

*National Strategic Reports 2008-2010  
on social protection and social inclusion:*

***Paving the way for a European  
consensual framework on  
homelessness***



*FEANTSA Evaluation of the 2008-2010 National strategic reports on social protection and social  
inclusion  
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## 1. BACKGROUND

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In September-October 2008, all 27 EU countries sent national progress reports on their anti-poverty policies to the European Commission in Brussels. These reports are referred to as “[National strategic reports on social protection and social inclusion](#)” (NSR) and they are, in principle, prepared in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders (social services, advocacy groups, researchers, other ministries, etc). The European Commission uses these reports to monitor progress made towards meeting the EU common objectives on Social Inclusion, Pensions, and Health and Long-Term Care (agreed in 2006). The [Social inclusion objectives](#) are relevant for FEANTSA as they include “ensuring access for all to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion, and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion”.

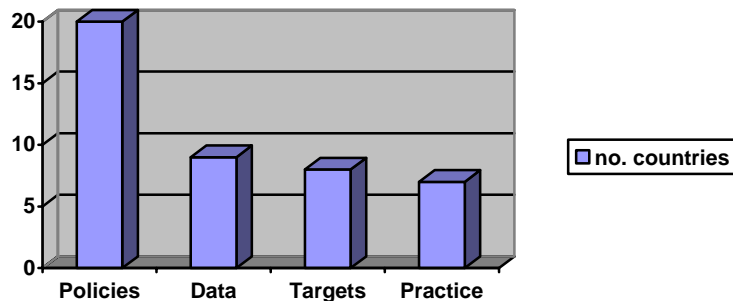
FEANTSA, the European Federation of national organisations working with the homeless/Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri, is a European Non-Governmental Organisation committed to preventing and reducing homelessness with a view to its progressive elimination. FEANTSA has been monitoring the EU social inclusion strategy since 2001 and has seen significant policy progress on homelessness in many EU countries, despite the unfavourable EU political context which tends to draw more attention to economic growth than to social inclusion. This is very telling of the potential of Open Method of Coordination (OMC) which can probably contribute to the building of a European consensus on how to tackle the phenomenon of homelessness.

Homelessness is a form of social exclusion which has been highlighted as a key priority in previous national reporting rounds (along with child poverty, financial exclusion, and other poverty-related phenomena). Homelessness is indeed a continuing public policy issue across all European countries. Many countries have developed integrated strategies to significantly reduce homelessness. In this context, reliable data are needed on the extent of homelessness, as well as information on the social characteristics, causes and geographical spread of the population. The European Commission is therefore facilitating exchanges and research on homelessness data collection and measurement ([MPHISIS](#) project), which would allow for more effective monitoring of progress on homelessness and homeless policy-making in the EU social inclusion strategy. Moreover, national statistics institutes will also collect data on homelessness in the framework of the 2011 round of population and housing censuses (see [EU regulation](#)). All these initiatives should serve to develop appropriate action in response to the European Parliament call to end street homelessness by 2015 (see [Written Declaration 111/2007](#)).

This FEANTSA paper does not aim to evaluate national homeless policies since the NSRs do not contain indepth information on such policies (lack of information on funding, lack of data on homelessness). This paper rather assesses the weight of homelessness in the 2008-2010 round of national reporting by highlighting the homeless policies, data, targets and good practices in the NSRs. The paper then draws conclusions from this analysis, and proposes key actions at EU level to build on the content of the 2008-2010 round of NSRs and use the full potential of Open Method of Coordination in the area of homelessness.

## 2. KEY POLICY TRENDS ON HOMELESSNESS IN THE NSRs

This section takes stock of the general policy trends on homelessness in the NSRs looking more specifically at the following elements: homelessness policies; existing data on homelessness in the NSR; the use of clear targets and objectives; and good practices outlined in the NSRs. The graph below provides a general indication of homelessness policy trends in the NSR 2008-2010:



Policies on homelessness are outlined in 20 country reports (not including the incoming country reports of the Netherlands, Poland and Spain where significant homeless policy developments have taken place). Data on homelessness is present in 9 reports while other reports. Targets and objectives on homelessness are used in 8 reports. Finally, good practices on or related to homelessness are put forward in 7 reports. The following sections aim to provide more detail on these four key trends.

### 2.1 Homelessness: a key policy priority

When countries first started coordinating their anti-poverty policies in 2001, the first national reports showed that the phenomenon of homelessness was underresearched in most EU countries, and most countries previously focused on the visible forms of homelessness only (mainly rough sleeping). However, research carried out since then has shown that homelessness is a dynamic process linked to other forms of housing exclusion. Public policy now increasingly approaches homelessness in a more integrated way looking at people experiencing different forms of homelessness<sup>1</sup>, such as people sleeping rough, people in emergency accommodation, people living in accommodation for homeless people, people living in institutions (due to lack of shelter), people living in non-conventional dwellings, or people living with family/friends.

It is clear from the 2008-2010 NSRs that most countries are developing or consolidating actions to tackle homelessness (Finland, Austria, Belgium, France, UK, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovak republic, Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania, Greece, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Portugal), and homelessness is considered a priority area for many of these countries. The NSRs include two broad types of action on homelessness: 1. Clearcut strategies which tackle homelessness in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional way, and 2. Measures on homelessness integrated in wider policy frameworks (such as housing, social and health policies) which generally deal with one specific aspect of homelessness.

