



**European Observatory on Homelessness: Statistics
Update 2006**

Poland

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STATISTICAL UPDATE

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Acronyms Used

DSWI	Department of Social Welfare and Integration
IPEH	Individual Programme for Escaping Homelessness
MSP	Ministry of Social Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SBAS	Saint Brother Albert Society
SPO	Social Policy Office

Introduction

The Polish Statistical Update 2006 was written for the European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH) of FEANTSA. It is one of twenty five national reports provided by EOH correspondents for each EU member country. Their goal is to report on the national data sources on homelessness and their compatibility with the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) in order to facilitate comparative data collection at a European level. The reports are the basis of the creation of a European Statistical Update published each year to provide data for the design and implementation of effective policies to alleviate homelessness and housing exclusion.

The Polish Statistical Update is based on desk analysis of internet sites of the major Polish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with the homeless, public institutions with statutory responsibilities for homelessness and housing exclusion, and major information site for Polish NGOs www.wiadomości.ngo.pl. Much of the information was accessed through interviews and e-mail exchanges with responsible informed workers of key organizations and institutions. Only a small fraction of the information comes from available research reports.

List of Organizations and Other Institutions:

CARITAS Kielecka www.kielce.caritas.pl

CARITAS Polska, www.caritas.pl

Fundacja Pomocy Wzajemnej 'BARKA', www.barka.org

Pogotowie dla Ofiar Przemocy w Rodzinie NIEBIESKA LINIA www.niebieskalinia.org

Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta (TPBA), www.bratalbert.org.pl

Warszawskie Centrum Pomocy Bliźniemu MONAR, www.cpb.waw.pl

Ministerstwo Polityki Społecznej (MPS), www.mps.gov.pl

Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości (MS), www.ms.gov.pl

Urząd Repatriacji i Cudzoziemców (URIC), www.uric.gov.pl

Instytut Rozwoju Miast (IRM), www.irm.krakow.pl

Komenda Główna Policji, www.kgp.gov.pl

Biuro Penitencjarne Centralnego Zarządu Służby Więziennej, www.czsw.gov.pl

Departament Pomocy i Integracji Społecznej MPS, www.mps.gov.pl/index.php?gid=8

I. Efforts to Describe the Homeless Population

Expert Estimations on Overall Homeless Population Size

The lack of comprehensive nationwide quantitative research or data sources on homelessness is the reason for the popularity of expert estimations on the overall size of the homeless population in Poland. Such estimations usually come from activists and practitioners from the major institutions working with the homeless. They possess a wealth of experience on homelessness and, when pressed by an audience interested in general figures, tend to give various estimations, usually of differing ranges. Their common characteristic is a lack of reference to any systematic data source, research report or extrapolation procedure. The name of a university is occasionally cited. Information on definition design is rather neglected and a general expression of *homelessness* is used. It is not mentioned whether this is based on service, point in time or prevalence measures. On occasions, it is clarified as to whether the figures apply to homelessness *sensu stricto* (accommodated in shelters or institutions from the homeless) or *sensu largo* (including the potentially homeless or those who are homeless by choice)¹. Many generalizations on the breakdown of certain characteristics such as sex, age, or the reasons for homelessness are based on extrapolations of case study results for single shelters or shelters run by a single organization. The figures are presented during conferences as well as used in various documents written by NGOs in process of fundraising or promotion.

A problematic definition was provided by one organization in its application for EU funding which stated that “*according to estimates from The University of Wroclaw the annual increase in qualified homelessness is as high as 13 to 17 percent*”. The unknown author admits that *absolute numbers are not available for a specific calculation period due to the mobile character of the homeless and a lack of efficient estimation procedures* but that it is still possible to state for certain that the *growth in the homelessness phenomenon is extremely dynamic*. According to his knowledge *about 25 percent of homeless people avoid contact with organized services as they are afraid of entering the circulation of data within institutions* (www.ngo.pl). This regards rough sleepers staying in gardening allotments, sewage and heating facilities or abandoned buildings. The author gives no reference to data sources which might be the basis for this given estimation for the population growth and overall scale of homelessness.

According to an article on population ageing and homelessness published by Gazeta Prawna², the number of homeless families in Poland declared by the director of one of the departments in the Ministry of Social Policy is close to 28,000. The source of this data is not given but it is obvious that it emanates from social welfare statistics based on the number of people using welfare benefits for

¹ Distinctions between those actually-homeless and those homeless-by-choice are still made and popular among activists, social workers and the general public.

² *Bezdomność. Negatywne skutki starzenia się społeczeństwa*, Gazeta Prawna nr 208 (1573), 2005.10.25

people *experiencing difficult life situations caused by homelessness*³. The definition behind the cited figure is not given even though it is crucial to an understanding of its adequacy.

Opinions on the overall size of the Polish homeless population were shared during a conference entitled *The Needs of Homeless People and The Way They Are Addressed*⁴ which took place in early 2006 at The Ministry of Social Policy. The conference attracted activists from multiple institutions across all sectors. According to their expertise there are around 60,000 to 70,000 homeless people in Poland, although it is justified to use the range of 30,000 to 300,000 considering that some people are homeless only periodically or share apartments with friends and family members.

Meanwhile, none of data sources identified in the Polish Statistical Reports of 2005 and 2006 can be used directly as figures describing the size of the homeless population in Poland. There is no extrapolation or aggregation procedure which may be successfully applied. All estimations are highly discretionary.

National Level

Social workers survey on representative sample of gminas

In 2005 Caritas Kielce conducted a survey on the number and basic needs of the homeless population in Poland⁵. Survey form was sent to representative sample of gminas and filled in by social workers employed in local welfare centres⁶. Gminas were chosen in stratified sampling procedure (All Voivodships to cover geographic and demographic dimension and then two groups of powiats: where services for the homeless were present and absent). One powiat of each kind was chosen in each voivodship and all its gminas were surveyed. Total sample consisted of 242 gminas from 30 powiats. Additionally, the sample was enlarged by five big municipalities and urban areas. According to the researcher the sample of gminas is representative for the population of all gminas with 6% margin of error. There was no definition of homelessness used and decision was up to the knowledge and experience of the social workers. Results are presented in Table 1.

³ The Act on Social Welfare

⁴ The Conference report is available on <http://caritas.pl/news.php?id=4237&d=6>

⁵ M. Wachowicz, *Raport z Badań*, 2006, unpublished.

