Experts Contributions Consensus Conference on Homelessness

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Key Question 1: What does homelessness mean?

Key Question 2: Ending homelessness, a realistic goal?

Key Question 3: Are housing-led policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?

Key Question 4: How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the homelessness policies be assured?

Key Question 5: To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?

Key Question 6: What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

Key Question 1: What Does Homelessness Mean?
Bill Edgar, European Housing Research Limited and University of Dundee

Introduction

This paper presents some of the issues involved in arriving at a consensual definition of homelessness (and housing exclusion) across the EU. Developing and implementing effective policies to prevent and address homelessness involves different ministries of government, central and local authorities as well as NGOs involved in providing services for the homeless. Hence it is essential to have a common understanding of the nature of homelessness and a common approach to data collection in the EU.

Significant challenges remain both in measuring the extent and diversity of homelessness in different parts of Europe and in making effective use of data to inform strategies designed to reduce or eradicate the problem. Many of these challenges were discussed in Measurement of Homelessness at European Union Level (Edgar et al, 2007), a study which sought to develop methodologies and practices for building the statistical capacity of EU member states in relation to homelessness and housing exclusion. The study highlighted the complex and dynamic nature of homelessness and the growing acceptance of conceptualisations which recognise multi-dimensional pathways into homelessness involving structural, institutional, relationship and personal factors (Torro, 2007; Minnery and Greenhalg, 2007). Adopting a pathways model has implications for the way in which homelessness is defined and the sources of data needed to understand the processes at work. This paper draws on that research as well as the findings of the Mphasis[1] project which followed on from that study.

We begin with a description of the conceptual definition of homelessness proposed by FEANTSA, which is known by the acronym ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion). The paper then proceeds to briefly consider some of the operational issues to be addressed to ensure accurate and reliable data are collected. This section also considers different perspectives on the operational definition and differences of opinion surrounding its adaptation and adoption across Europe. These perspectives arise largely due to the different pathways and entries into homelessness – the paper briefly refers to this understanding as an explanation of the reason for such diverse perspectives.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Homelessness

The last decade has seen changing conceptualisations of homelessness emerge in both academic research and in policy development in Europe (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2010; chapter 1). In order to enumerate homelessness it is necessary to establish both conceptual and operational definitions that allow the population of interest to be specified unambiguously and to specify the living situations in which this population may be counted. FEANTSA approached this task by specifying a conceptual approach that identifies three domains, which together constitute a home, the absence of which can be taken to delineate homelessness (Edgar and Meert, 2004). Having a home can be understood as: having a decent dwelling (or space) adequate to meet the needs of the person and his/her family (*physical domain*); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations (*social domain*) and having exclusive possession, security of occupation and legal title (*legal domain*).

This conceptual model is used to specify seven theoretical types of homelessness and housing exclusion (Figure 1). From this model, FEANTSA has adopted a conceptual definition of homelessness and housing exclusion, outlined in Table 1, and developed this into an operational definition, which forms the basis of the ETHOS typology of homelessness.

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[1] Mutual Progress on Homelessness through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems. This project was funded by the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities PROGRESS Programme in order to improve the capacity for monitoring information on homelessness and housing exclusion in 20 European countries on the basis of the recommendations of the previous EU study on Measurement of Homelessness.
http://www.trp.dundee.ac.uk/research/mphasis/

Figure 1: The Domains of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

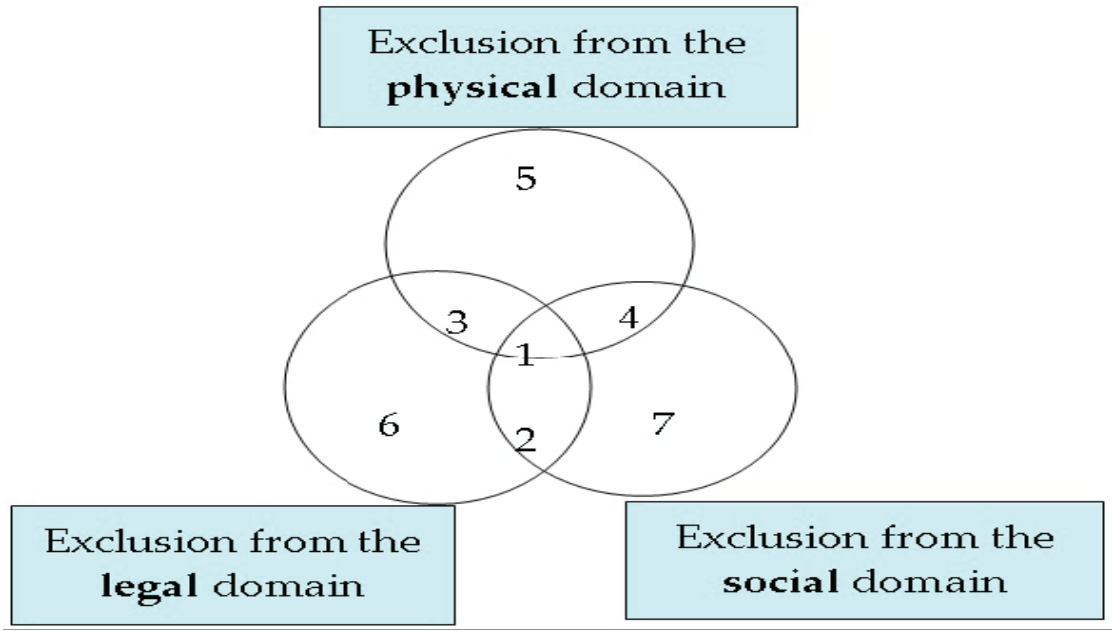

Table 1 Seven theoretical domains of homelessness

Conceptual Category	Operational Category		Physical Domain	Legal Domain	Social Domain
Homelessness	1	**Rooflessness**	No dwelling (roof)	No legal title to a space for exclusive possession	No private and safe personal space for social relations
	2	**Houselessness**	Has a place to live, fit for habitation	No legal title to a space for exclusive possession	No private and safe personal space for social relations
Housing exclusion	3	**Insecure and Inadequate housing**	Has a place to live (not secure and unfit for habitation)	No security of tenure	Has space for social relations
	4	**Inadequate housing and social isolation within a legally occupied dwelling**	Inadequate dwelling (unfit for habitation)	Has legal title and/or security of tenure	No private and safe personal space for social relations
	5	Inadequate housing (secure tenure)	Inadequate dwelling (dwelling unfit for habitation)	Has legal title and/or security of tenure	Has space for social relations
	6	Insecure housing (adequate housing)	Has a place to live	No security of tenure	Has space for social relations
	7	Social isolation within a secure and adequate context	Has a place to live	Has legal title and/or security of tenure	No private and safe personal space for social relations

The ETHOS typology derived from this conceptual approach (see Table 2) is intended to provide an operational definition of homelessness and housing exclusion, which can be adapted to national and local perspectives. This also allows different nomenclature of service provision and policy models to be clarified and related.

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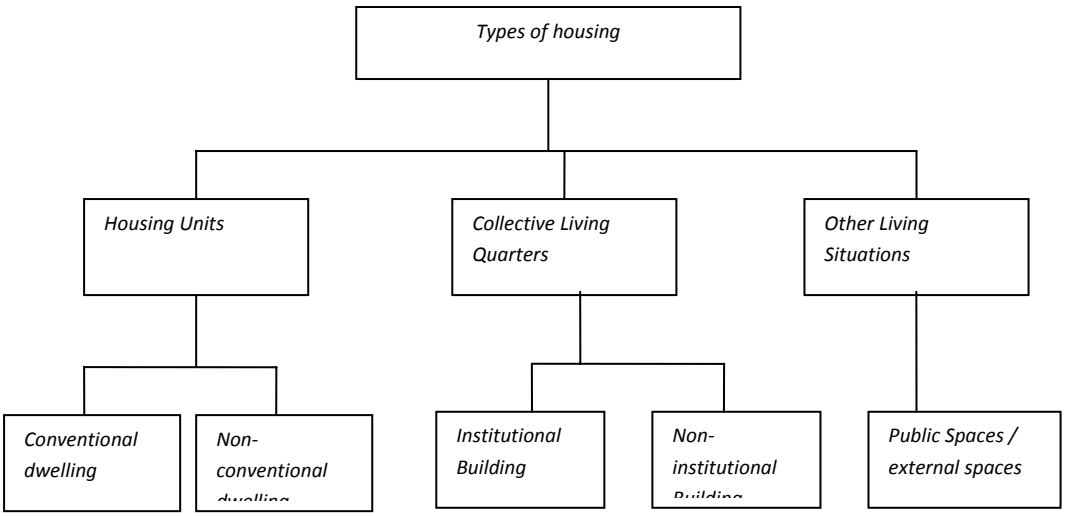
Table 2 ETHOS - European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

Conceptual Category		Operational Category		Living Situation
ROOFLESS	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public space o external spacer
	2	People staying in a night shelter	2.1	Night shelter
HOUSELESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 3.2 3.3	Homeless hostel Temporary Accommodation Transitional supported accommodation
	4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 5.2	Temporary accommodation / reception centres Migrant workers accommodation
	6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1 6.2 6.3	Penal institutions Medical institutions Children's institutions / homes
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 7.2	Residential care for older homeless people Supported accommodation for formerly homeless persons
INSECURE	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 8.2 8.3	Temporarily with family/friends No legal (sub)tenancy Illegal occupation of land
	9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1 9.2	Legal orders enforced (rented) Re-possession orders (owned)
	10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents
INADEQUATE	11	People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1 11.2 11.3	Mobile homes Non-conventional building Temporary structure
	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwelling unfit for habitation
	13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding

Source: Edgar (2009), p. 73

It has been argued that any definition of homelessness and housing exclusion should avoid the stigmatisation of the homeless. For this reason both the EUROSTAT/INSEE study (Brousse, 2004) and the FEANTSA definition of homelessness and housing exclusion (Edgar and Meert, 2004) begin from a definition of home and identify the living situations which can be understood to represent a lack of a home or housing exclusion. Edgar et al (2007) adopted the UNECE/EUROSTAT (2006) definition of living situations which makes a distinction between conventional dwellings, collective living quarters and other housing units or non-conventional dwellings (p. 23). Figure 2 which is adapted from the UNECE/EUROSTAT report (2006; Chart 4) summarises this approach.

Figure 2 Types of Housing Unit and Living Situation



Source: Adapted from UNECE/EUROSTAT (2005) Chart 4, p 123

The UNECE / EUROSTAT report made recommendations regarding population and household censuses in Europe (UNECE/EUROSTAT, 2006; p.103). The report identifies and defines the usual place of residence where households are to be counted. Hence the definition provided in relation to the homeless is for people who do not have a 'usual place of residence'. The general rule governing usual residence is that a person's place of usual residence is that at which he/she spends most of his/her daily night-rest (UNECE/EUROSTAT, 2006; para 160). The report recognises that, for most persons, the application of this rule will not give rise to difficulty but identifies people living in institutions and homeless people where the rule requires to be defined.

For the purpose of census enumeration, the report defines housing arrangements where a person is a usual resident at the time of the census' to cover all persons who are usual residents in different types of living quarters, or who do not have a usual residence and stay temporarily in living quarters, or are roofless persons sleeping rough or in emergency shelters when the census was taken (para 615). The report recommends the following classification by housing arrangement:

(1.0) Occupants (that is persons with a usual residence) living in a conventional dwelling
(2.0) Occupants (that is persons with a usual residence) living in another housing unit – hut, cabin, shack, caravan, houseboat, or a barn, mill, cave or other shelter used for human habitation at the time of the census
(3.0) Occupants (that is persons with a usual residence) living in a collective living quarter – a hotel, institution, camp, etc.
(4.0) Persons who are not usual residents in any living quarter category, such as homeless or other people moving between temporary accommodation.

Conceptual and Operational Issues in the Definition for Policy Making and Data Collection

A key aim of the development of ETHOS was to use a robust conceptual definition that allowed different operational definitions to be developed which reflect either different policy purposes or distinct national situations. Thus while it is clearly possible to criticise the ETHOS typology on a number of grounds (see Marpsat, 2009; Amore et al 2010) the benefit of the approach is that it allows different operational approaches to be related to the same conceptual framework.

The Statistician's Perspective

Statisticians responsible for census enumeration are concerned to identify and define the usual place of residence where households are to be counted on census night (see above). Thus, while statisticians can accept the conceptual definition of houselessness and define the usual place of residence as an institution, they would not accept the **operational category 6 in ETHOS**. For the purposes of enumeration a person is either resident in a prison, hospital on other institution on census night or in some other place. Hence, while this category is important for policy and planning purposes especially in relation to the prevention of homelessness, it is not one that a statistician recognises.

The Policy Maker's Perspective

Strategies to tackle homelessness in Europe have moved in recent years towards policies aimed at prevention and 'housing first' (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Policy makers therefore need to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes to prevent eviction and to ensure sustainable re-housing of homeless people. This means that it is necessary to count the number of people who receive support to sustain a tenancy who may have been homeless or at risk of homelessness. The **ETHOS operational category 7** reflects this issue – people living in longer-term supported accommodation. However, stricto sensu, people in this living situation are not homeless.

Different National Perspectives

ETHOS identifies **operational category 4** – places for people (women) fleeing from domestic violence. However, in Germany this type of facility is not regarded as part of the homelessness sector and would not be specifically identified in official data sources as such.

Furthermore, situations change over time so it is important that the typology of homelessness (ETHOS) is robust enough to reflect change without the need for constant revision (although it does need to be kept under review). One example of this is in relation to **operational category 9.** While the threat of eviction from rented accommodation is understood in all countries, it is only recently that the loss of a dwelling due to mortgage re-possession (**category 9.2**) has become an issue in some countries.

It was partly as a reflection of such discussion that Edgar et al (2007), in a study funded by the European Commission[2] adopted a narrower version of ETHOS which could, they argued, be more widely adopted across Europe offering the possibility of a harmonised European definition for the purposes of data collection (though countries would still wish to develop broader definitions for the purposes of policy making and evaluation). This definition of "ETHOS Light" is given in Figure 3 below.

[2] See the website : http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2007/study_homelessness_en.pdf

Figure 3 Proposal for a harmonised definition of homelessness

Operational category		Living situation		Definition
1	People living rough	1	Public space / external space	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homeless hostels	Where the period of stay is less than one year[3]
		4	Temporary accommodation	
		5	Transitional supported accommodation	
		6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	
4	People living in institutions	7	Health care institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
		8	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
		10	Non-conventional building	
		11	Temporary structure	
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

Source: Edgar et al, 2007

Understanding the Dynamics of Homelessness to arrive at a Definition

The ETHOS definition of homelessness was developed in a particular manner to reflect the fact that homelessness is not a static phenomenon and any definition of it needs to capture the process of housing exclusion and the factors that underlie this process. This section summarises the key aspects of this thinking by referring to the factors of homelessness and the pathways into homelessness. Since the experience of homelessness is of different durations it is important that any definition of homelessness captures the temporal aspects of the phenomenon. The section ends by referring to this aspect since this is important in designing methods of data collection and in developing policies of intervention.

The scale, nature and causes of homelessness as seen in a particular national context might be substantially influenced by the predominant definition and conceptualisation of homelessness commonly used in this context. A very narrow definition focusing on the most extreme forms of homelessness and the most destitute persons (rough sleepers and persons in emergency accommodation) will almost automatically lead to a smaller size and

[3] The period of one year is chosen to allow consistency with UNECE/EUROSTAT Census recommendations.

higher proportion of persons with serious support needs and burdened life histories than if a broader definition is applied including the “houseless” and different household types (including families) in temporary accommodation.

It has been hypothesised that countries with benign social and economic conditions – well functioning housing and labour markets and generous social security policies – will have a low overall prevalence of homelessness, but a high proportion of their relatively small homeless populations will have complex personal problems (Fitzpatrick 1998). Although there is some evidence available for this, the hypothesis remains difficult to prove through comparative analysis between countries due to a lack of accurate official data and to the fact that countries with restrictive welfare policies tend to adopt narrow definitions of homelessness for data collection purposes (see Busch-Geertsema et al, 2010, chapter 3).

Following Edgar (2009) we can distinguish four broad **risk factors** which increase the probability homelessness. These are structural factors, institutional factors, relationship and personal factors. In addition, triggers refer to specific events which may lead directly to an episode of homelessness, or to a further step in a ‘career’, which may ultimately result in homelessness. This is illustrated in Table 3 below.

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CAUSE	FACTOR OF VULNERABILITY	Trigger
STRUCTURAL	Economic processes (poverty, unemployment)	Rent or mortgage arrears Eviction from rented or owned home Loss of tied accommodation Change of place for job search
	Housing market processes	
	Social protection / welfare	New arrival, change of status, Access to affordable housing and social protection blocked
	Immigration, citizenship	
INSTITUTIONAL	Shortage of adequate mainstream services and lack of co-ordination between existing services to meet demand or care needs	Support breakdown or no adequate support in case of emerging need
	Allocation mechanisms	
	Institutional living (Foster / Child Care), prison, long-term hospital	Discharge Loss of home after admission
	Institutional procedures (admission, discharge)	
RELATIONSHIP	Family Status	Leaving family home
	Relationship situation (abusive partners or parents)	Domestic violence
	Relationship breakdown (Death, divorce, separation)	Living alone
PERSONAL	Disability / long-term illness / mental health problems	Illness episode Support breakdown or problems to get adequate support (Increased) substance Misuse
	Low educational attainment	
	Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling)	

Table 3 Risk factors and triggers for homelessness

Table adapted from Edgar 2009

In addition to these factors leading to homelessness, **demographic change** can also be seen to have an impact of the scale of households who may be vulnerable to housing exclusion and homelessness. The complexity of understanding this at EU level is the result of the impact of different welfare regimes (see Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007, Busch-Geertsema et al, 2010; chapter 7). All EU countries have undergone a demographic

transition since the 1960s, leading to an ageing of the population combined with a fall in general fertility rates. This has meant that population change, within countries and regions, is increasingly led by migration rather than natural change. It is reasonable therefore to expect such structural changes to be reflected in the age profile and migration (and ethnic) status of homeless people.

While there has been limited research on youth homelessness in Europe, it is clear that there are different pathways into homelessness experienced by young people[4], older people and women. Busch-Geetsema et al (2010; chapter 5) summarise the research evidence related to these different pathways. Meert et al (2004) demonstrate that adult pathways into homelessness are often associated in the media and in public perception with middle-age single men. However, a significant proportion of the homeless population is older people. Edgar and Doherty (2001) identify that there are significant differences between countries in the nature and causes of homelessness for women (either on their own or with their children). Relationship factors, and domestic violence in particular, are an important but not a sufficient explanation of women's pathways into homelessness. The consequences of changes in household composition and risk of poverty (more female-headed households, more single mothers, a "feminisation" of poverty, increased participation in the low-paid segments of the labour market) are also relevant. For example, data in a number of countries show a high rate of rent arrears and evictions as triggers for homelessness among women.

The evidence also suggests that the **profile of homeless people is changing**. While the predominant characteristic of homeless people is middle-aged single men, there is a growing proportion of women, of younger people and of families with children. Furthermore while most homeless people have low educational attainment and are unemployed, there is a growing proportion of people with higher levels of education and in work (albeit mostly part-time and low paid employment). Although most homeless people are national citizens, in many EU countries (especially among the EU-15) there is a growing proportion of immigrants among the street homeless and among homeless service users (in some countries this is the majority).

Homeless entries are often not the result of a single event or trigger but another step in a pathway or "career" with earlier stages and/or – as the American researcher O´Flaherty (2004) calls it – "a conjunction of unfortunate circumstances". This is important, because it draws attention to chances for early intervention and crisis intervention. This also emphasises the approach underlying ETHOS of recognising that homelessness is a process leading to vulnerability in the housing market which may result in housing exclusion or visible homelessness.

"Homeless careers" can be more adequately categorised into those leading only to a relatively short and singular episode of homelessness (transitional homelessness), those involving several episodes of homelessness (episodic homelessness) and those where homelessness has been experienced without interruptions for years (chronic homelessness; May, 2000).

Although comprehensive and robust research on the "dynamics of homelessness" in Europe is absent, there are clear indications that long-term homeless people constitute a minority of service provider clients in Europe. Data from Germany show for example that only 11 per cent of all users of NGO services for homeless persons used these services for more than a year, 47 per cent used them for less than a month (BAG W 2009). However caution is needed when interpreting these data because short-term users of one service might use other services instead and not using a service for homeless persons cannot be equated with not being homeless.

Conclusions

The ETHOS typology provides a robust conceptual definition of homelessness and housing exclusion, which allows specific operational definitions to be adopted, in order to reflect national situations and policy needs.

The Draft Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on Combating Homelessness (dated 5th-6th October 2010) recommends member states adopt ETHOS: "13. There is no common European definition of homelessness, and the Committee would therefore urge the Member States to use the ETHOS typology

[4] For an overview see Anderson and Tulloch 2000 and O'Sullivan 2008

(European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion). This should make it possible to compare situations in the Member States and results of different initiatives".[5]

The need to have different types of data (stock, flow and prevalence) has implications for the operational methods used to collect information. Thus, for example, service provider systems need to record data of entry to and exit from the service to allow different measures to be calculated and to monitor policy objectives (e.g. reducing the length of time spent in temporary accommodation). In order to monitor strategic policy objectives to end long-term homelessness it is necessary to adopt a consensual operational definition of chronic homelessness and repeat homelessness.

There is evidence from reviews of national homeless strategies of countries successfully using specific target indicators to monitor policy implementation and outcomes (e.g. prevalence rate of evictions, number of people spending more than a defined length of time in temporary accommodation). The adoption of secondary indicators on overcrowding and housing deprivation by the Social Protection Committee provides the basis for more comparative analysis of some ETHOS categories using EU-SILC and the 2011 Census. The evidence from the MPHASIS project, demonstrates several key issues. First, it is necessary to use a combination of survey and administrative sources of data collection to provide the evidence base for policy purposes. Second, most counties need to ensure that there is proper governance of data collection on homelessness and housing exclusion by specifying the strategy and funding for data collection in the overall homelessness strategy (see Edgar et al, 2007). The Census 2011 provides an opportunity for all countries in Europe to provide a baseline of information on most of the ETHOS categories.

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Key Question 1: What does Homelessness Mean?
Primož Časl, Društvo Kralji Ulice (Kings of the Street), Slovenia

Introduction:

I am a man of wealth (of experience) and taste (in terms of values). Based on my fieldwork studies - both as a student of cultural anthropology and as a homeless human being, traveller, citizen of the world, squatter, ex- drug addict, son of my (divorced) parents and almost father (an abortion prevented it), I am a searcher of knowledge and an aspirant to wisdom, though I know now that it is a gentle plant, which needs proper and patient cultivation.

In the last two years I started the "great come-back" from a pit of un-creativity and boredom. My rehabilitation reached the stage of "resocialization", including the accomplishment of my studies at the University of Ljubljana and the resettlement program of Društvo Kralji Ulice (Kings of the Street), an association for help and self-help of homeless people. The basis and origins of this organization is a street paper, which offers homeless people and everybody else an opportunity to participate creatively by writing articles or doing other jobs, and also to make money by selling the paper instead of begging. I am using this paper to write about my research in the field of homelessness.

When the Conference of Poverty, Social Exclusion and Homelessness was organized in Ljubljana in June 2010, I participated by co-organizing two discussions with homeless people from all over Slovenia and presenting our conclusions. The aim of the conference was to set the ground for a national homelessness strategy. Different stakeholders were invited to present their point of view and my contribution was to present our view of the problem. Concrete stories of participants presented the constant encountering of problems that homeless people have in their everyday life. The meetings highlighted the diversity of homeless experiences and realities. Stories varied from "total disaster" to "fairytale" in terms of possibilities that homeless people have and the type of creative co- operation that they can enter into. The leading topic was that of connecting actors in the field of homelessness. Both discussions clearly exposed the need to connect existing operative organizations, the need to broaden the public discourse about homelessness and a need to put the problem of homelessness on the main stage of the thrilling reality of contemporary Slovene society.

The conference formed and presented conclusions. We definitely need a national policy and strategy in the field of homelessness and this should be based on adequate understanding of homelessness. The basic priority should be accessibility of accommodation; there is a need for inter-sectoral connecting, professionalization; for the development of knowledge and sufficient staff provision; and last but not least, we need to consider the special vulnerability of specific groups and the need to develop programs adjusted to the needs of those users. The result of the conference was a proposal to the government to make a time- limited commitment to establish national policy and a strategy in the field of homelessness, which in fact represents one of the commitments of the European Council of Departments in the field of Social Services. The government should form a working team which should include representatives of homeless people alongside the professionals, NGO representatives, researchers, local community representatives and other actors.

We are willing to learn from the many successful models presented and we are capable of establishing and implementing a national strategy, but some political will is necessary now.

My fieldwork research

In my fieldwork research I organized four focus groups; group discussion on the key question in order to get the perspective of people with the experience of homelessness. In focus groups we can explore the topic in a wider way then in one-to-one discussions. The aim was to encourage thinking and talking about topics connected with homelessness and latently presented in us. By reporting on our conclusions in the street paper Kings of the Street, I tried to establish a discourse of an engaged discussion, to remind people of important questions and so create some platform for the chance of the change. Through discussions we defined key concepts and established important (true) values, playing an important role in the process of changing (ending) situations of homelessness.

In the following contribution I will, as an expert with experience of homelessness, concentrate on my personal story, supported with the story of my close comrade Marko and a few impressions from other stories, discussed in the fieldwork research.

I will try to decode different categories of homelessness and connect them to my experiences and those of my colleagues. I will also try to explain the relationship between objective and subjective presentations of homelessness, which are not always harmonized.

I will try to show homelessness also depends on the state of mind of the individual. Subjective perception sometimes contradicts objective categorization. For example, a homeless person may deny their problem, as is clearly shown in the story of a post-graduate student explored below. The consequence may be an inability to move on towards change of the homeless situation into a non-homeless one. It's important anyhow not to put too much responsibility on vulnerable people who may not be able to solve the problem on their own but may need other support – social, health etc. Another example is when a grown-up child still lives at his/ her parents place because it's more convenient (less expense and less effort), and on the other hand there is a lack of housing, employment and other transition policies offered. But it also means this person does not realize his/her dependency and that he/she is in fact a homeless person. I call it “the hotel mama syndrome”. The consequence may be an inability to move on towards change.

Finally, I will try to show the importance of understanding the meaning of change and the mechanisms of creating it.

My story:

In my contribution I will describe my attempt at transition into adulthood, which ended up in housing exclusion and homelessness.

In my case everything started when I was fifteen, moving from the local community of a small town on the Slovenian Coast to the capital city (capital village on my opinion!) of Ljubljana in order to continue my education at high school. Looking back after more than twenty years, I can say that I was leaving my home town because I felt like a stranger in my home town and in my family. I found people from my home town narrow-minded and my family was definitely not a classical one: divorced parents, re-married to divorced new partners with children from ex- marriages... I had no wish to stay there.

In Ljubljana the schooling system provided me with the opportunity of staying in the pupils’ accommodation but in the third year, as soon I was eighteen, I moved into my first rented apartment with a friend, who was already a student. I met my first sexual partner and went on my first hitchhiking trip to Europe - Berlin and Amsterdam.

In the fourth, last year of high school, I moved in with another girlfriend, who lived with her parents and her married sister who had a daughter, a husband, a cat, a dog and a parrot. I stayed there for three or four years, entered University of Ljubljana and become a student. When we split apart, I went straight to Metelkova, the first squatted place in independent Slovenia and stayed there for four years, living like a student (which I was) in a student’s home (which the squat was not). I learned how to make money by being a model at the Art Academy and when I was kicked-out of the squat, I had no problem renting another cheap room, squatting some other place or moving-in with some friend or girlfriend.

In fact I was already homeless, but I started to realise it when my status of student expired after the regular six years. Of course I had no intent whatsoever of returning “home” to my parents in my home town.

In that period I had no problem with finances. I had scholarship money, which depended only on advancing year-by-year at high-school, and later university with A or B grades. Due to my irresponsible way of life, I never tried hard to reach much beyond B-grades. It was not necessary. My parents supported me financially because I was in fact absent most of the time and they didn't know much (or didn't want to know) about my way of living (basically sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll). As long as the schooling was okay, everything was okay. And the schooling was okay until the last year of regular study at university. The only mistake I made was that I did not complete all of the exams and thesis.

So, I continued cycling from one form of homelessness to another, and repeated those cycles at least four times in, let's say eleven to twelve years. There was squatting based on the idea of rebellion, homeless squatting, co-renting cheap rooms (without a valid contract), temporary settlement with a friend or girlfriend, temporary sheltered housing, even temporarily going “home” to my parents. But in the last few years the experimenting with drugs changed to drug addiction and another category – “the road” (rough sleeping) - appeared in my life. This gradually displaced other different, seemingly interesting ways of “being free, being independent”. I became irresponsible and dishonest towards myself, as I see it from today's perspective.

That point was the first time I tried different organizations for helping homeless people - shelters, public kitchens, clothes exchanges, the Kings of the Streets drop in centre etc. It was also the second time I realised that I was homeless, but this time on a higher, more fatal level.

I slowly fell into passivity and boredom and felt that “nothing was going on anymore“. I still needed an external intervention in order to make a step. This appeared in the form of lung disease, and an offer from my mother to support

me if I recovered from everything - addiction, hepatitis C, bad teeth, poor social health, homelessness and finished unfinished projects like my studies at the University of Ljubljana.

By that time I had gained a strong feeling of individual responsibility, and experienced the common feeling “I am guilty for my situation.” I had no idea of collective responsibility, of the “sick” society, which needs a proper strategy to solve its problems, including homelessness.

After being dismissed from the hospital I accepted the idea of going “home” to my parent’s place in that small town on the Slovenian Coast, full of narrow minded people (from my point of view), where there is nothing much to do. But it was planned temporarily, like a project to restart my pathway to adulthood and a truly independent life. Therefore, it was acceptable and I wasn't bored for a single minute because I had so much to do. I re-entered the University of Ljubljana, got a volunteering job at the cerebral palsy association of Slovenia, travelled to Ljubljana by train two or three times a week for my studies. I also entered and completed a drug-rehabilitation programme and cured my hepatitis C. I repaired my teeth (my grandmother and my mother contributed financially towards health insurance) and started regular shotokan-karate training. I also joined the theatre group, organized by the Kings of the Street Association.

When I had to sleep in Ljubljana I paid for a dormitory myself in the youth hostel, or went to the daughter of my step-father. Lately, I’ve stayed with a close comrade of mine, Marko, who participates in a resettlement programme. All my expenses are covered by social benefits, plus a loan from my parents which we agreed I will pay back when I earn my own money.

In my studies of cultural anthropology I have chosen marginalized social groups (including homeless people, disabled people, gender issues, underground subcultures like squatters) as my research field, and am trying to establish a concept of “engaged anthropology”, meaning participant observation with a purpose of social change. It is still a work in progress! I feel like it's the good way to use all of my past experience.

So, the last year of my studies is ahead of me and I am entering the resettlement program, which gradually prepares the participant to be able to live a truly independent life, supported by their own forces - true liberty with the wide prospect of choosing their own field of creative (co)operation. By gradually paying more and more money towards the rent, one is forced to find a regular source of finance to support one’s way of living; hopefully ending homelessness for good. Not least, a year and a half period of living together with other people is a good training for further successful communication and co-operation in a wider society. It is also an opportunity to solve problems concerning social status. I take both projects (resettlement and finishing my study) as a starting point to developing my studies of humankind and myself in an even more creative and productive way.

Marko’s story

I am switching now to the story of Marko, a close comrade of mine.

His story is similar to mine in certain points and different in others. I met him in the period when we were both without any creative perspective in our lives. We never established any kind of personal relationship even though we lived in the same squatted place for some time. But now, in the last year, we met in the Kings of the Street theatre group and discovered we have so much to do together – now that we have both changed a lot.

The story of Marko shows how drug addiction can be the frame and the agens movens of changes, leading in and out of homelessness. Marko, his girlfriend and a newborn daughter moved into his grandmother’s for half a year. They couldn't stand it any longer that his parents were telling them what to do all the time. At that time his mother excluded him from the home address because he was involved in an accident resulting in a large debt to the court and officials were looking for him all the time.

So, he had no legal status and the young family eventually moved to her parents' house. He sensed his first feeling of insecurity at that time, insecurity about where and how to live from now on. From the habit of smoking marijuana they developed the “habit” of taking heroin and later cocaine. From today's perspective Marko says “We slipped from one addiction to another to another.” The fact that her parents were shutting their eyes from the reality of the situation was a comfortable condition preventing any changes. But drug addiction demanded more and more effort to provide expensive illegal substances and prevented him earning money through a stable job to support his young family. He changed between many short-term jobs and experienced great instability, including lacking legal status, being without a permanent address (a base for all rights and insurances) and drug addiction. In his mind he erased all the past on a daily basis and had no vision for the future. Marko says “it was a Big Black Hole.”

It lasted for years. The only change that he was capable of making was going to the Social Centre and getting a permanent address. The other change happened when he stole money for the winter heating. His partner's father threw him out the same day. He moved to his grandmother's place.

After a few years of quarrelling with his grandmother about money he made another mistake - he stole an old violin for drug money and moved to the capital (village) of Ljubljana on the same day. He had no vision of solving his situation; he was in fact on the run from himself. He was sleeping rough, in the park. Then he found some place in the newly squatted factory building, where he spent his first winter in Ljubljana. In the spring time others noticed his drug (ab)use and threw him out of the squat. Somebody showed him how to sleep on parked train wagons and he did it for six months. "Once I almost killed myself jumping from a moving train", he says.

He slowly switched from drug (ab)use to alcohol and slipped into another addiction. He tried to participate in the theatre group, organized by the Kings of the Street Association, but he was in fact incapable of regular training so he dropped out. A girl, a student he met at the Kings of the Street drop-in centre, took him to her place in the students' home for a few months, where he slowly came off alcohol and started to discuss his future vision – a re-established connection to the common world.

He re-entered the theatre group and started showing some ambition of resolving his situation. Professionals from The Kings of the Street offered him the opportunity to join the resettlement programme. Marko entered it gladly. In a year and a half he successfully completed detoxification from substitutive drugs (methadone). At the moment he is a non-addicted creative audio and visual artist, progressing in his process of rehabilitation. He has regular contact with his twelve year old daughter and a fine vision for the future. The Kings of the Street Resettlement team allowed him a prolonged stay in the resettlement programme for another half a year, in order to be able to get cured from hepatitis C. He started this half-year-long therapy process in September 2010.

Marko concludes his story;

"The feeling of being homeless is slowly vanishing. Not in the sense that I am now home somewhere, but being at home everywhere"

Homelessness as a "state of mind"

It is interesting in both stories at what points we both realized we were homeless and what were the push factors to start to look for the way out. It seems both sides needed to be engaged and somehow tuned together – a personal willingness (internal motivation) and external intervention (support offered by some organizations, etc.).

So homelessness is in fact partly a state of mind. It has objective connotations but it is not only dependant on objective categories, it also depends on subjective feeling. Of course it is a complex matter, connected to self-perception and identity.

The following story shows the importance of self-perception and reflection on one's situation clearly.

Post-graduate student's story:

A forty-year-old woman, actually a post-graduate student without any social support, job or income, is still looking for a room in the student accommodation. If anyone says to her that she is a homeless person who should get help from the homeless services, she gets angry and immediately denies it. In fact she has no place to sleep, she is searching for a place to sleep on a day to day basis, but because of her being a woman with specific experiences related to her fear of abuse, she won't come to any organization to ask for help. This resistance is based on her inability to recognize herself as a homeless person. So she is looking for help in all the "wrong" places, where she can't really get it (as a student), because she is (according to Slovenian standards) too old. Her self-perception disables her in taking some steps towards some kind of change. Self perception is of course connected with public perceptions of a phenomenon. It may be more difficult for a woman to admit to herself that she is homeless. There is a common social stigma that "being homeless is the most terrible thing", even more if you are a women or even a single mother. Besides (in Slovenia) there are also no organizations for homeless women only. Regardless of her perception, she is experiencing homelessness. Accepting homelessness can be very important in moving away from homelessness. Not accepting homelessness does not mean that someone is not experiencing it, or is not entitled to support.

An important factor in moving on from homelessness is whether one freely accepts one's situation of homelessness. Later, on the basis of changed perceptions, one starts to feel differently (not as a homeless person anymore). Alternatively, one does not (yet) admit to being a homeless person.

In reality, cruel social exclusion and housing exclusion is present in both cases. This is an objective fact, a distant view of an observer who does not share the experience of homelessness. At this point I want to emphasize the importance of communication between all possible points of view and different perspectives.

Categories of homelessness

Through my experience, and Marko's experience as well as the focus groups, a number of different forms of homelessness can be identified and this section will explore the lived experience of these categories.

In Marko's case his current category of homelessness - staying in a resettlement programme - splits into two parts: one before he established a creative co-operation relationship with a close friend and one after he did this. In the first part he was kind of adapting to new conditions and trying to learn and practice audio and visual expression by making music, videos and theatre. But there was no plan of what to do with all of those newly gained skills. Creative co-operation brought him to being involved in some projects where his skills were more than welcome. He started to plan his future and realized he is in fact on the way out of homelessness.

An interesting category is "on the road" or sleeping rough. Although it is the most severe form of homelessness (the most harmful and risky), it still has many faces and includes sleeping in a so- called "base", which can be a permanent bench in a city park, train wagon, crushed and forgotten car and also banished house, waiting to be shattered down. But it can also mean a non-permanent day-to-day looking for a shelter to sleep in.

Sleeping rough differs from squatting because in Ljubljana squatting means some level of organization, first the place as such and then the organization of the way of living there (organization of social life, connected with squatting). Usually a number of people join together to manage a squatted place and in some cases they start some cultural production to offer it to themselves and to some wider audience. In such a squat active members easily dismiss and exclude inactive and addicted members (in fact those who are more socially vulnerable).

In my case squatting at Metelkova was based on an ideology of rebellion against present society and proving that there are "alternative ways" of living in a society. It taught me how to do it, and I used those skills to squat when I was sleeping rough and simply needed a place to stay. Let me mention that I was always very proud of creating an organized community, even though it had a short-term existence and no creative force whatsoever.

If I met some company interested in renting some cheap apartment, we usually did it. But it was always with an in-valid contract, meaning the landlord could at anytime evict you.

Living with occasional roommates is similar to staying at some friend or actual girl/boyfriend's place - it is never lasting and it is impossible to develop some sense or feeling of being at "home". Maybe if there is some strong idealistic perception of everlasting love or friendship one could feel "at home" for some time, but that is it. In general there is always a strong feeling of insecurity and instability present.

A special case is being dismissed from a hospital or an institution. The first day is important. I accepted the proposition from my mother to temporarily move back to her to "clean up the mess" from the past and reach a good starting point for the future. It was a great idea, I am at the end of this two years "program" at the moment, but I have never stopped feeling that I was homeless. Now I am entering resettlement program in Ljubljana and after this, and after I gain my profession and make my own money with it, then I can start recognizing myself as a non-homeless person.

I should point out a category of homelessness I had only a little experience with. I am talking about the shelters, offered by the capital "village" of Ljubljana (and other bigger towns in Slovenia). From my point of view, there is a kind of contradiction here. One can accept the rules and the timetable and can stay there for a longer period of time. One can also create long-term relationships with roommates, so that it starts to feel like a "home". But in my experience there is no privacy, no possibility to spend the whole day there (one enters in the evening and leaves in the morning), no way to establish a "home studio" or anything like that, which means no creating, studying, inviting friends or family members, searching for a job. And of course one cannot start a family there. So, it is more about having no ambition for changing the state of homelessness, about giving up a creative approach in the battle for freedom; of choosing one's own way of life. Well, there is one good thing about it. Homeless people there don't lie to themselves anymore about being homeless

- they admit it. But at that point they should move on, which is difficult from such a social environment, or when there are not adequate alternatives for them.

Homelessness involves at least two conditions: objective categorization and subjective self-recognition. They are both slippery. One can be a homeless in the eyes of a distant observer but if one doesn't feel like it, one might not feel a need for change and/or can have difficulties in searching for the proper support. But it doesn't mean you're not homeless if you're not ready to accept it, and thus begin to move on. Secondly, one can find himself homeless in the environment which provides for all the basic needs but because of the lack of creative relations and appropriate services one cannot find a pathway out of homelessness and motivate oneself to upgrade his/her quality of life – to become an independent, responsible and creative person. Remember the above mentioned staying in homeless shelters, the “hotel mama syndrome” and not moving on.

Understanding Change

In every case the approach of the participants (homeless persons), researchers and professionals should be the one of change as a starting point and as a goal. If we want to understand how to create pathways out of homelessness, we must understand also the pathways into homelessness. When we understand this, we can contribute to the prevention of one’s becoming a homeless person at all.

Through discussions with people with experience of homelessness, we discovered that there is always a combination of complex circumstances leading into homelessness and it is usually a slow process. These combinations we can simplify by dividing them into a group of internal influence and external influence.

In the case of internal influence, my research emphasized the importance of communication and relations with others; those people surrounding an individual that are connected in a way. Connections influence one’s well being. The inner circle of others includes my friends and members of my family. The outer circle can be peers (my generation), members of younger and older generations, colleagues and members of different professional and other social structures. When an individual goes through changes and changes his/her behaviour, members of the inner circle of others can become alienated. Family rupture can often be a crucial cause of homelessness.

In case of rejection or exclusion from others, an individual can easily react in the same way- exclusionary. In the case of exclusion, otherness, defined by difference, may in time become an identity statement.

Consequences of exclusion (or non- belonging) are mainly loneliness, anger, sorrow and disappointment, also disappointment with the world and its misunderstanding, disagreement and non- acceptance. A creative individual would in that case choose or build his own environment, which guarantees his well being. Our chances to influence this environment are ways of communication- the ability to listen to the other people, to accept them, to get closer (diminish the distance). We can also use some means of communication – e.g. the media like the street paper as a voice of the homeless population and the means of communication with other media. A great chance is in better communication to future generations - (our) children in the first place.

In my fieldwork research I organized four focus groups. The first one, entitled “Come back among the living” took place in March 2010 in the drop-in centre of Kings of the Street. In the last year, at coffee drinking or cigarette breaks, I heard many positive stories about how somebody got up or is getting up from being virtually blind – living on the street, in constant crisis situations.

I was interested in motifs for change, in what or whom one can find some support and a vision for the future - wishes, ideas, and plans. I wanted to encourage thinking of what we learned from our experience. I didn't want to make conclusions just by myself, so here I present different points of view from those discussions.

Everybody emphasized the unbearableness of the situation of homelessness, and just one of the participants said:

> “I don't find it so terrible.”

That's why he still hasn't decided to make a change.

The top motive for change is therefore a sense that “it can't go on like this anymore”; loneliness, alienation, addiction and boredom, and in front of them all the lack of possibilities and will for creative expression and (co)operation (losing a job, cutting off contacts with other people, downfall of ambitions).

An additional motive is a wish to re-establish contacts with those close to us, establishing a social network and communication with people and also a creative, encouraging environment which we would like to participate in.

In two cases the key moment was an external intervention into a routine of everyday practice (illness, the threat of losing a job). External intervention also appeared in the form of support (support to resettle, fix social status and relations). Motives to move on are best seen from the statement:

> "It's not enough to be normal and to be happy, one must also do something about it".

Even those with no concrete plans have their chance for changes, for a good idea. And those already making an effort in the battle for freedom of creative (co)operation do not regret past doings - one takes them as precious experience to be learned from for the future, and has an optimistic view into the future.

"How do we create a change?" was the theme of the third focus group. We discussed it and also stressed obstacles and challenges appearing in the process. Everybody agreed that change makes sense when we are not satisfied with the situation. Those experiencing addiction; whether on alcohol, drugs or running (jogging), were able to define the will for change more clearly, others imagined it more abstractly, as some inner sense of "in my everyday life, I wish for something more, something different...".

We all agreed that change needs a good plan; to define reason(s) and goal(s), and show a great deal of responsibility. Support is an important factor, but we imagined it differently. Inner motivation requires some amount of self-consciousness, admitting mistakes and accepting the critics, besides that also a bit of guilt and moral support in the sense of upgrading or re-evaluating values.

It is important to react to external intervention coming out of the communication with one's environment. A good decision is to change companions and/or environment.

We also discovered it is not easy to talk about oneself in front of the others but it helps when we try to define our curiosity, interests, ambitions. We learn patience and find out that change is a process, going forward gradually, step by step.

When we started to discuss changes in the world around us, we started to talk about creative cooperation and that was the topic of the fourth focus group. We found out that all of us participants are individualists, who like to meet and join each other but also like to decide on our own. We discussed values connected to cooperation. Even when participating in a focus group, where we came to meet some new people, hear their problems and share our own problems, we need a sense of security. It's based on confidence - we prefer to cooperate with those with whom we have cooperated before, and accomplished together. Confidence makes distant ones close ones. We also prefer to cooperate with someone showing great interest in anything, although it is not easy to find someone who has the same tempo. But it makes it easier for us to make compromises - an inevitable part of creative co-operation.

An example of re-evaluation of values is friendship motivating cooperation instead of profit. We can also trust some reliable structure, like a working team, where roles, rights and duties are given in advance. But in that case one has to be a good worker (role model) himself; otherwise co-operation in a team doesn't give proper results.

Participants established some interpersonal bonds and offered each other some particular co-operation. It is interesting that Kings of the Street offers some opportunities to do this, but many don't decide to take it; but those who have done have only compliments for Kings of the Street and their cooperation. The Kings of the Street drop-in centre provided us some authenticity, not noticed in the outside world - it relaxed us. We entered some relations we never thought were possible.

Mentioning communication we enter the field of external influences on the process of becoming homeless or not. The social environment offering little or no possibilities of choosing one's way of life is a very common reason to not "feel at home" - no suitable family relations, education possibilities, employment, leisure or partnership opportunities. This can make one move in search of a different, more suitable environment.

Now we enter the field of social security and the idea of "a welfare state", so popular in EU fantasies. We all know that we are living in a difficult period of so-called recession and as I know, European strategies for improvement of the social situation as a whole are poor and underdeveloped. Maybe the efforts we are making will contribute to improvements. Anyway, the collective state of mind should take homelessness not as a marginal and unimportant part of social

structures but as a one of the central problems of contemporary society and an indicator, a mirror of the processes in a global society.

Of course there is always the possibility of obstacles and sudden accidents but a society, tending to reach for a “welfare state” should be well prepared for that possibility. Specific homelessness policies can help in this respect. So, we are back to the claim for suitable health systems, social rights equal to civil rights and a capable economic system supporting all that. Once again we can see the problem of homelessness is (or it should be) one of the central problems of contemporary society. By learning how to solve this one, we could learn how to solve any other disharmony in society.

Key Question 1: What does homelessness mean?
Stefania Parigi, Director General of the Paris Samusocial Public Interest Group

The question “What does homelessness mean?” and most of its variations (What is homelessness? What are the causes of homelessness? What do we understand by homelessness? What does being homeless involve? Who is homeless?) are out of tune with the Conference’s programme.

Over the past twenty years in Europe, researchers and organisations have devoted themselves to characterising and defining situations of extreme poverty, exclusion and homelessness. Of course, there is no general consensus in the public arena on one or other definition. It is easier to highlight the failings of one term or another, to be annoyed that no word is able to encompass the often complex reality of the situations observed. Meaning: language is an instrument of power and a way of structuring the world.

However, it is clear that, in Europe, as in the United States (Kim Hopper, 2010), we are unable to paint a very clear picture of “homelessness”. Today's challenge is perhaps less in refining our descriptions even further, than in learning how to translate them into concepts for action.

Because, a relatively wide scientific consensus is emerging on two levels at least:

- On the one hand, homeless people (the word is often used for convenience) should not be assimilated massively with "drunk, stoned, crazy and sick" individuals (Snow, Baker and Anderson, 1986). These descriptions, even if apparent, should only ever be considered in precise relation to the conditions and circumstances of their expression. More clearly, the life of homeless people may be analysed as a daily “labour” (Hopper, op. cit), all the more unacceptable since it does not lead to any benefits in line with the effort accorded to it.
- Also, most serious research insists on the process of losing one's home as being a determinant of homelessness and, more generally, on housing being the main challenge of targeted public action for homeless people.

The preparatory text submitted to speakers also highlights the fact that a good definition of homelessness on a political level should focus primarily on the challenge of housing. In this respect, the ETHOS typology is outstanding. Taking homelessness as a continuum of situations of exclusion from housing, this typology reflects a key idea of current research which invites people to consider, in summarised terms, the structural causes of homelessness as being the main lever for mobilisation and political action in favour of homeless people.

As for every form of categorisation, it serves as much to include as to divide. Therefore, there is no need to highlight the fact that the ETHOS categories do not say it all and that they do not present certain members of the public or certain situations well. That is not its purpose. Also, it is probably not very wise - especially in view of the fact that it does, at long last, enable us to count and compare -, to criticise it too virulently, since, for example, it does not take enough account of employment policies and labour markets, or of family changes which, of course play a part in making people homeless.

Thus, let us refer back to the construction of the ETHOS grid, which, as the preparatory text suggests, and, no doubt, as Bill Edgar's contribution will show, answers the questions asked.

What more can be said, especially by an institution devoted for almost twenty years to emergency assistance for the very poorest?

The daily action of our teams, our slow daily work of weaving a social link, does not contradict the importance of designing a housing policy as a tool for combating situations of exclusion.

Social emergency as a means of intervention must lead to sustainable solutions, which necessarily involve housing, whilst also creating a safety net of support and ongoing recognition for those whose capacities have been weakened.

