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# Institutionalisation and Deformalisation: Reorganising Access to Service Provision for Homeless EU Migrants

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› **Abstract** *Since the European Union enlargements, NGOs across the ‘old EU’ have been reporting increasing numbers of clients from the ‘new’ Member States. As local authorities and service providers respond to these needs, policies are in a dynamic process of being made, changed and negotiated. This article presents findings from a recently completed research project on services and the situation of Polish migrants in cases of rooflessness in Copenhagen, Dublin, Amsterdam and Stockholm. Most changes in provision and policy are incremental in nature, as actors ‘muddle through’ and adapt to the immediate problems they are facing to the actions of other actors. ‘Institutionalisation’ and the ‘deformalisation’ of support for EU migrants occur simultaneously in all cities. There are programmes aimed specifically at migrants but they may have negative effects and exclude those who do not fit a predefined profile. Informal, short-term solutions in individual cases may also occur in more restrictive contexts. Migrants are left uncertain and have to carefully balance their survival strategies as they compete with other groups of homeless persons for dynamically changing access to resources.*

› **Keywords** *EU migrants, services, rough sleeping*

## Introduction

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Since European Union enlargements in 2004 and 2007, NGOs across the 'old EU' have been reporting increasing numbers of clients from the 'new' Member States. Additionally, the recent economic crisis has resulted in harder conditions for EU migrants, observed for instance in increased amounts of financial help received from families back home (reverse remittances) (Pemberton *et al.*, 2014). The situation demands new policies and, indeed, the policies and practices of access to services for this group are in the process of reorganisation.

Simple policy-making models have suggested that the process occurs in consecutive steps such as: identifying the problem, agenda-setting and policy implementation. These stages may be supplemented by policy evaluation, which would complete the circular model and conclude the cycle of policy-making (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). These models suggest that policies are steered by superior institutional actors, which in many cases seems contrary to empirical evidence. It has been pointed out that policy-making does not usually proceed neatly in stages and, hence, other models move away from rational choice and clear-cut stages of a linear or cyclical framework (Jann and Wegrich, 2007).

The incrementalist approach, for instance, claimed that since policies are created in the environment of already existing policies, the means and the end are not clearly distinct and it is easier for the actors to agree on a specific policy proposal than on values or objectives. Hence, small adjustments to current policies are most likely to be implemented. According to this approach, policy-making is thus about dealing with immediate problems as they arrive and 'muddling through' (Lindblom, 1959). Further, 'garbage can' models in organization theory showed how problems, solutions and participants meet with no particular order or rules (Cohen *et al.*, 1972). These 'organized anarchy' models assume that various policy streams progress simultaneously. For instance, Kingdon (1984) proposed a model of three, largely independent, streams; problem-defining, the political agenda and the policy stream may or may not converge in a 'window of opportunity' ultimately to structure the decision agenda (Kingdon, 1984).

The recently noticed problem of homelessness among EU migrants is partly due to uncoordinated policy-making within the European Union. European regulations on free movement and an open labour market are set against welfare and housing policies, which are left to the discretion of individual Member States. The right to reside for over three months (and hence access some forms of support) is based on having employment or sufficient means of one's own. Contributory benefits do not cover 'economically inactive' persons or migrants who have worked on an undocumented basis, were in employment for very short periods of time or worked previously in other states. Furthermore, due to long periods of unemploy-

ment, their entitlements may have already expired in the home country. Further still, it is usually the local governments that are responsible for implementing policies and they impose their own restrictions, such as the criterion of having a 'local connection'. Municipalities also bear the responsibility for emergency provision, such as night shelters.

The legal limbo some EU migrants find themselves in was addressed in FEANTSA's policy statements (2011; 2013) and during the FEANTSA conference in 2012. FEANTSA advocated – as did other voluntary organizations – clarity at EU level in relation to the ambiguous position of EU migrants and their access to services, including on the terms 'genuine chance for employment', 'job-seekers' status and 'unreasonable burden on social welfare system' included in the EU Directive on Free Movement (FEANTSA, 2013; 2015; Homeless Migrants in Copenhagen, 2012).

In spite of this need for a European policy change, it is the service providers, often from the voluntary sector, that are the first to meet migrants in need. Services adapt to the new situation and to the different needs of different groups of migrants. Providers have to take into account the specificity of migrant homelessness. They also have to modify their funding for programmes that can no longer be based on the fact that users are entitled to claim benefits. This process of service reorganisation and policy-making in relation to the homelessness of EU migrants lies at the centre of this paper.

The paper is based on data from a project financed by a research grant of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (0369/IP3/2011/71). One of the principal aims of the research project was to look at the reorganisation of access to homeless services for migrants in various cities in Europe. Homelessness among EU migrants is a relatively small-scale issue but, as mentioned above, it concerns policy-making on various levels: from the responsibility of municipalities to provide emergency support to the transnational and European issues of mobility and welfare coordination. The aim of the study was also to analyse the processes of mutual adaptation of migrant survival strategies and the social practices of services for homeless persons. The objective was to capture the dynamic, interactive process of adaptation and negotiation of rights, accessibility of services and assistance.