⁶ Poland has three levels of local government (self government of gmina, of powiat and of voivodship). Certain responsibilities in terms of homelessness are attached to various levels, however gminas hold majority of them. Self governments are not hierarchically dependent, they have different public responsibilities attached. Voivodship apart from self government has national - central administration. There are almost 2500 gminas, 300 powiats and sixteen voivodships.

Table 1. Social workers survey from representative sample of gminas

Categories of gminas by population	Avarage number of homeless people
Up to 5000	2.45
5000 to 10,000	1.94
10,000 to 15,000	5.21
15,000 to 50,000	14.21
50,000 to 200,000	145.20
Over 200,000	1220.00
Total	36.44

Results from surveyed gminas were extrapolated based on population criteria for the whole Poland. The final figure is 62,000 with 6% error margin (3700). According to the social workers employed in public welfare system there are about 62,000 homeless people in Poland. Other conclusions of the study point out the correlation between the size of the gmina and quantity of homelessness on its territory which is followed by concentration of services. Social workers tend to concentrate on adminiting financial bennfits and support in crisis situation, however they express understanding of the importnce of active forms of preventing and exiting homelessness.

Survey design gives no clue as to possible classification of results within ETHOS. The way social workers define homelessness was not studied.

Data from Beneficiaries of the National Homelessness Programme

NGOs which benefit from subsidies from the National Prevention Programme Against the Exclusion of the Homelessness and Those Threatened with Homelessness⁷ report on the allocation of Programme funding. One section of the report form regards the *number of people served during the reported period for the implementation of projects financed through the Programme*⁸. Data provided by beneficiaries is aggregated by the Department of Social Welfare and Integration (DSWI) in MSP at voivodship level and later at national level. The department does not aggregate data from organizations which receive grants directly from the Ministry – a part of the Programme’s budget is allocated through the Ministry with the remainder allocated through voivodships – based on the assumption that some organizations use grants from both sources. This is a procedure intended to avoid double counting, although its efficiency in this matter has never actually been evaluated.

The application and reporting procedures are uncomplicated and the Programme is published well in advance and is known to organizations expecting and planning on funding every year. It is usually announced in the second half of the year and is treated as a good source of easy money which might be used for filling budgetary deficits of everyday needs such electricity, gas, water, food etc. These

⁷ The National Programme is described in the Polish Policy Update 2006

⁸ Report Form for the Implementation of Social Welfare Activity for 2005, Ministry of Social Policy

are good reasons to assume that many active organizations do use its funding. Data provided by beneficiaries is potentially, therefore, a good source of estimates on the size of the homeless population in Poland.

Doubts may be raised with regard to the quality of the data on the numbers of people served as reported by organizations, along with the way it is aggregated. Firstly, it is not clear whether the declared figures relate to people served or to services provided. It is not necessary to provide explanations for such figures nor to run any specific registration system for this purpose. Activists do not know which measures should be used (e.g. point in time or flow) and as result they often declare whatever can be worked out. It is not possible to validate their accuracy. Secondly, it is not possible to eliminate double counting during aggregation procedures which are simply based on summarizing data given by each beneficiary. The intention is to provide data on the number of people who use services during a reported period of about three months long. However, there are service users who migrate from shelter to shelter much more often than during this time period. They may eat in a soup-kitchen and sleep at a night shelter run by separate beneficiaries of the Programme. Thirdly, the Department may assume that there are organizations using funding exclusively allocated through the Ministry, and their clients would not be counted, thereby resulting in an undercount.

According to data reported by voivodships in 2005, organizations supported 87,238 people of whom 55,148 were males; 18,270 females and 13,829 children⁹. The total number probably applies to ETHOS types 1, 2, 3, 4, and possibly 7.

The quality of data aggregated through the National Homelessness Programme for estimating the size of homeless service users may be improved by a small modification to section on numbers of clients in the report form. It would be easier for service providers to report on point-in time measures other than for the number of people served during the reported period.

Social Welfare Statistics

Some data on homeless people is available in the social welfare statistics published by the Ministry of Social Policy. Such statistics are based on the monthly reports of local welfare centres on the implementation of their statutory responsibilities. There are few such services addressed directly to the homeless and they were described in detail in the 2005 Polish Policy Report. The available data for 2003-2005 is presented in Table 2.

⁹ Data emanates from tables provided by the Department of Social Policy and Integration at the Ministry of Social Policy in July 2006.

Table 2. Social Welfare Statistics On the Homeless

	2003	2004	2005
Number of People Receiving Shelter/Refuge	11,181	10,898	12,122
Number of People within Families Supported Due to Difficult Life Situation Caused by Homelessness	32,414	35,968	33,785
Number of People using Shelter Services Financed from <i>Gmina</i> Social Welfare Budgets	14,893 Stock 5,123 Shelters 163	15,215 Stock 6,675 Shelters 193	15,234 Stock 7,774 Shelters 209
Number of People using Shelter Services Financed from <i>Powiat</i> Social Welfare Budgets	707 Stock 181 Shelters 3	603 Stock 292 Shelters 5	909 Stock 435 Shelters 8

Since 2004 the welfare system has included the *Individual Programme for Escaping Homelessness* (IPEH) which is designed as tool addressed specifically to homeless people who undertake activities towards self-independence, mostly undertake substance therapy, and who look for and find stable employment. This is a kind of a contract signed between a homeless person and a social worker for a two year period. According to the 2004 Social Welfare Act social welfare is an institution and set of activities prescribed to the state. The IPEH is an exception as it may be signed by social workers working either at a public welfare centre or for an NGO.

No data on IPEH is included in official welfare statistics and so its popularity cannot be evaluated. In the meantime, it has been reported that there are regions in which social workers know nothing with regard to this tool and that there are towns in which no programmes have been signed at all. From the perspective of a homeless person, it is not considered as being useful due to the fact that most of the benefits which follow may be obtained anyway (including health insurance). The IPEH is treated by shelter managers and social workers as a way of enforcing certain rules for the shelter and of binding inhabitants to deliver unpaid work for the organization.

