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HOMELESS *in Europe*



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This edition of the **FEANTSA** magazine focuses on the impact of social and demographic change. The evolution of the composition of the European population and the changing social fabric across the EU are having a major impact on the phenomenon of homelessness. The present edition brings together the experience of service providers and public authorities on the ground, and the changes documented by researchers, in order to offer a picture of how the social and demographic context has evolved across the EU and how these changes have become visible in the experience of homelessness and the profiles of people experiencing homelessness in Europe. This is clearly a very complex subject, encompassing, as it does, a broad range of micro and macro economic, social and political factors. While it is beyond the scope of this magazine to offer an exhaustive analysis, an interesting overview of some of the principal social and demographic trends impacting on homelessness across Europe does emerge.

It is clear that these trends need to be at the heart of the reflection for forward-looking policy-making on homelessness in Europe. The work that is currently taking place to develop policies to prevent and reduce homelessness and meet the needs of people suffering homelessness and housing exclusion, needs to take account of the social and demographic landscape in the EU in order to be effective. Conversely, policy-makers working across the spectrum of policies in areas such as health, long-term care, immigration, housing and social protection, need to be aware of how policy developments may impact on homelessness. It is clear that the changes in these areas are impacting negatively on the enjoyment of fundamental rights by people living in Europe and that targeted actions are needed to counter this.

The article from our contributors in the National Board of Health and Welfare in Sweden offers a comprehensive introduction to the theme of social and demographic change. It brings together the results of a recent mapping of homelessness in Sweden and highlights the main problematic trends and the approaches adopted: how the health system fails to meet the needs of people who are homeless; the growing numbers of homeless women and migrants; aging of the homeless population and decline in affordable and accessible housing. These are themes which reoccur throughout the different

articles of this edition of the **FEANTSA** magazine. Immigration flows and homelessness are the focus of the articles contributed by Paul Sheehan from the organisation Cork Simon in Ireland and by Jean-Philippe Horr ard, head of social crisis and integration unit in the Paris City Council Department of health and social affairs. In Ireland there is a growing trend of homelessness among Eastern European migrant workers, whose situation is complicated by a legal provision making it difficult for them to access social welfare. In Paris, there are substantial migration inflows from all over the world which have also significantly contributed to the scale and complexity of the homelessness and housing exclusion in the city. The efforts to understand and approach this problem are the focus of the article.

Researcher Dragana Avramov highlights the "early warning system" that demography can offer. Her article highlights the complex interplay between demographic and social factors and how demography can serve to capture a range of predictive factors that need to be taken into account in policy planning. Researcher Maureen Crane and **FEANTSA** policy officer Liz Gosme focus on different demographic trends and how they have become visible in the profiles of the homeless population. Maureen Crane focuses on older homeless people in the UK and the challenges of meeting the needs of an aging homeless population. Liz Gosme highlights the problematic European trend towards child homelessness and the particular policy responses that it calls for. Finally, researcher Svetlana Stephenson offers a complex overview of how social change impacts on homelessness through her examination of how the social and economic transition from the Soviet Union to post Soviet Russia has created a problematic growth in homelessness and housing exclusion. This snapshot offers a nuanced understanding of how the macro economic and political factors that are at play in the social transformation of Russia, and indeed other societies with a Soviet background, impact on homelessness and the profiles of homeless people.

As always, **FEANTSA** would like to extend its grateful thanks to all of the contributors to this edition of Homeless in Europe. Your comments and questions on this edition of the **FEANTSA** magazine are welcome: you can send them to dearbhal.murphy@feantsa.org.



Homelessness in Sweden – multiple faces, multiple responsibilities

By Ann Jönsson, Annika Remaeus, Maria Boustedt Hedvall & Christina Bohman,
National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden

In June, the National Board of Health and Welfare presented a plan on behalf of the government for how the work to combat homelessness is to be conducted in the next three years. Collaboration between different stakeholders and viewing homelessness in a broader perspective are essential components of this plan.

Homelessness takes many forms and it is therefore the responsibility of many. There is not a "typical homeless person"; each individual has his/her own story of why he/she has ended up homeless. However, homelessness is strongly associated with social exclusion – poverty, unemployment, low education, poor health. But it is also important to note that there are people among the homeless who do not have any other problems apart from the lack of a home.

Homelessness is a problem in itself, regardless of the other difficulties and problems a person may have. Many different measures are needed, and many stakeholders have a responsibility and a role to play in combating homelessness.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has carried out development work to combat homelessness since 2002. This has involved providing support for local activities and development of methods for local and national measurement. The work of method development and mapping has provided valuable knowledge for further work.

In 2005 The National Board of Health and Welfare carried out the most recent measurement of homelessness in Sweden. Approximately 17,800 people were homeless during the measurement period. It was 2,000-3,000 more than in 1999, when the last mapping took place. Three-quarters were men. The average age of the whole group of homeless people was 41.

The National Board of Health and Welfare defines homelessness as seen through four different situations:

* **SITUATION 1.** About 3,600 people were included in this group of the most vulnerable homeless people. Approximately 900 of them were sleeping rough. 2,700 people lived in hostels, women's refuges, emergency accommodation, hotels, campsites or youth hostels. A comparison between 1999 and 2005 shows a large increase in the latter group.

Two-thirds of the people in Situation 1 had addiction problems, one third had mental problems. In many cases, these were the same people. More than half had been homeless for longer period than a year. Most of them were wholly unemployed and were dependent on financial support from the social services, unemployment benefit fund, sickness benefit or disability benefit.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has drawn attention to the deficiencies in health care and social services for people with addiction and mental problems as a possible explanation for the increase that has taken place in this group.

* **SITUATION 2.** Nearly 2,000 people found themselves in situation 2. This group consists of people who were intended to be released from prison within three months or discharged from some kind of institution or supported accommodation without having any housing arranged for their release, discharge or move.

* **SITUATION 3.** About 6,400 people found themselves in situation 3. This group included people with insecure housing solutions, with a risk for future homelessness. They were staying in treatment homes or in some form of supported accommodation. Discharge was not planned in the next three months, but housing had not been arranged for any future discharge or move.

* **SITUATION 4.** Approximately 4,700 people were in this situation. They lived temporarily without contracts with relatives or friends, or had subletting contracts shorter than three months. They had applied to the social services or another organisation for assistance in solving their housing situation.

The homelessness situation during the measurement period was unknown for about 1,100 people.

Big differences can be seen *within* the group of people listed as homeless.

It is still more common for men to be homeless than women. Previous mappings also record that men are more likely to be sleeping rough or live in hostels. The women on average are younger and have been homeless for shorter periods than the men. They are more often listed as parents of children younger than 18 years of age. It is also more common that the women live with their children. The women's problem picture is more often characterised by family problems, for example divorce or violence in the family. The women are more often listed as having mental problems while the men more often have addiction problems.

Since 1999, the proportion of women and persons born outside the Nordic countries among the homeless has increased.

In the 2005 survey people born outside Sweden were over-represented, accounting for 26 per cent of all homeless persons listed compared with 12 per cent of the whole population.

Persons born outside the Nordic countries show a slightly different problem picture compared with persons born in Sweden and the Nordic countries. It is twice as common to find addiction problems with people born in the Nordic countries, whereas it is more common to find mental problems, unemployment, financial problems and family problems with people born outside the Nordic countries.