In social emergencies, the growing number of populations which, in principle, are protected by other public policies (poor workers, asylum seekers, women victims of domestic violence, children at risk) does not mean that social emergencies are adapted to these populations, which require other forms of response, including somewhere to live, namely regaining control of the world (Breviglieri, 2002).

However, working with these people, as with "social outcasts" the main target group behind the creation of Paris Samusocial in 1993, teaches us not to neglect the reappearance, the emergence, or the presence of other problems which may become major obstacles on the road to integration.

Thus, health problems may lead to long-term homelessness, as we have shown at the Paris Samusocial with studies conducted by its monitoring body, which highlight an above average prevalence of a certain number of serious illnesses, chronic psychiatric conditions (Laporte et al., 2010), epilepsy (Laporte et al., 2007) and diabetes (Arnaud et al., 2009).

Living on the street may also give rise to serious medical conditions requiring daily treatment, such as tuberculosis.

It may also aggravate serious pathologies. The consequences of incorrectly treated diabetes, such as amputation, may be restricting for carrying out daily tasks, especially procedures required to become involved in an integration plan.

Reviewing the health dimension of exclusion does not in any way call for or imply a “medicalisation", or even a “psychiatrisation” of social aspects, far from it. (Seriously) ill homeless people have more in common, in terms of origin and social background, with their fellow homeless than with people suffering from the same illnesses among the general population. Reviewing this health dimension means inviting people to take account of the, sometimes extensive, combination of problems (medical and social) encountered in situations of exclusion in terms of problems which have hastened the start of a process of exclusion.

Yet, this entanglement of problems has led to a new problem for homeless people: an increase in the number of assistance services. Their assistance path resembles (Damon, 2002) that of a ping-pong ball hit from one player to the other (the hot potato or revolving doors syndrome), or a pawn struggling to reach the end of its journey, with progress resembling that of a board game.

First consequence: the response to homelessness is not necessarily, or solely, the fight against its causes. The prevention of homelessness needs to be developed, of course, and the best prevention no doubt consists of relaunching a housing policy for poor households.

But, in order to fight homelessness, it is not enough to build social housing, although this is a priority. It is also necessary to be able to give integration back its meaning, from the point of view of those who are targeted by it (Gardella, Le Méner, 2010). This work on meaning is complicated, owing to the multitude of agents and assistance services through which homeless people have to pass.

Second consequence: it is necessary to minimise the system’s complexity. Attempts at coordination between agencies and players in the field have always failed. We can hope that the setting up of SIAO (Integrated Reception and Orientation Services) in France, designed to help coordinate actions in the field and, above all, implement accompaniment on a case-by-case basis, similar to American case management, helps to reduce this complexity.

Third consequence: in terms of local public action, we must set ourselves goals, but also create clear indicators for reducing exclusion, complementary to population censuses on the one hand and to the accommodation and housing offering on the other hand. The asymptotic, but reasonable, target of zero homeless people (Damon, 2008) should be associated with progress reports which help to assess precisely the effectiveness of various mechanisms. The creation of a European space for dialogue on homelessness and the shared use of the ETHOS grid, encourage the exchange of good practices and the development of rigorous comparisons.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of a housing policy for homeless people will depend on reducing the complexity of the problems encountered by homeless people. In particular, this will involve more complete and more personalised support and monitoring of each individual, whose experience is not necessarily, and in practical terms, that of an exclusion from housing. In other terms, although it is necessary to support the use of classifications as well built as the ETHOS grid, it is necessary to be careful, when working among homeless people, to avoid the illusion that it is necessary only to act on the causes of homelessness in order to put an end to social exclusion.

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Key Question 1: What does homelessness mean?
Yvan Mayeur, President of Brussels Samusocial

Defining homelessness is only possible after having understood the society from which a person is excluded. Each time, behind the successive figures of the poor, the tramp, the sub-proletariat, the "excluded", the homeless, there is a society's imagination (its "cultural model"), the type of integration that it promotes and the weight of the relationships of domination which lead to and confine citizens within marginality.

Thus, within a period of thirty years, we have moved from the traditional figure of the "vagrant", which used to refer to those on the fringes of society, living on the edges of the norms of industrial society, to that of today's homeless person, which refers to the disaffiliated, the excluded of post-industrial society.

In a neo-liberal society such as our own, where the market rules, it is not surprising to see the number of excluded increase constantly. It has become necessary to ask ourselves which mechanisms of social disaffiliation are at work, and how our society produces its own excluded: the phenomena of marginalisation and exclusion from employment have become general practice over recent decades and of course, the recent crisis has done nothing to help this.

In the post-war years, the housing shortage was a key factor of "homelessness". **But, with time, sociology has changed greatly, and the causes leading to, or increasing the phenomenon of "homelessness" have changed with it.**

Although the homeless also share the common feature of not having a fixed abode, they do not always have the same problems. A change has been noted in the behaviour and problems which we encounter (people with psychiatric problems, young runaways, the elderly, drug addicts, young migrants, etc.).

Therefore, needs are becoming increasingly complex. And, one cannot but notice that society and its institutions have not succeeded in adapting to all these changes, such as, for example, the major increase in people with psychiatric problems.

Poverty in Brussels

Let us spend a little time looking at a context we know particularly well: Brussels.

It is important to start by looking at the socio-economic situation in Brussels in order to understand the homeless problem in the Belgian capital.

Brussels is the Belgian region with the highest percentage of the population living below the at-risk-of-poverty level. More than one inhabitant of Brussels out of every four has to survive on an income below the at-risk-of-poverty level (€899 for a single person).

The impact of the crisis is as clearly visible in the unemployment statistics and at Public Social Welfare Centres (CPAS), as it is through the number of people falling behind on the repayment of consumer credits. There are many social inequalities within the region, and the numbers are even increasing. These have an obvious effect on the health of the inhabitants of Brussels. The demand for social housing continues to rise and the indicators are worrying.

The shortage of affordable housing for workers is one of the causes of the increase in homelessness. Remember that Brussels is the region with the most expensive real estate and where average income is the lowest in Belgium. Access to housing is more difficult than elsewhere. Just 41.4% of the inhabitants of Brussels own their own homes - 10 to 15% less than in other Belgian cities[6].

This highlights the need to set up an insurance system against loss of income in order to favour the acquisition of homes without the fear of losing one's job. It is necessary, at all costs, to attempt to offer people security by guaranteeing them their home. We know that the loss of one's home is a major factor of social marginalisation, even of disaffiliation.

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[6] DUBOIS, F., "*Perdre son job sans perdre son toit"*, article in Le Soir on 10 and 11 November 2010.

The problem: Who are the homeless in a city such as Brussels?

How does a person become homeless?

Today, although poverty and the housing shortage are the fundamental causes of exclusion leading to "the fall", they do not explain everything.

Each person is a product of his own past, path in life, career, which comprises a variety of experiences. It is important to always bear in mind the diversity of these people's experiences. Each story is unique, but, in general, it forms part of a background of poverty, exclusion, abandonment or emotional rejection; material, physical, psychological, relational, family, social, administrative, professional and health problems. Already in a weakened state, a person undergoes an experience which transforms his life. The accumulation of difficulties contributes to digging the person deeper into a hole, and preventing them from climbing back up to the surface of society.

Therefore, often, it is a combination of factors, an accumulation of problems, leading people to face an "institutional no man's land" and gradually dragging them down to the status of "homeless", which, in the absence of an appropriate response, will become their sole identity.

As a result, on the streets we find **people with deficiencies on several levels**, "outcasts" who are not cared for by mainstream emergency services or psychiatric emergency services,

or by "traditional" accommodation centres where they are unable to find a place because they are full or because their rules and regulations do not accept people under the influence of alcohol or with too many mental problems to become part of a dynamic of integration.

However, distress is not only medical, psychiatric or social. It is often the result of an overlapping of various problems which, taken individually, do not justify emergency care in specialist institutions under the terms of existing reception criteria.

The individual finds himself in an unmanageable situation, a "no-man's land", in which he does not know which institution to turn to.

Therefore, these people find themselves resigned to their fate, incapable of asking for anything, and the main obstacle to integration becomes themselves. They expect nothing, they hope for nothing and, consequently, they do not attempt anything.

Sociology is such that these cases are increasingly common and complex and their typology is difficult to grasp: young runaways, abandoned families, Eastern European refugees or illegal immigrants from southern countries, tramps or alcoholics, psychotics without a fixed abode... one of the main roots of the problem is the shortage of suitable accommodation centres and, above all, the description of these problems.

Multi-dimensional social work

When a homeless person ceases to be a man fighting for his rights, when, little by little, as a result of rejection and refusal, he loses credibility and accepts his fate, when he asks for nothing – this person, who presents a multitude of deficiencies, becomes a "victim" and it is necessary to take care of him, as the SAMU MEDICAL does.

Extreme situations are intolerable in our society of abundance. Maintaining or acquiring social rights is not automatic because in order to obtain them people have to engage in a process and often the procedures require great intellectual knowledge and know-how.

The Brussels Samusocial was created to cater for an institutional void, and, in the same way as the SAMU MEDICAL, in order to APPROACH people who are victims, or who, implicitly, have the status of victims because they are too isolated to find the strength to engage the procedures themselves, too indifferent about their physical state to ask or expect something from the institution that could help them.

Working on the social rehabilitation, emancipation and stabilisation of the situation of homeless people should be seen as an alternative to a purely "charitable" and compartmentalised concept of assistance. We believe that social emergencies must decompartmentalise how a person is cared for. The aim is to understand the individual as a whole. A person in distress does not only need accommodation. Or just health care. Or just social support.

It is this global approach to the individual which is employed at the Brussels Samusocial and which involves mobilising cross-cutting skills (medical-psychological-social).

Considering the many dimensions of homelessness, collaborations with the other sectors involved: legal; assistance (social services, help for people awaiting trial, etc.); physical and mental health; culture; housing, are essential.

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Key Question 2: 'Ending Homelessness': A realistic goal?
Juha Kaakinen, Programme Leader of the National Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness, Finland

Finnish experiences

Finland has in recent years successfully reduced long-term homelessness. The Finnish experience strongly suggests that ending homelessness is possible. The feasibility of eliminating homelessness is evaluated here, based on the Finnish experiences in the matter. Evaluating the feasibility of the objective signifies, above all, charting both those political prerequisites which are critical for reaching the objective and the affiliated economic resources and know-how. The ethical and humane justifications of the objective can be regarded as self-evident.

1. General background on housing and housing policy in Finland

There are about 2.8 million dwellings in Finland (the Finnish population is 5 368 451) of which about 60 % are owner-occupied, 30 % rented properties and 10 % right-of-occupancy housing[7]. Finnish housing markets are strongly cyclical: changes in economic growth are often reflected in even greater changes in house prices and the supply of rental apartments. In terms of European comparisons, Finland is located in the middle of the owner-occupied – rented housing axis. There are about 800,000 rented properties, of which about half are financed through the ARA[8] system or through loans with subsidised interest rates. The remainder are rented properties that are financed on the open market.

The ARA housing stock, which is built with State aid, includes rented, right-of-occupancy housing and part-owned housing funded by ARA and loans with subsidised interest rates. The use and conveyance of these properties is restricted by legislation because the housing includes social elements. Residents are selected on social bases such as income, wealth and urgency of housing need. Homelessness is naturally evaluated as an urgent need and social housing is the most important solution for homelessness, especially for households who can manage their housing with normal economic and social support. Finnish housing policy has always considered it important to prevent the concentration of social housing. An effective way of avoiding concentration has been the possibility of using public grants in the acquisition of rented accommodation from owner-occupied housing stock. It is estimated that there are about 40,000 supported flats of this kind in Finland.

ARA housing and rented housing funded through interest rate subsidies are mainly produced and owned by municipalities and not-for-profit associations.

Since rent control was abandoned in Finland between 1992 and 1995, and there is no general system of control of rents in the country, housing rents financed on the open market are mainly determined through agreement between the parties and market rates.

Those living in rented properties can receive housing allowance, which in Finland is granted via three systems that run parallel with one another. The systems are targeted at different population groups according to their phase of life. All Finns are covered by a housing allowance system and at present some 20 % of them receive housing allowance.

According to section 19 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the public authorities shall promote the right of everyone to housing and the opportunity for people to arrange their own housing. The role of the State in developing housing is to guarantee the implementation of human and basic rights by taking care of the strategic outline for housing development, passing laws and granting, for example, housing allowance as well as loans, interest rate subsidies and grants for the construction, repair and acquisition of housing. The municipalities implement government policies at the local level.

The Act on the Development of Housing Conditions (919/1985) intends to guarantee all people residing permanently in Finland an opportunity to reasonable housing. The municipalities have to ensure that implementation of housing development is directed particularly towards developing housing for the homeless and those that are in poor quality housing, and have to organise reasonable accommodation for those members of

[7] Right-of-occupancy housing was developed during the 1990s as a new form of housing management between owner occupancy and rented housing . In this system a household pays 15 % of the price of the home and in return receives security of accomodation and protection against market increases in rents.
[8] The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland

the community that have become homeless and would not, without considerable difficulty, be able to arrange housing for themselves.

Income support is a last-resort financial assistance under social welfare. It is meant to ensure at least the minimum income needed for a life of human dignity (section 1 of the Act on Social Assistance, 1412/1997). A person in need of assistance is granted income support for the necessary housing expenses.

The State finances its activities through the collection of taxes. The Constitution of Finland also guarantees wide ranging autonomy in Finland to the municipalities, who have the right to tax and the right to decide on the use of their funds. Economic differences between the municipalities are evened out through the State's proportioning system of income from general taxation.

2. Homelessness in Finland

In Finland, homelessness includes the following categories:

- People staying outdoors, in staircases, in night shelters etc.
- People living in other shelters, hostels or boarding houses for homeless people (c. 1,000 people)
- People living in care homes or other dwellings of social welfare authorities, rehabilitation homes or hospitals due to lack of housing (almost 1,500 people)
- Prisoners soon to be released who have no housing
- People living temporarily with relatives and acquaintances due to lack of housing (the majority of homeless people, almost 5,000 people)
- Families and couples who have split up and are therefore in housing need, or are living in temporary housing due to lack of housing

Most of the homeless people in Finland are still “ordinary” men - that is men without complex support needs beyond housing, some of whom are working. However, since the1980s the profile of homeless people has become more diversified, and the proportion of women, young people and immigrants amongst the homeless population has increased. The proportion of people with multiple problems has also increased, which brings its own challenges to finding accommodation for homeless people.

Geographically, homelessness is concentrated in the growth centres where most immigration is targeted, and which have the largest population growth. In 2007, about half of the country’s population lived in the Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Oulu regions, but as much as 80 % of the country’s homeless people were found there. Homelessness is a particular problem in the Helsinki region which accounts for about half of all the homeless people in the country.

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) is responsible for producing an annual report on homelessness and its profile, based on a statistical survey. The survey is carried out by the municipalities. Statistics have been collected since 1987. At that time the statistics showed that there were almost 20,000 homeless people in Finland. By 2008, their numbers had fallen to about 8,000 people. The number halved between 1987 and 1996, partly because of the general developments in the housing market, and partly because of various specific measures that were taken to reduce homelessness. However, after the mid-1990s the reduction in homelessness slowed; at the turn of the millennium, and in 2008, the number of homeless people had increased.

In spite of the measures taken then, homelessness had not disappeared. By 2008, those homeless people who were easier to house had been housed, but that still left the long-term homeless who had difficult social and health problems and needed a significant amount of services, support and/or monitoring as well as housing.

However it is worth remembering that the picture given by the statistics of the phenomena of homelessness only indicates the trend.

Measures for reducing homelessness in Finland remained for a long time strongly related to housing policy: increasing the proportion of affordable rental dwellings was regarded as the key measure in reducing homelessness. During the years 2001–2005 two homelessness reduction programmes were executed on the initiative of the Ministry of the Environment. One targeted the ten largest Finnish cities with a problem of homelessness, while the other focused on the metropolitan area. Although the quantitative target of producing 1 000 new dwellings was not met, the programmes succeeded in halting the impending increase in homelessness.

These programmes from 2001–2005 already recognised the importance of housing support services[9]. More attention than previously was paid to homeless people who are difficult to house, and the importance of improving both basic services and homeless services was emphasised, in addition to simply providing housing. However, these goals were not fully realised. There was too much concentration on the amount of housing produced at the expense of quality targets. This was reflected in such things as forgetting to resource services and failures in the measurement and monitoring of quality targets. The evaluation of the reduction programme included an important recommendation for the future: the need to implement a new homelessness reduction programme targeting the elimination of long term homelessness amongst those who most need support services.

3. The Finnish Approach to ending homelessness

3.1. Group of the Wise

The year 2007 marks a turning point in Finnish homelessness policies and thinking. It was during 2007 that the basis for the current policy and the programme for ending long-term homelessness were established. In May of 2007, the Ministry of the Environment set up a working group known as the 'Group of the Wise' to prepare a new programme for eliminating long term homelessness (2008–2015). Once the Group of the Wise's report was ready, a programme working group was established which, on the basis of the Group of the Wise's report, drew up a new programme for eliminating long term homelessness for the period 2008-2015.

The Group of the Wise saw three problem areas in the previous homelessness reduction measures:

1) Matching: Support measures for homeless people often did not even meet the needs of the long term homeless, or simply did not reach them. In addition, new people were becoming homeless all the time, which indicated gaps in the support system.

2) Implementation: For a number of reasons, the implementation of the preferential treatment intended for the long term homeless was slow. The lack of appropriate building sites had caused the most problems.

3) Support: Insufficient social and health support had been provided. The problem was a lack of finance, coordination and provision of appropriate support.

The group presented the ethical, legal and economic bases for eliminating homelessness and put forward proposals for reducing long term homelessness. An extremely important starting point was the 'housing first' principle, which is used as the philosophical starting point for the programme and as a practical guiding concept that permeates the whole programme. In the report it was stated that because of changes in the nature of homelessness, new kinds of housing, social and health policy solutions were needed. The resources targeted at helping the individual homeless person had to be greater than previously, because the remaining homeless people, who are difficult to house, need more intensive support than the groups of homeless people that have already been housed. However, the working group stated that the costs resulting from the measures to be taken under the project would be smaller than the costs to society of not dealing with homelessness.

The Group of the Wise proposed a target of halving long term homelessness by 2011 and eliminating it entirely by 2015. In practice, the quantitative target was presented as a total of 2,500 new dwellings or care places directed towards the homeless. Of these, 1,600 would be in Helsinki, 400 elsewhere in the Helsinki region and 500 in other growth centres that are suffering from homelessness. The target set by the group was included, with some small changes, in both the programme working group's report and the Government's decision in principle.

The report of the Group of the Wise presented a new kind of operating model: Dormitory-type hostel solutions would be almost totally abandoned and, even for those difficult to house, the primary solution would be ordinary rentals in accordance with the Act on Residential Leases. These would be supported by, for example, a mobile support team. Alongside this model, serviced housing in accordance with Social Welfare Act was proposed for those who needed more intensive support. The change in the programme regarding dormitory-type hostel accommodation is based directly on both the 'housing first' principle and the section in the Constitution of Finland on a person's right to peace at home and privacy, which was emphasised by the working group. The Group of the Wise proposed special measures to be targeted at preventing and averting homelessness amongst two groups; young people and newly released prisoners.

[9] Housing support service is mainly provided by social workers or support workers with vocational training. In practice housing support service means personal counseling and very practical guidance in every-day life related to new housing arrangements.

3.2. The long term homelessness reduction programme for 2008–2011

The long term homelessness reduction programme for 2008-2011 is part of the Government's housing policy programme which defines the central measures of housing policy for the period of the government. The Government took a decision in principle to implement a long term homelessness reduction programme on the 14th February 2008. The decision in principle presented the background to the programme, its objectives and measures, which closely follow the proposals of the programme working group.

The objective of the programme is:

1) to halve long term homelessness by 2011

2) to intensify measures to prevent homelessness

The requirement to create about 1250 new dwellings, supported housing or care places directed towards the long term homeless by 2011, was set as a quantitative target. The programme also includes a vast array of preventive measures such as expanding the activities of housing advisors and the national development project of supported housing for young people among others.

In the long term homelessness reduction programme, long term homelessness is defined as:

"A person whose homelessness has become prolonged and chronic, or is threatening to become chronic, because normal housing approaches have not worked, and because there have been insufficient housing solutions tailored to individual needs".

The risk of prolonging homelessness increases significantly if homelessness is linked to one or several of the following factors: uncontrolled use of intoxicants, active use of drugs, mental health problems, neurological injuries, a tendency to violence, criminality, release from prison, indebtedness.

Before the programme started it was estimated that about one third of all homeless people were experiencing long term homelessness, i.e. about 2,500 people, of whom about 2,000 were in the Helsinki region. Within the programme, people experiencing long term homelessness are divided primarily according to their need for support. The target groups are men and women with mental health and intoxication problems; behavioural disturbances from multiple illnesses; young people with drug problems as well as newly released prisoners and other clients of the Probation Service. The groups are not precisely defined in all respects and there is some overlap between them. The proportion with multiple problems is small in number, but successfully housing them will require the most resources.

The Programme is structured around the 'housing first' principle. Solutions to social and health problems cannot be a condition for organising accommodation: on the contrary, accommodation is a requirement which also enables other problems of people who have been homeless to be solved. Having somewhere to live makes it possible to strengthen life management skills and is conducive to purposeful activity.

According to our understanding and experience, ending homelessness means providing long-term solutions for people and only solutions based on the 'housing first' principle are sustainable. The basic idea behind the 'housing first' concept as developed in Finland is a housing package where accommodation and services can be organised according to the resident's needs, abilities and social welfare and health requirements. A person is allocated independent accommodation – a 'home' – and services that differ in their intensity according to the individual are established around this. Services are implemented via partnership working between the accommodation provider and public social and health services. Important aspects of this concept include community living and civic participation. The main elements of the Finnish approach are:

- secure permanent accommodation with a tenancy agreement;
- reducing the use of conventional shelters and changing them into supported, rented accommodation units;
- the prevention of eviction by means of housing advice services and financial support;
- drafting plans for individual rehabilitation and services;

- guidance in the use of mainstream social welfare and health services, and;

- civil action: peer support and community building.

The programme is being implemented with reference to the letters of intent agreed to by the State authorities and the 10 largest Finnish cities with a problem of homelessness. These letters of intent contain tailored, city-specific action plans including the funding, timetable, staff and target group for all projects in the programme period.

According to the letters of intent, the Ministry of the Environment will promote and coordinate the implementation of the agreements. For the State the letters of intent were signed by the Minister of Housing (Ministry of the Environment), the Minister of Health and Social Services (MSAH) and the Minister of Justice (Ministry of Justice) as well as the directors of ARA, RAY[10] and the Crime Sanctions Agency. For the cities, the signatories were senior officials (Mayor or Director of Social Affairs/Housing/Administration).

The letters of intent agree that monitoring of the programme will be implemented through an operating report to be drawn up annually. According to the agreements, the Ministry of the Environment will establish a national monitoring and guidance group. The Ministry of the Environment is also coordinating the cooperation of different state authorities.

Responsibility for financing the Programme is shared between the State and the local authorities. The State has set aside 80 Million Euros in structural investment for the Programme and 10.3 Million Euros for the hire of support personnel. Furthermore, the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY) has set aside 18 Million Euros as financial assistance.

3.3. Intermediate evaluation of the programme

The main conclusions in the recent intermediate evaluation of the programme include:

- The quantitative targets of the programme will be exceeded. The target was to produce 1 250 new dwellings in independent or supported housing for the long-term homeless. According to the current data a total of 1 600 new dwellings will be acquired during the programme period

- The overall funding of the programme has proven sufficient and the funding model effective. The overall funding of the programme exceeds 200 million Euros, of which the state provides 170 million Euros, municipalities 10,3 million Euros and RAY (Finland's Slot Machine Association) 20,5 million Euros

- The state's allocated funding has covered 50 % of the salary costs of additional staff required to produce support services. 130 new employees have been employed through this funding, which has played a crucial role in the success of housing

- The concreteness of the letter of intent between the state and cities has strengthened the credibility of the programme and committed different parties in its implementation

- The programme's starting point, the 'housing first' principle - based on housing through rental agreements, has proven efficient. As the occupants have been provided housing, their motivation and capacity to tackle social and health problems has also clearly increased

- The projects under the reduction programme have had a direct effect on the overall services the municipalities provide for the homeless. In addition to the housing sector, the programme also influences social and health care services. Along with the programme, an extensive development of housing and social work has been initiated with a multidisciplinary outreach working model as its key element

- The implementation of the conversion programme for dormitory accommodation (hostels and shelters) has been confirmed. After this conversion programme is completed by 2012 there will be no more shelters and hostels destined for temporary housing of the homeless in the metropolitan area. They have been replaced by supported housing units based on tenancy agreements

[10] the Finnish Slot Machine Association

- The scope of housing advice has been broadened by employing new housing advisors in the programme cities through state subsidy. Joint approaches to prevent evictions have been drawn up for the authorities of the programme cities, in order to invest in the prevention of homelessness

- 300 new dwellings have been built for young people needing special support and a new type of service chain combining outreach work with young people and supported housing has been created in order to prevent homelessness amongst young people

- The financial significance of reducing homelessness has been empirically proven in an evaluation conducted by the Tampere University of Technology. According to the study, intensified supported housing generates significant savings as the use of services decreases. The survey carried out in a Tampere supported housing unit shows that housing with intensified support halves the use of social and health care services compared to service-use during homelessness. This equates, to 14 000 Euros of savings per resident. The total annual savings for 15 residents in the unit in question amounted to 220 000 Euros.

The results of the homelessness reduction programme have been impressive enough to grant justification for drafting an extension for the programme for the years 2012-2015. The ambitious objective of the extension period is to eliminate long-term homelessness in Finland entirely.

4. Main conclusions drawn from the Finnish experiences

- Eliminating homelessness is a realistic goal

As an unequivocal conclusion drawn from the Finnish experiences it can be stated that eliminating homelessness is an entirely feasible and realistic objective. It requires persistent, systematic work, which is not possible without an extensive political consensus ranging from the national to the local level. Building an extensive political consensus is not self-evident, it requires strategic initiatives where the active role of relevant state officials and NGOs is crucial. Political legitimacy also prepares the way for the acquisition of financial resources. Moreover, eliminating homelessness is not even a major economic cost if we consider the financial savings that result from the elimination of homelessness.

The following sections will describe the indispensable prerequisites for the elimination of homelessness, the factors that either facilitate or complicate the reaching of the objective.

- A strategy with concrete objectives is needed

Meeting the elimination target requires a consistent strategy founded on the equal partnership and commitment between different agents as well as on a concrete implementation plan. The Finnish implementation of the long-term homelessness reduction programme involves both national and local government officials (ministries, the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY), the ten largest cities) and service providers from NGOs. The city-specific implementation plans include all the projects to be carried out during the programme period as well as their funding. The transparency of the reduction programme is reflected in the fact that the chain of decision-making and operations can be traced from the government's decision in principle and the allocation of funds by the ministries and municipalities all the way to the decisions concerning the housing arrangements of an individual homeless person.

The time span for the programme needs to be extensive enough for a controlled implementation to take place. The reduction programme is 4 years long and a 4 year extension is being drafted in order to achieve the final objective of eliminating long-term homelessness entirely. According to our understanding, synchronising the operations of different levels (national as well as local) also plays a crucial role in contributing to the success of the programme. Operations - whether legislative or concrete local projects, should be carried out simultaneously. The synchronisation of the operations creates an image of an adequate critical mass, which has a clear positive psychological effect, including on public opinion.

The synchronisation of the different levels also signifies a strong investment in supporting the professional competence of those working closely with homeless people, as well as in utilising their experiences when defining the goals for the programmes.

The Finnish experience demonstrates that a national programme can achieve considerable progress in the elimination of homelessness, if the programme has been assigned with concrete quantifiable targets whose implementation is monitored and evaluated regularly. These concrete goals must be designed according to local circumstances and needs. The evaluation of the programme and especially the evaluation of the financial effects of the programme's operations has proven to be a crucial factor with regard to the political legitimacy of the elimination programme.

- The role of housing policy is crucial

The self-regulation of the entirely free housing markets will not make the elimination of homelessness possible. The public authorities, the state and the representatives of the local government need to take adequate measures to influence the operations of the housing markets. These measures for a partial regulation of the housing markets can be based on legislation and funding regulations or on financial support targeted at the residents. In Finland, the social housing production financed by the state enables municipalities and non-profit housing corporations to achieve the housing of the disadvantaged. This is a significant starting point in order to avoid homelessness based solely on economic reasons.

- Reliable basic information is needed

The planning and implementation of measures that aim to eliminate homelessness is not possible without reliable basic information based on research and an understanding of homelessness as a phenomenon. Regular revision of policies is necessary and most effective with a sound understanding of homelessness. Despite the increase in research on homelessness our perceptions with regard to many of the dimensions of this phenomenon are inadequate.

Realistic and achievable objectives are only possible when adequate research is carried out to fully understand the nature and scope of homelessness, the needs of the people who are homeless, the evolution of the housing and labour market and other related areas.

The information concerning homelessness can only be accumulated through bringing together academic research and the know-how of those working with homeless people. In Finland, this accumulation of basic knowledge has been sought through the development of a network for the long-term homelessness reduction programme, which has been composed of different working groups with over 200 employees from municipalities and non-governmental organizations and researchers working with the homeless.

In recent years the significance of the expertise of people with experience of homelessness has also become evident. The new extensive development project initiated in August, focusing on homeless services, includes homeless and formerly homeless people who have gone through homelessness, as 'experts through experience' in each of the project's working groups.

- The homeless are not a homogeneous group

There is no one single universal patent solution for the reduction and elimination of homelessness. Several earlier homelessness reduction programmes have reached quantitatively good results. It seems however that these programmes have been targeted more to those homeless people whose sole reason for homelessness has been the lack of affordable rental apartments. The programmes have in fact excluded large groups of homeless people, whose lives have been afflicted by serious exclusion and multiple problems.

The current programme for reducing long term homelessness has been intentionally targeted to this group of homeless people, for which it is the most difficult to provide housing and which needs the most support and care. In practice, the idea that increasing the amount of generally available housing would impact positively on the situation of this group of long-term homeless has not worked. Instead of a top-down model, this group of homeless people needs its own individually tailored housing solutions. The implementation of the programme has shown that the group of long-term homeless people is heterogeneous and the need for support and care varies considerably. In order for the housing solutions to succeed, the service organisation needs to be considerably flexible - being able to react swiftly to changing support needs. Adequate support based on multidisciplinary know-how and appropriate numbers of personnel are indispensable prerequisites for the success of new housing units. As the Finnish experience shows, appropriate revision of homeless policies and structures is necessary on

a regular basis in order to meet the needs of different categories of homeless people. The Finnish experience testifies to the importance of needs-based approaches.

- The solutions for homelessness cannot be temporary

Attempts to solve homelessness have previously been characterised by a temporariness that had become permanent. At the start of the year the Herttoniemi shelter in Helsinki, established in the mid 80's as a temporary solution for a dismal homelessness situation, was closed down. Thus, a temporary measure had lasted over 25 years. In our experience, dormitory-type units contribute to homelessness instead of preventing it. Specific subcultures characterised by temporariness and lack of responsibility develop easily in the dormitories. Dormitories also easily serve as a fertile ground for different types of criminal activity. The dormitory conditions do not safeguard the type of privacy and safety that would make the solving of difficult social and health related problems possible.

According to our understanding, dormitories cannot serve as a modern solution for homelessness, even as a temporary solution. The 21st century minimum solution for homelessness is supported housing with an adequate number of professional staff members. As a result, all the dormitories in Finland are destined to be converted into supported housing units within a few years' time. It is evident that the authorities also need to maintain a readiness for providing emergency housing in acute homelessness situations. Emergency housing can only be a temporary solution, which here signifies a maximum of a few weeks time during which a more permanent solution needs to be found.

- The programme needs to be founded on a clear philosophy and vision of the elimination of homelessness

The long-term homelessness reduction programme is based on the Finnish application of the 'housing first' principle. Housing is regarded as a basic human need and right. Not until housing is of reasonable quality does the solving of even the most difficult social and health related problems become possible. A central element of the 'housing first' principle in the Finnish model is the evaluation of the need for services, which aims at verifying that the resident is receiving appropriate support and services.

- The reduction of homelessness has strong implications for social and health care services

It can already be noted that the projects of the reduction programme have a direct influence on the totality of services provided for homeless people by the municipalities. New units have increased the number of alternatives and made possible the construction of housing paths in addition to reducing impractical placements such as housing in institutions due to a lack of housing. The increases in the amount of staff in supporting services for homeless people have been historically substantial. Finland is witnessing a paradigm shift with regard to the services provided for homeless people. This has deep implications for the manner in which the social and health care services for the most severely excluded people are arranged. The change involves especially the services for people with intoxicant abuse problems and mental health problems.

We call this new concept 'housingsocial work'. In accordance with the 'housing first' principle, housing is seen as a "stabilising environment" which serves as a base from which it is possible to support clients in focusing their resources on strengthening interactive relationships (professional, peer, personal relationships) that will promote the continuity of housing. 'Housingsocial work' does not focus on psycho-social problems; the perspective is rather on successful housing solutions. In order to achieve this goal the members of the multidisciplinary team bring their own know-how to the client's support without limiting the perspective to their own professional frame of reference.

- Preventing homelessness requires concrete, targeted actions

Ending homelessness requires a comprehensive approach where prevention and responses to homelessness are in balance. Preventive measures are not sufficient for the elimination of homelessness if the incoming flow of new homeless people cannot be stopped. In the reduction programme the prevention of homelessness has been intensified through various means. In our understanding, efficient means to prevent homelessness include the strengthening of the cooperation between authorities. Accordingly, joint approaches to prevent evictions have

been drawn up for the authorities of the programme cities, in addition to the establishment of housing advice. Housing advice is regarded as such a central preventive mode of work that legislation which would put the municipalities under the obligation to provide housing advice as a permanent service is currently being prepared. Extending housing advice into the private tenancy markets is also indispensable

From the point of view of social inclusion, young people facing the threat of homelessness need to be awarded special attention. With regard to young people, in addition to the support directed at housing, the role of meaningful activity (studies/work) is also emphasized.

5. Final conclusions

Eliminating homelessness is a feasible and realistic goal. It is a goal that can be justified on humane, ethical and political grounds and supported by strong economic evidence. A sustainable policy of social inclusion can only be built on this goal. Eliminating homelessness is a housing policy issue which spans a wide range of policy areas, most notably social and health.

Eliminating homelessness requires a very concrete implementation of a strategy, based on a comprehensive partnership and with strong political support. Political support is needed both in the actual implementation of the strategy and also to secure the necessary legal framework at national level, which allows consistency and accountability in the implementation of homelessness strategies.

Measures should be well targeted to different groups of homeless people. Special attention should be reserved for the most vulnerable groups and seriously excluded homeless people. Measures should be quantitatively sufficient and implemented in phases to sustain the balance of the service system. The sufficiency of quantity applies both to housing solutions and to support personnel.

Eliminating homelessness is not possible without a simultaneous investment in the prevention of homelessness and responses to homelessness. In this respect, measures should be concrete, targeted and based on local circumstances.

The time frame for ending homelessness is dependent on the extent of homelessness. The Finnish reduction programme aims to end long-term homelessness by 2015. As this goal is reached we can also see a significant reduction in temporary homelessness. Based on our current knowledge of the extent of homelessness in EU-countries it is reasonable to argue that on the EU-level a realistic time-frame for ending homelessness in closer to 2020.

The progress towards ending homelessness can be reliably evaluated if subgoals are concrete and measurable and if a reliable monitoring system has been established at the same time. A well-functioning cooperation between different local authorities is a precondition for a reliable monitoring system.

The greatest obstacle for ending homelessness is the public opinion, the ”silent majority”, whose attitudes towards homeless people are often very prejudiced and stigmatizing. These attitudes surface especially in local resistance towards new housing units for homeless people. The only method for decreasing this resistance seems to be the continuous distribution of information regarding homelessness and an on-going dialogue between the units and their neighbourhood.

The greatest risk in ending homelessness lies in the discrepancy of homelessness policies and strategies between EU member states. It is evident already now that homeless people within a country (e.g. Finland) move to cities where there are more services available for them. If the gap in the level of services for homeless people in different EU-countries widens there is a great risk of migration of homeless people from one country to another. The need for a European consensus on a strategy to end homelessness and also to harmonize basic social security is evident.

Ending homelessness is not possible without a sufficient legal framework to support the implementation of homelessness strategies. The European Social Charter already provides a strong foundation for national legislation. We have strong empirical evidence which shows that ending homelessness is possible, it is realistic, it is ethically justifiable and it is also economically viable. It is not an overstatement to say that ending homelessness is the sole most efficient measure to fight against social exclusion.

Key Question 2: 'Ending Homelessness': A realistic goal?

Raffaele Tangorra, Member of the Social Protection Committee and Director General, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Italy

This expert's response will consider the feasibility of ending homelessness from an Italian perspective. When talking about homelessness, it is important to precisely define the phenomenon that we are referring to. It is clear that the more restricted the definition that we use is, the more specific it becomes. This is not always functional for the scope of homelessness, yet a broader definition is harder to manage and supervise as it necessarily implies policies such as those concerning public housing, or social protection. If our definition of homelessness becomes as extended as to include any situation of unconventional living, this is evidently exceeding the welfare-state field of interest. It is not easy to determine whether one choice is better than the other and it is especially hard to get different administrations to work jointly. In most cases in fact, homelessness is only one part of the problem, which has also to do with various other elements such as health, group specificity or even public security, for example. There is certainly a need for major progress in data collection and improved information as it is important to find a common starting point from which sub-populations can be investigated. This does not imply the definition of a large number of targets. Generally, based on my experience, when considering awareness and information relating to these themes, it is more useful to limit the field of interest and focus on very precise ideas; hence making it easier to raise concern both in terms of public opinion and professionals in the sector.

Coming to national contexts, and more specifically to the Italian situation where the construction of the welfare state has had a traditionally localist character, it becomes evident that the possibility of establishing common national goals over issues such as the fight against homelessness could function as a significant stimulus to the territories' action. According to the Italian constitution, the Central Government does not have powers of intervention over regional administrations which represent the competent authority and direct referent over social issues. Indeed, just as for the European Union with respect to its Member States, what the Italian administrative system should be aiming towards is a common action, shared by the various competent institutions in a joint operation; thus bringing regional and local partners, respectively in charge of the policy programme and the management of interventions to act under the impulse of the national authority for the individuation of common objectives and targets.

Defining targets in relation to homelessness is complicated. The welfare context as a whole is one provided with a very low level of information. Yet when it comes to homelessness the situation is even worse and quantitative data is close to zero. The implementation of updated information and of an indicators system represents a basic step that needs to be taken in order to effectively fight against homelessness. Any decision has to be taken on the basis of good knowledge and documentation, whereas we are still suffering from a significant lack of information even concerning the ordinary management at local level. There is definitely an urgent need for a transversal evolution in the quality of available information.

One first step to be made towards the establishment of common targets (which of course imply shared indicators as well) is clearly establishing the dimensions of the phenomenon. On this, we are largely starting from zero. Few countries can claim to have reached a complete understanding in terms of the enumeration of homelessness. Such an objective is only reachable through constant measuring activity. It has taken four years of work for the ad-hoc investigation that the Italian Ministry for Labour and Social Policies is currently conducting to produce its first results and we are definitely still in an experimental phase. This sort of operation needs to be systematized and results must be made available to everyone. Beyond the numeric count, what our research in cooperation with fio.PSD (Federazione Italiana Organismi Persone Senza Dimora) interestingly reveals is a high level of specificity in the various local homeless populations. Clearly, the single circumstance of being linked by a condition of homelessness does not mean that homeless people have common living conditions overall. On the contrary, whereas a diffused tendency exists to associate homeless people to stereotyped images, the cited research has evidenced a multiplicity of situations and needs, each requiring different responses and thus making it an essential task to specifically define the sub-groups of the population living in conditions of social emergency.

One more significant element that our research uncovers is that of the geographical characterization of homelessness, implying that there is diversity at the local and area level that needs to be considered. This can lead to a much more effective analysis of the problem than an approach proceeding on the basis of averages alone. In this perspective, it becomes fundamental to start developing indicators of geographic composition besides those based exclusively on territorial averages. Indeed, the extent of a given area needs to be taken into consideration. Urban areas differ from metropolitan ones as well as from smaller cities. Our investigation covers the whole phenomenon in its various manifestations - starting from small and medium cities of 70.000 inhabitants we drop down to 30.000 in order to cover every provincial capital city. The Italian context is one in which small centres prevail over larger realities: in a total number of 8000 municipalities, about 5000 have less than 10.000 inhabitants. In small villages, when there is a situation of homelessness it is often a known one and usually characterized by small numbers of households, hence easily recognizable. It is clear that the larger a city is in terms of number of inhabitants, the harder it becomes to have a perception of the extent of the phenomenon and to establish a strategy of intervention.

In fact, although policies on homelessness are mostly programmed and dispensed on a local level, the instrument of national common goals can play a role in catalyzing responses, as it is useful for raising awareness on the issue and also helps to create and sustain a proactive and more effective response on the part of civil society and advocacy bodies. Central coordination can be especially useful in those cases where there is no specific competence over national social policies; consider for example the case of the European Union where the domain is fully subsidiary. The European case concretely exemplifies how central coordination on social themes can become an instrument for the development of a common framework of analysis, thus allowing exchange amongst different countries and contributing to maintaining awareness and debate on the agendas of Member States. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a good example. However, we need to be not too ambitious. If we think of the OMC as an instrument of convergence between Member States' policies, we are at least being unrealistic. I believe that not even the NGO world ever believed in such a perspective, which can surely be a long-term one, but does not work in the immediate.

Convergence can be the common end to be aiming for, but we are evidently considering very soft instruments of intervention, which without a serious investment of resources will hardly be effective on a series of processes which require more than a mere ‘reputation effect’ such as OMC sanctions are intended to be. Reputation has not really worked as a deterrent over much more delicate issues in terms of dedicated resources, hence I would not value the OMC for its sanctioning power. Much more interesting is the OMC’s promotional power and the attention it can raise amongst local politicians over the issue in question. One good example of this OMC role is provided by the 2010 European Year against Poverty, which remains an information campaign but still has contributed to the inclusion of the poverty target in the EU 2020 strategy, and the proposed European anti Poverty Platform. Indeed, leaving aside the coordination of political choices, reaching a common level of attention on specific themes in coordination with local realities can already be considered a success. Homelessness is not an exception, considering that it is a theme often excluded from the political agenda or analyzed from other, very different, perspectives such as the public security perspective.

It is precisely in such a frame of mind that our targets should be looked at, especially the most ambitious ones. Ending homelessness, above all, can constitute the common policy driving force, but only as long as it is intended in a long-term perspective, definitely not to be reached within a 10 year term. It can work as a motivational drive, but requires structural changes that a government alone does not have the power to realize. Moreover, although we still do not have the exact numbers, it is quite clear that the homeless population has changed, and indeed grown over recent years. Even on the basis of a banal personal perception, it is easy to assess that the profile of people who live in the streets has changed deeply over the last 10 years in Italy. The causes of such a transformation are to be found on the one hand in likely short-term effect of the recent financial crisis, while on the other hand more structural trends -- connected to migratory flows -- are at play. Hence, this evolution in profiles is determined by transitions that are mostly unavoidable and which, in the case of immigration, have been assuming a certain specificity regarding the Italian reality. Indeed, although every other country in Europe has been dealing with the issue of migrant reception, the impression is that Italy is currently in a position of particular stress in this context. Although Italy is often not more than the obligatory gateway to the Schengen area and immigrants head for other countries in many instances, it is also true that migration has become a relevant and complicated issue

for Italy, especially in recent years and more specifically in concomitance with EU enlargement. Massive immigration flows present a particular challenge; hard to handle even for an advanced system and which evidently calls for a revolutionary redefinition of public services which were thought out and put into place on the basis of much smaller numbers of possible recipients.

Although immigrants often make up part of the homeless population, the causes of their homelessness are quite specific and they do not often present the multiple problems and complex needs characterizing the story of many homeless people. Yet, immigration definitely influences the process of demand and supply within the Italian welfare-state, which is to say that the idea of ending homelessness is undermined and made utopian by the same factors that have been generating it increasingly in the last years. Within such a frame and considering ending homelessness as a long-term perspective, intermediate goals can be hypothesized; the first step being that of a census and, once in possession of data, significant results can possibly be obtained. Ending street homelessness, for example, would be a realistic and yet ambitious objective to pursue; requiring a strategic central coordination for local administrations that do not have the resources or the tools to activate and promote effective strategies.

The Italian situation is further complicated by the political and institutional context, since most probably not even a regional program exists for homelessness (for which regions represent the competent authority and direct referent of the Government). What the Ministry is trying to do is increase communication, especially on the aspects of coordination and monitoring. In fact, it is often a substantial difficulty for the central administration to get information on local projects or to follow and diffuse good practices. Examples of such good practices include 'Housing-First', already active in Turin and Rimini, or practices connected to social housing which represents a possible response in the current context of reduced resources because they allows us to increase the offer with limited public investment (although we do not imagine this to be the structural solution to the needs presented by the issue homelessness). The biggest obstacles in this sense are represented by metropolitan areas, which are often alone in managing social emergencies. There might be a need to structure a system of coordination within the coordination amongst various metropolitan areas, which would still require resources and investments if we want to consider such a prospect from a concrete and not exclusively utopian standing point.

There is a general need to create effective mechanisms for discussion on homelessness. There is no co-coordinating framework, culture or context making it possible for the 21 different administrations to compare and exchange beyond the mere negotiation with the central government in Italy. The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is currently working in the direction of favoring major exchange and coordination amongst local administrations. It is a fact that progress is being made in this direction, but there is still much to do and acknowledging that the Italian decentralized administration does constitute a critical specificity, just like the immigration phenomenon, can be a first step towards improvement and success. Overall, this answer considers that ending homelessness is a useful long-term goal but the specificities of different contexts regarding homelessness need to be fully accounted for and accommodated within an overall strategy that identifies appropriate intermediate objectives in order to make progress and is underpinned by adequate knowledge and understanding.

Key Question 2: 'Ending Homelessness': A realistic goal?
Professor Isobel Anderson, Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, UK[11]

Introduction

I am delighted to draw upon my research expertise to present evidence and analysis on the goal of ending homelessness to the European consensus conference on homelessness. My main expertise is on the legislative framework developed in Scotland, post-1999. This framework has set a target to ensure all 'non-intentionally' homeless households have settled accommodation by 2012. The detail of this framework is clarified in the evidence below, but it has been closely associated with effectively providing a right to housing by 2012, which could potentially end homelessness in Scotland by that date. Where possible I will make comparisons with other nations.

Context

The post-2000 period has seen increasing policy attention directed towards homelessness in much of, and beyond the European Union. Many countries now have national strategies or legislative frameworks which incorporate measurable targets to substantially reduce, or even eradicate homelessness within the next decade. Examples include Australia, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, all three Scandinavian countries and all four jurisdictions of the United Kingdom.

While there may be disagreement amongst the key stakeholders in tackling homelessness on what the ultimate aim of public policy on homelessness should be, some policy makers are beginning to accept that it is possible to end homelessness, and the Scottish and French approaches discussed here are two important examples of approaches with the capacity to end or very substantially reduce homelessness[12.] The view that ending homelessness within Europe is impossible and that homelessness policy should simply seek to manage the social reality of homelessness as effectively as possible seems increasingly inadequate for a socially inclusive Europe in the 21st century, irrespective of the challenging economic climate.

As well as a need to establish a consensus on what homelessness strategies should aim to achieve, and what targets need to be established in order to meet these aims, it is also crucial to consider what is meant by ending homelessness. This requires a consensus on the meaning of home and an agreed definition of adequacy in housing and social participation which can be operationalised in order to identify any reduction in/eradication of homelessness.

Ending Homelessness – the evidence

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw important progress in policy and rights-based responses to homelessness at national and international levels. In considering whether ending homelessness is a realistic goal, this response will examine evidence for greater social justice and equality in access to housing, as well as the alleviation and prevention of homelessness. Recent examples of rights-based responses to homelessness, which have the capacity to effectively end homelessness, are analysed with reference to the wider international context of the right to housing as a human right, a legal right and a social right.

The meaning of home

While the term housing refers mainly to adequacy of physical shelter from the elements, the English word home conveys much more than just a physical dwelling. The home is a social space from which to conduct life's activities, and from which occupants seek security and comfort in terms of both living accommodation and the surrounding environment. The costs of housing are crucial to households' ability to afford and maintain a home

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[12] *See also the FEANTSA publication* '**Ending Homelessness: A Handbook for Policy Makers'**. *This resource brings together examples of effective approaches from across Europe that have made progress towards ending homelessness.*

along with other aspects of desired standards of living. Consequently, even a literal interpretation of homelessness as 'being without a home' suggests that this implies more than just lacking adequate shelter, but that a person, family or household does not have a secure, adequate, affordable, private space from which to conduct their life. The term homelessness is subject to common sense, cultural, and legal definitions ranging from absolute destitution to definitions which are relative to the norms of different nations and societies. Edgar and Meert (2005) developed ETHOS, an operational typology of homelessness based on four main conceptual categories: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. However, there is equally a need to conceptualise definitions of being housed in terms of appropriate physical shelter along with minimum standards to facilitate wider participation in society, such as:

- Reasonable choice in dwelling and neighbourhood
- Reasonable standards in terms of size, type and condition of housing
- Affordable costs, where any individualised assistance with costs does not create a trap which precludes access to work
- Reasonable security of tenure over the medium to long term
- Reasonable support services to sustain independent living and participation in civic society
- A reasonable living income through employment or state support.