Some data is gathered at the DSWI based on the reports of beneficiaries of the National Homelessness Programme. Among 2005 voivodship beneficiary clients, 2319 people were contracted (Slaskie 1046, Pomorskie 442, Wielkopolskie 365). It is not clear which IPEH were signed by NGOs and by the public welfare centres. In six voivodships there were no programmes reported at all. According to data collected by the Specialist Homelessness Division at the Powiat Family Support Centre in Poznan, organizations on municipality contracts to deliver services for the homeless signed 277 programmes in 2005. This is considered to be an exhaustive number for the whole municipality. It is probable that similar data has been collected by other municipalities but the lack of official aggregation procedures prevents any citing of nationwide statistics.

Data-Bases on Institutions for the Homeless

There are five data-bases on institutions working with the homeless in Poland. They were created by different agencies, based on different initial data sources and are updated differently. They were all initiated and remain managed by NGOs. A more detailed description is available in Table 3.

Each data-base was created for advisory purposes and, therefore, concentrate on contact information. Stock and specific specializations are hardly ever included. Most are simple word documents and any statistics have to be generated by simple summing up. The kinds of services are defined from the organization's own declaration and distinguish only a small portion of specializations, including night-shelter, shelter, home and soup-kitchen. This is a much smaller range of specializations than actually exists (e.g. BARKA communities, training apartments, supported social housing apartments).

No data collection gives notice to the existing contracted housing services, training and re-adaptation apartments or hostel rooms organized within shelters to provide longer term supported accommodation to people well on the way to self-independence. Both kinds of services have existed for a number of years and their absence in any available data collection scheme is a failure.

In addition, no data-base includes any information on the number of people served by these measures.

Table 3. Data-Bases on Institutions for the Homeless

Polish Name	Bank Danych o placówkach dla bezdomnych ¹⁰	Organizacje i instytucje działające na rzecz osób bezdomnych	Informator o placówkach dla bezdomnych ¹¹	Informator	Informator o placówkach dla ofiar przemocy w rodzinie NIEBIESKA LINIA ¹²
Translated Name	Data Bank of Institutions for the Homeless	Organizations and Institutions Working for the Homeless	Guidebook on Institutions for the Homeless	Guidebook	Guidebook on Institutions for Victims of Domestic Violence
Administered by...	CARITAS Kielce	KLON/JAWOR Association	Working Federation of Unions of Social Organizations WRZOS	Brother Saint Albert Support Society	BLUE LINE Helpline for Victims of Domestic Violence
www	www.caritas.kielce.pl	www.bazy.ngo.pl	www.wrzos.org.pl	www.bratalbert.cp.win.pl/informator	www.niebieskalinia.org
Access	Open	Open	Open	Open	Internal
Created Based On ...	Data from various institutions including Voivodship registers, KLON and national NGO networks.	KLON/JAWOR Database on Organizations Providing Welfare Services, locally collected data and voivodship registers	WRZOS member organizations and others known to them within local communities	Data from organizations applying for funding from the National Homelessness Programme	No data
When Created, When and How Updated	Updated at the end of 2005 with data from voivodship registers of non-governmental organizations. Data was obtained indirectly from service providers.	Since its creation in 2003 it has not been systematically updated as a whole. Data for the Warsaw region was revised at the beginning of 2006. Data was obtained directly from service providers. Data base is open for self-updates by organizations and institutions managed by them.	Since its creation in 2003 has not been updated at all. In 2006 was extended to six more voivodships which were not covered in the initial stage.	Since its creation in 2000 has not been systematically updated. Some records have been revised on an ad hoc basis.	Has existed since the end of the 90s. Revised as a whole at the beginning of 2005. Updated on an everyday basis by helpline workers.
What Data is Included	Name of institution, managing agency/organization, address, phone numbers, email	Name of institution, managing agency/organization, address, phone numbers, email, date of last revision and more than ten types of activities including <i>organization/institution working for the homeless</i>	Name of institution, managing agency/organization, address, phone numbers, email, kinds of services, specialization	Name of institution, managing agency/organization, address, phone numbers, email, stock, meals served	Name of institution, managing agency/organization, address, phone numbers, email
Kinds of Services/Institutions	Kinds of institutions including separate night-shelter and shelter	According to declarations of institutions ordered into shelter/night-shelter as one type and single mothers home	According to declarations of institutions	According to declarations of institutions ordered into: shelter (temporary stay) night-shelter (closed during the day), home (permanent stay), with specialization for women, for men and for both	Kinds of services including overnight shelter and types of clients: women, men, children, youths, offenders

¹⁰ In July 2006 the data base was temporarily inaccessible due to the reconstruction of the CARITAS Kielce web page.

¹¹ In July 2006 the data base was temporarily inaccessible due to the reconstruction of the WRZOS web page.

¹² Helpline is currently working on new database with bigger accessibility and more data. It is being tested under the Blue Network Project.

Stock	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Number of Clients	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Geographical Range	National	National	14 Voivodships	National	National
Generating Statistics	Access database, statistics may be generated with the permission of Caritas Kielce	Access database fully searchable through the Internet	With the permission of the organization for academic purposes	Word document formula – statistics cannot be generated automatically	With the permission of the organization for academic purposes
Overall Number of Records	1,487	727	No data	222	1,915
Institutions Providing Residential Services (Night Shelters, Shelters, Homes, etc.)	721	306	No data	328	245

The most up to date is the CARITAS Data Bank. However, its data was not drawn directly from institutions for the homeless but from administrative data from Voivodship registers. The KLON and BLUE LINE data bases could have been used in order to verify information as they are based on data received directly from shelters. The CARITAS Data Bank consists of almost 1500 records. A substantial part consists of institutions addressed to broader groups of clients such as the excluded, the poor etc. Examples are local family support centres, local welfare centres, social integration centres, soup-kitchens etc. The remaining 721 institutions are shelters and night shelters or bigger residential facilities for dozens of patients with a few sleeping places designated to homeless people from the local area. These tend to be Social Welfare Houses run by public administration.

80 percent of the 721 residential institutions are administered by non-profit organizations, providing 14 percent of sleeping stock. The biggest national networks of organizations, including CARITAS, TPBA, and MONAR manage 30 percent of shelters and night shelters and provide 46 percent of stock. Shelters run by smaller organizations for local communities constitute half of all shelters for the homeless and 40 percent of sleeping stock.