Fieldwork concentrated on the case of Polish migrants sleeping rough in four Western European cities: Copenhagen, Dublin, Amsterdam and Stockholm. The cities chosen were deliberately not metropolises such as London or Paris, but were nonetheless capital cities and the largest cities of the most prosperous EU countries with established welfare systems and with extensive provision for homeless people.

Policy documents, reports and available data on homelessness among EU migrants from each country and city were analysed. Fieldwork for this project was conducted in the summer months of 2012 and 2013. I spent 30 days in each city and in total conducted 52 interviews with authorities and NGOs, including officials, managers, front-line staff and volunteers in various organizations dealing with homelessness or migration. Many hours were also spent on ethnographic participant observation at services and interviews with Polish migrants experiencing homelessness (rough sleeping, using shelters and day centres) (Table 1). All participants were informed about the research project and gave their consent to be interviewed.

The possibility for migrants to access some services changes very rapidly. The cases described refer to the situation on the ground during the fieldwork. However, rather than capturing a snapshot of the situation, the aim was to look at policy in the process of being made and the dynamics of the situation, as well as to see how different actors influence each other.

**Table 1. Basic Fieldwork Information**

	2012	2012	2013	2013
	Copenhagen	Dublin	Amsterdam	Stockholm
Number of expert interviews (NGOs)	16 (8)	16 (8)	9 (7)	11 (8)
Size of the Polish rough sleepers population in contact (women)	15 (2)	19 (2)	30 (1)	35 (6)
Collected interviews/life stories (women)	7 (1)	5 (0)	7 (1)	5 (1)

## Migrant Homelessness

As mentioned above, migrant homelessness is in some respects different from the typical situations of homelessness among indigenous persons. Many studies have shown an increased risk of poverty and destitution for migrants. Migrant vulnerabilities that have been identified are linked to a precarious situation on the labour market (also de-skilling) and the housing market, a (transitional) lack of access to financial support, a poorer knowledge of the welfare system and differing social safety nets (Edgar *et al.*, 2004, Pleace, 2010).

The situation of EU migrants has been studied predominantly in the UK, where the share of rough sleepers from Eastern Europe rose sharply in the mid-2000's (Homeless Link, 2006; 2009; 2010; Broadway, 2007; 2009). Evidence on the situation of EU migrants in other countries is not well documented, and for the countries in question it will be summarised further below.

In the UK, the causes of migrant homelessness and the question of whether destitution predated migration were the subject of contradictory findings (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2012). It was observed that homeless EU migrants have support needs that are different to many indigenous clients of low-threshold services; for instance, fewer of them had mental health or drug-related problems (Bowpitt *et al.*, 2011). Indeed, a survey on multiple exclusion among service users found lower indicators of severe problems among migrants, who nonetheless had higher rates of rough sleeping (probably mostly due to a lack of access to shelters). Adverse life events were equally common among all participants. Overall, however, the 'structural causes' of migrant homelessness seemed to be more important. Destitution, including homelessness, usually happened after arrival to the UK, even if some psychiatric problems or drug use preceded migration (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2012).

Still, East European migrants who were homeless in the UK had multiple problems. They had limited English language skills and mostly used the social networks of their peers, which led to a depreciation of job status and low pay, as well as to living in overcrowded situations in the private rented sector. They were often dependent on charitable support and informal networks since they were usually excluded from more long-term support (Bowpitt *et al.*, 2011).

Two main groups of homeless EU migrants were described in the British context: (1) those with migration-related difficulties and (2) those with long-term vulnerabilities (Bowpitt *et al.*, 2011; Garapich, 2011; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2012). It was observed in the UK, but also in Ireland and Denmark (Christensen and Kubickova, 2011; Focus Ireland, 2012), that migration can trigger not only a situation of homelessness in the case of those at highest risk, but can also increase vulnerability. For homeless migrants, the lack of a quick response and a change in situation were particularly likely to lead to long-term rooflessness with increased health and substance misuse problems (Bowpitt *et al.*, 2011; Garapich, 2011).

## Putting the Selected Cities and Countries in Context

After Romania, Poland is the largest sending EU Member State. The main destinations of Polish migrants are the UK and Germany, but a significant number of Poles emigrated to or are temporarily residing in Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden (Table 2). These selected countries may be described as prosperous welfare states, albeit with different social welfare regimes. All of the countries chosen are also 'new' migration countries, where the majority of Polish workers emigrating after 2004 did not have long-established national social networks to depend on. Ireland and Sweden opened their labour markets to new EU citizens in 2004, the Netherlands in 2007 and Denmark in 2009.