Importantly, the definition and measurement of being homeless or not being homeless should take account of self-definition by those who experience homelessness or extreme housing disadvantage. Those who have faced difficulties would also be well placed to participate in building consensus on what constitutes a home from which a person or family can reasonably engage in social, family, work and civic life.

Across the globe, housing is provided and consumed through a combination of market mechanisms, state provision/intervention, third sector/Non-Government Organisation (NGO) provision and self-help/informal solutions. In responding to homelessness and the wider housing needs of the population, the housing policies of nation states reflect a range of influences such as demography, market forces, and intervention strategies. To an extent national policies and legal frameworks will reflect prevailing political ideologies although housing systems (for example, in terms of the overall balance of tenure or finance mechanisms) take time to respond to political change. That said, state responses to homelessness can be influential and can range from 'rights based' or legal approaches to 'softer' policy instruments such as offering financial incentives to local agencies to assist homeless households or otherwise encouraging 'enabling' approaches at the local level. The meaning of home needs to be better integrated into these strategies so that there is a positive definition of meeting needs, rather than simply measuring homelessness.

Many households may not explicitly consider the need to claim a 'right' to housing, especially if they are readily able to access suitable accommodation through a market mechanism. However, those who face severe constraints in the market sector or who face a homelessness crisis may well rely on the state to assist them in meeting their housing needs. In such circumstances the question of a right to housing becomes much more pertinent. Housing as a social or human right is important in that it recognises the basic need of human beings not just for shelter from the elements, but for accommodation which is safe, secure, affordable and sufficient for the needs of the household. To fully end homelessness, policy needs to work towards provision of a home for all.

Ending homelessness: rights-based approaches

Bengtsson (2001) distinguished between 'legalistic' rights to housing associated with more selective national housing policies and 'social' rights to housing associated with more universal housing and welfare policies. The legalistic or 'justiciable' approach, where housing rights can be enforced at law, is quite different from, say, the frameworks of rights contained in international treaties which cannot necessarily be enforced at law by individual households within signatory states. It is therefore important to examine the approaches of individual countries to rights-based responses to homelessness and to assess whether these are actually designed to end homelessness.

In Mandič's (2006) review of homelessness policies in the European Union, France was identified as having introduced a right to housing in 1982, which was further enhanced in the Besson Act of 1990, although difficulties

in implementation were acknowledged. Beyond this, Mandič concluded that the approaches of other EU member states to resolving homelessness appeared to demonstrate 'uniqueness' rather than identifiable patterns. Stephens and Fitzpatrick's (2007) study of 11 OECD countries concluded that the United Kingdom was unusual in having a legislative basis for legally enforceable rights for homeless households. Notably, the UK system helped homeless people into settled/secure accommodation, compared to, say, Germany where legal duties were only for the provision of temporary accommodation. In Sweden, Poland and Hungary, limited rights for emergency accommodation for some homeless groups were identifiable and social welfare legislation assisted homeless people in other countries. Nevertheless, across the 11 countries studied, there was wide acknowledgement of the need for at least temporary accommodation and social support as part of responses to homelessness (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007). Different strategies were evident in Central and Eastern European states which had undergone post-1990 social, economic and political transitions to EU membership, compared to those nations which had developed capitalist welfare states since the post-1945 period.

Scotland – widening the homelessness safety net

In the United Kingdom the New Labour Government elected in 1997, and the post-1999 devolved Parliaments in Scotland and Wales, sought to deliver more progressive social policies, prioritising regenerating disadvantaged communities and reducing homelessness. The period of economic growth and prosperity up to 2008 allowed a fundamentally neoliberal economic model to support increased welfare spending under New Labour's Third Way. Policies to tackle these issues were sustained up to the change of government at the May 2010 elections.

From 1977, a legal framework in place across England, Scotland and Wales placed duties on the local state (local authorities) to take action where individuals or households presented themselves as homeless or threatened with homelessness. Homelessness was defined as lacking accommodation or being prevented from occupying accommodation, for example because of a threat of violence (adapted from Fitzpatrick, Quilgars and Pleace, eds, 2009, pxiii). The legislation did not, however, treat all households equally as local housing authorities were required to apply four 'tests' to applications for assistance:

1. Is the household 'homeless' as defined in the legislation?
2. Is at least one member of the household in 'priority need' of accommodation, defined as:
    a. Household with children of school age or an expectant mother?
    b. Households 'vulnerable' due to old age, health or disability, or another special reason?
    c. Household homeless because of an emergency such as a fire or flood?
3. Has the household become homeless 'intentionally' (by deliberate act or omission which led to homelessness)?
4. Does the household have a 'connection' with the local authority to which they have presented (through residence, employment, or family)?

If the authority judged that the household circumstances met all four tests, then a duty to provide accommodation would arise, and would generally have been fulfilled by offering housing in the local authority's own rented housing stock (council housing) or by referral to an alternative social landlord (housing association or registered social landlord).

The devolution of housing policy to the new Scottish Parliament in 1999 resulted in differential housing policy and legislation in Scotland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. Recognising that the 1977 homelessness legislation was out of date, the New Labour-led coalition set up the Homelessness Task Force to review homelessness in Scotland and to make recommendations for more effective responses. The Task Force published an interim report in 2000 and a final report and action plan in 2002 (Homelessness Task Force, 2000, 2002). Recommendations were incorporated into law in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness, etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, with implementation over the period up to 2012.

Essentially, the four tests of the 1977 legislation were to be reduced to one test – is the household homeless? Perhaps the most significant recommendation for legislative change was the phasing out of the differential treatment of households according to whether they were considered to have 'priority need' or not. In essence this was the long campaigned for recognition that housing is a fundamental need of all households and that the distinction between priority and non-priority status was unfair and ultimately ineffective as separate policy initiatives (e.g. 'Rough Sleepers Initiatives) had been required for those not supported by the main safety net (Anderson, 2007). Although not explicitly announced as a 'right to housing', the new measures meant that by

2012 there would effectively be a duty on local authorities to ensure that all households in Scotland had some form of accommodation. In 2003 the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE, an international Human Rights NGO) awarded the Housing Rights Protector Award to the Scottish Executive for this new homelessness legislation (Goodlad, 2005, p86). Further, in 2009, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, recommended that the Scottish homelessness framework be adopted throughout the United Kingdom (Bowcott, 2009).

After the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections, the Scottish National Party (SNP) formed a minority government in Scotland, but continued implementation of the new homelessness framework. By the end of the administrative year 2008/9, Scottish local authorities reported being more than 80% of the way to achieving the 2012 target of abolishing the priority/non-priority need distinction, albeit that there was variation in performance across the 32 Scottish local authorities (Scottish Government, 2009). The SNP Government subsequently implemented measures to change the means by which local authorities could discharge their duties to some homeless households to include private, as well as public/social sector tenancies (Scottish Government, 2010). While this represented a practical response to the pressure on the social housing sector, questions remained as to the suitability of the Scottish privately rented sector to provide adequate long-term solutions to homelessness. For example, Scottish social housing tenancies incorporated a wider package of 'tenants' rights' (on repairs, exchanging homes, tenancy succession and protection from eviction) which did not apply in the private sector. Moreover, private sector tenancies remained generally more expensive than the social sector, but with less favourable housing allowance regulations (Anderson, 2009).

Although this level of legislative change was not repeated in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, positive policy reviews were undertaken across the United Kingdom, resulting broadly in:

- Change from a responsive approach to individual homelessness to a strategic approach to assessing and meeting needs at national and local authority level.
- Recognition that homelessness was not just a housing problem: health, social care, and housing support needs should also be met.
- Recognition that some households experienced repeated homelessness and needed to be supported to sustain independent living.
- Recognition that homelessness could result from an immediate crisis or be linked to long term sustained multiple disadvantage and that both aspects could be resolved.
- A move towards preventing homelessness from occurring (linked to the adoption of strategic, rather than responsive approaches).

Further, during 2000-2005 central Government did begin to make broad commitments to 'affordable secure housing for all' and to measure performance towards key targets in housing quality. Setting of overall goals for housing policy and monitoring performance at central government level was a significant change in approach to policy evaluation in the UK during this period. Programmes to tackle rooflessness were in place before 2000 and while rooflessness was not totally eliminated, it had been substantially reduced. Continuing responses to rooflessness were then merged into the strategic approach to needs assessment and responding to homelessness embedded in local authority homelessness and housing strategies.

France – introducing an enforceable right to housing

In France, the long-standing legislative response to housing was also modernised in the post-2000 period as documented by Loison (2007). France recognised the right to housing as a social right enshrined in the Constitution of 1946 and reaffirmed in subsequent laws. Notably, the Besson Act of 1990 provided that guaranteeing the right to housing was a duty of solidarity incumbent upon the whole nation. The difficulty was that the right to housing was not legally enforceable as it gave no entitlement to relief through the courts for those who could not find somewhere to live (Loison, 2007, p186). The phrase 'enforceable right to housing' (Droit Au Logement Opposable, abbreviated to DALO in the French language) emerged from a period of policy review post-2000. Loison characterised the enforceable right to housing as a 'performance obligation' 'under which central government's responsibility for guaranteeing the right to housing would be devolved to local authorities and homeless persons would have official forms of redress first by mediation and then through the courts' (2007, pp186-7).

Voluntary homelessness agencies also campaigned for the enforceable right to housing which finally passed into law in Bill No 2007-290 (Loison, 2007, p189). The key legislative measures of DALO included:

1. The state guaranteed the right to housing in the Besson Act
2. From 1 December 2008, the DALO would cover the six highest priority categories of applicant: roofless people, tenants facing eviction, people in temporary accommodation, people in substandard or unfit accommodation; people with at least one dependent child living in housing not regarded as decent; people with a disability or a disabled dependent whose housing is not regarded as decent
3. From 1 January 2012, the DALO would be extended to all other people who qualify for social housing but had been waiting for an abnormally long time.
4. All groups could take their case to a mediation committee and then an administrative appeal tribunal and the court would be able to order the state to house the applicant.

The DALO was supplemented by measures to increase the supply of social housing and an enhanced plan of action on homelessness designed to ensure appropriate action to move people from temporary to settled accommodation and to provide required support for resettlement. Early evaluation of the implementation of DALO (Loison-Leruste, and Quilgars, 2009, p95) suggested that the number of people helped was less than expected (just over 4000 by October 2008) but that it had raised the profile of homelessness on the policy agenda and provided better information to help ensure more effective practice in the future. While a full evaluation of the impact of DALO is needed, early implementation seems to suggest that an enforceable legal right to housing is a very significant tool towards ending homelessness, even if it also needs to be accompanied by wider measures (and extended to all groups in the population). It also provides a practical mechanism for the measurement of progress if appropriate data is collected on applications and outcomes.

Norway[13] – a universalistic approach with social rights?

Norway has a single comprehensive national strategy to address homelessness På vei til egen bolig (A Path to a Permanent Home) (KRD 2005, Husbanken 2006). The overarching aims of the Norwegian homelessness strategy have been that demands for eviction should be reduced by 50 percent and that the number of evictions should be reduced by 30 percent. Other aims were that no one should have to spend time in temporary accommodation after being released from jail or after discharge from an institution; no one should be offered overnight accommodation without a quality agreement; and no one should stay more than three months in temporary residency. The strategy has emphasized not “hard” national regulations, but “soft” governance by comparative evaluation of performance of the municipalities by means of common objectives and policy suggestions and recommendations. The emphasis has also been on funding networks and forums for communication and mutual learning. The strategy leaves the responsibility for implementing suitable change and measures to the municipalities, though there have been initiatives to help the implementation process on the local level (KRD 2006).

The Norwegian homelessness strategy treats tackling homelessness in a universalistic way (Anderson and Ytrehus, 2010). The homelessness strategy addresses homeless people’s lack of access to health or other services due to structural issues by emphasising that a range of welfare services have responsibility for meeting the varied needs of homeless people. Consequently, the Norwegian homelessness strategy does not aim to develop separate new services for homeless people. The approach of the Norwegian homelessness strategy is in line with the basic principles of organisation in the Norwegian welfare state, which state that no special care services shall be established. All people have the same right to welfare benefits, such as their own home, education, work, meaningful spare-time activities and influence on their own life situation. The regulatory implication of the Norwegian strategy to reduce homelessness is that it should not be implemented by one service or a specific professional authority. Rather, according to the intention in the strategy, homelessness should be addressed in all relevant policy areas and the strategy is an inter-ministry strategy led by the state Housing Bank, which leads on housing policy in Norway. The freedom of municipalities in the choice of organisation model must be seen against the background of the strong independence which Norwegian municipalities have over welfare and service production. However, the national strategy has put the issue of homelessness firmly on the agenda with other sectors, such as health and poverty alleviation. Although the Norwegian approach is again slightly

[13] While not a full EU member, Norway is closely integrated into the Union in many respects.

different to that of Scotland and France, one factor which they all have in common is a strategic approach at national/regional jurisdiction level, which provides a co-ordinating framework for local-level implementation.

Housing rights - an effective strategy for ending homelessness?

A number of similarities are evident in the rights-based responses to homelessness in Scotland and France. Both represented modernised frameworks which emerged from longstanding and evolving legislation influenced by civil society as well as the state. Both demonstrated socially inclusive approaches through a progressive widening of the characteristics of groups entitled to be housed in the event of homelessness, with the same target implementation date of 2012. The French approach was most explicitly introduced as an 'enforceable right to housing', while the rights-based approach was more implicit in the Scottish model. Ultimately, the effectiveness of both programmes will depend on the capacity of homeless households to claim or enforce these legal entitlements to housing and the capacity of the national housing systems to adequately meet need.

In the Scottish case, effectiveness was being monitored through annual reporting to central government of progress towards the 2012 target. In France, the DALO act also provided for annual monitoring and reporting, including quantifying the number of unsatisfied housing applications. A key component of DALO was the right to apply to an administrative tribunal if homeless applicants had been waiting for housing for an abnormally long time without being offered suitable housing. If the decision went against the State, it would have to compensate the complainant (Loison, 2007, p196). However, whereas in Scotland the responsibility for implementation rested clearly with local government authorities, in France, the involvement of government at central, regional and departmental levels, as well as district associations and local authorities made the local implementation of centralised policies extremely complex in practice.

The Scottish approach has also been compared with Ireland and Norway (Anderson, Dyb and Finnerty, 2008). Some key aspects of convergence on homelessness policy were identified despite differing historical welfare paths and tenure structures. A key feature of approaches to homelessness in all three countries was not just the sustained involvement of the central state, but also the crucial role of the local state in the implementation of nationally set policy and strategy. All three countries had introduced national strategies with broad goals of integrated service provision, supported by partnership working. All at least recognised the need for support services as well as housing provision and all made use of incentive funding to encourage local delivery of the national strategy. Broadly, all had a goal of providing at least temporary/emergency accommodation for all citizens or ending the most extreme experience of street homelessness. Scotland was characterised by a greater willingness to resort to legislation while Ireland and Norway relied more on financial incentives to encourage local delivery (which were also adopted in Scotland). Because of its detailed legal framework, Scotland could be characterised as the country with the most comprehensive approach. However, that conclusion should perhaps be interpreted in the light of Scotland having the highest overall level of homelessness among the three countries compared.

In terms of housing outcomes for formerly homeless people, commentators have characterised the social rented sectors in all three countries as residualised (Anderson, Dyb and Finnerty, 2008) notwithstanding the very different scale of the sector across the three. Ireland and Scotland (and to a lesser extent Norway) were exploring greater use of the privately rented sector to assist in resolving homelessness. Cost was obviously a key factor and, importantly for Scotland, Housing Benefit and the Local Housing Allowance for private tenancies are reserved matters to London/the UK parliament, over which the Scottish Government has no control.

Ireland and Norway were commended for having commissioned and published independent reviews of the progress of their strategies and it is to be hoped that Scotland will do the same (as was the case for the earlier Rough Sleeping Initiative). That said, only Scotland (along with the rest of the UK) routinely collects and publishes a comprehensive set of homelessness statistics over the long-term, which certainly contribute to monitoring the impact of change. The three country analysis of Ireland, Scotland and Norway demonstrated considerable convergence in approaches to tackling homelessness despite continuing divergence in wider housing market structures, notably in the balance of tenure. All three housing systems gave precedence to the market but certainly not to the extent of withdrawing or failing to provide a basic safety net for those facing a homelessness crisis. Some long-standing national characteristics were identifiable with Norway emerging as still the 'best housed' nation; Ireland's housing and welfare policy still reflecting its agrarian past and later economic development; and Scotland's overall economy and housing/homelessness landscape reflected it's long term

relatively poorer status than it's much larger immediate neighbour, England (Anderson, Dyb and Finnerty, 2008). All three countries clearly had a sound basis for progressive policies to end the most extreme manifestations of homelessness and to integrate wider strategies to move towards the provision of reasonable housing for the whole population.

For the United Kingdom, the routine housing statistics collated by Wilcox (2009) give some indication of the impact of the post-2000 changes to homelessness policy and legislation. First of all, Table 1 shows that while expenditure on housing and community amenities in the UK was a fraction of that on health and social protection, it did grow more significantly over the decade.

Table 1: UK total expenditure on services by function in real terms (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, p103).

Expenditure Service	£billions 1999/2000	£billions 2008/9	Increase
Housing and Community Amenities	5.7	14.8	x 2.5
Health	60.2	107.9	x1.8
Social Protection	149.7	199.1	X 1.3

Second, Tables 2 and 3 show that while the proportion of social rented housing continued to decline in the UK, Scotland still had a relatively higher proportion of social rented stock to support its widening of the legal safety net.

Table 2: Tenure Change in Scotland 2000-2007 (adapted from Wilcox 2009, p107)

Year Tenure as % of whole stock	2000	2007
Owner occupied	62.3	65.4
Privately rented	6.7	9.6
Housing Association	5.7	10.8
Local Authority	25.3	14.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Total social rented (Housing Association plus Local Authority)	31.0	25.1

Table 3: Tenure Change UK 1999-2007 (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, p107).

Year Tenure as % of whole stock	1999	2007
Owner Occupied	68.9	69.5
Privately Rented	9.4	12.5
Housing Association	5.3	8.4
Local Authority	16.4	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Total social rented (Housing Association plus Local Authority)	21.7	18.1

Table 4 illustrates how the official homelessness statistics reflect the different approaches to tackling homelessness in Scotland and England. Scotland has increased its legal safety net and in the short term this has meant a rise in the number of households accepted as homeless. It is crucial to interpret these as households going through a process which, for most, concludes with settled accommodation (i.e. no longer homeless). In contrast, England has not changed its legislative framework but has had success in reducing acceptances through 'homelessness prevention'. Prevention can include mediation, measures to avoid eviction and advice on alternative housing options, but households retain the right to make an application under the homelessness legislation.

Table 4: Homelessness Acceptances 2000-2008 (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, p206)

Year Number of households accepted as homeless	2000	2008	Change
England	120,000	66,400	Reduction – preventive approach – homelessness avoided?
Scotland	20,600	34,701	Increase – widening the safety net – housing provided

There were slightly fewer households in temporary (rather than long-term, settled) accommodation in England at the end of the decade, while the expanded duty in Scotland again resulted in an increased duty to provide temporary accommodation (Table 5).

Table 5: Households in temporary accommodation (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, pp207-8)

Year Households in Temporary Accommodation	2000	2008	Change
England	73,080	67,480	No additional Temporary Accommodation duty
Scotland	3,995	9,535	From 2001, duty to provide temporary accommodation to all homeless households, typically for up to 28 days while application is assessed. In many cases this will also result in a duty to provide long term accommodation (100% of cases by 2012).

Measures to tackle street homelessness had been in place in the UK since the 1990s and reasonable success in reducing rooflessness has been widely acknowledged. Table 6 shows that only a tiny proportion of English local authorities report more than 50 persons 'sleeping rough' (and these are mainly concentrated in certain areas of London). Directly comparable figures for Scotland were not available.

Table 6: Estimates of individuals 'sleeping rough' (roofless), England (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, p213)

Estimate of individuals sleeping rough (point in time)	% of Local Authorities 1998	% of Local Authorities 2009
Between nil and 10 persons	44.3	98.6
More than 50 persons	2.8	0.3

One concern which has been expressed during implementation of the modernised approach to homelessness in the UK is that a very high proportion of social housing lettings may be required for homeless households in Scotland in order to meet its ambitious target. Table 7 shows that while lettings to homeless households are higher in Scotland they still constitute just under half of all lettings. Arguably this is an indication of effective policy implementation demonstrating that Scotland is succeeding in housing its most vulnerable households. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government is currently exploring alternatives such as the increased use of the private rented and housing association sectors to resolve homelessness.

Table 7: Social housing allocations to homeless households, 1999-2008 (adapted from Wilcox, 2009, p213)

Proportion of lettings to homeless households	1999	2008
English Local Authorities	25.0	28.0
English Housing Associations	12.0	23.0
Scottish Local Authorities	21.2	47.9

Looking at social policy more widely, Hills et al (2009) produced a detailed analysis of whether Britain was a fairer society after ten years of New Labour social policy (1997-2007), concluding that New Labour had not reversed the dramatic growth in income inequality of the previous 20 years, but nor had income inequality worsened

significantly. However, housing was considered to be one of the more successful policy fields in terms of addressing disadvantage – showing that progress can be made towards ending homelessness. In May 2010, the UK witnessed another political watershed in the shape of a coalition government at Westminster between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. Major public expenditure cuts and regressive tax changes were announced in the June 2010 budget. Protection of the achievements made in reducing homelessness in the previous decade will be a crucial challenge for the UK and the influence of consensus across the EU could prove extremely valuable in maintaining the policy impetus for the alleviation and prevention of homelessness.

EU and international context:

The rights-based case studies can be further compared with the wider concept of housing rights as human rights (Kenna, 2005). According to this approach, homelessness is a violation of human rights and therefore should be ended. The two principle instruments of the Council of Europe (47 member states) which relate to housing rights are the European Social Charter (and revised charter) and the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Kenna, 2005 pp31-54). The European Social Charter was established in 1961and is gradually being replaced by the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) of 1996. Under Article 31 of the RESC everyone has a right to housing, requiring nation states to take measures to promote access to housing of an adequate standard; **to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination** (author's emphasis); and to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources. Regular national reports on compliance are submitted to the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Rights (CSR). The Committee of Ministers can make a recommendation to a State asking it to change the situation in law and/or practice and reports published by the Committee offer benchmarks for national housing and homelessness policies. As at February 2009, however, only 25 of the 47 member states had fully ratified and implemented this charter (Council of Europe, 2009). Under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), living conditions have been taken into account in cases concerning human dignity and the convention recognises that a home is more than a dwelling and that human rights and fundamental freedoms require respect for 'home' and private/family life. The ECHR has been ratified by all 47 member states of the Council of Europe, applies to all persons in a State (not just its citizens) and has strong enforcement mechanisms (Kenna, 2005).

In contrast, the European Union approach (27 member states) has been to develop common governance arrangements for social protection, rather than legal rights, and housing has never been fully recognised as an area of competence at EU level. For example, instruments to support social inclusion such as National Action Plans (NAPs) initially made only superficial reference to housing (Kenna, 2005, pp64-67). Nevertheless, the 1990s and 2000s saw gradual recognition of the complex links between housing and other aspects of social exclusion/social protection which the EU sought to address. A 1997 resolution of the European Parliament expressed the desire for an EU housing policy, calling for the right to decent and affordable housing for all; in 1999 the Committee of the Regions raised the importance of homelessness issues; and EU texts on human dignity implicitly recognise the right to adequate accommodation as a fundamental human right. The Committee of the regions has in fact just published an own initiative opinion on the need for an EU homelessness strategy. Further, in 2007 the European Parliament adopted a written declaration on ending homelessness (111/2007). There are procedures for the discussion of housing issues through annual meetings of EU housing Ministers. These meetings do address the issue of homelessness. However, homelessness tends to be discussed as a social inclusion issue whereas more general housing issues are held to be largely a market function, where concerns are more with consumer rights and property rights than with fundamental rights to housing (Kenna, 2005). The 2010 joint report on social protection and social exclusion explicitly recognised the need for a sustained approach to tackling homelessness and the European Consensus Conference should provide a basis for further policy co-ordination and support at EU level. Further, the EU respects the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and EU members, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have all incorporated the right to housing into their national constitutions (even though it may not be explicitly legally enforceable as implemented in France). The Norwegian strategy outlined above also takes a social rights/governance approach rather than one of legally enforceable rights.

At global level, the most widely applicable human rights instruments are those under the auspices of the United Nations (150 member states), and nation states ratifying UN Covenants must ensure compatibility between their national laws and their international duties. Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

> "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control"
>
> (Kenna, 2005, p14, this author's emphasis).

Kenna (2005, p15-22) further documents that Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR ,1966), refers directly to the right to housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. This covenant has been ratified by 150 states and requires signatories to 'take appropriate steps to ensure realisation of this right'. General Comment 4 of the ICESCR further specifies required elements of housing policy including:

1. Legal security of tenure
2. Availability of services, materials and infrastructures
3. Affordable housing (such that housing costs do not threaten other needs being met)
4. Habitable housing
5. Accessible housing (including for groups with specific needs)
6. Location (environment and other services)
7. Culturally adequate housing

In theory, any person not enjoying these entitlements could claim that they do not enjoy the right to housing as enshrined in international human rights law (Kenna, 2005, p22).General comment 7 requires that forced evictions are prohibited unless they are carried out fully in accordance with national law and international covenants on human rights. Finally, wider United Nations anti-discrimination instruments apply equally to housing as to other areas of policy. Thus the right to housing is enshrined in widely ratified in international instruments and, if effectively implemented, would result in ending homelessness. What is required is that nation states give more attention to making the spirit of these instruments a reality.

Ending homelessness – the need for wider social change

Ending homelessness can be compared with strategies to tackle other types of social issues (e.g. poverty or discrimination) and these are dependent upon approaches to understanding difference and disadvantage in society. For example, the concepts of structure and agency are widely drawn upon to help explain people's different experiences of housing and other aspects of wellbeing. Ratcliffe (2004, p7) interprets structure as encompassing all of those features of society which constitute a context for constraint or enablement (institutions, organisations, forces of social regulation, laws, custom and practice). Agency is taken to refer to meaningful social action of an individual or collective nature and is considered to be multi-layered and multi-dimensional. The relations between structure and agency are not static and need to be seen as mutually reinforcing or transformative (Ratcliffe, 2004). Analysis of the interrelationship between structure and agency in homelessness remains a challenge for our full understanding of the problem of homelessness and for assessing whether any nation state or supra-national union can realistically end homelessness.

Piachaud (2008) considers a social policy approach to social justice examining libertarian, distributional and capabilities[14] approaches to understanding the extent to which individuals can fulfill their potential in any society. Piachaud (2008, p44) raises a number of questions in relation to achieving social justice. What is a fair starting point? What is a fair distribution of resources? Does the prevention of future social injustices justify short term inequality to reach that end? Piachaud argues that although the pursuit of social justice is a driver of social change, most societies are very far from achieving this goal. With regard to whether social justice requires some degree of equality of outcomes or requires equality of opportunities – he simply concludes that the debate continues.

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have presented an international analysis of social policy issues that put the emphasis firmly on inequality, arguing that further economic growth in the early 21st century was no longer

[14] Broadly the capabilities approach is about ensuring everyone has the capability live a full life, and can be compared with an equal opportunity approach.

bringing continual increases in well-being to the wealthiest nations[15]. Rather, they were seeing a rise in health and social problems (p6). Wilkinson and Picket constructed an index of health and social problems, which they found increased as levels of inequality increased (p20). In their sample, Japan, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands had the lowest inequality and the lowest levels of social problems, while the UK, Portugal, and the USA had the highest levels of inequality and health and social problems. Wilkinson and Pickett argued that interventionist services to deal with social problems were expensive and only partially effective (p26). Rather, the roots of inequality needed to be tackled by shifting from consumerism towards a more socially integrated and affiliative society. Strategies include reducing income differentials before taxation and redistributive welfare, implying a maximum income or maximum differential between richest and poorest and they argue (p241) that public opinion surveys broadly support a more even distribution of wealth. This analysis is important for a consideration of ending homelessness because it examines the bigger picture of poverty and inequality and proposes structural changes in the redistribution of wealth and power in society in a preventative approach, rather than mechanistic responses targeted at responding to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Conclusions

Quality of housing outcomes reflects choice and constraint within any nation or society, and sometimes people may have no effective choice, resulting in their becoming homeless. For those facing the most difficult circumstances a rights-based response to homelessness may offer an enforceable or justiciable procedure which actually empowers individual households to resolve their housing situation (Fitzpatrick, 2009, p167). Housing rights as human rights conferred by the international conventions discussed above may be closer to a social form of housing rights, which, if effectively implemented may well contribute to the prevention and elimination of homelessness and so avoid the need for a responsive solution. For example, DeDecker (2004) argued that Belgium's high degree of social protection resulted in it having among the lowest poverty levels in the world even though intervention in the housing market was weak. Of course the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. O'Sullivan (2008) has argued that the negotiated, consensual approach to developing a national strategy to combat homelessness in Ireland may prove more effective than an 'adversarial' (p229) legal rights approach. However, the extended rights-based legal framework in Scotland discussed in this response also emerged from a consensus approach through the Homelessness Task Force; and the DALO in France was implemented in conjunction with broader social inclusion measures.

As noted earlier, Bengtsson (2001) has argued that in more universalistic welfare states, social rights may be more appropriate and effective than justiciable rights. However, the introduction of social housing rights may be particularly challenging to secure in nation states where this would require fundamental shifts in national welfare provision. In such circumstances, enforceable housing rights may offer a short-medium-term shift which demonstrates some commitment to a rights-based response to homelessness and tackles the most urgent aspects of the problem. The direct transferability of the Scottish and French frameworks to other national contexts would not be straightforward, but they could perhaps be drawn upon as aspirational models which demonstrate that policy can change and nation states can implement rights-based responses to homelessness.

At supra-national level, systems are in place to monitor states' performance in meeting housing rights obligations, for example, through the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Rights; the European Union Social Protection Committee; and the European Courts. These bodies provide at least some remedy against contraventions of international instruments indicating that international human rights instruments can be used to address the development of human and housing rights within nation states. However, the question remains as to how accessible they are to individual households, as opposed to requiring substantial legal or advocacy support in order to successfully bring a complaint.

Low income/poverty is still a key factor in the persistence of homelessness and poor housing conditions. Those who have financial resources to rent or buy a home in the market can largely avoid homelessness, except in cases of particularly severe health issues or social circumstances, and times of unforeseen crisis. This response

[15] Wilkinson and Pickett acknowledged that for poorer countries, life expectancy continued to increase with economic growth/development.

therefore emphasises the structural causes of, and solutions to, poverty, inequality, housing disadvantage and homelessness. The UK has seen very significant progress on tackling homelessness with different strategies adopted in Scotland and England. However, overall inequalities have not reduced significantly in either country and we perhaps need to ask what is the most effective strategy to really reduce homelessness? Broader social policies to reduce income inequality and other aspects of housing disadvantage would greatly aid the reduction and elimination of homelessness. However, there is undoubtedly also an important place for a legal safety net and interventions to alleviate and prevent homelessness which can ensure immediate progress in divergent welfare contexts.

The UK and other countries have also seen an important reshaping of options for formerly homeless households. For example, there has been a trend away from the use of large scale hostel accommodation to housing in ordinary communities with support services as necessary. Such support services need to be sustained to avoid the risk of homelessness rising again. Most recently Governments have sought to extend short and long term options to include privately rented housing. It is not yet clear how the UK might achieve some further reshaping of its private rental housing towards a more continental model which is able to provide reasonably affordable and reasonably secure housing to a wide range of income groups, without being overly dependent on housing allowances (and so avoiding excluding low income tenants from the labour market). Another area of relative policy success has been in working with mortgage lenders to prevent eviction from the owner occupied sector with the onset of recession. A number of innovative schemes appear to have helped ensure that mortgage repossessions in the late 2000s did not increase to anything like the extent of the 1990s crisis. Across Europe, specific policy initiatives will need to take account of national housing systems and tenure profiles.

The 2000's was also a period of reshaping of governance of homelessness through effective use of policy networks to achieve consensus on policy change across a wide range of stakeholders. The inclusion of cross-party representatives as well as state, private and third sector agencies in the policy review process undoubtedly aided the implementation phase where agencies charged with delivery were already 'signed up' to the new agenda. However, there remains a need to better link solutions to homelessness to housing and communities. Those who experience homelessness all come from communities at some point – whether through relationship breakdown, eviction, or other loss of previous accommodation. So policy makers need to support local communities to be positive about the re-housing of homeless people and the provision of support services. There remains a need to counter any prejudice/incorrect assumptions that formerly homeless people will be in some way problematic in the community. Further, there is still a need for more effective evaluation of joint working across housing, health and social care professions to support formerly homeless people living in the community.

Ending homelessness: a realistic goal?

From the evidence above the following final points are offered for the jury's consideration.

What does ending homelessness mean for policy purposes? Examples of existing national policies and strategies have been outlined in the evidence. The EU and nation states need to recognise common definitions of homelessness and common standards for adequacy in both shelter and in having a home in the sense of a safe and secure place to live one's life and participate in all aspects of wider society. Ending homelessness will require appropriate housing interventions but also necessitates inclusive social welfare/social protection and labour market polices. This necessitates comprehensive approaches involving all relevant stakeholders.

Is it realistic to end homelessness? It is certainly realistic to end homelessness. The UK has had an effective legal safety net in place for certain households since 1977. Since 2000, Scotland has been working towards expanding this safety net to include virtually all homeless households by 2012. A complete implementation of all 59 recommendations of the Scottish Homelessness Task Force (2000, 2002) would include the provision of temporary accommodation and support services to even the most challenging ('intentionally') homeless households[16] to work with them to resolve issues preventing them accessing and sustaining a settled home.

If so, what targets should be addressed to make progress towards ending homelessness, and over what time frames? Targets could be set in relation to either a legal/justiciable right to housing or for reducing homelessness through social rights and inclusive social protection. In either case the first step is to have an effective assessment

[16] A tiny fraction of all those accepted as homeless

of existing homelessness and an effective strategy to reduce homelessness. Continuing with the example of Scotland, the process of widening the safety net was implemented over a ten year period. Account was taken of the 'relative starting points' of all 32 local authorities and central government set interim targets towards the end point 2012. In this case the target was gradually increasing the proportion of applicants where the authority accepted the duty to assist with the provision of accommodation. This could be adapted to the definition, measurement and practice contexts of other countries.

How should priorities towards ending homelessness be ordered? The needs and preferences of those experiencing homelessness need to be taken into account in supporting them to access appropriate housing and any required support/care services. Some homeless households will only require help with housing and this should be the key priority. For those with support/care needs (e.g. in relation to health, addictions, long term exclusion from work etc), the provision of housing and support for sustaining that housing need to be co-ordinated together. This will necessitate effective joint working, mainly involving housing, housing support, social work and health professionals.

How can progress towards ending homelessness be measured? Effective data collection systems and evaluation programmes will be required to monitor progress. As noted, this requires effective definitions of being adequately housed, as well as of states of homelessness. National governments, the local state and NGOs will need to work together to ensure effective co-ordination of monitoring systems, though national governments are probably best placed overall to monitor implementation. Bench mark data needs to be collected and progress measured in terms of both the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. The FEANTSA ETHOS typology could be helpful here and the UK systems for recording 'action by local authorities in respect of their homelessness duties' could be adapted for other national systems.

What are the barriers to ending homelessness? While ending homelessness is a realistic goal, it is by no means straightforward, and will certainly require financial resources to support implementation. The key barriers lie in any deficit in terms of supply of affordable housing and in the provision of required health and social care support services for people moving out of homelessness. Lack of effective policies and services to prevent homelessness (e.g. prevention of eviction, mediation of family breakdown, financial inclusion, appropriate health/mental health/addictions services) also represent a barrier to ending homelessness.

What are the risks associated with an ending homelessness approach? The main risk is of failure and this is likely to be associated with lack of commitment on the part of policy makers and housing/service providers; lack of resources (for housing and support services); and imperfect information for those at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness in terms of knowledge about where/how to find help and having confidence in services available to them. While it may not be possible to prevent every homelessness crisis (e.g. a teenager running from an abusive family situation) effective services can be put in place to absolutely minimise that crisis and to ensure smooth pathways into affordable housing and any required support services.

Although this response has argued for enforceable, rights-based responses to homelessness, the importance of broader housing and social policies to avoiding and alleviating homelessness is very much acknowledged. Neither universalistic social rights nor fully enforceable legal rights to housing may yet be achievable for all nation states, but the ideal of a well developed rights-based approach to homelessness within a wider social system which promotes adequate housing and social protection for all is a goal worth setting.

This response has drawn on a number of my recent research publications on this topic, which are readily available/can be provided for the jury:

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Key question 3: Are Housing led policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?

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Introduction

There is a broad consensus that the ultimate aim of homeless policies should be to reduce homelessness by improving measures to prevent persons at risk from becoming homeless and by helping those persons who became homeless to exit from this situation as quickly as possible. But there is no consensus about the time and the type of interventions needed to reach the second goal, or whether different steps or stages are necessary to allow people who have been homeless to be able to live in regular housing. There are also different opinions about the role of the "housing factor" as compared with other factors (like overcoming worklessness, addiction, mental and behavioural problems and other problems which might – at least for a certain part of the homeless population - have contributed to becoming homeless or which might have been exacerbated by being homelessness). The notion that homeless people must be "housing ready" before they can be re-housed is still wide-spread in European countries. The idea that the re-housing process, at least for those with complex support needs, should ideally proceed in different stages moving through different types of residential services is deeply enrooted in service provision concepts for homeless persons in many European countries.

But from the late 1990s, in Europe as well as in the United States and elsewhere, there has been some fundamental criticism of an approach, which aims at the normalisation of the lifestyles of homeless people or at "treatment" of their problems before their housing situation is normalised. So-called "staircase" systems, and the idea of a "continuum of care" to make homeless people "housing ready" before they can get access to permanent housing have been rejected because they often contribute to the exclusion of homeless people from regular housing and can lead to an increase of homelessness instead of reducing it (Tsemberis and Asmussen 1999, Sahlin, 1998 and 2005; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Hansen Löfstrand, 2010; Tsemberis, 2010).

On the other hand, some practioners and experts in the field emphasise that a significant proportion of homeless persons need "more than just housing" and run into great risk of repeat homelessness when they are "left alone" in permanent accommodation.

This expert statement summarises the critique of staircase approaches and the "continuum of care" and presents evidence, mainly from the United States and from Europe, about the effectiveness of "Housing First" projects and housing-led approaches in tackling homelessness. It argues that the Housing First approach originally focused on a relatively small fraction of homeless people, but is indeed important in providing robust evidence that those regarded as most difficult to be housed can sustain an independent tenancy if adequate support is provided. If Housing First is understood as a broader concept to promote access to housing as a first response to all types of homelessness, such a housing-led approach is indeed the most effective approach, but it will also have to be combined with the provision of flexible support in housing for those in need. In the final sections of the paper issues regarding the type of housing and support provided, the role of choice, and the potential risks and caveats of housing-led strategies are discussed and a few recommendations are made.

The critique of staircase approaches and the "continuum of care"

The idea of a staircase of transition is that different types of accommodation-based services with different levels of standards, autonomy and control (like low-standard shelters, temporary accommodation for specific groups, (shared) training flats or transitional flats) are organised like a ladder or a staircase, comprising a number of steps or rungs for the homeless client to climb up, ultimately exiting from homelessness through acquiring a self-contained flat with regular leasehold and full tenancy rights. Meanwhile, the clients are expected to solve allegedly "underlying" problems (e.g. by paying off old debts, stopping abusing substances, starting work) and obtain 'training in independent living' while being monitored by social workers. The assumption is that the clients gradually qualify for regular housing. In this model the degree of privacy, autonomy and freedom as well as the quality of the accommodation increase in an upward movement (as a kind of reward for good behaviour and success in overcoming problems) while the degree of supervision and control decreases.

There are variations in the number of steps involved and the exact types of accommodation-based services provided, but the basic logic of staircase approaches in Europe (Sahlin 2005) and linear models or "continuum of

care" models in the US (Ridgway and Zipple, 1990) is always the same, namely progressing through several physically separate, distinct, time-limited residential services towards independent living (Pleace, 2008).

However, the flipside of this system is that the individual who does not "improve" is stuck on a rung, while the one who "misbehaves" or fails to comply with treatment or support programs is either degraded to a lower step or pushed down to the bottom floor, often a night shelter.

A number of main problematic elements of the staircase approach have been criticised (Tsemberis and Asmussen, 1999; Sahlin 2005):

- stress and dislocation caused by the need to move between different accommodation-based projects,
- lack of service users' choice and freedom combined with standardized levels of support in the different stages of residential services,
- decisions about when and where clients are placed are made by service staff and clients are afforded little privacy and control (at least in the "lower" stages),
- skills learned for successful functioning in a structured congregate setting are not necessarily transferable to an independent living situation,
- the final move into independent housing may take years and between the different stages many clients get "lost".

Support systems relying on such approaches have been criticised for administering or managing homelessness instead of ending it (Burt and Spellman, 2007). Sahlin (2005) found for Sweden that in those cities with a staircase approach, homelessness increased rather than decreased, contrary to what was originally intended. Since more people are evicted or transferred to lower steps in the staircase, than upgraded to higher steps, and as there is a continuous flow of new homeless people who failed to get regular housing or were evicted from ordinary dwellings, the local staircase typically tends to expand on the lower rungs, while the top steps make up a bottleneck.

Wong et al. (2005) found in the US that even in the lowest rank of the "continuum of care" model, the emergency shelter programs, a significant portion of the homeless population was prohibited from even entering the "continuum of care" system. A majority of emergency shelters (61 percent) rejected substance abusers, 43 percent did not admit persons with severe symptoms of mental illness and 32 percent did not admit persons with serious physical problems. This points to the fact that while staircase and "continuum of care" systems are often argued to be only for those clients with complex support needs and severe problems like mental health disorders and substance abuse issues, these groups are often explicitly excluded. The services are in reality offered as the only option to other homeless persons with minor support needs as well, thereby contributing to the definition of an increasing portion of homeless people as "incapable of independent living" and obscuring the problem of structural barriers for access to regular housing.

The alternative: Quick access to housing and support in housing if needed

In contrast to approaches based on the assumption that people experiencing homelessness must be somehow "repaired" or "made fit for housing" ("treatment first"), alternative strategies seek to move them into permanent housing as quickly as possible ("housing first"). This approach recognises housing as a fundamental right for all people.[17] Support is provided to those homeless persons who need it, but sobriety and treatment or motivation to change are not requirements for getting access to permanent and self-contained housing, nor can a failure to comply with support services lead to an eviction. Compliance with residential tenancy laws is the only requirement. An essential element of this approach is that social service interventions can be more effective when provided to people in their own home. Choice and a feeling of security and stability regarding housing and support are important elements of this alternative strategy, although variations exist in practice regarding the type and duration of support and the type of long-term housing provided (see Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010, and further below).

There is now abundant evidence that homeless people prefer to live in mainstream self-contained housing and that only for a very small minority shared housing or living in hostels is an alternative they would prefer (Busch-

[17] The right to housing is widely recognized, including in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the revised European Social Charter. But only the UK and France have introduced an individually enforcable statutory right to housing in the EU (Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009).

Geertsema, 2002 and 2005). But are homeless people also capable of living in mainstream housing, even if they have complex support needs?

Evidence from the USA: Housing First

Research in the United States has shown that even for persons with severe mental health problems and "dual diagnoses"[18], a Housing First approach works better than the "continuum of care" approach. In a longitudinal and randomized experimental study in New York, 225 homeless and mentally ill individuals were randomly assigned either to housing contingent on treatment and sobriety (the control group) or were housed immediately and without treatment prerequisites in the Housing First model developed by the Pathways to Housing organisation in New York (the experimental group). After two years the experimental group had experienced approximately 80 percent of their time stably housed compared with only 30 percent for participants in traditional "continuum of care" services (Tsemberis et al, 2004). The great majority of participants in the Housing First group showed that they were able to obtain and maintain independent housing and even after 48 months there was no increase in substance use and/or psychiatric symptoms and no significant differences to the control group were found (Padget et al, 2006). Another study of long-term shelter residents with psychiatric problems in a suburban county found 68 per cent of Housing First clients maintaining housing after almost four years, with the original model of Housing First, Pathways to Housing, even reaching a retention rate of over 78 per cent (Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007). The influence of these studies on the debate has been particularly strong because they provided evidence of the greater housing stability (and lower costs) of the Housing First approach on the basis of long-term and randomized experimental studies comprising a large number of homeless mentally ill persons.

Subsequent studies showed high rates of housing retention in a number of different Housing First projects. In a governmental study 84 percent of 80 persons with serious mental illness were still living in one of the three Housing First projects analysed after one year (Pearson et al, 2007).

The prototype of Housing First developed by the Pathways to Housing project in 1992 in New York contains a number of elements which have to be kept in mind when discussing this model and the results (see Atherton and McNaughton Nichols, 2008; Tsemberis, 2010; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010):

- Pathway to Housing deals exclusively with persons who suffer from mental illness and addiction disorders.
- The program provides immediate access to permanent affordable housing directly from the street or from emergency services without requiring any participation in treatment or sobriety. It focuses on a harm-reduction approach. Participation in mental health treatment and reductions in drugs and alcohol use are encouraged, but are not conditional for access to housing or for maintaining residence and support.
- Comprehensive support is provided, usually by an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team or an intensive-case management team. ACT teams include a variety of experts, such as drug use specialists, nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, peer supporters and employment specialists. The teams are located off-site but are available on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Use of these services is on a voluntary basis, but clients are encouraged to engage and they are required to meet staff at least once each week. Budgeting services are offered to help ensure that rent and other bills are paid.
- Housing is provided on the basis of a standard lease without a time limit and service provision is available as long as it is needed. Both are kept separate from each other, so in case of loss of the apartment because of lease violations programme staff continue to work with the person affected, trying to prevent a return to homelessness and to ensure continuity of care in crisis situations. On the other hand treatment noncompliance or short-term hospitalisation cannot lead to evictions.
- Pathways to Housing emphasises the importance of choice as a central element of the Housing First approach. Participants can choose the type, frequency and sequence of services. They can choose their neighbourhood and apartment as far as suitable units are available. Choice also relates to the selection of furniture and household items.
- Pathways to Housing (in contrast to other Housing First providers) also emphasises the need to use scattered housing to ensure that mentally ill people are integrated into the community and currently the program limits leases to a maximum of 20 percent of the units in any single building (Tsemberis 2010: 45). Pathways to Housing has a housing department that finds and secures appropriate apartment units for the clients. The apartments are usually rented from private landlords. Housing department staff also take responsibility for apartment inspections and maintenance issues, and they handle all communication with

[18] *of mental health illness and substance misuse problems*

landlords about any issues that tenants may have. Clients are required to pay 30 percent of their income in rent, the programme pays the remainder.

However, as the successful Housing First model was adopted and promoted at Federal level in the US, and was also replicated in other countries the term “Housing First“ has become more ambiguous, as it is now used to describe a broader variety of service types which can diverge significantly from the original model (Pearson at al, 2007; Pleace, 2008; Atherton and McNaughton Nichols, 2008; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010).

While Pathways to Housing recommends using scattered site housing and emphasises that this is an essential factor of residents’ psychological well-being and social integration (Gulcur at al, 2007; Tsemberis, 2010), other projects use congregate supportive housing with support staff located on site (Pearson, 2007; Larimer et al, 2009). Some of the accommodation used by other “Housing First“ projects shows similarities with traditional hostels for homeless persons but with no time limit on stays. A US-governmental evaluation of Housing First models includes a program in Seattle, which provides housing in three hotels located in a three block area. One of these hotels has 180 residential units and a 203-bed shelter attached (Pearson et al, 2007: 21).

Other deviations from the original approach include greater selectivity in client recruitment (rejection of clients defined as “difficult to house” or not willing to engage with support), imposition of time limitations and setting goals which are not compatible with the harm reduction philosophy of Pathways to Housing (Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007; Pearson et al, 2007; Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007).

Pathways to Housing is currently developing a Housing First fidelity scale (see www.pathwaystohousing.org) and some studies have identified differences from the original model as being responsible for lower rates of housing stability and client satisfaction in projects which have deviated from the essential features of Housing First as developed by Pathways (Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007; Gulcur et al, 2007).

However, the Housing First studies in the US have shown very clearly that even those homeless persons with severe mental health and addiction problems, who are usually seen as very difficult to house, are able to maintain stable and independent tenancies in self-contained apartments if adequate support is provided. The evidence is particularly strong because the clients have not been “cherry picked” with a preference for those who are seen as “housing ready” but rather the opposite (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008).

A number of studies have also shown that the costs of Housing First projects are significantly lower when compared with “continuum of care” placements or stays in prisons or psychiatric hospitals, which many of the clients had experienced before being rehoused by a Housing First or other supported housing project (Padgett et al, 2006; for an overview of further studies see Culhane et al, 2008 and Tsemberis, 2010).

