advantage of the elderly man's inability and senility, used his monthly income for personal interest. He is alone, old, and helpless. Since he had not been seen for more than a week and the window remained closed for several days, the Ambulance and Fire Department were called. He was found collapsed on the floor, dehydrated, and covered with bedsores.

The anamnesis from the admission showed a grim reality: alone, isolated, with cardiovascular diseases and depleted of strength, he had been lying for more than 5 days on the bedroom carpet. The neighbors took on the task of caring for him, while social services made the necessary arrangements to find his son. He refused to take care of him, and Ioan was admitted for the second time, shortly after, this time for a longer period. He was brought back home and remained in the care of the neighbors and social assistance."



IOAN, 95 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widowed, 1 son of 70 years old

Location: Roman, Romania

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

POVERTY

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

Tona, 95 years old, lives alone in an old house above a valley leading to the seaside. The valley has a rich history, and the community is tightly knit, with groups like the Red Cross playing vital roles. Despite this, Tona remains isolated in her cold, damp home. Her family is scattered, with her daughters living abroad, unaware of her living conditions, which she prefers to keep secret. Her husband died years ago, and she no longer remembers his face. Recently, Tona's health has deteriorated. The doctor, concerned about her worsening condition, contacted the Center for Social Assistance. Despite their offers of home help, financial support, or relocation to a nursing home, Tona refuses to leave her house. Her memory is fading, and she often forgets people, including the doctor and social worker, whom she sometimes greets with hostility.

A neighbor used to visit weekly, bringing food and occasionally sharing a glass of wine. However, Tona's dementia has progressed, causing her to become suspicious and hostile, even towards him. She now accuses him of trying to poison her and refuses his help, leaving the food he brings untouched.

The doctor, social worker, and neighbor agree that Tona can no longer live alone, especially with winter approaching. They plan to visit her together to convince her to move to a safer place. When they arrive, they find the front door open and the house cold and empty. Tona is gone.

They search the house and the surrounding area, calling her name in vain. Eventually, they spot something shining at the edge of the clearing near the forest. It's Tona's white cloak. Realizing she has wandered into the forest, they exchange worried glances and start running, calling out for her: "Tona! Tona!"



Tona, 95 YEARS OLD

Situation: Widowed, dementia

Location: Sofja Loka, Slovenia 

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS



JUAN, 98 YEARS OLD

Situation: Retired - widowed

Location: Jumilla, Spain



“Juan has two children. One of them has a health problem and cannot go to see him. His other daughter lives her life, focused on her work and personal activities.

Juan was widowed five years ago and lives in a third floor flat with no lift. Due to his age and health problems, Juan has not been outside for 12 years.

He is only cared for by his carer who comes to his house for two hours in the morning, cleans and leaves him lunch and dinner prepared. The rest of the day Juan is alone. Once a week a nurse comes to treat his legs. This nurse has a key to his house. John moves very slowly and needs a lot of time to be able to do things with a walker or two crutches.”

DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (OR BREAK UP)

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS / LONG ILLNESS

ADDICTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

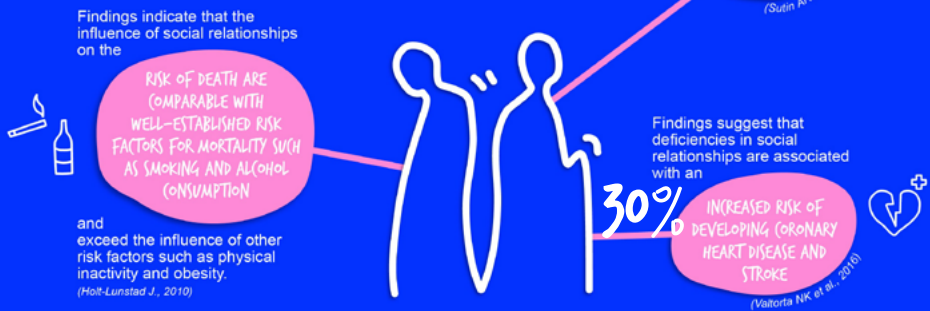
ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING

LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS

+ LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

SOCIAL
ISOLATION
KILLS

SOCIAL ISOLATION IS HARMFUL



Social isolation is not just a situation in which a person find himself/herself lonely but a situation of (conscious or unconscious) suffering due to the long term deficiency of social relations. One could think, naturally, that this suffering resembles a long-term depression, but it can actually lead to mental illness. Indeed, a study conducted on a 10 year period with over 12 000 people demonstrated that **loneliness is associated with a 40% increased risk of dementia.** (Sutin AR.).

