



FEANTSA

# Frequently Asked Questions

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European Homelessness at a Glance

■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What is homelessness?

There is no universally accepted definition of homelessness, nor is there a common European definition.

Homelessness can be defined narrowly to include only people without a roof over their heads or it can be defined more broadly. FEANTSA argues for a broad definition of homelessness, which includes, as well as people who are roofless, people who are houseless and people who live in insecure and inadequate housing. FEANTSA's ETHOS typology (see below) sets out our integrated definition of homelessness and housing exclusion.

The European Commission's study on measurement of homelessness at EU level proposed a European definition of homelessness. This definition is closely in-line with FEANTSA's ETHOS document, and is frequently referred to as "ETHOS light". While the EU Study definition is useful, FEANTSA believes that ETHOS represents more completely the reality of homelessness as a dynamic process linked to other forms of housing exclusion.

Find out more:

- [ETHOS](#) (European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) is a tool FEANTSA has developed to improve understanding and measurement of homelessness in Europe. It is a one page document that classifies homeless people according to their living situation, now available in 13 European languages.
- See the [European Study](#) on homelessness for the EU Study definition.

## 2. How many people are homeless in the EU?

There are no homelessness statistics at European level. Data on some categories of homelessness is collected at national, regional and local levels in many countries. However, differences in definition and methodology mean that it is rarely comparable between countries. Steps are being taken to improve statistics at the EU and international level.

Find out more:

- See our [data sources on homelessness in the EU](#) webpage for an up-to-date snapshot of homelessness statistics from the Member States.
- FEANTSA facilitates a data collection working group; a pool of experts who exchange information on data collection methodologies, monitor relevant EU developments, and steer FEANTSA's strategy on data collection. See our [data collection](#) page for policy statements, background documents, news and useful links on measuring homelessness.
- See our [Flash](#) newsletter for regular news on national and local counts, surveys and reports.
- See the [European statistics](#) page on the FEANTSA research website.



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### 3. How are people experiencing homelessness counted in Europe?

Counting the number of people experiencing homelessness in Europe is a challenging task for several reasons. Differences in definition and methodology mean statistics that do exist are rarely comparable between countries. The lack of clear data on the extent of homelessness makes an understanding of its nature, causes and the effective action needed to tackle it all the more difficult.

A variety of definitions and methodologies are used to collect data on homelessness. Homeless people can be counted at one point in time (e.g. a survey of people sleeping rough on a given night) or they can be counted over a period of time (e.g. a register of people using homeless services over a year). This variety of approaches can produce incomparable and divergent results on the nature and scope of homelessness.

In December 2005, the European Commission commissioned a study called 'Measurement of Homelessness at EU Level.' The study shows that measurement of homelessness in Europe is developing in most countries, and four principle methods of measurement are currently being used to measure different forms of homelessness:

- **Surveys:** used to count rough sleepers
- **Client record systems:** used to count people in emergency accommodation or accommodation for the homeless
- **Administrative Records:** used to count people living in institutions
- **Census/ Surveys:** used to count people living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing and people living temporarily with families and friends

The study also includes a number of recommendations for the improvement of measurement and monitoring of homelessness.

Find out more:

- See the [European Study](#) on homelessness
- See our [data collection](#) page for policy statements, background documents, news and useful links on measuring homelessness.

### 4. Who experiences homelessness in Europe?

The lack of reliable, comparable statistics makes it difficult to accurately profile who is experiencing homelessness in Europe. People experiencing homelessness are diverse and the profile is changing. Current trends suggest that in many European countries, more women and families are experiencing homelessness than in the past. There are also an increasing number of inter-EU migrants experiencing homelessness, as well as more young people and older people.

Find out more:

- See the European Observatory's [thematic research page](#).
- See the [Flash](#) newsletter for news on studies profiling homeless people around Europe



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### 5. Why do people become homeless?

There are multiple pathways into homelessness. Often, individual experiences such as relationship breakdown, health issues, addiction, eviction or experience of violence combine with external factors to cause homelessness. External factors can be structural; poor access to decent affordable housing, unemployment, precarious employment and discrimination and stigmatisation. They can also be institutional; release from institutions such as prisons, medical or children's institutions, poorly structured and administrated benefits systems and lack of service co-ordination.

Find out more:

- The [reports](#) page of the FEANTSA website contains up-to-date reports on a wide variety of issues relating to homelessness.
- Our [housing](#), [employment](#) and [health and social protection](#) pages provide policy statements, background documents, news and useful links that give a more in-depth insight into the specific roles of these factors on homelessness.

### 6. What good practices exist to fight against homelessness?

A wide variety of approaches to combat homelessness exist. Due to different institutional, political and socio-economic contexts, it is impossible to define a showcase of "best" policies, applicable in all situations.

FEANTSA believe that the most effective homelessness policies should include 10 approaches that are listed in our Toolkit for Developing an Integrated Homeless Strategy. However, a balance should always be sought with the context in which the policy will be implemented and operated.

Find out more:

- See the FEANTSA [Toolkit](#) for developing an integrated homeless strategy.
- FEANTSA's [Strategies to combat homelessness](#) page contains examples of strategies that have been put in place across Europe with the aim of reducing, and even ending, homelessness.
- See the [Flash](#) newsletter for regular updates on services and policies tackling homelessness.



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FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. It is the only major European network that focuses exclusively on homelessness at the European level. FEANTSA's objective is to prevent and alleviate the poverty and social exclusion of people threatened by or living in homelessness, by encouraging and facilitating the co-operation of all relevant actors fighting homelessness in Europe.



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This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. 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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