



Denmark - National Report

Housing Solutions for People who are homeless

FEANTSA Annual Theme 2008

Housing and Homelessness

1. Basic questions about housing marked

1. Social housing accounts for 24% of the total housing stock in Denmark
2. Privately rented housing accounts for 15% of the total housing stock (see also section 2).
3. The number of sub-standard dwellings is currently very small. In Denmark, a flat without own bathroom and toilet would be defined as sub-standard (see also section 2).
4. No figures are available for housing/housing estates that could be defined as overpopulated. This problem is not known in Denmark.
5. In Denmark there is a shortage of flats affordable for people on low incomes such as those receiving cash benefits.

2. Public housing policies

What are the aims/objectives of public housing policy in relation to Homelessness?

The housing policy in Denmark has in an overall objective been influenced by considerations concerning policies on dispersion since the 1930s. It has been a wish to secure that everyone can get a decent home, which is payable. This has among other things been arranged through the construction of houses with public grant and with a supplement to the payment of rent.

The housing policy in Denmark does not operate with the terms homeless or homelessness. One will thus search in vain through the laws on housing when looking for an objects clause concerning the contributions to the homeless. In stead is the expression “adults with special social problems” used.

There are two laws that cover the housing contributions regarding adults with special social problems. These are Law on public housing and Law on social service.

The most specific objects clause concerning the contribution to adults with special problems is found in Law on social service. In § 81 it is written:

“The local authority shall offer a special contribution to adults with reduced physical or mental functional capacity or with special social problems. The purpose of this contribution is:

- 1) to prevent that problems regarding the individual worsen,
- 2) to improve the individual’s social and personal function and possibilities of progress,

- 3) to improve the individual's possibilities of display of life through contact, offers about fellowship, activities, treatment, solicitude and care and
- 4) to give an overall contribution of service adjusted the individual's special needs at home, including offers of housing in Law on public housing or offers of housing in this law (Law on social service).

There is thus a broad, overall objects clause, where the housing contribution is combined with social service in general in agreement with the purpose of the Law on social service: to offer counselling and support to prevent social problems, to offer multiple public services which also can have a preventive purpose, and to consider needs that follow reduced physical or mental functional capacity or special social problems and to improve the individual's possibilities of display of life.

The two laws contain different offers of housing to adults with special social problems. Law on public housing deals among other things with public housing, where the municipalities master 25 percent and have the right of assignment according to the social housing criteria to adults with special difficult social trouble, "crooked homes" and halfway houses. Homes included in this law are covered in the Law on tenancy. Law on social service covers temporary offers, housing offers of longer duration and housing arrangements for persons with special social problems, which do not or cannot stay in their own homes and whom are in need of housing offers and offers of activating support, care and subsequent help. In addition to this, the law contains housing arrangements for women who have been exposed to violence. Homes included in this law are not covered in the Law on tenancy.

What (statutory) role for public housing policies in preventing and addressing homelessness?

The municipalities must secure that everybody has the possibility of receiving free counselling to prevent social problems. In connection to this counselling the municipality has to pay attention to whether or not the individual is in need of additional help.

In connection to evictions from a home the social services department within the municipality has to be informed. The social centre must investigate the cause of the eviction, and in case of children living in the home secure a temporary housing arrangement. The municipality offers advice and counselling, and if it is possible, also about a cheaper housing arrangement or a home through the municipality.

In accordance with an investigation made by the Ministry of social affairs in co-operation with the law department, the contributions from the municipalities are not in all cases optimal. A law revision in 2007 involves that the municipalities are obligated to re-estimate the citizens need of help and that the municipalities have to estimate whether or not there is a basis for a change in the contribution to the citizen.

If a person/family is homeless the municipality has to provide them with a temporary home for a payment.

Persons receiving cash benefit and early retirement pension can enter into an agreement with the municipality about an administration of rent.

The municipality can in special cases contribute with payment of rent, if the family is at risk of an eviction.

Other arrangements regarding the prevention of homelessness are the social housing offers, where housing organizations and municipalities co-operate in an effort to help weak groups of residents. The contribution include among other things counselling and help to cope with economy issues. It is, however, only a few housing associations in Denmark, which can offer resident counselling.

The arrangement of support and help from a contact person for the mentally ill and homeless is also an arrangement that can contribute to the prevention of homelessness (again). The arrangement is a way of securing a contact to, among others, the social services department and to make sure that the user is provided with an opportunity to make use of the society's offers.

Which decision-making level leads on the issue of housing?

