



FEANTSA

BRIEFING Monitoring Report

Today, FEANTSA publishes "On the Way Home?", its 2012 Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe.

This important report examines the extent and nature of homelessness in the EU's Member States and analyses policy progress over recent years. It is based on the input of national experts from 21 countries. The main headlines from the report's findings are summarised below.

The report concludes with detailed recommendations for national and European policies in order to improve progress in the fight against homelessness. In addition to the European report, more detailed information about the specific national situations will also shortly be available as separate "Country Fiches" on the FEANTSA website.

Extent of homelessness: Homelessness remains a problem in all Member States and has increased in the past 1-5 years in 15 Member States. In some instances, this increase is closely linked to the financial and economic crisis. However, it is significant that homelessness has decreased in the Netherlands, Finland and Scotland as a result of integrated homelessness strategies. In some countries the impact of the crisis on levels of homelessness has been limited by such integrated strategies.

Profile of homeless people: The report shows that the profile of homelessness is changing in Europe. Many Member States report an increasing proportion of homeless women, families, migrants and young people. In some Member States, homelessness is affecting a larger section of the population as a result of the crisis.

Integrated homelessness strategies: In line with several calls at EU-level, including the 2010 Joint Report and the European Parliaments' Resolution, a growing number of Member States have developed integrated homelessness strategies to reduce homelessness over the long term. So far, 10 European countries have developed such strategies at national or regional level.

The evidence-base to support homeless policies: There is considerable variation in the extent to which homeless policies are evidence-based in Europe. Some countries have strong data collection systems that play a clear role in strategic planning and monitoring. Others have data that is insufficient for the purposes of strategic planning to end homelessness. Most countries have made progress on homeless data collection in recent years. There is also a well developed body of knowledge at EU level about the type of data required and how this can be collected. There is a need to include homelessness in the EU SILC data.

Housing-led approaches and targeted prevention: Housing-led approaches and targeted prevention have emerged as key priorities in making sustained progress on homelessness.

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These reflect a broader shift towards the “normalisation” of the living conditions of people experiencing homelessness. Some countries such as Finland, Denmark, and Scotland have developed housing-led homelessness strategies where immediate access to housing with support where needed is becoming the dominant response to homelessness.

Quality of homeless services: Analysis of staffing levels and room occupancy in residential homeless services shows that there is great diversity in the quality of homeless services – with conditions ranging from overcrowded dormitories to single rooms in shelter and hostel accommodation. The extent to which homeless people receive individual care from qualified social workers also varies considerably. Policies orientated towards ending homelessness increasingly require quality frameworks which support ending situations of homelessness rather than managing homelessness. This requires the development of innovative outcome measurement tools. There are several examples of such tools that have been developed in Europe but further progress is required.

Coercive policy approaches: In a number of contexts, measures have been introduced to criminalise homeless people or to use enforcement measures to control their use of public space. This often reflects a failure of homeless policy to offer decent alternatives to homelessness. Even when there are well developed homeless services that can facilitate genuine exits from homelessness, coercive approaches represent a high risk strategy and can have negative outcomes for homeless people.