
Editorial

Introduction

We are pleased to introduce this second volume of the *European Journal of Homelessness* and trust that you will find it stimulating and thought-provoking as well as informative. The main articles in each volume of the Journal will focus on a specific theme of relevance to current policy and practice developments across Europe. The theme selected for this volume is the *effectiveness of services and policies to prevent and tackle homelessness*. Following the structure established in our first volume, as well as scholarly articles, the Journal also contains a section on policy evaluation and a section of ‘think pieces’ together with a review of books and research. The aim of the Journal is to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at a European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation.

Articles

The articles in the Journal are intended to examine diverse aspects of the annual theme in a manner that allows for an extended critical assessment of issues and, where appropriate, a comparative analysis of approaches across different EU member states. The eight articles on this year’s theme of effectiveness examine a range of topics. With regard to the development of policies, Loison-Leruste examines how the attempt to build consensus among stakeholders on policy issues occurred in France, while Filipovič Hrast discusses the role of the media in the perception of homelessness and policy development in Slovenia. Different aspects of the changing role of the state and the comparative evaluation of policies in various welfare regimes are covered by Baptista and O’Sullivan (Portugal and Ireland), Benjaminssen and Dyb (Scandinavia), Olsson and Nordfeldt (Sweden) and Fitzpatrick and Busch-Geertsema (England and Germany). Finally, Culhane provides an examination of the emergence of cost effectiveness studies in the USA which provides a basis by which readers can understand the relevance of such studies in the European context.

The article by O’Sullivan and Baptista examines the role of the State in both Ireland and Portugal, in shaping policies in relation to homelessness by locating these developments in their particular historical, institutional and strategic contexts. Recognising the substantial shifts that have occurred over the past three decades,

they consider the role of the State in homeless policy by mapping changes in its role over time. In both Ireland and Portugal, there is evidence of changes in the understanding of homelessness among key stakeholders and in the development of national and local strategies. The key trend identified in both countries is that of the State taking ownership or control over homeless policy and attempting to devise reasonably coherent frameworks in which to address the issue. Increasingly, in both countries the shared understanding of homelessness is located within a housing framework, albeit with supporting services. A key element underpinning the strategic approach to homelessness policy is evidenced in the multiple forms of 'partnership' exhibited at local and national levels in both countries. These networks and interdependencies allowed for the realisation of a state project to emerge in relation to homelessness. These projects are constantly in flux as the homelessness state project competes with other state projects for recognition, status and finance. Homeless strategies to realise the promise of coherence in the delivery of services are, they argue, conditional on a range of other state projects. Thus, it is necessary to understand the homeless strategy as just one of a number of competing state projects, in order to evaluate its effectiveness and to understand the fragile nature of the strategy and the social networks and interdependencies that sustain it.

Portugal and Ireland are, more often than not, understood as belonging to different welfare regimes, which are respectively the 'southern' and the 'liberal'. On the other hand, Scandinavian countries are perceived to share common characteristics representative of the 'social/democratic' welfare state model. Benjaminsen and Dyb, examining homeless strategies in three Scandinavian countries, contend that while current homelessness intervention strategies in the three countries exhibit common characteristics, overall homeless approaches and policies differ between Scandinavian countries. The article suggests that, since homeless policies develop in the intersection between housing and social policy, the countries are broadly similar with regard to welfare institutions, yet are widely divergent in housing policy and housing regimes. It is in these differences in housing policy that differences in homeless policy can be explained. Clear common trends in recent developments in national strategies are evident in a common emphasis on targeting of services, flexible services and preventative efforts. However, they argue that a main distinction is between the 'housing first-' and 'normalising-' oriented approaches found in Denmark and Norway and the widespread use of the staircase model in Sweden. They argue that there are variations not only among, but also within the countries when it comes to levels of homelessness, policy responses and intervention strategies. Variations within countries emerge as a result of the decentralised system of local government in Scandinavian countries, which enables municipalities to

develop localised responses to homelessness and which raises the question of how to ensure that national policies of increasing and targeting services are anchored and implemented on a local level.