Table 4. Types of Agencies Managing Shelters and Night-Shelters According to the CARITAS Data Bank

Managing Institution	Shelters and Night-Shelters		Stock	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
CARITAS, TPBA, MONAR, Church Organizations	217	30%	10,856	46%
Other NGOs	359	50%	9,492	40%
Local Government	145	20%	3,321	14%
Total	721	100%	23,669	100%

Within residential facilities run by the major networks there are numerous large shelters with dozens of sleeping places in common rooms. Statistics generated from the CARITAS data bank sustain this assumption. Major networks such as MONAR tend to concentrate a large number of services within one space, including among others youth shelters, de-toxification facilities, charitable hospital, and homes for people with mental disorders. Each service within one space would be described separately in its data bank and the existence of centres would not be mentioned at all.

Data on Lethal Freezing

The police generate statistics on the number of people who freeze to death on the streets during the winter season. Not all are homeless, with a number being unconsciously drunk and unable to make their way home, although this is not mentioned in the statistics. Specific data is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Deaths by Freezing in Winter 2004/2005

Month	X	XI	XII	I	II	III	IV	Total
Number	7	36	31	29	55	31	1	190

Regional Level

Voivodship Development and Social Policy Strategies

By law, voivodship local governments are obliged to *draw up, update and implement a Social Policy Strategy for each voivodship*¹³. This strategy should be designed in cooperation with local partners active in welfare field including non-governmental organizations. Analysis of social problems of each region should be prepared and included in this strategy.

Not all voivodships comply to this regulation as there is no direct punishment for not doing so. Existing strategies are not aggregated and have to be searched for in the sixteen different voivodship offices. Some are simply empty documents based on official statistics unearthed from old registers. Problem analysis based on independent research is rare. The regulation was meant to stimulate independent research and cooperation between local governments, the NGO sector and academic society in order to create informed social policy. So far, however, the strategies are only a potential source of good information on social problems at a regional level.

The Warmia & Mazury Voivodship is an exception. A long term Social Policy Strategy has been designed, and is being implemented and evaluated. The 2005 Monitoring includes some information on the homeless population of the region: statistics for IPEH, the number for homeless children, the number for available shelters and stock among others. Tendencies observed in subsequent years have been analyzed. Assessment is based on welfare statistics with no independent data source, although figures are gathered and commented on in a systematic manner. The document is accessible through the internet.

The Pomeranian Forum on Aid to Escape Homelessness

The Pomeranian Forum is an example of broad multi-sector cooperation facilitated in order to recognize the needs, character and size of the homeless population in the region. The Forum gathers representatives of all agencies involved in the homelessness field including NGOs, local government, welfare centres, employment offices, the academic community and local business unions. Its activities concentrate on:

- Ensuring the flow of information among all actors by means of regular meetings
- Conducting research including a bi-annual headcount survey entitled, '*Socio-Demographic Portrait of the Pomeranian Homeless Population*'. Basic numbers for the 2005 survey are presented in Table 5.

¹³ The Act of 5th June 1998 on Voivodship Self Government

- Drawing up and promoting ‘*Standards of Residential Support for the Homeless*’
- Identifying gaps in existing policies which address homelessness and implementing solutions to fill them, such as street services launched in late 2005.

Without a doubt, the Pomeranian Voivodship has the best data collection system on its homeless population in Poland. This influences the quality of provision for the group. More information on Pomeranian Forum can be accessed through www.pfwb.org.pl/en/index.php.

Table 6. Socio-Demographic Portrait of the Pomeranian Homeless Population – Basic Figures

Kind of Housing Situation	Number of People	%
Institutions for the Homeless	1,467	53.30%
Penal Institutions	91	3.30%
Hospitals and Sobering Up Units	118	4.30%
Non-Habitable Places	628	22.80%
Gardening Allotments and Sheds	449	16.30%
Total	2,753	100%

Municipality Level

Municipality of Warsaw

Since 1999 Warsaw has had a system of data collection based on registers run by local non-governmental organizations providing services for the homeless receiving subsidies or contracts from the Municipality of Warsaw through its Social Policy Office (SPO). A unique characteristic of the system is that it gathers data from institutions run by various organizations based on a unified questionnaire and making this a prerequisite of reporting to SPO.

Even though not all of Warsaw’s shelters are included in the system, the statistics cover the majority and may be used to describe the homeless population residing in Warsaw shelters in general. According to the ‘*Homelessness – Where to Look for Support in Warsaw*’¹⁴ leaflet updated in late 2004 there are 47 shelters and night-shelters in Greater Warsaw. SPO statistics for first half of 2005 were drawn from around 30 institutions.

The system is based on the Inhabitant Card, a unified questionnaire which, by definition, is to be filled in by the social worker during the interview with each shelter client intending to stay for more than three days. The cards include questions on basic demographic characteristics, the reasons for and history of homelessness, the original place of living, employment status and health condition.

Once every three months organizations report to the SPO on margins generated from the Cards of clients present at the institution at a certain point in time, the end of the reporting period. No personal identification data is revealed. The SPO sums up all of the figures and produces quarterly

¹⁴ *Bezdomni - gdzie szukać pomocy na terenie Warszawy*, opracowanie z serii “*Poznaj Swoje Prawa*”, www.pomocspoleczna.ngo.pl

reports available for research purposes once the office has been contacted. The basic figures are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Number of People Using Services Provided by Organizations Subsidized by the Social Policy Office of the Municipality of Warsaw

Point in Time Number ¹⁵ :	31st March 2005	30th June 2005	31st March 2006
Total	3,496	3,054	3,702
Women	521	1082	938
Men	2,973	1,972	2,764
Number of Institutions	30	30	27

The majority of subsidized organizations have contributed to the system for a number of years. They have collected large numbers of Inhabitant Cards from people who have used their services in the years since 1999. The collections are stored in each shelter in paper form with almost none having been computerized. Not all of the data is revealed in the statistics of the Municipality of Warsaw. Deeper analysis of Cards from all shelters would allow the tracking of homeless individuals in Warsaw, patterns of service use, and would provide numbers of new cases as well as many other statistics not available from any other data collection system in Poland. Inhabitant Cards possess information which allows the identification of individuals, thereby eliminating double counting, and enables tracking. Yet, revealing personal identification details of shelter clients has always been strongly opposed by managers of Warsaw shelters and the leaders of organizations running them. The concept of policy oriented research has not yet become established.