Homelessness in Sweden has increased since the 1999 mapping. In recent decades, a number of changes in society can be assumed to lie behind this increase. De-institutionalisation in psychiatry, restructuring of care of addicts, unemployment, increased mental illness and the development of the housing market are important aspects.

In recent years, new needs have been noticed among the "classical homeless", i.e. single men with addiction problems who are perhaps also mentally ill. As before, attention has been drawn to the lack of access to care of addicts and care and support for persons with mental disabilities. Recently, the need for health care, dental care and care of the elderly has been emphasised.

The focus has also been directed to new groups in risk of becoming homeless. This applies particularly to families with children with a weak financial situation and an insecure housing situation, but also to elderly persons with dementia or mental problems. Young men have been identified as a new risk group. The opportunities for obtaining fast loans without credit assessment have led to risks for young people getting into debt and thus having problems in obtaining a tenancy agreement.

Housing policy is continuously changing and this also affects homelessness. This applies both to access to housing and to the demands that landlords make for entering into a tenancy agreement. An increasing hard climate can be noted in the housing market in Sweden. This is not only a matter of a lack of rented apartments. The evaluations made by the National Board of Health and Welfare indicate a trend towards landlords not accepting financial assistance from the social services as a source of income to obtain a first-hand tenancy agreement.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to qualify for the housing market. At the same time, a number of special solutions have been arranged in municipalities for people who have not succeeded in becoming established as tenants in the regular housing market. Temporary and transitional, supported accommodation have been created. This housing is provided alongside of the regular housing market and is therefore often referred to as "the secondary housing market".

In the past decade, lack of housing has to an increasing extent been treated as an issue of social policy rather than of housing policy. The possible needs of homeless people for health care and treatment have been highlighted while the lack of a home has been less in focus. On many occasions, various forms of social support may be necessary to assist persons to cope with their housing, and it then becomes the responsibility of the social services. However, homelessness is very much a housing policy issue. It is about building homes and about the way that the housing market works. When increasingly high demands are made for obtaining a first-hand tenancy agreement, the groups of people who do not fit into the "regular" housing market become larger. They become clients of the social services, despite their not having any other problems apart from homelessness.

There are many reasons for homelessness and different solutions are therefore required. Unemployment, low education, segregation and poverty are factors that are very important. Homelessness thus affects a number of policy areas such as health and medical policy, labour market policy and integration policy. Collaboration between different stakeholders is therefore necessary.

In February 2007, the government adopted a strategy to combat homelessness and exclusion from the housing market. This strategy covers the period 2007-2009.

Four objectives have been specified:

1. Everyone will be guaranteed a roof over his/her head and be offered further co-ordinated measures based on individual needs.
2. There will be a reduction in the number of people in the criminal justice system, and those in other institutions, who are homeless upon discharge.
3. Entry into the regular housing market shall be made easier for women and men in temporary, transitional and supported accommodation.
4. The number of evictions will be reduced and no children will be evicted.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been given the commission of leading the work at the national level. The work of implementing the strategy will take place on a broad basis – with several ministries, authorities, municipalities, county councils, housing companies and non-governmental organisations.

Compiling and spreading knowledge is an important part of this strategy, as well as supporting the development of successful working methods. A government grant is to be used to develop working methods locally that are linked to the four objectives. Guidelines are to be produced to assist municipalities in preventing evictions. Methods are to be produced to be able to monitor the development of homelessness. The results and findings will be presented in a report to the government in 2010.

A new national mapping, which is organised approximately in the same way as the 2005 survey, is to be carried out in 2010.

A starting point for measures to combat homelessness and exclusion from the housing market is to view the issue in a broad light, to find and take measures to rectify systemic faults that lead to large groups not being admitted to the regular housing market. Discrimination is an important issue to shed light on in this context.

The issue of homelessness has a clear ethical dimension, which, among other things, is about how meetings take place between representatives of the community and people who live in vulnerable social conditions. Every homeless person has his or her own history to tell – and their own thoughts about their future. In the work of combating homelessness, it is necessary to meet the individual person where he or she is and respond to his or her specific needs. This method of work shall aim at making use of and strengthening the individual's own resources.

The work of carrying out this strategy requires the active participation of people who are or have been homeless. Collaboration and a clear user perspective should permeate all the measures taken. •



Migration and Homelessness in Cork, Ireland: The impact of European Union labour Mobility

By Paul Sheehan, *Cork Simon*



A new landmark building in Cork opened its doors for the first time in early September 2007. The Cork Institute of Technology School of Music, a €60 million development, reflects a city that continues to grow in confidence and stature. In their winning submission in 2001 to build the project, architects Murray O'Laoire described Cork as "a city of light, water and landform, fusing with mellifluous cadences of language and musical accent." While at the time that description of the city might have seemed somewhat grandiose, in the intervening years, life may just have imitated art. Light and landform have been combined to great effect, to the extent that the city now boasts impressive new streetscapes that have a continental feel; old dockland and warehousing districts have been transformed into modern high-rise hotel and office blocks; new apartment blocks have sprung up across the city. A stroll through Cork's main thoroughfare serves up a multicultural feast for the ears: scores of accents and languages blend naturally with the rhythms of a diverse mix of street entertainers and musicians, a by-product perhaps of the city's status as European Capital of Culture in 2005.

Cork has arrived, the expanding borders of the European Union reflected in the city's landscape, people and lifestyle. The arrival of thousands of the European Union's new citizens has given Cork a new vibrancy. They have helped satisfy the construction industry's almost insatiable appetite for labourers and craftsmen. They have filled vacancies in the hospitality and retail sectors, jobs that employers would otherwise find difficult to fill. The benefits of a growing European Union can be seen in virtually every industry sector in Cork. For many of the city's new arrivals, life is good.

But the bright lights, the shiny new facades and the confident outlook belie an uneasiness that is barely acknowledged. As the local population struggles to understand and adapt to this rapid transformation, the city itself struggles to respond to a small but growing number of new arrivals for whom life is not so good. Circumstances conspire to frustrate the plans and hopes of some immigrants of securing a place to live, a job, a better life. Some arrive ill-prepared, not appreciating the high cost of living, the importance of a reasonable grasp of the English language, nor aware of the legal requirements to work on a construction site. Some arrive on the promise of a job, only to find it has been given to someone else. Others end up working in the black economy in jobs that are generally short-lived, underpaid, or in some instances, not paid at all. Ongoing increases in the cost of renting a place to live can be a burden for others. For a whole variety of reasons some new arrivals to Cork find themselves without a source of income, without a place to live, without a means of making contact with family or friends for support. They can very quickly find themselves alone, penniless and on the streets. The sense of isolation and loneliness in unfamiliar surroundings can be overwhelming, aggravated further by language barriers. The effects on personal health and well-being can be quick and devastating. But the city looks the other way, unable to offer any help or assistance.

It's not as if Cork's response to issues around homelessness is wanting. Since 2000 the city has taken a pro-active approach to responding to the needs of people who are homeless. In the wake of a National Government Strategy on Homelessness, Cork City Council established the Cork Homeless Forum. It brought together the relevant local statutory, health and non-

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governmental organisations to share resources, expertise and ideas to make sure the most appropriate services were available to people who were homeless. An Action Plan was drawn up, agreed and implemented, with many positive effects. The Action Plan was revised in 2005 to take account of gaps in service-provision and emerging trends. A Government commissioned review of its Strategy on Homelessness, conducted in 2006 by Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants, described the approach to Homeless Action Planning in Cork as "...an example of good practice that all local homeless fora could follow, regardless of the specific problems within their areas". But no one could have predicted the level of immigration to Ireland, or the level of needs of some of those immigrants who would have a difficult time adjusting to the stresses of settling in a new country. But even if those predictions were made, the city would still have struggled to provide an adequate response – not because it lacked the will to do so, but because its hands were tied by national Government policy.

