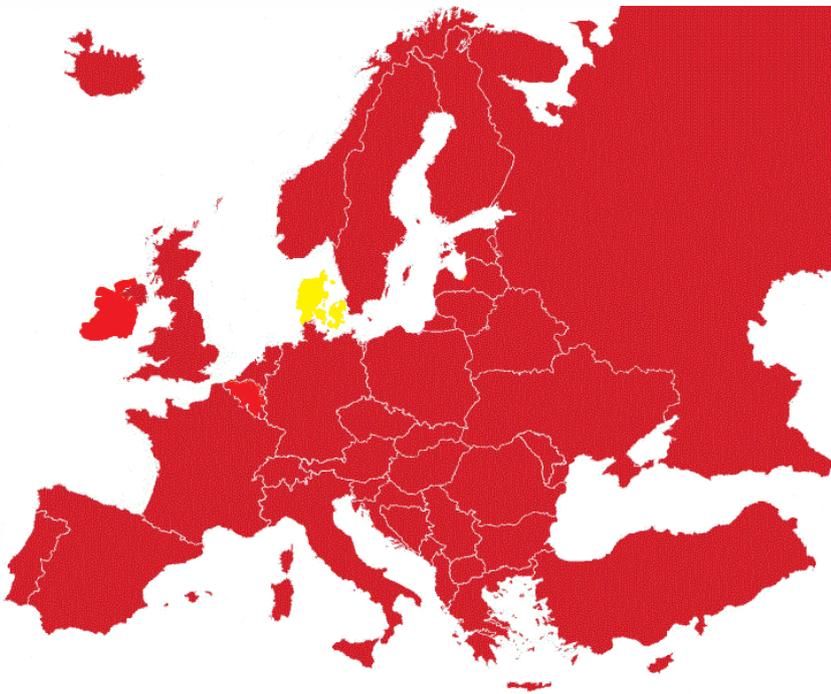
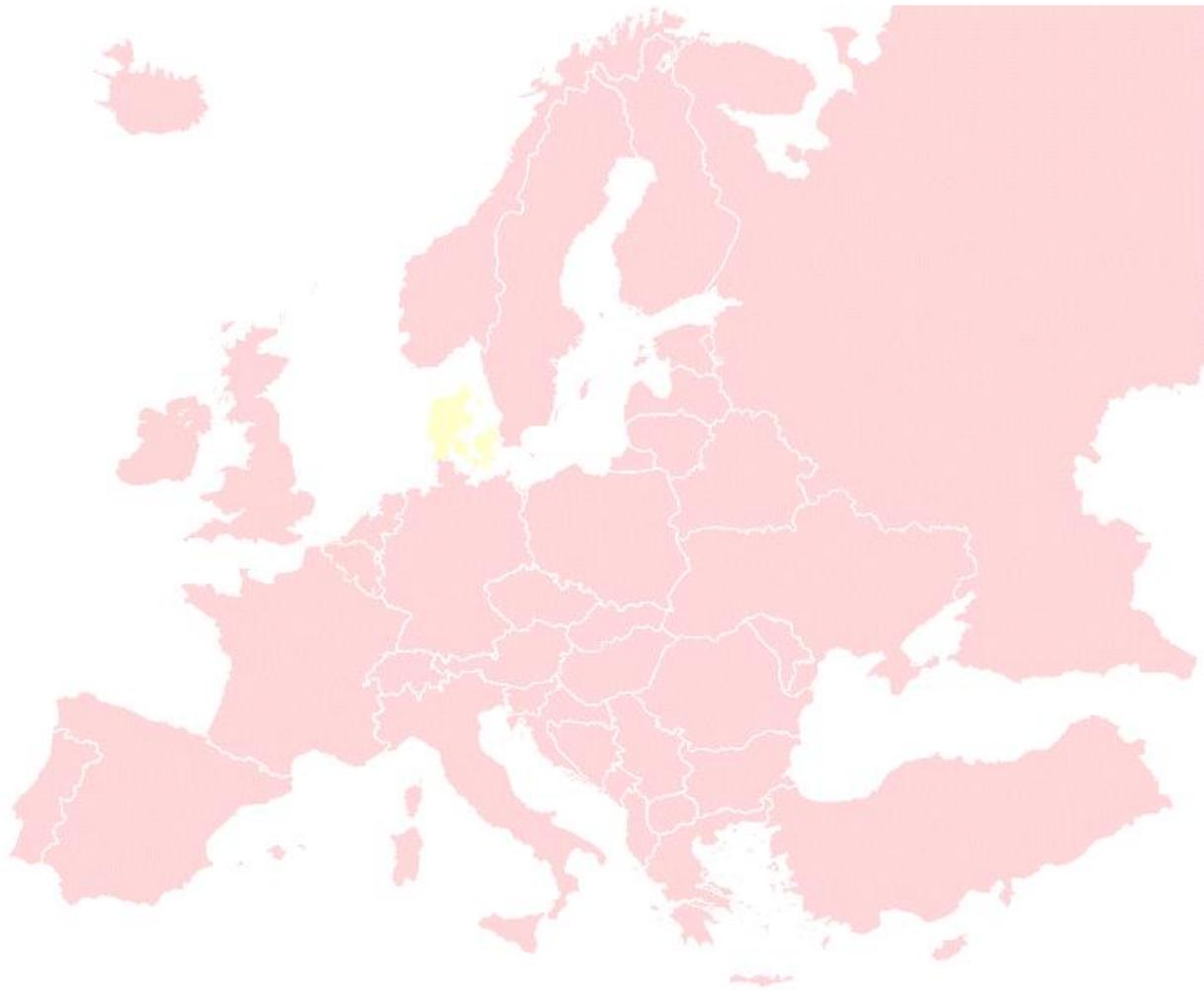




**PEER REVIEW ON HOMELESSNESS
POLICIES IN ODENSE CITY
(DENMARK)**

**HABITACT
PEER REVIEW
2015**





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PEER REVIEW on Homelessness Policies in Odense Discussion Paper

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1. Introduction

This paper reviews homelessness and urban inclusion policies in the city of Odense, Denmark, in the context of wider European developments and potential comparisons with other European cities. This is the sixth in a series of peer reviews of city homelessness policies in Europe, mediated through the HABITACT European Exchange Forum on local homelessness strategies. The city of Odense presents a valuable case study of reducing homelessness by re-housing homeless people using the Housing First approach and strengthening preventative efforts. At the same time Odense homelessness policies are making closer links with urban planning in order to create an inclusive city with room for all citizens including the most disadvantaged groups. The use of GPS tracking of homeless and marginalised people is a unique method to enlarge the evidence base for urban planning with the aim to improve services and implement protected spaces for these citizens

The discussion paper begins by setting the context of responses to homelessness and social exclusion at the European level. It then examines homelessness in relation to the Danish national context, before providing an overview of key elements of homelessness policy and wider urban policies to create an inclusive city with a view to characterising the Odense approach. The detailed case study of homelessness and urban policy in Odense is then compared with the wider research evidence base across other European countries in order to identify potential for transferability of elements of the Odense model to other local contexts. The discussion paper concludes by formulating key questions about the Odense approach for consideration in the peer review meeting.

2. EU Context: Reducing Homelessness, Promoting Prevention and Social Inclusion

Homelessness became a priority as part of EU anti-poverty policies under the Europe 2020 strategy. While the immediate responsibility for homelessness lies with EU Member States, as recently as January 2014, Members of European Parliament called for a European strategy on homelessness focusing on housing, cross-border homelessness, quality of service provision and homelessness prevention (EP, 2014). The EU Committee of the Regions reiterated this call end of June 2014 (CoR, 2014)

Homelessness is covered directly or indirectly under different EU policy and legislative frameworks relevant to local policy-makers responsible for tackling homelessness in their communities.

The Europe 2020 growth and jobs strategy was agreed with politically and legally binding targets to be achieved by 2020 (including poverty reduction), with the European Commission publishing EU policy guidance on confronting homelessness in its Social Investment Package (EC, 2013). Most significantly, the Commission calls on Member States to confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on prevention, housing-led approaches and reviewing regulations and practices on eviction, taking into account the key findings of the guidance on confronting homelessness provided in the Package. The European Commission monitors national homelessness policies through the Europe2020 national reform programmes, but also through national social reports submitted regularly to the European Commission (the last round was in 2014). All countries must highlight their targeted social investments to reduce different forms of poverty, including homelessness.

The EU also responded to the crisis by reinforcing economic policy coordination and surveillance to achieve earlier detection and correction of harmful fiscal and macroeconomic trends than in the past. Mechanisms include monitoring housing markets, e.g. for any new risk of a housing bubble, yearly trends in house prices, reducing volatility, and fostering rental markets. This is a new competence which gives the European Commission some leverage to make policy recommendations in the housing policy field.