Homelessness Divisions within the Public Welfare System

In a few of the bigger towns in which homelessness is particularly noticeable, local welfare centres or local family support centres have created within their structures specialist divisions to address the problem. One centre may become designated to deal with the entire homeless population of the whole town. Some run internal data-bases on homeless individuals using their support. Data is gathered according to internal questionnaires and is accessible only to social workers. Statistics are not aggregated within an official welfare statistics scheme.

The collection of such information is limited to people claiming welfare benefit and who constitute only a part of the homeless community. Among those excluded are individuals who fail to meet the income criteria set in Social Welfare Act, such as most pensioners and people on disability benefits whose income is higher. Specialist divisions designated to deal with homeless clients have been created in Gdansk, Poznan and Cracow.

The 'Doctors for Hope' Association

¹⁵ Biuro Polityki Społecznej dnia 25 lipca 2006 roku nie dysponowało zestawieniami za III i IV kwartał 2005 roku.

Interesting data collection at a municipality level may be found in the possession of the Doctors for Hope Association which runs the Specialist Health Clinic for the Homeless in Warsaw¹⁶. The association is one of two charitable health services addressed at meeting the needs of homeless and poor patients and it is serving anyone who asks for services.

The Clinic has been in operation since 1991 and from that point has systematically gathered information on its clients. It uses public health records to document the medical history of its patients. In 2000 part of its data was transferred to a computerized data-base which included names, basic demographical variables, education and the date of first appointment at the Clinic. Since 2000 only new patients have registered in the computer system and their medical history is documented in health records in paper. Information on current place of stay and contact details are also noted in health records.

In 2004 computerized data was summarized in one Report which is available on site. Health records have never been subjected to analysis. The Clinic, which is subsidized by the Municipality of Warsaw, is required to prepare quarterly reports on its performance including the number of appointments with all specialists. They include no data on patients. Prior to July 2006, the computerized data-base included information on around 7,000 patients supported by the Clinic.

Single Organizations

Since 2005 within the biggest networks of organizations working with the homeless there has been visible tendency towards the computerizing and coordinating of data collection systems of their chapters and managed institutions. This is seen as recognizing the importance of improving the quality of services and effective policies needed to address the requirements of their clients. The low level of computerization of shelters and chapters, as well as difficulties with internet access are some of the barriers encountered. This is especially tiresome for small institutions located in rural areas and small towns. The insufficient computer skills of managers and a lack of work time are frequent obstacles. A common characteristic of all undertakings is their restriction to institutions run by one organization. To date, an appreciation of the advantages of running trans-organizational data systems open to all institutions engaged in provision for the homeless on a certain territory has not been forthcoming.

A number of organizations have declared their commitment to independent research. However, other than the activities of the Pomeranian Forum, these mainly amount to declarations or announcements of no objection to research based on information obtained from their clients. This commitment has

¹⁶ Information obtained directly from the Clinic.

not been accompanied by any pledges regarding funding. Research is kindly accepted on condition that it is conducted by volunteers with no extra financial resources required. Research reports from conducted studies are difficult to access and are usually stored in the offices of organizations with a high likelihood that office workers know nothing of their existence. Electronic versions are infrequently published on the internet.

The descriptions below provide information on the efforts of the biggest national organizations to coordinate and order internal data collection systems on their clients. Efforts at facilitating independent research are mentioned where applicable. All information was assessed directly from agencies or their internet sites.

The Saint Brother Albert Society

The Saint Brother Albert Society (SBAS) is a national organization specializing in supporting homeless men. It has a well developed network of chapters running multiple institutions throughout the country with the highest concentration in the Dolny Slask region. In September 2005 the organizational board accepted a document on *'Values and Directions for Development'* which included declarations on research activity:

Dedication to long term and holistic support aimed at the prevention of and permanent escape from homelessness requires the Society to assure high professionalism in its performance. To address this goal the Society has initiated and supports independent research on the phenomenon of homelessness, its prevention and escape from it. The Society makes use of research results during its everyday work and systematically improves the qualifications of its members workers and volunteers. (...) aimed at the individual recognition of needs and addressing them in the most adequate manner, Society intends to create a Data-Base on Homeless People¹⁷.

Such declarations were further specified in a subsequent document accepted at the end of June 2006 on *"SBAS Strategy for 2006-2015"*¹⁸ in a chapter dedicated to a computer system. It states that the rapid implementation of a computer system is essential for the Society's mission. This is conditioned by improving the hardware stock of the organization and its chapters as well as extending their access to the internet. In 2005, 39 chapters were equipped with one or more computers with 22 not possessing one. Only 27 chapters had access to electronic mail and 14 to an administered web page. The quality of hardware and software is not recognized. Computer training for employees is inevitable and in the end an entire system of data-bases has to be created. The system is to be

¹⁷ The Board of the Saint Brother Albert Society, *Wartości i kierunki rozwoju TPBA*, www.bratalbert.org.pl, 24.06.2006,

¹⁸ *Strategia TPBA, Piąty obszar strategiczny - budowa zintegrowanego systemu informatycznego TPBA (Informatyzacja)*, uzyskane bezpośrednio od organizacji dn. 26.07.2006

accessible through the internet only by authorized workers from all chapters. One data-base would consist of the records of homeless males from the year 2000 and after who were clients of shelters and institutions run by the organization throughout the country. It is not planned to open the data-base to service providers from other organizations. According to the timetable set out in the Strategy, the system would be created within two years.

The MONAR Association

The MONAR Association¹⁹ is a national organization which has dedicated itself to supporting people addicted to drugs and the homeless for almost thirty years. It has a well developed structure of ambulatory and residential services throughout the country including services run by the MARKOT Movement for Escaping Homelessness. It is self-help in character and many shelter managers are people who have experience of homelessness or have had to deal with other problems. Many institutions are located outside towns, often in difficult to access rural areas and forests. Due to location factors and the high cost of connecting to telecommunication networks, these institutions have experienced difficulties in accessing the internet. This has obstructed efforts at data collection.