**Table 2. Polish Citizens Residing Temporarily in Other EU States (still registered in Poland)**

Polish emigration		2002	2007	2011
	<b>European Union</b>	<b>451,000</b>	<b>1,860,000</b>	<b>1,670,000</b>
	Of which to:			
<b>Largest emigration</b>	United Kingdom	24,000	690,000	625,000
	Germany	294,000	490,000	470,000
<b>Countries studied</b>	Denmark		17,000	21,000
	Ireland	2,000	200,000	120,000
	The Netherlands	10,000	98,000	95,000
	Sweden	6,000	27,000	36,000

Source: Główny Urząd Statystyczny

The size and characteristics of labour markets have a large influence on migration patterns to these countries. Polish migrants to the EU are generally young and well educated. Some official data about Polish migrants to these countries are supplemented by results from surveys using the Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) method, which were recently conducted in Denmark (Hansen and Hansen, 2009) and Ireland (Mühlau *et al.*, 2011) to study the living and working conditions of Polish migrants that are partly hidden from the official registers. These are mobile citizens who are not always registered abroad; they work off the books or temporarily. Many are low skilled, with no knowledge of foreign languages, often living in poor conditions and situations of overcrowding.

Ireland absorbed a high number of Polish workers in the post-accession period, but the effects of economic recession are visible in the high foreign-unemployment rate and many Poles leaving Ireland after 2008 (Tables 2 and 3). Even though Polish migration in Ireland became more settled with an increasing number of family reunions, many Poles lived in situations of overcrowding, renting on the private market and usually sharing dwellings (only 5 percent of respondents in an RDS survey did not share with another family) (Mühlau *et al.*, 2011). Many Polish migrants in the Netherlands were employed via temporary work agencies; they were mostly low-skilled men engaged for seasonal work in agriculture. Unfavourable work contracts and exploitation by employers were named as the most significant problems for Polish migrants in the Netherlands (Kaczmarczyk, 2013). On the other hand, Denmark and Sweden experienced much more moderate immigration, probably due in part to language barriers and the big influence of trade unions, especially in sectors like construction. Polish migrants in Sweden (at least those residing there officially and for long enough to be registered) are young and generally well educated (Gerdes and Wadensjö, 2013). However, an RDS survey of the Polish community in Denmark found that 12 percent of respondents had neither a legal residence nor employment and another 22 percent were in a grey zone (not having fulfilled all formalities). Also 45 percent of them had previously worked in another state (other than Poland and Denmark) (Hansen and Hansen, 2009).

**Table 3. Comparison of Countries of Polish Migration**

	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
Population 2012	5,580,000	4,580,000	16,730,000	9,480,000
Percent foreign-born (percent born outside EU27)	8.8 (6.2)	14.1 (3.1)	10.9 (8.4)	13.8 (8.8)
Three largest foreign-born groups	Germany, Turkey, <b>Poland</b>	UK, <b>Poland</b> , Lithuania	Turkey, Suriname, Morocco	Finland, Iraq, <b>Poland</b>
Polish population 2006 and 2012	21,000 32,000	63,000 123,000	30,000 78,000	52,000 75,000
Opening labour market to A10	2009	2004	2007	2004
Unemployment rate 2006 (and 2012)	3.9 (7.5)	4.5 (14.8)	4.4 (5.3)	7.1 (8.0)
Foreign-born unemployment rate 2009-2010 (EU-born)	13.0 (9.0)	16.0 (17.0)	8.0 (5.0)	15.0 (8.0)
Estimated homeless population	4,998	3,808	18,000	10,100
Estimated % homeless migrants	21%	19%	46%	34%

Sources: Eurostat; Benjaminsen, 2009; Central Statistics Office, 2012; Central Bureau voor de Statistiek; Socialstyrelsen, 2012.

In the selected countries, the capital (and largest) cities were chosen as field sites. Denmark and Ireland are small countries with a large share of the population concentrated in capital cities, where Polish people have also recently become one of the largest foreign-born groups. Sweden and the Netherlands, on the other hand, have a larger share of non-European migrants (Table 3). A large share of the Polish community outside of Poland is concentrated in Dublin, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Amsterdam stands out as the only city studied that does not have a concentration of Polish expatriates, as it does not offer many jobs (or housing) for menial workers. Amsterdam, however, is a popular tourist destination, which explains the migration strategies of some individual migrants (Table 4). All four cities are comparable in terms of the size of their metropolitan population and in terms of facing large problems with homelessness. No easily comparable data on the scale of homelessness exists, but each of the cities has a substantial number of rough sleepers or people in acute housing situations. Also, the estimated percentage of foreign-born persons among the homeless population is high and varies from 19 percent in Copenhagen to 60 percent in Amsterdam (Table 4).