National politicians decide the superior frames regarding the housing policies including the priority of owned and rented homes, and the terms of public houses. The building of public houses is almost non-existent. There is a maximum of how much public houses may cost, and nobody can build houses within this frame because of the large rising on property the last few years. From this follows a large pressure on rent in the major cities, which average wage earners barely can pay. The national politicians have thus a large influence on the social housing terms in Denmark, and who gets the benefits from the housing policies.

It is the local politicians who decide what needs to be build or whether the municipal buildings should be sold or not, and this was what happened in Copenhagen in the 1990s, when the municipality sold almost 18.000 municipal buildings, which are now changed into housing co-operatives. Because of this the municipality's options regarding offers of social housing are reduced. The local politicians also decide whether there should be a rent regulation or not within the municipality. The municipal councils thus play an important role when it comes to the social housing situation. Some municipalities have a large and extended public sector while other municipalities for the most have private housing. The differences between the municipalities display fundamental political priorities between owned and rented homes, between private and public buildings and between political regulation of the housing market and the free market forces.

What is the % of the public housing budget spent on homelessness?

An analysis from August 2007 (CASA: homes and housing offers to the homeless, a survey) showed that 936 homeless are assigned to a public home, 354 are assigned to a home within public housing and 247 are assigned to a 'crooked home'. At the same time did 1.594 homeless stay at shelters.

It is difficult to show the division of the budget in percent, but the homeless account for a minimal part within the public housing budgets. It is however important to pay attention to the fact that there in recent years have been an assignment of homeless (adults with special problems), which has not been taken into account in the above mentioned numbers.

3. Access to housing as a trigger/cause of homelessness

The first mapping of the extent of homelessness in Denmark was made in January 2007. It showed that in a randomly chosen week (week 6, 2007) there were a total of 5.253 persons, who were homeless. The demarcation/definition, which was used, was the same as the ETHOS-classification. Because this was the first count ever, it is not possible to make out an objective goal for the development of homelessness in Denmark. The number of users of shelters, receptions centres and other similar temporary housing arrangements for homeless people are on the other hand known because of the annual estimations from previous years. Throughout the last 10 years the number of different users at a national level (c. 7000) and the number of places (c. 2000) have not changed much beside minor swings up and down.

A significant amount of the homelessness is present in the larger cities, and the mapping of homelessness showed that approximately 30 pct. of all homeless people have been registered as living in Copenhagen. As described in section '2 Public Housing Policies', in the 1990's the municipality of Copenhagen sold a great part of the houses they owned and could assign to the citizens. Even though that caused the municipality's possibilities to be reduced, there is nothing that suggests that this has affected the number of homeless people within the municipality. Access to a home and the legal/economic possibility of keeping a home are significant points when it comes to homelessness in Denmark, but only on a minor scale.

It is now starting to show that more and more people can be described as socially vulnerable, and that it is primarily persons from these groups, who, besides the social problems they already have to deal with, are at risk of becoming homeless. Either because of such large psychosocial problems and poverty that they cannot find a place to live in a more and more expensive housing market or because of such large financial or behaviour related problems that they are evicted.

The expansion of the number of socially vulnerable and sensitive persons is especially noticeable amongst younger and very young persons without an

education, amongst socially weak single breadwinners (most often single mothers with children) and amongst immigrants with social problems. It is also these three groups, which dominate in cases regarding evictions where enquiries emphasize financial trouble as the overall problem.

An enquiry in 1999 (the Appeal Tribunal) showed that approximately one third of the residents within the housing arrangements for homeless (c. 700) was ready to move to another permanent home, but for some reason did not have the possibility of doing so. Included in this was trouble finding a suitable home, which means payable, and finding a home, which provide the possibility of living there, without necessarily to be able to live up to all the regulation within ordinary housing rules. This enquiry contributed to establish the pilot scheme “crocked houses for crocked persons’. The vision behind the establishment of these houses was to build cheap separate homes, according to Law on public housing, and with an offer of receiving some social support. The houses were built in such a way that the standard was relatively low in order to keep the rent low too. Since then, there has been built approximately 500 of these ‘crocked’ houses – but without any noticeable consistency in the number of temporary housing arrangements.

4. Role of hostel accommodation

The role played by hostels for homeless persons is crucial on several fronts. More than anything, a stay at a hostel helps in the initial phase to ease stress in what is in many respects a chaotic existence.

The homeless person is offered help and guidance in dealing with the social authorities. The homeless person is also offered help and advice in getting in touch with drug and alcohol dependency centres if relevant.

Hostels have a duty to offer to draw up a plan for the stay. This plan is designed to serve as a ‘manual’ for the residency, and as a basis for subsequent solutions and initiatives. The content of the hostel residency plan can be amended as and when needed.

