



FEANTSA

“Multiple barriers, multiple solutions: Inclusion into and through employment for people who are homeless in Europe”

National Report Denmark - Annual Theme 2007

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In Denmark the homeless are not defined as a special group in relation to the labour market everybody has equal access to the labour market, but it is evident that not everybody has the same professional and personal competences enabling access to the labour market.

Persons who are homeless and jobless and take up residence at an institution for the homeless are immediately after moving into the institution put in touch with the municipal job centre which requires the person to participate in municipal activation. Municipal activation is a precondition for receiving cash benefit. There is however a matching of the individual person, and match groups 1 - 5 are used. Typically a requirement for activation of match groups 4 and 5 would be dubious as these often cover persons with a broad-spectred need for help.

1. Employment profiles of people who are homeless

There are no figures for such Ethos categories in Denmark. Homelessness often coincides with abuse, mental illness, violence in relationships, poor labour market attachment, crime, lacking social network and rootlessness, and these conditions go across the Ethos categories. The homeless are persons with special social problems without own dwelling or who cannot stay in own dwelling and are persons with a need for dwelling offers and offers for activating support, care and subsequent help. Homeless in relation to institutions for the homeless is not only a matter of a dwelling problem. However, the decisive factors are the special social problems. In a Danish understanding, the personal social problems play a major role in the understanding of the concept of homelessness. The National Institute of Social Research has defined the solution of the dwelling problem as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for stating that a person has abandoned homelessness.

Battered women have special types of problems and reasons for homelessness. In this connection it is essential to draw attention to the fact that as for immigrant women there are special issues. They often have problems in connection with establishing themselves in a new life as they run a great risk of being persecuted by their husband's family on account of honour concepts. Many immigrant women who move into battered women's shelters often have not had any previous attachment to the labour market.

1.1.

There are no known surveys in this context and therefore no concrete figures. The assumption is that the group is not particularly large as the group of homeless as a whole is "far from the labour market" and therefore not actively applying for jobs.

1.2.

There is a large number of examples on homeless finding jobs in "the social economy" for example in "House of the Homeless" or as street vendors of "Hus Forbi", the newspaper of the homeless. In addition, it should be mentioned that a number of homeless persons have found jobs as voluntary helpers in connection with drop-in centres and shelters. In addition, there are many homeless who stay at institutions for the homeless with specially planned employment at the institution.

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Recently about 5000 long-term unemployed have found jobs or rare taking educations, which corresponds to 11.8% of the target group.

If homeless are to obtain employment, special measures are required. A comprehensive effort with clarification of working capacity is required, and at the same time solutions to social, personal and health conditions have to be found. There should be focus on the person and the conditions the person has to live with.

2. Barriers to employment for people who are homeless

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In a regulatory context there has to an increasing extent been a development in the direction of all personal social problem issues being solved via activation.

The increasing market orientation of society entails that still increasing demands being made on the qualifications of the workforce in relation to the individual's productivity, education, stability, efficiency etc. Persons with psycho-social difficulties in addition to unemployment and who do not belong to match group 4 or 5 have to an increasing extent experienced difficulties in relation to matching the ordinary labour market. At the same time a number of manual and service-oriented work functions which previously could be catered for by employees with reduced working capacity are being abolished. The development reinforces the tendency for many people to be expelled from or never finding their place in working life.

It is a basic assumption that work is a strong factor creating identity for human beings for which reason to right to work is fundamental. Work assists in structuring our lives in relation to time and space and provides the option for social relations. The attachment to working life provides human beings with identity, self-confidence and dignity.

In line with an increased need to involve more and more into the active workforce, a number of labour-increasing and clarifying initiatives have been launched. In addition to activity offers and activation, the effort contains goal-oriented social, health and educational offers which, among other things, serve the purpose of assisting unemployed in taking work test assessments, clarification, requalification, on-the-job training, placement in ordinary jobs, flex jobs or light jobs, education or pre-pensioning.

Social exposure may be described as a life situation which is difficult for a person to manage at his own advantage and which encompasses an impending risk of decided exclusion. Whether a person experiences a social exposure, marginalization or exclusion and maybe ending up with the role of being a passive recipient depends on a number of factors - not least seen in the form of help and support for the individual recipient and if this assistance contributes to providing the individual with greater self-esteem, better self-insight, development potentials, competences etc.