**Table 4. Comparison of Cities**

	<b>Copenhagen</b>	<b>Dublin</b>	<b>Amsterdam</b>	<b>Stockholm</b>
City population	550,000	530,000	790,000	880,000
Metropolitan population	1,700,000	1,300,000	2,300,000	2,100,000
Percent minorities	16%	16%	30%	22%
Polish population 2012	12,000	31,000	3,000	31,000
Estimated number of homeless persons	1,542	2,375	937	3,400
Estimated % of homeless migrants	19%	24%	60%	40%

Sources: Danmarks Statistik; Central Statistics Office; Central Bureau voor de Statistiek; Statistiska centralbyrån; Benjaminsen, 2009; G4, 2012; Socialstyrelsen, 2012.

## Access to Services for EU Migrants in Selected Cities

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In accordance with EU Directive 2004/38 on the right of Union citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, an EU migrant “should not become an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State”. With minor variations, the Directive is implemented in all Member States (for instance, in Ireland migrants must satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition to receive welfare payments). Generally, therefore, funding for homeless EU migrants with no right to reside does not come from the host state and the solution offered officially is repatriation. ‘Local connection’ restrictions may further limit migrant access to services, as happens in all the cities under consideration, with additional restrictions in Amsterdam, where one has to be in a ‘socially vulnerable’ target group to qualify for benefits.

Estimates from all those cities show that at least a couple of hundred EU migrants were trying to access basic services during the year; 10-50 percent of them were Polish (Homeless Migrants in Copenhagen, 2012; Focus Ireland, 2012; G4 User, 2012; Socialstyrelsen, 2013). The groups I came in direct contact with during fieldwork in the centres of those cities numbered approximately 20 to 50 persons. Those were mostly members of a core group of long-term Polish rough sleepers. Polish homeless migrants are by no means a well-defined category and they may have different residence status and employment history. My respondents, however, did not usually meet the criteria of the EU Directive on free movement (they had no right to reside) and were excluded from most financial and long-term support. Available data on homeless EU migrants and access to services for such persons will be described below for each city.

### *Copenhagen*

Even though a lack of work was reported as the principal problem of migrants using the Kofoeds Kælder day centre in Copenhagen, the study found that they had multiple, severe problems; most were rough sleeping or using emergency shelter, their language and professional skills were low and their levels of addictions high (Christensen and Kubickova, 2011). Going back to Poland was not seen as an option by most of the Polish clients interviewed. According to another report, this severe marginalization could be identified in 20 percent of cases of about 500 EU migrants estimated to be in acute homelessness in Copenhagen in a particular year (Homeless Migrants in Copenhagen, 2012).

At the time of the fieldwork, Polish rough-sleeping migrants were using outreach food distribution, a couple of day centres serving free meals and there was one ‘night café’ for about 25 people, where one could spend the night and no questions were asked. My respondents were sleeping in parks, vehicles and spending the days in the public space in the city centre, most often individually or in groups of 2-3 persons.

### ***Dublin***

In 2006, it was estimated that about 60 to 120 EU migrants were homeless in Dublin (Homeless Agency, 2006). They were predominantly recently-arrived migrants who had no access to payments. Their problems revolved around a lack of employment, poor knowledge of the language, and formalities. It was stressed that they need different support from 'traditionally' homeless people. Six years later, the consequences of long-term destitution were apparent. Most Polish respondents had been homeless for 1-2 years, their health was poor, they had usually never asked for any formal support, they did not participate in any courses, and they were entrenched in street culture (begging, scavenging and drinking) (Focus Ireland, 2012).

In 2012 a pilot programme aimed at 'reconnecting' Eastern European migrants with their home countries was launched by Dublin City Council, the Mendicity Institution (a local NGO) and the Polish Barka Foundation. The goal was set at 20 reconnections within half a year, as each "successful reconnection is value for money" (Reconnection and Reintegration of Central and Eastern European migrants, Dublin 2012). In order to provide comprehensive case management, a hostel for persons participating in the programme was opened. The pressure for effectiveness was criticized by some of the staff, while uncertainty about the hostel's future was a matter for concern among participants (Mostowska, 2014). Other voluntary and municipal organizations were also helping with documents, advice, courses or repatriation. Homeless Polish people in Dublin that I had been in contact with were either staying at the 'Polish hostel', had received payments and were staying in mainstream hostels, or were rough sleeping. They visited various day centres during the day and spent most of the time in large groups in and around these facilities. Repatriation was not seen as a real option. Also, the group was wary of individuals who declared a readiness to go back to Poland, as it undermined the group's solidarity.

### ***Amsterdam***

In 2012, FEANTSA filed a collective complaint to the Council of Europe against the Netherlands (Complaint No. 86/2012, 2012) on the basis that lawfully resident EU migrant workers were being excluded from shelters where they lacked the 'local connection'. In 2014, a lack of access to emergency shelters was declared not to be compatible with the provisions of the Revised Social Charter.

An emergency shelter for all operated in Amsterdam only during winter time (as in other cities) and in the warm months, beds were only available in some of the organizations on an exceptional basis (before being admitted to hospital, a couple of days before repatriation). The Municipality funded the Polish Barka Foundation to operate an outreach team for a 'reconnections' programme. The De

Regenbooggroep organization was running a centre for migrants (Amoc) and in 2011 opened a helpdesk for Eastern Europeans. Amoc offered some emergency beds, advice and repatriation. Various day centres, soup kitchens and food outreach were available.