A hostel residency plan will typically cover elements such as: clarification of acute problems; overview of financial circumstances, including assistance with debt relief; assessment of opportunities for employment or education/training, and any health-related problems.

For by far the majority of homeless persons in Denmark, a stay at a hostel is both a necessary and useful welfare provision.

It is inherently difficult and at times impossible for people to resolve their social and housing-related problems if they are living on the streets.

A stay at a hostel gives structure to everyday life, with each individual resident being offered the opportunity to take part in “a normal day”, where he or she can participate in food preparation, cleaning, gardening and various kinds of workshop activities. The philosophy behind this structure is for each individual to see him/herself as part of a ‘community’ based on mutual expectations.

This structure also helps residents to experience daily life as made up of constructive content, which then also empowers them to deal constructively with their own personal issues.

5. Home-ownership

Throughout the last 20 years there have been carried through extensive urban renewals. Within the private housing market the renovations of certain areas and buildings have been full of changes, which have caused many rental homes to be sold as either cooperative apartments or owner-occupied apartments. There have been established attempts to sell houses in the private housing sector, but without positive results. Because of this the main part of the public houses are still rental homes. But many rental buildings in the public sector have gone through extensive renovation, and following this many of the socially vulnerable and maladjusted people have been forced to move out or have been evicted. This has probably only to a smaller extent caused homelessness, but it has caused segregations and split-ups.

Throughout the last 10-15 years the prizes on owner-occupied houses have gone up almost rocketing. Especially in the larger cities the prizes on houses and apartments have gone up so much that the possibilities of buying have become very limited for people with very low incomes, but also for people with low incomes. The owner oriented housing market has thus, beside in some geographically outlying areas, not been within reach for people with lower incomes including homeless people. On the other hand those people, who already had an owner-occupied house before the prizes rose, have been favoured with a low interest, an increase in value and thereby an accumulation of capital within the house.

6. Role of private rental housing market

The private rental housing as a genuine actor in the provision of decent and affordable housing for homeless people

The number of private rental houses has gone down during the last 25 years. In 1981 private rental houses took up 23 percent of the housing stock in Denmark. In 2007 private rental houses took up 15 percent. A large part of these private rental houses have been sold as housing co-operatives. There has not been much interest in building private rental houses.

As it is now, private rental houses are not interesting for the homeless. Only five municipalities have homes for homeless in private houses, analogous to 147 places (CASA). There are only a few tenants who are receiving cash benefits in private rental houses. It is the individual landlord who decides to whom they rent out to. It is possible for the municipalities to buy themselves into private rental houses, but the option is hardly ever used. The social

housing tasks are placed with the public housing. This is underlined by the composition of tenants in the public houses. The tenants in employment and the self-employed are almost not represented, while persons without employment are highly represented within the public sector. The housing organizations within the public sector can establish special halfway houses for persons who are being reabsorbed from temporary homes according to Law on service, just as the housing organizations can build ‘crooked homes for crooked persons’.

A political wish has been presented that the private rental sector also should solve the social housing tasks with ¼ of the houses, especially because of the attempt to fight the rising of ghettos in certain areas. There is a tendency that the weaker groups are being gathered in certain municipalities and neighbourhoods, while other municipalities, with only a few public houses, have none. A better spread over all municipalities and types of houses would ease the integration process. The private landlords are however not interested in these kinds of tasks. The municipalities and the private landlords can go into voluntary agreements regarding a municipal assigned tenant, but the rental organizations are very hesitant about this arrangement even though there is an economic advantage to it. The landlords fear that municipal assigned tenants will make the other tenants move out, and that there will be more violation and vandalism to the tenancy.

Do you think rent regulations works to ease housing market pressures and make private rental housing more affordable for very vulnerable groups?

The majority of the tenancies in Denmark are regulated in proportion to Law on tenancy and Law on housing regulation. Private rental buildings constructed after 1991 have free setting of rent.

Within the regulated tenancies the rent is set in proportion to running costs in the building, including taxes, duty, maintenance, administration and insurance. To this must also a capital yield be included, normally set to seven percent of the building’s public value.

Within the municipalities without a regulation the rent is set according to ‘the value of the tenancy’, which mean a rent that is commonly present for similar homes in the neighbourhood.

The effects of rent regulation and housing subsidization are of a very complicated matter. A home is a fundamental premise for a person’s life, and a home is thus on another level than other consumer goods. Everyone should be secured a decent home to a decent rent. This has been the foundation for the regulation policy and it has with no doubt had great influence on the fact that Denmark have succeeded in changing from a agricultural society to a industrial society, to cope with the immigration from the country side to the cities and to get through the post-war shortage of houses. There have thus been solved important social housing tasks through regulation.