There is clear evidence that a Housing First strategy does not result in increased health problems or substance abuse compared to “continuum of care” approaches. However, there is only limited evidence that this approach will lead to a reduction of substance abuse and a recovery from mental health problems. While some studies show a reduction of alcohol and drug use in Housing First projects as early as in the first year (Larimer et al, 2009; Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007), others do not show any substantial improvements and in a recent review of Housing First studies it was even argued that the evidence is not sufficient to prove the applicability of Housing First programmes for people with severe and active addiction (Kertesz et al, 2009). The governmental study by Pearson et al. (2007: 104) concludes:

“While the housing provided by the programs increased housing stability and afforded the opportunity to receive treatment, substantial progress toward recovery and self-sufficiency often takes years and is no linear process, rather it is a series of ups and downs. “

But it should also be noted that a harm reduction approach as followed by Pathways to Housing, while encouraging clients to reach such goals as ending substance abuse and achieving independent living where possible, neither requires nor expects all clients to do so (Pleace, 2008).

The Housing First approach has received much attention in the US media and among US politicians. It was a crucial element of the national strategy to end chronic homelessness in the US and hundreds of local communities have committed to following up this strategy. Housing First projects have been set up in a number of different countries, including Australia and Canada and are currently also being tested in a number of European countries (see below).

Evidence from Europe and elsewhere

Johnsen and Teixeira (2010) come to the conclusion for the UK that linear approaches are still dominant and a "treatment first" philosophy prevails for those homeless persons not covered by the national homelessness legislation as statutory homeless. Their statement, that "in most urban areas the vast majority spend periods of time in hostel and/or other transitional accommodation before moving into independent accommodation" (p. 15) probably holds true for most European countries. And the concept that homeless people need to be "housing-ready" before being housed is widespread as well.

On the other hand, the idea that homeless people should be placed as quickly as possible into ordinary housing and floating support should be provided for those in need has gained much influence in European countries in recent years. And the evidence available about such approaches in different European countries (Germany, Italy, Ireland and the UK) has confirmed, like that from the US but with a less robust methodology, that services providing people with complex support needs with ordinary, self-contained housing and floating support can produce good outcomes and low tenancy failure rates (Fitzpatrick et al, 2010, Busch-Geertsema, 2002 and 2005; Tosi, 2005; Dane 1998; Pleace, 1997). In Canada 87 percent of street homeless persons re-housed by the "Streets to Homes" project in Toronto using a Housing First approach were reported as still living in their homes two years after the programme had started. Interviews with a selection of residents showed a widespread improvement of the quality of life and satisfaction (Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007).

Housing First, but not housing only

'Housing on its own is no solution' is a wide spread reaction in debates about Housing First and housing-led policies for tackling homelessness. But as we have seen, Housing First is almost the opposite of 'housing only'. The original concept even includes the offer of very intensive and multi-dimensional support, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week as an essential element.

The proportion of homeless people in need of such intensive support may differ considerably between countries (and there are reasons to believe that numbers of mentally ill homeless persons may be higher in the US, where the health system is less well developed than in several European countries). Indeed, the proportion of homeless people who "just need housing" and access to regular mainstream social services is often underestimated. But it is important to acknowledge that a certain number of homeless people will need additional and individually tailored social support for maintaining a tenancy and improving their quality of life. The important point in the Housing First approach is that providing such support as a service in ordinary housing is more effective (and more humane) than making access to permanent and self-contained housing conditional on 'successful' prior stays in transitional accommodation.

In countries with well functioning social and health services a case-management approach and flexible floating support might be of greater relevance than the ACT approach practised by Pathways to Housing, but this will of course also depend on the specific target group.

Housing First - only for people with complex support needs?

Housing First projects as they have been evaluated in the US and are being tested in a number of European countries are a very specific service for a very specific subgroup of the homeless population, namely mentally ill homeless people, the majority of them with co-occurring substance abuse. They have often been homeless for a long time and are a subgroup of "chronic" homeless people.

Longitudinal analysis of shelter use in the US has suggested that experiences of homelessness tend to be 'transitional', 'episodic' or 'chronic' (Kuhn and Culhane, 1999; Culhane and Metraux, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008). Chronic and episodic homelessness are strongly associated with lone men with high rates of addiction and severe mental illness. Transitional homelessness is associated with low individual support needs. Transitional homeless shelter users make up the majority of users (approx. 80 percent) and exit homelessness relatively quickly - a considerable proportion of them without any further formal support. Chronic homeless people make up a relatively small fraction of shelter users (approx. 10 percent) but use almost half of the shelter beds over time. They are a small group with complex needs producing relatively high costs. In the light of the effectiveness of Housing First and permanent supported housing for this group, it was suggested in the United States to reallocate resources from the provision of shelters to permanent housing with adequate support for chronic shelter users.

But if it does not make sense to provide shelters and specialised transitional accommodation for those homeless people with the most complex support needs, why should it make sense for those with less severe problems? And if the evidence shows that people with double diagnoses can manage better in independent self contained housing with adequate support than in a staircase of transition, then there is no reason to believe that this is not the same for people with less severe problems. They might need other types of support (less intensive and perhaps for a shorter period of time), but access to self-contained housing and the provision of individually tailored support are key elements of tackling their homelessness as well. However, the individual assessment of support needs and the flexibility of support offered are important requirements for providing the right type, intensity and duration of social support. Of course financial dimensions play an important role here and it is neither legitimate nor helpful to provide long-term and intensive support to people who do not really need it.

Finally it should also be kept in mind, that a certain proportion of homeless people do not need any specialised support. They often may rely on informal support networks of friends or relatives for exiting homelessness. For them access to adequate and affordable housing and to mainstream social services (and financial support) in case of need is in fact the one and only solution needed for exiting homelessness (for the UK see Pleace et al, 2008; for France see Brousse 2009).

Is Housing First transferable to Europe and what does "housing-led approaches" mean in the European context?

Various academics – especially in the UK – have explored the potential of the Housing First approach in a European or UK context (Pleace, 2008; Atherton and McNaughton Nichols, 2008; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). They all acknowledge that the US evidence has made it much more difficult to maintain the view (typical for a "treatment first" approach) that people with complex support needs are incapable of sustaining an independent tenancy without prior intervention in special institutions. They also point to the fact that some elements of the Housing First approach are already realised in projects for homeless people with mental health and substance misuse problems in European countries, and that there is at least potential for testing and evaluating Housing First projects as realised by Pathways to Housing in the US in different European welfare contexts. But they also warn against an over-generalisation of research results, mainly based on American studies, in relation to a significantly different welfare context in Europe and call for more research about the effects of Housing First and alternative models of supported housing in Europe.

The Housing First approach with special focus on persons with psychiatric problems and substance abuse is explicitly referred to in several projects across Europe, like the Turning Point Scotland Housing First Project in Glasgow (Scotland, UK, see Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010), the Discus Housing First Project in Amsterdam (see http://www.hvoquerido.nl/discus.html), a Housing First project in Lisbon run by the Association for Study of Psychosocial Integration (AEIPS). Evaluations of these projects on the national level are planned or under way, but no results are available yet. Housing First Projects are also planned or in the implementation process in Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Sweden and other European countries.

But often the term "Housing First" has also been used for a broader policy and philosophy aiming at a normalisation of the material living conditions of homeless people and a rapid integration into permanent housing as a precondition for further integrations steps. Such a "normalisation approach" or a "housing-led" policy approach has been promoted in several European countries for years. The statutory homelessness system in the UK and the homelessness programmes in Finland, for example, have traditionally been "housing-led". Germany, Finland and Scotland were mentioned in an early overview on different "settlement" approaches to homelessness as examples of a "normalisation model" (Harvey 1998), seeking to reduce the use of shelters and transitional accommodation and to increase access to permanent housing and floating support for formerly homeless persons. Germany can be seen as an example, where relaxed housing markets, and targeted work towards increasing support in housing and replacing temporary accommodation, together with a strong emphasis on prevention have reduced homelessness considerably (Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008).

In a recent article on homelessness strategies in the liberal and social democratic welfare regimes (Ireland and the UK countries, Norway, Demark, Finland and Sweden) the impact of the Housing First approach was noted in all of these countries, "albeit [that] the term 'housing first' is utilised in a fairly elastic manner… a clear emphasis on outcomes such as reducing the use of temporary accommodation, reducing stays in shelters, providing long-term or permanent accommodation and providing individualised services and support are evident in all strategies

under review" (Benjaminsen et al, 2009:45). Housing First is also mentioned as one of the main principles of the recent French homelessness strategy.[19]

Further discussion is needed on the role of choice and of adequate types of housing provision. Research from both USA and Canada has shown that greater choice concerning housing leads to greater housing satisfaction and eventual stability of those re-housed (Pearson et al, 2007: Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007). The Canadian study and studies in Germany and the UK have also provided evidence that projects where single homeless people are "re-housed" into shared accommodation provide less positive results and bear greater risks of failure than independent, self-contained accommodation. As Atherton and McNaughton Nichols (2008: 299) point out, "programmes using hostel type accommodation are failing to provide one of the basic precepts of Housing First."[20]

Edgar et al. (2000), when analysing different types of "supported housing" in Europe, found a general tendency to move from place-centred approaches to person-centred provision, i.e. from supported housing to support in housing. This implies that there has been a tendency to move away from accommodation with on-site support towards flexible types of support, which are focussing on the individual requirements of people in need, living in regular housing. If these needs change or become less intensive people do not have to move to another type of accommodation, but the support provided will have to change and eventually be withdrawn. It might also be intensified in a period of crisis.

The main components for reducing homelessness: Access to housing, adequate support for those in need and prevention

To sum it up, ensuring access to suitable and affordable housing as a first response to all types of homelessness is an important general principle of effective homelessness policies. It is also essential that sufficient means are available to cover the costs of housing and of subsistence and that for those who cannot procure these means by paid work, adequate benefits are provided by systems of social welfare.

Social housing is an important source for providing homeless people and those at risk of homelessness with decent accommodation. However, often mechanisms of preferential access for homeless people and households imminently threatened with homelessness are needed and access barriers have to be reduced in order to use the potential of this part of the housing stock.[21] Sometimes cooperation agreements between social landlords, municipalities and NGOs providing social services have showed positive effects. With a decreasing or already very small stock of social housing in many European countries, alternative approaches to ensure access to housing gain importance. Interesting examples are the Y-Foundation in Finland, which uses funds of the government and of the Finnish Slot Machine Association to buy small apartments scattered in owner-occupied stock in order to let them mainly to single homeless people (see Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009). A number of EU countries, such as Ireland, the UK countries and France, have recently tried to make better use of the private rental sector for housing homeless people. In Belgium, Germany, Spain and elsewhere social rental agencies are renting and subletting housing on the private rental market (see Busch-Geertsema, 1998; de Decker, 2002), following a similar approach as described above for Pathways to Housing. For Central and Eastern European countries the use of European Regional Funds could in the future be a source of funding for supported housing for marginalised groups, following recent changes of the regulations proposed by the European Commission.

Adequate social support for those in need, helping them to sustain their tenancies and achieve further steps towards integration and improving the quality of life will be needed by a certain proportion of formerly homeless persons but can best be provided in mainstream housing. Up to now not enough robust evidence is available in European countries about the most effective types of support for formerly homeless people,[22] but it is clear that

[19] See République Française (2007)

[20] In Sweden a tendency of municipalities to convert transitional housing provisions which had been part of a staircase model into permanent supported homes outside the regular housing market has met with harsh criticism and is put in contrast to Housing First approaches which acquire housing from the regular housing market: "In transforming the special-housing units into a permanent living arrangement, the new model fails to provide a mechanism by which homeless clients can re-establish themselves on the regular housing market, offering no real pathway out of homelessness." (Hansen Löfstrand, 2010: 29).

[21] Rejection of homeless people and households defined as 'risky tenants' are often legitimised by blacklisting households with a history of debts and by emphasising a principle of social mix (see Edgar et al 2002; Busch-Geertsema, 2007)

[22] For the US and focusing on mentally ill homeless persons see Nelson et al (2007). Currently several research projects in EU countries (e.g. in Denmark and the Netherlands) are focusing in-depth on the effectiveness of different types of support on tackling homelessness.

for a certain number of them provision needs to be provided assertively (visiting clients in their homes, encouraging participation and not waiting until they ask for help) and to be multidimensional. It is also crucial that floating support is flexible in intensity and duration. A case-management approach and joint working with mainstream health and social services is needed for a section of the population of re-housed homeless people. But for some it might also be sufficient to help with financial problems, benefit claims etc., provide support for dealing with tenancy problems and to intervene in crisis situations if needed.

Comprehensive and well functioning prevention measures are required to keep people at risk in regular housing and prevent evictions. Generally increased emphasis on prevention can be found in all recent national homelessness strategies. In a number of countries, like for example in Austria and Germany, specialised prevention centres for households threatened by eviction have been implemented during the last decades (in Germany mainly by municipalities, in Austria mainly by NGOs), which offer pro-active support especially for households with rent arrears. But prevention efforts are often also targeted at mediating domestic conflicts and include measures to provide quick access to housing for those being released from institutions, and for people who have to leave their home because of escalating domestic conflicts (see Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick 2008).

Risks and caveats

The studies published so far on the outcomes of support in housing for formerly homeless persons show that especially for marginalized persons with a long history of homelessness, living rough and additional problems, setting realistic goals is important. In societies with high levels of unemployment and poverty, and for persons with a long history of marginalisation, full autonomy might not always be a realistic perspective. If they manage to sustain their tenancy and do not relapse into homelessness this might just as well be judged as an important step towards relative integration and relative autonomy (and is highly appreciated as such by the people concerned), even if they still depend on support in crisis situations and struggle with finding a job and coping with restricted financial resources (Busch-Geertsema 2005). Or, as the founder of the Pathways to Housing project in New York, Sam Tsemberis (2010: 52) puts it: "Housing First and other supportive housing interventions may end homelessness but do not cure psychiatric disability, addiction, or poverty. These programs, it might be said, help individuals graduate from the trauma of homelessness into the normal everyday misery of extreme poverty, stigma and unemployment". As he rightly points out, poverty and unemployment are structural problems, which have to be tackled with structural measures.

Social isolation, loneliness and boredom of single homeless persons after being re-housed are often reported as risks which may lead to feeling 'homeless at home' and eventually to repeat homelessness, thus threatening the sustainability of re-housing efforts. These problems need to be addressed by the support provided and by targeted measures (including peer support by former homeless people and targeted employment and training schemes), but they are no legitimate reason for postponing access to mainstream housing.

One of the risks of "overreaching" in promoting Housing First or housing–led policies could be the closing down of temporary and emergency accommodation without proper alternatives being in place. It has not yet been really tested as to what extent shelter and transitional accommodation may be minimised if proper prevention mechanisms are in place and housing-led policies are fully effective. A small provision of temporary accommodation will be needed for transitional homeless people, who have lost there housing by force majeure, who have recently arrived in a city or are fleeing domestic violence etc. It has to be kept in mind that even though re-housing projects for the most excluded homeless people in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere have had positive effects, there was always a small proportion of clients who have not managed to maintain their tenancy. Solutions have to be found for them as well.

Among chronic homeless people there might still be a small group who wants or needs another environment than mainstream housing. Especially for some persons with a long history of hospitalization and serious problems, long-term supported housing where residents can live permanently and which provides a more communal and supervised structure might be more adequate. However, even for this group alternatives to hostel-like provision exist. The Danish approach of a "skæve huse" model ('alternative housing for alternative living') provides homeless people with an own home with a conventional tenancy agreement, but unusual types of self contained but congregated housing are used. The model follows a harm reduction approach and while there is no permanent staff living in these communities, social workers pay regular visits, monitor tenants' progress and provide services (e.g. health, employment) where possible and necessary (see Meert, 2005 and Hansen, 2010).

Recommendations

On the European level a number of recommendations have been published recently, which are relevant in our context. The 2010 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, adopted in March by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, calls on Member States to develop "strategies to address housing exclusion and homelessness". Listing the important elements for effective strategies the report also states:

> "social and public housing are a key element in housing policies, and often the main solution to homelessness" (Council of Europe, 2010: 9)

The report also mentions the relevance of "integrated policies, combining financial support to individuals, effective regulation and quality social services, including housing, employment, health and welfare services" and points to the need to pay more attention to "the specific obstacles the homeless have in accessing" such services. Furthermore the Joint Report refers to the use of EU structural funds, in particular the European Regional Development Funds as an important potential source of funding for the younger Members States of the European Union.

As mentioned before, strategies to improve the use of the private rental market and even the owner-occupied sector of the housing market for increasing access to housing for homeless people are also important. The existing barriers for access to social housing for homeless people and approaches to overcome these barriers should be explored.

The shift from using shelters and transitional accommodation as the predominant answer to homelessness towards increasing access to permanent housing and increasing the capacities for providing adequate floating support (and other prevention efforts) for re-housed homeless people and people imminently threatened with homelessness should be continued, strengthened and extended to European countries and municipalities where the staircase approach is still dominating. The Commission could play a role with concrete recommendations and requirements for national government to report regularly on the development of homelessness and on the strategies to reduce homelessness and housing exclusion.

Debate and further research on quality issues regarding adequate social support and housing for formerly homeless people is needed. The effectiveness of different combinations of housing and support and of different types of social work approaches should be evaluated. It would be particularly useful to collect the evidence and promote mutual learning at European level about different projects testing the Housing First approach in a number of European cities.

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Key Question 3: Are housing-led policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?"

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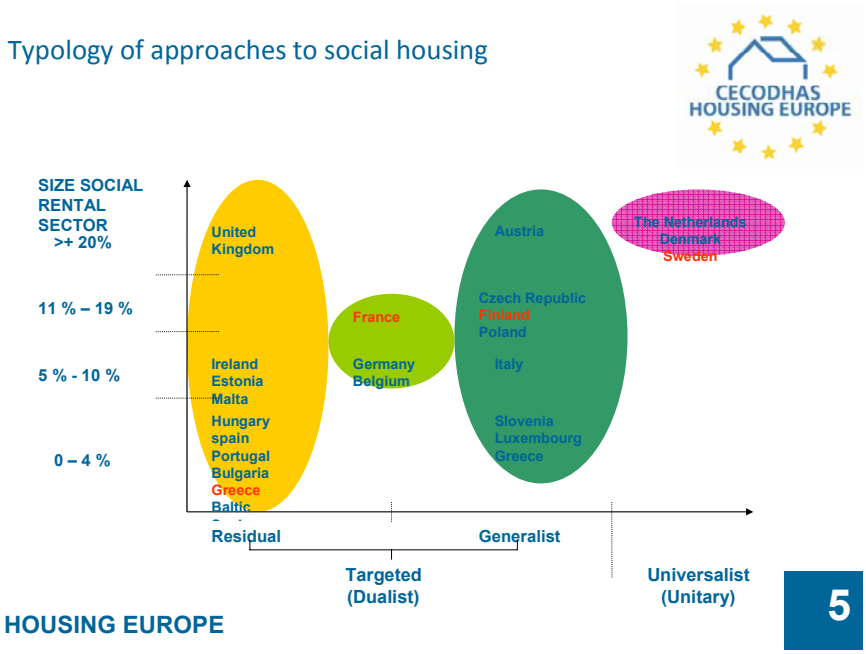
I. What do we mean by "Social Housing in Europe" and "homeless people"?

a. Brief presentation of the social housing sector in Europe

It is important to take into account the size of the sector and its tasks to better understand the potential role of social landlords in the implementation of the Housing First approach: it will not be possible to mobilize them in all cases and solutions that are specific to national circumstances will have to be considered.

Diversity in terms of size: in the Netherlands housing corporations manage more than one third of primary residences while in many European countries there is virtually no public/social housing (Greece, the Baltic States, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria).

Diversity in terms of concept: the national systems can be differentiated based on an analysis of the criteria for access to social housing. "Universalist" social housing means that everyone has access to social housing, even if it is subsequently reserved for certain groups who are given priority. The system is "targeted" when not every member of the population has access to social housing, specifically because of the stipulation of a maximum income limit when applying for housing. In this category, social housing is said to be "residual" when priority criteria mean that only the most vulnerable have access to social housing and "generalist" when the criteria focus on other groups (workers, for example[24]).



[23] **Authors: Julian Dijol and Claire Roumet.** Based on two articles by Alice Pittini, Coordinator of the CECODHAS-Housing Europe Observatory, with the assistance of Elsa Laino and information provided by members of CECODHAS-Housing Europe (correspondents of the Observatory): "Allocation process and criteria in the EU" and "Right to housing in the EU".

[24] (According to the typology developed by Laurent Ghekière ; social housing in the European Union, study by DEXIA 2007)

Diversity in terms of development: In addition to this typology, which is based on eligibility criteria, we note that the tasks assigned to social landlords are substantially different and also change over time. In countries where social housing makes up a substantial part of the available housing (France, Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom), we can compare the different roles assigned to the sector. In the early twentieth century, social housing had a health-based and educational function, aimed at improving living conditions and sanitation levels. As a key element of post-war reconstruction, housing policies were primarily aimed at fuelling economic development by mobilising capital and accommodating an exponentially growing population. The social function of social housing, which is still in evidence today, is now predominant in most European countries.

In Germany, the share of social housing has been reduced over time, following the privatisation of the sector in the 1990s. The development of social housing in Italy is the same as in countries where the sector's share is substantial but Italian figures have always been on the low side. The Central and Eastern European countries, meanwhile, have experienced a structural change, moving from an 'all public' to an 'all private' sector (except CZ and PL).

Diversity of stakeholders: social landlords are at the service of local authorities for the implementation of their housing policy, but they also contribute to urban development. Some countries have chosen to organise the sector through public enterprises, associations, sometimes co-managed by tenants, and residents' assocations. Employers and unions are often associated with social landlords or even built the housing themselves originally. Lastly, social home ownership is often neglected in discussions relating to public housing policies when, in some countries, there is no alternative.

b. Who lives in social housing in Europe today? Who are the target befeniciaries of a "Housing First" policy?

We will discuss the allocation criteria and the selection of applicants for social housing in the analysis of the obstacles to the implementation of the Housing First approach. At this stage it is worth noting that the ETHOS categories which are given priority in almost all European countries are those population categories whose living conditions fit the description of "inadequate housing", "poor housing" and largely "houseless people", i.e., persons who do not require specific social or medical monitoring. This makes up the key task of social landlords. The question we are trying to answer here is the application of the "Housing First" approach for people requiring some sort of support, particularly those with a very chaotic past in terms of housing.

c. Recent developments in the social housing sector

Finally, to conclude this introduction, we will briefly describe the changes in the sector that are relatively similar in all European countries (where social housing makes up an important share of available housing). The main trend is that of impoverished tenants. Year after year, tenants' average income decreases, the newcomers are even poorer than those leaving the sector, which makes sense, but income levels are also increasingly lower. Tenants are also getting older and in some countries the proportion of households without income from employment has experienced a significant increase; the same applies to single parent families. Housing policies strive to implement the housing rights of individuals (sometimes enforceable, such as the DALO in France, for example) and joint schemes (social mix, sustainable development of neighbourhoods) are on the decline. Many studies on the subject refer to a residualisation of the sector. Housing policies follow the trends observed in social policies. The context is thus particularly favourable for the implementation of the "Housing First" approach, with this exception that conditions tend to be more frequently imposed (right to remain in social housing is subject to the obligation of being a good citizen: actively seeking a job, sending one's children to school, etc.)

II. Obstacles to the implementation of the "housing first" approach by social housing organisations

a. A reminder of the criteria for eligibility for and allocation of social housing

In countries that adopt a targeted approach, the criteria for eligibility for social housing are provided for by national or regional legislation. This legislation tends to be fairly general and may include:

· The use of revenue caps (combined with household size), generally associated with the condition that the applicant does not already own or have a permanent right to use another dwelling. This is the most common system for determining the eligibility of applicants.

· Other social criteria to define the vulnerability of the applicant (like in Ireland for example). This is also the case for categories of vulnerable people in England and Scotland, but in theory, these are priority criteria, and in practice these conditions are not required in order to be on a waiting list.

• In some cases (the Netherlands until recently, Denmark, Sweden) on principle nobody is refused access to social housing

People who are eligible according to these criteria are then added to a waiting list. In most cases, applicants register with the municipality, but they can also register directly with the social landlord (France, the Netherlands, Denmark, etc.).

A second aspect relates to what happens once a person is on a waiting list: in some cases, the criterion is simply the chronological order of registration (Denmark), but this is never the only criterion. That is why there are priority criteria provided by the national (France) or regional (Belgium) authorities but in most cases they are determined locally based on the local situation and on individual needs.

In general, these criteria are based on the degree of urgency of the applicant's situation. Homeless people make up a category that is considered a priority (particularly in France and the United Kingdom where they are "at the top of the list"). Homelessness, however, is not the only priority criterion. Households with children living in unsanitary conditions or low income households, for example, are other priority target groups in many countries. People with reduced mobility or various disabilities are also often seen as priority recipients of social housing. In Spain and Portugal, some programmes specifically mention low-income youth as a priority target group. Thus, we must not forget that much depends on local demographics, job market conditions and the characteristics of the housing market at local level. But it should be noted that in general the municipalities decide these criteria. The social landlords then apply them in the allocation process.

In addition, in some countries, housing for particularly vulnerable groups (including homeless people) is considered a specific responsibility of municipalities and local authorities. That is why mechanisms that somehow "supplement" to the "normal" housing allocation process have been introduced. This is the case, for example, in countries where governments can reserve a share of the available social housing (France, Italy, Austria, Denmark, etc.): the municipality can then allocate housing to people in particularly urgent need.

b. The multiple objectives of an affordable housing policy: an obstacle to the realisation of the "housing first" approach?

As we saw earlier, national, regional and local governments can determine the criteria of eligibility for access to social housing and the criteria for priority households. These criteria are often determined locally in relation to social situations that are typical of the region. But homeless people are only one priority category alongside other categories that can include people with disabilities, elderly people with limited resources, families with children living in precarious unsanitary conditions and others. These choices correspond to the different objectives that the government sets for an affordable housing policy.

Next to the issue of the selection of priority households there is also the issue of the practical allocation of a housing unit to a household. It is at this stage that the issue of the social mix in a building or a social housing estate starts to play a role. Because one of the objectives of affordable housing policies in many countries is to preserve and strengthen social cohesion in particular by ensuring that there is no social segregation (i.e., the concentration of households with the same socio-economic characteristics in certain buildings and neighbourhoods). Assuring a balanced mix in the social housing sector (often called “social mix”) therefore appears to be an important lever to prevent this segregation.

The question that is often asked is whether ensuring a good social mix is consistent with the "Housing First" approach to the extent that this approach could reinforce the trend towards a mass accommodation in social housing of households that experience social exclusion. One element to take into account is that even given a nearly constant housing supply, it is not always possible to offer the first vacant dwelling to any household or individual that is considered to be a priority (for example a substance user who has just left emergency accommodation). Other reasons that may intervene are the adequate size of the housing offered, the existence of appropriate services as well as a balanced social mix. This may appear to slow down the implementation of the "Housing first" policy. But at the same it can also be seen as a guarantee that the housing and services that are best suited to the needs of individuals that should be given priority are proposed to these individuals, while maintaining a good social mix in social housing.

We shall see in Part III that ways have been found to deal with these restrictions.

c. The issue of the funding of social housing as a potential obstacle to the realisation of the "Housing First" approach

The funding for social housing programmes has changed considerably in most Member States over the past 10 years. The general trend points to a declining financial involvement on the part of the authorities (national or local) whereas the share of social housing organisations’ own resources is on the increase (rental income and debts). Maintaining a financial balance is a requirement of the authorities for social housing organisations or a necessity in case of increased independence of these organisations (such as, for example in the United Kingdom or the Netherlands). This trend underscores the importance of the solvency of households applying for social housing. But how can one ensure a balanced social housing programme, while accommodating a significant proportion of highly vulnerable households and while the average income of prospective tenants continues to decrease? Some Member States (see table below) now provide individual support. The premises are rented at a profitable rate and the authorities propose compensation to offset the low income of tenants. The system for fixing rents and the existence of a housing allowance may influence the capacity of social housing organisations to accommodate the most vulnerable, including homeless people.

Policy of fixing rents in public housing

	Based on income	Based on cost	Rent caps	+ housing allowances
Austria		X		X
Belgium	X			
Denmark		X		X
Finland		X		X
France			X[25]	X
Germany			X	
Ireland	X			
Italy	X[26]		X[27]	
Luxembourg	X		X	
The Netherlands			X	
Poland		X		
Portugal	X		X[28]	
Sweden		X		X
United Kingdom		X[29]		

III. Contributions and responses of social housing stakeholders to the "housing first" approach

As mentioned above, affordable housing policies make up one of the two pillars of the implementation of housing rights, alongside the other pillar consisting of the policies in terms of reducing homelessness. These two policies, with different mechanisms and purposes (prevention against the risks of failure and exclusion for the former, dealing with situations of extreme vulnerability for the latter), will intersect with one another. This happens when public decision-makers and field workers choose to reserve a share of the available social housing and dedicate the competences of social housing organisations to tackling homelessness in the case of the “Housing First” approach.

[25] The rent is raised when the tenant’s income increases
[26] For public social landlords
[27] For private social landlords
[28] The rents are based on income and minimum and maximum monthly amounts are set out by law
[29] Rent formula which indexes rent increases based on the index of retail prices

After all, the definition of "Housing First" is relatively precise, whether in academic literature or in the official texts of some governments. In France for example, the report on the health of homeless people, delivered to the Minister of Health in January 2010 by Dr Vincent Girard, noted that "this approach consists of providing immediate access and permanent housing for homeless people who have been living on the street for quite some time and who are experiencing mental health problems, without preconditions or requirements as to their sobriety or substance abuse. " The "housing first" approach thus only concerns part of the group of people considered to be homeless (as already explained in the introduction).

We have already mentioned the obstacles to the implementation of the "Housing First" approach in terms of the social housing stakeholders. Yet solutions do exist and are implemented. We will enumerate some in order to identify better the specificity of the stakeholders in terms of affordable housing who are essential and effective partners when it comes to combating homelessness and who form partnerships in the frame of this "housing first" approach.

a. More adequate management of social demand

In a context of the continuing scarcity (at least in the short and medium term) of social housing, given the complex competences when it comes to allocating social housing in some Member States, and within the framework of the implementation of enforceable housing rights in certain Member States, consultative bodies have been created. They group social housing organisations, local elected officials, tenants associations, associations focusing on integration through housing, social services and the health authorities and community services in charge of housing. The aim is to agree on a definition of priority criteria for households (including for homeless people and people living in emergency accommodation), to implement strategies for populating this social housing based on the joint assessment of the needs of people and the capacity of the regions.

The idea is that the procedures for awarding social housing should be properly objectified based on a real local consensus but also that professional practices should be harmonised through better training, communication and information among professionals in the social housing sector, as well as among professionals who are working towards reducing homelessness and elected public officials.

b. An adapted supply of housing and structures

Because social housing organizations de facto accommodate people that are increasingly vulnerable and therefore are cumulating risks of precariousness in terms of income, dependency and isolation as well as psycho-social suffering, they now tend to prefer a more global approach (accommodation + services) adapted to their tenants' requirements. In most cases they do this through dedicated structures ("branches") (permanent or temporary) in partnership with associations (which often manage these branches) to create and provide the necessary social support needed to ensure that a person can continue to live autonomously or even return to living autonomously. This support can take many forms and cater to various types of populations: bringing shopping or meals to elderly people who are socially isolated, a medical presence for a group of dwellings for people who have experience of homelessness and who have problems with addiction, organisation of social or health monitoring (mental health problems for example) by a specialised organisation, information and training for former offenders, "back to work" training for homeless people, establishment of funds to help young homeless people find housing in the private sector (to pay the first few months' rent, for example).

c. Evolution of the skills of social housing professionals

The traditional tasks of constructing and managing housing are no longer sufficient to deal with the diversity and increasing fragility of tenants' and applicants' experiences. An ageing population, difficulties in terms of access to housing for an increasing number of households, increasing expectations from applicants as regards social housing, among others through the enforceable right to housing and the implementation of the "housing first" approach in certain countries, combating discrimination and the reduction of national funding all underscore the expectations of stakeholders. New skills are necessary to respond systematically to these expectations and to tackle operational issues: How should partnerships be organised? What is the right way to proceed in case of situations of acute exclusion? How can we assure a comprehensive offer including "very social services" in a given region and with other stakeholders? How can we take into account individual characteristics when enforcing

a collective management approach? Social housing professionals are honing their ability to anticipate critical situations, to identify need, to provide individual and group support with the aim of improving the quality of services rendered, especially to the most vulnerable.

It can be concluded then that the contribution of social housing organisations to the implementation of the "Housing first" approach is part and parcel of a variety of activities aimed at very vulnerable people. It requires skills and structures that are neither historically nor organisationally part of the profession and activities of all social housing organisations. And yet the stakeholders of an affordable housing policy are increasingly asked to contribute to the objectives of homelessness policy. Some are better equipped than others to do this but all share the same awareness of the gravity of the economic and social crisis, of its impact on the profiles of people who require housing and support as well as of the necessity to adapt to the situation in order to implement the right to housing for everybody.

IV. Pending issues

a. Can the Housing First approach be implemented outside the social housing sector?

Although social landlords are the first to be asked to implement the "Housing First" approach, it is necessary to reflect on how the rest of the housing market can potentially contribute, particularly as we have already shown that certain countries do not have the luxury of being able to mobilise a nonexistent or overstretched sector. But also because the key business of social landlords has always been until now to accommodate people who cannot find decent and affordable housing on the private market without the need for social support.

Thus the "Housing First" approach can only be implemented with a strong involvement of social services which can also choose to use ordinary housing. As shown in the preceding paragraphs the changes in the tasks of social landlords often also involve organisational changes to meet new demands. In other words, do we need to change the social housing sector, or create a new specialised "Housing First" sector (housing management and partnerships with organisations in charge of support)? For now, we see that the first option has been chosen.

b. Self-construction associations: a new "Housing first" approach in contexts where social housing is underdeveloped

A complementary, and perhaps more integrated approach, which has been tested by our members, is that of self-construction/self-renovation which not only provides a roof over one's head but also a qualification and possibly a job. Called IGLOO, this approach requires significant resources, financial means and the coordination of local stakeholders, but the results seem satisfactory. This approach is a long-term approach and has the advantage of not simply providing an individual response. One does not build one's accommodation on one's own but with other people who have also been trained and for whom the outcome of this project is to have a roof over their heads in the long term. Moreover, by mobilising different stakeholders (including charities and trade unions) these projects have a different scale (a few houses) and allow a gradual integration of housing in its environment and of people in one's neighbourhood.

c. Targeting the most vulnerable: today the selection of priorities focuses on the most vulnerable families first and then on the most vulnerable individuals: does this societal consensus need to be reviewed?

As discussed above, the procedures for allocating social housing are complicated and attribution is often the outcome of a consensus at local level between the different stakeholders of housing policy (local authorities/social landlords/social services/charities, etc.). The choices are made in accordance with lists of priorities that are established based on the allocation of points. Should we question these to change the way poverty is classified?

d. Homeless people and a failing housing market that is structurally impossible to access: what is the role of market regulation and housing allowances?

Beyond the population categories (ETHOS-Homeless) which focus on the Housing First approach at the moment the overall implementation of the right to housing (Housing First for all!) is rendered impossible by the discrepancy between housing prices and the incomes of citizens. Housing markets must be better "assisted" or "managed" to meet the key needs of the population.

e. "Housing First" or "Housing Plus"?

Finally, for at least two decades, social landlords throughout Europe have developed dedicated services and products for population categories: these have been grouped under the heading: "Housing Plus".

There is no Housing First without Housing Plus, so there can be no Housing First without a close institutionalised cooperation between the different stakeholders involved in housing policy, social policy and health policy.

Key question 3: Are housing led policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?
Maria Jose Aldanas, Provivienda, Spain[30]

This response to the question will demonstrate the impact of housing-led approaches to tackling homelessness by presenting the activities of Provivienda, a Spanish NGO that provides housing solutions to homeless people in Madrid.

It is important to distinguish between housing-led and 'housing first' in responding to this question. Housing-led policy approaches see housi.ng as the central solution to a situation of homelessness, to be obtained as quickly as possible. They see stable housing, with appropriate support as required, as a prerequisite to solving other problems, such as social, health and employment issues. Housing-led approaches encompass a broad range of prevention and reintegration strategies that aim primarily to help people access and/or maintain long-term housing solutions. 'Housing first' is a specific housing-led model, originating from the USA, which places people experiencing "chronic" homelessness into self-contained housing with a standard tenancy agreement. A chronically homeless person is an unaccompanied homeless person with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or experienced repeated incidences of homelessness. All housing led approaches contrast with the traditional 'continuum of care' or 'staircase' approach, which has tended to move homeless people through stages, whereby each stage is a move closer to stable housing (for example: rough sleeping to shelter, to transitional housing programme, to apartment). This response will focus on the value of housing-led approaches that Provivienda has implemented, rather than the specific 'housing first' model.

Context

Spain has a specific housing context. The problem of housing in Spain seems to be more a problem of access than of construction or market supply. There is not a lack of housing but the prices are too high with regard to the income of certain sectors and there is a limited accessibility to housing, since it is confined exclusively to those individuals with the economic capacity to acquire it on the market. To a large extent, the Spanish system is based almost exclusively on privately owned housing and access to housing is equivalent to access to a mortgage, which in turn depends on property already owned and on having, or not, a stable and sufficiently well-paid job.

We can point out some characteristics of the housing market in Spain:

-High price of housing

-Lack of social housing

-Low percentage of rented houses, with high costs

-High proportion of empty or non-occupied houses

-Highest percent of secondary housing in Europe

-The disjuncture between supply and demand: while supply is directed to the socially and economically better off, the demand of the young, the ethnic minorities, immigrants and the new family models is unmet.

In Spain, the question of accommodation for homeless people (especially rough sleepers) has traditionally been approached from the social services point of view, rather than from the housing perspective, in the belief that homelessness is caused by personal or individual circumstances. Consequently, resources were conceived of in terms of shelters (Cabrera, 2006): in essence it was believed that "we need more beds in shelters"

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My most heartfelt thanks to David Sigüenza, who made some corrections to the English Version

Fortunately, this perspective is changing and recent years have shown that there is an increasingly common belief that a complex interplay between individual circumstances and adverse structural factors causes homelessness. The main causes are our housing provision system and the systematic neglect by public housing policies of individuals and social groups with greater difficulties in obtaining housing adapted to their needs by their own means.

Different forms of supported housing have been developed under different names. The Catalonian Government, for example, with its Network of Housing for Social Inclusion, is trying not only to define categories of intervention, but also to coordinate and analyse through networking[31].

We believe it is important to advance in the provision of accommodation through Social Services and an effort should me made to simplify and streamline these interventions, as well as defining typologies. Temporary intervention is important because it helps to structure the recovery process, but ongoing support and stable housing alternatives are equally necessary.

This last point leads us to the necessary link between the activities carried out by Social Services and the response of Housing Policies as a continuation of the intervention. The article of Cabrera and Rubio (2008) concludes:

"Only if you change the concept of homelessness to understand it more widely and as caused by structural factors, will actions be initiated ... to tackle homelessness, not only by the specific social services but also by housing policy ... modifying the structural limits of the overall intervention system... it would imply the recognition of the right to housing and to decent housing."

We believe that this change needs to occur in both systems, Social Services and Housing Policies. There is a lot to be done to achieve this goal.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur recommendations supported this position (Khotari, 2008):

"The Special Rapporteur believes that homelessness is a complex phenomenon and as such must be dealt with using a comprehensive approach based on human rights, and through coordination between different administrative levels, political areas, non-profit organizations and the private sector. Moreover**, he considers that homelessness should not only be dealt with by the social services, but that housing departments should also take part in managing the problem** …thus the allocation of housing resources for the homeless should be recognized in the State Housing Plan, as should flats for young workers."

Since its foundation in 1989 Provivienda has always been committed to seeking housing solutions for homeless people. We have never built homes, but have mainly worked within the private rental market. We understand that a home is the best place to restore and promote the development of people's capacities and interpersonal relations. Provivienda always works with professional support, networking with other agencies that complement our intervention. We believe that at home, and from autonomy within the home is where you can best recover from homelessness and address other problems. In the words of Cabrera and Rubio (2008);

"Due to its stabilizing capacity, decent housing, adapted to the needs of individuals and not limited to the short term, becomes the privileged platform from which to work on social and labour integration, improvements in health, habits, the stabilisation of everyday relationships, and so on" [32]

This is the reason why permanent, stable accommodation has become the key element of some European strategies to combat homelessness according to the authors.

[31] The Network of Housing for Social Inclusion of the Generalitat of Catalonia in 2008 summed up 570 appartmens which received 620.500 euros and in 2009 the 666 appartments received 1.050.500 euros. The dwellings increased by 16.8% and the financial support by 69.3%.

[32] The text has been translated freely into English from the original Spanish version.

INTEGRATION SUPPORT THROUGH HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The Integration Support through Housing Programme for Disadvantaged Groups was launched in 1997. It is managed by Provivienda Association and is currently funded by the Health and Social Policy Ministry and the Council of Employment, Women and Immigration of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. This Programme is designed as a housing support mechanism for people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness or social exclusion, including all the categories of the ETHOS[33] typology.

Therefore, the programme is addressed to people in precarious housing situations, and who are experiencing homelessness. It involves owners of private housing that want to rent their facilities, allowing for people with limited resources or who lack the requirements of the private rental market (bank guarantee, payslip, permanent employment contract etc) to obtain or maintain stable housing.

In addition to this, the programme has designed a system that guarantees rent payment and tenant stability through an endorsement by the association against possible defaults on rent payment during the first year of the rental contract. This guarantee can be extended for a subsequent year. The programme offers the landlord a multi-risk insurance, as well as monitoring and mediation during the lease.

These guarantees are offered to encourage homeowners to rent their homes, despite the misgivings that they may have, such as being reluctant to rent to certain groups; anxiety about non-payment of rent because the tenant lacks an employment contract or has a precarious contract. In this sense, it is important to note that the percentage of defaults produced within the program is very low. All homes are visited to ensure they are in good habitable condition, in terms of minimum physical, architectural, and security standards, and in terms of basic amenities.

The program housed 316 people in 97 homes in Madrid in 2009.

For those at risk of social exclusion, the professional team makes a socio-residential assessment and agrees with the client on intervention proposals based on the strengths and needs identified. Provivienda seeks, amongst the housing stock, those apartments that comply with the requirements of adequacy, stability and accessibility for each individual. Once the household or group is housed, the support starts for as long as the professional team deems necessary. Normally it will last a minimum of one year to achieve the goal of autonomy and residential stability.

Our support is complemented by the agencies that initially refer the people to the programme (mainly social services and NGOs). Our network compensates for our deficits in other areas of specialization, such as employment, health, training, leisure...etc.

We would like to emphasize that Provivienda gives support in situations where a default may occur by covering the payment of rent when a room or flat is empty, and in cases requiring the provision of specific assistance, both in terms of social and economic support. Furthermore, Provivienda, through its endorsement of the tenant, also has the responsibility to keep the premises in good condition, so is responsible in case of breakdowns, maintenance, negotiations with the insurance company, etc.

Positive aspects

Stable housing interventions such as the one outlined above involve not only making available a basic right, but constitute an instrument for a comprehensive social intervention. In this sense, it is important to note that housing provides a framework from which to develop skills that promote the integration process. In this scheme, housing facilitates the generation of a closer relationship with, and greater confidence in the professional through daily interaction. Being a tenant strengthens the feeling of safety compared to the anguish and instability of having to think about what to do with your life next and thus provide a more egalitarian, healthy and interpersonal intervention than traditional temporary accommodation solutions for homeless people. In a recent research within the program (Gallardo, 2010), a tenant stated:

"We know when our contract ends, they have to tell us whether they are going to renew it or not. Otherwise it is renewed by default. You have some obligations, such as payment and maintenance of the apartment, but you also have some rights".

[33] European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion http://www.feantsa.org/code/EN/pg.asp?Page=484

It is also important to note the importance of home observation, performed in a standard context that offers different perspectives to those of interviews in an office setting. This observation consists of monitoring and supporting life skills (e.g. hygiene, healthy living), housing maintenance (bills, damages, payment of rent), household budgeting, developing a routine of daily chores, social skills, family relations, education of children, etc.

People are housed in living groups under this programme. Each living-group is formed by people who decide to live together. Some of the groups come spontaneously to the programme to rent an apartment, and can be family units or a group of people with no family links. On other occasions, groups of people that were previously sharing an apartment in more supported housing decide to live together in a rented flat of their own. Other groups are formed after attending our workshops for living together (we have some successful experiences with women) .The group can also be formed by the organisation which refers them to the Programme i.e. a group of young people who in the transition to independent living decide to choose this programme because of a lack of other first time housing options.

When living groups are formed, support is generated among tenants (while cooking, or when a person becomes ill, or as a way to relieve problems, etc...). We must not forget that loneliness is a factor of exclusion for many of the people we serve. However, relationships in the domestic space are not always easy. Conflicts can also be an important part of the process towards autonomy. The distribution of rooms, organising cleanliness and use of common areas such as the kitchen, toilets, dining room etc, as well as financial organisation are all potential challenges. Tenants learn conflict resolution without necessarily having to resort to professionals.

Social support organised around the home provides a listening space that will eventually generate a bond and help to identify areas that the person needs to work on, once the residential need has been met. Issues such as motivation to change, improvement of self-esteem, leisure pursuits and participation, as well as the improvement of deteriorated social links can be identified by the professional team.

Moreover, the fact that the program can offer a variety of apartments, (although not in all areas, due to the high prices of some municipalities or districts) allows applicants to show preference for the communities they feel they have a stronger attachment to, perhaps where they have solid social networks, or proximity to their workplace, health center, social services, schools, etc. Some of the people interviewed for the evaluation of the program told us:

"We go to the soup kitchen, the Health Centre, Social Services there. We shop in the shops in the neighbourhood, they know us ... I will never be a millionaire, but if I ever become one, don't take away the life of the neighbourhood, because that's what I like, and where I prefer to meet with people ... "

"We have a good relation with the neighbours, they greet us and we greet them, we know them, we talk, we take a drink when we are in the neighbourhood ..."

In short, the location of housing is crucial to the exercise of citizen participation, and relates to the fact of being a "visible" citizen.

The programme demonstrates on a day-to-day basis the importance of stable housing with the required support, both in the personal dimension and in the participatory one: being registered in a stable place, going to the same doctor, having a physical place to stay, keeping your personal documents, socializing with other residents, neighbourhood life, cooking, being alone in your own room, having a place for both physical and mental rest etc.

Inclusion through housing, therefore, is a key factor, though not the only factor, in the reintegration process. The program can provide stable accommodation for rent, and it also favours a more efficient and closer, but also more flexible social intervention: the accompaniment will adjust according to the needs of the clients at all times, and the tenants feel this flexibility and know they can count on Provivienda when they need it.

Weaknesses and limitations

As we reflect on this program, we would not want to circumvent some weak points and limitations. There is an important external factor, which has to do with the significant fluctuation in the private housing market. The high

rents in cities such as Madrid limit the leasing of affordable housing to districts with lower than average rental prices. However, professionals involved typically manage to negotiate an average rent below the market price in each area. Similarly, it should be noted that there has recently been some downward trend in the price of rental accommodation, which has led in many cases to renegotiation with the owners upon completion of the contract year. Nonetheless, these market limitations could be settled by way of resources and measures developed by the social policies of government.

There is a direct consequence of these points: the program leaves out those who cannot afford the rent on a sustainable basis. The fact that Provivienda endorses tenants implies that we must ensure that a high number of defaults do not occur, not only because it could jeopardize the program's budget, but also because one of the main objectives is to achieve stable accommodation.

We have had, therefore, people who do not qualify for this program (especially the minimum income requirements) and the need arises to design another kind of scheme, which is shared housing also provided in the private rental market. We will explain this type of accommodation, which is closely related with the above program.

SHARED HOUSING

In Provivienda we considered how to better address housing solutions in more severe situations of social exclusion, amongst so-called “chronically” homeless people whose needs could not be addressed through our mediation program, described above, mainly due to insufficient income to pay the market rents.

Some doubts arose in regard to the social intervention itself: whether people with a severe long history of exclusion can achieve their recovery processes in a house, as previous experiences with homeless people staying in groups in rented accommodation, with financial and social support had not been fully successful due to rent defaults, conflicts between members of groups and conflict with neighbours.

We must bear in mind that our initiatives are developed in a context where rental apartments suitable for single persons are not available and we do not have the resources and the support of the public administration to develop this model, even though we consider that this would be desirable. The reality of the Spanish context is that the private rental market cannot offer affordable private rents to people with low income. Nor do we have adequate benefits which cover the difference between rent and the income of every household.

We found an alternative: to cover the need for accommodation through shared housing and the creation of living groups, with the advantages and disadvantages. This model contrasts to the one described above in that residents are placed in groups, rather than deciding upon them themselves. In this respect, we believe Provivienda was a pioneer of a model that we developed in 2002 to work with homeless people with a long history of social exclusion, who have come off the street, from shelters, boarding houses or rented rooms in a shared apartment. Most of them are recipients of a social benefit or a minimum pension that in Spain, at present, do not exceed 400 Euros per month on average (with some exceptions in some regions). In 2009, 212 people were housed in Madrid by this programme. An estimated 45 % of the people leaving this scheme went on to stable housing. Quite a large proportion, approximately 20 % leave to a rented room in a shared apartment (private market).

We have developed the following working model:

1. Use of existing housing in the private rental market. Provivienda is the renter in the rental contract (social profitability of the private housing stock).

2. Use of housing distributed throughout the city of Madrid. Most homeless people stay in this city, and we avoid concentration in certain neighbourhoods.