Various EU funds also exist to support programmes locally. The European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020 regulation now also makes reference to homelessness, potentially opening up funding opportunities for homelessness organisations during 2014-2020 (HABITACT, 2014a). Further, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-2020 can be used to finance housing, social and health infrastructure which promote community-based action to support social inclusion, as well as investments in 'physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities'. A regulation for the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) for the period 2014-2020 was formally adopted in March 2014, allowing national authorities to decide on priorities for FEAD operational programmes. The FEAD is potentially useful for emergency interventions tackling homelessness, such as starter packs to help people move out of homelessness and into accommodation.¹

The EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation 2014-2020 (EaSI), will support Member States' efforts in the design and implementation of employment and social reforms at European, national, regional and local levels by means of policy coordination and the identification, analysis and sharing of best practices. EaSI integrates and extends the coverage of three existing programmes: Progress (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity); EURES (European Employment Services); and the European Progress Microfinance Facility. The EaSI programme should provide further support for research and innovation in the field of homelessness (as has been done in the past with projects like *MPHASIS*, *Hope in Stations* and *Housing First Europe*).²

The EU also recently launched a consultation on the need for a European Urban Agenda (EC, 2014a). It is believed that economic, social and environmental challenges are increasingly crossing the traditional boundaries of cities, with a number of challenges that cities can only resolve in a national or international context. This includes cross-border mobility, homelessness, social exclusion and more (EC, 2014b; EUKN, 2014; EP, 2015). The European Commission's "Cities of Tomorrow" Report refers to the importance of social and public housing, and the need for integrated strategies to address housing exclusion and homelessness with a view to building cohesive and environmentally sustainable communities (EC, 2011). There are currently discussions between the EU institutions to assess the relevance of a distinct EU urban agenda which would establish an action framework to support cities to address a range of challenges. If adopted, this could be a useful framework for the HABITACT network in the future to further drive cross-city cooperation and innovation in the field of homelessness. The European Commission is already involved in urban development in a wide variety of areas, and has a European regional and urban development policy which is supported by funding programmes like the URBACT programme (which has just entered its third phase: Urbact III).

3. Homelessness in Denmark and the Debate on an Inclusive City

3.1. Definition and measurement of homelessness in Denmark

As reported in previous peer review discussion papers, FEANTSA's ETHOS typology of homelessness identifies 13 operational categories of homelessness across four core categories of rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing (Edgar and Meert, 2005; Edgar, 2009) and services directed at improving people's housing circumstances could prove valuable in all situations (see ETHOS in Annex). In ETHOS, homelessness is conceptualised as exclusion from at least two of the three domains of housing: the physical, social and legal domain.

As the main ETHOS homelessness typology has been developed for policy purposes (capturing the whole continuum of homelessness and housing exclusion) and includes categories that are difficult to count, a specialist version of ETHOS, known as ETHOS Light, has been developed for use in surveys and statistical research. ETHOS Light was used as the basis for standardising data and making comparisons in the present research.

¹ESF 2014-2020 regulation: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0470:0486:EN:PDF>

ERDF2020 regulation: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0289:0302:EN:PDF>

FEAD 2020 regulation: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:072:0001:0041:EN:PDF>

²EaSI 2014-2020 regulation: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0238:0252:EN:PDF>

Table 1: ETHOS Light

Operational Category		Living Situation		Definition
1	People living rough	1	Public spaces / external spaces	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homeless hostels	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided
4		Temporary accommodation		
5		Transitional supported accommodation		
6	Women's shelters or refuge accommodation	6		
4	People living in institutions	7	Health care institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
8		Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release	
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
10		Non-conventional buildings		
11		Temporary structures		
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

Source: Edgar et. Al (2007)

In Denmark, a nationwide biennial national survey on homelessness has been conducted since 2007 by SFI, the Danish National Centre for Social Research, on behalf the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. These national counts are conducted by asking all local services and authorities who are in contact with, or have knowledge about, homeless people to fill out a two-page individual questionnaire for each homeless person during a 'count week'. The survey is comprehensive, covering homeless shelters, addiction treatment centres, psychiatric facilities, municipal social centres, job centres and social drop-in cafés. Double counting is controlled by cross-referencing with Central Personal Register Numbers, initials, birthdates and other information. The count covers the entire country and can be broken down by municipality. While there will always be homeless people who are not enumerated in a count, the data are generally of high quality and there is a high response rate from local services, especially from important services, including homeless shelters and municipal social centres.

The Danish definition of homelessness is as follows: "*Homeless people do not have their own (owned or rented) dwelling or room, but have to stay in temporary accommodation or stay temporarily and without a contract [tenancy] with family or friends. People who report they do not have a place to stay the next night are also counted as homeless.*" (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2014, p. 16)

The operational definition of homelessness (living situations of homeless people) in the Danish counts consists of 8 categories (9 when the category 'other' is included). These categories are:

1. Stay the night on the street, in a stairway, in a shed or the like.
2. Stay in an emergency night shelter/drop-in café with emergency night shelter.
3. Stay in acute/temporary accommodation, e.g. a shelter.
4. Stay in a hotel, hostel etc. due to homelessness.
5. Stay temporarily and without a contract at family or friends.
6. Stay in short-term temporary transitional housing without a permanent contract.
7. To be released from prison within a month but without a housing solution.
8. To be discharged from hospital/treatment facility within a month but without a housing solution.
9. Other.

As we can see, almost all categories of ETHOS Light are covered, except women who stay in crisis centres due to domestic violence. They do not consider themselves as homeless but as victims of domestic violence in the first place. According to the expert conducting the count, the specifications of the definition also include people in mobile homes (caravans), and non-conventional housing such as 'garden allotment houses'.

When comparing Danish homeless numbers or population quotas with quotas in other European countries it should always be kept in mind that the Danish statistical definition (as indeed also definitions in other Nordic countries like Finland and Sweden) is much broader than in many other EU member states. In the last Danish count (week 6 of 2013) 28 % of all homeless people (1,653 of 5,820) were staying temporarily and without a contract at family or friends, a category of homelessness which is often not defined and counted as homeless further South and East of Europe.

3.2. The Danish national homelessness strategy

In 2008, the Danish Parliament adopted the first national Homelessness Strategy. It was originally planned for the period of 2009 – 2012 and was later extended until September 2013. The Danish Homelessness Strategy is one of the few European examples of a large-scale Housing First programme targeting more than a thousand citizens. It was evaluated extensively and was also the theme of an intergovernmental Peer Review supported by the European Commission in November 2013 (Benjaminsen 2013; Fitzpatrick 2013a and b).

The Strategy was characterised by a close partnership between selected local municipalities (17 out of 98, caring for about two thirds of homeless people in Denmark) and Central Government. About 65 million Euros were allocated to the strategy programme over the period of 2009 – 2012. During the first phase eight municipalities with roughly over half the homeless people in Denmark and including the largest cities in Denmark – Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense – were invited to participate and received the bulk of the funding. At a later stage nine further, mainly medium-sized, towns were selected to participate in the strategy. Four overall goals were set in the programme:

1. To reduce rough sleeping;
2. To provide other solutions than shelters to homeless youth;
3. To reduce time spent in a shelter;
4. To reduce homelessness due to institutional release from prison and hospitals without a housing solution.

A key aim in the programme was to develop and test internationally evidence-based interventions in a Danish setting. The Housing First approach was decided to be the overall principle of the strategy and a requirement for participation and funding, which implied a turn away from the Treatment First/Housing Ready approach. The model to be followed here (with some deviations, see further below) was to a large extent that developed by the pioneering project Pathways to Housing in New York (Tsemberis 2010a and b).

It was also decided that for the floating support interventions required to implement the Housing First approach, one of three methods should be followed:

- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT),
- Individual Case Management (ICM) or
- Critical Time Intervention (CTI).

(For an explanation of these methods see further below).

Other parts of the programme included strengthening of street outreach work and implementing new methods for needs assessment of homeless people. A certain part of the funding was also used to build new housing and other types of accommodation for homeless people. The municipalities applied individually for specific projects and agreed with National Government on setting specific targets. The municipalities were free to focus on all, or just some of the four overall goals depending on the local circumstances.

While the Housing First approach has proven to be very effective and the evaluation showed high rates of housing retention of participants in this programme (Benjaminsen 2013a and c), there was an increase in homelessness in Denmark between 2009 and 2013. *“While the interventions implemented under the Danish National Strategy on Homelessness appear to be highly successful at the individual service user-level, the overall goal of reducing homelessness in Denmark was not met. In fact, there was a 16% increase in registered homelessness over the period 2009-2013, and a particularly strong (80%) increase in homelessness amongst 18-24 year olds. While there were local variations, and positive results in some areas, none of the four strategic aims of the national programme (...) were met overall.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2013b, p. 15). For the details of the quantitative development and some of the reasons for the increase in homelessness, see the next section.

A follow-up programme to the National Homelessness Strategy was decided in Denmark in 2013 and began in 2014. It was planned that it would include 40 municipalities, further proceed to implement Housing First, and to adopt evidence-based methods with clear guidelines and manuals on how to use these methods. The target set for this second Strategy is to reduce the number of homeless people by 25% by 2020. However, the actual number of participating municipalities is 26. An additional programme aimed at young homeless people includes 11 of the 26 municipalities. The Danish Government has set a range of so-called 'social 2020 goals' (goals to be achieved by the year 2020), which include a range of social targets in the field of social inclusion. Two of these targets concern homeless people. The first one is to reduce the number of homeless people by 25% by 2020 (with the 2011 count as the baseline). The second goal is to reduce to a maximum of 20 % the number of people who return to a shelter after being rehoused following a shelter stay. The follow-up homelessness programme shall facilitate the achievement of these goals together with other measures.

3.3. Recent trends in homelessness in Denmark and the results of the national homelessness strategy

In 2014, Denmark had a population of 5.65 million inhabitants. According to the most recent homelessness survey in week 6 of 2013 the total number of homeless persons was 5,820, 16 % more than in the same week in 2009. The share of the Danish population being affected by homelessness in a given week was 0.1 %.

As can be seen in Table 2, homelessness has overall increased much more (by 43 %) in those cities that did not join the strategy than in those which participated in the strategy. The total increase was lowest in those cities that participated fully in the programme (+4%) and still quite low (+11%) in the mainly medium-sized towns which joined the programme at a later stage providing floating support. However, looking at the increases and decreases city by city there were considerable increases in the programme cities as well, particularly in Aarhus (+32 %) and Høje-Taastrup (which is part of Metropolitan Copenhagen and showed an increase of 40 %). As main reasons for the increase of homelessness in these cities, the evaluation singled out the massive tightening of housing markets in certain Danish regions. Young people under 25, whose subsistence benefits are considerably lower than the benefits of those 25 and older, were particularly hit by the lack of affordable housing in urban areas. Numbers of homeless young people have increased by 69 % (from 395 to 667) in the strategy municipalities and by 98 % in those municipalities not participating in the strategy.