But regulation or not, there are still some trouble when it comes to paying rent for, among others, people on cash benefits and receivers of initial help. In this area there is a ceiling regarding the social benefits inclusive housing benefits. This means that the rent after all can be too high within the ceiling, and cause too few means to cover other necessities such as food, clothing and dental care. These persons can often not solve their financial difficulties by moving to a cheaper house because these are non-existent.

Do you know of successful policies that aim at reducing vacancy rates and making vacant housing available for homeless people?

No.

Is very inadequate/substandard housing in the private rental market a big problem?

The housing standard is generally speaking high in Denmark. The number of houses without a toilet, bath or central heating is almost bisected between 1990 and 2006. This is done through general modernizations, uniting and demolitions of the houses in the worst conditions and through a specific urban renewal. The private rental houses are all in all old. Half of them are constructed before 1940. There are especially in the older housing co-operatives and private rental buildings still flaws, for instance no bath and toilet in the back stairs. This can be said to be the down side of the regulation policy. There have in these cases not been the necessary means in order to modernize. The private buildings are often modernized when they are relend, and when this is done the rent is doubled.

In the 60s and 70s there was talk about 'slumlords', which at large faked modernizations in older buildings and sold then as private homes with very high profits. The housing market is still a lucrative place for speculations. A couple of years ago there were landlords, which renovated apartments by throwing away functioning toilets and taps and replacing them with new just to be able to raise the rent.

The tenants are as a general rule protected by the Law on tenancy and Law on regulation and by a relatively strong tenants association, which can conduct the cases of those tenants who are trapped. The conditions of tenancy can be processed by a rent control board in the determination of whether or not the conditions are in agreement with the laws, and by a rent tribunal, which are located in all municipalities. Most landlords are proper businessmen, but there is a subculture of landlords, which do not treat their tenants right and thus make up fake high rents, giant fees when the tenants move out, harassment, lack of maintenance, restraining of deposits, illegal charging of water and heat supply and so on.

Are homeless people put into cheap hotel accommodation because of lack of other alternatives?

It is very rare that homeless people are lodged in a hotel. At the homeless count in 2007, there was 110 homeless registered at a hotel or hostel, analogous to 2 percent of the number of homeless. When hotel accommodation is used it is for severe cases of homeless citizens. The costs of hotel accommodation in Copenhagen have dropped strikingly in the latter years because there are now more temporary emergency shelters.

Squatting

Squatting is not related to homelessness, but to youth cultures like the squatters (BZ-movement in Denmark).

7. Role of social/public housing

How is social housing defined in your country and what are the statutory aims?

In the Danish definition of social and public houses, the ownership must be taken into consideration. In Denmark 2% of the houses (54.469) are owned by the public authorities and can thus be considered public houses. But it is however not just these houses that play a part when it comes to re-housing homeless people. The central forms of housing, when it comes to housing citizens with social housing problems, are the public houses that make up 24% of the housing stock (515.257). The public houses are owned by different housing associations or housing societies, where the residents are members of the association. There are also public houses, which are reserved for homeless people. These are the so-called 'Crooked Houses'. These houses have been constructed so they follow the same terms of ownership as other public houses. There are however other criteria for receiving this home. In the ordinary public houses your name is written on a waiting list and is assigned to you by seniority – the person whose name has been on the list for the longest time will get the next available home – while one will be referred to a 'Crooked House'. It is the municipality that will refer people to a 'Crooked House'.

What role does the social housing sector play in addressing and preventing homelessness?

Do social housing landlords have a statutory obligation to house homeless people? If yes, please explain?

As described in section 2, the municipality has the right to assign 25% of the homes in the public buildings to people with housing problems. In Copenhagen (the capital of Denmark) the municipality has the right to assign 33% of the public houses.

It is up to the municipality to define the criteria they chose to assign from, and it does actually differ quite much from municipality to municipality how they do it. However, it is the same in all municipalities that single parents with children are considered before citizens without children and homeless people.

Are you aware of any other policies that help/incite social housing landlords to provide housing to homeless people?

In July 2005 a new law came into affect, this provided the municipalities and the public housing associations with the opportunity to establish halfway apartments in some of the public buildings. This arrangement means that a resident in a housing arrangement can move to this halfway apartment within a public building and still keep the necessary support from the housing arrangement when living in the apartment. When and if the resident is ready to live without the support, he or she can keep the apartment. This must however happen within a timeframe of 2 years.