3. Use of housing located in residential communities and neighbourhoods well served by public transport, with public services (social services, health centre, entertainment ...), with nearby shops, allowing clients to use such amenities as any citizen does, to develop a sense of belonging, and to feel recognized as a neighbour.

4. Promotion of personal autonomy. The programme gives priority to people's own objectives and processes. Provivienda simply offers tools and the required assistance to make them happen.

5. Use of single rooms, to regain privacy. This means that the housing capacity is limited by the number of rooms in every apartment of the program (usually a maximum capacity of 3 / 4 persons per household).

6. Use of rooms with a key, which promotes a sense of security and privacy. The people who move in are not chosen by the people staying in the apartment and they do not know, a priori, each other. However, experience has shown us that once they are living together, they do not normally use the locks. In a recent evaluation of the program, a person said that the things he most valued in the house were "stability, peace; my home mates are good people and I can leave the door open".

7. Fully equipped common areas. The programme ensures fully equipped lounges, bathrooms, kitchens, etc. The people staying in every apartment, between three or four people maximum, can make use of these spaces with ease and comfort. Each of the guests, at their own pace, can make use of the kitchen at least for breakfast and dinner, as well as the living-room, for sharing leisure time and relaxing with their fellow residents.

8. Regular meetings are organised with the group and the professionals responsible for social support to discuss organizational issues (house cleaning, use of the house etc), as well as life together and relationships between the group members, and the maintenance of facilities. Self-organization and participation are promoted.

9. Individual and group support depending on need, and on the moment in time (for example, a moment of relapse, a moment of progress). We try to create a bond, a trusting relationship that allows for a helpful relation and promotes responsibility.

10. Length of stay adapted to each person and to their needs (personal, social, employment, income, health). There is not a maximum stay limit, but the establishment of social objectives related to the programme even though these can be very basic.
    Take the example of F - a middle-aged person with a history of heroin addiction for 8 years, one year of abstinence, and who has spent several years living in the street. He lives in a rented room in a shared apartment, and for fear of relapse in such an environment, asks the referring organisation to look for a place with professional supervision. The program monitors the maintenance of abstinence, and provides access to employment support and participation in occupational activities. After a year and three months, he leaves voluntarily to stable housing.

    The residence documents are periodically renewed in cooperation with the person. It allows us to give one-to-one feedback on improvement, and to be aware of the change, or on the other hand to identify where blockages are to moving forward, to improved self-conception, self-assurance, communication, assertiveness, domestic planning and future plans.

11. Written rules regarding the use of the amenities and rights and duties are explained and signed by all participants. Basic minimum standards help to regulate their life together, bring security to the house, and involve a responsibility to know and respect them, and eventually bear the consequences of not doing so.

12. Contribution to the rent payments, even if symbolic. This allows people to relearn the habit of having to pay for one's housing costs and to work on financial planning in some of the cases.

13. Detecting other problems. The social support in a non-formal context, allowing detection of problems (mental illness, addictions, learning disabilities) that were not previously detected, even for those people who had been in other services over time. People can be referred to specialized care bodies for particular needs.

The model of stable shared housing, in our experience, has its advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

Our experience is that living with others brings advantages. The programme can help people work, with support, on issues such as loneliness, social relationships, affection, empathy, communication, assertiveness and responsibility; issues that will improve social skills. Working in the domestic sphere allows clients to acquire/develop skills in the social sphere, skills that make the person stronger to interact in the society of which

they form a part. Therefore, we believe in the benefits of living together but much depends on the group: in general it could be said that the more compact the group is, the greater the chance that it will become a tool for improvement.

Disadvantages

The dwellings are shared so a series of basic rules of courtesy must be set. In this context, if living together does not work, we have to resort to making changes in living groups in order to reset the balance. In some cases, when there are major conflicts, expulsion is necessary, as stated in the rules. In this case, the residential alternative offered to the person who has to leave the home is a place in a shelter or a hostel. It is not possible to hide the discouraging effect this can cause on the life of a person. In some cases, the appropriate solution would be individual homes and although some organisations run some individual homes, they are not sufficient in number. We believe that any person, who had to leave the shared home because they were not prepared, or simply did not want to live with others, could have achieved independence in such an individual home with professional support. The context in which we work limits the extent to which we can provide housing-led solutions to these people. If we had a variety of alternative housing options, this setback could be managed differently.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRACTICE

Importance of residential stability

As we previously mentioned, residential stability is a priority so that people can develop feelings of attachment, belonging, identity and successful interaction within their social environment. For this reason, we address the necessary accompaniment from a situation of stability, involving temporary accommodation to improve processes of reintegration. This means not setting time limits on stays in advance. We would like to stress the importance of support. Residential stability does not occur just through the allocation of housing. For some people, housing for life without the necessary support is not necessarily stable housing.

The social function of housing

In our context, the most viable way to work from the housing-led perspective with homeless people on subsistence income, would be in public housing or subsidized rental housing on the private market and with professionalized services. It is necessary to highlight the major difficulties the NGO sector faces to be awarded public housing. The availability of social housing for the development of these programs would lower the cost considerably.

However, we consider that in the Spanish context, the only alternative is not massive construction of public housing. On the contrary: with a major housing stock already built and sometimes empty, the government should use some sustainability criteria in order to give a social function to our housing stock (rent control, rental grants, greater stability in the duration of rental contracts etc)

There are people in our programme that are allocated social housing, more stable in theory, but the intervention and support from public authorities or social housing providers is still very deficient. During the period 2008-2009, 16% of people in our program were allocated public housing. In many cases, long after the departure from our services, they were still demanding some support from Provivienda professionals because their social housing did not provide adequate support. There are some people receiving additional support via Provivienda while living in public housing. This emphasises how important the provision of adequate needs-based support is to the success of housing-led approaches. There is not always a good connection with social services close to the area. If there were, they would be able to follow up with the person, to avoid social isolation and loneliness, or even more severe problems. In addition, the social organizations help homeless people that have been granted public housing – to find ways to pay a deposit, to pay for the electricity, gas utilities, basic furniture, appliances - essential aspects for a home – not just a roof, but a home. We do this because the government does not provide for this and the subsistence income cannot cover these expenses.

Ongoing support

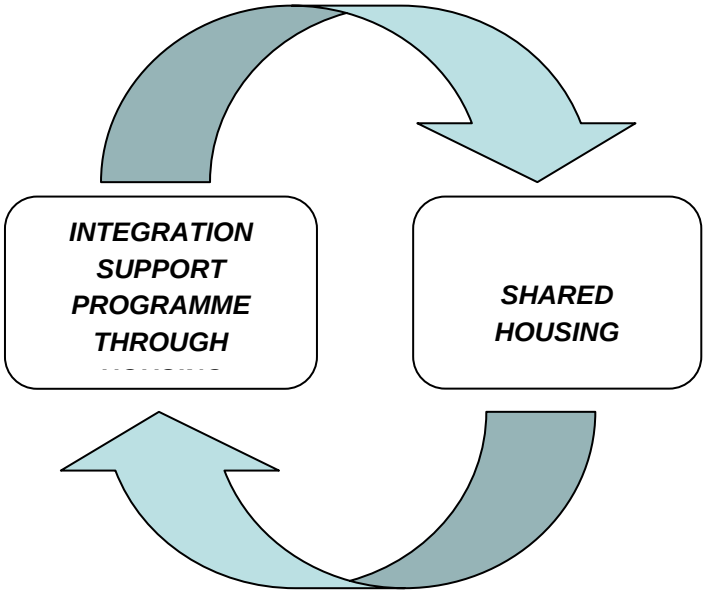
Residents necessarily experience change throughout the life cycle, either because of natural progressions (becoming independent, finding a life partner, being part of a couple with children, becoming elderly) or stressful situations that may occur (break-ups, divorce, illness).

For those with complex needs and minimal incomes, the shared housing with social support allows us to get to know the people who have been housed and create a bond with them, and a relationship of trust. We know about

their adaptability within a living group and about their ability to pay, take responsibility for the maintenance of housing, etc. We also know about their ability to respond to an autonomous environment.

There is traditionally an assumption that the "continuum of care" should work in a progressive way, with the person making a series of improvements. However, this is not always true; sometimes there are regressions. For example, in the context of the economic crisis, a person might lose their job and therefore cease to receive their salary, and then may not be able to maintain an apartment in the private rental market. In this sense, we believe that residential stability means also having the support needed to cope with difficulties that may occur.

COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMMES



The Mediation Rental Program - Integration Support through Housing - and the Shared Housing Programme complement each other. In our experience, this can work positively for the personal and social process of recovery of those that we support. It means we can respond to different residential needs, and prevent the loss of appropriate accommodation.

An example of this is people who, after staying for different periods in shared housing, have formed a group and Provivienda has provided a home for rent in the private rental market, thanks to our Mediation Program, through which all of the tenants have Provivienda endorsement. Some of these groups have stayed in a flat for five years or more. Stability in the housing has been achieved though support of the group because they are able to afford to share a rented apartment in the market if the costs are shared.

In these situations, we have to be able to address individual relapse situations; providing alternatives to people who have to be taken out of the tenancy agreement and selecting a new person who comes to help bear the costs of the housing. Occasionally, we appeal to our shared living spaces in order to solve these relapses, or to deal with crisis situations that stretch over time, mainly long-term unemployment.

This support involves: mediation and conflict resolution, endorsement by Provivienda for the duration of the contract, advance rent payments and individual repayment plans, social support that meets the needs of individual and group, etc.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that Provivienda is committed to social support at home, because we believe that this is the most promising context where you can work on social inclusion strategies for people who have been homeless. It should be adequate housing in a neighbourhood and community environment where privacy and security are guaranteed. Finally, in order to obtain the highest possible level of residential stability,

even in contexts in which the market precludes stability, temporary housing, as shared housing, can help to achieve the goal of stable housing.

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Key Question 4: How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homeless policies be assured?
Brigitte Hartung Initiative Bauen Wohnen Arbeiten e.V Cologne

This response to the key question will explore the issues of participation and empowerment from the experience and perspective of a self-help organisation for people experiencing homelessness

I will begin by presenting the idea behind and the origins of the Initiative Bauen Wohnen Arbeiten e.V project.

In 1995, the City of Cologne decided to make the town centre more attractive. In addition to the train station and the Cathedral Square (Domplatte), entire districts were revamped. Marginalised groups such as homeless people, drug addicts and prostitutes were dislodged from the city centre in an effort to obtain a more attractive townscape. Street prostitution was relocated to an outlying district, trailer parks were likewise moved to the outskirts and ultimately disbanded entirely. To counter this policy, several self-help associations working with homeless people and private individuals joined forces in the "Initiative Bauen Wohnen Arbeiten e.V" [the Build, Live, Work Initiative] with the idea of having "homeless people build housing for the homeless."

The withdrawal of the allies had left large barracks empty, such as the former Belgian barracks of Klerken in Cologne-Ossendorf. In the pursuit of innovative town planning, the Ministry of Building and Construction in North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) and the Landes-Entwicklungs-Gesellschaft (LEG) [State Development Agency] supported turning the listed barracks into a new residential district. Together with the architectural firm Marciniak, the Initiative Bauen Wohnen Arbeiten e.V submitted a design for a self-help construction project for homeless and long-term unemployed persons to the Ministry of Building and Construction and was thereby able to obtain that ministry's support.

The project was financed with development funds for social housing construction and a loan from the Bank für Sozialwirtschaft [Bank for the Solidarity-based Economy]. The missing equity capital was brought in by the project participants - an amount of €1.5 million. To be able to make this contribution, a company was set up and is affiliated to the association. This company dealt with building contracts for the project and charged 50% of the actual market value for them. The expenditure thus saved were counted as the initiative's own contribution.

The limited financing has been a problem up to now. No further funding has been granted apart from the building project. In addition to the building materials and trainers, social workers and managerial staff are paid from the operating revenues. In addition to the pressure to cope with the project, the financial management has been hitherto an energy and time-consuming balancing act. New funding sources must be constantly found in order to give a financial incentive to participants in the project. Even professional employees can be paid only low salaries. The management team has hitherto consisted of at most five people who have to cover all the tasks. So, in addition to the financial pressure, the team members are constantly overworked. Furthermore, no qualified employees could be taken on because of the limited ability to pay. The necessary knowledge had to be obtained through laborious processes.

The aim from the outset was that the planned forty six housing units would go not only to single homeless people, but to families with many children, single parents, senior citizens, students and people with disabilities. The aim was to avoid ghettoisation. One hundred and fifty people are currently living in the project, including about forty children. Fifty people who have experienced homelessness have found a home here. To integrate more homeless people into the project, a total of 10 temporary caravan dwellings have been built and are being made available as first accommodation by way of emergency housing.

This mixture of people from different backgrounds was a blessing for the project. Everyone learns from everyone else. Mutual acceptance and consideration developed very quickly and a genuine feeling of "us" emerged. Seen from the outside, this mixture did not have the desired success. There was no appreciation for the project participants, but adepreciation by the neighbours of tenants who had no experience with homelessness. Prejudices are still making life difficult for them. Perhaps that is what has had such a positive influence on living together in the project.

During the two-year planning and preparation phase, street workers from "Ohne festen Wohnsitz e.V." [No Fixed Abode] had contact with homeless people in Cologne to provide advice and support them in entering the project. In September 1998, the first eight rough sleepers moved into the trailers and caravans on the land of the initiative. By 2000, their number in the project had risen to twenty five.

The homeless belonged to different groups of homeless people, who were isolated from each other on the street. It was left up to the participants in the project whether they would share a piece of land with several others, or whether they wanted to settle on small plot alone. This made it possible to include participants from all groups in the project.

A working meeting has been held in the morning up to now, during which everyone can decide the work detail that s/he wishes to join. The participants, but the others too, identified very quickly with the work. New arrivals were accepted faster if they cooperated.

A “roundtable” is held once a week where everyone can participate to discuss the progress of the project and to address and solve conflicts together.

The self-determination to choose and to create one’s living by oneself was the precondition for accepting homeless people in the project permanently. Having a say on the work and on all matters enabled participants to develop trust and confidence in each other quickly

In the first two years, there was a management team consisting of a social worker, a garden landscape architect (both women) and the manager. The board consisted of the manager, a legal expert and a former homeless person, who worked as a street worker. In addition, there was an executive (insurance salesman) and an adviser (real estate salesman). The participants in the project were not involved in decisions that did not concern the association. It turned out that the interests of the members of the association, who were not participating directly in the project and who were active locally, diverged. A conflict arose, which split the local management team. This conflict was transferred to the participants in the project and made everyone anxious.

Up to now, the structures were clear. Participants had a say in their personal interests, and the management team decided about all the interests of the project. It became clear in the management team, that team members who were not involved in the daily work locally, had other ideas. Team-members with a professional economic background who were not involved in the project-work with homeless people developed their own goals for the project. Their goals had only economic backgrounds. The social spirit, that homeless people build their own housing, was not included.

I was appointed to the management team to diffuse the crisis. The participants in the project elected an allocation committee which had a say in the letting of the dwellings in order to ensure that homeless people obtained housing. Participants could become members of the association. Thus, the number of members rose from 15 to over 40. In subsequent board elections, only members who cooperated in the project were elected. As a result, participants in the project began to have a say in all matters concerning the projects. Various committees came into being such as the workers’ council and the residents’ council, who had a say in appointments and dismissals and on the inclusion of those concerned in the project. The council members were elected from among all participants in the project. The residents drew up their own set of rules to govern living together at the site. Getting through a crisis together brings people closer together. This new way of having a say initially helped to strengthen a feeling of belonging together. Owing to the skills of the individual participants in the project, people had a say at different hierarchical levels, and very soon a sort of competitive thinking arose. Participants in the project at management level were mobbed by others.

That was unique. Those involved had an opportunity to have their say in decisions concerning all the matters of the project. Some assumed positions in management, others qualified as trainers in the different work areas. Rules were easy to draw up but difficult to implement. All participants found it hard to arrive at the agreed results when the rules were violated. It used to be difficult for those involved to throw people back on the street as a last resort if the rules were violated. As a result, groups emerged who acted according to their own ‘rules.’

In the summer of 2003, co-workers who had risen to the management team came under serious threat. As a direct countermeasure, the management team decided initially to take legal steps against violent participants in the project. Though this approach managed to calm the situation at first, it offered no solution for peaceful co-existence in the long term. The supervisor at the time re-established contact with the Kutschera Institute in Vienna, where she had earned a degree in communication. Dr Gundel Kutschera accepted four co-workers, including two participants in the project who were on the management team to undergo training as NLP resonance practitioners and then as NLP trainers. The training programmes were pre-financed by the Resonance Foundation. Three of the co-workers went on to the NLP resonance master’s programme. In the meantime, the two former participants in the project have become NLP resonance trainers and are now undergoing instruction in life and social consulting, which they expect to complete in November 2010. Thanks to these training programmes, new offers could be developed for the participants in the project: Individual and group coaching offers for children, young people and adults with different areas of specialisation such as personal and social skills, health, leadership skills and conflict management. Crisis and conflict situations were recognised far earlier and could be solved constructively. The skills of individual participants were ascertained faster and could be promoted better in order to set attainable goals for the individuals.

„Participation and empowerment are possible only if all participants develop further continuously. This development can only be achieved through professional and individual support for the participants. The support for individual skills and talents of the individual together with the development of feasible life goals guarantee success for the individual but also for the project, as they lead to the appreciation of one’s qualities but also of others as well as co-existence as equals, where there is no room for power struggles any more.

Results have shown that former homeless people, who have completed the programme, have great access to participants in the project. The necessary trust and confidence are built up very rapidly because owing to a shared past, there are no thresholds. Moreover, they serve as examples to a certain extent.

Because the management team is constantly understaffed, there is unfortunately not much time for an intensive coaching programme for all participants. That is why successes are registered only slowly.

The construction project was completed and all the dwellings were let at the end of 2006. But there was still a lot of work to be done. The temporary caravans and the outdoor facilities were not supported with public funds. After Harz IV [Heart IV] was introduced in the beginning of 2005, the initiative succeeded, in cooperation with other self-help associations, to establish the Freies Trägerbündnis Köln [Cologne Free Sponsor alliance] and thus to become a cooperation partner for ARGE-Köln, in its capacity of qualification sponsor for the integration of long-term unemployed people. Since 2009, the initiative has also been recognised by the Landschaftsverband Rheinland [Regional Association of the Rhineland] and offers supervised residential counselling, so that the qualification of and care for the participants to the project can be continued.

Only the construction project was supported from the outset. Instruction, management and social work were financed only through the operating revenues saved. Everyone consequently concentrated their efforts on completing the dwellings and on all the interests of the projects. There was no room really for any publicity or lobbying work. Two board members of the initiative came via the Bundesbetroffeneninitiative e.V. (BBI) [Federal Citizens' Initiative] to the committees of the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V. (BAGW) [Federal Working Group on Assistance for the Homeless] and FEANTSA. Cooperation in these committees has led to a new self-conception, and the initiative has opened to the outside world. The most varied offers, hitherto reserved only for participants in the project, now became available to the entire district. Cooperation schemes with aid organisations emerged in the neighbourhood and led to joint offers. Fears of the unknown could be dispelled in both directions. For one, neighbours came to the initiative to avail themselves of local offers, while participants in the project joined community projects in the neighbourhood and availed themselves of offers from other institutions.

Projects for the homeless have a slightly grubby image. The initiative too has stayed mostly in the background the entire time. Exclusion is not only a problem that comes from the outside. One's own self-conception also builds limits. An inventory of all offers and successes has helped to develop new self-esteem.

The joint goal of building dwellings was achieved. The self-financing of the construction of the temporary caravans relieved the pressure to perform. It was clear during the entire construction phase that integration and qualification in and for the project were emphasised in order to complete the dwellings. Qualification and integration are now emphasised, but new goals and direction have not yet been defined by the management team. The professional team members put emphasis on customer care. The team members who come from a homeless background, are endeavouring to get the participants in the project integrated beyond the project and into society. Both basic approaches are important. For one, many, especially new participants in the project, have a higher need for care, whilst the utmost goal should be integration in our society. Efforts have in the last two years been made to proceed with both approaches in parallel, but such endeavours cannot work without a common goal.

The project in Cologne is outstanding. It offers homeless people an opportunity to have a home again, to get some peace of mind, and to discover and hone their skills. The intensive care helps them to overcome difficulties from the past and to bring order to their lives. The qualification in various working areas helps them to find their own goals and to develop their occupational skills. The opening of the association to the outside world and the cooperation with other institutions enable participants to take a step in society. Everyone has to take a step beyond the project and into an active, self-determined life on their own.

Every aid organisation has natural limitations. I am convinced that there is a sort of participation in every organisation, however low its threshold. People who live on the street live exclusively in the present. The reasons why they are in their current situation lie in the past. That past is suppressed. The daily struggle for survival leaves no room for making plans for the future. Aid organisations such as emergency accommodations and soup kitchens help them get through the day. Projects such as the one in Cologne help those concerned find some peace of mind so that they can start considering the future again. But this project too has an external threshold. Close cooperation with all institutions and widely diverse offers enable those concerned to find assistance to suit their individual needs so that they can get an opportunity to build a future again

Policymakers separate people who have experienced poverty into different groups, e.g. single parents, people with physical or mental disabilities, addicts, elderly people, etc. In this project, all these groups live together, and the experience has shown that they all have the same problems. There are homeless people among all these groups. In addition to being disabled, and/or a single parent, and/or old, and/or an addict, they have lost their home. Combating homelessness should not end with providing people with accommodation. A complete life concept must be developed that broaches all separate aspects of the individual, and that can be done only by involving the person him/herself.

The national poverty conference in June 2010 in Berlin was attended by people from all these "groups." The realisation that they all have something together, namely the experience of living at the poverty threshold, enables

them to get closer to each other. An internet database has been created where all people who have experienced poverty and all those working in different aid systems can obtain information and exchange views.

The dissolution of this way of thinking in terms of groups would enable all people who have experienced poverty to get integral help. The networking of all offers and intensive cooperation by all lead to a joint, successful solution for integrating people in an independent, active and future-oriented life.

Human dignity is sacrosanct, and is enshrined as such in the constitution of all European countries. This means all people are equal. They therefore are entitled to develop their skills and talents and to live out their heart's desires. And that can only be done through participation. Consequently, participation and empowerment constitute a basic right for every human being!

Conclusions:

Different levels of participation exist.

1. Participation in night shelters and soup kitchens:

Homeless persons have the possibility to get little jobs. Social workers assure first contacts with the authorities, medical support and eventually the transfer to housing and other shelters.

For homeless people, it is important to find a place where they can feel secure. It needs time to get confidence in the staff. Working is very important, it gives the impression of being valuable.

Limits:
Services for homeless persons are mostly paid by government money. This money is limited. The procedure to get government money is complicated and needs a lot of administration work. Social workers in services for homeless persons have mostly to many clients and to much administration work, so the real social work is limited. Moreover, there is no financial possibility for the staff to perform. Social workers learned their job because they wanted to help people. They can't fulfil their mission. Dissatisfaction and resignation turn out to be diseases. Associations have a responsibility against towards staff to assure their jobs and their health. So they are interested to keep clients as long as possible in the same service to assure the necessary government money. There are no resources to develop new strategies to solve homelessness.

Participation is limited to determinate low level jobs in the shelters. Participation in the organization of the shelter is rare. The development of an individual personal life strategy is mostly not possible.

2. Participation in self-help-projects:

Besides housing and working, homeless persons participate on the development of the project and on their personal development. In some projects, it is possible for them to reach leader positions.

Limits:

Self-help-projects have not enough financial support from the government. The constant financial pressures decrease the quality of development.

In working-projects the goal is professional qualification. For the association the question is: "Qualifying for the project or for the labour-market?" If qualified persons stay in the project, they can develop their talents only to a certain level. If they left the project, the association has to train and facilitate the qualification of new staff.

In political and lobby-work- projects participants needed to be qualified in social competences and communication. Without these qualifications, a dialogue between project-members and political stake holders will be difficult. Unqualified participants may be used for the personal interests of strong leaders.

Qualified participants are between two "worlds". They are not anymore a homeless person but they are not yet accepted as a full member of society. To be a ex-homeless person is like a stigma. The experience made in time of homelessness and on the way out of homelessness is more and more appreciated in different committees to develop new solutions to solve homelessness. The fact that someone is homeless should not mean that this person is not able to live in society or that this person is not intelligent. Homelessness is only an uncommon living situation in consequence of personal problems.

Qualified persons with experience in homelessness get much quicker contact to homeless persons. With their experience, they can develop new uncommon strategies to solve homelessness. But there is mostly no financial possibility to pay an adapted reward.

Assuring participation in the development of homeless policies means:

- Finding out the status quo - how much and what kind of participation is in all different institutions for homeless persons and developing possibilities for participation within the different limits and levels of each service.

- Possibility of intensive profiling in night shelters and soup kitchens to establish the real and individual needs of the service user and to develop a step by step strategy with the full participation of the service user.

- A working network to arrange the necessary steps.

- Professional qualifications for social workers.

- More social work and less administration

- Professional qualifications for the service users in self- and social competences.

- Combination of housing, work and personal support.

- Subsidies for the first labour market to assure a professional qualification in jobs.

- Development and installation of a second and third labour market to persons with multiple handicaps in work to gain qualifications.

- Qualifications and inclusion of homeless persons with their personal experience in the social and political work to solve homelessness and to develop new strategies.

- Step by step support from a ex-homeless person to a full member of society. For example, acknowledgment of the person as an expert in uncommon life strategies, appreciation of uncommon life experience as a valuable tool. Same pay for same work.

- Determination that the final goal of participation is to participle as a recognized and self determining member in our society.

But the first step to participation is up to every one of us to do in his mind.

- To solve a problem, experts are needed. In social problems, individual persons are involved. Each person is an expert for his life. Nobody other than himself can find a solution to solve the problem. It needs only support to adapt the solution to the social- economic- and legal frame.

- The goal of social help should be integration in normal social life and not dependence on an association, project or social service. It is “help to help yourself” and not help until the end of your days.

- It is comfortable to accept help and to criticize the helping system, to claim rights and financial support from the society without taking self responsibility.

Key Question 4: How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?

Pedro Meca, Compagnons de la Nuit, France

The invitation to take part in this conference clearly defines its objective: “The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness seeks to establish common understandings on fundamental questions about homelessness, in order to provide a basis for future policy progress."

The diverse situations in EU Member States, the diversity of collective and individual situations within each State and diversity in the practical situations of each individual - age, family, friends, work, unemployment, health, training, or in other words, the reasons that have led to someone finding themselves homeless - make common understanding of these fundamental questions which "can provide a basis for future policy progress" very difficult.

It is with a view to establishing a consensus that six questions relating to homelessness have been defined. Achieving a consensus will be an important and necessary asset in the development of future homelessness policies.

Based on my own particular experience, I have been asked to answer the question: “How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?”

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To give the broadest and most accurate answer possible, it is essential to analyse the steps taken in other European or North American countries to encourage those responsible for developing public homelessness policies to establish a national policy which transcends partisan divisions and possible changes in the Parliamentary majority.

However, I have been asked to provide an answer from my personal experience in this area. Answering the question directly and immediately may lead to a quick and limited answer which ignores the substance of the question, which is the participation of homeless people in the fight against homelessness. For this, I think it is vital to go upstream of the current situation of people on the street in order to consider their participation in the homelessness policy seriously.

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One of the reasons for this scepticism is the ignorance of reality. People on the street are judged from prejudices lodged in our minds and views. We carry prejudices that come from our personal and collective history and we talk about homeless people generally, knowing or having spoken with few people on the street. We attribute them with a way of thinking, feeling and living without an objective basis, without knowing them or personally associating with them. We project our way of thinking onto them by imagining that our thoughts are their reality. I often hear people say about homeless people: “If I was in their situation, I would react differently; I would do this and that, etc., to get myself out of it.” How can we imagine our own reaction to a totally unknown situation? The fact of being homeless says nothing about someone’s personal history, about their abilities, knowledge, feelings, their strengths and weaknesses, in other words what has led them to finding themselves on the street. Thinking we understand people’s current situation, we imagine solutions for them. We act as if they are incapable of knowing what they are and how to behave accordingly. We tell them what they must do, what is good for them, without knowing anything (or very little) about their lives.

Only knowledge of the reality can change and correct this approach to homelessness and combat the scepticism towards homeless people’s ability to participate in the development of policies concerning them, in terms of housing as well as other aspects of their life.

For social workers, understanding the reality means knowing people on the street, or at least a certain number of them, the physical proximity necessary for a certain level of friendliness can lead to mutual trust which frees speech and fuels dialogue to discuss everything, the banalities of everyday life as well as important issues such as feelings, misery and frustration, joys and aspirations, hopes and despair. This knowledge of reality resulting from meeting with people on the street must be strengthened by a more ‘scientific’ understanding through the contribution and involvement of the sociologists and anthropologists with whom the social workers

must associate. This may take the form of an ongoing “research-action”. Each person brings their own tools, social work techniques on the one hand, the contribution of sociology on the other, in a synergy to allow greater understanding of the realities of living on the street.

Without this mutual understanding, without this reciprocal trust, how can a dialogue be established with a view to homeless people participating in the development of policies on housing or any other aspect of life that affects them?

With regards the participation of homeless people in the development of policies on housing, I think something very important needs to be pointed out: there is a big difference between people who have more or less long term accommodation in a shelter or residence and people living and sleeping on the street or in isolated places – roofless people.

I will only be talking about my experience of working with people at night on the streets of Paris, which I have been doing for 30 years.

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There are events which disrupt life's path. Some experiences can be deeply traumatic, as much on a personal as on a family and social level. Psychological consequences weaken or prevent the creation of a personality. Shortcomings in emotional and educational relationships condition behaviour in daily life. The personal, professional and social life of people on the street is evidence of an often repetitive process, the outcome of which is marked by the suffering and failure which affects their future.

Individual identity is what enables someone to know who s/he is, what s/he believes and what his/her place in society is, to give meaning to life and allow him/her enter into relationships with others. The circumstances that lead to someone finding themselves on the street, homeless may be many and different for everyone, but the result is often the same: loss of reference points in family, friends, neighbours and employment. They no longer knows where they are because they have lost their bearings in relation to the location through a change of city and their connection to the urban area due to their experience on the street. Their relationship with time becomes another difficulty as they find it impossible to live within a time structure. Consequently, time is no longer a reference point and loses its consistency. Not having a job in the present devalues the past and makes it useless. Likewise the future: the man on the street cannot look to the future, making plans by prioritising his actions. It is very difficult for him to escape the disappointments of the present. So, how can he get his bearings in relation to society’s time organised according to employment and housing? Condemned to isolation, the homeless person can become “socially autistic” and, in the long run, internalises the aggression of the view applied to him/her by the society which excludes him/her and condemns him/her to exclusion from him/herself, to self-exclusion.

“How could this defenceless man, without any quality other than his dereliction, really and symbolically be the fellow human being of anyone within the city? By a curious, yet fundamentally consistent paradox, there is nothing left for this absolute non-person but to be locked away in the exile of support, or even emergency assistance and lined up with the number of those whose distinctive feature, in this case poverty, is to have slipped through the civic and social net”. (Elisabeth G. Sledziewski. Conférence de consensus "Sortir de la rue - Les sans-abri". FNARS Paris 29-30 XI 2007)

Self-exclusion is characterised by incommunicability which is the assertion of a solitude that tolerates only the presence of misfortune, the presence of people in the same situation. Any other form of presence becomes unbearable because it reflects a way of living and being to which he cannot respond. As a result, “the solitary, distraught man cannot direct this fierce aggressiveness which consumes him against anyone, he therefore has no other target than himself” (Jacek Kuron, La foi et la faute, Fayard, 1991 p.320).

All this characterises most of the "clients" encountered by the "Compagnons de la Nuit”. An audience which presents an accumulation of difficulties and failures (educational, emotional, professional), health problems (physical and psychological) and social integration issues (no or little training, released from prison or psychiatric hospitals, alcoholics, drug addicts). Often on the street, some are accommodated in shelters, in squalid hotels or all kinds of squats.

In these situations, society provides largely material assistance. For those most broken by this existence, this response is, on the one hand difficult to implement in particular for housing and employment and on the other hand, does not necessarily correspond to what would be appropriate to offer them so they can recover. Indeed, their existential problem largely exceeds material shortages. These shortages identified and recognised as important needs are originally social responses and the proposed services to satisfy them.

Social and charitable work with homeless people has a long history of considering these people the object of the aid and care given to them and not as the subject of their lives. Social work has taken over from the charitable work of the beginning of the century (aid to "the poor"), without removing it, but retains the same view of these people: objects for attention and aid and not subjects of their life.

There is always suspicion surrounding these people and their ability to take responsibility for their lives. One of the consequences of this attitude towards homeless people is that they become aid dependent, or people who become accustomed to receiving everything from others all the time without having to worry about or take responsibility for their immediate basic needs in life. In our rich countries, society provides these basic needs (to a greater or lesser degree), but in doing so it manages to demobilise the energy required for so-called social integration. These people become dependent on aid and their behaviour can be summarised as follows: on the first day, they ask; the second, they demand; the third it is a right and the forth they remonstrate against those helping them because they do not have everything they are asking for.

I think it is important to note that the view of "the homeless" which often reduces them to the status of aid-dependent arises from the fact that we do not see them as people - subjects of their own life story. Basically, we do not consider them as people in their own right despite the language used to the contrary. We often hear people who care for the homeless say, "we work with people", professional social workers included, when in reality they behave differently with them, only taking into account the particular need which they can fulfil. Social work is often reduced to filling the gaps for these people, but rarely takes into account their potential and the positive aspects of their personality to be developed. It makes these aid dependent individuals more than partners in an objective which becomes common to homeless people and social workers.

This negative view of homeless people is, unfortunately, the view shared by society as a whole. A view which reduces the homelessness problem to an individual dimension for which they alone are responsible.

As long as homeless people's situation is not considered as an issue that concerns us all, it will be impossible to find an answer unless society changes its view of them and itself. The scepticism that we experience with regards the participation of homeless people in developing policies that relate to them comes from this, the fact that we do not believe in them. If I do not believe in someone, how can I believe that s/he could take part in a task I want to run? How can we establish the conditions for this participation to be achieved, to become a reality and develop? At the heart of the possible participation of homeless people, there must be faith in human beings, in the humanity of every person, of every homeless person.

In addition to being guided towards existing services, these people require support to rebuild their confidence in themselves and in the eyes of others and to restore the person's view to a future in which s/he had ceased to believe.

Our role as social workers concerns the encounter with the subject and not the search for immediate answers to all his/her problems, while nonetheless trying to start this process. To do so, we must meet and get to know each other before talking everything over and take the measure of the other person. Each of the protagonists (social worker and person being met) is testing their place in the relationship that they are trying to establish. This is also a challenge for the skills and technical ability of the social worker.

Since our assistance and support is a presence for him, determined by his will, we must ensure that we do not miss or skip stages, as much as we may feel pressured by the physical and mental health of the person opposite us. At the same time, we must work against passive stagnation, a certain system in the services to which they have a right and which may draw them downwards, towards the inactivity that then makes it difficult to return to the surface and escape charity.

Today, there is quality aid which is especially reassuring for a society with a bad conscience and which feels obliged to do something for these people. However, these measures that improve daily life deal with the

symptoms rather than the cause of the problem. They are not a solution. Hence our effort to go further by making the most of the hidden, forgotten or unknown potential that everyone has within them and working on interiority and self-integration, a prelude and guarantee of social integration. It is a question of motivating people from within, at a pace appropriate to each individual, never forgetting that these are wounded people, on the defensive, withdrawn, weighed down by their problems and suspicious of everything and everyone.

This is long-term assistance and daily support in their processes which will not be linear but will experience interruptions, steps backwards and even failures. We refuse to confine them to their failures and the status of socially "handicapped" people which they are easily labelled with.

Our system of social care is one which defines its clientele by handicaps. We define someone by what s/he lacks, by what s/he does not have. However, we all know that to help someone develop, we must start with what s/he has, his/her abilities and not his/her failings. Entering aid services is not a guarantee of escaping them. Our work with the "Compagnons de la Nuit" and particularly the activities at La Moquette, our reception and meeting centre, is a project of a cultural nature.

Our cultural challenge is what we call "inversion" in mathematics: what was at the margins finds itself at the centre and vice versa. Entry into the services is central to social work while the relationship with the person is found on the margins. The challenge for us, inversion, is to make the relationship central to our work. Services only have an essential purpose if there is a relationship between them and the person and between this person and other people. Separate services, without relationships between them, loose their effectiveness and their meaning.

The public authorities have established a wide range of very complex services. This complexity, diversity and difference are central. Unity is on the margins. This amounts to cutting the individual into slices, determining his/her needs and thus creating categories of poor (excluded) people where we organise appropriate and independent services in each of these categories. The individual only has to enter them. S/he must go around all the counters for each need expending tremendous energy to stick the services together. In order that the complexity of the services works, the unity must be in the individual. Every time s/he presents himself at a counter for a service, s/he is called upon to give the plan or project s/he has for his/her life. But how can this profound unity be retained in a totally fragmented, unstructured and scattered life? How can it be managed so that the multiple services thought of in terms of categories can truly serve the individual, each individual with his/her dignity, integrity, identity, history, in a word, his/her personal reality?

For us, the answer will come from inversion: instead of starting by categorising individuals based on their deficiencies and handicaps, we must start with who they are personally by organising the process around their potential creativity. It means building someone's personality on the inside so that the outside benefits. We call this the right to interiority.

This is the cultural balance we try to strike in our daily work: "being" in order to become "greater" and "better". This applies just as much to the people hosted - homeless people -, as to social workers.

All this can only be achieved in places which enable friendliness between citizens in different social situations and freedom of speech in complete confidence, forgetting the prejudices that people have about each other: homeless people, politicians, social workers and citizens.

The work at our premises, La Moquette (The Carpet), is organised like this, but it takes time, patience, and respect for personal timeframes to achieve discussions between all sorts of people on all sorts of subjects and with no restraint. Why not open centres like these in various districts of the city?

Why not create meeting places in homeless hostels for those who live there and those who come from outside, whether homeless or not, so that it becomes usual for people to have discussions simply as citizens.

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We live in a time where citizens do not show a great deal of interest in politics and seem unconcerned, leaving this job to the politicians. Global participation in elections is declining and is evidence of people's lack of interest in politics. Citizens' education in political responsibility is less than adequate and the laisser-faire attitude is becoming established all over. It is only during election periods that citizens wake up a little, but this is due more to the personalities of the politicians than their manifestos. In these general conditions, how can we expect the homeless to feel concerned with the policies to be developed relating to their situation and take more responsibility than other citizens in the development of policies that concern them?

Since the question concerns the involvement of homeless people in the development of strategies, I believe we need to try and assess existing services. Participation has been gradually imposed in public policy sectors, but there are challenges and debates about which practices are effective along with the risks. For example, the difficulties related to developing participation which has meaning, rather than the purely institutional forms of participation which can be exploited by policy makers. Other reservations concern the question of representation – which homeless people should be involved in the development of policies and on behalf of whom will they be speaking? Can the most excluded people be heard? There is also the risk of "labelling" people as "people with experience of homelessness" which could put obstacles in the way of them escaping housing exclusion. Undoubtedly, the most important debate focuses on the question of resources allowing effective participation to be guaranteed - what are 'good' practices to facilitate the participation of homeless people in the development of policies? What are the values and conditions that must guide these practices? How can we monitor the added value and ensure the responsibility of the different people involved in the participative process?

Some homeless shelters organise information sessions and meetings involving people in the running of the shelter through the participation of the people accommodated there. I took part in meetings in shelters which, in principle, were organised for volunteers and social workers but which were extended to users. This 'mix' enabled a mutual and profound understanding and the chance to discover each others' abilities not permitted by their normal day-to-day contact. It is from these more general meetings (on the running of the shelter) that we could consequently meet to deal with other more specific subjects such as looking for work, how to find housing, professional training, etc. Once these meetings have taken place, the reciprocal trust and understanding make it possible to plan and conduct meetings where everyone can express their ideas about how housing policies relating to them are organised.

The issue of representation is a difficult one because homeless people do not form a group able to appoint representatives. At a stretch, people accommodated in a shelter or several shelters can meet to decide to elect one or several representatives from their group. This would be very limited, but it is possible. However, it is more difficult to find a system to enable the representation of isolated people who find themselves on the street. At La Moquette, in the 1990s, we proposed and encouraged the creation of an association for people on the street. It took many meetings to discuss the objectives, the operation, etc. and once the statutes were voted upon, being part of the association was very difficult because they were not used to being on the inside of associations, or the democratic process to be followed. For people who are used to life on the street and fending for themselves, it is difficult to promote shared research, to think of others at the same time as yourself, to replace 'me' by 'we'.

All this to say that the process of democratic consultation is not easy and can only become a reality if we work together over a long period of time, if we share a lot of time and energy personally getting to know each other, learning to appreciate and trust others...

Against the scepticism relating to "the meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies", only faith in the humanity of every person, recognition of everyone's equal right to dignity and each person's creative ability can establish a social climate and institutions capable of catering for people and meeting all their needs holistically. Once that is in place, there emerges a climate in which various problems, including the development of homelessness policies, can be dealt with by all citizens, including homeless people.

Key question 4: How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?
Christian Stark, Professor of Social Work at the University of applied Sciences Linz/Upper Austria

In order to answer this key question, it is necessary to first define participation and describe a principal attitude to policy-making in the context of homelessness.

1. Participation - definitions, principles and forms

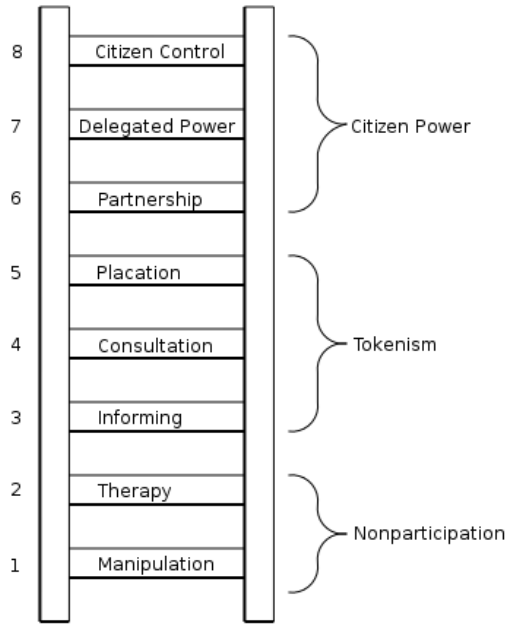
Participation can be defined as the active and effective involvement of homeless people as service users in the provision of services as well as in the decision-making processes affecting these services. Participation also means the inclusion of people who experience homelessness more broadly, including those who are not engaged in service structures. Participation is about recognizing the right of all people who experience homelessness to be involved.

In the context of homeless people, participation means moving from "doing" services to people to doing things with them. Homeless people should have a say in the provisions set up for them and play an active part in influencing the services they use. They should exercise some influence on the preparation of policy.

It is important to emphasize that participation should be voluntary. It does not exclude the need for support but describes how support should be provided.

There are different forms of participation. I am referring to the ladder model of Arnstein[34] (see below).This model provides a framework within which to define and recognize participation activity. It is a useful point of reference to demonstrate different levels of participation. Arnstein defines 8 rungs on a ladder of participation which show the diversity in extent of participation.

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation:



[34] cf. Arnstein, S. (1969): A Ladder of Citizen Participation, in: Journal of the American Institute of Planners, p. 217/222.

Each rung represents a stage in the gradual process of empowerment. Arnstein starts at the bottom with manipulation and therapy and calls it **non-participation**; the ladder continues with informing, consultation and placation, which Arnstein describes as degrees of **tokenism;** symbolic and superficial forms of participation. At the top he names partnership, delegated power and citizen control, which he calls degrees of **citizen power**. There is a critical difference between going through the ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process. To demonstrate these different levels more clearly, let me list examples of different forms of participation of homeless people:

1. Manipulation and therapy:
   Homeless people take part in the "helping process" but the service providers (e.g. social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists etc.) tell them what is good and useful for them in an "expertocratic" way. There are examples from shelters in Austria which are governed in a very paternalistic way by a "father figure" who prescribes and interprets all the rules, and practices no dialogue. There are also so-called "merit systems" where residents who follow all the rules and are very obedient get a better form of lodging e.g. a single room.

2. Information, consultation, placation:
   Sharing information enables service users to make informed choices and decisions. The tools of information are guides and publications by service providers (e.g. residents' handbooks, information packs, newsletters, websites etc) and information events (e.g. residents' meetings). Here, service providers inform the users but the homeless people have no real influence on decisions. They are presented with a fait accompli and remain passive listeners. Views and opinions are actively sought by service providers on how to improve existing services. They run consultation meetings and forums. There are also service user consultations through the use questionnaires or complaint books and boxes. But there is no obligation for providers to fulfill the proposals of the users or to react to complaints. In order to move up on the ladder and increase the degree of participation, there must be instruments that guarantee that information is transformed into a dialogue and that the results of the consultation are respected and definitely implemented.

3. Partnership, delegated power and citizen control:
   Partnership:
   Homeless persons have the same standing as staff or government officials, as each partner's views are equally important in influencing projects and policy making. Service users are fully-recognized board members with decisive power and their voice counts as much as the voice of any other board member. They have real decision-making power in all kinds of matters which affect them e.g. not only regarding leisure activities, meals etc but also concerning the use of money and the selection and training of staff.

   Delegated power and citizen control:
   Homeless people are fully represented in the decision-making process and in directing the work of an organization. Some examples are self-help groups; homeless people producing their own newsletters; and membership on boards of management or trustees. Funding is given directly to homeless people to give them the opportunity to lead their own projects. So, homeless persons run their own services and build user-organizations whose representatives are members of boards which can influence policy-decisions; taking part in policy processes for defining quality standards and making decisions about which kind of services are needed and funded (e.g. special shelters for couples, women).

   Furthermore, there are two models of participation: the consumerist model and the empowerment model. The consumerist model uses consultation and participatory initiatives for decision support, but not decision-making. This model is a more business-like approach to improve the satisfaction of the customer. Arnstein would call this model "tokenistic". The empowerment model requires a transfer of power. The amount of power transferred is the measure of participation. When participation is not connected to actual decision-making, it is merely cheap talk.

In Austria, for example, the situation concerning the participative decision-making process at different levels of the policy process is very poor. One important step would be the definition of quality standards concerning participation; both participation in service user organizations and participation in policy making in general. In Austria, only one state has quality standards defined by the local government. These standards deal largely with matters such as the infrastructure of services, staffing, size of rooms, documentation, staff training and only marginally address aspects of participation such as giving users the possibility to complain or comment - tokenistic forms according to Arnstein's model. Homeless people did take part in this process but they only had a consultative function and were selectively chosen by the service providers. Otherwise there are only the standards defined by service providers. I conducted a survey in 2009 together with BAWO – the Austrian Network Organization for Service Providers concerning possibilities for participation of homeless people in Austria. I addressed more than 100 service user organizations, but only 15 responded. Only one of them mentioned a

service user representative who in fact had no real decision power. Nearly all service providers had residents' meetings and possibilities to influence leisure activities, house rules, etc.

2. The scepticism about the participation in policy development

There is a growing consensus that service users should be involved in service provision but the participation of homeless people at the level of policy development is much more contested. What could be the reasons for the scepticism about the participation of homeless people in policy development? This scepticism may be based on a principal attitude to policy-making and the usefulness of such participation for the service providers. There is a basic stereotype regarding homeless people and a lack of confidence in their capabilities.

2.1. The role of policy-making

I distinguish between two forms of policy making: "top down" policy making (by professional politicians) and "bottom up" policy-making (by each civil person who is concerned by political issues – in this case by service providers and homeless people). Thus bottom up policy-making related to homelessness means any activity that achieves a positive change of the structures that are causing the social problems of homeless people. In this sense, policy-making means not being a tool for the established political power relations, but trying as a subject to influence the political conditions which are causing the problems. It becomes possible to actually co-design social policy.

Bottom up policy making can only have an indirect influence on decision-making processes. The big decisions are made by politicians and their officials, and therefore top down policy-making is very relevant. Participation and top down policy-making are matters of democracy and depend upon serious commitments to democracy on the part of politicians and the political will to tackle homelessness. It also means recognizing that homeless people have the same rights as anyone else in the community. The problem is that there is a big democracy deficit, especially in Austria, but also in other European states and the whole EU. There are only representative forms of democracy and very few forms of direct democracy. So, the only way for citizens to exercise democracy seems to consist of voting and choosing who governs you in a more or less negligent, undemocratic way for the next legislative period.

People can make a decision on who they vote for, but within the legislative period the possibilities to influence policy decisions concerning budget, environment, social welfare and other issues are very limited and frustrating. Therefore, political science researchers have recognized a big disenchantment with politics amongst the population, which results in very pessimistic views, along the lines of:

"If elections could change political power relations really in favour of citizens, they would already have been abolished"

The only alternative citizens seem to have is to wait for the next elections and then teach the politicians a lesson they won't forget. Of course you can keep in mind Churchill's words:

"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Is there a real will and conviction among politicians that people should be more than gullible voters? Democracy as a form of rule by the people, with the people and through the people seems to be a dream. In connection with globalization there is also a loss of sovereignty in national policy and it seems that the real ruler is the economy, especially in the shape of transnational corporations.

The matter of meaningful participation is a matter of democracy in general. How can people participate in general and especially homeless people? The problem is that homeless people are not a very interesting voting block and have no strong lobby. They often do not even have the possibility to vote because they have no certificate of registration.

