

## **1. Organisation and funding of homeless services**

Objective: this section aims at understanding the organization of the provision of homeless services in a given country

### **1.1. Legislation**

***Is there any legislation or policy in your country which focuses specifically on homeless services provision?***

Homelessness in Malta is a concept which often goes unnoticed. We are not accustomed to seeing people sleeping in card board boxes and in parks as one would see in many other European cities, this however does not mean that homelessness does not exist. We do not see these people because there are shelters like the YMCA Homeless shelter, among others. The problem of homelessness often tends to be overlooked and these people go unnoticed. Services do not cater specifically for homeless people except for a very few and only those working with homeless individuals seem to consider that homelessness is an increasing social burden in our country.

No legislation or policy exists in Malta which focuses on homeless service provision. There is no policy even directly related to Housing and to the right to housing. Housing right is not guaranteed although set as a priority and although there is a main service provided by the state to cater for housing needs. The latter, however, is generally regarded as being rather generous in provision and in the services offered.

More often than not, homeless people who are picked up by police officers get a service depending on the officer on duty.

### **1.2. Typology and organization of services**

***Does a typology of homeless or social services exist in your country? In your organization? If yes, please describe in detail.***

A clear typology regarding homelessness does not exist, or at least it exists but is not nationally recognized. As previously explained we do not see homeless people sleeping in card board boxes, or at least those sleeping rough are a very small minority. In order to avoid recognizing this problem, the state, tends to recognize that homelessness is sleeping rough, and those living in homeless shelters and other shelters are considered as social cases but not as homeless people.

At organizational level this exists, and the distinction is clear between who is homeless and who is at risk, however not all organizations recognize this. This is basically a result of very little awareness and that the social phenomenon is one which gives rise to controversy, thus some prefer not to bring to light this problem since it would reflect poorly on them, especially with regards funding.

Some shelters are also selective as regards who to accept and who to reject. This happens mostly with regards to homeless youths and children. Children and youths coming from abusive families are sent back to their family homes (that is their abusive environment) because no placement is available for them, due to lack of space or due to their challenging behavior, and they stop being considered as being homeless. This however does not mean that the problem has been solved. In reality chances are that those for whom a placement is found will also not be considered as homeless since they are not sleeping rough, irrespective of whether or not this placement is well suited for their needs.

Another problem encountered in this regard is that in order to be accepted homelessness has to be broken down into the cause of the problem in order to be given due importance, and that is another aspect where selection takes place. So, for example, women in domestic violence shelters are not really considered as being homeless, but simply as victims of domestic violence. People living in Mount Carmel Hospital (the Maltese Psychiatric Hospital) because they have nowhere to go are not considered as being homeless but as people suffering from mental health issues.

***-Does a register of homeless services exist? If yes, please give us relevant links to websites and directories.***

A register specifically on Homeless Services does not exist. What exists is a booklet in which all voluntary services are listed. This however involves all entities working in the social field and not just homeless services.

Those working in the field know what services exist from their knowledge and from their own network and experience.

***-Describe briefly how the provision of homeless services is organized in your country.***

Homeless service provision is organized as follows:

- Initial contact of homeless person (either personally or by a third party) is done with either one of the following agencies:
  - o IRS (initial Response Service) operated by the National Social Service Agency (Appogg),
  - o Support Line 179 (a voluntary service operated by Appogg)
  - o Police Stations
  - o YMCA Homeless Drop In Center (self referral)
  - o Other Community Services, like Access (the government community service)
  - o Another residential facility due to termination from the service.
- These are then referred to shelters which provide accommodation.

### **1.3. Funding**

***-What are the main mechanisms in place for funding homeless services provided for the not-for profit organisations in your country (public procurement, grants, agreements with NGOs, donations etc)?***

The state subsidizes non-profit and non-governmental organizations through the NGO Grant Selection Committee – which is the only funding body which covers costs related to salaries. The process is basically one where a project proposal is submitted during the 3rd quarter of every year and funds are approved accordingly.

Apart from this, other funds are achieved through Foundations who provide project based funding (one which generally tends to cover only capital costs), though this is not on a regular basis and only a small number of NGOs are selected. Similar to this is the yearly campaign carried out under the auspices of his Excellency the President of Malta, where a number of funds are collected from the general public and once again divided according to the type of project submitted.