Amsterdam is exceptional among other large Dutch cities as it has more transient rough sleepers who are more often in contact with law enforcement and who use illegal drugs more often (G4 User, 2012). Also, the Polish migrants using the services that I met were substantially younger and more mobile than in other cities. Many were in their twenties and were 'on the way' to England, France or the Scandinavian countries.

### *Stockholm*

Even though NGOs were reporting an increase in migrant homelessness, the 2011 homelessness survey revealed a low number of migrants. Hence, the Swedish Health and Social Welfare Board conducted another survey specifically on the homelessness of EU migrants with no right to reside. Romanian citizens were the largest group, while Poles comprised 10 percent of cases (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). Another report showed that migrants' problems were mostly due to unemployment and that their episodes of homelessness were relatively short (Stadsmission, 2012). Street workers on an average night counted about 150 rough sleepers in the city centre and another 100 in tents in green areas.

In 2011, a joint project of Stockholm's Stadsmission (one of the largest and oldest voluntary organisations working in the field of homelessness in Stockholm), the municipality and an employment agency, in cooperation with other NGOs and with funding from the European Social Fund, was launched in Stockholm. 'Crossroads' offered both basic support (meals, showers, emergency beds) and employment advice and courses. Other voluntary organizations offered soup kitchens and day centres. Emergency shelters operated in the wintertime.

Crossroads was hailed a success and was subsequently rolled out in other cities. Its focus on employment meant that it was predominantly visited by 'third country nationals' – for instance, many Africans with permanent residence in Southern European countries. The Polish group, which was much less job-ready with poorer health and language skills, stopped coming to Crossroads and limited itself to soup kitchens and day centres in other organizations. Some of these NGOs, especially smaller ones, were very critical of the 'official' policy, which they saw as the city side-lining their efforts to serve everyone and as removing such services from the city centre to less accessible locations. One place, about 20km from Stockholm, has become a safe haven for Poles. A little day centre run by the Swedish church has attracted the whole Polish group. They drove most of the older guests away

and kept other groups from approaching it. Polish migrants have developed very friendly relations with the staff there and internal group mechanisms for keeping order to keep up good relations.

As summarised above, in all cities, service responses and policies are fragmented, not well coordinated and constantly changing. Organizations adopt policies as to which groups they want to and can serve. This can change quickly due to financing but also for more mundane reasons – for instance, when a staff member with knowledge of a foreign language leaves the job. Some programmes have been financed through private funds (Koføeds Kælder, Projekt Udenfor, Amoc) or as ‘projects’ (the cooperation of the Dublin City Council and Barka Foundation, or Crossroads co-financed by the European Social Fund). This means that they are terminated once the project is completed. This dynamic has further been complicated by the strategies of individual migrants and groups of migrants as well as interaction between different groups of users.

Most of these processes seem to be incremental in nature, as a particular actor adapts to the immediate problem they are facing and to the actions of other actors. Depending on who those actors are (local government, NGOs or individual staff members) these actions may be roughly put in two categories: ‘deformalisation’ and ‘institutionalisation’.

## **Deformalisation and Individualisation**

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In circumstances where migrant access to services that are run or financed by the local government becomes increasingly restricted, usually other options appear. Such was the case with the outreach and mobile café by Projekt Udenfor that was run in Copenhagen. Likewise, the Salvation Army soup run in Amsterdam was a reaction to increase in demand. These kinds of services are aimed at the most excluded; support is offered anonymously and involves food, the delivery of clothes and sleeping bags, keeping in contact where there are health problems, helping with lost documents and the like.

In a restrictive national and municipal context, low threshold service providers may choose deliberately not to report the nationality of clients. Another strategy they implement is to fund this part of their work through private means. This was the case with Amoc serving Eastern Europeans clients and Koføeds Kælder in Copenhagen. Providers run the risk of conflict with authority or other organizations, but also that the programme will have to be discontinued when the money runs out, which leaves destitute migrants insecure and uncertain.

Restrictive contexts however also lead to 'individualisation'. By this I mean, for instance, informal referrals and the placement of individuals in shelters or hospitals. On an exceptional basis, help is 'deformalised' and the solutions offered are usually to individuals in the most dramatic circumstances. These are quiet acts of professional noncompliance by staff with restrictions and are usually short-term solutions for individual persons (Mostowska, 2014). Local government may deliberately avoid institutionalising support for migrants, shifting the responsibility to the voluntary sector, even if it is in fact financing it. NGOs may also have a better knowledge of the groups in questions and be more flexible (Olsson and Nordfeldt, 2008).