Social isolation might even kill you, prematurely. While social isolation is almost always looked at through its psychological effects, studies show that it might also have severe physical effects. This might appear rather suprising but recent findings suggest that deficiencies in social relationships are associated

with an increased risk of developing **coronary heart disease and stroke** (Valtorta NK et al.). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the risk of heart stroke and disease is increased by 30%. Moreover, studies indicate that **the influence of social relationships on the risk of death are comparable with well-established risk factors for mortality such as smoking and alcohol consumption and exceed the influence of other risk factors such as physical inactivity and obesity** (Holt-Lunstad J.). WHO estimates the risk of early death from social isolation to rise by 25%.

Social isolation not only kills prematurely, but *'also have significant impacts on social cohesion and community trust'* (EU Commission, 2022).

Conclusion

WHAT SHALL
WE DO?

The challenge of social isolation is large and has systemic causes and implications. The reflex would be to tackle this challenge by targeting sub-groups of people such as 'the elderly', 'the young ones', etc. But, doing so would not be correct. Why? First, because a lot of causes of social isolation are not necessarily age-related. Second, because targeting specific groups always lead to siloed policy approaches. 'It's not in our scope. It's the Youth Department's job'. Therefore, we recommend to public authorities not to work on the subject of isolation through the age lense but rather to consider the following 7 focus points:

- 1. We need to better identify socially isolated people**
- 2. We need to better diagnose those at risk of isolation (early signs)**
- 3. We need to develop direct answers to help out those already isolated**

4. We need to reinforce and multiply solutions to prevent isolation of those at risk

5. We need to raise awareness on social isolation, how to recognize it and its effects

6. We need to develop city-wide answers by partnering within municipality departments and with local stakeholders, and in particular, local NGOs

7. We need to reinforce a culture of mutual community care

Also, we (including policymakers) should not forget that isolation is not like fixing a broken pipe, it is about people, which means that solutions shall be found through participatory and user-centered design approaches, as well as peer-to-peer exchange between cities throughout Europe and beyond. Because, **we shall not forget that isolation has no border, but solutions also.**



Christophe Gouache, designer & researcher,
Lead Expert of the Breaking Isolation URBACT
network



LISTEN TO OUR BREAKING ISOLATION SONGS



It's high time we
care again!



A call to break
isolation



Together & care

WHY MAKE SONGS?



Telling stories through music. Christophe Gouache, UR-BACT lead expert of the Breaking Isolation network, has written the lyrics of 3 original songs then used AI for composition to spread the word about the Breaking Isolation network and its issue. Through the lyrics, Christophe is telling us about the multiple factors and causes of social isolation, from the death of a loved one, break up, to domestic violence, addictions, and so on. The songs also tell us that isolation is not age-specific, nor religious-specific, etc. and that it may happen to anyone, your own parent, your neighbour or even yourself.

Besides raising awareness and knowledge about isolation, the songs are a call for action to end, reduce and prevent social isolation everywhere.

Of course, using AI was also part of an experiment for the network with new technologies and how they could be of use to spread knowledge and raise awareness...

IT'S HIGH TIME WE (ARE AGAIN

(Verse 1)

She's sixty seven and he's twenty three,
He's not even twelve, she just turned eighty,
No one to talk to, no one to turn to,
Isolation? Freaking universal!

He's a catholic, she's an orthodox,
A buddhist, a muslim, an atheist,
Inside, he knows no one should be alone,
But even she, believes they always will.

She is retired, he just dropped out of school
He's Black, she is white, hetero, gay, trans,
She lost her position, he lost his wife,
She ran out of money, he does gambling.

(Chorus)

**Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again**

(Verse 2)

He's your discreet neighbour, she's a cousin,
He has been your friend, she's an ex colleague,
once they might have been all former school
mates,
now, strangers avoiding one another.