Shelter managers are obliged to deliver monthly and annual information on 'client movement' based on a form provided by the Organization Board. Data from some shelters is obtained through telephone calls. The forms include tables on the number of people accommodated, their sex, age, place of last formal residence, nationality, length of stay, income, health condition, history of homelessness including reasons and the number of people not accepted in the shelter, among many other categories. Monthly and annual reports are aggregated in the central chapter where the overall figures are summed up and published. According to the 2005 Annual Report, the MARKOT Movement for Exiting Homelessness had 4,576 places in 56 institutions. Among these were seventeen homes for single mothers and their children, two night-shelters and thirty seven residential homes for homeless people. Services were used by 22,937 people throughout the year, 21 percent of them being female. As of 31st October 2005, there were 1,422 children accommodated in various shelters.

As the current system is unable to guarantee tracing client movement between institutions, the elimination of double counting or collecting detailed and individualized information on beneficiaries of various programs implemented by the Movement, it was decided in 2005 to design a more elaborate Data Collection System. This would include information on each shelter, the kinds of services provided, staff, equipment and - last but not least - individual data on clients. The system is expected to improve the quality of services and the effectiveness of implementing the mission of the organization.

¹⁹ Informacje uzyskane bezpośrednio od organizacji

The computer system project was designed and initially tested in early 2006. In the first stage of its implementation, workers from the Mazovia Region were trained. In July 2006 the organization was awaiting a decision on funding for further stages (training and necessary software for chapters from throughout Poland). The process of inserting data is to begin soon.

The Data Collection System was created as a MARKOT internal tool, and was to be accessible to authorized workers via the internet, mostly shelter managers. To date, it is not envisaged to open the system to other organizations or to integrate it with their existing data-bases.

CARITAS Kielce

Multiple research initiatives have been conducted by CARITAS of the Kielce Diocese. Independent of the Data Bank described in the previous section of the report, the organization in 2003 implemented a unique project aimed at creating a trans-organizational database on clients of multiple shelters throughout Poland. Its goal was to enable the following of the migrations of homeless individuals between services and to provide current shelter workers with the knowledge as to whom to contact in order to obtain information on an individual person's needs, and the way they were previously addressed. Each record contained a name, surname initial, date of birth and list of services used by that person during a certain time. The manager of each shelter providing information on its clients was granted access to a data-base stored on a hard disk on the computer located in the CARITAS Kielce office. The data-base was operated by specially designated workers in possession of authorization codes.

Around ten CARITAS chapters, a few shelters run by MONAR, around a dozen shelters of the SBAS along with individual institutions joined the project in its initial stage. They provided data on around 8,000 shelter clients. The data was intended to be updated quarterly by new inputs from participating service providers. The first was not as successful as had been hoped, due to the fact that organizations became concerned at being charged by the Personal Data Protection Inspector. CARITAS asked the Inspector's Office to provide its opinion on the legality of the project, but received an unclear answer. The Office cited a few paragraphs of the Personal Data Protection Act with no conclusion regarding the CARITAS data base. The project was suspended at that point as organizations were reluctant to join it and their broad participation was vital to its success.

Between 2004 and 2005 CARITAS conducted three questionnaire surveys on declared reasons for homelessness and the service – need deficits at *gmina* level. In the first case questionnaires were distributed through various shelter managers and filled in by shelter inhabitants. In the second case research was addressed to social workers who were contacted through public welfare centres. The Organization continues to cooperate with researchers in processing and interpreting data. Research reports are available from CARITAS and are soon expected to be accessible via the internet.

II. Existing Services, Proposed Standards and ETHOS

Since 2005 no new kinds of services for the homeless have been developed. All of the existing forms are described in the 2005 Polish Statistical Report. There are still no universal standards and prescribing a certain institution to one specific category depends on the self-definition and criteria used by its managers. There is no consistency within the country. A collection of the different kinds of service used by organizations in their names is presented in Table 7. It is theoretically possible to prescribe them to operational categories of ETHOS, but this has no influence on enhancing data collection. Division is highly discretionary and has no equivalent data collection system either on institutions or clients. Inessential – in terms of data collection – matching with operational categories of ETHOS is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Types of Institutions and ETHOS

	Operational Category	Type of Institutions by Name
1	Living in a Public Space (No Abode)	Soup-Kitchens Bathing/Washing Rooms Health Stations Advisory and Counselling Points Street-Workers
2	Stay in a Night-Shelter and/or Forced to Spend Several Hours a Day in a Public Space	Warming-up Rooms Night Shelters
3	Homeless Hostel/Temporary Accommodation	Shelters (short term but often prolonged to long term) Hostel rooms (long term)
4	Women's Shelter/Refuge	Shelters for Women Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence Homes for Pregnant Women Homes for Single Mothers
5	Accommodation for asylum seekers and immigrants	Centres for Immigrants
6	Institutional Release	Shelters for People Leaving Correctional Facilities Charitable Hospitals for the Homeless Protected Apartments for Youths Leaving Foster Institutions Homes/Hostels for Chronically Ill Homeless People
7	Specialist Supported Accommodation (For the Homeless)	Protected Apartments Contract, Training and Re-Adaptation Apartments Supported Public Housing Apartments Communities

New developments have been seen in terms of promoting the standardization of services. Two sets of standards have been designed and published by CARITAS Kielce and The Pomeranian Forum and are described in more detail in the 2006 Policy Update for Poland. They are differently constructed, although with a little generalization they may be integrated. Both proposals describe the desired construction of a service system rather than the currently functioning set of services in their full diversity (e.g. none includes communities as implemented by BARKA or supported housing for people newly settled after a history of homelessness like WOLA Social Reintegration Programme). They do not describe the whole range of housing situations in which homeless people or people threatened with homelessness may find themselves (e.g. settling gardening allotments). This is not their purpose, and so makes comparison with ETHOS difficult and downgrades their value for the

future improvement of data collection. The potential compatibility of both proposals with each other is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Compatibility of the Kielce and Pomeranian Standards with each other

Kielce Standards	(English Version)	Pomeranian Standards
ogrzewalnia	Warming-up Facility	Ogrzewalnia
noclegownia	Night-Shelter	Noclegownia
stołówka	Canteen	
punkt wydawania odzieży i paczek żywnościowych	Food and Clothing Distribution Station	
punkt konsultacyjny i usługi medyczne	Consultation and Medical Station	
łaźnia i pralnia	Bathroom and Washing Room	
schronisko I	Shelter (Short and Longer Term)	Schronisko
schronisko II		
hostel-dom opieki	Hostel, Care Home (dedicated to those unable to break with homelessness)	dom dla bezdomnych
mieszkania kontraktowe, readaptacyjne, chronione	Supported and Transitional Apartments	mieszkania treningowe
poradnictwo i kluby (praca programowa długofalowa)	Legal Advice and Long Term Psychological Support	
kis lub cis	Social Integration Centres	

III. ETHOS Data

Detailed information on Polish data sources is available in the Data Matrices. Some necessary comments have been made below, mostly in order to supplement or adjust information included in the 2005 Polish Statistical Report. Not all data sources included in the Matrices are commented upon in this Chapter. In the event of it not being possible to prescribe a Polish data source to a specific operational ETHOS definition, it has been prescribed to the operational category in general. A summary of data sources is presented in Table 11 at the end of Chapter III.