When the European Union expanded its borders in 2004, Ireland was one of only three countries to allow nationals of the accession states general access to its labour market. Ireland however imposed restrictions on access to welfare and social insurance assistance, which became known as the Habitual Residency Condition. It dictates that applicants for specific social welfare payments must have lived in the state for a period of two years in order to be deemed habitually resident. Applicants who do not meet this condition are not entitled to social welfare assistance¹. Furthermore, during the course of research on homelessness among new arrivals in Dublin, the Homeless Agency discovered that two Government departments – Environment, Heritage & Local Government and Social & Family Affairs, interpreted the Habitual Residency Condition to include access to publicly funded services, including homeless servic-

es. It is this interpretation that binds the hands of the Cork Homeless Forum, creating an environment in which it is very difficult for the Forum to provide any meaningful response to the needs of new arrivals in Cork who find themselves homeless.

Service providers, many of which are at least part-funded by the state, have struggled within this environment too. Cork Simon Community has been supporting people who are homeless since 1971. The Community is an active member of the Homeless Forum. As a values-driven organisation, embracing commitment to care, community, diversity, social justice & equality and voluntarism as its core principles, Cork Simon instinctively offered whatever support it could to those new arrivals that found themselves homeless. During the first six months of 2005, the first signs of this new trend emerging became evident as Cork Simon's Day Centre began to encounter a handful of immigrants that were in difficulty. As the year progressed, the number of new arrivals increased steadily, a trend that continued throughout 2006 and during the first six months of 2007.

The Day Centre is a project catering specifically for people sleeping rough, living in squats, derelict buildings or other unsuitable accommodation. It provides some basic needs – food, a hot shower, laundry facilities, but also offers advice and support, directing people to the most appropriate homeless service, advocating on their behalf where necessary. It offers access to doctors, nurses and counsellors that deal specifically with issues related to homelessness. The Day Centre is a place where people can get some respite from the streets in a warm, welcoming, supportive environment.

As the number of immigrants in need of support began to increase, care staff at the Day Centre began to notice a distinct trend. Their needs were very different to the needs normally encountered among service users. Cork

¹ A number of factors are taken into account when establishing if a person is habitually resident, including length and continuity of residency in Ireland; length and purpose of absence from Ireland; nature and pattern of employment; applicants main centre of interest.



Simon's projects and services are set-up to cater for a complex range of needs associated with homelessness: mental health issues, addiction issues, poor physical health and challenging behaviour. The needs of most new arrivals were generally related to income and accommodation. Also noticeable was the short-term nature of support among immigrants. Most would present for two to three days, enough support to help people become established and settled. A big challenge for care staff was the language. Many immigrants had poor English language skills making communication difficult. A small number of immigrants presenting at the Day Centre had more complex needs, usually as a result of sleeping rough for relatively longer periods of time. Whenever possible the Day Centre secured a bed for them for a few nights at the Emergency Shelter. This proved difficult as the Shelter had to regularly turn people away because it was fully occupied every night.

Notwithstanding the low level of support needed by most new arrivals using the Day Centre, the added numbers have put pressure on already over-stretched resources. The numbers speak for themselves. In 2004 over 200 people used the Day Centre; this doubled to almost 450 people in 2005, and more than doubled again to over 1,000 people in 2006. Already this year (January to June 2007) the Day Centre has supported over 700 people. While Cork Simon has allocated extra resources to the Day Centre, the Community cannot sustain the extra costs on its own in the longer term. There is no sign of the trend abating. Recent figures published by Ireland's Central Statistics Office suggest that immigrants held almost 80% of 1,800 construction jobs lost during the second quarter of 2007. There is disagreement as to whether this trend will continue during the third and fourth quarters. If it does, it will undoubtedly aggravate an already difficult situation for Cork Simon services.

National Government continues to turn a blind eye to these developments. There is no sign of the Habitual Residency Condition being repealed, or the interpretation of it widened, despite several requests to do so. It's unlikely that the Condition will be repealed or revised, but doing so would go a long way to alleviating pressure on homeless services and relieving unnecessary suffering among some new arrivals. In any case there is an argument to be made that existing homeless services are not appropriate in responding to the low-support needs of some immigrants. A low-cost option would be a more targeted approach incorporating temporary accommodation; help with language, with securing a job and securing long-term accommodation, making sure people get back on their feet quickly. Immigrants now account for 11% of the Irish workforce. A recent study conducted by Ireland's Economic and Social Research Institute indicates that migrant workers have added between 2.5% and 3% to Ireland's GNP. Those new arrivals that find themselves homeless in a country that benefits so much from their presence here deserve better.

There is some hope. The Cork Homeless Forum has decided it cannot remain passive on the issue any longer. It has established a group to consider the needs of new arrivals for homeless services. That group will shortly commission independent research that will assess the current needs of new arrivals and estimate the level of need over the next two to three years. The challenge for national Government will be to acknowledge the issue exists and commit to an appropriate response. With its Homeless Strategy currently under review, the timing for the Government is perfect. In a changing Europe with an increasingly mobile population, Ireland can prove to be a leading light in demonstrating its confidence and innovation in managing new social trends in a responsible and caring fashion. ●

Migration and homelessness in Paris

By **Jean-Philippe Horr ard**, *Head of social crisis and integration unit.*
Paris City Council Department of health and social affairs



Since last winter's Saint Martin Canal crisis which saw a near-300 tent city set up in Paris to give shelter to homeless and under-housed groups, France has brought in a line-up of legal instruments establishing a right to housing or temporary accommodation enforceable against the State¹. Of the 300 people identified as being in crisis, however, more than 50 were undocumented immigrants and therefore had neither any claim to the new scheme nor any prospects of integration in France.

Paris has a long-standing problem taking in and housing large numbers of homeless immigrants. Some are passing through, heading for other European capitals; others are looking for off-the-books work because they are not lawfully resident in France. Still others have ended up on the capital's streets because their plans have not worked out or they are seen as not "fit" for legitimate work, although they have often been exploited in undeclared work.

There are therefore clear links between persistent "homelessness" and the economic or political migration of a particular foreign community towards the French capital. Some individuals who find no established ethnic community network and have chosen not to seek official asylum or have had their request rejected, are to some extent "condemned" to insecurity and exclusion.

Is homelessness in Paris from different migration flows fated to get worse, and why do men and women - whole families even - flock to the capital to live a hard life notwithstanding humanitarian relief in the hope and belief of escaping poverty?

Paris has an extensive network of voluntary agencies that can deliver basic levels of humanitarian relief in food and accommodation to anyone in need - including those not lawfully resident.

Even so, the scale of some migration streams, played into by many people-smuggling networks relying on the existence of a mainly free supply of temporary accommodation, inevitably makes it hard to meet a steadily growing demand, and is creating an intractable homelessness problem.

The official responses to homelessness cannot easily address the very wide diversity of demands, especially where the procedures for a basic entitlement to temporary accommodation and eventual housing are largely dictated by the intention to settle permanently or otherwise in France.