The housing arrangement can also make the resident return if it is estimated to be necessary (information concerning introduction of the arrangement with halfway houses (social.dk)).

The law is intended to widen and ease the transition from a housing arrangement to a private home. The arrangement has only been used to a small extend.

What are the most commonly used arguments for social housing landlords to house/not to house homeless people? Do you agree with these arguments?

Approximately 77% of the homeless people in Denmark are having problems with addictions (Homelessness in Denmark 2007, own calculation from table 8.5). The housing associations and private landlords express their concern that social clients will bother their neighbours when they are affected by alcohol /hash/drugs. Besides this the homeless often have difficulties when trying to make ends meet financially – approximately 87% are receiving transfer payment, which in some cases makes it somewhat harder for the landlords to secure their rent in time, than by the residents who have jobs. The landlords have thus an interest in not having to (re-) house homeless people. Within the public debate the public housing sector acknowledges the responsibility for providing houses to social clients, but in practice there is a striking rise in the number of evictions during the last 5 years from both private and public buildings.

It is hard from a societal point of view to defend that the lack of assigning houses to the weaker part of the society is excused with the fact that they are difficult. There should be homes for everyone. Furthermore is it unfortunate that there has been a massive rise in the number of evictions by the bailiff from rented homes. In 2002 the number was 1499 while there in 2006 was 2589 evictions, and thus a rise on almost 73%.

The evictions are mainly caused by financial problems, but also addictions, divorces, mental illnesses and loss of jobs play an important role (Why residents are evicted, SFI2008).

Do you think the social housing stock is large enough to allow social housing landlords to play an effective role in addressing and preventing homelessness? If not, what happens with homeless people during the time more social housing is made available?

The public housing sector is generally speaking large enough to relieve homelessness. But there is however a problem when it comes to offering enough cheap apartments for the low income groups including the homeless people.

In 2005 the Danish Parliament passed a law on flexible house renting, which give the housing associations the opportunity to influence the composition of residents in certain areas where the part of residents without jobs is large. The areas where the cheaper apartments are located are already filled with so many social clients that the vulnerable groups cannot be assigned to homes within these areas in order to prevent the forming of ghettos.

In Copenhagen there is, among other things, an objective that there must not be more than 40 – 50% unemployed within the 4 larger known areas of public buildings.

Does the funding regime help/complicate social housing operators to focus on homeless people?

There have been established a ceiling for how expensive the public building must be per square meter. The rising prices on property, the high prices on materials and the lack of workmen have done it almost impossible to start up the construction of new public buildings in the last year.

Within the Copenhagen area where the lack of homes is largest the prices are also highest. Even if the limit of how expensive the public buildings may be is raised, the homes will be too expensive to live in for the low-income group.

To make it even worse, the current government has impounded a large part of the Landsbyggefond's money. The purpose of the Landsbyggefond is to promote, improve and maintain the public buildings.

On what basis is social housing allocated to the tenants? Do the selection

criteria favour/obstruct access to housing for homeless people?

As mentioned earlier it is the municipalities that estimate who should be assigned to a house through the municipalities' waiting lists. It is a demand that the house-hunter must be in a serious need of a house and not be able to find one on his own. It is most often handicapped, divorced, immigrants or single parents who are assigned a home.

It is not normal municipal practice to assign a house to a homeless person based on the criteria that the homeless are in a serious need of a home. Most often will an assignment to a public home for a homeless person happen in collaboration or through a recommendation from a case worker, who is connected with the housing arrangement in which the homeless is currently living.

People who are discharged from hospitals, prisons and such will not automatically get assigned to a home if they do not already have a home of their own.

Please provide details of the share of the different income groups in social housing – in particular the share of people in the 2 lowest income deciles.

I have not been able to find any statistical material within this area.

Do you agree that social housing should be allocated primarily on the basis of the urgency of housing exclusion – even if that would jeopardise social mix in the social housing stock? Please, explain.

There has to be a wide spectrum of local housing possibilities, to own – to rent, private – public, and through this variety homes for the socially and financially vulnerable people must be found. In order to create the frames for good functioning areas long termed and visionary plans must be created, where the composition of residents ideally reflects the composition of the population. With this ideal in mind, one cannot also distribute the homes according to the serious needs of homes. In practise Denmark has local areas with very similar compositions of citizens, both when citizens from the society's elite, middle class or the low-income groups dominate them. The before mentioned law on flexible house renting will however give the housing associations the possibility of compromising with a serious need of homes in favour of a larger, seen with social political eyes, variety of resident composition.