<sup>1</sup> See ETHOS typology of homelessness in Annex I

► Clearcut homeless strategies exist in at least a third of the EU countries. Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark are still in the process of implementing strategies launched before 2008, while Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Romania and Poland, have taken new measures in the area of homelessness since the last round of NSRs.

**Sweden:** “Strengthening groups in particularly vulnerable situations” including “Continued efforts to counteract homelessness and exclusion from the housing market” are important pillars of the Swedish NSR. Tackling homelessness and exclusion from the housing market were one of the four key priorities in last NSR 2006-2008 and the Government presented a strategy which extends to 2009. “Tackling homelessness requires sustainable and coordinated efforts, and homelessness therefore also constitutes a priority area in this action plan.” This will involve measures covering eviction prevention (in May the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Enforcement Authority published guidance on efforts to prevent evictions), outreach activities with expertise from both social services, health care and the voluntary organisations, and monitoring homelessness trends (the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning will therefore survey the secondary housing market every three years, beginning in 2008).

**United Kingdom:** The NSR refers to homelessness as a key challenge under “improving access to quality services”. The UK government tackles different forms of homelessness through a wide range of measures focusing on reducing street homelessness, reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation, improving links between accommodation services and training/employment facilities. The government has recently increased investment in homelessness prevention and increased opportunities for moving out of temporary accommodation and into settled homes – this approach will be enhanced by a wider range of effective front-line preventative services, and increasing homelessness grants to local authorities and voluntary sector agencies. All four regions of the UK have clearcut homeless strategies (Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland).

**Denmark:** The Danish NSR focuses on three general action areas: 1. Support for disadvantaged children and young people 2. Support for socially disadvantaged groups 3. Integration. The second action area comprises adults who - because of homelessness, alcohol misuse, bad health, mental diseases, unemployment, etc. - have difficulty finding their place both in the labour market and in society at large. “Combating homelessness is a special objective in the Government’s efforts to create suitable housing for everyone. The number of homeless people who sleep in the street must be reduced, and young homeless people must be offered an alternative to a place in a reception centre. The stay in reception centres must be limited to three or four months for citizens ready to move into a dwelling with the necessary support, and citizens must be ensured housing before being discharged from a treatment institution or released from prison.” The Government has now also decided by law to make the *Freak Houses* scheme<sup>2</sup> permanent as of 1 January 2009, so it will still be possible to apply for subsidies to establish this type of housing.

**Finland:** Strategic targets and focal areas of action in the Finnish NSR include “ A separate programme for alleviating long-term homelessness for 2008-2011.” A total maximum of EUR 80 million of investment subsidy budget authorisation for improving the housing conditions of special groups will be bound to the projects carried out under the programme during 2008-2011. “When organising housing for the long-term homeless, solutions are required that are more targeted and individualised and support that is considerably more intensive than currently, as well as rehabilitation and supervision.” The majority of housing solutions for people suffering from long-term homelessness will therefore be supported housing rather than housing in shelters. Novel models of phased release will be developed for prisoners and clients of the Probation Service.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Freak Houses* scheme was set up with a view to granting financial support to the establishment of permanent housing for people who have difficulty - despite offers of social support - settling down in conventional residential estates or existing residential facilities.

**France:** Improving access to social housing and to shelters is one of the key priorities (“axes stratégiques”) in the French NSR. The shelter and temporary accommodation supply is under review and will be reformed through a specific action plan « Plan d’action renforcé pour les personnes sans abri (PARSA) » which has been reinforced by the adoption of a strategy for 2008-2012 « Grand chantier prioritaire 2008-2012 pour l’hébergement et de l’accès au logement des personnes mal logées et sans abri» which will tackle homelessness through preventive measures, resettlement initiatives, and measures based on the DALO Act (justiciable right to housing). The implementation of the DALO Act has allowed for a significant increase in the number of homes subsidised by the PLAI supported housing programme.

**Hungary:** Reducing housing disadvantages is a key policy priority in the Hungarian NSR: “The extreme form of housing poverty is homelessness; when tackling the problem of homelessness not only the homeless people themselves but also the groups affected by overindebtedness due to housing loans and overhead debts (consequently exposed to the danger of homelessness) should be taken into account.” In 2007 a Government Decree was adopted specifying the medium-term development tasks concerning the care of *homeless people* aiming at, among others, increasing the number of “external places” (out of the service system), launching labour market and social integration programmes, helping homeless families get an apartment or a house in the countryside, modernizing the institutions taking care of homeless people and developing the health centres performing medical treatment of homeless people.

**Ireland:** One of the key challenges in the Irish NSR is: “Access to quality services, with a focus on the homeless”. A revised Government Strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland was published in 2008. The Irish Youth Homelessness Strategy has the objective of reducing and, if possible, eliminating youth homelessness through preventative strategies. Moreover, the government is implementing its Youth Homelessness Strategy with the objective of reducing and, if possible, eliminating youth homelessness through preventative strategies.

**Czech republic:** A research project called “ Strategy for the social inclusion of the homeless in the Czech Republic” was carried out between 2005 and 2007 on homelessness which included developing a definition of homelessness, taking stock of access to healthcare for homeless people, quality standards for homeless services, and other relevant aspects of homeless policy. See more in “Good practice” section below. It is unclear, however, if the evidence and data collated will lead to a clear policy to tackle homelessness. Currently, measures targeting homeless people in the Czech republic are included in health and employment policy frameworks (see below).