As in most European Union countries, the process of resource allocation and access to temporary accommodation provision specifically for this group of migrants in France (asylum-seeker reception centres) is only triggered by an application for asylum.

The limits of solutions like expanding temporary accommodation provision and regularizing the situation of undocumented migrants are well-established. Personal support for individuals including through appealing incentives to voluntary repatriation is arguably the way to address homelessness among these migrant communities.

POORLY-COUNTED MIGRATION INFLOWS CREATING PERSISTENT HOMELESSNESS IN THE FRENCH CAPITAL

Government agencies are currently spending the best part of Paris' 100 million-plus euro budget each year on providing emergency accommodation for communities resulting from different migration inflows seeking shelter either as humanitarian relief or on a longer-term basis pending a hoped-for regularisation of their presence in France.

At present, there are nigh-on 6000 people in families who are undocumented migrants or rejected asylum claimants being housed in bed-and-breakfast hotels in Paris, plus another 2000 awaiting asylum status determination and applying for temporary accommodation.

Paris has approximately 5000 emergency accommodation places for unmarried individuals, at least 30% of which are currently estimated to be taken up by undocumented migrants.

¹ Enforceable Right to Housing (Establishment) Act No. 2007-290 of 5 March 2007.



Outside of these places, it is particularly difficult to count the number of people resulting from migration inflows living on the street or in different kinds of makeshift shelter. However, spot counts were done in 2006 and 2007 by various street worker outreach patrols and police teams:

- Over half of the 2000 single people counted in 2006 in the city's parks, gardens and on ring road embankments originated from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine, Romania).
- A survey done by Paris Council's department of health and social affairs in December 2006 counted a further 300-odd extremely marginalized Polish nationals living on the streets.
- There are currently also estimated to be more than 500 single men of Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian origin, most living in emergency shelters, in Paris. Others have to live in shanty-town communities around the Gare du Nord railway station, the strategic departure point for Calais and Belgium. This floating population which, over a year probably represents several thousand individuals, includes many unattached minors (450 between September 2006 and September 2007) who are offered shelter then care in specialised child welfare accommodation provision.
- Roma families living in different informal settlements or squats around Paris are frequently evicted by the police and shunted from substandard pillar to squalid post. This population is probably the most numerous and is estimated at several thousand individuals, most of whom have "settled" on various patches of waste ground in the neighbouring Seine Saint Denis department. Romania's entry to the European Union now allows them to enter freely into France and stay here for at least three months with "tourist" status. Beyond that, without a work permit or permanent address, they become unlawfully resident.

The census of migrant populations in Paris is by definition limited because they are anything but settled and stay for extremely variable lengths of time. In any case, the diversity and scale of the problem is such that central government and Paris City Council agencies are now trying to work on joined-up solutions relevant to the different kinds of homelessness encountered, with different practical means of implementation for each community, which is now arguably the way it must go.

A POLICY BASED ON SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR THE DIFFERENT HOMELESS GROUPS:

A detailed study of the measures taken by the authorities to prevent and tackle these problems in Paris is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, the key to homelessness policy is identifying and understanding the issue, and for whatever solutions are offered those concerned to form part of a coherent, comprehensive measure to tackle exclusion that in Paris does not try to discriminate between street homeless persons by status or nationality.

Tackling homelessness requires a more effective prevention policy directed towards potential immigrants driven by a belief that Western European countries will provide work for whoever manages to get there. Working with consular authorities (especially in Eastern Europe) or bringing in television crews from the countries concerned to portray what may be the real outcome of failed journeys may well deter unskilled prospective migrants who have not even contemplated the possibility of failure and the poverty-stricken living conditions that may await them.

But falling travel costs will inevitably boost future flows of would-be migrants generally responding to demands for occasional, generally undeclared, labour.

But those surveyed are not necessarily downcast: some are resigned to living in makeshift shelters or tents, and some (Bulgarians in particular) even affirm that their living conditions were even worse back home.

The high mobility of these groups of often single men supplying low-cost labour, however, is an obstacle to effectively meeting their demand for accommodation. Makeshift settlements come and go, either moved on by the police, or in response to where the work is, or the weather.

Inspections of companies that hire this complaisant labour are arguably the most effective way of limiting rampant and unpredictable homelessness and tackling these problems.

It is always possible that some of these working poor, exiled for their skills and know-how (usually in the building trades), may secure a work permit enabling them to meet the requirements for accessing the legal labour market in France and the full range of help for housing or temporary accommodation.

Nonetheless, the key to homelessness policy is identifying and understanding the issue, and for whatever solutions are offered those concerned to form part of a coherent, comprehensive measure to tackle exclusion.



"There is therefore a need to look at other methods of support by which to address the growing burden of insecurity on these migrants whose only alternatives are street homelessness and exclusion."

One evident consequence for these groups exploited by unscrupulous businesses is an increasingly insecure way of life, most often reflected in a highly communal lifestyle that leads to alcohol abuse or inter-group violence. Some street homeless people encountered, especially long-time Paris residents, had been excluded from the labour market as a result of an accident and with no hope of return, had become settled in the street, making no particular plans or demands for help.

Several hundred Polish immigrants are in this plight, which gave rise to the idea of working for these groups through a network approach in which various voluntary agencies specialised in social crisis situations will link up in Paris to try and deliver joint solutions to accommodation and addiction problems, and help through the often complex maze of red tape. Bringing in different Polish-speakers to help overcome the language hurdle is in many respects decisive in getting movement and tackling a homelessness widely thought to be inescapable because of the degree of exclusion faced by these groups.

For transit migrants from the Middle East, most aiming for a clandestine entry into the UK, the contacts made by the different front-line voluntary agencies have revealed a fundamental lack of knowledge amongst most of these groups about procedures for claiming asylum. Some have already fallen foul of the Dublin Convention and can no longer apply for asylum in France, since they have already been apprehended in another European Union country (usually Greece or Italy). Others are unconcerned, being hell-bent on getting to a country where they believe they cannot fail to get a job that will enable them to repay the €5000 on average paid to the people smugglers.

The response to these transit migrants has been to significantly expand the number of emergency shelter places in the capital. Initially a seasonal response, the temporary accommodation supply has been maintained throughout the year. But this response has a breaking point and cannot be a long-term solution.

There is therefore a need to look at other methods of support by which to address the growing burden of insecurity on these migrants whose only alternatives are street homelessness and exclusion.

The results of incentives to voluntary repatriation are beginning to show in France. At an average €2000 for a single person and €3500 for a family, voluntary repatriation assistance is one possible way out of the "dead end" for some migrants.

Some "supported" voluntary repatriation programmes that include specific help for integration through earning, run by the National Agency for the Reception of Foreigners and Migration (ANAEM) and various local voluntary partners among others, is surely the most successful solution to tackling the rise in the number of homeless migrants in "magnet" capitals. An agreement for over a hundred Roma to be voluntarily repatriated to Romania under supported assistance schemes was concluded as part of the clearance of a Roma camp at Vénissieux in the Rhône department last August. Other temporary accommodation solutions in bed-and-breakfast hotels or hostels were also offered to those able or wanting to integrate.