Accommodated in institutions for the homeless (ETHOS 2-3-4)

There are four data sources which, as a last resort, might be used to describe the size of the population using residential services provided by institutions for the homeless (mostly shelters and night-shelters, homes for women, shelters for former prisoners). None allows the withdrawal of data for users of specific services. Two are of national scope, one regards the Municipality of Warsaw and the final is for the Pomeranian region. All sources are aimed at the same population but over it to unknown extent and there is no procedure to allow aggregation.

Official social welfare statistics isolate the numbers of people who received support due to difficult life situation caused by homelessness. In 2005 there were 12,122 such people. To receive welfare benefit one has to meet a monthly income criteria of no more than PLN 316. According to practitioners and experts, there are many homeless people whose income is above this limit, such as people with a disability pension or retirement benefits. Among the homeless there are many who, for ideological reasons, refuse to apply for any welfare benefits. These may include those who do not

want to go through the family welfare interview obligatory for any benefit. Data aggregated by the Ministry comes from the quarterly reports of local welfare centres along with family support centres – it is not unusual for some people to utilize the support of both institutions. Final figures are not verified in terms of double counting. Data may be compared only to figures obtained from the same source for previous years. There is no procedure which allows its use in order to estimate the overall size of homeless service users in Poland.

Further data comes from official social welfare statistics and regards the number of people who use the services of shelters and night-shelters founded through the welfare budgets of *gminas* and *powiats*. This applies to services managed by local government and NGOs. In 2005 there were 116,143 such people. The data collection procedure is unknown, although it is clear that the data emanates from institution reports submitted during the reporting procedure for funding. It is not possible to tell what part of such services were taken into account. In all probability, groups of clients have been counted more than once. As with previously described data it cannot be used to estimate the general size of homeless shelter users in Poland.

Centres for Immigrants (ETHOS 5.1)

There are sixteen residential centres for immigrants along with one central reception facility. They accommodate people applying for refugee status. The average number of people accommodated monthly as a whole fluctuates from 3,000 to 3,500. The status procedure may result in the granting of refugee status, tolerated stay status or a temporary stay agreement. People who apply for refugee status may potentially be considered as being homeless. There were 6,860 such people in 2005. Among these, the group of people for whom the procedure resulted in tolerated stay status (44 in 2005 but the number has been growing since 2003, as Table 10 presents) are at highest risk. Unlike refugees, they are denied integrative benefit but are still required to leave governmental residential refugee facilities.

Table 10. People Receiving Refugee, Tolerated Stay Status and Temporary Stay Agreements

	2003	2004	2005
Refugee Status	24	840	1856
Tolerated Stay Status	1	34	44
Temporary Stay Status	27	41	5

Leaving Penal Institutions (ETHOS 6.1)

Penitentiary Office of The Penal Service Central Board

In the first half of 2006 the average number of imprisoned people was in the region of 87,000 including people with effective sentences and those temporarily arrested. This number has been

increasing constantly since 2000 when the figure was 54,000. In 2005 over 90,000 prisoners were released. In theory, services dedicated to the preparation for life after prison are available to all, but in reality only a few decide to take up such services. Support is provided by tutors six months prior to the expected release date and their work is coordinated by the Penitentiary Office. According to Office registers, housing was an issue in 3,180 cases of people who asked for support in 2005. Among activities undertaken in these cases were the arrangement of a place in a homeless shelter or social welfare home as well as a clarification of the individual housing situation. Detailed figures are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Penitentiary Office Interventions Related to Housing Issues of Prisoners Six Months Before Release

Housing Issues	
Interventions to Maintain Previous Accommodation or Locate a New One	1,557
Arranging a Space in Shelters or Night-Shelters	761
Referral to Social Welfare Homes	104
Total	2,422

According to experts from the Penitentiary Office, a majority of prisoners who might require support in solving their housing situations never decide to apply for it. Prisoners wait until the very last moment to admit that they possess no housing once released. A stable housing and family situation is conditional to obtaining parole. Parole would not be granted to people who are homeless or plan to spend their time in a homeless shelter.

Prison system employees believe that there exists a group of homeless people seeking to avoid paying alimony who actively attempt to enter prison at the beginning of the winter season. They have sentences which they have to serve in exchange for not paying alimonies or they had been sentenced and not previously reachable by the police. Part of their motivation, other than escaping cold weather, is access to the free prison health system. A limited amount of health services are available to this group only in prisons, such as dental care and prosthodontics. The Penitentiary Office has no statistics to back up this opinion.

Leaving Hospital (ETHOS 6.2)

There is no register or data available on people to be released from hospitals who might become homeless afterwards. In fact, there is no data on the number of homeless people served by the health system. Statistical divisions between hospitals confuse the statistics on free health services provided to people with no health insurance who have been granted provision through a decision from an alderman, mayor or *gmina* president. Not all of such people are homeless and not all of the homeless people are deprived health insurance (people on unemployment benefits or pensioners).

In one Warsaw hospital, the state of being homeless is noted in medical records as declared by the patient. Data is gathered by social nurses whose job is to ensure the fulfilment of the access procedure to free health services for those uninsured, clarifying the identity of patients and searching for a place to stay after they leaving hospital. This data is not passed on to the statistics division – it stays in the nurse’s paper notebook. This includes names, surnames, identity paper number, place of last registered stay and date of birth.

Support for Becoming Self-Independent

People leaving various residential institutions, such as foster families, orphanages, youth correctional facilities, penal institutions, homes for mentally disabled children and others are entitled to apply for welfare benefit for integration with society and to become self-independent. Financial support is provided for certain purposes: self-independence, studying, or gaining proper housing conditions. In kind support usually involves furniture. Statistics on this benefit are part of official welfare statistics. In 2005 benefits for gaining proper housing conditions were admitted to 809 people.

