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## Editorial

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Over the past decades, most EU Member States have experienced increasing migration from third countries. According to Eurostat, in 2010 there were 32.4 million foreigners living in the EU-27 Member States (6.5% of the total population). Of those, 12.3 million were EU-27 nationals living in another Member State and 20.1 million were citizens from a non-EU-27 country (4% of the total population). Since the Communication from the European Commission on a Community Immigration Policy, issued in 2000, and more recently through the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Union has recognised the potential of migration for building a competitive and sustainable economy and set out, as a clear political objective, the effective integration of regularly residing migrants. Over the last ten years, European migration and integration policies have focused on access to the labour market as one of the most important indicators of the level of integration of third-country nationals into European Member States. Nonetheless, the full and lasting integration into the labour market is interdependent on access to affordable housing.

Immigrants, and in particular recent immigrants, are a significant and, in some countries, increasing proportion of people living rough, they are also appearing among users of some homelessness services at a frequent rate in countries such as France and Portugal. A key factor affecting the vulnerability of immigrants to homelessness relates to their legal status. At present, EU law does not provide any legal right to housing support to undocumented migrants whose position in the housing market is therefore extremely precarious. Since they are excluded from the social housing sector, recourse to the informal housing market is the fate of many. It is also evident that services available to undocumented migrants differ among EU Member States, where for instance, Belgian legislation provides that undocumented families may be granted accommodation if they have a minor, whereas in Denmark, even access to publicly funded shelters is denied to irregular migrants. Similarly, access of third-country nationals to healthcare and social security assistance varies greatly among the Member States. For instance, in Lithuania, migrants obtain rights to housing and social security assistance after five years of legal residence whereas in Slovenia only migrant workers enjoy full healthcare and social assistance and in Austria, access to housing and social security assistance depends on the length of residence and is governed by the laws of the respective federal states.

To explore these issues more fully, FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness, the ENHR Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion, fio.PSD and CISP (Interdisciplinary Center for Peace Studies), University of Pisa, organised the 6th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe in Pisa on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011 on the theme of "Homelessness, Migration and Demographic Change in Europe". A selection of the papers presented at the conference, supplemented by other contributions, forms the basis for this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness.

The first paper in this special edition of the European is an edited version of the keynote address to the conference by Thomas Maloutas, in which he highlights that the management of deprived neighbourhoods in Southern Europe has become more difficult as new immigrant groups have greater needs and fewer resources, while public funds are coming under severe stress at the same time. This negative dynamic greatly facilitates an arbitrary shift in the discourse and hence the mystification of neighbourhood problems, as social issues become secondary to the need for economic recovery, and may easily be attributed to such things as the 'incompatible' cultural diversity of immigrants.

Immigrants have access to accommodation and housing according to their legal status. It is evident that it is more likely for third-country nationals with a permit of residence to find durable and secure housing solutions. It is also clear that among regular migrants, asylum seekers are generally the most precarious since, in the wait for a decision on their asylum request, have limited access to the labour market and often rely on the accommodation capacities of the Member State where they reside. Therefore it is clear that immigrants are not a homogeneous category anymore than homeless people are.

Fitzpatrick, Johnsen and Bramley bring this out very clearly where they explore the experience of 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (MEH) amongst migrants to the UK. Drawing on a multi-stage quantitative survey, the paper demonstrates that the MEH experiences of people who have migrated to the UK as adults tend to differ from those of the indigenous MEH population; the former are, in particular, far less likely to report troubled childhoods and multiple forms of deep exclusion. It also identifies a series of experiential clusters within the MEH migrant population, with central and eastern European migrants often reporting less complex support needs than other migrant groups using low threshold support services. The paper also considers the extent to which migrants experiencing MEH in the UK had encountered similar levels of exclusion in their home countries, and reveals that the more extreme problems this group faced tended to occur only after arrival in the UK.

Amongst the groups of immigrants who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, are women who are escaping domestic violence. Mayock, Sheridan and Parker in their contribution present findings from biographical interviews with seventeen migrant women who are part of a larger study of homelessness among women in Ireland. Their paper highlights the structural underpinnings of the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness, with these spanning economic, social, legal and cultural domains, and impact women's responses to violence/abuse and to the systems of intervention designed to meet their needs. The consequences for migrant women are multi-faceted, affecting their ability to leave abusive home situations, access appropriate services, and exit homelessness.

The invisibility of migrant families is highlighted in the contribution by Le Méner and Oppenheim, as public policy placed such families without access to adequate accommodation in various motels across Paris where they then merged with non-migrant homeless families and the issue morphed into a political debate over housing homeless families rather than dealing with the specific needs of migrant families. In her contribution, Nordfeldt explores the situation of homeless families in Stockholm, with the paper demonstrating that a combination of single motherhood, immigration and lack of financial resources increases the risk of being homeless and excluded from other social arenas. The paper argues that in addition to the risk of being discriminated against because of ethnic background, a restructured housing market in combination with a dismantling of social housing has raised the threshold to enter the primary housing market.

The final paper examines the configuration of homeless services in Italian metropolitan areas on the results of a number of local focus group studies, and on initial evidence from national research on homelessness and homeless services, which was conducted in Italy for the first time between 2010 and 2011 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and a number of NGOs. The article highlights how the absence of a strategic common framework to combat homelessness in Italy, at local, regional and national level, has an isomorphic effect on local service systems, such that even without an express policy, local authorities and service providers invariably configure services to allow for the containment and management of homelessness.

## Conclusion

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Housing of immigrants is an important challenge at European level. A number of Member States are struggling to provide affordable housing and to address the negative consequences of segregation and deprived urban areas, where immigrants tend to be over-represented. Low-quality housing and over representation of immigrants in deprived urban neighbourhoods create problems for integration in most Member States. Furthermore, the challenges faced by immigrants in the access to housing are reflected in the significant and, in some Member States, an increasing number of migrants who are experiencing homelessness. Entitlements for migrants vary across the Member States, where in some countries, most entitlements are obtained immediately upon receiving a residence permit, in others the situation differs according to the target group. However, migrants acquire them only after a certain period of time and under certain conditions.

In terms of policy and legislation, priority has been given to employment, primarily because of needs of European labour markets, but access to housing is equally important and we hope that the papers in this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of the dynamics of migration, welfare, access to housing and homelessness.

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