The rest of the funds are mainly generated through fund raising campaigns and activities, donations and corporate funders.

## **2. Policy and legal framework regarding quality in homeless services**

Objective: this section aims at gathering information on existing provisions on quality and their nature and scope.

### **2.1. Quality provisions**

***-Is there any legislation or policy framework in place defining quality standards or principles in homeless services in your country? (If yes, give a brief description of it and provide us with links to relevant laws or materials)***

Legislation specifically targeted towards quality standards in homeless service provision does not exist.

In the field of minors and children in care there are the Model for policies and procedures for out of home care, which is targeted to stand as a guideline to those offering a service in the field.

Each of the homes offering the service then has its own manual for policies and procedures.

In terms of Minors in Care, a number of legislations exist supposedly there to safe guard the well being of the children. The extent to which these are adhered to is however debatable since there is a difference between what happens in practice and what exists on paper.

There is also the Department of Social Welfare Standards, which is the regulatory body in the Social Welfare Sector. Once the required legislation is enacted, it will focus on the licensing of social welfare services, on the monitoring and assessment of established standards and on ensuring compliance with regulations set out by Government.

***-If yes, are these quality standards or quality principles?***

I would say that such manuals are a mix of both. They outline standards and principles, the latter in terms of philosophies, vision and mission.

***-Is it compulsory or voluntary?***

To a certain extent, they are on a voluntary basis, since it is up to the residential facility to have policies, procedures and manuals. Yet, funding is based on standards and

reports and these greatly effect the funding provided. This therefore makes them in a way compulsory.

***-Is there a quality framework for social services in general relevant to the homeless sector? Are you in your work affected by quality provisions regarding healthcare services or employment services?***

There is no quality framework in this regard. However every decision taken by higher authorities, be it in terms of funding and in service provision in various other fields, greatly effects the organization in its operation. Effect in this regard is both on the service user or client group and on the employees working in the field.

## **2.2. Dimensions of quality**

***- What definition of quality is used in your country?***

This is very subjective as it depends on what area the focus is and which body is defining the term quality.

***- What are the criteria of quality in a homeless service in your country? (i.e. user's participation, training, funding)***

A criterion of quality in a homeless service is not clearly defined in Malta. Funding is however granted on the basis of reports and numbers of individuals being helped by the organization and evaluation reports are from time to time requested in order to ensure the quality and efficiency of the service. These are however on a generic level, that is, there is no governing body specifically focused on homelessness.

***-At what level are the quality standards being developed in your country? (national, regional, local, at the level of your own organisation or a federation of organisations)?***

These are mainly carried out at organization al level, though at a National level studies are carried out from time to time on social exclusion and deprivation, but not specifically on homelessness.

The only published statistics in terms of homeless people are done by YMCA Homeless, even though several attempts have been done to get these carried out on a national level.

### **2.3. Conditionality of funding**

***-Do funding bodies require minimum standards in homeless services, with strict reporting on meeting these standards? If yes, do funding bodies provide adequate funding to meet these standards?***

I would say that rather than minimum standards, funding bodies are more focused on numbers and how many people are being reached with the funds being granted. However, the NGO Project selection body does require evaluation sheets which ask questions on deliverables and how the service is being reached.

With regards to private funders and foundations, standards are given due importance however once again the focus tends to be related to amounts of people being reached.

### **3. Quality in the context of the specificities of homeless services**

Objective: This section seeks to highlight some specificities of homeless services which should be taken into account when discussing and developing quality standards and measurement tools.

#### **3.1. Transitional character of homeless services**

***- In your country, is there a different way of measuring quality in homeless services because of their short-term and emergency nature?***

There is not much difference between short term and emergency homeless services. Those providing a service in the field of homelessness tend to provide this on both levels.

Quality is then measured by the one governing body that exists in this regards, which is the ministry of social policy, under which all other bodies make part of, being the Commissioner for voluntary organizations and the NGO Project Selection Committee.

***-Consultation of service users is an element of quality of the service – do emergency/transitional services in your country have specific methods for this?***

Consultation of service users is not given due importance. As an organization, YMCA Homeless is trying to implement this with the service users, however such changes require planning and often times man power which is something we lack.

Feedback from residents is however still received since the organization has an open door policy and the structure in itself allows for direct contact with residents, even with the management within the organization

Something which is done in this regard is through students doing dissertations in the field and studies related to homeless service provision, however more often than not, these are used internally.