We depend on private organizations. And of course NGO organizations, they can do something that the city perhaps can't do. They have access to something and they don't have to be so strict. We have to follow the law. (Interview, Municipal Social Services, Copenhagen 2012)

In Copenhagen and Amsterdam, where there were fewer formal options for migrants, contacts with clients were also much more individualised, as no strong Polish group existed. Outside of routine, individual help and advice was also declared in Dublin and Stockholm, with regards, for instance, to obtaining payments. Restrictions in access to services may leave individuals in long-term homelessness with increasing health and addiction problems. 'Cracks' in the system, however, mean that deformalised help may become possible for individuals.

## **Institutionalisation**

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Visible groups of foreign rough sleepers in the public space put greater onus on local authorities to take action. Institutionalisation is understood here as the creation or organization of governmental institutions or particular bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing policy. The local government thus takes responsibility and formally takes part in some sort of programme aimed especially at EU migrants. Such was the case with the agreement between Dublin City Council, the Mendicity Institution and the Polish Barka Foundation, and with the creation of Crossroads in Stockholm (an organization created through the collaboration of NGOs and the municipality with ESF funding).

Such programmes have a limited time perspective and are aimed at solving the immediate and most visible part of the problem. They may also have negative consequences. It seems that these actions monopolise support for migrants; that is, they allow organizations to justify their practices of exclusion and refer individuals to that one 'official' programme. In the case of many Poles, such referrals to Crossroads were futile. Large group of Polish rough sleepers stopped coming to Crossroads. They were often intoxicated and got into conflict with African and

Roma migrants there. They were also not utilising the employment and formal help offered by Crossroads. This group's needs were actually closer to those of the 'traditional homeless' with severe addiction and health problems. Their nationality was irrelevant, but their 'fragile residence status' (Stenum, 2011) was excluding them from other forms of help.

Large programmes like Crossroads or the cooperation between Dublin City Council and Barka focus on efficiency. Even though Dublin's programme was aimed at the most excluded people, the financial aspect was clear in the project's overview:

The cost/benefit analysis would suggest that the programme cost of €68,000 which indicates a cost per person of €3,400 per successful reconnection is value for money, when one considers the identifiable cost of maintaining an individual in homeless services at a minimum of €20,000 per annum (including accommodation, care and support costs, not including cost impact on other services such as health, prisons, and welfare). (Reconnection and Reintegration of Central and Eastern European migrants, Dublin 2012)

'Institutionalisation' and a focus on efficiency in the case of Stockholm led to specialisation. The largest group of migrants, the easiest and the most common cases received more support more quickly. Those individuals who didn't fit the profile were left at the end of the line. Critique and disagreements arise when authorities engage in such selective policy. In Stockholm, NGOs dealing with migrants not ready for the Crossroads idea were very critical of it.

I don't like Crossroads, because I don't see the point in the EU spending a lot of money so a lot of people can be paid just to tell them that they cannot stay and have to go home. (Interview, Ny Gemenskap, Stockholm 2013)

A tense situation between NGOs was also seen in Amsterdam, where Amoc – which started the project for Eastern Europeans using their own funds – was somehow neglected by the city, which invited Barka to cooperate with the 'reconnections' project.

## **Group Strategies of Homeless Polish Migrants**

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In most research, people in situations of homelessness are seen as individuals acting under structural constraints, having their capabilities and vulnerabilities, interacting with state agencies or NGOs. The importance of group dynamics is often left out. In the case of destitute migrants, the group aspect is particularly interesting. People who lack entitlement to benefits and who lack access to many services, whose social networks are limited, who often have little knowledge of the system and poor command of the foreign language, rely in greater part on their peers. This has been observed during participant observation and has appeared

in many interviews with migrant service users. The short duration of the fieldwork and the way that informants were recruited, however, (mostly in and around low threshold services) might have affected observations, which nevertheless will be summarised here as opening remarks for further discussion.

Differences in migrant situations between cities were significant in terms of the ethnographic field and the main characteristics of the rough sleeping population in contact (Table 5). Polish people using services in Copenhagen and Amsterdam were much more mobile (had usually travelled before between different EU countries) and had been in their current location for a much shorter a time. Especially in the case of Amsterdam, they were also on average much younger. Dublin and Stockholm groups consisted mostly of middle-aged men who had spent many years abroad. As mentioned before, this could be attributed to the characteristics of Polish migration to these cities, but also to the available services and the way they functioned.

Relatively closely-knit groups of Polish migrants were observed in Dublin and Stockholm. These street groups were formed in the vicinity of anchor places: hostels, day centres, railroad stations. Additionally, those cities have much more 'refuse space' around services, which is suitable for hanging out (Höjdestrand, 2009). The availability of services is crucial to group formation, but oppressiveness or friendliness in the public space also plays a vital role. In Amsterdam, where public spaces are especially heavily controlled (and the city centre is also a very densely-built urban fabric), gathering, smoking or talking in front of a soup kitchen is virtually impossible. Service staff themselves are vigilant not to let groups hang out in front of their door.

