

---

## Editorial

---

On 26-27 February 1995, FEANTSA organized a seminar in Brussels to explore aspects of homelessness in Central and Eastern Europe (Avramov, 1997). Covering a number of countries and exploring homelessness from a number of different perspectives, the papers at the conference had nonetheless a common theme of how marginal households were faring in countries which were in the process of dismantling one system of social protection without establishing new social safety nets.

Fifteen years later FEANTSA, together with the European Observatory on Homelessness, the European Network on Housing Research Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion and the Metropolitan Research Institute Budapest, organised the 5th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe on the theme of “*Understanding Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in the New European Context*”. The conference took place in Budapest on 17 September 2010 and was prompted by the fact that research into dimensions of homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe has been geographically uneven, despite the impetus of the aforementioned seminar in Brussels in 1995, with the bulk of published research emanating from Western and Northern Europe. While this gap is gradually being addressed, the aim of this conference was both to stimulate and consolidate research exploring homelessness and housing exclusion in Central and Eastern Europe. The papers published in this special edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* are a selection of the papers presented at the conference in Budapest, and they reflect the diversity of perspectives on homelessness that was evident at the conference.

Of course, between the holding of the seminar on homelessness in Central and Eastern Europe in 1995 and the research conference in Budapest in 2010, the political and institutional landscape had shifted dramatically. At the time of the initial seminar, the European Union was comprised of 15 member states (EU15). On 1 May 2004, eight countries (A8) of Central and Eastern Europe — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia — joined the European Union and on 1 January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania (A2) joined the European Union. However, understanding the social protection systems of these countries has remained a constant topic of debate and discussion.

Early attempts to classify the welfare systems of these countries suggested that a variety of welfare systems or regimes (that is, the particular institutional mix of family, the state, the market and civil society in the provision of welfare services)

would emerge, rather than a unitary one with, for example, Hungary emerging as a liberal welfare regime, the Czech republic developing social democratic tendencies, and Bulgaria and Romania exhibiting 'post communist conservative corporatist' tendencies (Deacon, 1993). As the terms imply, the general sense at the time was that the welfare systems of central and Eastern Europe would gradually approximate the models already in place in Western Europe (Esping-Andersen, 1996), but within an overarching neo-liberal agenda that predominated in countries that had recently returned to the free market.

What has transpired is somewhat more complex than initially envisaged, and considerable diversity in the organisation, financing and delivery of welfare is evident (Schubert *et al.*, 2009). In respect of the imposition of a neo-liberal model of welfare, Fuchs and Offe (2009) argue that, at least in respect of the A8 member states, no country actually implemented a fully fledged marketisation of welfare, but nor did they maintain the universality and comprehensive decommodification of welfare that was evident prior to 1989 (Aidukaite, 2009). What the CEE member states have in common are lower rates of social expenditure as a percentage of GDP than the EU15 member states and the fact that they have, in the main, adopted social insurance schemes along Bismarkian lines (Careja and Emmenegger, 2009; Draxler and Van Vliet, 2010). Recent research has suggested that two primary welfare regimes are now evident in the CEE member states: a *conservative post-socialist regime* in the central European countries, with mostly transfer-oriented labour market measures and a moderate degree of employment protection, and a *liberal post-socialist* cluster in the Baltic countries, which are characterised by a more flexible labour market (Whelan and Maître, 2010).

Substantial difficulties already exist in delineating the relationship and outcomes between welfare regimes and homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2010), but this is particularly challenging when welfare regimes are evolving and in flux. The dimensions of homelessness and housing exclusion debated in this special edition of the Journal – namely housing poverty, migration and homelessness, barriers to exiting homelessness, homeless youth, and data collection issues – all interact with the general welfare settlement in each member state. However, in the first paper of this special edition, József Hegedüs argues that there are too many inconsistencies in the different policy areas that make up welfare regimes across CEE member states to allow the identification of a single welfare regime category; rather, specific policy arenas have different characteristics. In this paper, housing policy in CEE countries is explored, in particular the nature and scale of emerging housing poverty. The paper is based on the analysis of changes in the Hungarian housing system, but examples from other regions are also used to support the arguments.

One consequence of the enlargement of the European Union was an increase in migration from CEE member states to Western member states, with Ireland, Sweden and the UK allowing unrestricted labour migration, and other members opting for a transitional period (Black *et al.*, 2010). While fears of welfare tourism and other scare-mongering have proven to be largely unfounded, some member states have restricted access to services for non-nationals facing homelessness (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010). This has resulted in a need to understand homelessness both in CEE member states and amongst A8 and A2 migrants in the EU15 member states, and highlights that establishing links between migration and homelessness needs a stronger evidence base.