### **3.2. Diversity**

***-People who are homeless have multiple needs so services need to have room for creativity and flexibility in finding solutions – do the quality provisions in your work address this diversity?***

Diversity is often addressed, yet this depends greatly on the entity providing the service. The system at large in itself tends to be rather rigid and often lacks flexibility for individual needs, especially with regards to minors and children in residential placements. People tend to be grouped, and due to the insufficient services provided in the field people are often given a service which does not directly target their need, so for example, minors are placed in shelters for Domestic Violence because no alternative placement is found. YMCA has been very pioneering in this front to highlight specific services required.

### **3.3. Users' Participation**

***- Has your organization developed specific methods to ensure effective participation of the users in spite of the unfavorable context of the often emergency character of the homeless services?***

Yes, however not officially and directly. Yet service users know who they have to talk to and each resident within the homeless shelter has a key worker assigned to them apart from the community worker in order to help facilitate the process.

## **4. Implementation of quality provisions in homeless services**

Objective: this section seeks to identify how the quality provisions are implemented in countries concerned

#### **4.1. Governance**

***-Who is responsible for implementing minimum standards in homeless services in your country? (homeless services' providers, funding bodies of the homeless services, local authorities etc.)***

This mostly falls under the service provider, which in terms of residential facilities tends to be Non Government Organizations and Church institutes.

***-Is the correct implementation of the quality provisions monitored? If yes, who is in charge of monitoring? Through which channels is it performed (i.e. activity reports, outcomes measurement, quality certification system etc.)?***

All services in the field of homelessness are governed by one body, which is the Ministry of Employment, Education and the Family; however, they are not really monitored in terms of quality. Monitoring is directly tied to funding, thus NGOs are obliged to hand in targets and services planned in order to be granted some form of funding. Add to this, every six months an evaluation report is handed in to the NGO commission in order to monitor service provision, however main focus is on statistics and numbers of individuals being helped and not the quality of service.

The Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations also requests some data in this regard from time to time.

#### **4.2. Methods**

***-Do homeless service providers in your country create and implement their own quality provisions without involving any external bodies?***

Homeless service providers create their own quality provisions, however since there is a lot of dependence on government for funding, they automatically need some form of approval.

***-Are quality standards regularly reviewed in your country to adapt to changes in service provision?***

No.

### **4.3. Staff training**

***-Are there budgets available to regularly train homeless service staff to adapt to emerging trends and needs?***

Budgets are very tight and NGOs barely have enough to get by. Staff training is expensive, and even though organizations are aware of the importance of it, they tend to put this aside in order to be able to issue wages and other more immediate expenses.

As an organization YMCA carries out training, however this is often done in house, or through professionals who are willing to offer training to staff members voluntarily.

***-Are there any training schemes to help homeless service staff to implement quality standards in their homeless services?***

No. Such training is carried out internally.

### **5. Evaluation of the existing quality provisions**

Objective: this section seeks to identify how the homeless services' providers assess the quality provision and their implementation and how they define the needs in the area against the background of the factual analysis above

#### **5.1. Organisation of homeless services**

***-In your opinion, is the legislation regarding the organisation of homeless services in your country appropriate?***

There is no legislation regarding homeless services in Malta. This I feel is definitely not appropriate, however we are a far cry away from having one. What I feel is even worst than that is there is no recognized definition of homelessness.

A point in time survey carried out by YMCA Homeless shows that around 300 individuals are homeless in Malta. In a publication published in 2007 which focused the definition of homelessness as being that used by FEANTSA, there is a total of 17582 people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

***-If not, would you recommend new or amended legislation on homeless services? Please describe how.***

For starters, it would be ideal if we could at least, as a country, acknowledge a definition of homelessness, as I feel that could be a strong basis which could potentially lead to a policy and eventually legislation.

## **5.2. Quality provisions**

***-Do you consider the existing quality provisions to be adequate to with the reality of homeless services in your country?***

Unfortunately, after working in the field of homelessness for the past four years, I feel that services are not sufficient with the reality of homelessness. This is mainly so because as a country we do not really recognize that this social burden is on the increase and we tend to blame these individuals as a society.

Another aspect is that on paper there seem to be services that cater for every one's needs; however that is not the reality. Many are those who fall from the country's safety net.