In contrast to the general trend, homelessness in Odense almost halved during the period of the national strategy, the largest decrease of all municipalities.

Table 2: Overall development in homelessness 2009-2013, Strategy and non-Strategy municipalities

Municipality	Homeless Week 6, 2009	Homeless Week 6, 2011	Homeless Week 6, 2013	Change 2009-13, Percent
Odense	208	178	110	-47
Albertslund*	46	46	52	13
Esbjerg	128	130	144	13
Frederiksberg*	233	203	178	-24
Høje-Taastrup*	45	63	63	40
København (Copenhagen)*	1494	1507	1581	6
Randers	100	64	92	-8
Aarhus	466	588	617	32
8 strategy municipalities with full programme	2720	2779	2837	4
9 strategy municipalities with floating support programme	852	884	943	11
81 non-Strategy municipalities	1426	1627	2040	43
Denmark, total	4998	5290	5820	16

*In Metropolitan Copenhagen

Source: SFI – The Danish National Centre for Social Research, quoted in Benjaminsen (2013), p. 113

As we have seen, one of the targets of the strategy was to reduce rough sleeping. Specific targets were agreed between the municipalities and Central Government. Unfortunately almost none of the cities could reach their target although some have managed to reduce numbers slightly, while in Copenhagen the number of rough sleepers even increased during the programme period (possibly influenced by immigrants without a legal right to stay), which also led to an increase of the *total* number of rough sleepers in those municipalities with a specific target to reduce rough sleeping (see Table 3 below). It is all the more remarkable that Odense not only achieved its target (which was 17, half of the 34 rough sleepers counted in February 2009), but even reduced the number of rough sleepers more than originally foreseen, by almost three quarters to only 9 people in February 2013. It would be interesting to consider during the Odense peer review on 9 April if a further reduction in rough sleeping could have been achieved with the provision of even more intensive support. But for the time being and compared with the other cities the reduction of rough sleepers in Odense is a success.

Table 3: Results for municipalities with specific targets to reduce rough sleeping

Municipality	Count 2009	Target 2012	Count 2013
Odense	34	17	9
Albertslund	5	2	4
Frederiksberg	28	10	18
København	174	70	259
Aarhus	66	10	61
Total	307	109	351

Source: Rambøll and SFI (2013). Quoted in Benjaminsen (2013), p. 116

Another target of the strategy was to reduce the need for young people under 25 to stay in homeless shelters (with the baseline set in 2007). In some municipalities such reductions were achieved, yet none of the cities with specified targets actually met their target and to the contrary, in some cities the number of homeless young shelter users even increased. The last column for 2012 (see Table 4) excludes “protected” youth shelters as these were established as a part of the national strategy to avoid young people having to stay in a regular shelter.

Odense did not reach its target of reducing the number of stays of young people in homeless shelters either. Instead of reducing it to the targeted 25, the number of stays were 68 in 2012, less than in 2007 (115) and 2010 (90), but still much more than aimed at. More recently Odense city has therefore focused efforts to reduce the number of stays further.

It should be added that Denmark is not the only European country noting an increase in youth homelessness. Young people – often “hidden” homeless for a while because young people after moving out of their parents’ home or youth welfare institutions tend to first share temporarily with friends or “sofa surf” until resources for this type of informal support are exhausted - have been singled out to be a group of growing concern (and growing numbers) in a whole range of European countries (Benjaminsen and Busch-Geertsema, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2013 a; Busch-Geertsema et al, 2014). Problems often mentioned are that young people are particularly affected by high unemployment rates and shortages of affordable housing - in several countries they are expected to stay with their parents until they are 25 before having their housing costs covered by social benefits. In some countries young people have been subject to specific welfare cuts and sanctions and for young adults leaving youth welfare care, support networks are often poorly developed or differing legal responsibilities of various support agencies (youth welfare agencies, job centres, homeless support agencies and young adults) lead to young adults being sent from one agency to the other until they “disappear”.

Table 4: Young people (18-24 years old) in homeless shelters: Stays and persons

Year Municipality	Number of stays (18-24 year olds)						Number of persons (18-24 year olds)				
	2007	2010	2011	2012	2012*)	Target 2012	2007	2010	2011	2012	2012 *)
Odense	115	90	76	68	68	25	41	56	39	39	40
Esbjerg	36	51	129	73	73	0	20	36	59	50	50
Frederiksberg	29	43	43	35	18	4	21	29	35	29	17
København	210	240	196	177	82	82	193	220	166	136	66
Randers	31	43	67	85	10	3	10	27	49	46	7
Aarhus	237	233	144	93	89	10	60	65	53	43	43
Total	658	700	655	531	340	124	345	433	401	343	223

*) excluding stays in specific protected youth shelters

Source: Rambøll and SFI (2013). Quoted in Benjaminsen (2013), p. 116

The third target of the national homeless strategy was to reduce the number of long shelter stays, defined as stays of more than 120 days. Again none of the cities that signed up for this target managed to reach what they had agreed with Central Government. The total number of long-term shelter stays even increased until 2010, which was also the case for Odense, where the number of long-term stays in 2007 was 68 and in 2012 had slightly increased to 70, while the agreed target had originally foreseen only 20 long-term stays by 2012. However, the average length of stays in Odense hostels diminished substantially during and after the strategy period, see further below.

Table 5: Long shelter stays (more than 120 days)

Municipality	2007	2010	2011	2012	Target 2012
Odense	68	74	48	70	20
Albertslund	9	14	11	8	0
Esbjerg	84	67	76	71	20
Frederiksberg	51	75	85	76	21
Høje-Taastrup	22	24	24	21	5
København	526	525	532	569	400
Randers	25	40	40	36	21
Aarhus	118	130	109	137	20
Total	903	949	925	988	507

Source: Rambøll and SFI (2013). Quoted in Benjaminsen (2013), p. 117

Finally the strategy also aimed to reduce numbers of individuals awaiting release from prison or discharge from hospitals without a housing solution. For this classical goal of prevention almost all municipalities achieved a reduction of those at risk of becoming homeless after release but did not meet their agreed targets, Odense being one of two municipalities that managed to reduce this number even further in 2013 than agreed for 2012.

Table 6: Individuals awaiting release from prisons or discharge from hospitals within one month, and without a housing solution

Municipality	2009	Target 2012	2013
Odense	10	4	1
Albertslund	9	3	2
Esbjerg	4	1	5
København	51	27	33
Randers	10	0	4
Aarhus	22	4	20
Total	106	39	65

Source: Rambøll and SFI (2013). Quoted in Benjaminsen (2013), p. 116.

3.4. Important elements of Danish legislation regarding homelessness prevention and access to housing

As a national background it is important to note that while improving the prevention of evictions was not an important part of the Danish National Homelessness Strategy (except for those formerly homeless people who were rehoused with floating support in accordance with the Housing First approach) some changes were introduced by the Danish Government as a reaction to rising eviction numbers during the first decade of this century.

Since 2011, when the annual number of effective evictions had reached a peak of 4,405, national numbers decreased quite substantially by about 20 per cent to 3,507 in 2013 (Benjaminsen 2015). Danish research has shown that most evictions are caused by rent arrears and about 25 % of all evictions lead to homelessness within a period of two years. One of the apparent problems in this context is the fact that the Danish system of subsistence benefits operates with a gross benefit, from which also housing costs also need to be paid, and there is only a smaller supplementary housing benefit. Especially young people with lower benefits have problems paying increased rents on tight housing markets.

The reforms undertaken recently to improve prevention of homelessness were the following (Benjaminsen, 2015):

- The general rent payment day has been changed from the 3rd to the 1st day of the month, in order to ensure that people pay the rent as soon as possible, and on the same day as most people receive salaries or transfer benefits. This change was introduced in order to reduce the risk that the money for the rent is spent otherwise.
- The respite period to cover rent arrear was extended from previously only three days to now 14 days with the purpose of giving people more time to cover the arrears and to give municipalities more time to help find a solution.
- Municipalities were given a possibility to cover rent arrears for a short period (either a one-off payment of one month's rent or for a period of a few months), under the condition that certain criteria are fulfilled, including criteria about the future sustainability of the citizen's financial situation. Arrears due to sanctions imposed in the cash benefit systems cannot be covered under these measures, a restriction which excludes some people threatened by eviction due to such sanctions.
- Municipalities also have a possibility to administer the rent payment for the citizen on a voluntary basis if the citizen agrees to this. However, in many cases municipalities are reluctant to offer this possibility to citizens as it both requires resources for administration, and as it is sometimes seen as a limitation of the citizen's autonomy or in conflict with a principle of empowerment.
- In cases of repeated rent arrears and with an imminent threat of eviction, a possibility has been introduced for the municipalities to require by authority that the rent payment is administered, but the criteria for forcing this measure upon the citizen are quite strict, and is thus used only to a very limited extent.

Access to public housing in Denmark is universal - there are no general income ceilings for households restricting access for those with higher incomes to the public housing sector. Up to 25 % of all vacancies in public housing are – by national legislation – reserved for persons with acute housing needs, a scheme which is administered by the local authorities. While the publicly subsidised sector is subject to detailed public regulations it is not owned directly by municipalities or the state, but by non-profit housing associations with a strong element of tenant participation (Engberg, 2000). Not all municipalities actually use this right – but almost all larger urban municipalities with housing supply problems do. There are local differences in public housing allocation mechanisms for homeless persons with complex support needs.