We don't know he's here, or pretend not to,
He lives in an apartment in Pombal,
She's stuck inside with a chronic disease
She lives in a house in Isernia,

No one hears, but her heart cries every night,
She lives in a nursing home in Agen,
a bit each day, He drinks his life away,

He lives in a homestead in Jumilla.

(Chorus)

**Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again**

(Verse 3)

Every single day she wakes up sorrow,
She lives in a remote farmhouse in Fot,
He spends his life on social media,
He lives in a flat in Skofja Loka.

She's never been taught how to behave right,
She lives in social housing in Serres,
Weirdo or crazy are the names he's given,
He lives in a flat in Bijelo Polje.

Beaten by her proper-looking husband,
she lives in a nice cottage in Tønder,
He got rejected like an old tissue,
He lives in a studio in Roman,

(Chorus)

**Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again**

(End)

No family no more, no friends no more,
No relations, only deep emptiness,
A feeling of distress and nothingness,
Isolation? Freaking universal!

A CALL TO BREAK ISOLATION

(Verse 1)

Woke up this morning, the sun was up,
I felt no joy, no wish to get up,
Some say, my life is social blackout
Some say, more often I should go out

No phone call, no chat in the hallway
No true friend, no one to share pathway
I'm not ok, but tell that I am
Feeling alone, don't tell that I am

Listen to the whisper in the air,
A call to reach out for mutual care,
In Jumilla and in Isernia,
To the mountains of Skofja Loka,

(Chorus)

**It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope**

**It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope**

(Verse 2)

The whisper is now getting louder
An unstoppable call in Tønder
It is now a chorus of voices
Singing together in all places

The call for breaking isolation
Echoes in Fot like an ovation
In Seres, or in Bijelo Polje,
Human connections are just toll-free

(Chorus)

**It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope**

**It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope**

(Verse 3)

No one should ever be left aside
Yet more and more folks are put aside
Opening up their arms in Roman
Relations are what makes us human

With the warmth of love and tenderness
In Pombal or Agen, face to face
We break the walls of isolation
We need everyone to take action

(End)

We are Europe, we are URBACT
We are cities, we are citizens, we are elected
officials, we are civil servants, we are here
Together to create change so that no one
Is ever abandoned and left with no connection

TOGETHER & CARE

(Verse 1)

7 o'clock, in Agen, France,
the police breaks the door,
she's laying down on the floor,
the doctor say she must have died 2 years ago.
9 o'clock, in Isernia, Italy,
the postman rings the bell
almost like breaking a spell,
the man's last visit must have been 3 months ago.

11 o'clock, in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro,
two children and single,
no extra time to mingle,
he left her with nothing about 4 years ago.
12 o'clock, in Fot, Hungary
plays alone in the street,
each day feeling bittersweet,
not even one friend yet moved in 9 months ago.

(chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire**

**We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care
We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care**

(verse 2)

2 o'clock, in Serres, Greece,
she's shaking all over,
got beaten like life's over,
regretting to have married him 3 years ago.

4 o'clock, in Tønder, Denmark,
he wakes up in distress,
feeling each day like a mess,
always together, lost his wife a year ago,
6 o'clock, in Skofja Loká, Slovenia,
she looks at the window,

never out, she's in limbo,
distant, got PTSD 3 years ago.

(chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire**

**We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care
We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care**

(verse 3)

8 o'clock, in Roman, Romania,
Daily Harassed in school,
he walks head down, that isn't cool,
Pushed and mocked, it all started a few months ago.