Migrant homelessness is not fated to continue rising in Paris. The experience of recent years has shown the interest of agreement-based solutions in which respect for individual dignity was taken into account. Social work, in collaboration with the law enforcement authorities, is vital to a better understanding of what exactly prompts a particular group to choose the street over hostels. It is an often complex and laborious job, but vital if we are to face the facts... •



Demography and housing deprivation

By Dr. Dragana Avramov, *Population and Social Policy Consultants (PSPC)*

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There are no cause-effect-interactions between demographic trends, population structures and demographic behaviour on the one hand and homelessness on the other hand. At the turn of the 21st century in Europe there is no causal relationship between population dynamics and trends in poverty and social exclusion. There is however, the interweaving of demographic with social phenomena and challenges in the field of social protection are deeply rooted in demographic dynamics, particularly population ageing and family formation and dissolution.

Demography provides a complex 'early warning system' regarding requirements for social adaptation and reform based on the expected, probable and possible population scenarios. Social adaptations and reform and sustainable funding of welfare regimes require a long-term perspective that takes into account life-course dynamics, intergenerational relationships and intergenerational equity as elements in policy building.

Social vulnerabilities of individuals are strongly connected to the combined effects of demographic characteristics such as age, gender and family composition. Living as a single person, lone parent, having many children or being aged are chances and choices that are the outcome of unforeseen or foreseeable events – they should not be viewed as handicaps. But, in a socially insecure environment characterised by disruptive life course events that are beyond the control of individuals, for example employment insecurity associated with macro-economic dynamics or changes in social protection paradigms, particular households may find themselves in risk situations more often than others. In most European countries this is particularly the case for young adults who set up independent households before they have acquired adequate skills to compete in the economy and where deprivations and risks of homelessness are associated with their weak position in the labour market, difficult access to social benefits

and personality traits which may prevent them from making use of social networks and institutions. The importance of the complete family as a buffer to income poverty and social exclusion and the relevance of within family transfers between kin, particularly at younger and older ages, are well documented in research.

The chances/choices nexus can best be monitored and measured by means of the demographic profiling of households at risk of multiple deprivations and those who experience homelessness. Behavioural changes in family formation and dissolution are particularly relevant because family dynamics entail adaptations in redistributive resource policies and practices.

Our analysis has shown that there are several household or individual features that entail greater risks of multiple deprivations that include a housing dimension. The unemployed are at the highest risk of poverty: they score highly on financial risk indicators, a high percentage experience housing problems, and they are very dissatisfied. Non-EU nationals score highly on unemployment and experience high levels of poverty (twice the average rate of nationals) and a high percentage of housing problems. They are twice as likely to express dissatisfaction with their general living conditions (work or main activity, finances and housing) as natives. People of working age who are in bad health are in many respects worse off than other risk groups and a high percentage are severely hampered in their daily activities. They have relatively high unemployment rates and show particularly high inactivity rates. They also score highly on the indicators of financial deprivation and dissatisfaction, and face many housing problems. The elderly have the highest prevalence of bad health, which is twice as high as that of main earners as a whole. They also stand out in terms of a lack of household durables, which is largely a generational phenomenon (Avramov, 2002).



"All European countries, be it advanced market economies or countries in transition, share the main features of the demographic future."

The profiling of people using homeless services has shown that the majority are single men between 20 and 39 years of age. Whereas we have observed an increase in youth homelessness in many countries, no such increase has been documented for elderly people. Although the second half of the 20th century witnessed a substantial progress of population ageing in Europe, the elderly continue to be rather well protected from severe deprivation via public, family and informal networks. Indeed, whereas the absolute size of the elderly (65+) more than doubled during the last 50 years from 46 to 112 million people and their relative weight in the total population increased from 8% in 1950 to 14% in 2000, and whereas Europe has continued to be the oldest among the major world regions (Avramov and Maskova, 2003) no ageing of the homeless population has been documented up to date.

All European countries, be it advanced market economies or countries in transition, share the main features of the demographic future. Namely, population ageing will continue with accelerating pace in the next two to three decades and a growing number of people will spend an increasing number of years living alone. This trend requires adaptations. Businesses have been actively pursuing strategies to attract older people as consumers. Tapping the potential of the 'silver economy' is given extensive attention as it is assessed that "the majority of older people possess sufficient money, time and good health to be able to enjoy leisure goods and services" (Karppinen, 2007). Industry has been active in attracting investments into high intensity health care and home-

based care for people with chronic diseases and/or cognitive, limited mobility and other disabilities associated with very high age (for example see developments in eHealth, 'virtual hospitals', 'smart homes', etc.). Social policies and the housing dimension of welfare reforms have yet to address in a comprehensive way solutions to help all people to remain in their own home which will be adequately equipped to meet the changing needs of people as they grow very old. Today, badly housed people those who do not have a bathroom in their dwelling or are unable to pay utility bills are often classified under the umbrella concept of homeless. Tomorrow, as the national criteria of good quality housing and inclusion evolve and as the population ages we may expect that the major divide between well housed and deprived elderly people will be in ambient intelligence and access to ICT for independent living. •

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Older homeless people in the United Kingdom: continuities and changes



By Crane M. and Warnes A.M., *Sheffield Institute for Studies on Ageing, University of Sheffield, UK*

Older homeless people are a substantial minority of single homeless people in many western countries. Although there are reports of rising numbers from several cities in Canada and the United States,^{1,2} there are no reliable figures of the number of older homeless people in the United Kingdom (UK), nor about the temporal trend. It is possible, however, to describe some of the ways in which social and demographic changes over the last three decades have altered the profiles and circumstances of contemporary older homeless people in the UK, including the effects of changed accommodation services. The paper draws on evidence from several studies of older homeless people since the early 1990s and from official reports.

In the UK, older people comprise a smaller proportion of the single homeless population than three decades ago. Until the mid-1970s, most homeless people who lived on the streets and in hostels were middle-aged or elderly men. National surveys in 1965 and 1972 of single homeless people found that, among men, almost 60 per cent were aged 50+ years, 33 per cent were aged 60+ years, and just 10 per cent less than 30 years of age.^{3,4} Nowadays, however, just one-fifth of single homeless people are aged 50 years or more, while 50-70 per cent are under the age of 35 years.⁵

There is little information from before the early 1990s about the backgrounds of older homeless people, so the relative proportions are unknown of those who had been homeless for years and of those who became homeless in later life. For many older homeless people today, however, their homelessness is *not* the continuation of a chronic or lifelong condition; rather they have lived for decades in conventional housing, sustained work and family roles, and became homeless for the first time when aged in their fifties or sixties (and, for a few, in their seventies). The recent Tri-Nation Study of the causes of new episodes of homelessness among people aged 50+ years in England, Boston (Massachusetts) and Melbourne (Australia) found that two-thirds of the 131 English respondents had *never* been homeless before.⁶ The most common factors that led to homelessness, namely marital breakdown, housing difficulties, the loss of a job, financial problems, and mental health and alcohol problems, are similar for all adult age groups.

HEAVY DRINKING AND ILLEGAL DRUG USE

The association between heavy drinking and homelessness among middle-aged and older homeless men is timeless. Disparaging terms, such as 'wino' or 'bum', were used to stereotype homeless men seen drinking alone or in groups in city centres and parks. Many stayed in hostels and shelters where drinking was disallowed

and that they had to vacate during the day. Although the majority of older homeless men are *not* heavy drinkers, those with the habit are now much less visible in British towns. This is because punitive and supportive measures have reduced street drinking. Recent governments have introduced 'anti-social behaviour orders' (ASBOs) to restrain begging, drug dealing and drinking on the streets, which in places damage the local environmental quality and harm commercial interests. Many local authorities now have byelaws that ban drinking in specified areas, and failure to comply can lead to criminal charges. At the same time, services for homeless people with alcohol problems have expanded, and many hostels now allow residents to drink and do not require them to leave during the day. The aim of supportive services is now 'harm minimisation' for those who cannot achieve abstinence, to promote healthier and more stable lifestyles, and the means is to encourage controlled drinking and the use of less dangerous substitutes.