Are there any conditions in relation to the place of residence to access social housing? Is this relevant to homelessness. Please, explain?

In Denmark every citizen has a home-municipality that you belong to. When it comes to the homeless people the home-municipality is the municipality where he or she had their last address (was physically and legally living). It is this municipality that helps the citizen financially for instance when it comes to homelessness. Homeless people are of course not necessary in the municipality where they had their latest address. In these cases one is primarily helped by the municipality where one is staying, but it is done in cooperation with the home-municipality. The municipalities are not interested in having financially troubled citizens staying, and are thus not interested in assigning a home to a 'stranger', but prefer to have the citizen's home-municipality taking care of the issue regarding a place to live.

A condition for being assigned to a home is thus, as a starting point, that one is actually living within the municipality. This is why there are so many homeless people in Copenhagen who cannot be assigned to homes even though they actually are in need of homes.

Are you aware of any structural cooperation between the homelessness sector and social housing providers? If yes, can you explain how the cooperation is organised (voluntary or statutory basis) and give examples of good practices.

The assignment to the waiting list for a public house often happens through the housing arrangements for homeless. They do not have the direct right of referral to the houses. (The specific procedure must be looked for. John, do you know that and maybe an example too?)

Do you agree that mixing housing tenures and social & ethnic groups is a

precondition for building sustainable communities? Please, explain.

We have seen well-functioning ghettos among rich citizens where the ethnic origin is very unilateral (Western European). When it comes to the poorest groups Denmark has experienced problems when there are many poor and socially weak citizens within one area. In cases where the concentration of citizens with another ethnic origin is high, and especially when the citizens are not from western countries, we know that the size of the problems are rising. To create well-functioning and durable public housing solutions it is very important not to gather financially and socially weak groups within the same area, and to try not to threaten the mono-cultural environment by having too high a concentration of 'foreigners'.

As mentioned earlier it has been tried to avoid a concentration of unemployed in certain areas in Copenhagen. The same tactic is being used in other larger cities.

How can one solve the tension between building socially mixed communities and providing housing for the most excluded?

The question is connected to the assumption that there is a contrast between having high social diversity in areas and to house expelled or socially vulnerable citizens. If the diversity is high and the number of vulnerable citizens does not rise above the general composition of the population, there will not be any problems.

How to accomplish this balance is a political matter. In reference to when the current government took office in 2001 the Ministry of Housing was closed down. Only through active and visionary housing politics it is possible to find homes for the homeless and other expelled groups.

In Denmark there have during the last 10 years been build approximately 500 crocked houses. These houses have reserved to citizens, who have difficulties when trying to live in ordinary houses or in permanent housing arrangements for addicts, homeless or mentally ill persons.

To find the location to these homes have not been without disagreements. The future neighbors usually find the idea very good, as long as these houses are not constructed in their local area. They just do not want to live next to people with addictions, who will be loud and act strangely (Not In My Back Yard-effect).

Are you aware of sustainable poor housing communities?

To me the 'Crocked Houses' are an example on 'Poor housing' – not as seen in Europe, but similar in a Danish context. The crocked houses are usually small independent houses made of wood. The materials are cheap and the houses are not very insulated, which cause the cost of heat to go up. The costs of construction have been low and the financial support from the state has motivated the municipalities (and especially the closed down counties) to construct these houses.

Overall have these homes, in spite of trouble with locations and conditions, been a success. It has been possible to house a group of people, which was difficult to fit into the current range of offers. When the houses in the end have

been placed in a certain area, there have not been all these problems that the neighbors have dreaded, and at the same time in some places these houses have solved the problems with these citizens being a disturbance to others because they tend to gather in groups and are loud.

Beside this the residents are very pleased with the homes and only very few of them have moved out before they die.

What are the main obstacles in your country to construct more social housing? How can they be overcome?

The high costs are as mentioned before the main reason why it is hard to construct buildings with a low enough rent.

The current government have through their proposal of a Quality Reform for the Danish welfare state put forward a recommendation to abolish housing co-operatives and public buildings. The political aversion to this sector must also be considered a large obstacle for constructing more public buildings.

When it comes to the crooked houses it is the NIMBY-effect and the municipalities' lack of will to insist of locations for the crooked houses and their intentional efforts to try and attain as few low-income citizens and citizens with social problems in the municipality as possible, which is the largest obstacle for enlargement.