**Table 5. Basic Information about Polish Migrants Contacted during Fieldwork**

	Copenhagen	Dublin	Amsterdam	Stockholm
Number of Polish rough sleepers contacted (women)	15 (2)	19 (2)	30 (1)	35 (6)
Average age	43	43	36	41
Main characteristics of the population	Individuals, pairs, scattered throughout the city, couple of years or less in Denmark	Largest share of people in hostels, closely-knit drinking group	Scattered, young and mobile (least attached to the city/country) population	Large groups in sleeping places, meeting in one day centre, many years in Sweden
Ethnographic field	Scattered places mostly in public space throughout the city centre	Very limited space within the city centre, public space and institutions, also hostels	Limited space, mostly parks, and institutions in the centre, sleeping places outside of the centre	Very scattered and sometimes distant places throughout the city and beyond Stockholm

The situation in Copenhagen, where most homeless services are located outside the tourist-commercial zone, was between the two extremes. Finding a place to hang out during the day in Copenhagen and Amsterdam was more often done in small groups of two to four people. Lack of access to shelters (with the exception of Dublin) led to the disintegration of migrant groups. In Stockholm, however, a large group of about fifteen persons was living in an abandoned warehouse, and although they travelled by train in smaller groups to a day centre, they remained closely integrated.

In addition to some degree of safety, companionship and access to some (shared) goods, a group also provides easier access to information. This is especially vital for migrants. What was observed during fieldwork for this project, and has been observed on other occasions (Mostowska, 2011; 2013), was that the most important capital among this population is knowledge of services, their schedules, locations, people who could help, knowledge of the language, and ways of taking care of formalities. The same was true of food distribution in front of the Sankta Klara church in the centre of Stockholm. A clearly visible crowd attracted attention and was a meeting place where one could learn about other services located outside the city centre in Hjorthagen, Högdalen or Handen.

Foreign surroundings and using low threshold services means also that migrants usually deal with 'first-come, first-served' type of arrangements. Being physically fit and being in a group is a huge advantage. The Polish people I observed during fieldwork used the strength of their group especially against Roma groups and indigenous drug users. 'Third-country nationals' were often stronger and quicker than the Polish group.

Being in a group also helps in distancing themselves from the state or any support provision (Garapich, 2011). These dense social networks were especially visible in Dublin, where group members cared for each other, shared food, drinks, cigarettes, clothes or information. The group usually puts its internal solidarity above individual interests. As already mentioned, the group's solidarity made it very hard for individuals to 'break away' and, for instance, to admit to engaging in the 'reconnections' procedure.

The particular situation that Polish homeless migrants find themselves in means, however, that there were drawbacks to being associated with the migrant group. Many service providers pointed out that migrant group behaviour was one of the challenges of working with them. Because of the poor reputation Polish people had in some of the day centres, and because of gate-keeping practices, my respondents utilised certain tactics so as to be less noticeable. They meticulously adhered to the rules, did not speak too loudly and kept to the queues. They would also avoid coming to a soup kitchen or day centre in a large group so as not to be associated

with the troublesome element. Also, a more individual personalized contact with service staff made it possible to be treated on exceptional basis, even if residence criteria were not formally met. For many Polish migrants, therefore, daily strategies involved a careful balancing of their identity and attachment to the group depending on what kind of institutional environment they found themselves in. Often, they had to choose between solidarity with their compatriots and seeking cracks in the system to approach a social worker individually. Sticking with the group was particularly important in situations of competition with other groups of (migrant) homeless persons in accessing resources.

My informants had very little knowledge of the system, their rights or entitlement to support. They did not distinguish between different voluntary organizations and municipal or state institutions. The most prevalent opinion was that “Poles don’t have access” in contrast to other groups: “Roma, drug-addicts, Blacks”. Repatriation was not seen as an option by most of them. Employment advice was seen as too bureaucratic and ineffective. Their opinions were mostly influenced by how friendly and open an atmosphere there was rather than what a particular service could actually offer. They therefore especially appreciated the freedom of using a place and, as in the case of Mendicity Institute in Dublin or Kryckan Vallakyrka near Stockholm, used group self-controlling mechanisms to keep order (see also Johnsen *et al.*, 2005). Individual stories and rumours (“she can get you a free ticket home”) spurred short-lived hopes for changing one’s own situation.

For migrants with no right to reside, even access to basic shelter was limited in all the cities studied. Also, programmes aimed specifically at migrants, like the ‘Polish’ shelter in Dublin or Stockholm’s Crossroads, had insufficient capacity to meet needs. Day centres and soup kitchens were the only support that most of the migrant rough sleepers used. The degree of openness of NGOs, the general attitude towards EU migrants and repressiveness in public spaces were the most important factors shaping the strategies of my informants. Begging has been forbidden in Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Dublin has partially banned it. In Copenhagen, Polish rough sleepers relied mostly on bottle collecting and scavenging to survive. In Stockholm, begging was an accepted activity and practiced by some of the respondents. In Amsterdam, on the other hand, many Poles boasted about engaging in small hustles – pickpocketing, shoplifting, dealing drugs or bicycle theft. Generally, homeless Polish people had no confidence in the state or the service providers. They were critical of the system but very thankful to individual people who helped them.