**Romania:** The Government approved the “Homeless children initiative” project, financed by the Council of Europe Development Bank with the amount of EUR 5.739 million, resulting in the setting up of 20 centres for 300 children and in providing approximately 150 social workers with training programmes.

► Measures are also taken to tackle homelessness within wider policy frameworks. In Belgium, Austria, Luxembourg, Croatia, Slovenia and Estonia, measures are included within housing policy measures such as preventing evictions or improving the shelter supply alongside a string of measures aimed to improve access to housing for all.

**Belgium:** One of the three key priorities in the Belgian NSR is « Guaranteeing access to quality, sustainable and affordable housing to all » which involves increasing the supply of shelter, temporary accommodation, and social housing. The Belgian government is looking into the possibility of developing a national homeless strategy coordinated at national level with cooperation of all three regions (Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia). This would include elements such as increasing access to temporary forms of accommodation, preventing evictions, offering access to housing to households living in insecure or inadequate forms of housing.

**Austria:** “Affordable Housing and Assistance to Homeless People” are among the key measures in the Austrian NSR. This includes measures to prevent eviction “to tackle homelessness at the source.” The primary objective of assistance to homeless people is to stabilise the social situation of homeless persons and to allow them to return to independent living as soon as possible. A varied range of services – from street work, easy-access day centres, emergency hostels and transitional housing to socially assisted forms of living – is made available by the Länder.

**Luxembourg:** One of the four key priorities of the Luxembourg NSR is to promote access to housing. One of the main measures taken has been to establish a national social rental agency which will serve to facilitate access to housing for vulnerable groups including persons in low-income households, young people, and people experiencing exclusion.

**Croatia:** Providing “adequate housing for all” is a key challenge in the Joint Inclusion Memorandum of Croatia (2007). Challenges include “the lack of shelters for the homeless and temporary emergency accommodation.” One of the measures planned therefore is to increase the number of shelters for homeless people.

**Slovenia:** Providing housing for vulnerable groups was a key challenge in the previous NSR. Part of the measures focused on increasing the supply of shelters, homes and outreach activities for homeless people, including shelters for women. In the new NSR however, there are no specific measures on homelessness, although one of the objectives to favour access to services is to increase the number of centres and shelters for homeless people.

**Estonia:** A Housing Development Plan for 2008-2013 has been established to ensure access to suitable and affordable housing. One of the main objectives of this strategy is to broaden financing opportunities to acquire housing for social groups such as youth, children without parental care, the disabled, the elderly, large families, people released from prison, homeless people, etc, and to ensure availability of housing for people with special needs such as the disabled and the elderly.

▶ Homeless people are also target groups of social policies aimed at “vulnerable groups” or “risk groups” as is the case in the NSRs of the Slovak republic, Romania, Latvia, Portugal.

**Slovak republic:** The Slovak republic adopted a “Strategy for Developing Cultural Needs of Disadvantaged Groups of the Population” in 2007, which ensures financing for the cultural needs of disadvantaged groups of the population (including persons with a health disability, Romani communities living in settlements, children and youth, elderly people, migrants, homeless, women belonging from marginalised groups).

**Romania:** In the framework of the development of social services “in view of enabling the social inclusion of vulnerable groups”, 9 programmes were approved aiming at the following disadvantaged groups: disabled persons, elderly, homeless, domestic violence victims. The total amount granted for the completion of these programmes came up to RON 64.5 million.

**Latvia:** In the Latvian NSR, under the objective of fostering access to quality services, “programmes of social services shall be prepared with the aim of improving the social and functional skills of persons with functional impairments and their family members, homeless people and other population groups subjected to the risk of social exclusion, in order to promote employment and social inclusion.”

**Portugal:** The Portuguese NSR states that one of its priorities is to promote social inclusion of vulnerable groups, namely people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities and people experiencing homelessness. Over the last few years, research and surveys on homelessness have been conducted to better understand the phenomenon and the solutions needed. These initiatives have mainly focused on the visible side of homelessness (rough sleeping, living in shelters). The Portuguese government intends to improve measurement of homelessness through the

development of a homelessness monitoring system to ensure that all homeless people receive support in accordance with their needs (see targets below).

► Strategies to reduce health inequalities outlined in the NSRs also target homeless people in countries like Lithuania, Greece, Belgium and the Czech Republic. Homelessness is therefore approached as a health-related issue rather than linked to housing.

**Lithuania:** There is no homeless strategy outlined in the Lithuanian NSR. However, the strategy to reduce healthcare inequalities in Lithuania targets socially vulnerable groups of people such as the poor, children, the young, the elderly, single parents, the unemployed, migrants, political refugees and homeless people. Persons in these groups face numerous social and healthcare problems which can be solved only by efficient system management and an integrated approach.

**Greece:** In the Greek NSR, reference is made to the strategies for homeless people under health and long-term care (aiming to provide more supported housing and care units).

**Belgium:** Supply of healthcare will be increased in areas where it is currently lacking in order to promote access to healthcare for all and especially vulnerable groups such as people who are homeless or undocumented migrants.

**Czech republic:** Certain problems with access to healthcare do exist in relation to homeless people. Legislation mandates the provision of healthcare for all, including for homeless people. However, in most cases, homeless people do not pay health insurance and are therefore in breach of the obligation that applies to every citizen. There are very few healthcare facilities in the Czech Republic that focus on this target group. In 2007, Dr. Danuše Šupková issued a publication entitled "Healthcare for the Homeless in the Czech Republic."