Politicians are responsible to the tax payers. Their money should be well-used, especially in a so-called welfare state, for people in need - to abolish homelessness and poverty. So, the participation of homeless people should

not take place in a vacuum, but as part of wider debates on participative democracy. To tackle democratic deficits, a more systematic use of participation structures is needed throughout politics and policy-making bodies.

There appears to be a principal scepticism on joint policy-making by service users and service providers. A number of factors may limit the active role that service users and providers play in policy-making. Service users may focus too much on immediate personal needs. These are more urgent than policy-making. They may also be anxious about being labeled and may be reluctant to take part in activities that identify them as having specific problems.

Due to reduced funding and financial cuts, managers of service providers often speak about concentration on the core-business i.e. case work, working with the clients. Policy-making by service providers seems like a luxury; a hobby for some left-orientated social workers; or it is generally regarded as a danger. When criticism of politicians and financial backers is necessary, there may be fear that they could cut the funding. This fact could limit the extent to which service providers feel able to challenge and influence local authority policies, because - of course - you do not criticize the person that feeds you. In contrast to this scepticism, I want to quote the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW):

"Social workers have the duty to draw the attention of their clients, decision makers, politicians and the public to situations in which resources are inadequate or the distribution of resources standards and practices is oppressive, unjust or damaging" [35]

This central statement shows that policy making should be a central task for social workers. That means it should also be a central task for them to empower their clients in this way. Social work is not a service with the same character as saleable goods, but the result of the collective effort of all involved – social worker and client – in a simultaneous arrangement and management of circumstances which make the success of the endeavors more likely. Social work as an integral part of social policy must be understood as more than a repair company for the amelioration of negative social and economic consequences.

2.2. Perceptions of homeless people

Additional reasons for scepticism are prejudices towards homeless people, and the stigma that they are confronted with, which have no empirical foundation. Scepticism is a matter of the anthropology of homeless people.

Homeless people are often regarded as loss-making human-beings and 2nd class citizens. They are seen as criminals, scroungers, addicts, dirty, helpless people who misuse the social system. They are seen as beggars instead of citizens with rights. Their homelessness is seen as their own fault. Therefore, they are not welcomed in the world of consumerism and tourism. Poverty should be invisible. So, based on zero-tolerance policies, they are expelled from the city centres. The impact is that homeless people are completely excluded from any participation - the minimal form of just being a member of society and having the right to stay in the public room. In the logic of neoliberal economists, only economic subjects i.e. customers have rights according to the formula laboro ergo sum. Homeless people are not powerful economic subjects; they are seen as people in need; beggars; so-called scroungers and so ultimately they lose the right to living under human conditions. Poverty should be invisible. Homeless people are a bad advertisement for tourists and customers and disturb them.

In the context of the so called economization of social work and the consumerist model of participation, homeless people are termed "customers". I think that is tokenism. Homeless people are in a vulnerable position and far away from being autonomous consumers that can effectively choose from a variety of services. A customer can choose between different services; a customer is active; he/she goes shopping; is not institutionalized; can return the product within a certain period in case of faults and get back his/her money. Homeless people are people in need; they live in poverty; may have psycho-social problems and disabilities - and not because they chose them like products in the supermarket.

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[35] IFSW (2004): Ethics in social work, URL: www.sozialarbeit.at (7.1.2007)

In the logic of a market economy there is a focus on customer retention and the creation of artificial needs: more customers mean more profit. In social work the aim is to help the homeless to help themselves and to try to "get rid of the clients" by facilitating moving on from homelessness. One aims at preventing social problems. There are different targets in a market-economy and in social work: on the one hand we have "immediate satisfaction of needs and creation of artificial needs" and on the other hand we have "sustainable coping with social problems".

In business, despite the motto "the customer is always right", customer orientation is a means to an end. The centre of interest is profit, the customer is seen as a function and not a personality. In social work the client is the focus of attention and treated with acceptance, empathy and authenticity. Concrete examples of consumerist approaches are service user surveys, satisfaction questionnaires, procedures which allow people to complain (complaint books and boxes). The service user comments/complaints may be regarded as interesting and an instrument of control, but they can only influence decisions indirectly and have no coercive power. Satisfaction questionnaires also generally produce a very high level of satisfaction and tend to reflect providers' priorities. In the consumerist logic structural reasons are neglected, only immediate needs seem to be satisfied. The terms customer and the consumerist logic draw a picture of homeless people which does not correspond to their reality as described above.

Whether someone gets the necessary means for a life worth living cannot be decided by the market. Homeless people are citizens with inalienable rights and should not be transformed into economic citizens who have only rights for that which they can afford/buy. Service provision is not a good but the result of the common efforts of all participants and the simultaneous management of circumstances, which makes success more likely.

3. <u>The instrumentalization of the participation of homeless people</u>

Participation can be instrumentalized in some ways. One way is what I call the neoliberal misinterpretation of empowerment. Following the saying "every man is the architect of his own fortune", the fortune of homeless people can be seen as their own fault. In this case, no structural causes of homelessness are taken into account.

By means of neo-liberal neologisms such as "supply and demand"; "help only for the really needy"; "get people moving towards self-help and using their own initiative"; "an end to the state benefit mentality" unemployment and poverty, according to the Social Darwinist canon, have become problems of the individual, of character weakness and a lack of readiness to perform in a job.

In this context, "activation and empowerment" amounts in a broader context to a kind of authoritarian withdrawal of social rights: Help to find work morphs into threats of forced labour. Hence, the welfare state becomes a goal-oriented workfare state which focuses on the functions of repression and social exclusion.[36] Poverty is seen as a crisis of one's own making and just penalty for non-performance. Unemployment is reinterpreted as a problem of individuals and their weakness of character and lack of willingness to perform. Public goods, which were guaranteed by law in the welfare state to provide every citizen with a life worth living, become products which must be bought. Citizens with inalienable rights become economic citizens who have only rights to that which they can afford.

In a crisis of unemployment where jobs, but not those willing to work, are missing, the pressure to work is strengthened by reference to these slogans without any attempt to improve the chances of the socially disadvantaged.

The community becomes divided into a welfare state market on the one hand and a charity state on the other. Those citizens who can afford it buy social security. In contrast, the workfare state offers only a minimum of service to protect people from starvation and freezing. These people, in the case of calamity, are handed over to private charitable organizations. Though reference is made to "personal responsibility," what is meant is an extra burden for those working and those on the lowest pensions.

Participation can be misused as a way of handing over individual responsibility to people for their situation. Homeless people can be overburdened. Despite the principle of "Help to self-help", sometimes it is necessary for

[36] cf. Dimmel (2006): URL: www.sozialearbeit.at (7.1.2007)

service providers to act as an advocate for their clients or to speak for them. Homeless people are often treated as second class people. They are not heard, valued, informed about their rights, and benefits are refused to them. They have no access to mass media, no lobby etc. They are also sometimes ashamed and too proud to be treated like an almsman in job centers or social security offices. They do not necessarily want to go on the street to demonstrate because they might be identified as people with specific stigmatized problems; they could be photographed; their picture could appear in newspapers and jeopardize a future job.

Participation could also be a means to an end by saving costs and saving staff - handing over the responsibility completely to the service users. Participation is a process and homeless people must be empowered and trained. Although they are experts on their situation, they cannot do the same job as professional social workers. Some participation activities can come too early and fail. When homeless people have little experience of being involved in decision-making they need support in order to participate effectively. They may be unaware of the options available to them due to a lack of confidence. The question is whose purposes participation is meant to serve. Is it about legitimising agency decisions or about opening up the decision-making process to those who will be affected by it? Is it about effecting a real change in the quality of people's lives?

Participation does not exclude the need for support! It concerns the matter of how the support is provided and aims to increase the autonomy of homeless people. This is one of the fundamental values of participation.

With regard to the "creaming effects" in fringe groups, one risk is that there could be a displacement of the weakest clients in favour of clients who are more easily looked after; yielding positive results. As a consequence there might be a preference for those clients who "did not cause their predicament through gross negligence" and who can be settled with little cost to the financial backer. With relation to participation, this has implications for the representation of the voice of the most vulnerable clients – in a context of formalized participation in policy making, there may be a tendency to select those homeless people best equipped for this type of situation.

Service users can also be seen and used as cheap staff: poor services for poor people and poor people for poor services. According to the "creaming effect" described above, the weakest users are displaced in favour of service users who are more easily looked after with positive results. Homeless people, especially long term homeless, have multiple problems and it often happens in services that only the immediate needs are satisfied, but the real problems and underlying issues are not tackled. Poverty is reined in, but there is no real integration, no independent housing or labour. Such services can serve as an alibi for policy, suggesting that the system is okay as no one need starve or freeze to death, and that is enough. But the standards are very low. Homeless people are kept in poverty. Such services may have very few professionals; relying on untrained volunteers and service users whose job is reduced to giving out meals; washing clothes; cleaning rooms and just making sure that there is no violence and trouble in services. And this is called "participation"! Homeless people may replace professionals and fulfill all the same functions. Some may get privileges and this could cause jealousy and destroy solidarity amongst the service users.

Furthermore, service providers could instrumentalize clients to get more money by fulfilling quality criteria. In such a situation the quality criteria are only fulfilled on paper - but not in reality. Service user surveys can be steered, controlled and manipulated by the providers. Due to fear of criticism, homeless people may give the required answers. You can also manipulate auditing by choosing model clients and giving them benefits, following the proverb: "you speak the words of the person that feeds you". There are residents' meetings, house representatives with no real decision-making power, and there is no actual control over, or evaluation of, how the standards are met.

4. The contradiction between institutionalising participation and supporting people in moving on from homelessness

To look at this more closely, you have to take into account the extent of participation and the form of service and the length of homelessness.

The contradiction in my opinion is only a contradiction at first sight. Homeless people should be involved from the first support contact through the entire process of care and re-integration. As a first step they must be empowered to make decisions about their own life, and in a second step - if they want to - they can formally participate in the development of homeless policies.

Empowerment must happen from the start and go hand in hand with concrete support measures. The more participation, the earlier people will move on from homelessness. The longer you are homeless, the more difficult it is to get out. The central task for service providers is to help people to help themselves, to motivate them and give them perspectives, and to involve them in the "helping process" from the first contact, and in all the forms of participation that they want to be involved in.

Participation needs to be sustainable and participation activities should be designed as long term initiatives. Moving on from homelessness is no quick process and help needs to be sustainable.

When homeless people really move on, they can become representatives, as former clients, and go on to shape policy as regular community members on another level. One stops being a service user as a homeless person when one has independent lodgings with no support from any service provider. One does not need to have work, but in one's search for work one is also independent and not supported by any service provider. That does not mean that one could not be in contact with services just to meet some old friends in day centres etc. This remains a matter of biography and personal choice that is dependent on each individual's coping strategies and mechanisms. The core questions are: Does one need distance to be sustainably re-integrated into society? Is keeping in contact with "the scene" a risk that may trigger a relapse, especially, for example, if one had had alcohol problems? The answers to these questions depend on the individual's skills to articulate, and their will to speak about their past situation without shame. It should be noted that the "homelessness expert" route may not be a sustainable path of growth, it could also lead to a standstill. At first it might be interesting going to conferences, taking part in meetings and being on boards, but it does not pay well to be a homeless expert and therefore may not lead to material independence. There is also the danger of being presented or misused by agencies and service providers as a "miracle" or a "special attraction" - as a means to a particular end. Being a homeless expert must not become a dead end, it must be accompanied by supervision and training, as is offered to professionals, otherwise it could have counter-productive effects.

5. The added value of the participation of homeless people in developing policies to fight homelessness - Why it is important that homeless people participate in the development of homelessness policies

Participation is only worth having if it has an impact and adds value to the decision-making process. It has to make a difference to service provision and policy development.

Homeless people are experts regarding their situations. They have first-hand experience. They know better than anyone else what they really need from services and policy. This knowledge is extremely valuable in terms of developing effective policies to tackle homelessness.

Service users should be the main actors in their situation and in the solution, but the problems of homeless people have also structural causes, so they cannot be solved by service providers and service users alone. It takes good policy and laws regarding funding, working facilities, etc. There could be, for example, statutory obligations for the amount of benefits, the minimum living wage, the right to housing and the implementation of participation for service providers.

The coming together of policy makers, practitioners, and homeless people, is a visible commitment and demonstrates the power of more participatory approaches to democratic engagement. It establishes a more sophisticated and trusting relationship between these stakeholders.

Poverty is often hidden. Homeless people are victims of an expulsion policy. If the situation of homeless people is reflected in policy and in publications like magazines, leaflets from the organisations and also daily papers, homelessness is publicised and made visible. It is a chance to overcome prejudices and the added value could be a de-stigmatization. But that is of course not enough. It must be accompanied by a genuine, adequately resourced, evidence-based commitment to tackling the problem by policy makers.

In addition, homeless people can gain new skills and knowledge and develop self-confidence through voicing their own opinion; it fosters self-awareness and self-esteem. Participation furthers the goal of independence by facilitating inclusion and encouraging the development of life skills as well as self esteem. Involvement enables users to have a direct say both in services and communities; to develop their capacity to maintain independent

living. They develop skills that are transferable to other areas, such as confidence and the ability to challenge discriminatory practices, as well as their own approach to securing ordinary life.

Promoting greater participation can lead to increases in positive forms of social capital and increased social cohesion. There are many benefits to participation for service users, service providers, and the government. To sum up, participation could yield the following added value:

Added value for people experiencing homelessness:

- Gaining practical skills and knowledge
- Greater rights, responsibilities and resources
- Moving towards increased self-help capacities
- A sense of responsibility regarding projects and a sense of ownership of projects
- Receiving services which are responsive to their needs
- Increased confidence, problem-solving skills, negotiating skills
- Awareness of the process of political and organizational decision-making and funding
- Personal development, skills development, access to wider community social networks

Added value in terms of the development of effective policies to end homelessness:

- Better quality of service planning, development and delivery
- Agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with homeless people
- A budget dedicated to participation and lobbying
- A greater sense of ownership on the part of all stakeholders
- Increased commitment to the objectives and outcomes
- Longer term social sustainability
- Stronger and more democratic institutions and partnerships

6. The means to ensure meaningful or effective participation - appropriate methods and principles

The preconditions of participation are processes of empowerment: processes by which individuals and groups enhance their capacity to be informed, make choices and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment is an approach that emphasizes the rights and autonomy of people. The empowerment approach encourages homeless people to take control of their own lives rather than have things decided or done for them.

The first step towards meaningful participation is to consider how homeless people want to be involved. We need to remember that participation is voluntary and a slow process which should start from the issues that people are interested in changing. Making participation meaningful is a process which has to start with an understanding of the immediate needs, capacities, interests, and concerns of homeless people. Effective participation is inclusive and anti-discriminatory. It enables people to be actively involved to the extent and level that they feel comfortable with.

So, forms and types of participation initiatives should offer a broad range of activities to enable people with different interests, capacities, and experiences to be involved at the pace and extent that is appropriate for them. Any model that was effective at one point, in one context is not necessarily likely to be appropriate in other contexts. Forms of involvement must remain flexible.

Another necessary consideration is that there are unequal power relations. Homeless people are simply less powerful in terms of resources and information than the stakeholders they are seeking to influence. Participation is a matter of power and the transfer of power is the measure of participation. Who has power and who does not? How is power obtained and how does it manifest itself? The challenge is how power is distributed and whether, as a politician, manager, service provider, or social worker, you are willing to hand over power.

Adopting participative approaches means changing common work habits and attitudes. Participation will only become a standard part of the policy-making process when it is embedded in the organizational service user and public service culture.

To ensure meaningful participation I am focussing on the stances and steps which are described in the Participation Toolkit of FENTSA[37]:

Information and getting to grips with the idea of participation:

Homeless people vary enormously: they include vulnerable young people, older, frail people, single homeless people, people from minority ethnic groups. Not all perceive themselves as members of a group with whom they share a common interest. Some people, e.g. people with HIV, women fleeing violence, could be anxious that they will be labelled and may be reluctant to take part in activities that identify them as having specific problems. So, the process should start by identifying common interests, and then offer opportunities for people to come together and build a sense of identity and mutual support. It is important to encourage people in the belief that they are of value and have an important contribution to make and that their involvement really does make a difference. We must enable them to raise issues of concern until they are able to form models of self-advocacy organisations.

Participation is a way of bringing people together to achieve mutually desirable outcomes. It is important to build up consciousness among all stakeholders about what participation is going to mean for everybody. A shared understanding about the values of participation is necessary. All stakeholders should have the possibility to put their fears, reservations etc. on the table and there should be the possibility to call into question the easy consensuses around values and principles or unexpressed work habits and attitudes which may not be shared.

Drawing up an action plan and taking practical decisions
The discussions described above are the basis for drawing up an action plan for organizations and also public authorities on the basis of the needs, expectations and support of everyone who is involved. The idea of participation has to be built into the organizational structure of service providers and public bodies and into their strategic planning.

The action plan of service users and providers depends on the attitude of the public authorities to participation. Are they already open? Are there already legal obligations? Do they resist, especially when more money is needed? Or, in the worst case, act against it? The problem is that the term participation is not embedded in the culture of governments and has no formal status in most democratic systems. This allows officials to dismiss activists who oppose their views as a nuisance to be ignored, rather than a voice to be engaged. There are no comprehensive government visions for participation. Instead, there are some policy statements setting out the role of participation in relation to specific policy agendas. There is an institutional assumption that participation is unnecessary. In most councils, participation is considered an optional extra. There is no need to really involve anyone else beyond a little bit of consultation. There are strong cultural barriers that deter government officers and homeless people from using participation as part of their daily life. Local authorities may see participation as a challenge to their authority and their role as community leaders. They have an “I know best” attitude. Professional culture in public services assumes that professional opinion is always superior to non-professional opinion. Tensions can be especially severe in councils that are dominated by a single political party. In this case lobbying and advocacy will be required to convince public authorities on the local and national level of the importance of participation.

Lobbying and resistance:

Homeless people who want to be involved could face real difficulties where the system is not open to their challenge. In this, service providers together with homeless people (service user organizations) should be aware of the fact that they are not simply at the mercy of the hierarchy of power and that dissociation and resistance to policy, which requires adaption to the force of circumstance, is possible.

This means that social work - by analyzing social problems - should turn its main attention to socially determined structural causes, direct its gaze at structural, social factors, publicize them, propagate them in current socio-political debates, interfere in current socio-political debates, and thereby construct a critical, alternative public domain.

[37] Cf. FEANTSA (2007): Participation Toolkit, pp. 5-10.

A better-integrated network of social workers, social institutions and service user organizations could generate pressure on the responsible politicians so that their concerns are noted and taken seriously. A central aim of social work must be the capacity to resist any further worsening of the basic social conditions in the form of cuts in social services.[38]

Ensuring finances:
Participation and participation training need funding. The necessary resources have to be built into a budget. This is a visible recognition of the importance of participation by public authorities. Of course this is challenging. The core financing should concern the maintenance of the services provided and a minimum subsistence level. Often service providers may prioritize; concentrating on the so-called "core business". But without funding participation will not work.

Service providers should provide for covering costs incurred by participation and lobbying. Funding is essential and should be independent of local authority influence. Activists and representatives must be able to express views in the knowledge that doing so will not compromise their funding. Core funding should be insulated from pressure to take particular policy positions in participation processes and discussions. Participation sometimes takes place after budgets have already been set, thus limiting the range of proposals that can be considered. Homeless people who want to get involved should also receive payment for their work without loss of benefits and the same support as staff, e.g. supervision and training. Of course this is dependent on budgeting and the political will to use money for those activities.

Training:

Participation training is necessary and has to be made available to staff, service users and representatives of policy.

Acting together - Working in partnership with all stakeholders

Adopting participative approaches and putting participation into practice is a challenging process and requires changes in the working culture and practice of organisations and offices. The high-level decision makers need to be fully supportive of the participative approach in order to support their staff and provide resources for upcoming activities. They need to be willing to give up some of their power to the "new" participants and allow them to influence the outcomes. They have to be willing to take risks and try new effective methods of participation in order to move towards a culture which has participation embedded in all its departments and services.

A clear statement is necessary that all citizens, especially members of fringe groups, are entitled to have a say in decisions that affect their well-being and the well-being of their communities. Policy needs to support cultural shifts that make participation a standard practice.

As mentioned above, there are strong cultural barriers that deter government officials and homeless people from participation as part of their daily life. Much of the mistrust between homeless people, service providers and statutory bodies rests on false assumptions about each other's behaviour and competence. Spending time together seems to have the power to challenge these assumptions. In Austria, the only contact between politicians, government officers, and homeless people is at an opening or the anniversary of a service provider organisation. Then they give unctuous speeches and shake hands and praise the good social system, but nothing more. So, the key task is to develop infrastructure that will facilitate a mutual flow of communication between politicians and homeless persons and create opportunities for real contact, to straddle this big gap and destroy prejudices on both sides.

Service users and service providers - in the best case - should work together with public authorities. They should be involved in local decision making and in national political processes and work directly with local or national policies to help them shape and set social policies and priorities. Public bodies should enable their representatives to go out and inhabit homeless worlds in order to deepen understanding and build relationships.

[38] cf. Butterwegge (2006): URL: www.sozialearbeit.at/ butterwegge_wandelsozialarbeit.pdf; p.15.

The problem regarding the present situation (especially in Austria), is that no one feels responsible for systematically challenging all government departments to support and pursue participative approaches.

Homeless people should be more involved and should have real voting power, they should be real representatives and appointed by the homeless people themselves. They should take part in important meetings with real decision-making power. There should be permanent institutionalized meetings and homeless people should be permanent members of the boards that control whether quality standards are really implemented, and report to the financial backer.

It is important to prohibit dumping processes between service providers. It should not happen that the cheapest providers with the lowest standards get the biggest piece of the budget cake. There should be mechanisms of control that within a certain time, these standards are really implemented and funding should be dependent on the good practice of implementation of participation measures. Evaluation could be done by researchers from universities together with homeless people. All stakeholders should work together and should have representatives, i.e. persons in charge to ensure that things keep on moving.

As referred to in the report "Removing the barriers to Community participation" by the National Community Forum, an advisory body to the Office of the British Deputy Prime Minister, a Participation Commissioner should be appointed with a small secretariat.[39] He/she should lead the creation of a national charter establishing citizens' entitlements to participate, especially fringe groups. This Commissioner should make a commitment to making participation a reality. He/she should be autonomous and run a national good practice awards system. He/she should analyse information about good practice and provide a central repository for information around good practice. He/she is not an ombudsman, but shall improve the quality of practice around the country and reduce the likelihood of apparently intractable problems arising. He/she should make clear that participation is of value as a democratic way of allowing citizens to make collective decisions on an equal basis as well as a means for improving service delivery and building social capital. Local agreements on how participation will operate should be set out.

The process of community empowerment strategies should be supported by participation facilitators based in government offices and responsible for initiating and facilitating discussion at a local level.

I would also recommend the appointment of a so-called ombudsman as exists in Austria in the area of child and youth welfare. This is a focal person for homeless people who are victims of violence or expulsed from the streets by police and other security groups who ignore the rights of homeless people in the public realm. The ombudsman could also receive complaints concerning non-participation and patriarchal ways of service delivery in the provider sector.

Barriers to participation can be found in government officers, the staff of service providers, and homeless people themselves. One way to manage these barriers is through participation training. The aim of training is to explain what participation means and how to get it started. The training should deal with definitions of participation, the benefits and added values. The ladder model should be used to identify where different activities meet the different levels. This should lead to how planned projects and activities can raise the level of participation. There also needs to be an action plan to implement new ideas and take participation forward.

As part of "bottom up" policy making, service users should organize their own networks and build up service user organizations. Service providers should support them in this process. There should also be contact with different services, practices and policies because this can reveal existing inequalities and give examples of best-practice.

7. The question of representativity

There is not "the homeless" person. Homeless people are no subculture. Homeless people are very different from one another. There are differences in age, sex, ethnicity. There are young homeless people, drug addicts or homeless migrants with different problems and in need of different services and there are different reasons why they are homeless.

[39] Cf. National Community Forum (2006): Removing the barriers to community participation, p.30.

There are also different political opinions and wishes and preferences among homeless people. The only thing they have in common is their homelessness.

Representativity is not always a given. Some “representatives” might be so preoccupied by their own pressing problems that they have no capacity to consider their fellow sufferers’ needs. The lack of clarity or consensus can leave homeless people vulnerable to the challenge that they are not representative and lack legitimacy. Therefore rules are necessary to find representatives. Representatives should be elected by secret ballot and they should be chaired by an elected user chair-person. There should be formal agendas and minutes and there should also be administrator and employee representatives. But this transparency is not always a given when it comes to the selection of representatives to speak on behalf of people experiencing homelessness.

8. Risks associated with participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies

Service providers and policy makers should be careful not to place too much stress and pressure on the users because they may become exhausted. Too much involvement can lead service users to burn out. It is possible to burden some representatives too much and thereby create professional homeless people. People may relapse - falling back into destructive patterns. The support system for the representatives should be similar to that for the staff (e.g. supervision) within homeless services.

As the level of participation increases and homeless persons become involved in a wider range of issues, service providers may forget that they are mostly volunteers and have other commitments. It needs to develop at a pace that the homeless persons feel comfortable with and they need to have the confidence to say when this is not the case.

Participants should not become overly involved and relied upon to participate in all activities.

Enough time should be build into decision-making that participants feel that they can share the load and consult one another.

It is also important not to raise unrealistic expectations, but to be honest and clear from the outset and explain and establish what is negotiable and what is not. Making promises that cannot be kept can be very detrimental and must be avoided.

There is an understandable reluctance to try participation again where it seems to have failed or caused delays. In the case of failure the homeless person might acquire labels as an unrepresentative and useless subject. A destructive part of participation, where negative attitudes to policy involvement lead to poor engagement practices, can cause increased hostility, decreased trust and poor experience. Homeless people may be anxious that they are labeled and may be reluctant to take part in activities that identify them as having specific problems.

Homeless people should not get caught in a bureaucratic straitjacket. It is important to recognize that not everyone will want to participate at all levels and what may appear to service providers and policy-makers to be apathy might in fact be anxiety about getting involved in a new activity or a lack of self confidence.

Information should be simple and straight forward. Meetings should be as informal as possible. There should be various opportunities for participation such as focus groups, open days or tenant panels. Procedures should be described clearly. Meetings should be arranged in venues that all participants can get to easily and held at times that are convenient. Meetings should be kept open so that everyone can raise spontaneous issues that are important for them.

Special groups can become too dominant. Dominance of one or a small number of users should not lead to exclusion of others. Some groups are traditionally less inclined to participate than others due to cultural or ethnic matters. Specific initiatives need to be developed to include them in decision-making processes by developing separate consultation and participation structures. Information needs to be accessible and understandable and help develop understanding of these groups and their needs. The involvement of a small number of homeless people could present a barrier to others getting involved. Groups of apparently apathetic users might form in contrast to the actively involved ones. This perception of apathy is often based on the experience of trying to get people involved in conventional approaches

With a clear message in the beginning, such a split among users can be avoided. Additionally, there is the problem of creating competition for a relatively small number of opportunities to participate formally e.g. conferences etc.

Involved with what seems to be an extension of the establishment that has marginalized them, policy-making can reinforce negative attitudes and behavior amongst homeless people. This is dependent on whether participation is only an alibi and homeless people are invited to discuss and consult with but are not taken seriously concerning making decisions. Politicians might make decisions claiming that homeless people took part in the process. In this case participants can feel misused in a particularly ironic way by seemingly endorsing the establishment that put them in their vulnerable position in the first place. Fear and distrust can make people just focus on very immediate and uncontentious needs and there could be fear among users that there is a risk attached to criticizing the services. Even if it is not true, it could be a deeply-rooted fear.

9. Conclusion:

Homeless people are citizens and not inferior to anyone else in society. There are professional politicians and they are responsible for guaranteeing a life worth living to all people and for promoting democracy. The first step has to be taken by them by means of top down policy. If this fails, people have to be empowered (bottom up). In this sense, the participation of homeless people should not take place in a vacuum, but as a part of wider debates on participative democracy. Homeless people are socially excluded. They are marginalised and feel isolated as a result of homelessness and/or a lack of skills. The stigma attached to their condition contributes to their being shut out of communities by neglect or design. This can be exacerbated by ethnicity, culture or gender. They are separated and apart from the wider community within which they live. Service providers should put a focus on securing the integration of homeless people into the wider community. Homeless people should not only feel like service users, but first like members of a community. The inclusion of homeless people in everyday life and within local communities should be the explicit purpose of service providers and they should raise public awareness and help to redress the degree of social exclusion experienced by homeless people. Therefore participation has to encompass approaches and methods that enable homeless people to gain greater access to integration within the wider community.

Homeless people should be main actors in their situation and in the solution. Regarding the stereotypes surrounding homeless people, a shift is necessary from being a recipient of provision and services to being a stakeholder to be accounted for. Concerning service providers it has become a matter of course in most organizations concerning the “helping process”, but regarding real decision-making power in policy-making etc. it is often very poor.

Homeless people know better than anyone else what they really need from services and policy. This knowledge can have a positive impact on the development of effective policy. However, participation is voluntary and does not exclude the need for support, but means changing how support is provided. Participation should increase service users’ autonomy

Participation is a matter of power and the transfer of power is the measure of participation. Where participation is not connected to decision-making it is merely a talking shop and tokenism.

Question 5: To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?

Sorcha Mckenna, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Northern Ireland Example

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is an independent, statutory body set up in 1999. Its role is to promote awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland, to review existing law and practice and to advise government on what legislative or other measures ought to be taken to protect human rights in Northern Ireland. One way the Commission fulfils this role is through conducting investigations into systemic human rights issues. Under the Justice and Security Act 2007 the Commission has a number of investigative powers including the power to enter places of detention, and to compel individuals and agencies to give oral testimony or to produce documents. In the context of growing concerns about the potential for destitution among non-UK nationals, the Commission decided in 2007 to conduct an investigation into homelessness and people with no, or limited, access to public funds. It wished to determine the practical impact of existing immigration legislation which limited access to public funds on non-UK nationals living in Northern Ireland. A particular concern was whether the legislation and the day-to-day interpretation of the legislation were leading to destitution among non-UK nationals.

In September 2009 the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission published the resulting investigation report entitled No Home from Home -Homelessness and People with No or Limited Access to Public Funds. The report found that just as British and Irish people have travelled the globe, people come to Northern Ireland for a number of reasons: to find work, to join family, to seek asylum, to study, or to make a better life for themselves and their families. Moving to a new country brings with it many social, cultural and financial challenges and inevitably some people will find themselves in difficulty. The Commission's investigators, Roisin Devlin and Sorcha McKenna examined the legal entitlements of all categories of non-UK nationals in Northern Ireland, including people from the European Union, the new accession states, asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors and other people from outside of the European Economic Area. The report also looked at the additional vulnerability to destitution for victims of domestic violence, exploitation or racial intimidation as well as the inter-relationship between ill-health, disability and destitution. Investigators also considered the particular problems which might be faced by asylum seekers and refugees. The investigation involved a range of methodologies including literature review, policy and legal analysis, case file reviews as well as interviews with government agency staff, non governmental agency representatives and a number of people who were currently or had previously experience homelessness and destitution. The paper will use the findings from No Home from Home to answer the key question with reference to the relevant legislation, policy and practice in Northern Ireland. The Commission hopes that the Northern Ireland example can assist the jury in reaching a consensus position on the question; to what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship? The Commissions position is that regardless of nationality or immigration status, member states should ensure that everyone within their territory has access to an adequate standard of living sufficient for that person and her or his dependents and that no one shall be allowed to fall into destitution.

What is the legal framework for access to homeless services for different categories of migrant with precarious legal status?

There are many international and regional human rights instruments applicable to individuals who are homeless and at risk of destitution. These rights generally apply irrespective of nationality or citizenship, and form minimum standards against which the Commission investigates the treatment of homeless non-UK nationals who are prevented from accessing public funds. This paper cannot provide an exhaustive account of human rights standards; however, the relevant human rights instruments include, among others, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). No Home from Home considered in detail a number of the treaties to which the UK is a party all of which are legally binding however this paper will focus on the European instruments.

All Council of Europe member states are party to the ECHR and new members are expected to ratify the convention at the earliest opportunity. In the United Kingdom the ECHR is the only human rights instrument that is directly incorporated into UK law (through the Human Rights Act 1998) and is, therefore, the only one that is directly judicially enforceable. The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) incorporates the majority of the provisions of

the ECHR into domestic law. The Act states that public bodies must act in compliance with the ECHR rights as interpreted via the developing jurisprudence of the European Court. In addition, when considering primary legislation, the courts must, as far as possible, interpret this to ensure compatibility with the ECHR. If this is not possible, the courts are empowered to issue a 'declaration of incompatibility' on the basis that a particular legislative provision contravenes one or more of the rights contained within the ECHR. If an offending provision is contained within secondary legislation, the courts have jurisdiction to override it, provided that this does not interfere with the continuing operation of related primary legislation.

Apart from the international human rights provisions, notably those of the ECHR, to which the United Kingdom is a party, it is worth mentioning, that an entire body of European Union legislation exists relating to immigration and asylum with both direct and indirect relevance to questions of access to public funds and accommodation. These are notably the Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers which stipulates the guarantee from the Member States of "certain material reception conditions, in particular accommodation, food and clothing, in kind or in the form of a financial allowance. Allowances must be such that they prevent the applicant from becoming destitute"[40]. Furthermore, in the proposal for the recast of the aforementioned directive, the Member States are required to guarantee access to material reception conditions, which must provide an adequate standard of living to asylum applicants[41]. With regard to immigration policies, the Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification[42] as well as the Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 on a long-term resident status for third country nationals who have legally resided for five years in the territory of a Member State lay down provisions regarding access and entitlement to services for non-EU nationals[43]. The current paper does not cover those provisions since the UK, together with Ireland and Denmark have opted out from the Title IV of the TEU based on which the Common European Immigration and Asylum Policies are being developed. However, these European Union legal instruments are relevant to other EU Member States and should be taken into account while analysing the right to access to homeless services for non-nationals.

It is legitimate for States to seek to regulate immigration and to restrict entry by those who do not have a right of residence. However, international human rights standards are clear that any mechanism to regulate migration, and the consequences of that mechanism, must be clearly set out by law, be proportionate and necessary in a democratic society, and be in pursuance of a legitimate aim. Additionally, once an individual gains entry to a state, they are entitled to full protection by that state of those human rights that cannot be restricted or interfered with. In particular, immigration rules that infringe upon 'absolute' rights, namely, the right to life, (Article 2 of the ECHR), or the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment or torture, (Article 3 of the ECHR), should never be justified by the State's need to regulate migration. Human rights standards should form the basis against which the state's immigration laws are assessed therefore legislation that places an absolute prohibition on access to public funds, in circumstances where the individual is destitute, or at risk of destitution, are unlikely to be justifiable on human rights grounds. The ECHR does not include a right to adequate housing or food, or the right to social security, these can be found in the non justiciable International Covenant for Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICSECR). Nevertheless, the existence of these rights has been interpreted from the meaning of other provisions within the Convention. Below, the applicability of the ECHR to homeless non-UK nationals, who are excluded from homelessness support and benefits, are outlined.

[40] Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, OJ L 31, 6.2.2003, p. 18–25
[41] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (Recast) {SEC(2008) 2944} {SEC(2008) 2945}, /* COM/2008/0815 final - COD 2008/0244 *
[42] Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, OJ L 251, 3.10.2003, p. 12–18
[43] Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, OJ L 16, 23.1.2004, p. 44–53

Article 2: Right to life

Lack of access to public funds may have serious implications for the wellbeing and survival of those who are homeless and destitute. While a general right to housing, food, or financial subsistence, does not exist within the meaning of Article 2 of the ECHR, it is possible that the state may have positive obligations toward destitute persons requiring it to provide assistance in order to avoid violation of the right to life. In Osman v UK, the European Court stated that, in certain circumstances, the right to life requires states to undertake positive obligations. The state is not accountable for all risks to life; however, it may become responsible where there is a real and imminent risk to life in circumstances where the state knows, or ought to know, about the risk. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that, where a homeless non-UK national presents to state agencies, in circumstances where destitution represents a serious risk to their life, or to the life of their family, legislative exclusions preventing basic assistance may potentially engage the right to life.

Article 3: Freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment

The European Court of Human Rights sets a high threshold in order to establish a violation of the state's obligation to ensure against inhuman and degrading treatment. In the case of Pretty v UK, the Court stated: "treatment is inhuman or degrading if, to a seriously detrimental extent, it denies the most basic needs of any human being".[44] In the context of homelessness and destitution, the House of Lords held that, in certain circumstances, failure to provide access to support services for destitute asylum seekers constitutes a breach of Article 3:

> As in all Article 3 cases, the treatment, to be proscribed, must achieve a minimum standard of severity, and I would accept that in a context such as this, not involving the deliberate infliction of pain or suffering, the threshold is a high one. A general public duty to house the homeless or provide for the destitute cannot be spelled out of article 3. But I have no doubt that the threshold may be crossed if a late applicant with no means and no alternative sources of support, unable to support himself, is, by the deliberate action of the state, denied shelter, food or the most basic necessities of life.[45]

Although referring to the refusal of support for asylum seekers under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the logical extension of Lord Bingham's judgment is that in certain circumstances, irrespective of legislation barring access to public funds, the state may be required to intervene to avoid a breach of Article 3 rights. However, as submitted by O'Cinneide, in order for this to be the case, state responsibility must be engaged.[46] European Court case law has established that there must be some element of responsibility on behalf of the state to engage Article 3; in other words, in this type of case, the state must bear some liability for the individual's destitution. Therefore, the Limbuela case demonstrates that destitution caused by the State can constitute inhuman and degrading treatment.[47] On this view, destitution plus state imposed exclusion from support may risk breach of Article 3 further, the risk of violation may be even more pronounced where destitution is coupled with other vulnerabilities such as physical and/or mental ill-health or disability.

Article 8: Private and family life

The right to private and family life (Article 8, ECHR) encompasses the right to respect for family, private life, and home. Although it does not give individuals the right to be provided with a home,[48] refusal of access to homelessness services has the potential to engage Article 8 if this is demonstrated to constitute an illegitimate

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[44] (2002) 35 EHRR 1, para 52.
[45] *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Adam; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Limbuela; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Tesema (Conjoined Appeals)* [2005] UKHL 66 (Bingham LJ, para 7). In Limbuela, the House of Lords held that the high threshold for ECHR Article 3 may be crossed if 'a late applicant with no means and no alternative sources of support, unable to support himself, is, by the deliberate action of the state, denied shelter, food or the most basic necessities of life'.
[46] See: O'Cinneide C (2008) above.
[47] *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Adam; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Limbuela; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Tesema (Conjoined Appeals)* [2005] UKHL 66 (Bingham LJ, para 7).
[48] *Chapman v UK* (2001) 18 January 2001.

and disproportionate interference with the applicant's private or family life. Whether Article 8 is engaged in the context of homelessness and/or destitution will depend upon an element of state responsibility. In order to establish interference with Article 8, there must be a direct link existing between the circumstances alleged and the right to enjoy private, family life or home within the meaning of the Convention.[49] The case of Connors v UK shows that the negative impact associated with homelessness may, in certain circumstances, fall within the ambit of the right to respect for home, private and family life.[50] In the particular context of disability, the domestic courts have held that failure by a local authority to respond to an assessment of the applicant's housing needs amounted to a breach of Article 8.[51] Although maintaining that Article 8 does not require the state to provide everyone with a home, the court confirmed that the state may be required to take positive steps to ensure respect for private and family life within the context of housing, particularly for more vulnerable individual's, such as those with disabilities. Finally, if it is shown that the circumstances surrounding an individual's homelessness, or their treatment by state agencies, on presenting as homeless, has resulted in interference with the enjoyment of their rights under Article 8, the state must show that this is 'in accordance with law and necessary in a democratic society'. It would be difficult to comprehend how, in a democratic society, measures denying access to basic subsistence could be regarded as necessary within the meaning of the Convention.

Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination

Legislative provisions that exclude certain categories of non-UK nationals from public funds could potentially form the basis of a claim for discrimination on grounds of national origin or 'other status' in conjunction with another ECHR right. It is of note that, in the case of R (RJM) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the House of Lords held that 'homelessness' is a personal characteristic within the meaning of 'other status' in Article 14 of the Convention (freedom from discrimination).[52] In addition, in the case of R (Morris) v Westminster City Council, the following characteristics were found potentially to fall within the ambit of 'other status': nationality, immigration control, settled residence, and social welfare.[53] This leaves open the possibility that measures excluding access to homelessness assistance or welfare benefits may be deemed discriminatory, in conjunction with one or more of the ECHR rights already discussed, as a result of differential treatment based on homelessness or immigration status.

[49] *R (on the application of Bernard) v Enfield LBC* [2002] EWHC 2282 (Admin); for detailed consideration of this case law, see O'Cinneide, above.
[50] Connors v UK *(2004) (Application No 66746/01), 27 May 2004.*

[51] *R (on the application of Bernard) v London Borough of Enfield* [2002] EWHC 2282 Admin.
[52] Above.
[53] [2005] EWCA Civ 1184.

What are the barriers to migrants with precarious legal status in accessing homeless services?

The table below sets out the current criteria used by government agencies to determine the extent to which different categories of non UK nationals are eligible for homelessness assistance in Northern Ireland.

	Eligibility for homelessness assistance
A8 nationals	The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) Regulations (NI) 2006 and the Accession (Immigration and Worker Registration) Regulations 2004, as amended, provide that often A8 nationals are ineligible for accommodation and housing assistance from the NIHE unless they satisfy additional criteria. In effect, this means that from the date of coming into force of the Regulations, nationals from the A8 accession states are denied homelessness assistance if they are out of work, or not in registered work, and have not yet completed 12 months of continuous employment under the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). There are exceptions, for instance, for students or self-employed persons.
A2 nationals	In general, A2 nationals (Romania and Bulgaria) travelling to the UK after 1 May 2006 are entitled to homelessness assistance only if they meet the requirements of the Worker Authorisation Scheme (see The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) Regulations (NI) 2006 and the Accession (Immigration and Worker Authorisation) Regulations 2006). There are exceptions, for instances, for students or self-employed persons.
EU15 nationals	The Allocation of Housing (Eligibility) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended provide that in general EU15 nationals are ineligible for housing assistance if they are not habitually resident in the UK or if the right to reside derives only from their status as a jobseeker. In practice, this means that EU15 nationals (and returning UK nationals) must satisfy the habitual residence test.[54] EU15 nationals will also have to show that they are more than a jobseeker, that is, that they are, or have been, a 'worker' in the UK. Again, there are exceptions, for e.g. self employed persons.
Non-EEA (Subject to immigration control)	Section 119 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides that individuals subject to immigration control are ineligible for assistance under homelessness provisions. This includes individuals with limited leave to remain in the UK, for example, those who have entered the UK on a spousal or student visa. However, there are circumstances where those subject to immigration control can be eligible for assistance, if they belong to a group specified by the Secretary of State.
Asylum Seekers	The Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act 2002 provides that access to homelessness assistance and financial subsistence can be refused where a person seeking asylum does not make a claim for asylum as soon as reasonably practicable following arrival in the UK.
Refused Asylum Seekers	Where an application for asylum is refused, the individual is ineligible for housing assistance unless they qualify for 'hard case' support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
Non-UK national family members	Entitlement to housing assistance for non-UK nationals residing in the UK as the family member of either a British national or a non-UK national may be dependent on their relationship with the spouse or partner. However, on relationship breakdown, depending on immigration status, the family member may become entitled to homeless assistance in his or her own right. For example, if from an A8 state, the family member can gain entitlement to homeless assistance by completing the WRS.

[54] See: Glossary for the definition of 'habitual residence'. See also: Chapter 5, Findings relating to the Habitual Residence Test.

How can the dignity, human and social rights of migrants with precarious legal status be respected?

The Commission recommends a number of ways in which the rights of migrants can be protected and respected by proactively preventing destitution were possible as well as by responding appropriately when people present at risk of destitution.

Labour exploitation and trafficking

Chapter 6 of No Home from Home presents concerns regarding UK immigration rules and the potential for these rules to exacerbate the consequences of exploitation. As a result of restrictive immigration rules, victims of exploitation are made all the more vulnerable because they cannot access homelessness assistance and welfare benefits. Particular issues arise in relation to the Worker Registration Scheme that applies to the majority of A8 nationals who come to work in the UK. The investigation uncovered examples of exploitation, including examples of individuals who had worked in the UK for several months being denied benefit because they did not register on the Worker Registration Scheme. A number of legislative amendments have been recommended in this regard including an end to the transitional arrangements from A8 and A2 states. The following recommendation was made regarding victims of trafficking;

> There should be homelessness assistance and welfare benefits for non-UK nationals who have been brought to the UK as a result of trafficking. The Government should consider how support can be provided even where victims do not wish to report their experiences to the 'Competent Authority'. In addition, the Commission urges the Government to view its commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights as minimum obligations and to build upon the assistance that it provides to victims. In particular, the government should ensure that the reflection period for victims of trafficking, which is currently 45 days, is extended in line with international best practice.

Asylum seekers

The circumstances of refugee and asylum seekers are discussed in Chapter 7 of No Home from Home. While asylum seekers are generally provided with support, known as NASS (National Asylum Support Service), legislative restrictions state that there are circumstances in which even this basic level of support can be removed. However, as found by the House of Lords in Limbuella, this must not occur where it is likely that removal of support will result in destitution to an extent engaging Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment). [55] The Chapter outlines concerns for failed asylum seekers, in particular single persons, who are less likely to be entitled to support on destitution. This situation could be improved if individuals were entitled to work while awaiting travel arrangements to leave the UK.

Chapter 7 also discusses the current response in Northern Ireland to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). There is evidence that Health and Social Care Trusts are providing support in these cases and there are examples of good practice on the part of individual staff in this respect. However, there is a lack of guidance and training across on this issue. In addition, in emergency situations, Trusts have responded by placing these children in interim bed and breakfast accommodation and this raises particular concerns including in the area of child protection. Comprehensive guidance for Trust staff would ensure that the rights of child asylum seekers are better protected.

Domestic violence

The investigation demonstrated how victims of domestic violence can be financially dependent on their partner due to immigration rules, which restrict non-UK national victims' access to public funds. The investigation outlines the Domestic Violence Rule, which is a concession made for certain visa nationals to ensure that, on proof of relationship breakdown due to domestic violence, the victim is entitled to access homelessness assistance and welfare benefits. While noting the benefits, gaps still exist despite the development of this rule. Among the government agencies, the investigation uncovered a lack of interagency co-operation in relation to the non-UK national victims of domestic violence. To improve this, agencies should work together to ensure that 'ineligible'

[55] *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Adam; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Limbuela; R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) ex parte Tesema (Conjoined Appeals)* [2005] UKHL 66 (Bingham LJ, para 7).

non-UK nationals are referred to Trusts so that they can be assessed for assistance. Again, while there are examples of Trust support, there is an absence of guidance on how social workers should respond to this issue.

Ill health and disability

The investigation found that legislation which prohibits access to public funds presents particular difficulties for people with ill-health or who have a disability. The report shows how illness can lead to a break in Worker Registration and subsequent homelessness due to an inability to access public funds. 'Rough sleeping' due to lack of homelessness assistance has resulted in illness to an extent warranting significant periods of in-patient hospital care. This is further exacerbated by the absence of accommodation and welfare benefits on discharge, which prevents appropriate aftercare. Although there are examples of good practice from individual social workers, there is a need for guidance in relation to destitute non-UK nationals presenting with illness or disability. Moreover, while Trusts have been known to offer ill or disabled non-UK nationals travel assistance to return to their country of origin, guidance is required to ensure transparent and consistent decision-making in relation to this process.

Racial intimidation

First, the situation of non-UK nationals who have experienced racial intimidation but are ineligible for homelessness assistance was examined. Here, the report examines if the legislation relating to ineligible non-UK nationals is compatible with international human rights standards and, in particular, adequate to ensure against the inherent risk to life. The chapter includes case studies of victims of racist intimidation who are refused homelessness assistance due to the 'no recourse to public funds' rule. Second, the NIHE's approach to racist intimidation was examined. Using information from case files and interviews with NIHE staff, recommendations are made so that, across all district offices, the approach to homelessness claims based on racist intimidation is improved. As the report was being finalised, Northern Ireland became the focus of global media attention as a result of the racist attacks against members of the Roma community. However, following the racist attacks, although homeless, the legislation meant that the approx 100 Romanians were not entitled to welfare benefits or homelessness assistance. The Commission is aware that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Health and Social Care Trust worked side by side with the voluntary agencies in providing support and assistance. This is an example of the interagency co-operation that the investigators had hoped to find during this investigation. On this occasion, the Housing Executive took ownership of a piece of legislation which allowed it to temporarily accommodate the families and financially assist with their return to Romania. However, this episode served as a stark illustration of the urgent need for legislative change and clear guidance on the responsibilities of statutory bodies for non-UK nationals facing homelessness.

Should there be EU legislation guaranteeing access to shelter of migrants with precarious legal status?

