

Bundesarbeitsgemeins chaft Wohnungslosenhilfe



**NGO lobbying action for a national
homeless strategy**

FEANTSA annual policy conference

- FEANTSA annual policy conference, Confronting homelessness in the EU: Seeking out the next generation of best practices, 24-25 October 2014, Bergamo, Italy
Workshop “Homelessness strategies: Reconciling national frameworks with decentralised responsibilities”

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Why lobby for a National Strategy in Germany?

Public agencies are quite inactive...

- Only a few **regions (Bundesländer)** take steps to systematic action
- The same picture for the **local level** – with exception of big cities
- There is no integrated action at **national level**: nevertheless a refined legal framework

Call for a National Strategy

Why we need a National Strategy for the Relief of Homelessness and Poverty in Germany, who is to implement it and what it strives for?

Who are „Wohnungsnotfälle“?



**Pyramid of homelessness
and housing exclusion**



Why a national strategy?

„Wohnungsnotfälle“ rise drastically



- In 2012, about 284,000 people in Germany were without a home (rise by 15% since 2010)
- BAG W estimates that by 2016, this number will have increased by 30% to 380,000
- Causes for the rise in homelessness and housing exclusion:
 - Rise of poverty and those at risk of poverty
 - lack of affordable housing and a continued decline in the existing social housing stock
 - marked rent rises, particularly in urban areas.
 - Agencies preventing homelessness have not been promoted enough

Why a call for a national strategy?



- to call on political leaders at all governmental levels **to act now and set up national, regional and local action plans** to relieve poverty and homelessness, and identify the key elements of these plans
- to contribute to the development of **national action plans for poverty relief** in Germany, which have not been forthcoming despite repeated requests from the EU.
- to **offer assistance** to governmental and non-governmental support organisations in

Who is to develop the strategy?

Establishment of Action Plans



- Homelessness and Housing Exclusion Action Plan at national level – with NGO participation
- Homelessness and Housing Exclusion Action Plans for all sixteen Federal “Länder” (16 regions) – with NGO participation
- Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

Which Joint strategic objectives at all political



- We need an overall support system for people who experience homelessness and housing exclusion. This is to be coordinated across all administrative areas and to go beyond the jurisdiction of individual Books of the German Social Welfare Code (“Sozialgesetzbuch”).
- We need a nationwide homelessness prevention scheme that helps people to avoid losing their home.
- We need to cut to zero the number of rough-sleeping homeless by promoting integrated emergency support.

Who does what? Key general tasks on national level



- An **inter-ministerial working group** has to be established as soon as possible with participation of BAG W (national NGO umbrella for the homeless)
- Implement a **national fund for** innovation of social services for the homeless.
- Framework legislation at federal level which obliges every authority across Germany **to collect statistical data** on the homeless and those at risk of homelessness
- The BAG W calls on legislators to ensure that **planning is made binding** and embedded in Books II and XII of the German Social Welfare Code

Who does what? Key general tasks on „Länder“ level



- With the help of surveys, each Federal Land shall ascertain the availability of support services and discern support needs within its region. Such a census will improve the future planning of support services.
- Each Federal Land shall make the collection of Wohnungsnotfall–statistics on Länder level mandatory regardless of any framework legislation – passed or not – at federal level.
- Regular conferences on homelessness and housing exclusion shall be held, supporting the entire process of setting–up, carrying out and evaluating the Action Plans

Who does what? Key general tasks at local level



- Officially adopt a support system strategy for “Wohnungsnotfälle” and embed it in the local social planning policy, in close cooperation with non-governmental organisations which shall have equal status alongside their governmental counterparts.
- create a comprehensive and coordinated support system for cases of homelessness and housing exclusion that includes all players and goes beyond the jurisdiction of single Books of the German Social Welfare Code
- establish more special units with elaborated prevention schemes

Call for a National Strategy



What has to be done in specific policy areas of the national strategy?

A short overview of some of our demands

Example I: Housing and housing policy



- Establishment of housing policy at the **federal level** (Homelessness statistics, legal Ceiling for rent rises, social housing programmes)
 - „**Bundesländer**“ must ensure affordable housing by social housing policy (including prevention programmes, homelessness statistics)
- Municipalities** have to develop concepts of local housing supply and implement local units for prevention of homelessness

Example II: Health Care and Health Care Policy



- **Federal Level:** co-payments for medication and other medical products as well as prescription charges have to be abolished
- **Bundesländer:** The promotion of medical projects shall be an integral part of the Länder action plans for emergency housing cases.
- **Municipalities:** have to set up low-threshold support services

Example III: Help for homeless migrants and migration policy



- **Federal Level:** Financial support of municipalities for emergency care through the federal state
- **Bundesländer:** Establishment of adequate help- and funding structures through regulations
- **Kommunen:** ensure non-discriminatory access to emergency care regardless of nationality

How have we lobbied? How will we lobby?



Phase 1: Publication and Distribution 2013/2014

- Presentation on National conference September 2013
- Distribution as publication in print and PDF to members (March 2014)
- National press conference (April 2014)
- Publication through our journal „Homeless“ (April 2014)
- Presentation as a specific part of our website (May 2014)
- Specific distribution to target groups in an policy and other und NGO (May until now)

Phase 2: specific lobby talks 2014

- Presentation of National Strategy on meeting of largest housing companies Germany (more than 20.000 Units p. company- April 14) – result: moderate interest
- Speaker of housing policy Green party (June) – result: parliamentary support
- National federation of home owners (July) – result: building alliance in 15‘
- Ministry of social affairs : secretary of state (September 14‘) – result: mixed; no inter-

Achievements so far



Plus:

- More integration of our own programmatic
- Support for member organisations for their local and regional lobby and support from members for the Strategy
- Theme is in the „homeless arena“, but not yet in the larger political arena
- Start of building alliances around the Issue of National Strategy
- Good info –tool for successful lobbying EHAP Germany

Minus:

- No specific interest of National Government so far: they prefer lobbying of single ministries

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We carry on...!

But: Never forget: also without a national strategy You can make happen a lot of things...

By the way: You can read an English full version of our Call for National strategy by beginning of 2015...

Thanks for listening!