► Homelessness is also tackled within employment programmes. These are examples of active inclusion strategies (employment and support) targeting people experiencing homelessness.

**Germany:** The German NSR highlights the need to support young people who have difficulties accessing the labour market due to, inter alia, lack of housing solutions. However, it is not clear what measures have been taken.

**Hungary:** In 2006, the Hungarian government reformed the system of work rehabilitation, development and preparatory activities of disabled people, psychiatric patients, addictive patients and homeless people living in social institutions. In the past two years, the majority of people living in residential social care institutions have been engaged in employment activities to improve working abilities and chances for independent work.

**UK:** As well as existing comprehensive homeless strategies in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales, projects aiming to improve access to training and employment for homeless people have been set up (see UK good practice: Off the Streets and into Work, and St Mungos).

**Czech republic:** Under the objective "Increase the integration of socially excluded individuals and individuals at risk of social exclusion through social assistance and services, remove barriers to the entrance and retention of these individuals in the labour market", one of the target groups is "homeless individuals (individuals who do not have a home or those at risk of homelessness, i.e. people with uncertain or temporary housing and people with unsuitable housing)".

## 2.2 Comparable data on homelessness : still lacking

Comparable homelessness statistics are still lacking in Europe. Quantitative data is urgently required in order to develop indicators to monitor trends in the numbers and profiles of homeless people, to develop evidence-based policies to effectively tackle homelessness, and to measure the impact of homeless policies. In order to measure and monitor homelessness, it is fundamental to establish a clear working definition of homelessness. Homelessness can be defined narrowly to include only people without a roof over their heads or it can be defined more broadly. The [2007 European Commission study on measurement of homelessness at EU level](#) recommended the following harmonised classification of living situations as a European 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
		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

Enumeration of homeless people in these living situations is recommended by the study. This will allow for comparisons of 'levels' of homelessness across Europe. In addition, the definition<sup>3</sup> of homelessness used for the 2011 population and housing censuses is very similar to the study definition. This should allow for reliable and comparable data for the next round of National Strategic Reports post-2010.

In the current round of national reporting, there is still no comparable data on homelessness. However, a number of countries refer in their NSR to numbers and profiles of homeless people. Other countries refer to the number and nature of homeless services. Finally, some countries have outlined plans to improve homelessness measurement.

<sup>3</sup> Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing, 2006  
<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.06.census2.htm>

► The national reports contain more data on homelessness (numbers and profiles) than in previous rounds, which shows that measurement methods on homelessness are developing steadily. The data used in the NSRs of Finland, Sweden, Ireland, the UK, France and Denmark, do not refer to rough sleeping only – they are generally based on comprehensive definitions of homelessness covering most of the living situations in the typology above.

**Finland:** It appears that homelessness concerns men in particular. In 2007, there were approximately 7,600 homeless households in Finland, of which 7,300 comprised single persons and 300 families. More than half of these lived in the Greater Helsinki Area. The number of homeless people has been decreasing during recent years.

**Sweden:** The data is based on a national survey conducted in 2005 - around 17 800 people were homeless at the time of the survey, which represented an increase since 1999. Three-quarters of these were men (13 142) and a quarter were women (4538). Between 1999 and 2005 the proportion of women and the proportion of people born outside Sweden rose. The 2005 survey showed that people born outside Sweden were over-represented in the group. Statistics on the number of evictions shows that it fell by a third between 2001 and 2007. The Sweden NSR also uses a homelessness indicator: Number of people who are in a situation of homelessness, broken down into women and men (National Board of Health and Welfare).

**Ireland:** Measures to address homelessness have resulted in recent years in their numbers reducing from 5,500 in 2002 to slightly in excess of 3,000 in 2005.

**United Kingdom:** The National Rough Sleeping Estimate for 2007 published in September 2007 shows there are 498 people sleeping rough in England. The estimate is based on the results of local authority street counts in England in those areas where a known, or suspected, rough sleeping problem has been identified. This represents a 73 per cent reduction in rough sleeping since 1998. As at 31 March 2008, 77,510 households were in temporary accommodation. See more data on the Communities department [website](#). Separate data is also available for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

**France :** In the French NSR, there is no data on numbers or profiles of homeless people, but there is data on the levels of overcrowding in France and data on the number of people on social housing waiting lists (Annex p. 29) which is to a certain extent an indicator of the proportion of the population having to find other temporary housing solutions while waiting for a permanent housing solution. It is important to note however, that the French social housing supply targets a wider audience, and not only the most vulnerable households, for greater social mix.

**Denmark:** To identify the scope of homelessness in Denmark and establish a better basis for developing future initiatives for homeless people, the Danish Government carried out a mapping of the demand for dwellings and residential housing for homeless people. This survey showed that in the week from 5 to 11 February 2007, at least 5,200 people in Denmark were homeless and that approx. 3,000 of them were staying in Copenhagen and nearby areas. In a mapping from the same period of residential housing aimed at homeless people, the local authorities assessed that a further 1,000 dwellings and residential housing units were needed for the local authorities to be able to solve the homelessness problems. The trends in homelessness are being followed locally and nationally. The next national census of homeless people will be conducted in 2009.