Yes the Commission is wholly supportive of EU wide legislation of this kind. At present, the UK legislation governing access to homelessness services for non-UK nationals is unduly restrictive. The findings from this investigation confirm that it is disproportionately weighted towards the Government's aims of regulating migration, paying little regard to the consequences for individual rights. As a result, the legislation excludes homeless and potentially destitute persons from homelessness assistance and welfare benefits, and permits statutory support in very limited circumstances only if necessary to avoid a breach of ECHR rights. This represents a negative approach to human rights, taking heed only when it is likely that basic rights are at serious risk of, or have already been, violated. Instead, the EU should adopt a more positive approach in line with international human rights standards, encouraging state agencies to promote rights by ensuring access to homelessness services in a way that ensures destitution does not arise in the first place. Therefore, legislation should be enshrined to reflect members states' commitments under regional and international human rights instruments. The jury may wish to consider the recommendations for legislative reform directed at the UK government in No Home from Home;

1. Regardless of nationality or immigration status, the Government should ensure that everyone within the territory of the UK has access to an adequate standard of living sufficient for that person and her or his dependents. Public authorities must take all appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to the maximum of their available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of this right. No one shall be allowed to fall into destitution.

The Commission is of the opinion that everyone has the right to adequate accommodation appropriate to their needs. In particular, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

2. The Government should ensure that everyone has access to appropriate emergency accommodation.

3. For the purpose of ensuring Recommendations 1 and 2, the Government should discontinue the transitional arrangements relating to the new A8 and A2 accession states, (the Worker Registration Scheme and Worker Authorisation arrangements) (see Chapter 6 of No Home from Home).

4. In light of this report and the conclusions arrived at by the European Committee of Social Rights, the Government should review the current habitual residence test (see Chapter 5 of No Home from Home).

5. For the purposes of ensuring Recommendations 1 and 2, the Government should amend homelessness legislation so that those who are sleeping on the street, without any other means to access welfare benefits or accommodation, are given 'priority need' (within the meaning of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988) (see Chapter 3).

6. Pending Recommendations 1 and 2, the Government should allow people subject to immigration control to access social assistance if it is likely that they will become destitute. They should not have to show that they are 'destitute plus' (as currently required by Section 121 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) (see Chapter 4).

7. Pending Recommendations 1 and 2, the UK Government should review Section 4 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 to ensure that refused asylum seekers are provided with greater levels of access to accommodation and financial support.

8. Pending Recommendations 1 and 2, the Government should amend homelessness legislation to ensure that family members, who are at present 'ineligible' non-UK nationals, can make a homelessness application in their own name rather than the current practice, which requires the application to be submitted by the 'eligible' partner (see Chapter 3 of No Home from Home).

What responsibility should the voluntary homelessness sector play in providing access to services for migrants with precarious legal status? What is the responsibility of the state in financing such services?

The Commission is of the belief that the provision of homelessness support and assistance should remain a statutory responsibility. No Home from Home demonstrated the extent to which voluntary sector organisations provide an invaluable source of practical, emotional and financial support for homeless non-UK nationals that should be appropriately acknowledged and enabled to continue. However the investigation found at times and over reliance on voluntary agencies as well as a lack of understanding by statutory bodies of the roles and responsibilities of voluntary organisations. This led at times to the voluntary agencies struggling financially to meet the demand for their services. For example although government agencies refer victims of domestic violence to voluntary organisations, there was a lack of recognition regarding potential funding difficulties, where often, voluntary groups are not permitted to put core funding toward supporting 'ineligible' non-UK nationals.

The Commission recommended that;

> In responding to homeless non-UK nationals, government agencies should continue to engage with the voluntary sector. Where there is a statutory duty to assist, government agencies should not signpost to voluntary organisations for accommodation services without ensuring that the organisation is provided with appropriate financial support.

In addition the report recommended that the Government should develop a fund that can be accessed by relevant voluntary organisations which accommodate or otherwise support individuals who have no, or limited access to, public funds.

Conclusions

No Home from Home was aimed at raising awareness of the complex issues facing certain non-UK nationals and the gaps in terms of assistance available to those who become homeless and who are excluded from statutory support. Ultimately, as the report shows, the barriers exist because of the way in which UK legislation is currently designed. Many of the recommendations are therefore aimed at the UK Government and, where appropriate, at the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. Homelessness and destitution are not the sole remit of any one of the statutory agencies investigated. However, each has a role to play to ensure that all possible avenues to support are explored. The Commission is of the belief that any EU policy on homelessness should be rooted in

international human rights standards and should require positive state action to ensure access to homelessness services in such a manner as to prevent destitution. Additionally, for those countries which haven't opted-out from the Common European Asylum Policy and Common European Immigration Policy, the access to services should be defined in accordance with the text of the European Directives and in accordance with international human rights standards.

Key Question 5: To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?

Preben Brandt, MD, Chairman, City of Copenhagen's Council for Socially Marginalised People and projekt UDENFOR

A Danish Perspective

Introduction:

Denmark is to be regarded as a 'privileged' country both in terms of the actual number of migrants who head for Denmark but who are unable to provide for themselves and in relation to the experience in other European countries.

The visible migration to Denmark of persons who are so poor that they are unable to provide for themselves and especially unable to obtain overnight accommodation under normal circumstances started later than elsewhere in Europe, such as in the Southern European countries.

Not until after 2005 did the migration of persons whom we might refer to as 'undocumented migrants' and who consist of groups and individuals from Eastern Europe and from Africa become visible in Danish street life and a topic of public and political debate. The undocumented migrants headed largely for Copenhagen, and only later for other Danish cities.

Before long the issue of whether these migrants who were sleeping rough could be received by homeless shelters became a heated topic of debate. Many of the homeless shelters were however ready to consider the possibility of accommodating these individuals as well, in premises that were already almost fully occupied.

But in 2007, in an interview comment in the Danish newspaper Politiken, the Danish Minister for Social Affairs Karen Jespersen stated that;

‘Eastern Europeans do not have the right to receive social services, which means that the local authority must therefore not house them. The ultimate consequence would be the withdrawal of the individual shelter's state subsidy if it were to house non-Danish nationals’

She added that she did not ”want Denmark to become Europe's shelter at the expense of Danish homeless people”. (Politiken.dk,: 22 Dec. 2007)

The Minister's position spurred discussion as to whether this was a subjective opinion or had a basis in Danish law. As a result, the Ministry issued the following communication concerning legislative obligations vis-à-vis socially marginalised citizens to all local authorities, regions etc on 19 May 2008:

‘On 7 July 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Local Government Denmark issued a joint letter to local authorities, regions etc. containing an overall description of the principal rules governing reception centres and crisis centres etc. This letter gave rise to a number of further questions, not only regarding the reception centres and crisis centres but also in relation to other areas affecting the circumstances of socially marginalised citizens. With this joint communication, Local Government Denmark and the Ministry of Social Affairs wish to clarify some of the rules that have given rise to questions.
The right of EU citizens to services under the Danish Social Services Act:
EU citizens have the right to stay as tourists in another EU country for 3 months and as job-seekers for 6 months on condition that they are able to provide for themselves and are not a burden on the host country. To this group, Denmark is able to provide assistance solely for the purpose of their repatriation cf. Section 12a of the Active Social Policies Act.

Persons who are not residing legally in Denmark will have the right to the assistance that cannot wait until they return to their home country.

Reception centres, shelters etc. (Section 110, Social Services Act):
Under Section 110 of the Social Services Act, accommodation at a reception centre or shelter is a temporary service provision. Admission to such accommodation is conditional on the person being legally resident in Denmark and being eligible in respect of the target group for the service provision. Under Section 110, the target group for reception centres etc. consists of "persons with special social problems who do not have or are unable

to stay in their own accommodation and who require housing provision and provision for activating support, care and follow-up assistance."

It is the manager of the accommodation facility who makes the decision on admission and who thus has to determine whether the person is residing legally in Denmark and belongs to the target group.
The same applies to the admission of visitors to night cafés etc. established in extension of a Section 110 accommodation facility. As such facilities are open provisions requiring no official needs-assessment and registration, language problems for example may make it difficult to determine whether a person is legally resident in the country and belongs to the target group. There may therefore be a need for more detailed inquiry into the person's background and situation, which can be completed within 1-2 days.

State reimbursements to the accommodation facilities are conditional on the service being provided pursuant to Danish legislation. If a service is provided without authority in the law, the local authority will not be eligible for state reimbursement. If a local authority has received state reimbursement unlawfully, it must be refunded.'

Some months later, Bjarne Lenan, the director of the large church-based organisation, Kirkens Korshær responded in an interview in the daily newspaper Kristelig Dagblad (5 February 2009). He stated that:

'Kirkens Korshær's shelters, which have an operating agreement with the local authorities under which they are required to register residents, will be obliged to turn away undocumented migrants and contact the police who will then transport them to the body that may expel them from Denmark. But at Kirkens Korshær's "private" shelters and night cafés, where no registration is required, people can come in directly off the streets and receive help anonymously. Here no questions are asked about identity, ethnicity or personal circumstances; instead they are offered subsistence help – typically food, clothing, company and counselling. This assistance is also offered to undocumented migrants. No questions are asked about whether their life and identity are actually documentable. It is sufficient 'documentation' that they are standing in front of our door and in need of assistance.'

He concluded by saying that:

'When the Ministry of Social Affairs in late 2007 threatened to take the state subsidies away from the voluntary social organisations that receive undocumented migrants, Kirkens Korshær asserted that in its voluntary and private ambit, it would continue to receive whosoever turned to the organisation for assistance. We neither can nor will let people sleep rough when we have the possibility of housing them at our night shelters. If Kirkens Korshær is to be able to look itself in the eyes it cannot in all decency turn away people in distress needing subsistence help. In that situation, there are no borders'" (Kristelig Dagblad 5 February 2009)

A succession of Ministers of Social Affairs have since asserted that under the Danish Social Services Act, services comprising overnight stays at shelters for homeless persons must not be provided to persons who are not legally resident in Denmark. And given that at least 95% of all shelters for homeless persons in Denmark are publicly funded, irrespective of whether they were established by private organisations, this leaves very few options for providing shelter to destitute migrants.

Shelter for homeless persons in Denmark:

In the metropolitan area there are around 1,000 places at shelters for homeless persons. Approx. 80% of the shelters are run by private organisations but wholly financed by City of Copenhagen. Most of the remainder of the places are at local authority shelters. The local authority receives a 50% reimbursement on its expenditure on the shelters from the state. In addition, there is a statutory user fee of approx. DKK 70 per night. This should be seen in the context of the fact that everyone, including people who are homeless, is entitled to cash benefits at the same rate as others who are unable to provide for themselves.

Besides these well-established shelters, over the last decade a number of emergency shelters have been established, and run exclusively on private funds. These shelters offer limited services, are only open during night hours and the sleeping place is often a mattress on the floor or a chair. These were primarily intended for Danish homeless persons who were either unwilling or unable to adapt to the stricter requirements made by ordinary shelters. Since 2007, more such shelters have appeared, and homeless foreigners tend to use this form of overnight accommodation.But within the last 3 years, emergency shelters have also been established, which directly offer accommodation to everyone, including foreign nationals.

Undocumented migrants in Denmark:

We have only scant and hence inadequate descriptions of the number of undocumented migrants; and who they are and what their plans and hopes might be.

At the emergency shelter in Samuel's Church[56], which was open in the three winter months (January-March) of 2009 and 2010, statistical records were kept of those who stayed at the shelter. Obviously there can be no knowing whether these figures are representative of all undocumented migrants in Copenhagen/Denmark. But they do provide the best snap-shot available of the situation at the time of writing. This emergency hostel could take up to 50 persons. In the same period there were two other private shelters with a capacity of up to 130 persons.

An internal report (Maj Kastanje: Statistics from the Shelter at Samuel's Church, 2 January to 31 March 2010) reveals that in 2009 the Samuel's Church shelter housed 24 persons a night and in 2010 38 persons a night. The number of unique users over the three-month period amounted to 365 persons in 2009 and 446 persons in 2010, corresponding to an increase of 81 persons. 85% of the users were aged between 21 and 50.

The nationality of the users broke down as follows:

- Western and Southern European countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK
- Eastern European Countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia,
- Rest of Europe: Bosnia, Moldova, Norway, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine
- Africa: Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Togo
- Asia: Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia
- Middle East: Egypt, Iraq, Israel
- America: Mexico, USA, Venezuela
- Number of nationalities represented: 43

[56] *This emergency shelter is organised by NATNØD, an association of 8 Danish social and humanitarian organisations.*

The Danish Council for Socially Marginalised People's view of the situation of migrants:

The annual report of the Danish Council for Socially Marginalised People (created in 2002 by the Danish government with a view to providing advice on social marginalisation and as an advocacy body for marginalised individuals) addressed the issue of the rights of destitute migrants, including the right to shelter.

The annual report states that:

'The members of the Council for Socially Marginalised People have registered the growing presence at drop-in centres, night shelters etc. of citizens from the other EU Member States and from non-EU states. These citizens effectively have no rights to even very limited social services. This is a key problem and a difficult one, to which there are no easy and straightforward solutions.'

The report also pointed out that:

'With open borders within the EU, migration has been on the rise. This is apparent daily in Denmark, where drop-in centres and emergency shelters for socially marginalised persons are sought out by many citizens from other EU member states and from countries outside the EU. Some of them end up destitute because they lose their job or fail to find work in Denmark. Others are perhaps trying to escape wretched social conditions in their home country. The problems underline the importance of the European Commission's 2020 strategy and the proposal for specific poverty reduction targets in each Member State, as stressed by the Danish Council for Socially Marginalised People in a letter to the Danish Government dated 18 May 2010.'

The Council goes on to state that:

'While the wait is on for the EU Member States to each introduce policies to reduce poverty and in so doing halt the exodus of socially deprived persons from appalling conditions, here in Denmark we are witnessing fatalities among homeless EU citizens who are forced to sleep in the open in the winter months – sometimes in sub-zero temperatures. Others have serious health problems and a general need for social assistance'.

The annual report states that the Council, the voluntary social organisations and the City of Copenhagen:

'had impressed on the Government the severity of the matter and described the dilemma facing this group: if the target group in an attempt to create a better existence for itself "trip ups" and occasionally tries to make use of the social or health care system, it "incriminates" itself and is sentenced to expulsion. This leads some of the affected citizens to refrain from seeking essential social and health care services. In the opinion of the Council this violates the human dignity of people in need. The Danish Government and Parliament must guarantee all people staying in Denmark treatment that respects their human dignity. The Government's response to date has been unequivocal: Illegally staying nationals must leave the country in one way or another. The local authorities have the option of paying for their journey home. Although the Council is unable to refute the requirement for repatriation, we cannot condone disregard of the necessity of assisting this group with reference to the need to do so at the European level. Repatriation must be effected with due regard for human dignity. The Council notes that under the Denmark 2020 employment programme, the Government will be initiating an inquiry into how repatriation of homeless foreign nationals can be accomplished more efficiently. In March 2010, the Government concluded an agreement with the Danish People's Party on a 'service check' of the Danish immigration and integration acts, which also addresses the issue of more efficient repatriation of homeless foreign nationals. The exact nature of this service check remains unclear. The Council will be monitoring this work closely'.

In May 2010, the Danish Council for Socially Marginalised People sent a letter to the Danish Government stating the following :

'With the opening of borders within the EU there is now also – if not actually free – then still significantly greater movement of poverty and social problems across national borders. We see evidence of this daily in Denmark, where drop-in centres and emergency shelters for socially marginalised citizens are also sought out by citizens from other EU countries. Some of them end up destitute because they lose their job or fail to find work in Denmark. Others are perhaps trying to escape wretched social conditions in their home country. The problems reaffirm that, at the European level as well, steps must be taken to ensure that all Member States guarantee social protection of deprived citizens and a dignified existence for everyone with respect for the wishes and

capacities of the individual. A European strategy based on specific targets may be a source of great political support for reforms of social policy in all countries so that the problems of protecting the rights of socially marginalised citizens may be reduced.'

The Minister for Social Affairs replied a month later, but the reply contains only reflections on the EU-wide poverty reduction programme, whereas the conditions facing undocumented migrants with no means of subsistence is completely disregarded:

'As you will be aware, the Government for its part has endorsed an EU objective to promote social inclusion. The Danish government upholds an explicit policy of striving to reduce the group of people who for various reasons are at risk of social exclusion or poverty. To that end we are gratified to note that recognition also now exists at EU level that the risk of poverty and social exclusion cannot solely be measured using a single indicator based on differences in income, and that this is a multifaceted phenomenon requiring multiple indicators. We are now in the process of translating the EU objective into Danish policy, including by means of indicators which we find pertinent to the Danish context so that we are certain that those people we identify are those with the greatest need for assistance. You therefore have my assurance that the Danish Government both at the EU level and nationally is wholeheartedly backing the efforts to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion, and that the Council will naturally be made a party to those efforts', read the Minister's reply.

The options for and actions concerning migrants:

As in other European countries, it is not merely the right of destitute migrants to be admitted to shelters that is at stake. On 6 July 2010 the Danish Immigration Service expelled 23 Romanian citizens (of Roma ethnicity) from the country after 12 of them had spent the night in disused premises on Amager and 11 had set up an encampment on the natural conservation area of Amager Fælled. All 23 were served with a 2-year entry ban citing their violation of public peace and order.

The police eviction action against the Roma occurred shortly after the Minister of Justice had pledged to step up measures against criminal Roma people. This occurred after the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen had called on the Danish Government to do more to expel criminal Roma. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Romano subsequently sent a letter to the Danish Prime Minister:

'**Re: Mass arrests and deportation of Romani EU citizens in Copenhagen**

Honourable Prime Minister Rasmussen,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)[1] and Romano[2] express their concern regarding the reported mass arrest of 23 EU citizens of Roma ethnicity (EU Roma), for trespassing, illegal occupation of private property and alleged theft, in Copenhagen on 6 July 2010 and their subsequent deportation by the Danish Immigration Services on 7 July 2010 for posing a threat to public order. Furthermore, the ERRC and Romano are also concerned about anti-Roma speech by Danish officials, including the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen Frank Jensen and the Minister of Justice Lars Barfoed.

The Danish newspaper Politiken reported on 6 July 2010 that the arrest of 23 EU Roma followed racist statements of Lord Mayor Jensen, who called for measures to rid Copenhagen of "criminal Roma." The Lord Mayor alleged that the EU Roma were responsible for a series of thefts and recalled the duty of police to expel criminal Roma; whereas Danish police stated they could not expel EU citizens with means of subsistence. In reaction, Minister of Justice Barfoed was reported to have stated:

"It is completely unacceptable that we have people who evidently stay illegally in Denmark in order to commit crime. There will be a whole series of police actions and there will be no softness. If the Roma have no money on them when apprehended, they should be expelled immediately."

No information was provided as to any formal charges or convictions brought against the Roma for the alleged thefts; such statements therefore appear unfounded and biased. Furthermore, the manner in which Danish authorities decided to expel the 23 EU Roma raises concern about obligations under Directive 2004/38/EC, which dictates the criteria on which EU citizens may be deported: **only if they have been individually considered and**

found to have exceeded 3 months of residence in Denmark and are unable to prove sufficient means to stay or pose a "genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat […] for public policy or public security."[3] Likewise, the decision to expel the 23 EU Roma potentially raises concerns under Article 4 of Protocol 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits the collective expulsion of aliens.

Honourable Prime Minister Rasmussen, the ERRC and Romano urge your office to:

- Ensure that no further arrests of Roma take place in Copenhagen in the absence of individualised suspicion of involvement in a crime;
- Stop the collective expulsions of EU Roma from Denmark;
- Provide clarification of the reasons for the deportation of the 23 EU Roma;
- Guarantee that each individual who receives an expulsion decision is notified of the grounds for expulsion, given a minimum of a month to leave the territory and provided access to appeal in accordance with Directive 2004/38/EC;
- And ensure that high ranking government officials refrain from making racist or inflammatory statements against Roma in Denmark'"

In the Danish newspaper Dagbladet Information (27 July 2010), Preben Brandt, chairman of the board of project UDENFOR ('project OUTSIDE') levelled sharp criticism against the treatment of Roma in Denmark, most recently with the expulsion of 23 Roma who had camped on Amager. In Denmark, we – also – excel at social marginalisation of people in the way we refer to people who are different. All it takes is a good dose of prejudice topped by discrimination. And if you then add a bit of racism, wrapped up as cultural differences, you're there.

An article in A4, the weekly newsletter published by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (issue 15, 7 April 2009), points out the need for action. They write:

'Although the Government with its one-way ticket policy wants homeless Eastern Europeans to depart from Denmark, both the Copenhagen mayor of social affairs and migration researcher at Aalborg University, Helle Stenum, who did a close study of homeless Eastern European nationals, maintain that the effect is negligible;

"Making life as miserable as possible for homeless foreign nationals will not make them go home. Barring them from a place to sleep or food to eat amounts to a violation of universal human rights and doesn't even have the intended effect" says Helle Stenum'

The City of Copenhagen also finds any results from the Government's strategy conspicuous in their absence;

'It is as if the Minister believes that all you have to do is turn up at Copenhagen Central Station with a one-way ticket to Poland. But it doesn't work like that. You have to get these people back on their feet before there is any way they can return home. Without dedicated social measures, you can't get people to go back home' stresses the Copenhagen Mayor of Social Affairs.

The project description for a project whose principal aims are to relieve the immediate needs of homeless foreign nationals and to pass on the insight and experience gathered in the process to operators and stakeholders at both the national and international levels (Project Foreign Rough Sleepers, project UDENFOR, 2010) states that:

'The legal status of the foreign homeless people differs greatly depending on whether they are citizens of a Nordic country, EU citizens or citizens of a non-EU country. However, the legislation is at the moment administered in such a way that none of the unregistered foreigners have access to assistance from the public system. This means that they are not entitled to health care (other than emergency care), to joint rehabilitation programmes or treatment for addictions. Nor are they allowed to stay in publicly funded shelters and night cafés. Thus, they do not have access to the various benefits offered to Danish homeless people, including support and assistance from the city's outreach workers and social workers. At the same time, those homeless foreigners who are EU citizens cannot be deported. The EU legislation protects them from this. This means that they end up in a gap, where they on the one hand cannot access the assistance they need and on the other hand cannot be forced to leave the

country. They are left completely unassisted and are therefore some of the most marginalised and socially excluded people in Copenhagen. Many sleep rough all year round or sleep in one of the few privately funded shelters'

Concluding remarks:

This paper concerns the situation of migrants with precarious legal status. Migrants with precarious legal status may be particularly vulnerable to homelessness. There is a lack of consensus about the role of homeless services in regard to this diverse group of people. Some believe that access to homeless services should be unconditional. For others, it should be limited to legally residing people.

It is difficult to design policies that move beyond emergency shelter for people with precarious legal status. This can be seen to undermine approaches that seek to end homelessness and find long-term solutions.

There are clear links between this dilemma and the EU context of Free Movement Legislation. There is evidence that in many Member States that EU citizens from other Member States constitute one of the largest and fastest growing groups of homeless service users. This problem mainly but not exclusively concerns EU citizens from the Member States that acceded to the European Union in and after 2004 and who moved to the 'old' 15 EU Member States in order to work or actively seek employment. There is equally evidence to suggest that there are a number of barriers to access to homeless services for a significant number of EU citizens due to their precarious legal status relating to Free Movement Legislation.

The legal situation of the homeless EU citizens is ambiguous: they have the right to freely enter and stay in Denmark as job-seekers for a period of 6 months, providing they support themselves and do not become a burden to the social system. According to the legislation, only those who are - or have been - working in Denmark and who are formally recognised as workers, earn the right to access social and health care services. However, at the same time, there seems to be no legal justification for expelling EU citizens who are not self-supporting while they stay in Denmark. It means that those, who do not manage to get employment are left in a legal vacuum: their stay is legal, but they have no access to publicly funded social services or preventive health services. According to the legislation, they have the right exclusively to emergency medical care and financial support for their journey home. They are left at the mercy of private charities with limited resources.

In the Danish context, the concept of 'legal residence' remains to be clarified. The Government has made its position clear, but NGOs and lawyers involved in human rights issues have a different view of what constitutes legal residence: they assert that the official interpretation appears highly restrictive – but is it in compliance with EU legislation? And the same individuals hold that EU legislation indicates that first-time job-seekers' use of the public social services system must not result in expulsion. It also indicates that under no circumstances must job-seekers who have genuine prospects of gaining employment be expelled – and that job-seekers can in any case solely be expelled in the interests of public order or safety. The person's behaviour must constitute a real, immediate and sufficiently serious threat to a fundamental societal interest. Any justification not based on the given case or which is in the nature of general prevention, may not be used.

Key Question 5: To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?
Xavier Vandromme, Emmaüs, France

Mr Chairman and the Members of the Jury.

I am very honoured to be presenting the subject before you today: “to what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?”

Today, the people concerned are:
- economic migrants
- political refugees
- refugees who have committed criminal acts
- refugees who are victims of racial or religious discrimination
- citizens who have lost their homes
- about three million homeless people in Europe. And ten million people living in inadequate housing likely to join the homeless. Therefore, the situation concerns more than 10% of the European population.

Before all other considerations, it is important to recall the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which state that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Also article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state”.

In Europe, the right to asylum appears in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 18 stipulates that “the right to asylum shall be guaranteed with due respect for the rules of the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees and in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community”.Therefore, it is the duty of all individuals, citizens, European elected representatives and civil servants to fight for the recognition of these rights and respect article 1 of our Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which states that “human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.”

Also, according to the OECD in its 2009 report, governments, despite the crisis, must reinforce their integration programmes very quickly and increase efforts to fight discrimination. Otherwise, other continents will be prepared for worldwide economic recovery before them, thanks to a cross-cultural active population at the service of a heterogeneous population.

It is necessary to put the effectiveness of repressive laws into perspective and promote the desire to live in Europe as a house with doors and windows that open on to a garden, rather than the vision of Europe we must reject, that of Europe as a medieval castle, complete with moats and ramparts, sitting in a battlefield.
Today, as before, powerful interests highlight xenophobic fears and attitudes which are a threat to peace in the Union.

Today’s challenge is to promote intelligence and benevolence through positive information and education. It is important to emphasise that in today's worldwide context the major challenges of society concern the organisation of wealth in the continents' regions and countries.

Two national examples of non-compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights

In the United Kingdom, asylum seekers who have had their application refused may not benefit from social allowances and are not entitled to work.

Failed asylum seekers are able to benefit from financial assistance in exchange for signing a refusal acceptance in their home country. Very few illegal immigrants ask for this financial assistance because they fear that they will be deported.

In Italy, it is compulsory to report the presence of illegal immigrants. Community reception centres for illegal immigrants are at risk of being closed if their manager does not comply with this obligation. Informing is a principle recognised by law.

As we saw earlier, 10% of the population is affected by homelessness and poor housing conditions. Therefore, a citizen-wide and continent-wide coherent system must be implemented very quickly; a protection net which enables people not to be excluded from the “shared house”.

Democratic NGOs represent the smallest level of economic influence, but the most influential moral authority. They are asking for a European legal framework to prevent poverty and guarantee access to housing and appropriate support.

In effect, 10 years after the launch of the Lisbon Strategy, which highlighted the “need to take decisive measures to fight poverty and social exclusion”, the level of poverty, meaning the number of people living with less than 60% of the average income of their country, has remained stable at about 16%, namely 80 million people.

Today, in 2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty, a new strategy is being built for 2020.

To date, no quantified goal has been achieved.
The real benefit of recent years is the policy in support of good practices which opens up new fields of social intervention. University concepts associated with research-action methods are systematically successful. Proof that an alternative model for fighting homelessness and welcoming migrants is possible.

Our ageing European societies feel afraid. Local councillors with short-term electoral mandates (5 years on average) support debates on the lack of security and, therefore, on delinquency. Highlighting the threat to security generated by migrants or homeless people helps to hide the lack of economic initiative and conceal the lack of political courage. Yet, by 2015, it will be necessary to regularise massive numbers of illegal immigrants if we want to continue to be competitive on the worldwide market and ensure the transfer of skills and productivity between generations.

As an expert, it is my duty to assess <u>the value</u> of things, assess <u>damage,</u> present <u>recommendations</u>.

It is important to be able to “bounce back” despite the ups and downs in the course of events.

Each serious crisis very quickly reveals new ideas about the common good and universal values, whether economic, scientific, social or political.

Indisputably, we are finding it hard to make the change and build a policy based on solidarity towards the very weakest. On this subject, the lack of a common policy and the extreme disparities between

the situations encountered in member state countries make decisions to streamline public policies particularly difficult. What do we need to be able to implement our values? A leader, a dogma, an idea, a will? Are we as intelligent as we would like to be, are our certainties still topical, is our courage still as great?

Our European voters' withdrawal into themselves leads to the election of fearful local and regional representatives. Yet, populism and xenophobia lead societies to aggressiveness and the rejection of others in complete contradiction to our founding texts drawn up immediately after a World War.

The traumas of yesterday and the present-day must lead to the sharing of a European resilience. As E. Wiessel put it "in the same way as there are crimes against humanity, there are crimes against memory."
Considering the security, anti-poverty and anti-migrant laws being drawn up in every country and region, this danger is very real.

Today, France has drawn up discriminatory legislative texts which are contrary to Human Rights. For example, the removal of the right to stay for sick foreigners, or the obligation to pay a €30 entry fee for any person benefiting from state medical aid, or the obligation to leave the country if the person is unable to justify a recognised identity, or the amendment of the Loi d'Orientation et de Programmation pour la Performance et la Sécurité Intérieure (Law for Orientation and Programming for Performance and National Security) – LOPPSI 2 (article 32 ter A authorising the expulsion within 48 hours and without the decision of a judge, of any person in dire need living in shanty towns, squats, makeshift shelters, etc.). All this despite the fact that the President of the Republic declared in 2007 that he was in favour of unconditional reception. On 17 February 2009, police searched an Emmaüs community in Marseilles looking for illegal immigrants.

All of these texts do not enable the reconciliation of interpersonal space. In effect, faced with violent conflicts between states and people, reconciliation based on justice and truth is urgent, not only for its social and political know-how, but also in the frame of the correct use of memory.

Without security, development is not possible, and without development, security is not possible. Without human rights, there can be no security or development. Only reconciliation enables development.
It is up to us to invent areas of convergence very quickly which free forces and enable the taking into account of personal accounts and the claims of the homeless and migrants.

Today, the procedure and reception directives are blocked. Northern European countries are abandoning responsibility for the reception of migrants and leaving it up to the countries of Southern Europe. Therefore, there is a real danger that the process of receiving foreign residents will come under intense stress, with damage done to the social pact in each country and in the Union.

My recommendations:

1) In terms of the experimentation in good practices introduced 15 years ago, pool them and ensure the sustainability of their means.
2) Include the principle of "unconditional reception" in all texts. There is nothing heroic about protecting human beings in danger!
3) Create university courses which include the study of fighting poverty and discrimination.
4) Issue after three months in a country, of a European passport authorising freedom of movement
5) Continue to develop exchanges with a programme focused on human diversity.
6) Systematically regularise the situation of people present in the territories for more than 10 years.

7) Increase financial support for third countries.
8) Repeal the revision of the directive 2005/85/CE on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status. This directive is contrary to the Geneva Convention.
9) Repeal the so-called “Dublin II” ruling contrary to the principle of freedom of movement.
10) Build a European legal framework to prevent poverty.
11) Build a legal framework enabling freedom of movement of people present in the European territory.

Key Question 6: What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA

The European Union could and should play a more active role in the fight against homelessness. In this article I will describe the current European context which is favourable for a more ambitious involvement from the EU, and explain what an EU strategy to address the problem of homelessness could look like.

1. Context

Since the launch of the Inclusion OMC in 2000, homelessness has been gradually rising as an issue of major concern on the EU agenda. This can be clearly seen in the references to homelessness in the Joint Inclusion Report, and the Joint Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. At first homelessness and housing exclusion were referred to as urgent policy issues for some Member States (1st Joint Inclusion Report 2001), then for most Member States (2nd Joint Inclusion report 2003), then for all new Member States (Report on NAPsIncl of new Member States 2005). Finally, homelessness became one of the 7 key priorities for the EU anti-poverty policies of all 25 Member States (1st Joint Report Social Protection & Social Inclusion 2005). In March 2005, the **EPSCO Council** agreed that "treatment of the phenomenon of homelessness" was one of the key social inclusion priorities for the future. In 2007, the EPSCO Council confirmed that homelessness was a priority issue by listing it as one of the three main challenges in the area of "active inclusion" - a new policy approach in which access to services, employment, and income are combined (Joint Report Social Protection & Social Inclusion 2007). In 2009, the EPSCO Council went beyond mere priority setting and called for "sustained work … to tackle homelessness as an extremely serious form of exclusion…" (Joint Report Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009). In 2010, the EPSCO Council called upon all member states to produce homelessness strategies following some basic guidelines (see below). The Joint Report 2010 states that "integrated strategies to address housing exclusion and homelessness have an important role to play in post-crisis policies, with a view to build cohesive and environmentally sustainable societies". (Joint Report Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010). This call for integrated homeless strategies followed a thematic "light year" on homelessness in 2009, in which all member states produced national reports on homelessness.

In the meantime other EU bodies have also called for more EU attention to the issue of homelessness. The **European Parliament** adopted a Written Declaration on homelessness in 2008. It called upon the Council to commit to ending street homelessness by 2015, but it also called upon the Commission to develop an EU action plan on homelessness, in which gathering statistics and monitoring progress of Member States in the fight against homelessness should be two central objectives. Following the adoption of the Declaration, the European Parliament referred regularly to the need to focus on homelessness as an urgent problem in a number of important reports such as the Report on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU (2008/2034(INI)). In September 2010 Members of the European Parliament from 5 different political groups launched a new Written Declaration which takes account of recent developments at the level of the Council and calls for the European Commission "to develop an ambitious EU homelessness strategy and to support Member States in developing effective national strategies following the guidelines of the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion adopted in March 2010 and as part of the EU 2020". We are hopeful that this Written Declaration will receive the necessary number of signatures to get the official endorsement of the European Parliament (deadline in December 2010).

The **Committee of the Regions** adopted an own initiative report on homelessness in October 2010. Like the European Parliament, the Committee also calls for a more ambitious role for the EU in the fight against homelessness, and stresses the role of local and regional authorities. The Committee calls for the creation of an EU Centre on Homelessness as the cornerstone of an EU homelessness strategy, the "main tasks [of which] would be to ensure coordination, but it would also help to build knowledge and develop joint strategies ... and… would also be responsible for monitoring the situation of homeless people in the Member States and…coordinate and support reforms in the Member States, for instance through exchange of best practice".

It is important to mention that also the **Commissioner Laszlo Andor,** responsible for employment, social affairs, and equal opportunities, publicly supported a strong focus on homelessness in future anti-poverty policies – notably at an event in the European Parliament on homelessness in April 2010 and at a European Commission conference on active inclusion and homelessness in May 2010. The conclusions of this latter conference included a demand for an EU homelessness strategy built around monitoring of progress, research, and mutual learning.

The **Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion**, which supports the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee as steering bodies of the Inclusion OMC also came to the conclusion that there is a need for an EU strategy on homelessness. The Network analysed the country reports which Member States produced in the framework of the thematic "light year" on homelessness in 2009, and agreed that "it is essential that homelessness be considered an integral part of the Social OMC and be consolidated and continued post 2010." The Network proposes an EU strategy based on integrated national homelessness strategies, data

collection and mutual learning, and monitoring and evaluation of progress. The conclusions of the Network are supported by the outcome statement of the **EU-funded MPHASIS project** on data collection on homelessness (2009) which also calls for an EU strategy on homelessness

The **European Year against Poverty** further increased the political momentum on homelessness. Many activities at both EU and Member State level concerned homelessness. And it is more than likely that homelessness will be mentioned as one of the key priorities for future EU anti-poverty policies in the Final Declaration of the European Year.

The **Informal Meeting of EU Housing Ministers** also called for more EU ambition regarding homelessness. Under the French Presidency in October 2008, the Ministers required that "homelessness and housing exclusion should be taken into account fully within the EU social inclusion strategy in order to allow significant progress on these issues". In order to guarantee such progress at EU level the Ministers required that "a consensus conference should be organized at EU level to generate a shared comprehension and common diagnostic of the situation". In 2010 under the Spanish Presidency, the Ministers asked and encouraged the European Commission "to integrate the results of the forthcoming consensus conference on homelessness within the EU social inclusion strategy". The French Minister of Housing Christine Boutin published in 2009 a report on homelessness in the EU (Julien Damon, Les Politiques de prise en charge des sans-abri dans l'Union Européenne. Rapport au Ministre du Logement) which was the result of some transnational work on homelessness during the **French Presidency of the EU.** This report calls for the creation of an EU Agency on homelessness which would be responsible for steering an EU strategy.

The current **Belgian Presidency of the EU** made homelessness one of its three social inclusion priorities. The responsible Minister Philippe Courard has called on several occasions for a stronger focus on homelessness in future EU social inclusion policies. In a report (Hugh Frazier, Eric Marlier, Ides Nicaise, A social inclusion roadmap for Europe 2020) published by the Ministry of Social Integration in the framework of the EU Presidency and as a contribution to the debate on future social inclusion policies in Europe 2020, there is a strong call for a strong thematic focus on homelessness at EU level. Belgium is also organizing the European consensus conference on homelessness.

Something which should not be forgotten is that there is also a strong demand from the **national, regional, and local stakeholders** in the different countries for more active involvement of the EU on homelessness. The demand is not artificially created amongst an inner crowd involved in the Inclusion OMC, but comes from organizations and persons which play a key role in the fight against homelessness in their country. The demand comes from public administrations, the NGO sector, the world of research, and homeless people themselves from most EU member states. The high number of **peer reviews in the framework of the Inclusion OMC** (6) is a clear illustration of this desire for more cooperation. Another illustration is the constant enlargement of FEANTSA as a European network/platform of transnational exchange, which does not only bring together NGOs but increasingly also national, regional, and local authorities, researchers, professionals from the health, employment, and housing sectors, and homeless people. Most of these organizations and people are involved in European cooperation on homelessness entirely on a voluntary basis. A last illustration is a recent agreement in September 2010 between the Christian Churches in Europe to call for a focus on homelessness as one of the 12 priorities for future social policy.

It is clear from the above that the context is favourable for a more ambitious EU intervention on the issue of homelessness/an EU strategy on homelessness. A democratic mandate comes from the strong plea for more ambition on homelessness from the European Parliament, a political mandate comes from the Council through the various Joint Reports and more in particular the 2010 Report which is supported by the recent opinion of the Committee of the Regions. A scientific mandate comes from the Independent Expert Network, and the European Year against Poverty and the general mobilization around homelessness inside and outside of FEANTSA adds a mandate from the homeless sector and the general public. The national light year reports can serve as an important reference/basis for an EU strategy on homelessness.

It is now up to the European Commission to develop such a strategy in the framework of the European Platform against Poverty – one of the flagship initiatives of the EU2020 agenda. An important question is on what basis such a strategy could be developed. We believe there are a number of key documents cited above, but probably the most important is the **guidance for integrated strategies on homelessness in the Joint Report 2010**. The Joint Report refers to the following elements as essential ingredients of an integrated homeless strategy:

- Proper governance in which all relevant stakeholders work together
- Concrete and measurable targets- especially regarding street homelessness, quality of homeless services, time spent in homeless services, prevention, and access to housing.
- Effective data collection and monitoring and evaluation to underpin policy development
- Multidimensional approach but strong emphasis on access to housing

- Flexible strategy to address the changing profile of the homeless population and take up emerging challenges

Another important basis for the EU strategy on homelessness will be the outcome of the **Consensus Conference**. It is clear that EU intervention will have no/limited effect when there is no consensus on a number of key questions amongst the stakeholders involved in the strategy - such as what is homelessness; or what is the aim of public policy intervention. We are hopeful that the Consensus Conference will bring answers to these and other key questions.

In addition to the various mandates cited above, there is clear evidence that European co-ordination and support in the area of homelessness can add real value to policy development in Member States. For example, the new Portuguese national strategy on homelessness owes much to the transnational co-ordination and mutual learning that has taken place in the area of homelessness under the Social OMC. Until the early 1990s there were no specific measures or policies addressing poverty in Portugal. Little interest had been shown towards developing homelessness policies until the EU asked the Member States to make homelessness a priority and include specific measures in their National Action Plan. In a context of increasing homelessness in cities like Porto and Lisbon, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity was able to use this opportunity to act more strategically on homelessness; launching a process, which subsequently became a broad-based partnership involving all stakeholders and the creation of a national strategy for the period 2009-2015.

An EU strategy would promote further transnational exchange and mutual learning, and thus help develop more effective homelessness policies at national, regional and local level. Furthermore, it would enable collection of comparable data on homelessness in the framework of a common definition and monitoring tools. An EU homelessness strategy could increase the quality of homeless services, for example by closing the skills gap in homeless services by promoting training of personnel. (see below under Actions).

In addition, a homelessness strategy at the EU level could play a crucial role in reaching the EU Poverty Target adopted by the European Council in June 2010. The EU poverty target is defined as 'promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion'. EU Member States are translating the target into concrete and achievable national targets on priority social inclusion issues. Member States agreed that in order to reach the target they will need to 'define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk such as…the homeless'

Another reason that an EU homelessness strategy is needed is that homelessness is an increasingly cross-border issue which is linked to areas of EU legislation. It concerns EU citizens engaged in free movement but also asylum seekers (see recent case of the European Commission requiring the UK to scrap discriminatory measures towards A8 citizens with regard to access to public funds).

2. An EU strategy to combat homelessness

On the basis of the guidance provided by the different EU institutions (see above), the demand and needs from the grassroots for European cooperation on homelessness, and the outcome/impact of the Inclusion OMC on homelessness so far, we propose the following EU strategy/action plan on homelessness.

2.1. The governance structure

An EU strategy/action plan on homelessness can only deliver results when it is underpinned by a strong governance structure (see also guidance from Joint Report 2010). The governance structure should allow for all relevant key stakeholders to be involved and should make sure there is sufficient leadership. The building blocks of an effective governance structure should be the following:

- **National/regional civil servants network**

It would be essential to make civil servants responsible for homelessness in the different EU Member States meet on an annual basis to discuss issues of common concern and evaluate progress in the fight against homelessness. In countries where responsibility for homelessness is largely decentralized (Spain, Belgium, Austria, UK) to the regions, a workable system of representation should be developed. For several years already FEANTSA organizes informal meetings for national/regional civil servants. The contacts and dynamic that have been built up could be used to establish a more formal structure quite easily. The European Commission and/or FEANTSA could provide the secretariat for these meetings.

The distinct focus on national/regional civil servants is important because it is at these levels that the overall policies/strategy is developed. For local authorities the implementation of policies is of more concern. The

demand for transnational/European cooperation from national/regional civil servants is growing and increasingly explicit - it is not uncommon anymore to see references to the need for European cooperation in national/regional homeless strategies/policies. The strategic approaches to homelessness aimed at reducing/ending the problem are relatively new in most Member States (last 10 to 15 years), and therefore the hunger for knowledge and experiences – also from abroad – still very high.

- **Local authority civil servants network**

Homelessness is essentially a local issue that is best addressed at local level. The interest in European cooperation amongst local authorities is high because many are looking for better/more (cost-)effective ways to address homelessness. The link with the local level would be important to maximize the impact of activities in the EU strategy such as transnational mutual learning and research (see below) at the level of policy implementation. We should also remember that the Committee of the Regions made a strong plea for involvement of local actors in an EU strategy. FEANTSA already established a small network of local authorities HABITACT (www.habitact.eu), which could be the basis of a bigger and more diverse network of local authorities in the future. One of the strengths of HABITACT is that it manages to bring a diverse range of local actors (NGOs, researchers, housing associations…) together around activities such as peer reviews, annual conference etc. Another reason to build on what exists in HABITACT is that HABITACT received formal political support from the Committee of the Regions recently. Because of the work already carried out to bring local authorities together on homelessness (the work of Eurocities is also worth citing here), it would only require limited resources (human and financial) to create a dynamic and representative network of local authorities (and other stakeholders).

- **Research sector**

Further increasing the knowledge on homelessness should be a key ingredient of an EU homeless strategy. FEANTSA created 20 years ago the European Observatory on homelessness which has been through different structural changes. It is currently a small team of researchers responsible for publishing a European Journal of Homelessness, for conducting some limited thematic research, for organizing an annual European research conference, and for coordinating external research projects. For this purpose the small core team of researchers works with a growing network of academics specialized in homelessness, housing exclusion, and related issues. Without going into any further detail, we believe that the Observatory and its research network could play an important role in implementing the research part of the EU homelessness strategy. The number of academics/researchers working on homelessness as their central theme of interest is quite small (around 100) and most of them are already involved in one way or another in the work of the Observatory. So, here again it would take minimal additional resources to have a strong research body to steer the research of the EU strategy on homelessness.

- **NGO/voluntary homelessness sector**

FEANTSA brings together most of the organized voluntary homeless sector in almost all EU Member States. Via our members we have relatively easy access to grassroots homelessness services such as hostels, detox centers and other health services, employment services, supported housing, etc. FEANTSA is one of the key players in the Inclusion OMC, and could play with the European Commission an important role as facilitator/coordinator of the EU homelessness strategy. FEANTSA's role would be logical and justified by the very strong involvement of the voluntary homelessness sector in the fight against homelessness in almost all EU member states (and even more so after the enlargement of the EU). So, no additional resources needed to organize the voluntary homelessness sector.

- **Human rights experts network**

For many years, the EU has promoted a human rights approach as one of the more effective ways to reduce/end poverty. This was confirmed with the creation of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency some years ago. Increasingly, human rights litigation is also used to address the problem of homelessness in several Member States and at European level (see for instance jurisprudence related to the European Convention of Human Rights and the revised Social Charter) and there is some willingness amongst different stakeholders to further exploit the potential of human rights litigation. Therefore it would be useful to have as part of an EU strategy on homelessness a network of human rights lawyers to support/promote a human rights approach to homelessness. FEANTSA set up some years ago Housing Rights Watch, a network of housing rights experts, which could be further developed as a network of human rights experts as part of the EU Strategy. So, here again, only limited resources would be required to develop a network of human rights experts.

- **Neighbouring sectors**

Homelessness cannot be effectively addressed when the neighbouring sectors are not involved. Homelessness cannot be reduced/solved by the homeless sector itself. The reconnection with mainstream services is essential in the process of reintegration of the average homeless person. The most important (mainstream) sectors for the fight against homelessness are the health, employment, and housing sectors. It would be important in the framework of the EU Strategy to create opportunities for these sectors to meet/exchange on a regular basis. FEANTSA already developed virtual networks with several hundred health, employment, and housing professionals which could be further developed and activated. Further mobilizing individuals and organizations and developing cooperation with European organizations (Cecodhas in the housing area for instance) in the above policy areas will be necessary and will take time. We are convinced that with fairly limited resources the neighbouring sectors can be organized in such a way that they can contribute in a valuable way to the EU strategy on homelessness

- **(Formerly) Homeless people**

In the Inclusion OMC the participation of people experiencing poverty in EU policies that concern them has always been an issue of great attention. It would therefore be entirely normal to also allow homeless people to be involved in an EU Strategy on homelessness. The difficulty is that in most countries homeless people are not very well organized in representative structures. FEANTSA helped to set up a virtual network of homeless people called HOPE in which both representative structures and individual homeless people are involved. It might be useful to look into how to further develop this network as a potentially important player in the EU strategy. There should at least be the possibility that homeless people involved in HOPE (and maybe also others) could meet on annual basis. To save resources it might be interesting to look into the possibility of facilitating this in the framework of the EU annual meeting of people experiencing poverty in the spring, which is likely to remain an important event in the European Platform against Poverty.

This governance structure should be properly managed by some kind of **Steering Committee**. It could be useful to bring together representatives of every structure mentioned above plus one representative of the relevant EU institutions – European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers/SPC, Committee of the Regions, and Economic and Social Committee - and FEANTSA members. They would have to meet several times a year to steer the EU Strategy on homelessness. FEANTSA and/or the European Commission could be responsible for doing the coordination/secretariat of the Steering Committee and the wider governance structure.

In order to keep the political momentum at EU level and to ensure political ownership of the EU strategy, it would be useful to have a **meeting of Ministers responsible for homelessness** at regular intervals (every three years for instance). This cannot happen in the current Council constellations because the responsibility for homelessness is too much spread between Ministers of Health, Housing, Social Affairs, and sometimes even Regional Affairs.

2.2. Actions

- **<u>Monitoring progress</u>**

Member States agreed that it would be necessary to develop **homeless strategies** according to the guidelines set out in the Joint Report 2010. Progress towards this commitment should be monitored as well as progress in the fight against homelessness in general. A practical and straightforward European monitoring framework will have to be developed. The results of the Consensus Conference could be useful in this regard. An **annual or bi-annual progress report** should be published. The European Observatory could draft/contribute to the drafting of such a report. FEANTSA could be responsible for drafting a “shadow report” which represents the views of the NGO sector.

Next to qualitative monitoring there should be some quantitative monitoring at EU level. It will take considerable time before measuring current levels of homelessness will be possible at EU level. **Measuring past experience of homelessness** through existing European surveys such as EU-SILC (Eurostat) should be possible and would be the best proxy for a European number of homeless people. Therefore an EU definition of homelessness should be adopted. The ETHOS typology developed by FEANTSA could be used as a basis.

For a monitoring process to have any sense a/some **target/s** have to be set – at national but also at EU level. The European Parliament called on the Council of the EU to end street homelessness by 2015. This could be an

initial target in a broader attempt to end/solve homelessness following the targets which the European Parliament proposes in its Written Declaration 116 (nobody sleeping rough, nobody staying longer in emergency accommodation than their situation remains an emergency, nobody in transitional accommodation longer than needed for integration process, nobody homeless after release from an institution, no young person becoming homeless during the transition to independent/adult life). It would be necessary for the Steering Group of the EU strategy to agree quickly on how to translate the targets proposed in the guidance on homelessness strategies in the EU Joint Report into EU targets and/or guidance for national/regional targets.