The article by Olsson and Nordfeldt echoes this conclusion when they argue that a major obstacle in Sweden is to combine national and structural measures with local responsibility as well as with individual and local solutions, but this appears difficult due to the long-standing organisational division of labour between public social services and non-governmental agencies. They argue that while the main responsibility for homelessness lies with local authorities in Sweden, national policy focuses on local-level solutions more than the underlying structural housing problems. This, they contend, is mainly due to organisational forms and former practice, where new forms of organisations and new forms of working with homeless people are both intentionally and unintentionally hindered by old organisations and traditions (both public and non-profit) resulting in a path dependency of policy development. The universalistic welfare system in Sweden includes a majority of the population and excludes a minority. This exclusion is mainly based on whether or not the individual has an income from employment. The Social Services Act guarantees people a place to live and means-tested financial support, but lack of resources or lack of organisational repertoire creates a specific niche for non-profit organisations. The more individual solutions provided by non-profit organisations seem to fit with an overall individualistic paradigm of social problems and hence of homelessness. Even though the modern welfare state in Sweden is based on ideas of universality, to cover all basic needs there have always been non-profit organisations working with marginalised groups. The division of labour between local public social services authorities and non-profit organisations and charities means that the latter more often work with people who have little or no contact with the public sector, many of whom are in a very difficult and acute situation, while the local social services authority works long-term with people in less acute need.

The articles described above all examine the development of homeless policies and, in different degrees, the role of the state. The articles by Loison-Leruste and Filipovič Hrast consider different aspects of the emergence of national homeless strategies. Loison-Leruste examines a method (the Consensus Conference) to develop some consensus on the principles required to improve public policies on homelessness in a context where debates on homelessness were becoming very politicised and divisive. She argues that the Consensus Conference has had some impact on France's welfare sector. The conference helped to achieve at least temporary unity around the reports of the Conference panel of independent experts and the report commissioned by the Prime Minister (known as the *Pinte report*) and the report of the Enforceable Right to Housing Assessment Committee.

Filipovič Hrast examines media representations of homelessness in Slovenia where, she argues, homeless people as a specific group are absent from national housing policies. While in Ireland and Portugal, as well as in Scandinavian countries, there is a description of a shift towards a more structural understanding of homelessness located within a housing framework, the social image of homelessness remains that of personal pathology. In the Slovene media, homelessness is even more narrowly defined than 'rough sleeping', referring to those rough sleepers who have adopted this 'lifestyle'. What is especially evident in the analysis presented by Filipovič, is the sense that the media believe that existing measures are sufficient and that no other, more comprehensive strategy is required to tackle homelessness. Thus, she argues, the more critical analysis of policy that can be found in newspapers in other countries seems to be missing in Slovenia. This is important because such critical commentary might help to stimulate public debate on the sufficiency of existing measures and/or challenge the existing perception of the homeless.

England and Germany are unusual, but not unique, amongst developed economies in reporting declining levels of homelessness. Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick argue that while a range of factors has contributed to these downward trends (a slackening housing market in Germany; tightened local authority assessment procedures in England), there is evidence to support claims that targeted preventative interventions have had a substantial beneficial effect. They contend that positive outcomes can be achieved even in the face of unhelpful structural trends (rising poverty and unemployment in Germany; worsening housing affordability in England). Their review of available research evidence in Germany and England suggests that successful prevention policies must be carefully targeted at the key 'triggers' for homelessness, and need to be underpinned by appropriate resources and an effective governance framework for their implementation. They caution against the dangers of international comparisons that pay insufficient attention to national contexts. Thus, what might be labelled 'homelessness prevention' in one country may be labelled entirely differently in another. That said, the paper presents a fundamentally positive message that homelessness can be significantly reduced by targeted policy action. The authors argue that a strong steer from Central Government/umbrella organisations is likely to be necessary to ensure the effectiveness of policies and to ensure that local administrations embrace enthusiastically the opportunities for positive change that prevention programmes can offer. However, one lesson from England in particular is that attention must be paid to any perverse incentives generated by prevention programmes, such that there can be some confidence that homelessness is genuinely being prevented rather than being disguised by changes in recording or assessment practices. One key lesson to be drawn from the experience of both Germany and England is that legal duties to provide temporary accom-