**Portugal :** The Portuguese NSR clearly states that there is no information on the number of homeless people in Portugal as yet. However, data on the profiles of homeless people is referred to : the phenomenon mainly affects men between 30 and 49 years of age, who tend to be single or divorced, of Portuguese nationality, mainly living in big metropolitan areas (Lisbon and Porto). They are people with health-related issues (mental health, substance misuse) who experience professional difficulties and have trouble accessing housing.

**Slovak republic:** According to the Slovak NSR, there is no official data on homelessness available. “At present we have no official estimates available of the total number of homeless persons in Slovakia. There are however, partial statistics, which reflect the situation in certain cities.” However, this data is not used in the NSR.

▶ Where data on homeless profiles are not mentioned in the NSR, there is at least data on homelessness services or on the number of homeless people included in support programmes which gives an indication of the number of people using homelessness support services.

**Hungary :** No data on homelessness is available in the NSR, however there is data on care homes for homeless people in Hungary (see NSR Annex Table 32: “Special institutional care”) and on people in specific homeless programmes (such as the EU-funded programme supporting labour market and social integration of 3,000 homeless people). More data on homelessness in Hungary does exist (numbers and profiles). See more on [FEANTSA website](#).

**France :** There is also data on the supply of shelters and temporary housing in 2006 both on quantity and quality in the sector. In terms of quantity, in 2006 there were 22.500 places in emergency shelters, 31.000 places in temporary housing, and 37.000 places in shelters for asylum-seekers (Annex p.30 ). Between 2006 and 2008, there has been a 28.5% increase in supply of shelter and supported housing, which has helped to better respond to existing needs (p.21). In terms of quality, the principle of “continuous support” (“continuité de la prise en charge”) is applied in emergency shelters which consequently run 24h services; a new support method was introduced with the creation of 7500 places of “hébergement de stabilisation” in 2008; finally, support services have been reinforced in emergency shelters with at least one social worker for 20 people.

**Slovenia:** In 2008, the network of shelters for homeless people was enlarged by five places compared to 2007. There are in total 107 places in shelters and 78 places in the programmes of admission centres and day centres; the interim objective of available places was achieved.

**Austria:** In autumn 2007 the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection commissioned a study to quantify homelessness in Austria and to take stock of the homeless programmes in place. In cooperation with the Länder, quantitative data regarding institutional and mobile services for homeless people as well as the number of clients (assigned to different categories on the basis of different criteria) were collected. However, this data was not used or referred to in the NSR.

▶ Initiatives to improve homelessness data collection and monitoring are also referred to in the NSRs of Ireland, Sweden, and France. However it is important to note that such debates are ongoing across Europe, and more specifically in the 20 countries involved in the MPHASIS project.

**Ireland,** the involvement of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector has been strengthened through the establishment of a National Homelessness Consultative Committee (NHCC) in April 2007 under the aegis of the Housing Forum. Meetings of a data sub-group of the NHCC, which has been formed to address the issue of data collection, are now ongoing.

**Sweden:** In order to monitor homelessness trends in Sweden, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning will survey the secondary housing market every three years, beginning in 2008.

**France:** The NSR observes that data on poverty used for indicators are based on household statistics, which may not fully cover all households (such as those experiencing homelessness). Although it is not outlined in the NSR, France has taken a number of initiatives to improve homelessness measurement.

**Czech republic:** The research project referred to the NSR as a good practice, “Strategy for the social inclusion of homeless people”, has taken appropriate methodological steps to establish a homeless monitoring system which will allow for measurement of the impact of homeless policy and services.

### 2.3 Ambitious targets and objectives on homelessness

The Written Declaration 111/2007 on ending street homelessness signed by 438 Members of European Parliament from all political groups and all European Member States calls for an end to street homelessness by 2015. Although few countries have referred to this call in their NSR, it is clear from the content of the NSRs that countries are taking more ambitious measures aiming not only to manage homelessness but rather to significantly reduce or even end homelessness. To this end, different types of targets are used in the NSRs in accordance with the national context, financial means, and national ambitions on homelessness. Some targets relate to reducing the number of homeless people while other targets and objectives rather relate to the homeless service and housing support sector (increasing supply). However, there are still many countries which have not set targets on homelessness, most probably as a result of the lack data on homelessness, a crucial element for measuring whether a target has been achieved.

► Targets relating to reducing homelessness are used in the NSR of Finland, the UK, the Netherlands, and Ireland. This only exists in countries where adequate data is collected to measure whether or not the target is indeed being achieved.

**Finland:** The main targets are to halve the number of long-term homeless by the year 2011 and to make measures preventing homelessness more effective. Housing in shelters, originally considered a temporary solution, will be wound down gradually and in a systematic and controlled way so that substitutive housing solutions are found for each inhabitant of every shelter that is closed down.

**United Kingdom:** The Scottish Government has the ambitious target to abolish the distinction between priority and non priority homeless households by 2012 with the aim of ensuring that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless is entitled to settled accommodation. The UK Government is committed to reducing rough sleeping further and driving down rough sleeping to as near to zero as possible. Moreover, the Government has set itself a challenging aim of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation to 50,500 by 2010. As at 31 March 2008, 77.510 households were in temporary accommodation. Around one third of local authorities have met the 2010 temporary accommodation target. Local authority temporary accommodation reduction plans indicate that the 2010 target will be met.