## Comparison and Conclusions

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The problem of EU migrant homelessness was recognized in all cities. Everywhere, municipal responses included winter emergency shelters (although not necessarily specifically for migrants, they were used in large numbers by this group). Outreach teams were reorganized to adapt to new tasks: municipal teams in Copenhagen and Stockholm, and an outreach run by a voluntary organization in Dublin. Repatriation was organised by various voluntary, local and state agencies, and also by Polish consulates. Repatriation was seen the official long-term solution to the problem, with the exception of the Crossroads approach in Stockholm. Municipalities financed voluntary organizations to run low threshold services, but also financed the Polish Barka in Dublin and Amsterdam. Other organizations that targeted this group specifically had to find their own resources (Amoc in Amsterdam, Kofoeds Kælder and Projekt Udenfor in Copenhagen, Kryckan Vallakyrka day centre near Stockholm). Also, other NGOs that served the most marginalised criticised the city's policy of removing services from the city centre (Ny Gemenskap, Convictus in Stockholm). Bans on begging and restrictions on the use of public space can also be seen as policy instruments to repress the presence of migrants in the city.

The rapidly-changing situation of access to support and provision offered to EU migrants is a result of small, incremental actions that are taken at NGO and local levels. Clearly, defining problems, raising awareness, gathering evidence and policy-making are simultaneous processes. There is virtually no EU or national set-up for strategic goals or policy-making. In each municipality, the problem concerns a relatively small group of migrants. It seems also that the definition of the problem is not clear. Is EU migrant homelessness a problem of 'managing migration' or coordinating welfare policies? Should it be approached at local, national, EU or transnational levels? Who is responsible for researching, seeking solutions, financing and implementing such policies – and to what degree?

Interviewees representing authorities and services framed the process of reorganizing services differently. In Denmark, the migration perspective was very apparent. Migrant homelessness was seen particularly as a consequence of 'unprepared migration', which should be prevented. The lack of shelter and restrictions on the use of public space were a way to stop this type of migration and increase repatriation (Mostowska, 2014). The 'troublesome groups of Polish drinkers' causing public nuisance was also a main concern in Amsterdam. Inviting Barka's outreach team was a way to increase repatriations and to counterbalance repressive public space practices and the lack of shelters. Interviewees in Dublin focused on the need to change the behaviour of Polish rough sleepers (drinking, hanging out with the group), but it was also acknowledged that it is a flaw in the welfare system that prevents Polish people from being treated in the same way as Irish citizens. In

Stockholm, again, there was a focus on the concept of the ‘migrant worker’; nonetheless, a migrant in Sweden could be helped on the spot with finding employment and gaining independence.

Furthermore, the problem with policy-making in respect to EU migrant homelessness is that it doesn’t have powerful policy entrepreneurs, which are crucial in the process of agenda setting. It is also clear that the attention of the media, the public but also researchers and politicians varies over time. The importance of the EU migrant homelessness issue fades with time and as new problems appear. Until now, changes in policy have been rather reactive with no long-term goals, strategies or institutional solutions. Individual organizations respond *ad hoc* to the situation.

Using Kingdon’s (1984) conceptual framework, one can say that the window of opportunity for policy streams to converge and reach the decision agenda was very narrow. With no opportunities for change in EU or national policies, local governments and NGOs are introducing small adjustments. In particular cases, when local policies don’t offer solutions, it is up to an individual social worker to help a particular migrant. In fact, actors on various levels – municipalities, service providers and individual migrants – are all ‘muddling through’.

Strategies of muddling through vary. On one hand we see the progressive exclusion of EU migrants from services. Support then sometimes takes place on an individual and exceptional basis in a deformed way. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of this new migrant group leads to the formation of new services and programmes aimed at EU migrants. All changes, however, occur in a dense context of other policies and interests and can therefore lead to conflict or other unintended consequences. The ‘institutionalisation’ of support, coupled with pressure for results and efficiency, excludes the most vulnerable individuals. Repressive policies on the use of public space and uncertainty about access to services have serious consequences for migrant survival strategies and future opportunities. ‘Institutionalisation’ and ‘deformalisation’ occur simultaneously in all cities and are in a way complementary, as each policy change leaves some individuals out. This creates the space for critique, innovation and change.

New types of institutions and practices are currently forming as part of the difficult processes of bargaining and the reorganisation of services. These include, for example, hybrid organizations (non-governmental/local authority partnerships) and transnational outreach work. In addition, the EU has acknowledged some responsibility for ‘the most destitute’, including migrants with no right to reside, devoting over 3.8 billion Euro for the 2014-2020 period to the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). Unfortunately, it has not been envisaged that the money will



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