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**HOMELESSNESS IN SLOVENIA**  
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## **Summary**

In the report the main sources of data for the roofless and houseless categories of the homeless are presented. The official data on all of the categories of roofless and homeless is rather scarce. Especially for the roofless there is no official dataset. The most comprehensive overview of the roofless situation gives the database of the Social protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, where the services for homeless (funded by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and local authorities) and the number of users are reported. Similar holds true for the data on women shelters and supported accommodation, as this presents itself as the most reliable source. On the other hand risk of homelessness when released from penal institution is available through reports of the Ministry of Justice. Similarly the report on the work of Ministry of the Interior is the source of data for number of persons in asylum and similar centres. There does not seem to be any interest in a more detailed data on the homeless population and also research in this field is not very developed.

## **Introduction**

For Slovenia data collection on any issues of housing exclusion, that is on any of the categories of FEANTSA - roofless, houseless, those in insecure housing and in inadequate housing is very limited or almost non-existent. Even more, there seems to be no debate on the need for this data and consequently issues of measurement are not present in the public or professional debate.

Not only is the official data scarce and limited, but also there is not much research on these issues, that would compensate for the lack of official data. An additional problem is the very limited view on the homeless issue. Namely, the homeless in Slovenia are often seen as the very narrow group of people that

sleep in the streets or use the homeless shelters. Other types of houseless (according to the Feantsa definition) are not viewed as "strictly" homeless - for example women in shelters, young in emergency accommodation. The various shelters that offer accommodation to different groups (victims of violence, young, drug users and homeless) are not seen as solving the same problem - housing issue. Therefore, there is no vision of combining the data from these various fields.

The housing problem in general seems to be an issue to which not much attention is given in policy debates (except for the general status of housing and high prices in Slovenia). Housing problems are often solved only when they are translated into other problems - abuse, psychological problems and similar (Boškič and Filipović 2002).

The data collection is also limited to the level of services (lists of shelters, NGO's, ...), and is not on the level of users. Therefore, no personal information on the users of various homeless services can be obtained, or their movements in space and among different services. Consequently, potential for overlapping when counting the users of various services is very high.

In the report the general sources of data will be presented and the data collections methods and their use. Additionally, it will describe specifically how the data for the two categories of homeless - roofless and houseless is gathered.

## **Data availability**

### **General availability of data on homeless**

In general the data is mainly obtained through various official bodies, mainly Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and also some other ministries (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice).

Ministry for Interior also has a database of all associations and foundations registered. However the database is not specific enough to enable distinguishing between the associations that work with the homeless and others.

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) has a list of services and programmes for homeless that they fund, which is made on a yearly basis. This list includes information on the name of the service, address and programme of the service provider. However the list does not include programmes and services for homeless that are not financed by the MLFSA. This data is very limited, in contents as well as in covering only a part of the services<sup>1</sup>.

There also exists a database on services and programmes provided by the Centres for social work. This data is gathered by Social protection institute of the Republic of Slovenia. The database has quite detailed and comprehensive information on the services provided and number of users, etc. However, here the homeless are not distinguished as specific group. Mainly the users are observed through various service programmes offered to them. Therefore, it is not very useful for collection of data on the homeless population.

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<sup>1</sup> However, it should be noted that the majority of the services in voluntary sector are financed by the Ministry and consequently not many are left out when looking only at those funded by the Ministry.

In 2005 the Social protection institute of the Republic of Slovenia started gathering information on organisations working in the social protection that are either funded by the MLFSA or the municipalities (the database in limited version existed also prior to this date, but did not include services funded from the municipalities, but only those funded by the Ministry). This is a very important source of information, and will be described in more detail further on in the report

A very important source of data on housing is Public Census, which was carried out in 2002. It encompasses the dwellings and also institutional forms of living (the buildings included in the census are homes for the elderly, student homes, convents, hospitals and similar). Among dwellings also living in temporary housing is listed. These data enable to some degree to establish the extent of one vulnerable situation - living in inadequate dwelling. However, the public census is limited due to the fact it is done only once every 10 years, which means that for the majority of time one is working with very old data. Furthermore, the access to information is limited (part of the data is published, and is widely accessible also on the internet, however one cannot access the database freely to make any additional calculations. Also due to protection of privacy small numbers are generally not allowed to be further analysed).

The research on the homeless at the national level is practically non-existent. There has been no research project funded that would observe the homeless population on the national level. This means that the lack of official data is multiplied by the lack of any other data. This pertains not only to the narrow definition of the homeless (the roofless, the houseless), but also to the issues of housing exclusion in general. In 2005 a Housing survey has been carried out by the faculty of Social Sciences (Centre for Welfare Studies), which was funded by the Housing Fund of Republic of Slovenia. This has been a first thorough research of the housing issues since 1994. It partly enables some overview of housing vulnerability (inadequate housing, overcrowding issues). However, it

does not include other, most vulnerable and hard to reach categories and situations (as is always a case in national telephone surveys).