**Ireland:** Long term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation will be eliminated by 2010. This will involve addressing the needs of up to 500 households. This target is included in *Towards 2016* and is also the aim of *A Key to the Door, the 2007 - 2010* action plan of the Homeless Agency. In 2007, 300 households who were long-term occupants of emergency homeless accommodation were moved to more permanent accommodation. It is expected that the needs of 200 households will be addressed in 2008.

**Denmark:** As part of the 2008-2011 rate adjustment pool agreement, the Government and the parties behind the rate adjustment pool allocated DKK 500m over four years to implement a strategy “targeted at reducing and ultimately eradicating homelessness in Denmark.” The stay in reception centres must be limited to three or four months for citizens ready to move into a dwelling with the necessary support, and citizens must be ensured housing before being discharged from a treatment institution or released from prison.

**Portugal:** The NSR refers to a clear objective of developing individualised plans for 80% of homeless people in Portugal by 2010, and developing an online homelessness documentation system by end 2009.

► General objectives related to homelessness are referred to in the NSRs. These are not targets but serve to understand the aims of public policy on homelessness. The objectives can be more or less ambitious including developing the shelter supply, reducing homelessness, ensuring that nobody has to sleep rough, preventing homelessness, improving access to services, improving the transition between shelters and permanent housing, finding adequate pathways out of homelessness, etc.

**France:** The French NSR refers to “Ambitious objectives” which have been set to reform the supply of shelter and temporary accommodation from 2008 to 2012, on the basis of the recommendations of the PINTE report (government report reviewing homeless policy in France). The objectives include: 1. Nobody should have to sleep rough due to lack of services (« ne plus condamner à la rue ») - this aims to prevent homelessness (evictions, institutional discharge, etc); 2. Resettlement through adequate housing alternatives: this is to be achieved through improvement of shelter and supported housing supply; 3. Access to housing for people who are homeless: through the DALO act on the justiciable right to housing and improving transitions between emergency and permanent housing solutions.

**Hungary:** No quantitative targets are mentioned, but general objectives of the policy to reduce housing disadvantages include 1. the comprehensive closing up of the most disadvantaged rural micro-regions; 2. the improvement of the accessibility of public services in regions with insufficient services; 3. a decrease of housing disadvantages, especially in segregated areas populated by the Roma, as well as decreasing/eliminating housing segregation; 4. and combating homelessness.

**Denmark:** Combating homelessness is a special objective in the Government’s efforts to create suitable housing for everyone. “The number of homeless people who sleep in the street must be reduced, and young homeless people must be offered an alternative to a place in a reception centre.”

► Objectives have also been set in relation to the development of the homeless service sector, namely concerning the supply of shelters and housing support.

**France:** On 31 December 2007, there were 264 “maisons relais” (supported housing for homeless people) offering more than 4 600 places. An objective of developing 12 000 places in “maisons relais” is referred to the NSR (p.21). The social cohesion strategy (adopted in January 2005) aimed to develop 4000 places in these forms of supported housing in 3 years – this process was accelerated with the PARSA (see above) which fixed a target of 9000 places in “maisons relais” and finally with the new DALO Act on the right to housing which has led to the earmarking of a pluriannual budget for the creation of 12000 places in total.

**Slovenia:** A quantitative objective is referred to in the NSR, namely to increase the capacities of admission centres and shelters for homeless people– with a total framework capacity of 250 places.

## 2.4 Good practices on homelessness: huge potential for mutual learning

In the NSRs, there are a number of “good practices” emerging from homeless policies/programmes/research projects in Hungary, France, the UK, the Czech republic and Belgium. In other countries, there are good practices which consist of programmes targeting a wider audience, including homeless people as is the case in Austria, Finland and again the UK.

► The good practices focusing specifically on homelessness in the NSR include strategies focusing on the resettlement of homeless people (Hungary and France), policies creating pathways out of homelessness through employment and training (UK), practices in the homeless sector such as improvement of coordination and networking (Belgium), and research projects on homelessness (Czech republic).

**Hungary:** The Hungarian programme “Subsidised housing for homeless people” was put forward as a good practice. Launched in 2005, the primary aim of the programme is to reduce the social exclusion of homeless people by providing support with independent housing outside social institutions and thereby to promote their independent living and reinforce their social integration.

**France:** In the French NSR, the programme aimed to create better links between temporary shelter and permanent housing « Instaurer la fluidité du parc hébergement/logement » was put forward as a good practice. The aim is to improve shelters and temporary accommodation and foster access to mainstream housing using the DALO Act.

**United Kingdom:** The organisations “Off the Streets and into Work” and “St Mungos” were highlighted as good practices. These projects aim to support people with multiple disadvantages, including those who are homeless, move towards suitable, sustainable and progressive employment.

**Belgium :** The organisation DIOGENES a.s.b.l. was put forward as a good practice for its innovative working methods to improve links between the street and society. This organisation creates links between homeless people and a wide range of existing social, health, housing support services in order to address and respond to the multiple needs of homeless people. DIOGENES does not provide direct support to homeless people but is rather a mediator between people living on the street and existing services.

**Czech republic:** “Strategy for the social inclusion of the homeless in the Czech Republic”. The objectives of this strategy included: A proposal for the sustainable development of social services for the homeless; A definition and typology of homelessness in the Czech Republic; The establishment of a monitoring system; The results of research on the provision of healthcare to the homeless; The results of tests on the effectiveness of increased numbers of social workers; Publicity for this issue aimed at the professional and general public.

