



FEANTSA

Belgium

FEANTSA Country Fiche¹

Key Statistics	<p>In Belgium, homelessness policy follows a highly regionalised structure. This means that the statistics available are regional rather than national.</p> <p>Brussels</p> <p>In the Brussels region, La Strada (the support centre for the homeless sector) has developed two data collection mechanisms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Centralisation of service data to monitor on one-night stays of the homeless people in services on an annual basis.2) A periodical survey of homeless people on a given night over the whole territory of Brussels. The survey was carried in 2008 and in 2010. <p><i>2010 One-Night Survey:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Number of people sleeping rough (ETHOS 1.1): 329○ Number of people living in night shelters (ETHOS 2.1): 282○ Number of people living in homeless accommodation for men : 312○ Number of people living in homeless accommodation for women: 34○ Number of people living in homeless accommodation for women and children: 298○ Number of people living in mixed-gendered homeless accommodation: 125○ Number of people living in private (non-certified) accommodation services: 189○ Number of people living in squats with local authority permission: 275○ Number of people living in very poor condition squats: 100 <p>Total: 1,944</p> <p><i>2010 Centralised Service-Data Collection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Number of people (adults & children) using homeless accommodation services: 2,051○ Number of children using homeless accommodation services: 964○ Number of people using homeless accommodation services on a regular basis: 170 <p>Total: 3,185</p> <p>Flanders</p> <p>In Flanders, the NGO centres for general welfare (CAWs) use a uniform register system. However, the local authority services for social welfare (OCMW) do not, meaning that there is not comparable data for the region as a whole. The Minister of Welfare has laid out plans for a regional monitoring system, which could provide more comprehensive data in the coming years. In 2010, the CAW data recorded 5,802 people staying in hostels and shelters and 2,830 people using forms of supported housing for homeless people.</p> <p>Wallonia</p> <p>There is very little regional-level data available for Wallonia. A 2004 estimate suggested there were around 5,000 homeless people.</p>
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¹ Last updated Autumn 2012

<p>Increase/Decrease in Number of Homeless People</p>	<p>No clear overall trend at national level. In Brussels, comparison of results from the one night survey carried out by La Strada in 2008 and 2010 shows an overall increase of 13% in the number of homeless people, from 1,724 in 2008 to 1,944 in 2010. Improvement and enlargement of the survey explains at least part of this increase. On the basis of the information available in Flanders, the number of clients using homeless services has remained stable in recent years.</p>
<p>Change in Profile of Homeless People</p>	<p>No clear trends at national level. There is some evidence of an increase in the proportion of women and immigrants amongst homeless services users. More than one in three homeless persons in Flanders is a woman and the proportion continues to increase. Most of them become homeless as a consequence of domestic violence.</p>
<p>National Strategy</p>	<p>National Strategy</p> <p>There is no integrated national strategy. There has been some progress towards regional strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the Flanders region, a multi-stakeholder steering group has been established to prepare a homelessness strategy. The steering group has produced a proposal based on five strategic goals to end homelessness. The steering group is now working on developing funding possibilities to implement the strategy. ○ In Brussels, protocols have been signed between the Government of the Brussels Capital Region and the three Community Institutions concerning the fight against poverty. ○ At Federal level, homelessness was included in the National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion, and is integrated into the 2012 National Reform Programme in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. There is an Inter-ministerial committee on social inclusion and the social economy (CIM) which brings together different ministries of the Federal Government, the Communities and the Regions. One of its five working groups is dedicated to homelessness. A temporary, federal, inter-ministerial group on homelessness was created in 2011 to focus on the crisis in winter shelter capacity. Homelessness was also a major priority for the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council in 2010. <p>Governance</p> <p>As stated above, competence for homelessness is mostly at the level of the regions. In the Brussels region, it is divided between the regional government, the three Community Institutions, and the <i>communes</i> (districts) which are responsible for the public social services centres. La Strada became operational in 2007. As a support centre for the homeless sector, its role is to support stakeholder dialogue/participation and data collection on homelessness. Meetings between service providers, public authorities and other stakeholders take place every two months with a larger meeting once a year. The aim is coordination, information sharing, practice development, mutual learning and overall exchange to enhance service delivery in line with needs.</p>
<p>Targeted Prevention</p>	<p>There is a federal law on the “humanising of judicial eviction”. Municipal social services (OCMW/CPAS) have to be informed of all eviction procedures so that they can provide support. The court informs the OCMW/CPAS when landlords request an eviction. Clients that are already known to the services are contacted directly by a social worker. Unknown clients</p>

	receive a letter and invitation to come the service for a first meeting.	
Housing-Led Approaches	A programme to test Housing First in the Belgian context has been developed. In Flanders, there has been growth in all forms of accompanied housing for homeless people over the past ten years.	
Quality of Homeless Services	Minimum quality standards exist and there are strong regulatory frameworks.	
Remarks on Research	There have been several important studies on homelessness recently, including evaluations in 2010 and 2012 of the Brussels winter emergency plan by La Strada. ²	
Remarks on Budget Evolution	No clear overall trend	
Remarks on Key Policy Developments	Positive	Negative
	Progress towards a homelessness strategy in Flanders.	Increase in coercive approaches reported in Brussels. This includes the use of administrative sanctions and a focus on squats and Roma people. An ordinance approved on December 13th 2007 criminalised begging and called for a fine of 84 Euros (N.b. "vagrancy" and begging were decriminalised in Belgium in 1993).

² La Strada (2010) *2010-2012 Évaluation du dispositif d'urgence hivernal en région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, available at : <http://www.lstb.be/pdf/DUHB%202010-2012%20FR-1.pdf>