3.5. The debate in Denmark about an inclusive city

In Denmark – as elsewhere in Europe - urban city spaces are often designed with socio-economically advantaged citizens in mind. The presence of socially vulnerable groups in public spaces is – as we will discuss in a later section – often considered a problem. A common solution is to create strategies that attempt to limit the stay of socially vulnerable citizens in the public space. Various measures are employed, ranging from the implementation of so-called strategic design (for example introducing benches that impede sleep) to straightforward prohibition of certain activities (like drinking and “loitering” in specific areas) or “house rules” with private security forces for formerly public urban spaces that have been privatised (e.g. arcades, pedestrian areas).

The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs – perhaps not so common elsewhere in Europe – has commissioned an interesting study on how to build a more inclusive city. The title of the study might be translated as “The City As Living Room?” (Socialministeriet, 2010). The study presents a number of positive examples from all over Denmark, where solutions have been found to reconcile the needs and preferences of socially marginalised groups with the requirements of local businesses and the broader public. Based on observations and interviews with vulnerable people, other users, planners, architects and municipal workers, a series of city spaces in use by both advantaged and socially disadvantaged groups, have been carefully analysed. The report charts the problems and challenges connected to the individual city spaces.

The report concludes with 17 concrete recommendations on how city space in the future can be developed and designed to create the best possible settings for coexistence between socially marginalized and other citizens. The goal is – according to the authors - to create city spaces where socially marginalized and other groups may live side by side. The recommendations on “how to create room for everybody” (Socialministeriet, 2010, pp. 95 ff., our translation) are the following:

1. **MAINTAIN THE CITY'S REVERSE SIDE** where there is room for what others do not want to see
2. **CREATE DIVERSE CITY SPACES** instead of uniformity
3. **ENSURE GOOD URBAN FURNITURE** which recognises the disadvantaged
4. **CREATE CITY SPACES WITH FLOW** through functional divisions and multiple options
5. **CONSIDER DEFINED ZONES** where the disadvantaged can be themselves
6. **CREATE SAFE LOCATIONS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED** and therefore for others
7. **SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY** with design and conflict resolution
8. **DO NOT FORGET YOUTHS** - if ignored they can create insecurity
9. **TALK TO THE DISADVANTAGED** not just about them
10. **LISTEN TO ALL PARTIES** let them meet and create networks
11. **CREATE A SIMPLE AND SHORT PROCESS** if possible with festive events
12. **REMEMBER COLLABORATION** across the municipalities
13. **LOOSEN BUREAUCRATIC KNOTS** so good initiatives do not get lost
14. **GET ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD** they can make different contributions
15. **REMEMBER THE WHOLE** the whole city, the whole day, the whole effort
16. **CONSIDER THE PROBLEM LEVEL** can it be solved locally or at a higher level
17. **USE POLICY AND PRAGMATISM** both clear statements and unobtrusive solutions

According to the Strategic Housing Consultant of Odense's Social and Labour Department all the recommendations of this report have been implemented in Odense. There is a strong consensus also on a political level that creating an inclusive city for all is a desirable goal and this goal is also supported by a majority of the population and the business community. We will come back to the concrete measures taken in Odense further below.

In the following we list some quotes from the Danish study (in our own translation) to further clarify the basic lines of the arguments for a city with „room for everybody“. The quotations also show the underlying pragmatic, tolerant and inclusive philosophy on which the recommendations are based:

*“Where others eat, drink, go to the toilet, sleep, cut their nails, inject themselves, relax or lie sick in their homes, **many disadvantaged people do these things in public spaces** to a higher degree: either because they do not have a home, because they are affected by drugs, alcohol or illness, or because they prefer it or are referred to the public space for other reasons.”*

*“It is also about **the city maintaining some reverse sides** - meaning lesser exposed spaces - where social services do not extend to. Not lawless spaces without regulations and supervision, but places where there is room for the behaviour other citizens are reluctant to face.”*

*“Whether it is done intentionally or not it is **impossible to avoid designing for some rather than others**. It is therefore advantageous to be aware of who is the target group in an urban space rather than imagining that it is possible to design a neutral urban space which appeals to everyone. And even if the exact target groups are not known, **It is possible to create options and differentiated zones which appeal to different types of users and user space**. Good urban space designs are, of course, not just about differentiating, but also about bringing together and uniting.”*

*“By **including disadvantaged people in the design and maintenance of urban furniture**, it is possible to benefit from their knowledge of the space, and provide them with a positive ownership where they feel recognised and take responsibility for keeping the space and its surroundings.”*

*“In order to create coexistence, urban spaces can be divided according to different functions, or it can be taken a step further, and enclosed zones can be created for disadvantaged users. (...) Clearly marked zones can as such be a pragmatic solution, **which eases co-existence**, but whether it is ethically defensible depends to a high degree on the perspective one has. If marked zones are chosen, it should be on the basis of a process where the disadvantaged users have been involved in the placement and the design.”*

“When talking about security in urban planning, it is almost always about the security of the middle class - about illuminated, maintained, vivid and manageable urban spaces. But in reality the most insecure in the city are disadvantaged people, who are forced to spend time in all kinds of public spaces around the clock. It is therefore central to put their security on the agenda.”

*“**One person's security may very well be the other person's insecurity**. The big dog in the park might make disadvantaged people feel safe, but make other people insecure, just as an open and foreseeable urban space can make disadvantaged people insecure, but other people safe.”*

*“In all **citizen-participation**, continuous information and personal contact with a recurring figure is an advantage, but **in relation to disadvantaged groups it is absolutely essential**. Partly because they are a central group of users in the public space, partly because they are harder to reach with information letters, notices and public meetings.”*

*“**Businesses, NGO's, local police, charities and local activists** can often contribute with knowledge and specific solutions in relation to disadvantaged people. Because they are not subject to the same rules and political scrutiny as state and municipality, they have other options. Often they also have a great **commitment and interest in solving the problems in the immediate area** (...).”*

*“Benches, shrubberies, shelters or toilets used by disadvantaged groups are often removed to solve the problems emerging from the occupation of urban space. However this does not solve the problem. At best it moves it somewhere else. Even when focus is on a certain urban space, delimited by the local or neighbourhood plan, one should always be **aware of the greater context of which the specific area is a part**.”*

*“In order to **recognise the rights of disadvantaged people** it is important to ensure political focus and clear announcements which prioritise the needs of the disadvantaged. (...). **Disadvantaged people are citizens**, who have a right to be in the public space on equal terms with others, and this should be made clear to everybody from the beginning.”*

Extracts from “The City as a Living Room?” (Socialministeriet, 2010)

4. The Odense Approach: Preventing and Reducing Homelessness & Working for an Inclusive City

4.1. The local context

With a population of 192,000 people, Odense Municipality is the fourth largest in Denmark (after Copenhagen, Aarhus and Aalborg). Of a total of 117,000 housing units in Odense 51,000 (43.6 %) are owner occupied, 42,000 (35.9 %) are privately rented and 24,000 (20.5 %) are public rented housing. Odense is said to have a relaxed housing market where it is relatively easy to find rental housing at affordable prices. About 7.9 % of the citizens of Odense (18,800 persons) are “poor” according to Danish criteria in 2010. Their proportion has increased from 6.2 % in 2006.

As we could see above Odense homeless policies – in the framework of the national strategy and under the given local conditions – have led to a considerable decrease of homelessness between 2009 and 2013 by 47 %, which is extraordinary when compared to the development of homelessness in other major Danish cities. Overall, Odense has experienced the best results in the whole country during the period of the homelessness strategy. In the evaluation of the national strategy this positive development in Odense is explained by pointing to three important factors, namely “a combination of a strong political commitment to the Housing First principle, a relatively sufficient supply of affordable housing, and an intensive floating support programme.” (Benjaminsen, 2013, p. 113). We will come back to these factors in the following sections.

Table 7 shows the locations of homeless people in Odense during the three national homelessness surveys in 2009, 2011 and 2013. It may be seen that the reductions achieved were particularly remarkable for people living rough. Their number was reduced by 2013 by almost three quarters compared to 2009. Only 9 rough sleepers were counted in 2013, compared to 34 in 2009. The largest group, those in specific accommodation for homeless people was almost halved (from 85 in 2009 to 47 in 2013). This has also facilitated the closure of one of the homeless shelters in Odense, which in turn had a very positive financial impact.

Table 7: Location of homeless persons in Odense during the three last national counts and

Location	Homeless Week 6, 2009	Homeless Week 6, 2011	Homeless Week 6, 2013
Living rough	34	8	9
Homeless accommodation	85	91	47
Hotel	0	1	1
Temporarily with family/friends	37	32	28
Due to be released from institutions	7	7	0
Prison	6	1	1
Hospital	4	2	0
Other	10	11	7
Unknown	12	5	3
Total	208	178	110

With 110 homeless people in February 2013 their population quota sunk to 0,06 %, a very low percentage compared to the Danish average and even more so compared to other European Cities and countries.

4.2. Ending homelessness using the Housing First approach

Results of the national mapping in Denmark show that about 80 per cent of homeless people in Denmark have either mental illness, substance abuse problems or both (Benjaminsen, 2009; Benjaminsen and Christensen, 2007; Benjaminsen and Lauritzen, 2013; see also Benjaminsen and Andrade 2015). Moreover, a previous analysis of Danish shelter data has shown a high occurrence of both mental illness and substance abuse amongst shelter users (Nielsen et al., 2011). It is therefore rather obvious that to end homelessness in Denmark it is not only necessary to provide access for them to ordinary housing but also to provide support, and in some cases quite intensive support in order to help them maintain their tenancies.