► The NSRs also outline good practices which target a wide audience, including homeless people. These include programmes focusing on health aspects, indebtedness, active inclusion.

**Finland:** “Promoting health and functional capacity in the City of Tampere”. This good practice partly covers the homeless population with mental health and substance misuse issues. The main objectives of the process are prevention, early detection and intervention and high-quality care and treatment, rehabilitation and social support.

**Austria:** “Credit account for people affected by poverty / persons without cash”. This good practice partly covers the homeless population. One of its aims is to promote social inclusion and reintegration into regular economic life by means of a current account – an important element in the resettlement of homeless people - namely through “stabilisation of the life situation by enabling them to open a temporary credit account.”

**United Kingdom:** There are two good practices which partly cover people experiencing homelessness. First of all, there is the practice of “Social firms” which is about paid employment for people at most disadvantage in the labour market, including homeless people. Secondly, in Scotland, the “Money Matters Financial Learning Project” in Inverclyde aims to promote financial learning and capability through a range of approaches.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINFORCING THE OMC IN THE AREA OF HOMELESSNESS

This section draws conclusions from the analysis above, and proposes key actions at EU level to build on the content of the 2008-2010 round of NSRs in order to use the full potential of Open Method of Coordination in the area of homelessness.

#### 3.1 Homeless policies in the NSRs: comprehensive, ambitious, innovative

► **Policies:** Countries increasingly address homelessness in a comprehensive way, however the lack of indepth information (data, funding, etc) in the NSRs makes it difficult to assess the true impact of these policies. Not all countries have the same profile of homeless people and therefore will focus on different aspects of homelessness: some countries may develop strategies to reduce rough sleeping, other countries may focus on getting people out of shelters and into permanent housing. The solutions to homelessness are generally developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders, thereby leading to innovative and more effective solutions. Moreover, there is a trend towards reinforced cooperation between social and housing government departments (Finland, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Portugal, Slovenia, to mention only a few). There are divergences in policy approaches in accordance with the national contexts, but there is clear convergence on the urgent need for concerted action on homelessness at EU level.

► **Data :** Data on homelessness is available in just under a third of the 2008-2010 NSRs, which does not mean that only these countries have data on homelessness. Many countries have documentation systems on homelessness and other methods of homelessness measurement, but have not referred to homelessness data in the NSR. In order to monitor progress in tackling homelessness at EU level, it is crucial to develop indicators based on solid and comparable data. Much progress has been made since the launch of the EU strategy in 2001, and developments in homelessness measurement are being promoted through the PROGRESS programme which has funded an EU study on homelessness measurement and a further project on homelessness information systems (MPHASIS). Such initiatives should lead to improvement in this area in the next round of national reporting.

► **Targets:** Targets on homelessness in the NSR vary, but on the whole are more ambitious compared to previous rounds. This is especially the case for smaller countries like Finland, Ireland, the UK, Denmark. In these countries, there is a clear shift towards reduction of homelessness rather than just managing the problem by increasing the shelter supply, which should serve as an inspiration for other countries. National targets or objectives are increasingly used by different EU countries, which is all the more crucial in light of the European Parliament call to end street homelessness by 2015. Such a European objective, towards which all EU countries can progress using their own targets, method and approaches, is more than ever a realistic objective. The next step will be to build consensus on how to respond to this call in a concerted way through the OMC.

► **Good practices:** Some interesting policies and projects have been highlighted as good practices in tackling homelessness in just under a third of NSRs, which demonstrates that the countries want to exchange information on homelessness. It is important to build on these in the 2009 and 2010 peer review programmes with countries using similar approaches. In order to allow for sound peer evaluation of good practices on homelessness, a *consensus* is urgently needed on the aims of public policy on homelessness to develop appropriate benchmarks. The assessment of such good practices will vary if the aims of policy are crisis management, resettlement of homeless people, or homelessness reduction/elimination. In any case, it is clearer than ever that there is much potential for policy learning on homelessness in 2009 and 2010 in the OMC.

To conclude, national policies to tackle homelessness have come a long way since the first round of national reports. However, it is important to note that many other policy areas will have an impact on the effective implementation of these policies and programmes. Prevention of homelessness and resettlement of homeless people and homeless families will require the development of effective policies and services in areas such as transport, housing, employment, education, etc. With the improvement of the comparability and quality of data on homelessness in the coming years, it should finally be possible to measure the impact of homeless policies on the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

### 3.2 Relevance of the NSRs : national or European?

► **National level - the NSR is not used as a policy instrument:** The periodic rounds of national reporting are generally perceived by FEANTSA members as a European initiative. The national reports are prepared nationally, but for use at EU level (as a reference in peer reviews, assessments, research), and *not* for use at national level. In terms of content, the NSRs provide merely an overview of all issues related to poverty/pensions/healthcare which is generally destined to be read by the European Commission and other EU countries. The consultations on the NSRs are considered a useful way to bring all stakeholders together on the issue of poverty, but the discussions focus more on the content of the report and not on developing effective policy responses to different poverty-related phenomena at national level. However, these NSR consultations may in some cases draw attention to new issues or trigger discussions which will then lead to further policy action at national level. If these reports are used effectively at EU level to develop appropriate transnational projects (such as the MPHASIS project on improving data collection on homelessness) in accordance with common key priorities, the national reporting process can eventually have an impact at national level.