- **Building knowledge**

Much progress has been achieved at EU level during the last 20 years in generating knowledge on homelessness. But some important gaps in knowledge still remain which could be addressed in the EU homelessness strategy. Possible themes could/should be the impact of migration policies on homelessness, the scope and nature of homelessness in Eastern Europe, prevention of homelessness, evaluation of "new" approaches to homelessness, the temporal aspect of homelessness, local dimensions of homelessness, etc. It would be useful to design a **research action plan for the next 10 years,** and to try to cooperate with other DGs funding social research (such as DG Research) and possibly also external/private funders of research (such as Foundations). FEANTSA's Observatory and the wider research structure around it could be used to carry out and/or coordinate the research action plan.

FEANTSAs bi-annual European Journal on Homelessness and the annual research conference would become important tools to publicize recent/ongoing research, to stimulate debate in academic circles, and to promote networking with and amongst researchers.

- **Innovation**

There is much scope for innovation in the fight against homelessness. In several counties homelessness is managed rather than reduced/solved, and those countries which try to reduce/solve homelessness are searching for more effective strategies. The **Housing First approach** to homelessness seems especially to generate growing interest amongst public authorities and other stakeholders in Europe, and could be a very interesting focus for the EU strategy on homelessness and for the social innovation agenda of the EU Platform against Poverty (especially now that there is a financing facility in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to fund housing interventions for marginalized communities including homeless people). The interest and infrastructure for social experimentation on Housing First is present in enough Member States and at EU level to launch an ambitious social innovation programme around Housing First with strong links to the ERDF and European Social Fund (regarding the need for a new approach to social support in the Housing First approach for instance).

- **Transnational exchanges and mutual learning**

There is a lot of demand and scope for transnational exchanges at the level of policy as well as at the level of practice. The impact of transnational exchanges in the area of homelessness is often immediate because the policies and practices are practical enough and because homelessness policies are generally flexible enough to integrate new ideas/take account of new knowledge. As for research, we should develop a **strategic approach to mutual learning and transnational exchanges for the next 10 years**. We should identify the areas/issues for which mutual learning and transnational exchanges will have most effect and for which mobilization of a variety of stakeholders is easiest. Probably we should focus more on issues related to concrete policy development and implementation and the practical management of homeless services rather than continue to focus more generally on the changing scope and nature of homelessness. We should also use in a strategic way the different tools that are available for mutual learning and transnational exchange such as peer reviews, conferences and seminars, expert meetings, trainings, etc.

- **Legal initiatives**

In some areas related to homelessness there is probably scope for new legislation at EU level. Member States can be understandably weary of legislative initiatives in the area of social policies, but homelessness is probably a small enough problem which is sufficiently disconnected from the bigger/higher priority social policy issues for which Member States would me much more likely to invoke the principle of subsidiarity to block EU action.

Homelessness could probably be used to explore the potential of/experiment with EU legislation in the social field. If successful, it would give the European Platform against Poverty some more teeth. I believe it would be useful to explore in the framework of the EU strategy on homelessness opportunities to legislate at EU level.

One issue of concern, for which EU legislation might be of added value, is the high level of homelessness amongst EU citizens living in another EU member state (mostly people from "new" Member States who moved to "old" member states for work reasons). In some countries these homeless EU citizens have no access to homeless services in the host country, and this seems to be in line with EU free movement legislation. There might be a need to explore the possibility of a legal initiative of the EU to secure access for all EU citizens to social emergency services such as (night) shelters. Another area where EU legislation might be considered is the area of quality standards for social services. Certain kinds of homeless services – especially those services that are catering for people with precarious legal status such as asylum seekers for whom there is already an EU legal framework – might benefit from an EU quality standard.

- **Funding**

The ESF is used in many Member States to fund homeless services. Recently also within the ERDF a financing facility has been created to fund housing interventions for marginalized communities such as the homeless. The funding is currently often used to compensate for lack of an integrated homelessness policy in the Member States. In the framework of an EU Strategy to combat homelessness, it would be necessary to promote strategic interventions on homelessness through the use of ESF or ERDF. Maybe there could be room for a financing stream on homelessness in the ESF and ERDF for which the European Commission provides some concrete guidelines.

- **Skills and training**

In the 2020 Strategy skills development is an important issue. Also in the homelessness sector there is a need to further develop the skills of the professionals and volunteers working with homelessness people (especially but not only in the new Member States). Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) has identified homelessness as one of the social problems for which the skill gap in social services is most urgent. In the framework of the EU strategy on homelessness, a training programme could be developed to professionalize the way workers of mainstream and specialized services interact with homeless people.

3. Conclusion

I realize that the development of an EU strategy – both in terms governance and the actual activities – will take time. But we are not starting from zero. Homelessness is one of the few priority issues of the Inclusion OMC for which most elements are in place to launch an effective EU strategy/action plan. FEANTSA is ready to work as a partner of the European Commission to develop and implement the strategy, so it would not be a huge drain on the limited financial and human resources available in the European Commission. But most importantly, the EU context is currently ideal for the launch of an ambitious homeless strategy, which can deliver visible results in a relatively short timeframe. And this would be very helpful to show that the European Platform against Poverty works.

Key Question 6: What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

Hugh Frazer[57], Department of Applied Social Studies at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion

1. Context

Any consideration of the key elements of an EU strategy on homelessness needs to take into account two things. First, it is important to learn from the efforts over the last decade to progress the issue as part of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Social OMC). Secondly, it is essential to take into account the new possibilities that are emerging in the context of the Lisbon Treaty and the new Europe 2020 Strategy.

1.1 Progress under the Social OMC

Homelessness has been an increasingly important issue for the Social OMC over the past decade and it has being increasingly recognised as a key element in the wider struggle against poverty and social exclusion in the EU.[58]

Homelessness has featured prominently in the main strands of the Social OMC. For instance, it has been highlighted quite prominently in successive National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/inclusion) of many Member States since 2001. It has been increasingly featured as an important issue in the annual Joint Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.[59] By the 2010 Joint Report, which was adopted by the European Commission and Council of Ministers in March, one of the key messages was that "Integrated strategies to address housing exclusion and homelessness have an important role to play in post-crisis policies, with a view to build cohesive and environmentally sustainable societies."

The core group of EU level networks working on issues of poverty and social exclusion funded by the European Commission as part of the Social OMC has always included FEANTSA as one of the key networks. Amongst other things this has led to FEANTSA's very important work in developing the ETHOS typology on housing exclusion and homelessness and in promoting research on the issue. Thus homelessness has featured prominently in policy related research undertaken as part of the OMC.[60] It is also an issue that has been recognised (though not resolved) in the work on social inclusion indicators by the Social Protection Committee's (SPC) Indicators Sub Committee.

Homelessness has featured in many of the mutual exchange and learning opportunities promoted under the Social OMC. For instance a number of transnational exchange projects addressing the issue have been supported during the process such as the "COOP" project which examined how different countries and cities deal successfully with the homeless. There have been some 6 Peer Reviews organised on homelessness at EU.[61] Homelessness has also featured prominently at the annual EU events on poverty and social exclusion organised by the European Commission and the EU Presidencies such as the EU Round Tables on Poverty and Social Exclusion and the EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty. In 2009 homelessness was made a major focus of the Social OMC activities throughout 2009 (it was only the second issue to be featured in such a way, the first being child poverty in 2007) and this led to considerable work by a wide range of actors on this issue including the submission by Member States of national reports on homelessness and housing exclusion. For instance the EU

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[58] There is a chapter devoted to the lessons on homelessness and housing exclusion that can be drawn from the Social OMC in a book commissioned by the Belgian EU Presidency, A Social Inclusion Roadmap for Europe 2020 (Frazer, Marlier and Nicaise, 2010). This paper draws on this study.

[59] The first Joint Report on Social Inclusion published in 2002 recognised that ensuring good accommodation for all was one of the eight core challenges to be addressed and within this "developing appropriate integrated responses both to prevent and address homelessness is another essential challenge for some countries". The 2005 Joint Report mentioned homelessness for the first time as a priority issue. In the 2007 Joint Report homelessness was listed as one of the few key priorities of the new "active inclusion" objective. In 2009 the Joint Report stated that 'sustained work is required to tackle homelessness as an extremely serious form of exclusion.'

[60] See for instance work on measuring homelessness (Edgar et al 2007) and the EU project on Mutual Progress on Homelessness Through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems (MPHASIS, 2007-2009)

[61] Further information can be found on the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion web site at: http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/key-themes/homelessness-and-housing-exclusion-1

Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion produced a report on homelessness and housing exclusion (Frazer and Marlier, 2009). Then in 2010 the needs of the homeless were recognised as a priority policy area for the EU 2010 Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and homelessness has been one of the priority issues for the Belgian EU Presidency. This has led to this consensus conference on homelessness.

All this activity and effort has contributed to considerable progress being made and the EU social inclusion process (i.e. the Social OMC) has enhanced and added value to efforts at national level to tackle homelessness. It has helped to situate these efforts in the broader framework of national strategies to prevent and tackle poverty and social exclusion. It has raised awareness and understanding of homelessness as a key element in addressing poverty and social exclusion more generally. It has advanced debate on definitions. It has enabled considerable exchange of learning and good practice on different aspects of homelessness. It has led to increased collection of comparable data, thus enabling improved analysis and monitoring. It has fostered a number of important comparative studies on homelessness issues that Member States can use to develop better policies. The process has encouraged Member States to involve a broad range of actors, including people having experience of homelessness, in developing, implementing and monitoring policies. It has raised the awareness in many Member States (particularly through the NAPs/inclusion) of the need for a more strategic approach based on more comprehensive and integrated policies. It has helped highlight the need to focus on prevention as well as on alleviation of problems.

Of course, the EU process has had its weaknesses. Many countries still lack a sufficiently comprehensive approach to issues of poverty and social exclusion generally and homelessness and housing exclusion in particular. Political commitment is sometimes still weak and in many Member Sates the NAPs/inclusion have often been more bureaucratic reports than effective strategic planning documents leading to real action on the ground. Also, although progress is being made on issues of definition, measurement and evaluation, there is still much to be done in these areas if the potential benefits of transnational comparisons and learning are to be maximised. The exchange of learning and good practice has often been rather piecemeal and fragmented. Thus European work on homelessness (and on poverty and social exclusion more generally) needs to move on to a new level of effectiveness that generates real outcomes. It needs to be planned in a more systematic and integrated manner. Monitoring and reporting on progress also need to be greatly enhanced.[62]

The experience of the last decade is important for what happens in the future and it demonstrates why there is a need for a continued EU level involvement in tackling homelessness. It also shows that we do not need to build something new from scratch. There is a lot of learning to build on. Ways of working at EU level have been developed, which, though often far from perfect, can be very helpful in making progress. Looking to the future the challenge is to build on the successes while at the same time addressing some of the limitations and weaknesses of the Social OMC so that enhanced results can be achieved in the context and timeframe of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

1.2 Enhanced possibilities under the Lisbon Treaty and Europe 2020

Two things in particular make it possible to imagine a stronger EU process on homelessness in the coming period and to argue for a stronger EU process to address homelessness. The first is the Lisbon Treaty and the second the new status given to tackling poverty and social exclusion under the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Lisbon Treaty and the Horizontal Social Clause

The Lisbon Treaty, which came into force on 1 December 2009, provides a stronger basis for increasing the political status of EU cooperation and coordination in the social field and in particular for tackling poverty and social exclusion, including homelessness and housing exclusion. The Treaty now explicitly states that the Union "shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child". Article 9 is of particular significance. This states that "In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall

[62] The strengths and weaknesses of the Social OMC are well documented in the background papers for the Belgian EU Presidency conference EU coordination in the social field in the context of Europe 2020: Looking back and building the future. These will form the basis for a book to be published shortly. The background papers are available from: http://socialsecurity.fgov.be/eu/docs/agenda/14-15_09_10_BP_EU_coordination_social_field_en.pdf

take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health" (European Union, 2009). This new horizontal social clause strongly reinforces the arguments for social inclusion objectives to be mainstreamed across all areas of EU policy making and thus for social impact assessments of all relevant EU policies. Another important innovation in the new Treaty is that it guarantees the freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (which the Treaty introduces into EU primary law) and gives its provisions a binding legal force; this concerns civil, political and economic as well as social rights. Over time, these important developments might also be taken into account in decisions of the European Court leading to a stronger social dimension to the Court's decisions.

Europe 2020

The new political status accorded to poverty and social exclusion in the Lisbon Treaty is reflected in the adoption by EU leaders of the new Europe 2020 Strategy to replace the Lisbon Strategy which was launched by the European Council in March 2000 as a framework for EU socio-economic policy coordination. This new Strategy aims to achieve "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (European Commission, 2010; European Council, 2010). In order to deliver on these three priorities, five EU headline targets have been agreed. Predictably these cover employment, economic development, the environment and education. However, it is also significant that they cover social inclusion. For the first time there is a European target which aims to promote social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion[63].

At the same time as establishing priorities and targets the European Council agreed that in order to help deliver on these targets seven flagship initiatives should be established. One of the 7 flagship initiatives which the European Commission has proposed in the context of the implementation of Europe 2020, is the European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) [see Box 1].

Box 1 - Flagship Initiative: "European Platform against Poverty"

The aim is to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion, building on the current European year for combating poverty and social exclusion so as to raise awareness and recognise the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, enabling them to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

At EU level, the Commission will work:

- To transform the open method of coordination on social exclusion and social protection into a platform for cooperation, peer-review and exchange of good practice, and into an instrument to foster commitment by public and private players to reduce social exclusion, and take concrete action, including through targeted support from the structural funds, notably the ESF;
– To design and implement programmes to promote social innovation for the most vulnerable, in particular by providing innovative education, training, and employment opportunities for deprived communities, to fight discrimination (e.g. disabled), and to develop a new agenda for migrants' integration to enable them to take full advantage of their potential;

– To undertake an assessment of the adequacy and sustainability of social protection and pension systems, and identify ways to ensure better access to health care systems.

At national level, Member States will need:

– To promote shared collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion;
– To define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk (such as one-parent families, elderly women, minorities, Roma, people with a disability and **the homeless**);

[63] This target is based on a combination of three indicators: the number of people at risk of poverty, the number of people "materially deprived", and the number of people aged 0-59 who live in "jobless" households (defined, for the purpose of the EU target, as households where none of the members aged 18-59 are working or where members aged 18-59 have, on average, very limited work attachment). So, the target will consist of reducing the number of people in the EU (120 million) who are at risk of poverty and/or materially deprived and/or living in jobless households by one sixth.

– To fully deploy their social security and pension systems to ensure adequate income support and access to health care.

Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

At the time of drafting this paper it is still unclear what shape this Platform will take and how it will relate to and strengthen (or perhaps even subsume) the existing Social OMC. In particular it is not clear whether there will continue to be National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (including, as one strand, NAPs/inclusion) or whether these will be subsumed into Member States' National Reform Programmes to implement the Integrated Guidelines (see below). This may only be clarified towards the end of 2010 when the Commission is likely to publish its proposals on the EPAP. However, overall the EPAP creates the possibility of significantly strengthening of the social dimension of the EU and adding to existing mechanisms developed under the Social OMC. The proposal for the EPAP, while not featuring homelessness prominently, contains a specific reference to addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk such as the homeless in the context of what Member States will need to do. (see Box 1)

The final part of the new European governance architecture to consider are the ten Integrated Guidelines for implementing the Europe 2020 which were adopted by the Council in October 2010 - six broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and the EU, and four guidelines for the employment (and social) policies of the Member States. Guideline 10 on "Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty" is particularly important (see Box 2). It is likely that future European work on social inclusion issues, and thus on homelessness, will be driven, to a very great extent, by the implementation of these guidelines in the framework of Member States' National Reform Programmes.

Box 2 - Guideline 10: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty

The extension of employment opportunities is an essential aspect of Member States' integrated strategies to prevent and reduce poverty and to promote full participation in society and economy. Appropriate use of the European Social Fund and other EU funds should be made to that end. Efforts should concentrate on ensuring equal opportunities, including through access for all to high quality, affordable, and sustainable services, in particular in the social field. Public services (including online services, in line with guideline 4) play an important role in this respect. Member States should put in place effective anti-discrimination measures. Empowering people and promoting labour market participation for those furthest away from the labour market while preventing in-work poverty will help fight social exclusion. This would require enhancing social protection systems, lifelong learning and comprehensive active inclusion policies to create opportunities at different stages of people's lives and shield them from the risk of exclusion, with special attention to women. Social protection systems, including pensions and access to healthcare, should be modernised and fully deployed to ensure adequate income support and services — thus providing social cohesion — whilst remaining financially sustainable and encouraging participation in society and in the labour market.

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, 21 October 2010

Risks and opportunities

There is not sufficient space here to go into all the possible opportunities and risks associated with these new arrangements. However, two broad points should be made. The first is that social issues are now a much more central and important part of the EU project. There is the potential for much closer interaction with other policy areas such as economic and employment policies so that all are mutually reinforcing. There is also the possibility of much better coordination of all aspects of the current patchwork of EU level social policies. Having an EU poverty and social inclusion target greatly increases the political importance of this dimension. This thus creates an exciting opportunity to develop a stronger Social EU.

The second point is less optimistic. If, in practice, all the focus is put on achieving the new European poverty target and if everything happens through the Integrated Guidelines and the National Reform Programmes, there is a risk that there will be too narrow an approach to poverty and social exclusion issues and that the focus will just be on reducing the number of people who experience income poverty and/or material deprivation and/or live in jobless households (i.e. the 3 components of the new European target). In these circumstances the focus on more comprehensive national strategies may be lost and the in depth study of specific issues such as homelessness may be lessened.

It will thus be essential to ensure that the new arrangements that are currently being developed do in fact build on the positive elements of the last decade and do include a comprehensive approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. Within that comprehensive approach there should then be detailed thematic work on key issues such as active inclusion, child poverty and homelessness and housing exclusion.

2. Key elements for future European action on homelessness

Given the uncertainties that still exist about the new governance arrangements it is difficult at this point to be precise about exactly where and how homelessness should be situated in these new arrangements (though this may be clearer by the time of the Consensus Conference in December). However, given that homelessness per se does not feature prominently in the new arrangements, the best possibility is to ensure that it is built in as a key issue within the broader arrangements to promote social inclusion and to tackle poverty and social exclusion. They at least are clearly named and have gained an enhanced political status. In other words, in my view it would be unrealistic in the present climate to expect a completely separate EU strategy on homelessness and housing exclusion. The trend at EU level is towards greater policy integration, consolidation and coordination and not to more separated initiatives. Even if such initiatives do happen they will risk becoming quite peripheral to the mainstream European policy debate. In these circumstances the most realistic and effective way forward would seem to be to build on past experience under the Social OMC and to press for a well-developed thematic approach within a broad and enhanced social protection and social inclusion process.

In any case, as I argued in an earlier article, it might be a mistake to seek a completely separate strategy on homelessness as "it would be a mistake to break down the issue of poverty and social exclusion into a series of separate boxes. If there is one thing above all else we have learned from the EU process since 2001 it is that poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena which need to be addressed in an integrated and coordinated manner. Issues such as homelessness, inadequate income, child poverty, poor access to services, exclusion from the labour market and discrimination against minorities all overlap. While at certain moments focused action may be needed to assist particular groups, such action needs to be set in the broader context of effective overall social inclusion policies. The separation into a variety of different little OMCs does not address the core problem that has bedevilled the Social OMC: the lack of political commitment to take real action to build more inclusive societies. A series of separate OMCs would not be very practical or effective. The result would be to dilute and weaken the overall social inclusion dimension in relation to the jobs and growth strands of the EU just at a moment when it is possible to envisage strengthening this dimension by, first, developing strong links between social inclusion and environmental/sustainable development issues and, second, taking advantage of the Lisbon Treaty, which, for the first time, makes the combating of social exclusion and discrimination and the promotion of social justice and protection objectives of the Union. The likely overall result of the limited and narrow approach advocated in the article would, in fact, be to weaken the SPC and to reduce its political status within EU structures. In the end this would be damaging for those concerned about homelessness and housing exclusion." (Frazer, 2009)

In the light of the above considerations the first and foremost challenge is to ensure that the future arrangements for the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy (e.g. EPAP, Social OMC, NRPs) do in fact provide for as strong, comprehensive and rigorous approach to poverty and social exclusion as possible. This will mean ensuring: more effective policy coordination and greater mainstreaming of social inclusion objectives at all levels of governance (EU, national and sub-national); more strategic and effective national and local plans; enhanced monitoring and reporting and greater accountability for outcomes; better data and analysis; and more systematic exchange of learning and good practice. Then, within such a broad social protection and social inclusion framework, it should be possible to develop an effective thematic focus on homelessness and housing exclusion which can, over time, become in effect a European strategy on homelessness.

The rest of this section concentrates on what might be the key elements of such a thematic approach on homelessness.

2.1 Multi-annual work programme[64]

While, as was documented earlier, progress was made on homelessness during the 2000-2010 period this was often on a rather ad hoc and piecemeal basis. Thus in future there is a need for a more systematic and structured approach to addressing the issue at EU level in order to achieve more tangible results. To ensure this Member States and the Commission, in the context of the Social Protection Committee (SPC), should develop a multi-annual work programme on homelessness as a key part of the future Social OMC (and/or EPAP). The key elements of such a work programme should reflect the elements outlined in the following sections.

2.2 Commission Recommendation

The first work programme, which could usefully be launched in 2011 (as an integral part of the post-Lisbon EU coordination in the social field), could include the task of working towards a Commission Recommendation on homelessness by 2012. This would build on the precedent of the active inclusion Recommendation (European Commission, 2008) and the commitment to prepare a Commission Recommendation on child poverty and well-being in 2011.[65] It would also be a means of taking account of the outcomes of the Consensus Conference on Homelessness. In effect this would become the framework for a European strategy on homelessness and for ongoing work on the issue.

2.3 Informal SPC and/or EPAP group on homelessness

To carry forward and oversee the thematic work on homelessness it could be helpful to establish an informal group within the SPC (and/or EPAP). The precedent for this exists with the successful outcomes of two such groups in recent years, i.e. the work of the EU Task Force on Child Poverty and Well-Being (Social Protection Committee, 2008) and the EU Lisbon Task Force (Social Protection Committee, 2008).

2.4 National strategies

In the context of developing future NAPs/inclusion strands of National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (or as background strategies to support and underpin their NRPs) Member States who have not already done so should be encouraged to develop integrated strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness which have clear objectives and quantified targets. Such strategies need to be comprehensive and to address structural factors (e.g. problems in the housing market including in particular shortages of adequate accommodation and the non affordability of housing, the impact of joblessness and the effects of poverty and indebtedness), institutional factors (e.g. the risks facing people leaving institutions), family and personal problems (e.g. family breakdown, mental illness and drug abuse), as well as discrimination and the lack of legal status (e.g. the position of migrants and of ethnic minorities such as the Roma). Likewise, Member States who have not yet done so could consider strengthening their governance arrangements in relation to homelessness so that there are: effective coordination and integration of policies relating to homelessness; efficient systems for the ongoing involvement of all relevant stakeholders; effective links between the different levels of governance (national, regional and local) on homelessness issues; and partnerships at local level to ensure the coordinated and integrated delivery of policies and programmes on the ground in a flexible manner which is tailored to the needs of individuals. Such plans must be backed up with a clear allocation of resources (including Structural Funds) to support the implementation of integrated strategies.

2.5 Agreed definitions

It is clear that one of the keys to making progress on homelessness at European level is to achieve a formally agreed definition. This is an area where the SPC and its Indicators Sub-Group (ISG) can play a key role in promoting agreement amongst Member States to apply a consistent official definition of homelessness. The ETHOS definition or, initially, a "reduced" version of ETHOS, could provide an appropriate starting point.

2.6 Agreed monitoring and reporting framework

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[64] This and subsequent sections draw in particular on the conclusions and recommendations for strengthening EU action on homeless and housing exclusion in chapter 4 of *A Social Inclusion Roadmap for Europe 2020* (Frazer, Marlier and Nicaise, 2010). Chapter 4 was drafted with a major contribution from Bill Edgar.

[65] The European Commission for Employment and Social Affairs, Laszlo Andor, gave a commitment to the Belgian EU Presidency Conference on child poverty on 2nd September 2010 to prepare a European Commission Recommendation during 2011 (see Frazer, 2010)

The Social OMC has demonstrated that one of the keys to making progress on issues is regular monitoring and reporting. This helps to increase the pressure and accountability on Member States to achieve results and comparisons with other Member States adds an element of peer pressure. Thus, in the context of a thematic approach, it would be very helpful if the European Commission and Member States could, in the context of the SPC, agree a common framework and common guidelines for measuring, monitoring and reporting on homelessness. This could then provide the basis for ensuring that there is a regular EU report on Member States' strategies to fight against homelessness as an integral part of the reporting arrangements that are (still to be) agreed for monitoring the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Also, in the short/medium term the impact of the economic and financial crisis on homelessness should be a key part of EU level reporting on the social impact of the crisis.

2.7 Better indicators and data

Effective reporting by Member States requires good data. Thus Member States who have not already done so should put in place a system for regularly collecting data on homelessness and, as necessary, collating data from the regional and local levels. Given that a single data source will not be enough for a proper count and monitoring of homelessness, each country will need to identify a good national "package" of available data sources (e.g. surveys, registers, clients' record data) and develop its statistical capacity as required.

At European level the SPC through the ISG should continue to work on improving data and indicators in relation to homelessness so as to increase the potential both for monitoring progress and for promoting mutual learning between Member States. In particular the ISG should continue to enrich the new indicators on housing deprivation (especially in the field of poor quality housing) and should work towards common EU indicator(s) on homelessness.

2.8 Promotion of quality standards

One of the key lessons from the Social OMC process has been the importance of ensuring access to high quality public services both to prevent and to tackle poverty and social exclusion. This is also true for homelessness. The quality of services that are in place to assist those at risk of homelessness is vital. Thus a key focus of the multi-annual work programme on homelessness should be to promote high quality services. For instance, good practice in relation to the development of standards of accommodation and service provision for homeless people might be identified and Member States might be encouraged to adopt these and to report on what they are doing to promote quality standards in their NAPs/inclusion.

2.9 Clustered exchange and learning

As was highlighted earlier there has been considerable exchange and learning on homelessness under the Social OMC and supporting transnational exchange and learning through peer reviews, studies, networks, improved data collection and conferences should continue to be a key priority under the future arrangements. However, the learning has been rather haphazard and not sufficiently integrated. Thus learning could be enhanced by a greater clustering of stakeholders and different activities concerned with homelessness in line with what was achieved in the context of the MPHASIS project (Mutual Progress on Homelessness through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems).

2.10 Mainstreaming and impact assessments

Homelessness is an issue that cuts across many policy areas. In this regard it is encouraging that the EU's new horizontal social clause (see 1.2 above) increases the argument for mainstreaming the fight against poverty and social exclusion (and also issues of adequate social protection and children's rights) across all relevant EU policy areas and programmes (including the Structural Funds). To make this potential effective it will be important that there is a more systematic application of the required social impact assessments (both ex ante and ex post) as part of the Commission's integrated impact assessment process.[66] It will be important to ensure that in developing the social impact assessment dimension the issue of homelessness is fully taken into account. The EPAP should play a central role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the social impact assessment process and on the extent to which the other strands of Europe 2020 are contributing to the goal of

[66] More information on the European Commission's impact assessment process can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/governance/better_regulation/impact_en.htm.

reducing poverty and social exclusion. If they are not, it should have the power to make recommendations as to how they could contribute better.[67]

23rd October 2010

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rtherPubs=ye

[67] It is important to systematically develop poverty and social exclusion impact assessments (both *ex ante* and *ex post*) for all relevant policies and not only those specifically aimed at increasing social inclusion, so that policy proposals all take into account the potential (positive or negative) impact they may have on poverty and social exclusion, including homelessness. Existing policies should also regularly be reviewed for their impact on poverty and social exclusion, including homelessness. The ultimate goal should be to systematically work at identifying possible ways (links/ synergies) of adjusting policies to strengthen their contribution to promoting social inclusion including in the area of housing. The European Commission, in cooperation with Member States, should develop and promote the methodology for social impact assessments, including in relation to homelessness, at national and sub-national levels.

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Key Question 6 What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

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For a European Homelessness Agency[*]

Abstract

This contribution to the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness supports the idea of a European agency responsible for technical and operational cooperation regarding homeless people. The old fight against vagrancy and begging has been a driving force in the creation of social and penal policies. Historically, to overcome the inability of local authorities to manage collectively the more or less disturbing presence of homeless people, regional, then national interventions were needed, to allow States to take the lead. Today, in a European Union with open borders, the new management level for the issue of homelessness is undoubtedly the European community. In certain respects, action at city and Union level are now more viable than at regional and State level. Gradually, levels of knowledge and exchanges between Member States are growing stronger. One could suggest specifying this issue in the Social Inclusion Strategy, but also through the creation of specific instruments, such as a European Agency responsible for this issue in order to consolidate this European community aspect of intervention to help homeless people.

The European social model, social Europe, and even the social nature of the European construction are the subjects of a substantial and significant body of literature.[69] In a word, social Europe is "finding itself". Among other things, it is a question of knowing whether the European Union simply exists as a means to achieve a single market with social policies subordinate to this main objective, or if it is indeed possible to give more substance to the social investments, bypassing the unique way in which work and the market are organised. Amidst all the debates and controversies, the European Union and its members are confronted in practical terms with new social realities which the countries have to deal with: new inequalities, the growing diversity of populations, changes in families, ageing, dependency, increased mobility and social exclusion. The majority of these issues are the responsibility of Member States, but also concern the European Union as a whole.

Faced with these new social realities, on which the Commission launched a large scale consultation in spring 2007,[70] European societies are being called upon to react and adapt their social policy priorities. It is therefore possible to make innovative proposals. Here we will be concerned with the case of homelessness in highlighting the now fundamentally European nature of the issue. In response, one might suggest new investments on a European scale and, if needed, a dedicated agency. Naturally, all this is intended as part of the new EU 2020 Strategy, which pays particular and attention to reducing exclusion, and this reduction comes with quantifiable aims.

Since the mid-1980s, homeless people have been highly visible in public areas in cities in the European Union. This age-old problem has taken on a new dimension, in particular because extreme forms of poverty are considered unacceptable in affluent societies. The situation and living conditions of homeless people are considered everywhere as infringements of human rights.

While this phenomenon is present in various forms in European Union countries, while it results in varied reactions (hostile or charitable) and while the problem does not at first seem to be the European community's responsibility, the presence of homeless people in cities is nevertheless one of the most serious demonstrations of the phenomena of social exclusion, first and foremost of interest to the local authorities, but also the States.[71] This problem, which combines insecurity, poverty and mobility, increasingly concerns the European Union itself.

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[*] This contribution refers to an article published in the Revue de droit sanitaire et social (n° 5, 2007, p. 887) and is a continuation of the Strategic Newswatch of the Centre d'analyse stratégique (n° 69, 2007) on a European approach to the problem of homelessness (www.strategie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Note_de_veille_69.pdf).

[69] For two recent milestones on the social dimension of the European construction, see the 2006 annual report of the Inspectorate General of Social Affairs, La dimension européenne des politiques sociales (French documentation, 2006) and the report by the Centre d'analyse stratégique, Quelle dimension sociale pour le projet politique européen ? (French documentation, 2007). See also the report by the European Policy Studies (CEPS) for the Commission, Is Social Europe Fit for Globalisation (May 2007), http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_situation/docs/simglobe_fin_rep.pdf

[70] See this "consultation document" on the "social reality of Europe" published online in March 2007: http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/docs/background_document_fr.pdf. For those interested in the subject (and it is truly hoped there are many), see also the Eurobarometer report (No. 273, "European Social Reality", February 2007) published on this consultation.

[71] *On the history and forms of services to homeless people, we refer to J. Damon, La Question SDF, PUF, 2002.*

The issue of homelessness is incidentally covered in European community debates on the problem of housing.[72] This is thanks to the progress relating to the social dimension of the European construction and the European initiatives and programmes in terms of combating exclusion.[73]

Here we will show how the issue of homelessness, assessed in terms of the historical treatment of vagrancy, has become a problem with an eminently European dimension due to greatly increased mobility. In an open area without borders, homeless people from inside and outside the European community can move from one country to another, from one European city to another. We will then present what it is about the gradual inclusion of this issue on an EU scale, with regards the current standardisation of definitions and statistics first of all. After this quick analysis, we will allow ourselves several European public policy suggestions, by maintaining that the principle of a "European Homelessness Agency" would be worth serious consideration.

The Uncertainty and Instablility of Cooperation Between Local Authorities Faced with Poverty and Transience: Why States Have Historically Taken the Lead

Faced with the presence of homeless people in the public domain, the alternatives are simple. They must be accommodated (or at least tolerated) or excluded (i.e. locked up or moved on somewhere else). A brief review of the history of state interventions with regards the homeless will make it possible to highlight the procedure whereby the regions, then the States, and now Europe have taken control in view of the fragility of local cooperation.

For a long time vagrancy and begging have been subject to state intervention.[74] From the middle of the 15th century, controlling the "vagrant" population became a major concern for Monarchist European States. With the control of those outside the communities and local solidarity, the State experimented with laws and offences, asserting itself in this way against local authorities. Since then, the possibility for communication and the speed of travel have increased considerably. This is now an issue on a European scale – even if only in terms of migration – and it is on a European scale that it may need to be dealt with. To support such an argument, we will follow the example of Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan in his analysis of the developments in managing vagrants and beggars, in parallel with the increase in power of central governments.[75]

In the Middle Ages, towns had only two options: accommodate the poor people who appeared at their gates or send them away. If one town, for religious or political reasons, decided to accommodate them, it would have no way of knowing if other authorities would do the same or if, on the contrary, they would take advantage of this offer of help off-load their own poor people and send away all the vagrants. The balance and coordination of the locally organised system to help the needy and/or coerce vagrants into leaving were researched regionally, but nothing could force a local authority to act in one way or another.

As the cities and their interdependencies developed, all over Europe, the State intervened so that a regional balance of aid was added to local charitable systems which had become insufficient. The first attempt at greater regional balance was the "Great Confinement" of the 17th century.[76] Buildings and general hospitals were built or transformed so the poor could be locked away in them in order to put an end to vagrancy. At the same time, the idea of "charity workshops" or workhouses was born. The poor were no longer simply shut away to be taken care of or punished. They were given a job which would convert, punish, rehabilitate or re-educate them. The principle was to use the able-bodied poor in a self-financing aid system.

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[72] The issue of housing was also the primary concern of the latest assessments on the subject of the homeless in Europe, ref . J. Doherty, B. Edgar, H. Meert, Access to Housing. Homelessness and Vulnerability in Europe, Policy Press, 2002.

[73] On these different European starting points for analysis of homelessness, see the opinion of the European Union's Committee of the Regions on "The Issue of Homelessness and Housing (no. 376, 3rd June 1999). http://coropinions.cor.europa.eu/CORopinionDocument.aspx?identifier=cdr\commission4\dossiers\com4-018\cdr376-1998_fin_ac.doc&language=FR

[74] See B. Geremek's classic text, La potence ou la pitié. Europe et les pauvres du Moyen Age à nos jours, Gallimard, 1978. For enthusiasts, see also E. Darnaud, Vagabonds et mendiants, Ernest Leroux, 1876, F. Chanteau, Vagabondage et mendicité, Pedone, 1899, C. Paultre, De la répression du vagabondage en France sous l'Ancien Régime, 1906, A. Vexliard, Introduction à la sociologie du vagabondage, Marcel Rivière, 1956.

[75] de Swaan, Sous l'aile protectrice de l'Etat, PUF, 1988, trans. 1995. On the consequences of these "transnational" analyses, see A.de Swaan, Social Policy beyond Borders. The social question in transnational perspective, Amsterdam University Press, 2002. See also our analysis of the connections between vagrancy and the emergence of central government, J. Damon, Vagabondage, interdépendances et ajustements du territoire. A propos d'Abram de Swaan, « Sous l'aile protectrice de l'Etat », Fondations, n° 3, 1996, p. 57.

[76] For the full history, with a particular view, see M. Foucault's classic, Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique, Gallimard, 1972. And for criticism of the Foucauldian view A. Vexliard, "Le grand renfermement". Une œuvre de charité et de piété laïque, in Hommage to Alexandre Vexliard , Publications de la faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Nice, n° 47, 1983, p. 13.

This idea of creating a certain amount of self-sufficiency within the aid gave the illusion of a solution to the dilemma of whether to accommodate the poor or send them away which overburdened the system of autonomous communities. However, the workhouses were barely self-financing and they were criticised by neighbouring companies who saw them as unfair competition. Thus central government played a decisive role in supporting cities and providing finance and/or orders for the workhouses or hospitals. State participation in combating vagrancy and assisting the poor has continued to grow. Municipal independence has given way to the emergence of an increasingly powerful central government to govern the communities in its region.

The history of vagrancy management sheds light on current phenomena. The lesson from this quick review is that autonomous communities have proven to be incapable of collective action to manage vagrancy without a central regulating authority. Within this framework, State interventions aim to organise the monitoring of movements and cooperation between cities.

Moving from the local parish to the national state, the management of the issue of homelessness can only change again with the opening up and progressive enlargement of European borders. From now on, homeless people can, more or less easily, move from one country to another, depending on personal preferences, the level of collective provision in a region, the emphasis put on repression or accommodation by municipalities.[77] It is indeed their increased ease of mobility, even more than their behaviour, considered as deviant, which now creates a problem for public policy and which can justify a more concentrated intervention at European level.

In the same way that after the Renaissance, it naturally seemed more appropriate and effective to deal with vagrancy on a national scale, it might now appear wiser to tackle the issue of homelessness on the scale of the European Union which sees homeless people from all Member States but also from all over the world move across its lands. If we consider only the French-speaking homeless people in France who INSEE were able to survey in January 2001, the percentage of foreigners is 29 %, which is four times higher than in the entire French population[78]. For its part, half of the homeless people accommodated by the Samu Social de Paris are not French.[79] In other countries in the Union, the percentages given are similar, and sometimes greater. So, for example, in 2002 it was estimated that two thirds of homeless people in Greece were foreigners.[80]

In any case, the issue of European coordination of policies for managing homelessness, in the same way as asylum and immigration policy, has become crucial for cities, even more so than regional coordination. In other words, the issue of homelessness now falls more within local and European remits, than regional and national ones.[81]

A European Approach to the Issue of Homelessness, Which Begins With Statistical Assessment and Discussion of Good Practice

Depending on the country, the issue of homelessness appears regularly or occasionally on local and national agendas . It does not yet have a major place on the European agenda.

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[77] For a thorough description of the motivations and types migration of Romanian people, up to and including becoming homeless in major European cities, see D. Diminescu (dir.), Visibles mais peu nombreux… Les circulations migratoires roumaines, Editions de la MSH, 2003, R.-M. Lagrave, D. Diminescu, Faire une saison. Pour une anthropologie des migrations roumaines en France. Le cas du Pays d'Oas, Migrations Etudes, n° 91, 1999

[78]Brousse, B. de la Rochère, Hébergement et distribution de repas chauds. Qui sont les sans-domicile usagers de ces services ?, Insee Première, n° 824, 2002.

[79] See the report by the Cour Régionale des Comptes d'Ile-de-France, Groupement d'intérêt public SAMU social de Paris, 22 September 2006. http://www.ccomptes.fr/CRC13/documents/ROD/IFR200632.pdf

[80] See the dossier "Immigration and homelessness", Homelessness in Europe, Feantsa Bulletin, Winter 2002. http://www.feantsa.org/files/Month%20Publications/FR/immigration_newslet_02fr.pdf More generally about the connections between 'homelessness' and immigration, ref. J. Doherty, B. Edgar, H. Meert, Immigration And Homelessness In Europe, Policy Press, 2005.

[81] Every year in France, we hear repeated that it is on a departmental, even regional scale that the issue must be addressed. In the case of Paris, the scale regularly extends to regional level . See for example the report conducted by the Ministry of social cohesion and parity about the consequences of mobilisation of the "Enfants de Don Quixote", by A. de Fleurieu and L. Chambaud, L'hébergement des personnes sans abri à Paris et en Ile de France, 2006.(http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/cgi-bin/brp/telestats.cgi?brp_ref=064000641&brp_file=0000.pdf). This lack of coordination is also described in the 2007 public report by the French Audit Office (Cour des Comptes), Les personnes sans domicile, French Documentation 2007. (www.ccomptes.fr/CC/documents/RPT/RapportPersonnesSansDomicile.pdf). The office draws up an assessment of public interventions for homeless people. It highlights that the State manages the different policies under its responsibility in too disparate a way and does not have the appropriate tools, especially in terms of collecting information and cooperation methods which would make its cooperation with other parties, especially local authorities, more effective. The EU perspective is not covered, however.

Since the seventies, European institutions have been concerned about poverty and exclusion. Now “new poverty” can be seen everywhere as a result of the economic crisis, but the Commission had already launched an ambitious international programme in 1975, which supported pilot projects to improve knowledge and develop new methods of combating poverty and “precariousness”.[82] Once again, the Union is primarily involved in terms of knowledge, sharing practices and supporting innovations. Whether it is housing, the employment market or social protection, the Union has neither skill nor the will to standardise. However, in certain areas such as State aid, government contracts or even the fight against discrimination, the Union's actions are having an increasingly marked impact on policies and organisations for combating exclusion related to housing. Furthermore, in the entire field of social inclusion, the system of shared expertise, is increasingly important for what is included national responses to homelessness. Homeless people, without obviously being at the centre of the Lisbon Strategy, are all the same the very example of the social cohesion problems which, among other things, this strategy seeks to reduce.

Indeed, the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 invited Member States and the European Commission to make provisions which would have a decisive impact on eliminating poverty by 2010. Member States coordinate their policies aiming to combat poverty and social exclusion based on a process of mutual exchange and learning known as the "open method of coordination" (OMC). It is within this European framework, in particular its extension aimed at supporting social inclusion policies, that the issue of homelessness is tackled.

The European social inclusion strategy mentions homeless people under the two registers - preventing of exclusion and the need to protect our societies’ most vulnerable. Since 2006, when the ambition to eradicate poverty and social exclusion was rendered public, the issue of homeless people has been referred to more and more, but never in a clearly defined way. For several years, European community efforts have been moving towards improving knowledge, a prerequisite for any assessment of mechanisms and support of good practices.

In reality there are few official statistics in the area of homelessness and those which exist are rarely comparable between countries. In order to qualify and quantify the phenomenon of homelessness and housing deprivation in the European context, expert authorities have been consulted. Eurostat was the first to highlight the obstacles to European comparisons, by examining the diversity in the range of definitions of homeless people and by analysing data collection systems.[83] This inventory drawn up by the Statistical Office of the European Commission brought to light the heterogeneity of the definition of “homeless” people. More recently, the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities ordered and distributed an in-depth study on possible ways to standardise definitions and survey methods.[84]

All these advances in standardising information have been made possible thanks to close cooperation between the Commission's services, national services, statistic producers and non-governmental institutions responsible for homeless people.

In this context, homeless support associations and experts involved in the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)[85] have, in recent years and with the support of the Commission, developed a substantial body of information and comparative research.[86] Among the work they do, we can see the aim to produce shared analytical frameworks, particularly in terms of definitions and statistics. This is a difficult exercise nationally. It is even more difficult on an EU scale.[87] A European typology of housing exclusion was nevertheless recently able to be debated and circulated. Called ETHOS (the European Typology

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[82] Bennett, E. James, G. Room, P. Watson, Europe against Poverty. The European Poverty Program : 1975-1980, Bedford Square Press, 1982.

[83] Eurostat, “The production of data on homelessness and housing deprivation in the European Union: survey and proposals”, published 20 January 2005 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CC-04-008/EN/KS-CC-04-008-EN.PDF

[84] See the report “Measurement of Homelessness at European Union Level” (January 2007), on the Commission’s website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2007/study_homelessness_en.pdf

[85] Created in 1989 and supported by the Commission, FEANTSA comprises around one hundred organisations based in 30 European countries, including 27 Member States of the European Union. In particular, since 1991 it has organised a “homelessness observatory” and regularly produces documents presenting the results of transnational discussions. Its reports are available online at : www.feantsa.org

[86] Note that throughout the 1990s, the figures released by national associations and FEANTSA calculated the size of the homeless population. For around ten years, it was thus repeated that every day approximately 1.1 million citizens of the European Union (15) needed homeless assistance services. Over a period of one year, this figure climbed to 1.8 million. Still according to FEANTSA estimates, almost 18 million citizens of the European Union live in very inadequate or “unconventional” housing, i.e. buildings whose purpose is not for housing.

[87] On these difficulties, see the article by C. Brousse, Définir et compter les sans-abri en Europe : enjeux et controverses, Genèses, 58, 2005, pp. 48-71.

on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion), it aims to be used for data collection, research and developing policies to combat housing exclusion.

This typology is an open exercise, putting aside national definitions in Member States. It allows homeless people to be classified according to their living situation:

- rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough);
- houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelters);
- living in insecure housing (threatened with exclusion due to precarious tenancies, eviction, domestic violence);
- living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, unfit housing, extreme overcrowding).

In addition to definitions and statistical problems, it is ultimately important to emphasise that the issue of homelessness is certainly a renewed mobility problem within an open Europe but one which is above all related to a situation where all other social problems (unemployment, changes in inequalities and poverty, changes in the family, housing market problems) are compounded and a result of the difficulties of public policy (both with regards social policies and asylum and immigration policies).

A Social Reality Which Calls for Responses from the European Community - Why Not a Homelessness Agency?

The phenomenon of homelessness is undoubtedly one of the social realities of the Union and in the Union which require renewed analytical frameworks and action methods. National analytical frameworks are no longer suited to the current form of "mobile" poverty, different from that of past centuries. Courses of action cannot be limited to local interventions or insufficient regional and national coordination capabilities. Today, the issue of homelessness is both a local and a European issue, which invites the strict and ambitious analysis and review of care systems, whether they be generic instruments (such as social assistance systems) or specific instruments (such as emergency housing centres), or even legislation relating to the management of antisocial behaviour in public areas or the progressive enforcement of the right to housing.

Taking account of the European dimension to the homelessness issue means opening up other views on the way in which the issues of the occupation of public areas (by groups of individuals, tents, etc.), the problems of begging and antisocial behaviour and the perspective of reinforcement and enforceability of the right to housing are dealt with elsewhere in the Union.[88]

In practical terms, three sets of proposals can be suggested:

- Firstly, as an extension of what is currently being developed, it may be appropriate for the issue of homelessness to become, as such, one of the subjects specifically identified in the social inclusion strategy. The eradication of homelessness, as a variation on the objective to eradicate poverty and social exclusion, could be the aim of this increase in exchanges of good practice.
- With the aim of strengthening current interventions and cooperation, carrying out an inventory of the problems and the policies in force in the Union, highlighting and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of EU interventions would be welcome. A high-level mission, established over two years, could perform an inventory of the issue in all the countries in the Union and on the scale of the Union.
- Finally, one could eventually envisage the setting up of specific instruments, for example a European agency with the threefold function of monitoring the phenomenon of homelessness throughout the EU; supporting care and regulation initiatives and conducting cooperations between States to manage the records and situations of homeless people who are not nationals of the State in which they are present.

This idea of a homelessness agency is worth examining. Let us note that the term "sans-abrisme" used in French in European circles is the translation of "rooflessness". This focuses on homelessness as understood in accordance with the classifications currently being adopted. However, this is not the situation experienced by all those living in inadequate housing, but only of people living on the street and/or in emergency housing centres. These are people for whom the issue of their place of residence and their emergency shelter arises. We are therefore talking about those people who are most immediately visible and recognisable as being homeless. Finally, they are those people who experience, throughout Europe, the most difficult personal problems in social

[88] On this now crucial issue of the right to housing, see the Europan portal on the website of the Union sociale pour l'habitat, www.union-hlm.org/europe, and particularly its proposal, not taken up, to recognise the right to housing in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

terms. Focusing on ”rooflessness” and its meaning in current typologies, is to focus on people on the street or in makeshift shelters, who can increasingly experience a European poverty “mobility”.

A European agency dedicated to European community cooperation and dealing with the rights of European community nationals who are on the street in EU member countries, but of which they are not nationals, could, with a specific framework for its research methods and incentives, considerably modernise and improve the management of these situations. This agency would work closely and, if the need arises, in total synergy, with the European migration network.

In practical terms, the primary aims of this agency could be the establishment and monitoring of quality criteria for the accommodation and care intended for homeless people. These standards exist in terms of the right of asylum. Why not adapt them to the issue of homelessness, particularly given the obvious cross-overs between both issues? These standards could concern everyday questions such as opening hours, the specialised staff ratio, rules for group living, the number of places per centre, etc.

A certain number of specialist agencies have already been established in the European Union in order to provide support to Member States and their citizens. These agencies reflect the need to deal with new tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature. Homelessness policy, or at least the coordination of national care systems, can react to this.

With regards the European community agencies (European public law bodies, distinct from European community institutions and with a separate legal nature) there are over twenty in the fields of fisheries, medicine and environmental control, occupational health, maritime and rail safety or even the improvement of living and working conditions. On reading this list of subjects, including some social, we see that homelessness could be a theme eligible for the creation of such an agency.

It goes without saying that these are only suggestions for guidance to improve public policy in terms of homelessness. It must be stressed, that this cannot be envisaged in isolation from other public policy mechanisms since the issue of homelessness is not a singular subject that specialised systems can regulate, but a social issue – now European – to be understood and thus treated as a concentration of all the others.