There are some additional sources of the data on the municipal levels. For example, City of Ljubljana has been included in the Urban Audit, where one of the measures is number of homeless per total resident population (for Ljubljana it is 0.11, which places it in the middle of all the cities included in the Urban audit) . The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia is gathering the data for the Urban Audit. The data on the homeless population is, according to my knowledge, based on the estimate from the Municipality of Ljubljana.

In 2005 there was a research project funded by Municipality of Ljubljana to count the homeless in Ljubljana. The project is being carried out by the Faculty for education. However, there are no results yet to be obtained, as the project is still in progress.

### **Data on roofless**

In the year 2005 the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has subsidised 12 programmes for homeless. In the shelters there were 90 homeless people included, and through other programmes (like day centres, food and clothes distribution centres, dispensary, ...) additional 800 homeless people were reached. Adding these two number we get approximately 890 people. (source: MLFSA).

Another source of information is the database of the Social protection institute. There various services for the homeless are listed, and the number of their users. Adding all the users of the services for the homeless (not only shelters but also food services, services for personal hygiene and other) we get 924 users. Therefore, the estimate could be about 900 homeless in Slovenia

(although the problem of overlapping of the users of various services is very high<sup>2</sup>).

There are additional issues when observing number of people in homeless shelters. In Slovenia it is hard to distinguish between short stay hostel and a homeless hostel. The first form of accommodation has been established only recently. An overnight shelter has been established in 2004 in Ljubljana (as supplementary accommodation in an existing Shelter for the Homeless Ljubljana - centre). It enables short stay accommodation in containers (approximately 18 beds available) – the stay is limited to only one night and the premises are closed during the day.

Majority of the centres for the homeless don't limit the duration of the stay in the centre. For example, in the Centre for the homeless in Ljubljana<sup>3</sup>, approximately half of the users of the accommodation facilities have been there for more than 5 years.

Table 1: The number of shelters financed by the Ministry of labour, Family and social affairs in 2005

City	number of beds
Ljubljana	45-50
Maribor	25
Celje	23
Slovenj Gradec	5
Krško	5
Total	108

Source: Ministry of Labour, family and social affairs (answer to the official inquiry by the author)

Note: In this data the number of beds in Ljubljana shelter encompass both, the shelter as well as short stay hostel.

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<sup>2</sup> Additional problem is also the use of services for the homeless by people not strictly homeless (for example free lunch service is used also by old pensioners that cannot get through the month with their pensions, however they cannot be counted as homeless).

<sup>3</sup> Interview carried out on 15/5/2005.

Among accommodation for the homeless also the Crisis centres for the children and young could be counted. According to the ministry of Labour, family and Social Affairs there were seven Crisis centres for the young in Slovenia, with accommodation capacities between 6 to 10 beds. In total there are approximately 57 beds in the Centres.

Table 2: The number of Crisis centre for young and their capacities in 2006

City	number of beds
CSD Ljubljana Bežigrad	6-7
CSD Maribor	10
CSD Celje	10
CSD Slovenj Gradec	6
CSD Krško	8
CSD Radovljica	6-8
CSD Murska Sobota	8
Total	57

Source: Ministry of Labour, family and social affairs and phone interviews with individual centres.

Note: CSD is abbreviation for Centre for social work.

### **Data on houseless**

Below we describe access to data on individual categories of the houseless. However, the category of those living in homeless shelters is described already in the above section of the roofless.

### **Temporary accommodation**

Municipalities have municipal Housing Funds whose responsibility is to ensure housing for vulnerable groups and in extreme situations. This is done through non-profit housing and emergency dwellings (housing units). However, the data on the number of the emergency dwellings in the municipalities is not

available at national level. According to the Director of Ljubljana Housing Fund there are 100 emergency housing units in use in 2005<sup>4</sup>.

### **Women's shelters**

The list of shelters funded by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and by municipalities and their users enables us to make an estimate on the number of users of these services (source: Social Protection Institute).

According to the data from the Social protection institute there are 16 maternity homes and safe houses in Slovenia and in the period from January 2005 to June 2005 377 women and children were accommodated.

In addition, there has been some research made in this field. For example research done by Leskošek and Boskić (2004) makes a very detailed overview of the services for women, victims of violence and the institutional, legislative contexts in which they operate.

### **Supported accommodation**

Like in the above cases, we can estimate the number of users in the supported accommodation on the basis of list of NGO's, gathered by the Social protection Institute. Supported accommodation for people with mental health problems in housing groups accommodates approximately 120 people. This is the number of users reported by various NGO's that offer this accommodation with support. The data refer to the period between January 2005 and June 2005.

Additionally, also NGO's that work with disabled people offer some supported housing. In this kind of accommodation in the observed time period there were 30 people.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Informal conversation with the Director of the Housing fund, Ljubljana, May 2005. The emergency abodes have existed in Ljubljana since 1997 (even before the necessary law was adopted). The length of the accommodation is not specifically limited. The law states that it is for the duration of the emergency.

Also, there has been some research done in this field, where information on housing groups as a specific form of supported accommodation for people with mental health problems can be obtained, for example Flaker (1999, 2000).