► **European level - useful for agenda-setting:** At EU level, the national reports are a useful instrument for EU stakeholders (EU institutions, European networks, researchers, etc) to evaluate policy progress on poverty and to develop mutual learning on key priorities. They are useful to set the EU political agenda on social inclusion and to understand emerging priorities at national level so that concerted action on specific issues (like child poverty, homelessness) can be taken. However, the NSRs are not considered as the key instrument in the OMC – the mutual learning instruments are far more popular instruments where policy progress can actually take place. However, the mutual learning currently only takes place in the framework of adhoc peer reviews and transnational projects. Although the information contained in the NSRs is not very detailed, it still provides a solid basis for developing the mutual learning potential of the OMC – potential which is currently underused.

### 3.3 Paving the way for a consensual framework on homelessness

► **Strategic mutual learning:** Mutual learning is the very essence of the OMC which aims to coordinate and facilitate exchanges on social inclusion policies rather than to harmonise national social inclusion policies. The potential of mutual learning on homelessness is very high (this is clear from the impact of previous EU peer reviews on homelessness, for instance). The European Commission plays an important role in facilitating exchanges, but effective mutual learning needs a stronger basis to start from. A *light year* on homelessness in 2009 could provide this basis and lead to political consensus on what is homelessness, on the key elements of effective homeless strategies, on the key challenges for the future, which in turn would make the future EU work on homelessness much more effective. It would enable the European Union to be more proactive on the issue of homelessness (as is the case for action on child poverty, for instance). The mutual learning component of the OMC is about bringing together national and local experts to exchange practical information on how to develop and implement policy in specific areas of the multi-dimensional poverty strategies outlined in the National Strategic Reports. Mutual learning can

therefore take place and allow for policy/political progress even if the wider political context (i.e. Lisbon) is not entirely favourable. To ensure real impact, it is crucial to work more closely with EU-funded European networks as potential drivers and facilitators of transnational mutual learning with the aim of building European resource/knowledge centres on specific priority themes and of reaching out to a much wider variety of stakeholders. European networks like FEANTSA can support implementation of the National reports by facilitating the exchange of expertise between NGOs, public authorities, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.

► **Consensus-building:** As the 2008 [European Commission Communication on Reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination](#) summarises: “Some of the [proposed] measures amount to a consolidation of existing practices. Others, in particular target setting, imply more substantial changes and will require consensus-building among Member States and stakeholders.” In order to measure progress in social inclusion policies, it is crucial to build consensus on how to tackle social exclusion. Yet consensus does not yet exist in all areas of social inclusion. Homelessness is a case in point. Mutual learning is a crucial tool to build consensus among the 27 countries of the EU which all have different approaches to tackling poverty. A more strategic approach to mutual learning under the OMC is therefore needed so that it impacts more directly on policy change in the different member states – to this end, FEANTSA calls for clear consensual European policy frameworks on specific priority themes in order to enhance the impact of transnational mutual learning in the OMC.

► **A European Consensus Conference on Homelessness:** FEANTSA has proposed that the European Commission organise European *Consensus Conferences* around one or more of the priority themes of the EU social inclusion pillar during the European Year on Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010. A European OMC Light Year on Homelessness could culminate in a European Consensus Conference on Homelessness in 2010. The European *light year* 2009 for the OMC could be a useful framework to take stock of what has been achieved during the last 15-20 years in terms of building knowledge and understanding of homelessness, and actual policy development/impact. A Consensus Conference will then direct EU action and transnational cooperation toward commonly understood and agreed objectives. The organisation of consensus conferences was clearly stated as a possible instrument for making policy progress in different social inclusion fields at the 2008 European Round Table on social inclusion in Marseilles (see [Round Table conclusions](#)).

## Annex : ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

The ETHOS Typology developed by FEANTSA in 2005 provides a comprehensive definition of the housing vulnerability of persons experiencing any of the following situations: rooflessness, houselessness, living in insecure housing, living in inadequate housing. ETHOS provides a more complete reflection of homelessness as a dynamic process linked to other forms of housing exclusion. The pathways model is at the basis of the ETHOS typology, which allows for the measurement of the different policy objectives of prevention of homelessness, crisis intervention, and rehabilitation.

	Operational Category		Living Situation		Generic Definition	
v Conceptual Category v	ROOFLESS	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public space or external space	Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2	People in emergency accommodation	2.1	Night shelter	People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel	Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
				3.2	Temporary Accommodation	
				3.3	Transitional supported accommodation	
		4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation	Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation / reception centres	Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
	5.2			Migrant workers accommodation		
	6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release	
			6.2	Medical institutions <sup>9</sup>	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing	
			6.3	Children's institutions / homes	No housing identified (e.g by 18th birthday)	
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for older homeless people	Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)	
			7.2	Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people		
INSECURE	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1	Temporarily with family/friends	Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing	
			8.2	No legal (sub)tenancy	Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy	
			8.3	Illegal occupation of land	Illegal occupation of a dwelling Occupation of land with no legal rights	
	9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1	Legal orders enforced (rented)	Where orders for eviction are operative	
9.2			Re-possession orders (owned)	Where mortgagor has legal order to re-possess		
10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents	Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence		
INADEQUATE	11	People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1	Mobile homes	Not intended as place of usual residence	
			11.2	Non-conventional building	Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty	
			11.3	Temporary structure	Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin	
12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation	Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations		
13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding	Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms		



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To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/progress/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html)

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