



FEANTSA

Multiple barriers, multiple solutions: Inclusion into and through employment for people who are homeless in Europe”

National Report Greece

Annual Theme 2007: Employment and Homelessness

MULTIPLE BARRIERS MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS: THE GREEK CASE

The basic barrier for the inclusion of the homeless through employment in Greece is that there is a general lack of services to help them to cover basic needs and of course a lack of services in relation to employment. This is connected to the fact that although the homeless are a vulnerable group are not included to the disadvantaged groups according to the law in the Greek social welfare system. So homeless people are not registered as homeless but as having other multiple needs and receive services as marginalised individuals and not as a specific target group suffering from homelessness.

As a result homeless are not a target group in public employment (and health and housing) policies. The support they get to access the labour market or simply to survive through occasional or informal work and activities out of the mainstream labour market, comes from ngos and charity organisations, volunteers, friends and informally from social workers and other professionals in all relevant services. It is hard to refer to the fact that in the Greek version of the Community Initiative EQUAL in 2000 the homeless WERE EXCLUDED as a group to receive services. This made even more difficult for the Greek ngos to have access to appropriate funding in a country where state funding is extremely restricted and there are not many possibilities for private resources.

In the next versions of EQUAL the homeless were not excluded but could get benefited through projects in the field of social economy. Nevertheless this sector is not really developed in Greece and social cooperatives can contribute in integration through employment basically for people with mental health problems.

We know also that the basis of integration through employment is that the homeless person has somehow solved the housing issue and has some existing address.

Unfortunately in Greece there is an absolute lack of affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness. Interventions focused on housing support, development of social skills and occupational activities are oriented basically to people with mental health problems, handicaps and other disadvantages but not specifically to homeless. Service providers have no access to social apartments that could be used for prevention or for the reintegration of the homeless. The social housing sector had no legal basis and support to get developed and transitional houses, protected apartments etc have been financed only as a part of the psychiatric reform. Other initiatives (i.e. guest houses of ngos and other service providers) face permanent financing problems, as they have not institutional support.

Another option of the Greek reality is that there is still not legislation about the minimum income. Although many kind of social benefits exist for people facing personal or family problems, it has been proved very difficult for the homeless to have access to some of these benefits. A minimum salary could ensure an adequate level of minimum quality of life and in combination with other individualised measures could help a lot people experiencing homelessness to get empowered, seek for additional income and integrate in terms of dignity.

What is referred to homeless Greek citizens is also valid for homeless asylum seekers and refugees, immigrants and undocumented immigrants, who face a lot of discriminations because of their weak or non existing legal status. As a matter of fact this category of homeless can find only very low paid jobs and survive in extremely

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inadequate housing conditions (i.e. homeless collecting oranges in the winter in rural areas).

As a conclusion the lack of legal basis and a combination of bureaucratic and financial barriers is still creating obstacles to the provision of adequate services for homeless both in the private-non profit sector and in the public and municipality services. It is very urgent the Greek situation to change and follow the European tension to compact homelessness mobilising all relevant bodies, revising old fashioned and non functioning policies that in fact are excluding the homeless.

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