In Odense, in particular, the share amongst homeless people with mental illness, substance abuse problems or both is even slightly higher than the national average, at 84 % amongst homeless men and 89 % of homeless women, compared to 80 % and 73 % at national level (Benjaminsen and Lauritzen, 2013, p. 91-92). These figures indicate that the remaining homeless problem in Odense is widely concentrated around people with complex support needs (these figures for Odense in 2009 before the strategy programme were already quite high at 81 % and 84 % amongst men and women respectively).

In order to participate in the National programme, it was a requirement to shift away from a “housing ready”/“treatment first” approach and use the Housing First approach instead which had been tested successfully in robust research (randomized controlled trials) with very similar target groups in the USA (see Tsemberis, 2010a and b, for an overview of the – still growing – evidence in the US).

The main principles of the Housing First approach, as pioneered by the organisation Pathways to Housing in New York (see Tsemberis, 2010b: 18), are

- the immediate – or almost immediate – provision of long-term and “ordinary” housing without any requirement to show the capacity to live independently (to be “housing ready”) before access to housing is granted. Housing is regarded as a basic human right.
- respect, warmth and compassion for all clients
- a commitment to working with clients for as long as they need
- scattered-site housing; independent apartments
- separation of housing and services
- consumer choice and self-determination
- a recovery orientation
- harm reduction.

Not all Housing First projects – neither in the US, nor in Europe - have followed all of these principles. In some projects the provision of support is time-limited and some – also in Denmark - have provided congregate housing with on-site support instead of scattered-site housing with floating (mobile) support teams visiting the clients in their homes. However, the evaluation of Housing First in Copenhagen has shown that scattered housing was the preferred option of most homeless people and also provided better outcomes (see Benjaminsen 2013c and Busch-Geertsema 2013). While in the US housing was mainly procured by renting private rented apartments and subletting them to the formerly homeless service users, in Denmark, as indeed in other European countries (such as for example in the UK and the Netherlands), the social housing stock was used. With a social housing stock of 24,000 units and the given legal opportunities it was obvious that Odense municipality did the same.

Providing access to housing for homeless people

Access to (ordinary and permanent) housing is one of the big challenges for implementing Housing First in many European cities. In Odense mainly scattered site housing in the public housing stock was used for implementing the Housing First approach, while most flats in the private rented sector are not affordable for households in receipt of social benefits. Various factors facilitated the use of the social housing stock for re-housing homeless people.

First of all the housing market in Odense is relatively relaxed. Odense has not – as other large Danish cities – been confronted in recent years with a rapid growth of population by people moving into the city from other Danish regions or from outside Denmark.

Second, the Danish legislation on the allocation of social housing allows the municipality – as explained above – to allocate a certain share of public housing to people in special need. Odense municipality has the right to allocate 25 % of the existing social housing stock. *“Annually, Odense manages about 200 housing solutions, of which 50 are for the Housing First target group”* (Rønning, 2013, p. 4)

Third, based on good cooperation with the existing housing associations it has become relatively easy for the municipality to allocate housing to homeless people. Every month there is a meeting between the housing association representatives and the municipality. The municipal representative hands over a list of people in need of housing and the housing associations arrange offers of vacant housing so that often within a month housing can be found for homeless persons.

The positive response of housing associations is also a result of continuous close cooperation and special offers of Odense municipality to intervene, for example in cases of neighbourhood conflicts. A ‘neighbours’ fire brigade’ is a professional municipal service with trained staff which will, for example after complaints in a housing area about challenging behaviour of tenants with mental health problems contact the neighbours and inform them about how to deal with mentally ill people in the housing complex: *“The objective of this kind of ‘housing fire brigade’ is partly to create security for all neighbours, and partly to maintain a high level of tolerance for individuals acting in what is considered non-mainstream behaviour. It also has the function of building bridges between neighbours and housing areas, and between the professionals working with problem-solving and helping individuals stay in their flats.”* (Rønning, 2013, p. 5).

Floating support for those in need by area-based teams

It has been said and written over and over again that “Housing First is not housing only”. Support in housing is rather offered assertively, the formerly homeless people are visited in their apartment and in the pioneer model one of the few conditions – apart from contributing to the rent if income exists – is the acceptance of weekly home visits. Such a condition cannot be part of an ordinary rent contract in Denmark, but still support in housing has been available in Odense to all rehoused homeless people. While the pilot project of Pathways to Housing works with multi-disciplinary teams providing ACT (Assertive Community Treatment), or with case-managers providing ICM (Intensive Case Management) and it is a principle to provide these relatively intensive types of support as long as they are needed, the city of Odense predominantly uses CTI (Critical Time Intervention), a specific type of case-management which is time-limited (nine months) and focusing on building a suitable support network (including other services, but also other individuals like friends and relatives) which shall provide sustainable support after the first more intensive phase has ended. According to the national evaluation during the strategy period 91 participants of the Housing First programme in Odense received CTI and 11 received ICM.

Floating support is also provided by municipal staff of the four area-based networks in Odense. They are cooperating closely with housing associations in the same area and have regular meetings every three months with care-takers from the housing associations, responsible persons from the youth welfare department and from psychiatric services, as well as the police. This network is also important for exchange of information and keeping an early warning system for any social and neighbourhood problems in the housing area. *“This enables quicker responses to problems, and the networking builds competencies important in relation to forecasting and preventing problems from spiralling out of control.”* (ibid.)

Odense has made little use of ICM and has no ACT team. It might still be a question of debate, if with more intensive and longer-term personal services it could be possible to meet targets missed during the strategy period, i.e. to reduce long-term stays in shelters and to further reduce the number of rough sleepers in Odense. As we have seen, there is also a need to strengthen the efforts to reduce the number of young peoples’ stays in shelters and the number of homeless people under 25 in general.

As well as different forms of health, social and housing support, Odense municipality has also projects for social employment on its’ agenda, in order to promote further social inclusion of formerly homeless and disadvantaged people

Good results in housing retention and cost reduction

From 2011-2012, a total of 100 Housing First clients moved into their own apartment with a permanent contract and only seven of these lost their apartment in this period. With this excellent housing retention rate the city of Odense is in line with the results reported from ACT clients in Copenhagen (Benjaminsen, 2013c). At the end of 2014 almost 200 formerly homeless people lived in their own apartments. Furthermore, the average duration of hostel stays in Odense diminished from 91 days in 2010 to 55 days in 2014, a reduction of 40 %. The number of permanent (all year round) users of hostels in Odense was reduced from 58 in 2010 to 32 in 2014.

The reduction of homelessness in the city and the reduction of the duration of hostel stays also enabled the city to close a shelter and reduce their overall homelessness budget by 35 %. As the responsible department in Odense has quite some flexibility in how to use its budget, the money saved on the shelter was reallocated to increase services for re-housed homeless people and other areas.

4.3. Prevention of homelessness

We described above that Odense municipality greatly reduced the numbers of individuals awaiting release from prison or discharge from hospitals without a housing solution, so an important goal of the city's preventative agenda (limiting the number of people at risk of homelessness after discharge from institutions) has been achieved.

Furthermore, many of the municipal activities described further above can also be seen as part of a preventative strategy to diminish neighbourhood problems and run an early warning system. But in Odense - like in many other cities across Europe - the bulk of households threatened with eviction are people with rent arrears. National data have shown that about 25 % of those households evicted by bailiffs end up as homeless within the next year (Benjaminsen, 2015b). One of the problems singled out by Odense municipality was that many households in rent arrears are not in contact with municipal services. As a consequence, Odense housing associations have developed a leaflet in Danish and English to inform tenants in rent arrears about the preventative services of the municipality. Meanwhile the municipality uses this leaflet as well to direct people at imminent risk of becoming homeless to their services. Within the legal limits the municipality can assume rent arrears or provide funds to overcome a financial crisis. However it has to be said that the respite time and the period in which the municipal services may intervene are rather short to allow for successful interventions.

As Rønning (2013, p. 5) puts it in an article on prevention in Odense, there is a growing consensus among all relevant stakeholders at local level that *"putting people back on the street is (..) Increasingly seen as the least attractive solution, as it has higher social, personal and financial costs than almost any other solution"*.

In Table 8 we can see how the numbers of eviction cases that ended with evictions have slowly but steadily diminished in Odense. Between 2009 and 2013 the number could be reduced by more than a third from 356 to 235. The last column is of special interest as it shows that the percentage of households brought to court with a case for eviction and end up being evicted has also decreased steadily. However, still about every fifth case being brought to court ended up in an eviction in 2013. Some of these households may still have a chance to find other housing to move to and some will try to help themselves by seeking accommodation with friends or relatives etc., but some will also have to be accommodated temporarily by the municipality.

Table 8: Bailiffs eviction statistics (numbers in Odense)

Year	Cases brought to court	Cases that ended with eviction	% of court cases ending with eviction
2009	1,515	356	23.5
2010	1,502	353	23.5
2011	1,574	341	21.7
2012	1,393	298	21.4
2013	1,170	235	20.1
First half of 2014	474	84	17.7

4.4. Working for an inclusive city

Regulating public space and promoting an inclusive city, not only a homelessness issue

It should be noted that the work in Odense for an inclusive city for all inhabitants is certainly of high relevance for homeless persons who have nowhere to stay and traditionally make visible use of public space, but it is also relevant for a much larger group of socially marginalised and disadvantaged people gathering in public space and often discriminated and pushed out of urban areas seen as important for business, leisure and recreation. Last, but not least, working for an inclusive city is important and of advantage for all citizens as it helps to secure a peaceful urban life and reduces potential conflicts.

The work for an inclusive city in Odense follows the strong belief that every citizen has the right to be treated with decency and feel secure, and that this right must also be accomplished for the most disadvantaged groups of urban society.