Until the 1990s in the UK, illegal drug dependency was rarely linked with homelessness but there is now a strong association. In London today, around one-half of homeless people on the streets have drug problems, compared to three-tenths in the late 1990s and less than one-tenth a decade before.⁷ Illicit drug use typically begins during adolescence, increases during young adulthood and thereafter gradually declines. There are indications, however, that illegal drug use among older people in the general population is rising, and that for some the onset does not occur until they are in their forties or older.^{8,9,10} In two counties of Northwest England between 1998 and 2004/05, the number of men aged 50-74 years receiving drug treatment increased nearly four-fold to 310, and the number of older female patients more than doubled to 117.¹¹ The prevalence of illegal drug use among *older* homeless people is low when compared with young adults, but the age differential is falling. Of the 378 respondents in the Tri-Nation Study, nine per cent reported having used drugs before they became homeless (5% in England, 10% in Boston, and 13% in Melbourne).

The illegal drug culture in certain British inner city and deprived areas has impacted on vulnerable older people in other ways and led directly to some becoming homeless. Several cases have been reported of drug dealers and users 'befriending' and exploiting older people who live alone, at first coercing permission to use their homes for injecting and dealing, and on occasion then abusing and even evicting the occupant. This happened to eleven English respondents in the Tri-Nation Study who became homeless because either drug users moved in and created an intolerable situation, or they were harassed by local drug dealers and drug-takers and did not feel it safe to continue living in the area.

ITINERANCY AND HOMELESSNESS

The association between itinerant lifestyles and homelessness has been evident across Europe for centuries. In several countries, nineteenth century reforms of the poor-law institutions created direct-access, basic accommodation for itinerant labourers (in England the workhouse 'casual wards'). There was no or only a minimal charge, a maximum stay of only a few nights, and often a requirement to carry out a menial task (at one time, stone breaking). In England, these rules continued into the 1960s and 1970s at the government-run Reception Centres (the direct descendants of the poor-law casual wards), and created the syndrome of being transient *while* homeless.¹² Men and women travelled around the country staying for short periods in a succession of hostels and shelters (as described during the 1930s in George Orwell's journalism and novels).¹³ The closure or takeover by charitable organisations of the Reception Centres (later known as Resettlement Units) in the 1980s and early 1990s, together with changes in procedures for booking into hostels and a shortage of hostel beds, now means that if a homeless person moves to another city, they no longer have immediate (or direct) access to a hostel bed. The itinerant patterns of older homeless men of even a decade ago have almost disappeared. Only a few wander from place to place in the age-old manner of traditional tramps.

For around 100 years up to the 1960s, many men in Britain worked as merchant seamen, building and construction labourers, or as casual and seasonal workers on farms and in docks and factories. A high proportion also served time in the armed forces. While working, many relied on their employers to provide accommodation, or stayed in working men's hostels, missions, lodging houses or the Reception Centres. Many became heavy drinkers, never married or lived independently, and took lodgings where meals were provided and they had no household responsibilities. From the 1920s to the 1970s, however, unskilled manufacturing, construction and land and marine transport jobs decreased massively. When the men could no longer find work or ceased work through ill health or old age, some took up long-term residence in the hostels for homeless people to which they had become accustomed.

Links between itinerant workers and homelessness continue in Britain today but the nature of the employment and the backgrounds of casual and seasonal workers have greatly changed. There have been significant improvements in rehousing support and services for people leaving the armed forces, and very few now cite 'discharge from the army' as a reason for becoming homeless.¹⁴ On the other hand, it has been evident for several years that a proportion of the men *and women* employed in the leisure and tourist sectors, *e.g.* as hotel porters or maids and theme-park, racecourse and night-club stewards, whether in the UK or abroad, when dismissed are destitute and turn to the homelessness services. A well-trodden pathway into London's hostels is now through Heathrow airport.

A more profound change came with the enlargement of the *European Union* in 2004. Since then, many unskilled, seasonal and low-paid jobs in Britain (as in horticulture and residential care) have been taken by citizens of the accession countries. Some have been recruited by ruthless 'gang masters' to work short-term on farms and in packing factories, and are accommodated in over-crowded and squalid housing. When the contracts end, some are impoverished and without accommodation. They now feature in the statistics of rough sleeping as 'A8 nationals' (and since 2007, 'A10 nationals'). A survey of nearly 4,500 homeless people at London's day centres, shelters and on the streets in 2006 found that 15 per cent were A8 nationals. Although most A8 nationals entering Britain are aged in their twenties and thirties, a higher proportion of those presenting as homeless are over the age of 45 years (39% compared to 7%).¹⁵

MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWNS

The breakdown of a marital or cohabiting relationship is a leading proximate cause of homelessness in contemporary affluent countries, and is common among older people as well as young and middle-aged adults. It applied to 27 per cent of the English respondents in the Tri-Nation Study (and as many as 60 per cent of women). Most were aged in their fifties at the time. Some estrangements were associated with the strains of stopping work and the onset of chronic illnesses and disabilities. In Britain, local authorities have a responsibility to secure housing for unintentionally homeless people with dependent children (most being younger adult women), but do not have this duty for able-bodied adults without dependants (generally men and older women). People in their fifties who are vulnerable or who get into financial difficulties are supported by a thinner social protection 'safety net' than either younger adults with children or those who have reached the state pension age.

CHANGES IN SERVICE PROVISION FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

Since the early 1990s, radical policy and service changes have been instigated by the UK government to tackle the problem of homelessness (and several have been elaborated by the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly). The post-1997 Labour governments have made it a priority to tackle social exclusion and to help homeless people return to conventional accommodation and lives.¹⁶ Public funding has increasingly required that services work pro-actively with homeless people to help them acquire the skills and motivation to return to work and conventional lives. A more comprehensive network of responsive, ameliorative and rehabilitative services to tackle homelessness has been developed, including education, life-skills and work training programmes. Hostel standards have greatly improved, and most large industrial-era buildings have been replaced by new, smaller hostels and self-contained clusters of flats



that provide transitional accommodation for independent-living training. Further improvements to hostels are underway through a 'Hostels Capital Improvement Programme'. According to the government, 'hostels will cease to be a place of last resort, but instead will be centres of excellence and choice which positively change lives'.¹⁷

The changed funding goals and working practices of hostels means that it is no longer acceptable for residents to live long-term in hostels, and the current expectation is that residents will move on within two years. Some older homeless people have lived in hostels for years, however, and a few for more than 20 years.¹⁸ Although by today's 'middle-class' standards, hostels are unsuitable as permanent housing, the principal policy objective is to prevent the current cohort of young homeless people becoming accustomed to and dependent upon expensive hostel provision and social-security benefit income. In short, the goal is to reduce 'welfare dependency'. A pervasive problem for long-term hostel residents, however, is that there is insufficient appropriate alternative accommodation. There are shortages of supported (*i.e.* staffed) move-on accommodation and, more particularly, of specialist residential care homes for those with complex problems and needs who are incapable of living independently. Any housing transition is stressful, particularly for people with thin social networks and support. The rate of failure of resettlements of older, formerly homeless people into shared accommodation and care homes for older people generally is rela-

tively high.¹⁹ An 'Old Before Their Time' campaign launched in August 2007 by *Thames Reach*, a leading homelessness service-provider in London, highlighted the problems faced by homeless people aged in their forties and fifties who have serious health and substance misuse problems, challenging behaviour, and for whom specialist accommodation and support is unavailable.²⁰