The risk-enhancing factors in the life situation of the individual may be described as:

- Extensive decoupling from some to the central partial systems in society (such as dwelling, work, economy, politics, family and network)

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- Limited ability or opportunity for self-determination
- Identity features which may be considered abnormal or may result in labelling
- Limited access to social recognition

An experience of being socially excluded or outside meaningful social contexts may however still encompass the possibility of inclusion in particular if there is room for diversity. Social inclusion and in this way attachment to the labour market. This is not an unambiguous entity. This may be contained in one social context and obliterated in other contexts. You may be outside in relation to participation in certain societal partial systems, (such as economy, work, politics, socialisation etc.) and be included in others (such as supported work, education or social and treatment-oriented offers). Here the degree of participation and the societal function and acknowledgment are important elements as to the experience of social inclusion and life quality.

As previously mentioned, in Denmark we operate with a sectioning in match groups. Socially exposed persons are typically to be found in the last two groups mentioned, these being match group 4 and match group 5.

Match group 4 is defined as follows:

The unemployed person has such essential limitations in competences and resources that he/she will not immediately be able to enter into job functions on the ordinary labour market. The unemployed person's working capacity is so significantly reduced that job functions compatible with his/her competences and resources will only exist to a very limited extent on ordinary labour market.

Match group 5 is defined as follows:

The unemployed person has such essential limitations in competences and resources that he/she actually has no working capacity which may be used in job functions on the ordinary labour market.

A survey made by "Knowledge and Communication Centre for Socially Exposed Persons" comprising the above groups shows the following tendencies.

It is a joint feature of the persons that in the latest development in their lives there has been a movement towards a tighter attachment to the labour market or to one of the inroads to the labour market such as the education system.

The survey also shows very different background for people becoming exposed/expelled. And secondly how they - in more or less incidental ways - get in touch with the labour market or the education system again. However, it is not all by chance. The fact is that the social system is actually geared to supporting some of these people.

The survey also shows that inclusion in societal life unfortunately does not occur automatically even though the individual is attached to the ordinary labour market. It is an essential precondition for the individual's experience of life quality that everyday life contains meaningful tasks. Integration in a work community does not occur solely by physical placing at the work place. There must also be spaciousness both physically, mentally and socially - a spaciousness

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which is also dependent on the individual workplace and the employees' tolerance in relation to vulnerable people.

It also shows that via the attachment to working life the individual acquires identity, self-confidence and dignity. The individual is different from and knows much more than what is indicated by his/her position in match groups 4 or 5. A precondition for this is that he/she experiences himself/herself as a person who is understood and respected as an equal person – and that the contents of the offer is experienced as meaningful. In other words, it is necessary to make the right match between the person and the offer/workplace. This is performed by thorough preparation and guidance both of the individual and the company and with focus on the terms and needs of both parties.

It is an essential factor as to methodology that the support experienced as most giving for the individual is often attached to a specific person – a mentor. Apparently it is effective if a person is attached to a specific support person in which way personal support is granted on the crossroads to employment or education. A mentor's task could for example be: To prepare the person for a work process – to support to gain a foothold at a workplace in relation to norms and professional requirements which form part of a workplace culture – to support during the employment in a company – to advise and guide the company in relation to conditions of relevance to the employment process – to contribute to preventing problems and in this way prevent absence – to support the person in maintaining attachment to the labour market – to grant long-term follow-up in a job which the individual can manage.

A mentor could for example be an employee or a person active in business life, a person who has relations to the social offer/workplace or a person with the same experience background as the exposed person. In this way it is ensured that the mentor has an intensive knowledge of the exposed person, his wishes, resources and problems and that the mentor has the opportunity to establish a trustful collaboration with the person in question during the whole process.

2.1.

Homeless with a drug abuse typically have a chaotic everyday life making it difficult for them to manage a job. Their abuse is typically so costly that they cannot finance without committing crimes.

Homeless with an alcohol abuse typically have a chaotic everyday life making it difficult for them to manage a job.

According to "the health guide" Denmark is one of the countries on a global basis with the lowest occurrence of tuberculosis.

Homeless with a mental disease typically have a chaotic everyday life making it difficult for them to manage a job.

Homeless with health problems have been the target group of a number of projects. However, the objective of the projects have exclusively been to offer them dwelling fulfilling their needs or to provide them with a real offer of services from the health-care sector.

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2.1. Barriers related to health	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Drug addiction/history of drug abuse	X		X		X		x	
Alcohol addiction/history of alcohol abuse	X		X		X		X	
Tuberculosis		X		X		X		X
Mental health problems	X		X		X		X	
'Dual diagnosis' (substance abuse combined with mental health problems)	X		X		X		X	
General physical health problems and dental problems	X		X		X		X	
Other, please specify								

2. Barriers related to housing.

The high prices of the housing market are not the obstacles for homeless acquiring and maintaining a dwelling. It is more a question of functional homeless who have become roofless or houseless.