One of the starting points and backgrounds for the plan to convert Odense into an inclusive city was that a church yard where socially marginalised people met regularly and spent time together was cleared to build access to an underground parking garage. An alternative solution therefore had to be found.



A first attempt by the municipality to provide an alternative space for the former users of the church yard was rejected by local shopkeepers. As a consequence the same group of people met later at a place near a school where they also used drugs and drank in public which led to complaints by teachers, parents, pupils and other people concerned. Instead of just trying to chase the group away again municipal authorities started to initiate talks with all stakeholders involved with a clear target to create a more inclusive city and to also create spaces where socially marginalised people can spend time together and feel secure.

The consultants who developed the report *"The City As Living Room"*, funded and published by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs (and mentioned above), also found that in Odense no benches were left in the whole city as they had been abolished to prevent homeless people sleeping on them. Inspired by the recommendations of the report but also by constructive talks at the local level, plans for converting Odense into an inclusive city with room for everybody were developed and two dedicated spaces were created to accommodate the needs of socially marginalised people, where they can drink and consume drugs without being disturbed or chased away.

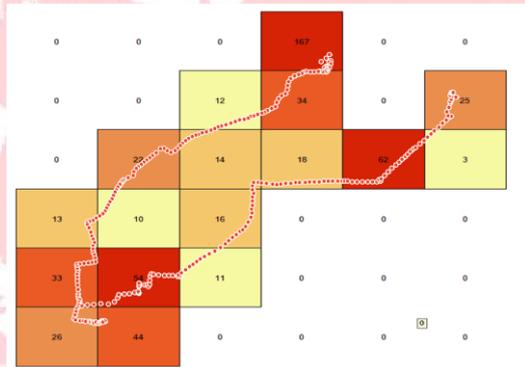
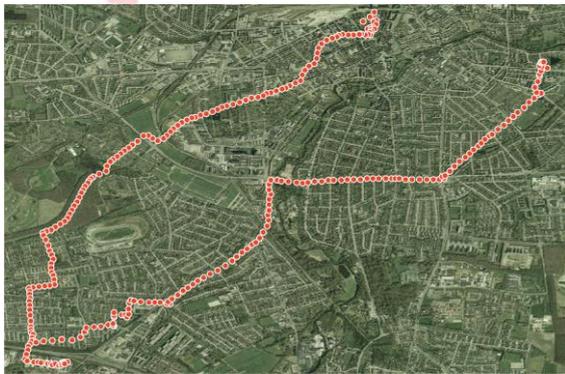
In a new recent project two more of such spaces were planned to be implemented as a type of mobile structure (built on the basis of a container which could be moved if necessary) as well as a new day centre and a night shelter. At the same time urban planners have been working on a new master plan for urban development and in this plan the aim to create an inclusive city has become an important principle. According to the housing strategy consultant with the Council, Tom Rønning, the goal of creating an inclusive city is nowadays also a common goal among the vast majority of the City Council members and of the Mayor of Odense. Even the majority of local business people in Odense acknowledge – after intensive discussions and clear statements by city officials in favour of an inclusive city - the need to create protected spaces for socially disadvantaged people and that issues related to these groups have to be taken into account in the urban planning process.

As Rønning (2013, p. 5) emphasises: *"Many social problems have their root cause in badly designed solutions for housing and local planning. Consequently, proper design of future local planning is a focus for Odense's work with homeless people."*

The use of GPS-tracking to improve the evidence base on marginalised people's preferences and habits

After asking homeless people and other marginalised persons where they would prefer to meet and consume, it was decided to improve the evidence base for decisions on where to locate the new provisions for these groups by using modern technology. In September and December 2014 Odense Council started two consecutive GPS-experiments. In cooperation with an NGO working with homeless people, on both occasions 20 socially marginalised persons received a GPS device to carry around in their pockets for a week. Participation was voluntary and it was not made known to the municipality who carried which device individually. The "test persons" received tickets for warm meals in exchange for their participation.

The geo data recorded show where people tend to concentrate at different times of the day and it is a clear target of the whole project to place benches and create spaces and services for marginalised people where they are needed and most useful. Below two examples of geo data analyses created by the tracking project can be seen:



The data also provide the possibility to analyse the concentration of people at different times of the day showing for example that many of them withdraw from public space for some time in the early afternoon, often to sleep and have a rest. This has led to considerations about the opening hours of services but also about the decentralisation of specific services (for example decentralising services for substance users in order to reduce the concentration of all users at the same place at certain times of the day).

At the time of writing this discussion paper, the geo data were still processed and analysed further in cooperation with experts from Copenhagen University. But a first new sheltered meeting space and the first pissoir for women in Denmark was already commissioned. An outline of the sheltered meeting space can be seen further below.



The GPS tracking experiment has created a lot of publicity. Not only did Danish newspapers and magazines reported about it; even "Spiegel Online" in Germany and a number of English language internet sources informed their readers about this innovative use of digital data.³ While in Denmark the reactions were mainly positive, some of the foreign press also mentioned potential reservations: Spiegel Online pointed to visions of George Orwell in "1984" on "total supervision, at every turn".

³ See for example <http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2014/09/a-danish-city-is-using-gps-to-track-and-help-the-homeless/380516/>, <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/im-daenischen-odense-werden-obdachlose-per-gps-peilsender-ueberwacht-a-993104.html>. See also the presentation of the project by Tom Rønning at the TEDxCopenhagenSalon event 9th October 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo1WSOSM-s>

And the reporter of CityLab started his article with *“It sounds intrusive, even dystopian, doesn’t it?”*, but both sources also emphasised the good intentions of Odense local council and contrasted them with recent news from elsewhere, where spikes and fences used as deterrents against homeless people shocked the general public (as for example in London and Hamburg) or where plans were made public to convert all bus stops so that homeless people could not sleep on their benches any more (as in Madrid). The report in CityLab concludes: *“If Odense’s plan can teach us anything, it’s that working with and listening to homeless people can create a better city for everyone”*.

5. The Odense Approach in a Comparative European Perspective

5.1 Regulating public space and building an inclusive city

A very recent e-bulletin of the Habitact-network confirms the relevance and timeliness of the Odense approach. The e-bulletin reports from a recent meeting of Habitact members: *“Much of the discussion focused on the increasing challenges in reconciling local political social agendas and security agendas. It is generally felt that local public social/health/housing services responsible for reducing homelessness in their communities are feeling increasing pressure to keep streets free of homeless people, which in some cases can be reconciled with social policy objectives but if not managed correctly can potentially override social objectives. Austerity measures are felt to have contributed to this increasing pressure. Discussion to be continued.”* (Habitact, 2014b, p. 1).

The debate on the regulation of public space is not new and academic research has pointed to a common trend in Western cities towards increasing control of urban spaces leading to spatial exclusion of socially disadvantaged people. The *“right to the city”* (Lefebvre, 1968; Mitchel, 2003) has been claimed to be more and more restricted by gentrification, privatisation of public space, exclusionary urban design, gated communities etc. In the US such tendencies together with criminalisation and penalisation of poor people have been summarised as intentional politics of *“urban revanchism”* by the neoliberal city (Smith, 1996).

While exclusionary tendencies against homeless people and other groups, especially migrants, are apparent in many European cities (Jones and Evangelista, 2013), several academics have argued that the European experience differs significantly from that which has characterised the USA (Tosi, 2007; Bergamaschi et al., 2015). Seen in a historical perspective homeless and poor people have always been subject to punitive and regulative strategies and there has been considerable progress in abolishing vagrancy laws and developing more inclusionary policies. Furthermore the extent of exclusionary policies is a matter of local and national disputes and policies. Local resistance as well as national and European campaigns for a City for all and against penalising the poor exist and raise public awareness about exclusionary tendencies (see Doherty et al., 2008 for examples, see also FEANTSA’s recent campaign *“Poverty is not a crime”*). There are also large programmes like *“The Social City”* in Germany, which basically follow the idea of creating an inclusionary urban environment.

O’Sullivan gives a somehow more optimistic picture than the rather pessimistic accounts of the American tendencies when he writes - not without calling for more research to differentiate his analysis: *“There is clear evidence across the EU of the re-introduction of legislation regulating behaviour in public spaces, begging in particular. However, the evidence that this is part of a strategy of punishing the poor or annihilating public space is scant. Homelessness policy is still largely driven by the politics of social inclusion rather than the politics of social exclusion, as evidenced by homeless strategies in the majority of EU Member States”*. (O’ Sullivan, 2012, p. 89).

The *“Inclusive City”* report commissioned by the Greek presidency of the EU highlights approaches to combat urban poverty and social exclusion in Europe, and states that while homelessness is not as important as poverty in numbers, it is a kind of warning that society is moving in the wrong direction (EUKN, 2014). Moreover, the European URBACT III funding programme promotes transnational exchanges with a view to creating cohesive cities: *“Cities are the ultimate expression of shared space. Open and tolerant, the optimum European city model is built on social justice and economic opportunity.”* (see www.urbact.eu). Generally speaking, it can be said that the approach promoted at EU level and by key European networks of local authorities like HABITACT, Eurocities and the European Social Network, supports the development of homeless-friendly cities.

5.2 Using the Housing First approach in Europe

As Suzanne Fitzpatrick confirmed in her discussion paper for the European Peer Review on the Danish Homelessness Strategy, *“Housing First with floating support interventions is a very effective approach to enable individuals with complex support needs to exit homelessness, with demonstrated housing retention rates of over 90%. This points to Housing First being the appropriate ‘default intervention’ for this group, meaning that independent, scattered site housing with intensive floating support should be tried as the first-line intervention for the rehousing of homeless people, including those with the most complex support needs.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2013, p. 13)

The European social experimentation project *“Housing First Europe”* (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), funded by the European Commission, confirmed positive results (housing retention rates of 80 to over 90 %) for a number of Housing First projects in very different local contexts in Europe (apart from Copenhagen also in Glasgow, Lisbon and Amsterdam), as long as they followed broadly the basic principles of the Pathways to Housing approach. More recent evidence is available from the evaluation of the French programme *“Un Chez Soi d’Abord”* (Estecahandy, 2014) and the evaluation of nine Housing First projects in England (Bretherton and Pleace, 2015)⁴, both showing very positive results regarding the housing retention of long-term homeless people with complex support needs.