modation for homeless households can be a crucial policy driver for improved preventative interventions. This, they suggest, may be an (additional) argument in favour of rights-based approaches to tackling homelessness.

While recognising the caution made by Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick against the dangers of international comparisons that pay insufficient attention to national contexts, it is an aim of the Journal to provide a basis for the comparison of the European experience with practices and policies of countries outside the European Union. In this context, the article by Culhane provides valuable insights into both the effectiveness of housing programmes for homeless people in the USA and the importance of effective administrative information systems to provide the evidence base for evaluating homeless programmes and the failure of mainstream services in meeting or resolving the needs of homeless people. Culhane examines the results of research which uses service-provider data to track the resources and programmes for which those services are responsible, and demonstrates the positive impact of housing programmes. This is in the context of an American system of homeless services which is largely unregulated and under-funded. The research reviewed by Culhane demonstrates the failure of intensively funded mainstream (non-homeless) services in assisting people who have housing needs. This also provides an evidence base to demonstrate that gaps in services can lead to homelessness. His analysis is cogent, but is only possible because information exists by which researchers and mainstream welfare agencies can identify excess and inefficient resource consumption and achieve greater accountability to reduce homelessness. The development of similar administrative information systems in Europe is still embryonic, though recent EU projects have targeted this knowledge gap (see the Mphasis project – <http://www.trp.dundee.ac.uk/research/mphasis>).

Policy Evaluation

The *Policy Evaluation* section of the Journal aims to provide a succinct analysis of current policy issues of relevance to the development or evaluation of homelessness strategies. It is an aim of the Journal to focus on a review of national policy initiatives in a particular country in order to assess the lessons that this experience may hold for other EU countries. Thus, the first volume examined the Scottish legislation which aims to guarantee a right to housing for all homeless people by 2011, providing a parallel description of the development of the rights-based approach in France. This volume examines a contrasting approach adopted in Ireland (O'Sullivan). In addition, the section contains two articles that consider the issues relevant to the development of the capacity and competence of homeless

services in the new member states (Hradecky ; Wagnanska). The section also contains articles related to specific groups (Begging – Johnsen and Fitzpatrick; Drug users – van der Poel, Baren-dregt and van de Mheen).

In contrast with Scotland, the approach adopted in Ireland is not rooted in a legalistic approach, but rather on a consensual or negotiated problem-solving approach. This reflects the broader environment in which public policy-making has evolved since 1987, whereby macro-economic and social policy is broadly agreed by the 'social partners' (Government, employers, trade unions and NGOs), in a process known as 'social partnership'. The review assesses the development of policy towards homelessness over this period of time. A number of factors, including an enhanced strategic focus on providing a co-ordinated response to homelessness, particularly in Dublin, and a substantial increase in the funding of homeless services, are identified as contributory factors to this apparent decrease. However, it is argued that a split in governance responsibility between local authorities who have responsibility for the provision of accommodation, and health authorities who have responsibility for the provision of care, has created difficulties both in implementation and in ensuring efficiency in resource utilisation. In a context in which the level of homelessness would appear from the existing (inadequate) data sources to be declining, the paper raises the interesting question of how homeless service providers will adapt to the changing nature and extent of homelessness. The author reports reluctance, to date, among agencies with respect to restructuring their operations. Legalistic or rights-based approaches have an intuitive appeal in that they appear to offer radical and relatively immediate solutions to righting social wrongs. However, this review of the development of Irish homeless policies concludes that an approach which is based on shared understanding and a problem-solving methodology may be ultimately more successful in the long term in tackling homelessness in a low key, incremental manner.