Specialist Supported Accommodation (ETHOS 7)

Supported Public Housing Apartments

The ‘Second Opportunity’ Wola Social Reintegration Programme provides supported social apartments to selected former inhabitants of Warsaw shelters for the homeless. They possess a temporary legal title to their apartments with a planned extension to permanent tenant status after two years of monitored performance within a settled housing situation. Currently, 16 Programme participants are accommodated. This pioneer programme provides social housing apartments with necessary support to people who have managed to find and keep their jobs but who need monitoring during the initial stage of housing independence. To date, this is the only programme in Poland and it needs to be promoted to the mainstream.

Table 12. Available Polish Data Sources for Specific ETHOS Types

		Operational Category	Polish Data Sources
Roofless	1	Living in a Public Space (No Abode)	1. 1 Staying in places not meant for habitation PFWB*
	2	Stay in a Night-Shelter and/or Forced to Spend Several Hours a Day in a Public Space	2-3-4 Inhabitants of institutions for the homeless, PFWB 2-3-4 Inhabitants of institutions, SPO Municipality of Warsaw 2-3-4 Received shelter support, Public Welfare Statistics 2-3-4 People accommodated in shelters financed from <i>gmina</i> and <i>powiat</i> welfare budgets, Public Welfare Statistics
Houseless	3	Homeless Hostel/Temporary Accommodation	
	4	Women’s Shelter/Refuge	
	5	Accommodation for Asylum Seekers and Immigrants	5.1 Granted refugee or tolerated stay status, URIC** 5.1 Applying for refugee status, URIC 5.2 Granted repatriate visas, URIC
	6	Institutional Release	6.1 Asking for intervention in housing issues, BP CZSW*** 6.1 Homeless people staying in penal institutions, PFWB; 6.2 Homeless people staying in hospitals and sobering-up units, PFWB 6. Support for self-independence for people leaving institutions, Public Welfare Statistics
	7	Specialist Supported Accommodation (for homeless people)	7.1 Supported social housing apartments – WPRS**** 7.2 Protected apartments for people supported to self-independence leaving institutions financed by <i>gminas</i> and <i>powiats</i> , Public Welfare Statistics

Insecure Housing	8	No Tenancy	No data for 2005/6
	9	Eviction Order	9.1 Enforced evictions with no substitute social housing provided, MS**** 9.1 Evictions awaiting for enforcement with no substitute social housing provided, MS
	10	Violence	10.1 Number of domestic violence victims registered within Blue Cards procedure, Police Headquarters
Inadequate	11	Temporary Structure	11. Staying in Worker's Gardening Allotments and sheds, PFWB
	12	Unfit Housing	No data for 2005/6
	13	Extreme Overcrowding	No data for 2005/6

* Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Escaping Homelessness; ** Office for Repatriation and Aliens; *** Penitentiary Office of the Central Board of Penal Service; **** Wola Social Reintegration Programme 'Second Opportunity'; ***** Ministry of Justice;

Conclusions

The lack of data sources for determining the size of the homeless population in Poland has created pressure on activists to provide expert estimations. The data available in administrative registers and acquired in a few independent studies is biased in one or more of the follow ways. It is:

- Fragmented – catches only fragments of the target population, institutions or services. Independent research concentrates on clients of certain organizations or institutions.
- Not easily accessed – most information has to be obtained through personal contact with officers or employees of organizations. Electronic versions accessible through the internet are a rarity.
- Local – most service provision for the homeless is the statutory responsibility of local governments and they are obliged to register statistics. Only part of that data is aggregated on a national level. Independent research is available for one region only.

The largest networks of non-governmental organizations running dozens of shelters, night-shelters and other services, are undertaking efforts aimed at improving the data collection system on their clients. Efforts include interactive and trans-institutional systems for data bases which allows tracking the paths of people using services of different organizations. Unfortunately, none of the anticipated systems is thought of as being potentially open to services and data gathered by other organizations. All projects are internal. Their implementation would not change much in data collection on the characteristics and size of the overall homeless population in the country or even at a local level of one municipality where the homeless concentrate and where services are provided by numerous different organizations.

Service providers are visibly tired with the lack of standardization of services and adequate public funding diversified depending on the scope of the service. Institutional standards are created by non-governmental service providers and their platforms. The intention is to enable a diversification of funding sources, so that services with a higher standard are financed appropriately. To date, most local governments contract out or subsidize provision for 'sleeping places' with the same flat rate, no matter whether they are provided in shelters with an elaborate social work program or a night-shelter with only beds. Organizations need to be assured that they will receive adequate funding to cover the

costs of services provided. This would allow them to provide more elaborate support programmes on a bigger scale, such as training apartments currently not sufficiently developed due to constant under-funding from public sources. These are the reasons for standards being rather descriptive towards the desired service system rather than existing in a fuller diversity of forms. This may become an obstacle to the implementation and broad promotion of standards among service providers, due to the fact that most are small local NGOs highly defensive of their independence.

The types of services or institutions identified in existing data-bases or standards do not fully mirror the functioning system. Data-bases make no mention of training or contract apartments, hostel rooms or of programmes for winning over social housing apartments for formerly homeless people, as in the Wola Social Reintegration Programme. Both kinds of services have been implemented on a small scale, yet they do exist, and provide an extremely valuable service and, therefore, should be brought more to the public's attention. Standards of institutional support do not include any programmes dedicated to providing support to formerly homeless people who have been newly housed within a free housing market setting. All services for homeless people in Poland are served in buildings, facilities or apartments owned or managed by a service provider.

The service system created by NGOs based on their experience and mission, as well as on certain funding patterns for homeless provision applied by the statutory responsibility of local governments evolved almost exclusively to contain roofless or, to some extent, houseless people as defined by ETHOS. People threatened by homelessness or housing exclusion are beyond its range.

Most data sources mentioned in the 2006 Polish Statistical Update have been described simply because they exist and have something to do with homelessness. They were prescribed to a specific ETHOS category or definition because there were hallmarks of overlap. With the exception of data from the Pomeranian Survey, evictions, blue card procedures for domestic violence and, possibly the Municipality of Warsaw reports, none of the sources can be used as fully descriptive to the populations sharing certain a 'housing situation' as defined by ETHOS.