The Finnish national strategy to eliminate long-term homelessness, which is explicitly based on the Housing First approach, was analysed in a number of different publications. Tainio and Fredriksson (2009) provided an early account of the strategy, which was – towards the end of its first phase – also the theme of a European Peer Review (see Busch-Geertsema, 2010). One of the more problematic aspects of the Finnish strategy was that in its first phase, driven by the need to create a lot of additional housing for the target group within a short period and at the same time to abolish the traditional shelters for long-term homeless persons, a considerable part of the newly created housing stock was congregated in the reconverted former shelters. For some of these new types of congregate self-contained housing, doubts could be raised about the potential limits to integration and whether the solution of today could end up being the problem of tomorrow (Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

At the final stage and very recently an international review of the Finnish Homelessness Strategy was published, in which high profile and experienced researchers from Finland, Sweden, the UK and the US came to the conclusion that *“the main goal of the programme, the permanent reduction of long-term homelessness on a national level, has been reached with the help of a carefully planned, comprehensive cooperation strategy. Programme work in accordance with the Housing First principle is proof of the fact that with sufficient and correctly allocated support, permanent housing can be guaranteed even for the long-term homeless in the most difficult position. (...) However, despite the success of the programme’s activities, it should not be forgotten that any increase or decrease in homelessness is tied not only to homelessness policy, but also to other changes and developments in social policy.”* (Pleace et al., 2015, p. 12). It should also be noted that in a recent statistical update on homelessness numbers, profiles and trends (since 2009) in 15 European member states, Finland was the only country reporting a decrease of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014) and the national strategy may certainly be responsible for this positive result.

Last but not least the encouraging recent outcomes of the Canadian „At home/Chez Soi“ project need to be mentioned, as this was the world’s largest multi-site randomized control trial of the Housing First approach in five Canadian cities following the study participants for a period of two years, again confirming very positive retention rates of those who participated in Housing First projects (Goering et al, 2014; Aubry et al. 2015; Stergiopoulos et al., 2015) .

While the evidence on housing retention is now overwhelming, results on improving the quality of life and achieving further social inclusion (overcoming social isolation, addiction problems, unemployment and poverty) are more mixed. Many evaluations of Housing First approaches, also in Denmark, show that negative developments are relatively rare, but often problems of integration into the labour market and making ends meet with very little resources continue to burden rehoused people’s lives. A proportion of them continue to struggle with addiction and mental health problems, and social isolation after rehousing and breaking links with former peer groups seem to be a frequent problem. This has led some academics to call the results of Housing First on social inclusion “underwhelming” (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008). There is clearly room for further progress in these fields, but progress often also requires more fundamental structural changes.

⁴ See Pleace and Bretherton (2013) for the evaluation of yet another Housing First project in Camden, London

Experiments with the Housing First approach have been reported from a large range of EU countries; from all Scandinavian countries, the UK and France, as mentioned above, from the BENELUX countries, Portugal and Spain, Austria and to a lesser extent from Germany (where some people claim that Housing First is already implemented without using the term, but this is often – wrongly – claimed in other countries as well, see Johnsen and Teixeira, 2012). In Central and Eastern European countries, the approach is less widespread, although some stakeholders from this region of Europe are currently promoting an exchange via an Erasmus Plus project about Housing First. However, also for the rest of Europe we cannot speak of the Housing First approach as a dominant approach which has already replaced the more traditional staircase system and the still widespread requirement that homeless people have first to be made housing ready before they can re-gain access to regular permanent housing. These more traditional approaches are still a dominating and widespread answer to homelessness in many European cities and countries and one of the most important reasons for their persistence are the massive problems of vulnerable groups to gain access to regular housing. In most countries this is a problem of a general lack of sufficient affordable housing but homeless people are also confronted with other barriers blocking their access to housing (see Edgar et al. 2002 and Pleace et al. 2011).

While financial arguments in favour of Housing First are certainly of great interest for the promotion of this approach we should nevertheless be careful not to overestimate its potential to save a lot of money. Research in a number of different contexts shows that, often, the saving effect is restricted to those homeless people with the highest support needs who also used to make extensive use of non-homelessness services such as ambulances, mental health hospitals and the criminal justice system. For people with less intensive support needs housing them with accompanying support might even be slightly more expensive (Culhane 2008; Pleace et al. 2013; Fuehrlein et al. 2015). *“There are alternative reasons to look at Housing First and one of these is the case for regarding Housing First as a cost-effective service model, rather than necessarily being a cost saving model [emphasis by the author]. Some American research has argued that while housing-led approaches to reducing homelessness like Housing First may not, in overall terms, save very much (or any) money, their greater effectiveness in ending homelessness means there is a powerful case for using them. Homelessness is a situation of unique distress and if it is prolonged or repeated, the potential for damage that it can cause an individual is very great. This links to the wider point about what homelessness services are for and what their place is in society. While there are reasons to explore costs and cost savings, the case for Housing First and other homelessness services is always ultimately a moral one, about being a society that does not tolerate, often very vulnerable people, experiencing homelessness”* (Bretherton and Pleace, 2015, p. 61).

Having said that, it is also important to note that the responsible department for homelessness in Odense has enough flexibility regarding their budget to finance for example support in housing instead of temporary accommodation. *„A lower consumption of accommodation in hostels leads to the availability of funds to support the citizens's own home.“* (Rønning). It is important to have this flexibility in order to rearrange funding streams in support of Housing First approaches.

5.3 Preventing homelessness

That *“prevention is better than cure”* may be taken as common sense in European cities. However, very different understandings about the concrete details of policies to prevent homelessness prevail. A recent comparative article on evictions due to rent arrears in 14 EU-member states found that this *“problem is very complex and that jumping to conclusions is ill-advised; for example, a high rate of rented dwellings does not necessarily lead to a high rate of evictions; identified best practice does not mean there is a robust national prevention strategy in place; and strong legal protection of tenants and people in need does not necessarily lead to the prevention of evictions.”* (Gerull, 2014, p. 137).

The author of this study comes to the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. *There is a need for valid data on evictions*
2. *Preventative strategies should include:*
 - a. *a legal framework protecting tenants and people in need*
 - b. *a sufficient budget*
 - c. *housing advisory and counselling services*
 - d. *available affordable housing*
3. *Strategies must be coordinated between departments for housing and social affairs*
4. *Local strategies must be coordinated within a national strategy”* (Gerull, 2014, p. 150)

It was mentioned already that the respite period to cover rent arrears for example is relatively short, also in comparison with other countries. For example while the respite period in Denmark was extended recently from previously only three days to now 14 days, to give tenants and municipalities more time to find a solution, it was extended some years ago in Germany from previously one month to two months without leading to a remarkable increase of rent arrears or a decrease of tenants' willingness to pay their rent. Usually a lot of documents and several meetings (plus negotiations with the landlord) are needed to decide about the assumptions of rent arrears and 14 days is a very short term for doing so. Also legal obligations for Danish municipalities to intervene in the case of imminent threat of homelessness could be extended. It is not quite clear why these duties now only exist for households with children while it is particularly difficult for single people to find permanent housing and the large majority of homeless people are single. For a discussion about these questions it is, however, also important to acknowledge the relatively large extent to which Danish public housing associations (with a high degree of tenants democracy) are ready to house vulnerable people, and existing worries therefore concerning their willingness to continue to do so if protection of vulnerable tenants from eviction were increased.

Another point of discussion in light of the experiences in other European countries could be direct payments of rent to tenants in cases where the risk of arrears are apparent, and more generally the separation of a part of the subsistence benefits which is paid as a lump sum for living expenses and another part which covers the actual housing costs as far as they are reasonable.

Currently a study – funded by the European Commission - is under way which will provide European and country specific recommendations for the prevention of evictions in all 28 EU member states. The results will be published and presented in a conference later in 2015.

6. Transferability issues

Obviously the specific local and national context has an important impact on the feasibility and success of the Odense approach. The social democratic welfare regime emphasises the inclusion of all citizens in the provision of social security. The inclusion of all citizens in urban planning has also been emphasised as an important goal by political statements and studies at national level. The influence of traditional cultural appreciation of values such as tolerance for “people who are different” might not be underestimated.

In a national and local context where the predominant aim of local policies is to exclude disadvantaged people from attractive areas, for example the risk of misuse of tracking data to accomplish that goal is apparent.

Furthermore, the national homelessness strategy has promoted the Housing First approach and a reduction of homelessness and has also financially helped Odense city to reach its goals. Sufficient funding is of course more than helpful if a policy change is aimed at.

At local level Odense has the great advantage of a relaxed housing market with a suitable offer of affordable housing and the right to allocate a certain share of public housing. Existing approaches for neighbourhood mediation and a good level of cooperation between housing association and the municipality are also favourable conditions for success.

Dedicated persons in politics and administration with a vision and the ability to create a local consensus are also important to facilitate the openness of the general public to goals like creating an inclusive city. Frequent reactions like the NIMBY effect (Not In My Backyard) were questioned publicly and pragmatic solutions for the reconciliation of contradicting interests were found.