Using the Czech Republic as a case study, Hradecky identifies the importance, and different influences of three distinct types of non-profit agency in the development of homeless services in countries that are in transition from former communist regimes. Extra-national agencies are identified as having been important in the developing capacity of service provision and as having had both positive and negative effects. Church-based (confessional) agencies have had effects both at national and at regional level and have tended to operate in a very specific domain of provision. Finally, there is the influence of the emergence of new civil society agencies, which have had to compete for funding and public support against extra-national agencies and in the context of a limited history of philanthropy. In an article which complements this Czech analysis, Wagnanska examines the importance of EU structural funds (in particular the EQUAL programme) in shaping the landscape of service provision in Poland. She argues that the priorities and the manner of

implementation of this particular funding stream, in conjunction with its popularity among homeless service providers, has had a direct impact on the homelessness service provision system in Poland. Although it has created previously unavailable service options for people who happen to be within the reach of organisations engaged in the programme, the sustainability and dissemination of these options is questionable, due primarily to funding gaps and a misunderstanding of the principle of mainstreaming.

The use of 'enforcement' measures to remove homeless people from public spaces while deterring them from engaging in activities such as begging and street drinking, which create 'public nuisance', has become a high profile and controversial issue in many countries. Johnsen and Fitzpatrick use empirical evidence to evaluate the impact of enforcement interventions on the welfare of people engaged in street activities in England. They argue that the situation is rather more complex and less punitive than it may at first appear and suggest that the use of enforcement measures, when accompanied by appropriate support, can lead to beneficial outcomes for some individuals. The outcomes for other members of the street population can, however, be very negative and are highly unpredictable even when accompanied by intensive support.

Drug use, homelessness and nuisance are often intertwined. The 2006 Rotterdam Homeless Housing Programme aims at having an individual care plan before 2010, which would take on 2,900 homeless people, the majority of whom should be housed and receiving the necessary care and treatment. Van der Poel, Baren-Dregt and van de Mheen use empirical analysis to compare the living conditions of drug users in Rotterdam in 2003 and 2007. This evidence shows that homelessness has decreased: users spent less time in public space; income is gathered by more legal methods; more users have health insurance (and also more use mental health medication); heroin and crack use has decreased; methadone use has increased; fewer users buy drugs on the street. On the basis of this analysis they suggest that the ambitious goal of the Rotterdam programme can be reached.

Think Pieces

The *Think Piece* section of the Journal includes three articles, two of which are focussed on the cost effectiveness and economic evaluation of homeless policies and the third on the effectiveness and applicability to Europe of the Housing First policies, as developed in the USA. An economic evaluation of a homeless programme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the programme in improving the outcomes for homeless people over and above what would otherwise have

prevalled, estimate the differential cost of the homelessness programme and draw together the analysis of programme effectiveness and costs in order to evaluate the overall cost-effectiveness of the programme.

Flatau and Zaretsky ask what constitutes a robust economic evaluation of a homelessness programme. In so doing they consider the efficacy of both experimental and non-experimental research designs. Most studies have been generated in the North American context and we have yet to see the emergence of cost-effectiveness studies outside the US. Perhaps this reflects the fact that in the US relevant data is readily available for such research, as Culhane's article demonstrates. The authors opine that while in most other areas of economic research relevant data is available for the economist to exploit through desktop research at very low access costs, this is not the case in the homelessness field. The coverage of client outcome issues in homelessness administrative sources is limited; rich data linkage options are often not available or under-developed. The significant cost of homelessness both to the individual and the community, means that homelessness programmes may not only be cost-effective but cost saving if they can generate positive outcomes for homeless people. The authors suggest that existing studies point to positive client outcomes from homelessness programme participation and, generally, to their cost-effectiveness. While Culhane, Flatau and Zaretsky identify a range of issues in measuring costs and effectiveness in homelessness services, Aldridge addresses the shortcomings of existing approaches to the measurement of costs and the risks involved in focussing too strongly on costs. He argues that the increasing focus on cost comparisons between services can lead to misleading conclusions about their effectiveness. Whilst cost comparisons can be a useful tool both for benchmarking services and as a means of advocating for services for specific groups, data can be difficult to collect and to interpret in a meaningful way. Data may focus on hard outcomes rather than soft outcomes and may potentially distort decisions about which services offer the best value. There is a need to find a better means of describing the 'softer' benefits of services both to the user of the service and to society as whole. Cost analysis, he argues, should be only one of a broad range of measures of the effectiveness of services.

Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls consider the effectiveness of the *Housing First* model and its applicability to the European context. Housing First approaches explicitly incorporate secure tenures as an intrinsic part of support packages for homeless people who have mental health and substance misuse problems. The authors contend that the evidence from the growing body of research in North America makes a compelling argument for the explicit incorporation of housing at an early stage, as an effective means of addressing homelessness, and that this approach has relevance in Europe. They argue that the North American studies suggest that even those who might be considered most difficult to house can, with

help, successfully maintain their own tenancies. A key argument in favour of the Housing First approach is that it is cost effective and this appears to be supported by empirical analysis. However, the authors argue for the need for research to highlight obstacles to implementation and the means by which these can be overcome. Security of tenure, they argue, has to be seen as a part of an integrated support package but this is one aspect which may provide an obstacle to the implementation of Housing First policies in some European countries. This is perhaps one area for further research. Nevertheless, the authors argue strongly that an explicit Housing First approach in Europe deserves serious consideration.

Conclusions

Our thanks go to all the contributors for making this a rich and stimulating volume of papers. Across the volume, the papers provide a broad geographic coverage of Europe and, in combination, provide important comparative analysis of the issues concerned with the homelessness policy area, at national as well as at European level.

The evidence from Portugal and Ireland identifies the changing role of the state in this policy arena in the last two decades and highlights the necessity of understanding homeless strategies as one of a number of competing state projects in order to assess its effectiveness. The papers on the Scandinavian countries provide detailed evidence of the diversity as well as the commonality that exists within the Nordic welfare regime (as well as within countries) and, in particular, provide detail of the division of labour between local public social services and non-governmental organisations which distinguishes the Nordic situation from many other European countries. In very different ways the articles from France and Slovenia demonstrate the importance of the media in the perception of homelessness and in disseminating the understanding of the issues involved. The French experiment with a consensus conference is unique in this policy arena and may provide lessons for other countries which struggle to engage all stakeholders in the development of policy initiatives. In particular, in the face of the current global economic crisis the evidence from Germany and England provides an important demonstration that targeted preventative intervention can have a substantial beneficial effect even in the face of unhelpful structural trends.

The policy evaluation papers in the volume provide a basis for the comparison of differences in policy approaches. Thus, while the legalistic or rights-based approaches have been adopted in Scotland and France, evidence from Ireland suggests that approaches which are more partnership-based provide an alternative low-key solution. The examples of Poland and the Czech Republic provide different

stories of the relative impact (both positive and negative) of European and non-national funding and agencies in the developing capacity of the homeless sector in the new member states. Different policy approaches, including the use of enforcement measures, in dealing with the nuisance associated with drug use and homelessness in the Netherlands and in England demonstrate that beneficial outcomes for many individuals can be achieved.

The evidence from non-European contexts demonstrates the positive impact of housing programmes, although caution is needed in the evaluation of cost effectiveness studies; further research is required in the European context, on the obstacles to implementation of housing-first approaches.

We encourage feedback from all our readers, and we would especially welcome comment on the purpose, structure and content of the Journal. Please write to us or leave your feedback on the comments page on our website (www.feantsa.org/research.ejh/comments). We will continue to invite commissioned papers and, in particular, introduce comparisons from beyond Europe.