In her paper, Magdalena Mostowska outlines how the dynamics of migration indicate that the concept of citizenship and eligibility for particular benefits are in the process of redefinition in Europe. Migrants, she argues, may be among the most vulnerable actors on the housing market, and due to their economic position, and their social and language skills, they may be at greater risk of homelessness. In the case of migrants facing rooflessness, there may be problems accessing even basic help. This paper explores access to service providers for homeless Polish migrants sleeping rough in Brussels and Oslo (although Norway is not a member state of the EU, it is closely associated with the Union through its membership in the Schengen Area and the European Economic Area (EEA), and has been granted participation rights – save voting rights – in several of the Union’s programmes, bodies and initiatives). In particular, the paper addresses the use of low-threshold services like soup runs, day centres, showers, medical help and emergency shelters. Brussels and Oslo are compared in terms of general patterns of Polish migration to those cities, survival strategies of homeless migrants, and practices of inclusion and exclusion by service providers. Individual resources, especially communication skills, interplay with legal eligibility and may lead to the exclusion of migrants from services on a number of levels.

In the third paper from the conference, Boróka Fehér provides a detailed qualitative analysis of why some people remain homeless for a long period of time while others manage to exit homelessness, using Hungary as a case study. The paper attempts to investigate whether chronic homelessness can be viewed as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder and what policy implications stem from such a conceptualisation of chronic homelessness. Selma Muhič Dizdarevič and Joan Smith then provide a comparative overview of youth homelessness in four countries: the Czech Republic (CZ), the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. In particular they report on responses from non-governmental organization workers with regard to the risk of homelessness for young populations in the four countries, comparing samples drawn in CZ with those of the three other countries. The paper also provides evidence on visible and invisible homelessness in the Czech

Republic, the risk factors associated with youth homelessness and the need for housing, supported accommodation services, and health services, including social services and link workers.

The final paper, by Maciej Dębski, reviews some of the most important aspects of homelessness in Poland based on the results of long-term research on homeless people in the Pomeranian Province carried out by the Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Getting Out of Homelessness. Dębski uses the results of quantitative surveys carried out in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009 to present an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the homeless population, and to indicate crucial problems connected with social and vocational reintegration. Such aspects as health conditions, professional activity, causes of homelessness and the Polish system of assistance used by homeless people are significant in the description of Polish homelessness. The paper also contains a critical analysis of the social assistance system for homeless people in Poland.

The papers presented in this special edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* contribute to the ongoing development of a robust evidence base for understanding homelessness and housing exclusion in CEE member states. Analysis of homelessness and housing exclusion remains largely at a descriptive level, but both the conference in Budapest and the papers presented here suggest that we can be confident that the foundations have been established to ensure that rigorous, methodologically sophisticated and policy relevant research will contribute to intelligent solutions to ending homelessness and housing exclusion in Central and Eastern Europe.

## › References

- Aidukaite, J. (2009) Old Welfare State Theories and New Welfare Regimes in Eastern Europe: Challenges and Implications, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (1), pp.23-29.
- Avramov, D. (Ed.) (1997) *Housing Exclusion in Central and Eastern Europe* (Brussels: FEANTSA).
- Black, R., Engbersen, G., Okolski, M. and Pantiru, C. (Eds.) (2010) *A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press).
- Careja, R. and Emenegger, P. (2009) The Politics of Public Spending in Post-Communist Countries, *East European Politics and Societies* 23 (2), pp. 165-184.
- Deacon, B. (1993) Developments in East European Social Policy, in: C. Jones (Ed.) *New Perspectives on the Welfare State in Europe* (London: Routledge).
- Draxler, J. and Van Vliet, O. (2010) European Social Model: No Convergence from the East, *Journal of European Integration* 32(1), pp.115-135.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1996) After the Golden Age? Welfare State Dilemmas in a Global Economy, in: G. Esping-Andersen (Ed.) *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies* (London: Sage).
- European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (2010) *Policy Recommendations of the Jury* (Brussels: European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity).
- Fuchs, S. and Offe, C. (2009) Welfare State Formation in the Enlarged European Union: Patterns of Reform in the Post-Communist New Member States, in: C. Rumford (Ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies* (London: Sage).
- O'Sullivan, E. (2010) Welfare States and Homelessness, in: E. O'Sullivan, V. Busch-Geertsema, D. Quilgars and N. Pleace (Eds.) *Homelessness Research in Europe: Festschrift for Joe Doherty and Bill Edgar*, pp. 65-83. (Brussels: FEANTSA).
- Schubert, K., Hegelich, S. and Bazant, U. (2009) European Welfare Systems: Current State of Research and some Theoretical Considerations, in: K. Schubert, S. Hegelich and U. Bazant (Eds.) *The Handbook of European Welfare Systems* (London: Routledge).
- Whelan, C. T. and Maître, B. (2010) Poverty in Ireland in Comparative European Perspective, *Social Indicators Research* 95(1), pp.91-110.