### **Institutional release**

Statistical office of Republic of Slovenia has data on the number of people being released from the hospitals (which is gathered by Health Protection Institute of Republic of Slovenia). In 2003 344.976 patients were admitted in hospitals, while the number of discharged patients was 344.596 (Statistical yearbook 2005). However, to my knowledge there is no data on the share of those that risk homelessness after the release.

The Ministry of Justice, Prison administration, has data on the number of prisoners yearly released from the prison. In 2005 there were in average 1137 person in prison, and in 2005 1719 were released from prison. According to the report of Prison administration for 2005, among the released convicts and young persons (that were in reformatory institutions) 32 had been released without having accommodation and 39 lost their dwelling during the time in prison (or reformatory institution). The housing of released from prison (or reformatory institutions) of persons released in 2005 is in the table below.

Table 3: Housing situation after the release from penal institutions

Housing in	share (%)
individual home	68,4
with relatives	5,2
as subtenant	9,2
in worker's hostels	1
assigned room or dwelling	0,8
transition centre for foreigners	1,8
nursing home for elderly	0,1
unresolved housing situation	3,5
other	10,1
Total	100

Source: Prison administration yearly report (2005)

The 3,5% of all released in 2005 had an unresolved housing situation and can therefore be termed as being homeless. This makes approximately 60 persons.

## **Data collection and data elements**

As mentioned, one of perhaps most comprehensive dataset is the one of the Social protection institute of the Republic of Slovenia. It encompasses the list of NGO's, that are either funded by the Ministry or the municipalities and a list of public Centres for social work. On the basis of the data yearly report is published by the Social protection Institute. It is intended for use by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

The data is gathered in two ways:

- on the basis of tender documentation and reports from NGOs on execution of the funded programmes
- with a survey, prepared by the Social Protection Institute (for the past year, i.e. the survey carried out in 2005 gathers information on services in 2004). The regional centres for social work give a list of organisations in their municipality and their services (in the field of social protection), which are funded by the local authorities. These services are then contacted to fill the questionnaire on the programme and the users of the programme.

The questionnaires were sent to 251 organisations and 131 answered. The answer rate was quite low (52 %), which means that important part of services could be left out. The data is therefore not entirely reliable, as it depends on the cooperation of individual local organisations. However, the Social protection Institutes hopes on rising the answer rate in the following years so the reliability of the data should be better in the future.

Additional information bias comes from the fact that the data on users is collected from semi-annual reports. This is important especially in certain

organisations, where the number might vary through the year significantly. In addition to this, the way of reporting on number of users varies among the organisations. Some report an average number of users, other the number of users in a limited time period. This again makes it difficult to have an exact overview of the situation.

The data therefore encompasses various services and enables gathering information on some of the categories of roofless and houseless. However, the data is based on the level of services and not on the level of users, so the overlapping can be extensive and cannot be controlled for.

The database includes the following data:

- the name of the organisation,
- the name of the programme,
- target groups,
- general description of the activities
- number of people employed (regular employment, contract, volunteers),
- the number of users.

The programmes are distinguished in topic groups which correspond to the tender topics by the Ministry of labour, family and Social Affairs. The topics are:

- maternity homes, safe houses and other programmes of professional help in case of family violence,
- programmes of housing groups, day care centres, advisories, advocacy and programmes of individual help for persons with long term mental health problems,
- programmes of SOS telephone for children and adults in personal distress
- programmes of housing groups for independent living of disabled and other programmes for organisation and enabling independent life of the disabled
- programmes of solving social problems linked to the drug abuse
- programmes of solving social problems linked to alcohol abuse

- programmes of intergenerational and other groups for self-help, programmes that lessen the social exclusion of the elderly
- programmes of centres for short period or daily care of children without normal family life and help in their family integration
- specialised preventive programmes for children with recognised problems
- programmes of help, self-help and advocacy in cases of violence
- programmes of shelters for homeless
- programmes aimed at lessening social problems, not included in other topics

Additionally, the programmes are distinguished into groups according to the duration of the funding of the programme - single funding up to SIT 300.000, single funding for more than SIT 300.000 and more than one year programmes.

## **Management and funding issues**

The recent dataset by the Social protection Institute, which is a public body, is funded by the governmental sources (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs). It is currently considered as a continuous project that will be carried out each year.

There does not seem to be interest in managing a more complex database on the users of various services (homeless shelters, maternity homes, etc...). This could be linked to the issues of privacy and protection of personal integrity, but also to lack funding for this purpose and management problems with a more complex dataset.

## **Conclusion**

The government has very much limited its role in housing, which can be seen in intensive privatisation, small social rented sector and small number of other instruments aimed at housing (housing loans, rent subsidies, etc.). In accordance with this low involvement, also the need for data in the field of housing has been small. Mainly the concerns were general, with the state of the housing market, but rarely with specific situations of housing exclusion.

The data gathering is still in very basic stage. However there is an effort to make a more comprehensive list of organisations that offer services for the homeless or help in other cases of housing exclusion. However detailed information, especially at the level of the users, is not available. This can be ascribed partly to very diverse positions of NGOs, funded from different public bodies - MLFSA or the local authorities, which makes gathering information harder. Also, the organisations themselves seem not to have an interest in more detailed information gathering (privacy issues, lack of funding and personnel for additional tasks).

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