Another aspect here is that the only services provided in the field of homelessness are provided by NGOs, and with the funding available, there is only so much that these can do. A number of people are referred to our services and to other homes and these are operating at full capacity and the need is often felt to increase this capacity to cater for more individuals. At present the YMCA Homeless Shelter, Dar Niki Cassar, is home to 29 individuals when the shelter is meant to cater for 22.

***-If not, would you recommend new or amended legislation on quality in homeless services? Please describe how the legislation could be amended and what should the standards or the principles be.***

The introduction of legislation in this regard could be a stepping stone.

***-Do you consider the capacity of your organization to comply with the quality requirements sufficient? If not, what are the needs to be met?***

Given the resources available I feel that NGOs and those working in field do their best and strive to provide the best service possible. There are however lacunas in the field which tend to hinder the provision of an efficient and effective service.

### 5.3. Specificities of the homeless services

***-Is standardization of quality in homeless services a positive phenomenon, or do you think that (over) standardisation can detrimentally affect small homeless services providers?***

It all depends on how standardizations of quality are implemented. Generalization tends to have an effect as then it would automatically lead to more social exclusion, however if a proper structure, resources and funding are put in place I think that it would lead to better service provision.

***-In your opinion, should there be a two-tier standards system (minimum/maximum) for homeless services to preserve flexibility when necessary (i.e. providing low-threshold services in extreme weather conditions)?***

The setting of some standards specifically related to homelessness could be a definite positive in the regard and would already be a leap forward.

***-One of the criteria of quality in the provision of the homeless services is ensuring effective participation of the service users. Do you find ensuring effective participation of the users in the homeless services challenging? Is this a criterion difficult to meet in your opinion?***

This is very debatable, as often the perceived needs and the actual needs of individuals vary.

### 5.4. Implementation of quality

***-Do you think that the quality standards are correctly implemented in the homeless services in your country?***

No, mainly since fixed quality standards specifically on homelessness do not exist. When quality standards are implemented, however on a generic level, this is, in my opinion done for all the wrong reasons, that is, to reduce costs.

***-In your opinion, what are key principles to consider when implementing quality in homeless services? (Transparency, support, user participation, continuous review, understanding of the homeless sector, bottom-up approach, etc.)***

Key principles that need to be considered are as follows:

- To start off with, immediate needs have to be met. Having limited placements, or being selective in who to accept and who to refuse will lead to a number of people not reaching the service.
- Services need to be flexible in order to meet client's need, whatever their age. There are, for example, a number of youths who spend their life being moved from one place to another because they do not fit in with this structure, and we need to be suitably adapted in order to still provide them with a service.
- Importance needs to be given to Aftercare. This would help prevent the same people from running around in circles once they leave the residential facility.
- Awareness and prevention work can lead to avoid those who are at risk of becoming homeless to improve their condition when they are still in time rather than looking for help when it is too late
- Have a clearly defined and recognized definition of homelessness.

## **6. The role of the European Union**

Objective: This section seeks to identify the perceptions of how the EU legislation is affecting the provision of homeless services. In the second place, it looks at what the role of the European Union should be in defining the common quality criteria.

### **6.1. Impact of EU legislation**

***-Have you encountered situations where EU rules have had a direct positive or negative impact on the functioning of services in your country?***

Not that I am aware of.

***-Are you aware of EU legislation on public procurement and state aid?***

No

***-When another EU national uses a homeless service in your country, do you encounter problems with regarding to his/her entitlement to receive services?***

As an organization YMCA does not discriminate against race, nationality or religion, therefore internally they are provided with the same services as a Maltese national would.

When working with other organizations, I feel that in general the same as above applies, though there have been specific cases which have proved to be problematic.

## **6.2. Quality framework**

***-Do you think it would be useful to have a European framework of quality in homeless (emergency) services?***

Having such a framework I think would help influence decisions taken locally, however unless we recognize that in Malta we have a problem in this area, there is only so much it can effect.

***-Do you see a role for FEANTSA in supporting the development of quality in homeless services? (for instance by developing a set of quality principles in homeless services)***

Having an entity like FEANTSA involved in the development of quality in homeless service provision would definitely be beneficial, on two fronts. First of all, it could provide the guidelines that are lacking locally, and secondly, it would help back arguments brought about by YMCA and other services in the field of homelessness to pressure changes locally.