A number of efforts within this field have tried to alleviate this problem – skew houses, social janitors and subsequent protection at the country's institution for the homeless.

(Living in economically deprived areas)

This is in Denmark seen as a ghetto problem which does not play a major role as a barrier to attachment to the labour market for the homeless.

(Possibility to open a bank account necessary for taking a job)

As a starting point, a bank account is needed to receive one's wages in Denmark. This is a problem for many homeless persons as they are persons who have often raised a number of loans. These loans will be collected via the bank account, and therefore the motivation for applying for a job is minimised.

2. Barriers related to housing	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Shortage of affordable housing		X						
Shortage of adequate housing								
Poor working		X						

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environment in hostels or other temporary housing									
Barriers created by service providers in their housing restrictions (e.g. limited time of stay, inflexible opening hours)		X							
Living in economically deprived areas		X							
Over crowdedness		X							
Lack of housing and tenant support while undertaking training or during the initial stages of employment		X							
Possibility to open a bank account necessary for taking up a job									
Other, please specify:									

2.3. Transport	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Lack of public transport		X		X		X		X
High costs of public transport		X		X		X		X
Lack of driver's licence		X		X		X		X
Lack of vehicle (bike, car)		X		X		X		X
Other, please specify:								

A survey shows that about ¼ of the Danes are functionally illiterate. There is a clear overrepresentation of homeless in this group. They are referred to unskilled jobs the number of which is reduced to an increasing extent in present years.

2.4. Education	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Lack of basic qualifications (e.g. literacy)	X		X		X		X	
Lack of specific	X		X		X		X	

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qualifications /secondary education								
Access to life skills training	X		X		X		X	
Access to work skills training	X		X		X		X	
Lack of qualified advice on what training to follow	X		X		X		X	
Other, please specify								

Lack of information is not a barrier – even if information was lacking, it would not provide the homeless with jobs.

2.5. Information	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Lack of information on/ access to information on job offers	X		X		X		X	
Lack of access to relevant information on rights and benefits	X		X		X		X	
Lack of access to internet	X		X		X		X	
Lack of access to telephone	X		X		X		X	
Lack of access to job-centres		X		X		X		X
Other, please specify								

2.6. Stigmatisation/discrimination	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical appearance (clothes, haircut, personal hygiene etc.)	X		X		X		X	
Lack of awareness on homelessness (if yes, please specify)	X		X		X		X	
Discrimination (if yes, please specify on which grounds)	X		X		X		X	
Other, please specify								

(Physical appearance)

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At the institutions for the homeless great efforts are launched in relation to the individual on these issues. Not primarily directed at the labour market, but with a view to the personal care.

(Lack of awareness on homelessness)

It is said that today the public opinion about the homeless is less prejudiced than earlier - The newspaper "Hus Forbi", skew-house projects which have made an effort to make people accept homeless as neighbours.

The City of Copenhagen has successfully conducted a day labourer project for recipients of cash assistance. This group may appear from day to day and receive offer for one day's work. It seems to have a positive effect.

2.7. Personal barriers	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Transient, unstable 'chaotic' lifestyles	X		X		X		X	
Lack of 'core' life skills	X		X		X		X	
Problems with debt	X		X		X		X	
Poor financial skills	X		X		X		X	
Lack of communication skills	X		X		X		X	
Long term distance from the reality of the labour market	X		X		X		X	
Lack of social and work networks	X		X		X		X	
Family related problems	X		X		X		X	
Experience of domestic violence	X		X		X		x	
Criminal record	X		X		X		X	
Lack of work experience	X		X		X		X	
Behaviour issue	X		X		X		X	
Hygiene issues	X		X		X		X	
Disempowerment	X		X		X		X	
Other, please specify								

Their everyday life is inconsistent in relation to managing a job. Having to meet at a specific time, having to perform specific work assignments in a specific way, having to meet in a sober condition.

Problems with debt

In 2006 the Danish Parliament passed an act providing socially encumbered persons with a possibility of applying for debt relief. The act was passed with a view to the homeless among others.

Poor financial skills

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2.10. Bureaucratic and financial barriers	Roofless		Houseless		Insecure housing		Inadequate housing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Poorly structured welfare benefits that make it financially unattractive to work - work does not pay		X						
Bureaucratic hurdles (e.g. due to legal status)		X						
Other, please specify								

2.11

A great barrier is the insufficient number of suitable dwelling offers and subsequent housing support. This also applies to some of the homeless who have labour market attachment because the lacking housing support often entails that they lose their dwelling again because they cannot control their finances and also often run the risk of returning to abuse unless social workers keep close contact.