Conclusions

In every era, a substantial proportion of homeless people are older, but awareness of their problems and needs is generally much less than those of young homeless people. The backgrounds and circumstances of older homeless people have changed markedly over the last three decades. The residual population of itinerant manual labourers has reduced considerably, while the number that formerly worked in personal and leisure services has grown. A common characteristic of older homeless people in every society is exceptional social isolation: either they never developed supportive social networks or their few relationships are estranged. Over the last 20 years, homelessness services in the United Kingdom have become much more supportive and individualised, and a great deal is now done to help young homeless people acquire skills, get into work and return to conventional lives. There are still only a handful of special accommodation projects for older homeless people with chronic disabilities, however, and in most parts of the country there is a shortage of appropriate services for those with high care needs. •

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Child homelessness as a European social reality: Time to face the facts

By Liz Gosme, FEANTSA Policy Officer

Homeless children in a prosperous European Union? We have to face the facts: rough sleeping is only the tip of the homelessness iceberg, and below there are not only adults but many children also experiencing hidden forms of homelessness and housing exclusion rather than living in safe childhood homes giving them a good start in life. A stocktaking of children experiencing homelessness in Europe conducted by FEANTSA highlights some of the current trends.

People experiencing homelessness often live outside the normal structures of society, and are therefore a moving target which makes it difficult to assess the phenomenon. Subsections of the homeless population are therefore even harder to identify, and this is perhaps more the case for children who are either dependent on homeless adults or who are on their own and do not have the legal age to perform basic tasks such as signing a work contract or a lease. FEANTSA carried out a stocktaking exercise in 2007 to shed light on the nature and extent of child homelessness in the European Union (*Child homelessness in Europe: An overview of emerging trends, 2007*).¹

DEFINITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

The feedback from FEANTSA members reveals different perceptions of child homelessness from country to country depending on the approach adopted. In some countries, there are clear references to child or youth homelessness, while in other countries there are references to various child-related problems - street youths, drifting youths, children in state care, unaccompanied minors, runaway youths, survivors of domestic violence living in specialist shelters - emphasising the urban, social or migration dimensions of the problem rather than the housing or homelessness dimensions. However, it is clear from further reading into these different child-related problems that many children under these labels are effectively experiencing similar living situations which amount to forms of child homelessness or housing exclusion.

In order to reconcile the different national approaches, the proposed ETHOS continuum of living situations was applied in the FEANTSA stocktaking to shed light on homelessness as experienced by children, through a mapping of different existing forms of child homelessness onto the ETHOS typology (FEANTSA Observatory, 2006).

PROFILES

The two main emerging trends concern *children in homeless families* and *unaccompanied adolescents experiencing homelessness*.

Children in homeless families are not often found living on the streets, but rather in forms of temporary shelter, and therefore tend to be in situations of homelessness, insecure housing or inadequate housing. Four main categories of children in homeless families were identified. Firstly, an alarming number of children in families are found to be **spending long periods in temporary shelters and accommodation** in different EU countries, therefore mainly experiencing homelessness. It is important to note that some of these homeless families can find themselves in a cycle of homelessness which also leads to short periods of rooflessness. Secondly, **children survivors of domestic vio-**

	Operational Category	Living Situation	Generic Definition
Conceptual Category	ROOFLESS	1 People Living Rough	1.1 Public space or external space Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2 People in emergency accommodation	2.1 Night shelter People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESS	3 People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 Homeless hostel 3.2 Temporary Accommodation 3.3 Transitional supported accommodation Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		4 People in Women's Shelter	4.1 Women's shelter accommodation Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5 People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 Temporary accommodation / reception centres 5.2 Migrant workers accommodation Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
	INSECURE	6 People due to be released from institutions	6.1 Penal institutions 6.2 Medical institutions (*) 6.3 Children's institutions / homes No housing available prior to release Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing No housing identified (e.g by 18th birthday)
		7 People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 Residential care for older homeless people 7.2 Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
		8 People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 Temporarily with family/friends 8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy 8.3 Illegal occupation of land Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy illegal occupation of a dwelling Occupation of land with no legal rights
	INADEQUATE	9 People living under threat of eviction	9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented) 9.2 Re-possession orders (owned) Where orders for eviction are operative Where mortgagor has legal order to re-possess
		10 People living under threat of violence	10.1 Police recorded incidents Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
		11 People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1 Mobile homes 11.2 Non-conventional building 11.3 Temporary structure Not intended as place of usual residence Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin
		12 People living in unfit housing	12.1 Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations
		13 People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year. This definition is compatible with Census definitions as recommended by the UNECE/EUROSTAT report (2006)

(*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals etc.



lence are increasingly found in shelters accompanying their mother and are often referred to in feedback from FEANTSA members as children experiencing forms of homelessness. Thirdly, there are a number of **families threatened with eviction** and therefore at risk of ending up on the street, or who literally end up in situations of rooflessness or houselessness which, without early intervention and adequate support, can potentially lead to a cycle of homelessness. This can involve eviction from inadequate forms of habitation such as makeshift dwellings or squats (and therefore implies both inadequate and insecure living situations), or can involve eviction from an adequate dwelling (and therefore mainly implies legally insecure living situations). Fourthly, child homelessness is also perceived in many countries to affect **children in families living in poor housing conditions**, often living situations which are described in the insecure and inadequate housing categories of the ETHOS typology. In some central and eastern European countries, this problem mainly concerns parts of the Roma population.

Unaccompanied adolescents experiencing homelessness (mainly rooflessness and houselessness) appears to be a trend in many EU countries and, again, four main categories emerge. First of all, there are **homeless adolescents** who have been chronically homeless since a very young age and tend to be referred to as street youths often moving from one living situation to another. Such individuals are sometimes hidden, staying with a succession of friends or acquaintances. Or they may alternate frequently between the street, living with friends, squatting, and staying in emergency or temporary accommodation. However, this trend of child homelessness is only just emerging in few EU countries since children in most countries are considered a priority group and should receive immediate support when found on the street. Secondly, there are **runaway or throw-away youth** who often end up in child support/protection services and are at high risk of ending up on the streets. These individuals tend to experience temporary or episodic homelessness, returning home to their family intermittently, as opposed to the first category of adolescents referred to above who have remained homeless for much longer periods and have often entered a chronic cycle of homelessness. Thirdly, the precarious living situations of **unaccompanied minors** in Europe often amount to forms of homelessness and housing exclusion. These children have often migrated from non-EU countries and tend to receive accommodation in hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation, foster families or care institutions. Some may end up staying in temporary accommodation much longer than planned. Some may slip through the system and rapidly find themselves

without a roof over their heads. Lastly, **children in or leaving institutions** are perceived to be at risk of homelessness if they have no relatives, no safe home to go to or no secure housing of their own. This situation can concern young offenders, children in medical institutions, or orphans in child care institutions. The recent report of the Council of Europe on rights of children at risk and in care (2006) confirms the high homelessness rates of children leaving care in Europe (CoE, 2006:64).