8. Prevention of homelessness

What are the main interventions in the housing area aimed at preventing homelessness? Please, explain. (summarise if necessary)

For persons with social or mental problems or problems with addictions there can be provided a temporal financial support for a citizen who live in his or her own house in order to keep the citizen there. The purpose of this support is to improve the person's ability to make choices and live a life in his or her own terms. Mainly is it a way of helping the citizen to organize his or her life, paying bills, grocery shopping. But also help with establishing social networks or set up contact with the labour market.

It is the municipality that estimate the need and range of the support.

October 1st 2006 the government created an arrangement with a support and contact person (SKP arrangement) for people who have had long addictions, bad living conditions, poor contact to private and public network and so on.

The SKP-workers outreaching jobs are primarily an offer to the citizens without previous visitation. The employee does not have any authority towards the citizen. The help is supportive and individual based on the citizen's needs.

It is the municipality, which has to start and organize the work and make sure that there are enough resources to fulfil it. The arrangement is quite new and has thus been difficult to evaluate. It is however our understanding that many municipalities have not yet created a systematic and efficient arrangement.

Is eviction an important issue in relation to homelessness? Why/why not

–

please, explain % of people evicted who become homeless?

There has, as mentioned earlier, been a massive growth in the number of evictions since 2002. In 25% of the cases (2002-2006) are the citizens in question still homeless one year after the eviction. This is the registered part of the evictions. On top of these there are countless evictions where the bailiff (the court) has not been a part of it, but where the landlord has ended the contract with the tenants. It is impossible to say exactly how many, but we assume that the same consequences for the evictee follow from the 'administrative' evictions, namely homelessness.

The expelled tenants belong to the low-income group. The consequence of the eviction is that these persons are kept in a financial and social weak position. In the mentioned report it is said that the rising polarization in the society and thus a larger low-income group as the primary reason for the high number of evictions. There have thus been created a higher basis for recruitment for evictions. Beside that it is worth noticing that the problems following evictions are highest in the 5 largest Danish cities, where the prices of rent also are the biggest (Why tenants are evicted, SFI 2008).

What are the main reasons for people being evicted?

"The reason for evictions is a result of the fact that the tenants in question often have low incomes, low sums of money, large debts, that they use quite a large part of their income on rent, and that they at the same time have difficulties administrating their economy. The impact this has on evictions is being reinforced if the tenant loose his or her job, experience changes in family relations or in his or her housing situation, is having an addiction or mental illnesses." (Why tenants are evicted, SFI 2008)

What public intervention exists to prevent eviction?

The municipalities have the possibility of placing a 'weak payer' under financial administration and make sure that the rent is being paid. Thus the municipality must be informed when a case regarding an eviction is begun and decide whether the tenant needs a reevaluation of his or her situation. This decision must be told the tenant including an overall orientation concerning the possibility of receiving support and help. The municipality can help by paying the rent arrears and thereby prevent the eviction.

Do you have evidence that this intervention reduced the number of people who are homeless?

We believe that it is too late when the municipality waits to help after an eviction has been demanded from the landlord. Then the case has begun and it is the landlord's choice whether to run it or drop it, even if the municipality pays the arrears. The landlord may have other reasons for wanting the tenant to move out beside the lack of rent. This target group can be difficult and is not always welcomed. It is our understanding that the massive rise in the number of evictions partly is caused by the fact that the housing associations' have tighten the forbearing towards vulnerable people to try an stop the forming of ghettos in some areas.

Please, explain the importance of housing allowances as a tool for prevention of homelessness? Is it cost-effective? Does it reach homeless people?

In Denmark it is possible to apply for a financial help to pay ones rent. The allotment is dependent on the composition in the home, income and housing conditions. In December 2007 residents in 231.881 regular apartments (public and private) received housing benefits. There is no doubt that if this support were to go the number of evictions and homeless would be enormous.

Seen in relation to the described problems of getting enough homes for the low-income group, it is necessary to get some support for the paying of rent if you are homeless and want to move into your own house. Because almost all homeless people are receiving transfer incomes this support very much benefits the target group's possibility of getting and keeping a home.

Is housing advice an effective way to prevent/address homelessness? What kind of housing advice do people need? How should it be provided?

In a larger scale when it comes to homelessness counseling regarding the future home does not play a part. It is the possibility of getting a payable home in a good area that counts. However, there is some sense in advising homeless people on the housing arrangement regarding their future home. In this case it is often a contact person within the housing arrangement and the municipal caseworker who in co-operation with the citizen discuss potential housing solutions. A crucial point when finding a solution is that the user's wishes are taken serious and that reasonable goals are formed. It weakens the plan if the user's economical latitude gets too low, if it is not taken into consideration that the user must be comfortable in the area and wants to obtain good social relations and so on.

