



IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editorial
- 4 Has the standardisation of homelessness services in Poland facilitated access to shelter?
- 7 Access to shelter in France
Hélène Chapelet and Carole Lardoux
- 10 Access to homelessness services and housing in Amsterdam
Jan de Ridder, Arjan Kok and Marcella van Doorn
- 13 Shelter costs in Ireland and the transition to secure more effective responses to homelessness
Pat Doyle
- 15 The Cheaper, The Better? Housing the Homeless in France
Marc Uhry
- 17 Shelter as a place of wellbeing and dignity
Cristian Campagnaro, Valentina Porcellana, Nicolò di Prima and Sara Ceraolo
- 20 Rough Sleepers Have Their Reasons
Julien Damon

Access to Shelter

By **Ian Tilling**, *FEANTSA President and Founder and President of the Casa Ioana Association*

The recent [Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018](#) by FEANTSA and the Abbé Pierre Foundation finds that housing exclusion continues to be a growing problem in Europe, resulting in an increasing demand for support and increased pressure on emergency services.

The numbers of people experiencing homelessness has continued to rise in almost all EU countries. A deterioration in the living conditions of extremely vulnerable families has led to children becoming the largest group of people in emergency shelters, with the numbers of women, young people, those with a migration background, and the working poor, becoming increasingly numerous among the homeless population.

Housing affordability and liveability are emerging as the most challenging social policy issues in Europe, with the ability to access housing adversely affecting young people, those with dependent family members, and migrants.

Shelters are the physical interface of the staircase approach for people experiencing homelessness, with a succession of preparatory interventions, from initial reception to social reintegration. Despite this key role, many shelters are often rundown and equipped with low quality and second-hand furniture, reflecting an image of exclusion and instability. They lack privacy and come with the expectation of cohabitation with strangers. Emergency accommodation is supposedly a temporary solution although, in reality, it prolongs precarious living situations and rarely leads to well-being, recovery and social integration. For many Member States, however, the shelter system is a reality and unlikely to change soon, providing at least some respite from living on the streets, even if it's just during the colder months.

The following articles provide an insight into the relationship of those using sheltered accommodation, those providing and staffing the shelter and the very building itself, as well as an opportunity to better understand some of the national realities and challenges faced by the homelessness sector professionals in different European Member States.

In **Poland**, amendments to the Social Assistance Act have introduced standards that categorise three types of shelters according to the needs of the homeless population. These changes have created challenges in relation to financing the shelters and their access by people experiencing homelessness and may well mean some shelter closures. An unforeseen outcome of these changes has led to those who are not self-reliant being excluded from the homeless support system, although a recent amendment will now meet the needs of this group of people. There might also be an opportunity for NGO funding in this sector as more local authorities contract out their homeless services.

Hélène Chapelet and Carole Lardoux from the Action for Solidarity Federation, discuss **France's** 115 helpline to access emergency accommodation. The 24-hour free service is a major pillar in informing and directing callers to emergency accommodation and other support services. The system centralises requests for accommodation and housing by the geographical area of callers and is now the only entry point to accommodation. It has proved to be a valuable monitoring tool by recording requests for emergency accommodation and has shown a significant increase since its establishment in the number of requests for help, especially from families. Accessing accommodation via the 115 system however, has proven to be a difficult process for callers, especially in regards to a shortage of available and adequate facilities.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, emma.nolan@feantsa.org

The articles in *Homeless in Europe* do not necessarily reflect the views of FEANTSA. Extracts from this publication can be quoted as long as the sources are acknowledged.



The reality in the **Netherlands** is that access to support and housing for homeless people in Amsterdam is inadequate. Despite legislation requiring local authorities to provide support for people experiencing homelessness, many local authorities are not doing so adequately. The process involved in accessing shelter is poor with restricted opening times when someone can apply for support and the strict bureaucratic process involving numerous interviews with many officials. The excessively strict selection criteria are thought to be responsible for the high number of applications for support being rejected, particular those deemed to be 'self-sufficient homeless' people.

A more than 50% rise in homelessness has proven to be a significant challenge to local authorities in **Ireland**, with the rise in family homelessness, causing issues with traditional shelters serving single people. In response, the authorities in Dublin placed families in hotel rooms and guesthouses, although 'Family Hubs', operated by NGOs, were later established to better address the needs of homeless families. Family Hubs remain a form of emergency homeless accommodation, with the length of stay dependant on the availability of safe and secure housing, meaning that securing exits is very challenging.

Marc Uhry from **France** presents the initial results from his research into the costs of the shelter system in Lyon, a city with 15,000 supported homes for the homeless. He splits the shelters into six categories: supported housing, sheltered dwellings, social inclusion shelters, shared buildings, hotels and Housing First for severe mental health issues.

Cristian Campagnaro, Valentina Porcellana, Nicolò di Prima, and Sara Ceraolo from **Italy** discuss whether sheltered accommodation is simply a place to live or a place of wellbeing for the people living in it, as an experiment to look at new strategies to tackle homelessness. Focusing on shelters not originally designed as such, showed that the basic needs of those using the services as well as the shelter's staff were overlooked. Their research aims to stimulate a discussion on buildings and on designing shelters according to the psycho-emotional and social needs of people experiencing homelessness through an inclusiveness.

Finally, Julien Damon from **France** uses a sociological framework to discuss why some rough sleepers refuse accommodation, even if it puts their lives at risk. He argues that just two issues need addressing, each with its own response. Firstly, protocols for admitting people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues need modifying to allow for the compulsory admission to hospital on the request of a third party. Secondly, that shelters and hostels need to improve their provision of adequate and appropriate facilities.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the FEANTSA Homeless in Europe Magazine, and encourage you to get in touch if you would like to contact any of the authors. Furthermore, if you have suggestions for future edition topics, please contact the editor, Emma Nolan: emma.nolan@feantsa.org.