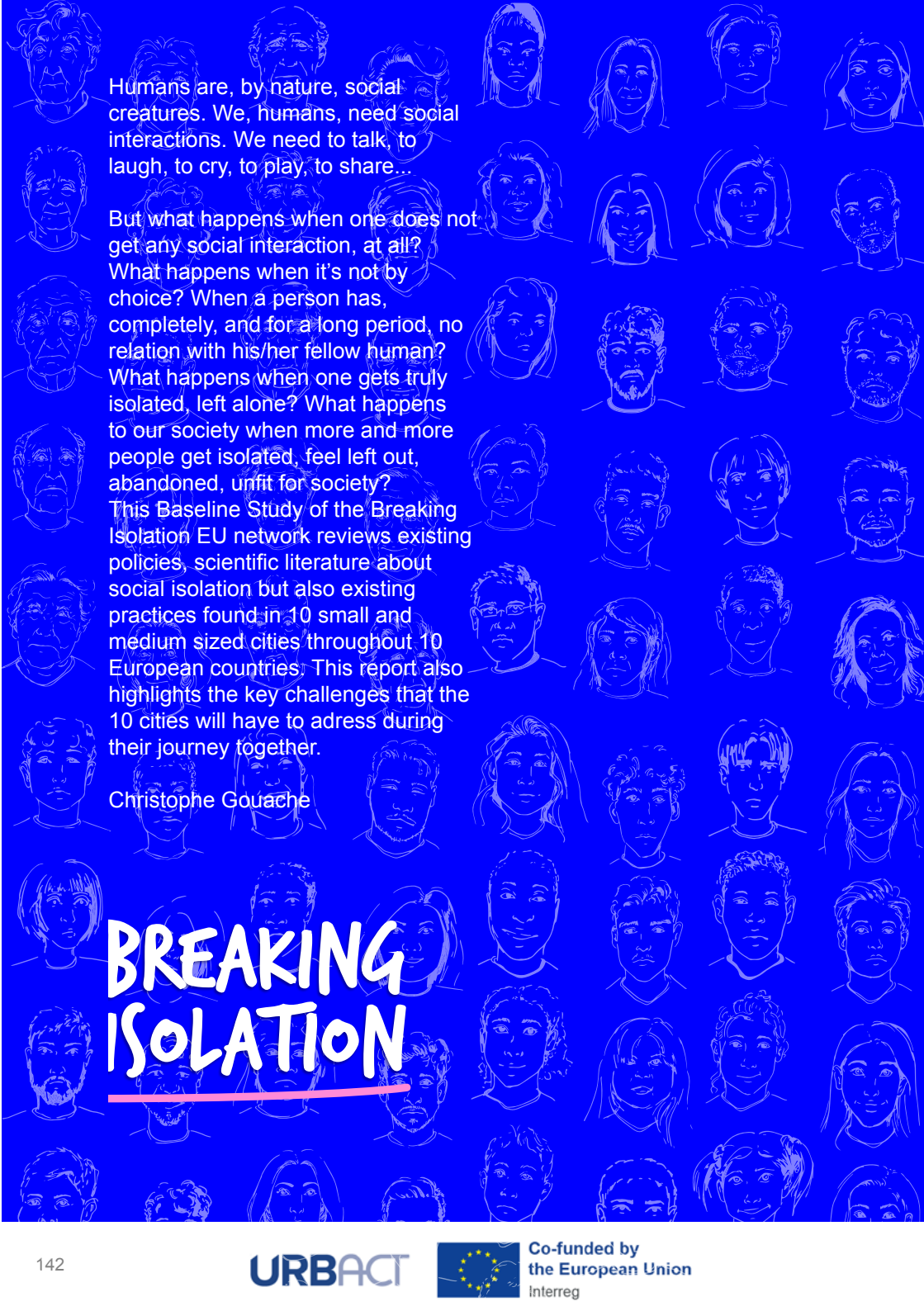
10 o'clock, in Jumilla, Spain,
going out she might, but
to move her legs it's a fight,
got into a bad accident, 2 years ago.

Midnight, in Pombal, Portugal
coming home finally,
drunken inexorably,
never stopped since she left, that was 9 months ago.

(Chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire
Isolation is a social straitjacket
a social straitjacket**

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire
Isolation is a social straitjacket
a social straitjacket**



Humans are, by nature, social creatures. We, humans, need social interactions. We need to talk, to laugh, to cry, to play, to share...

But what happens when one does not get any social interaction, at all? What happens when it's not by choice? When a person has, completely, and for a long period, no relation with his/her fellow human? What happens when one gets truly isolated, left alone? What happens to our society when more and more people get isolated, feel left out, abandoned, unfit for society? This Baseline Study of the Breaking Isolation EU network reviews existing policies, scientific literature about social isolation but also existing practices found in 10 small and medium sized cities throughout 10 European countries. This report also highlights the key challenges that the 10 cities will have to address during their journey together.

Christophe Gouache

BREAKING ISOLATION