Within the housing arrangement, where the homeless can relax and in collaboration with the staff and the municipal caseworkers discuss the housing issues, it is possible to give the most sensible guidance regarding future housing.

When the right home has been found and the citizen has moved in is it however very important that the right support and guidance are provided regarding how to make every day work, stay away from alcohol or drugs, establish social relations, go grocery shopping and cook and so on. A sensible housing benefit can make the potential homeless person in his or her home, while the lack of a housing benefit can cause homelessness.

Is intervening in the housing market a cost-effective way to prevent homelessness? Please, explain.

It is difficult to give a straight answer to whether it would be advantageous to intervene on the housing market regarding a prevention of homelessness without making a cost-benefit analysis. Such one has not been made in Denmark.

It is however possible to state that problems in the housing market would have been avoided if there had been a housing policy. Since the beginning of this century the prizes on houses have risen a lot in Denmark, with a breaking

and fall last year. This has primarily caused a higher societal polarization. Established house owners and people who have bought while the price on houses was rising have got a higher equity, and thus more money, while people in our target group who have not had the possibility of buying have had difficulties finding a home that was payable. The rent in the private part of the rented homes has gone up a lot too because of the increased demand. The government has supported this development by allowing loans free of amortization, to freeze taxes on real estate and not to tax profits on house sales.

The construction of public houses and improvement and maintenance of the existing public buildings have at the same time become limited. Whether it is financially profitable to intervene in the housing market or not there is some clear social consequences that could have been avoided if something active had been done to control the housing market seen from a social political point of view.

9. Right to housing

Is the right to housing enshrined in the constitution and/or legislation?

There is no law in Denmark, which secures the right to a home. Beside the common political use of the expression 'the right to..', the discussion concerning the right to a home refers to the international human rights conventions and to the agreement between the Danish laws and these conventions.

Two circumstances have in recent years actualized the discussion regarding the right to a home. In order to stop the rising of ghettos, it is possible to reject certain groups that are registered on a waiting list, if the house is located in an area with many unemployed people. This is primarily persons receiving cash benefits, initial help and introductory benefits. The local authority has to, if possible, provide these people with another appropriate home within 6 months. This 'if possible' is problematic and raise the question whether these people can be rejected a house, which they actually are entitled to, with a referral to another house 'if possible'. This discussion might both be a discussion concerning discrimination and concerning social rights.

The other circumstance is the rising number of tenants that are evicted, because they cannot afford their rent, also within the public sector. The number of households that are evicted has gone from 1.499 in 2002 to 2.589 in 2006. The causes of this are among other things an unfortunate combination of increasing rents and reduced public support to people on cash benefit. Every fourth, who are being evicted, is homeless the following year. This development has been going on during the latter years without any crucial political initiatives. However, the government has recently declared a

contribution within two main areas: An earlier effort from the municipality and an increased help in handling housing benefits, debts and economy.

But can these persons invoke their right to a home, if they cannot acquire it themselves? No, they cannot.

An actual right to a home is becoming a more pressing affair as the housing market is being liberated and the public support is being restricted. The development has showed that an increasing number of persons are not secured a decent home, which they at the same time can pay for. The dispositional considerations of the housing policy is thus in danger, which can have enormous consequences for the coherence within the society.

A legal access to a home will however not be the full conclusion to the problem of homelessness in Denmark. There is still a need of a broad social/pedagogical effort.

10. Immigration

The new immigration to Denmark started in the mid 1980s. Today the immigrants from non-western countries and their children make up approximately 9% of the Danish population. The mapping of homelessness in 2007 showed that 25% of all homeless had a background as immigrants. These were all homeless people with a background as immigrants or refugees from non-European countries, who were staying legally in Denmark. When it comes to homeless people with a background as immigrants, who have been registered in housing arrangements, 3 out of 4 are Danish citizens.

Migrants from the new countries within the European Union, who do not have a legal job in Denmark, and also other undocumented migrants, who cannot provide for themselves, are all seen as people without rights when it comes to social and health related help.

Through a random test done by one of the large morning papers (Politiken, December 2007), it was stated that 110 eastern-Europeans scrape through life, by among other things, sleeping in the parks in Copenhagen, in trains, at stations and in some private shelters, which are open at night. Social workers and organisations estimate that the number is higher and probably even twice as high.

The Danish minister of welfare estimate that Denmark cannot, or should not, be a warm shelter for Europeans, and make clear, with reference to Law on social service, that eastern-Europeans do not have the right to claim social help and benefits, and that the municipalities therefore must not find homes for them or provide them with financial support.