However, these favourable conditions in Odense might not be as unique as they might appear at first sight. Many of the favourable conditions have been created over the course of time and are a result of intense debates at national and local level. Local and national debates and even programmes to create inclusive (or “social”) cities exist in other countries as well and resistance against exclusionary tendencies of attempts to regulate public space have been reported from many European cities (see Doherty et al, 2008). There is an increasing number of countries that have developed national or regional strategies to reduce homelessness with several of the targets also found in the Danish strategy: reducing the number of people sleeping rough, reducing the duration of stays in different types of temporary accommodation, improving re-housing measures etc. In some countries the important goal of improving prevention of

homelessness has been even more explicitly expressed than was the case in Denmark. Furthermore a number of changes at local level do not require additional funding and might even save money in the long run. A whole series of pilot projects has shown that using the Housing First approach may provide much better value for money and bring much better results than using the more traditional staircase approach.

All in all, it may be concluded that many aspects of the Odense approaches are indeed transferable to other local contexts in Europe; overcoming barriers for homeless people to access the regular housing market and creating a tolerant local public accepting concrete measures for an inclusive city might be two of those, which require special efforts and local mediation. It should also be noted that up to now most attempts to realise the Housing First approach were found in the Western part of Europe, while in most – but not all – Central and Eastern European countries the approach was seen as difficult or almost impossible to implement, given the general level of housing shortage and poverty and often weak benefit levels for those excluded from the labour market. On the other hand the debate about the better efficiency of Housing First approaches against the traditional staircase system might help to prevent introducing the latter and help to introduce housing-led strategies as the better strategy from the outset.

7. Questions for peer review

- What are the participants' own experiences with local policies for regulating public space? What obstacles exist for planning and implementing the principles of an inclusive city and how can these obstacles be overcome?
- How to procure access to housing for homeless people in tight housing markets? Are there chances to implement similar allocation rights as in Denmark in other national and local contexts? What other instruments can be used to overcome existing barriers in the housing market for homeless people? Can the private rented market be used in a better way if not enough social housing is available?
- What needs to be done in order to mainstream the Housing First approach at local level and which are the main barriers?
- Are there 'culture change' barriers to moving over to Housing First as well as to the aim of an inclusive city in other cities and Member States? Is there experience available in Odense on constructive means of overcoming such obstacles that other cities can benefit from?
- "Housing First. What's second?": What needs to be done to further promote the social inclusion of re-housed homeless people, e.g. by overcoming social isolation, worklessness, addiction and mental health problems?
- As Denmark is among the richest countries in Europe, how can lessons from Odense be applied to cities in less wealthy countries and particularly in southern and eastern European countries with much lower levels of public spending? What are the obstacles and challenges to transferability in these cases, and how might they be overcome?
- How can preventive work at city level be made more effective and lead to a reduction of homelessness?
- How can agencies develop realistic objectives and indicators to measure progress of homelessness prevention and reduction?
- How can cities best unlock the potential for EU funding to support local services, and for homelessness reduction?
- What use can be made of the European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD), the EaSI programme and the URBACT III programme?

8. Conclusion

The Odense approach is an example of good practice in many respects. It has achieved a substantial reduction of homelessness (by almost half), which is a highly valuable goal for many, if not all, European cities. It has reached this goal by using the Housing First approach, again a recommendable approach specifically for homeless people with complex needs, but in adjusted forms (sharing the basic philosophy, but using less intensive types of floating support) also for a much wider range of homeless persons. It combines access to regular and permanent housing (scattered housing with rent contracts) with assertive support of the rehoused persons in their homes.

In Odense access to housing for these target groups is made easier by the availability of allocation rights for municipalities in public housing and by a relatively relaxed housing market plus a good cooperation with the local housing associations. Again it seems to be a transferable and recommendable goal to secure access to permanent housing for homeless people by allocation rights and other means, which could even work in tighter housing markets and ensure that homeless people do not end up at the back of the line when it comes to allocation of vacant dwellings.

Concerning the second basic element of the Housing First approach, the provision of support in housing, another type of support was predominantly used in Odense than in the pioneering model in the US. It was mainly a time-limited type of support (Critical Time Intervention), trying to build up a sustainable support network during a period of more intensive support. This type of support, combined with an area based early-warning system and good neighbourhood relations of municipal social workers, has worked well for the majority of re-housed homeless people and it was possible to bring the numbers of rough sleepers down by almost three quarters and to reach a very high housing retention rate. However it might be relevant to discuss whether more intensive (and interdisciplinary) and longer-term support might still be needed for the remaining rough sleepers and long-term homeless persons.

As with the national homelessness strategy in Denmark, also in Odense questions may be raised about possible room for improvement and further initiatives, for example to optimise prevention from eviction and prevention of young people becoming homeless, to promote further inclusion of ex-homeless people and the process of overcoming social isolation, unemployment, poverty and addiction and mental health problems.

The strong political will and concrete measures to reach the aim of an inclusive city with room for all citizens, where also the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups are treated with respect and decency and have a right to feel secure may be seen as one important aspect to promote inclusion in the context of urban planning and organising public space. It is an interesting and hopefully inspiring example of linking policies for homeless and other marginalised people with urban development. Looking at the literature about regulating public space and many negative examples of trying to exclude homeless and other marginalised people from attractive public spaces by privatisation, by design, by different types of penalisation etc. there seems a long way to go and some mind shift needed in order to make inclusive cities a goal for an increasing number of cities. Odense and initiatives at the national level in Denmark might be good examples to follow in these respects. It is in this specific context that the use of GPS tracking as an innovative way to collect further evidence about the habits and preferences of socially disadvantaged people might be seen as a positive step for advancing their inclusion in urban society. However it should not be overlooked, that the same techniques and the same evidence might just serve very opposite goals (of further exclusion of these groups from spaces where they are unwanted) when used in a more hostile climate, which – most unfortunately – still predominates in many European cities.

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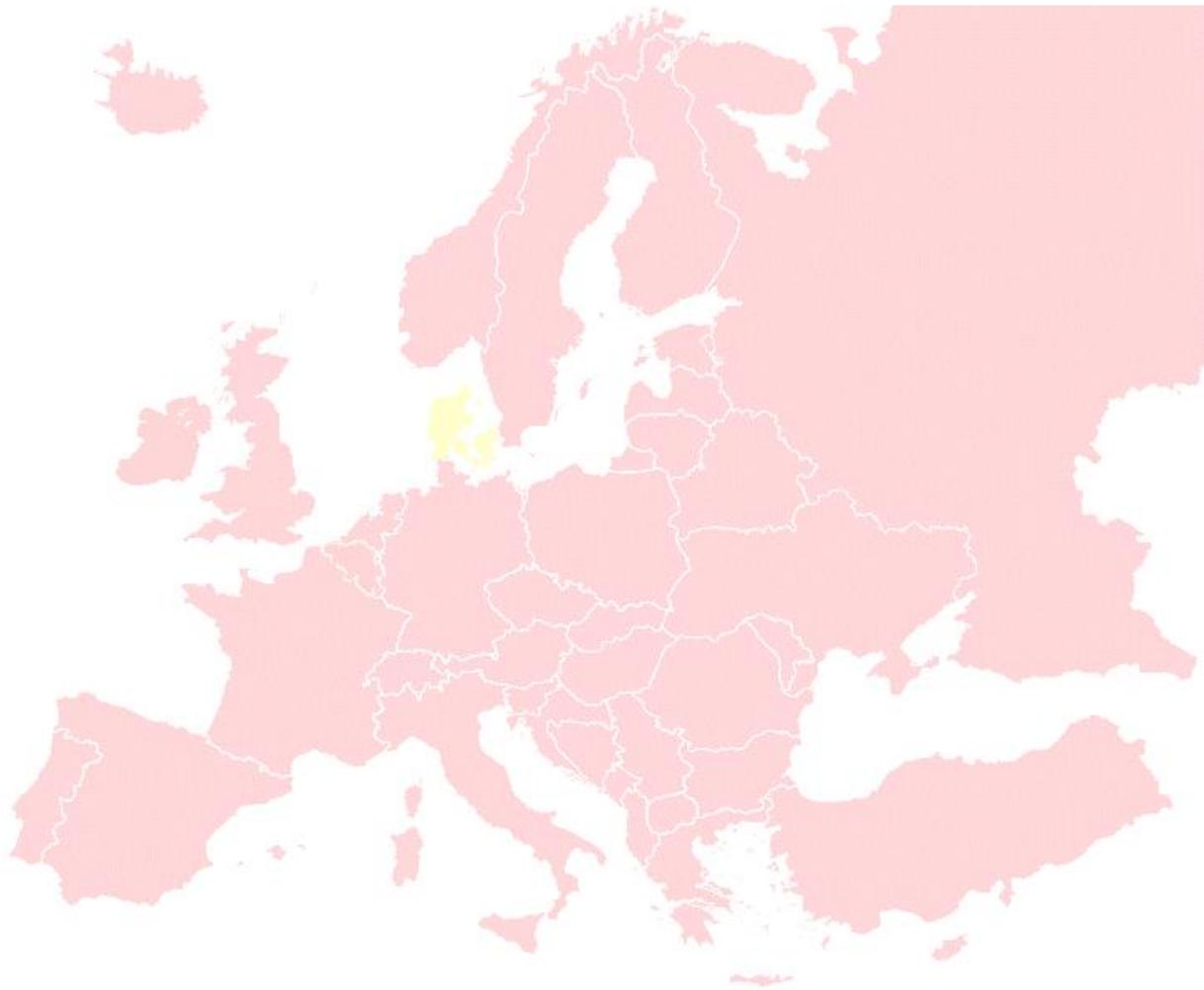


Annex: ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion

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

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year.
This definition is compatible with Census definitions as recommended by the UNECE/EUROSTAT report (2006)

(*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals etc.





HABITACT PEER REVIEW 2015