CAUSES

There are many different causes of child homelessness in different EU countries, but some commonality has emerged from the different existing situations pointing to *general* pathways into homelessness experienced by children - although clearly these different factors of homelessness are interlinked. **Structural factors:** Some children may become homeless - alone or accompanied - when their families suffer hardship and financial crises resulting from lack of affordable and good quality housing, limited employment opportunities, or inadequate welfare benefits. **Institutional factors** can also influence vulnerability of children to homelessness such as a lack of services, services which do not meet certain needs, the nature of allocation mechanisms, and lack of coordination between services, or a breakdown in the continuity of care. **Relational factors** such as relationship problems or family breakdown are often associated with housing exclusion or can create a vulnerability to homelessness, and is often the precipitant factor leading to the first onset of homelessness for a child (mothers with children leaving a violent home, runaway youths, children placed in homes due to family breakdown). **Personal factors** can include personal problems linked to health, substance abuse, immigration, but can also be linked to lack of knowledge of certain support services (which is likely to be the case for homeless children with no guardians to guide or protect them).

NEEDS

As well as a roof, children experiencing homelessness often require additional support to help them to improve their situation, in order to fully recover from the trauma of homelessness and to prevent any further problems arising as a consequence of their living situation. The following needs were identified: housing needs, health needs, financial needs, education needs, and social needs. However, the categorisation used for the purpose of the FEANTSA report is somewhat artificial - most children who are homeless often have a combination of these different needs which, if unmet, can make it extremely difficult to break the cycle of homelessness. **Housing needs** are the most obvious

"Some children may become homeless - alone or accompanied - when their families suffer hardship and financial crises resulting from lack of affordable and good quality housing, limited employment opportunities, or inadequate welfare benefits."



needs of children who are homeless (i.e. who lack a home) who urgently need a stable home to allow them to benefit from any additional social or health support which can prevent their situation from deteriorating. Temporary accommodation can be useful to meet immediate housing needs as long as it does not become a long-term solution. The ultimate aim is permanent accommodation of an adequate standard, with space for social relations, and which is legally secure. **Health needs** are common among children experiencing homelessness and vary according to the living situation. Living situations which can have damaging effects on a child's mental and physical health and development include homelessness as a result of domestic violence, as a result of living in dwellings unfit for habitation, and especially as a result of rooflessness situations concerning unaccompanied adolescents who are exposed to a street environment which can place them in conditions of high health risk linked to violence (sexual and physical), malnutrition, drug abuse and depression. **Education needs** are generally important among children experiencing homelessness given that their unstable living situation often leads to them changing schools or even stopping school altogether for short periods, which inevitably then has an impact on the child's development. Children frequently have **financial or material needs**. Children in homeless households living in temporary accommodation services need access to basic financial or material support. Unaccompanied children or adolescents who are in situations of rooflessness or in insecure accommodation staying with friends tend to be worse off financially because, due to their young age, they have few legal means by which they can earn money to meet their basic needs, and may therefore resolve to begging or crime to have any income at all. **Social needs** of children experiencing homelessness include the need for security, protection and stability as a pre-condition to breaking the cycle of homelessness – this is especially the case for unaccompanied homeless adolescents without a caregiver or any social networks.

Conclusions

It seems the phenomenon of children chronically experiencing homelessness is still only an emerging problem which can, and should, be stemmed as soon as possible by improving prevention policies (both systemic and targeted) to reach out to the many children at risk to avoid them entering a cycle of homelessness in adulthood. There are different approaches to tackling this problem (outlined in the FEANTSA report) mainly founded on a prevention ethos and the need to catch the problems as early as possible. There are structural policies linked to housing, social welfare, education and health which serve to prevent crisis situations and to detect imminent crisis situations. Other policies are developed for children who cannot benefit from these mainstream measures. These therefore tend to be specialised policies which target children (and their families) who are already living in difficult situations.

It is clear from the FEANTSA analysis that child homelessness cannot be tackled in isolation from poverty and homelessness experienced by adults, especially as many children experience homelessness as a result of their parents going through crisis situations. Children often enter homeless services with a parent and are generally perceived as attached to their parent rather than as homeless service clients in their own right. However, homelessness can be a traumatic experience for children and requires all the more attention to prevent children in such difficult living situations from becoming chronically homeless in adulthood. ●

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¹ See full report on FEANTSA website for national examples illustrating the trends outlined in this article



Homelessness and social transformation in Russia

By Svetlana Stephenson



Since the start of market reforms in the early 1990s, the figure of a street homeless person has become an almost omnipresent sight in Russian urban areas. Homelessness did exist in the Soviet Union, but it was more or less hidden from public view. Vagrancy, begging and 'parasitic way of life' – all three often being signifiers for homelessness – were subject to criminal punishment. From the beginning of the 1990s, persecution of beggars, vagrants and 'parasites' stopped. At first, many homeless people on the streets could be said to be the product of this 'uncovering' of the suppressed Soviet social problem. The large part of the 'old' homeless were ex-prisoners, who had been the victims of anti-homelessness criminal legislation or other ex-convicts, who had been deprived of their public housing while in prison and were not allowed to settle in many areas on release. Other vulnerable people, who lost housing through a variety of personal risks – disabled individuals, women escaping from domestic abuse or unemployable alcoholics – were now 'free' to roam the streets.

Very soon, however, new categories of homeless people appeared, among them economic migrants and refugees, street children, people made homeless through housing privatisation and closure of workers' hostels. They can be said to be the victims of the social and political upheaval associated with the market transition. Erosion of socialist enterprise-based communities with their stable jobs and free provision of housing, housing reforms, crisis of agriculture and particularly the collective farm system, new regional economic inequalities and immigration of ethnic Russians from the ex-Soviet states resulted in large-scale social and territorial displacement. Although displaced people could try to exercise their own 're-placement' strategies more easily than in the Soviet times – by moving to peripheral spaces of the country or, on the contrary, to large economic centres in search of jobs and housing, switching on to the expanding informal economic markets or getting support from NGOs – all these strategies were very risky.

Post-Soviet Russia has retained the basis of the Soviet system of registration at the place of residence, which is linked to all welfare entitlements. A lack of residential permit in the area means no access to formal jobs, pensions or welfare benefits. Even the newly established system of local authority shelters requires a homeless person to prove his or her past residency status in the area in order to get access to the facilities (this requirement is only relaxed in extremely harsh winters). Employment in the informal sector (particularly for low-skilled workers) can mean a risk of abuse, non-payment and a threat of homelessness if the job suddenly ends.

Thirty-year old Tatiana came to Moscow from a village in central Russia with her six-year-old son Sergei. The collective farm where she used to work had all but collapsed. Tatiana had not been paid

for over a year. In an interview she explained that she came to Moscow to look for a better paid job with a place in a hostel, but this proved to be impossible. Tatiana was eventually hired as a trader in a kiosk, even though she did not have a residential permit in Moscow. She found a room to rent and her son went to school. But then she lost her job and they had to move to live at train stations. Since then Tatiana and Sergei have migrated between the train stations, cheap hotels and rented flats, supporting themselves by street trade and occasional jobs in the market. In the last year, Tatiana and Sergei have lived apart from each other – although they managed to see each other occasionally. Tatiana would sometimes find a place to stay – with friends and occasional boyfriends, but nobody was willing to take her in with her son. Little Sergei lived with a group of street kids in a cellar in central Moscow.

Illegal immigrant workers – the so-called *gastarbaitery* – are among the most vulnerable categories of migrants. From 2002 every immigrant needs to have a migration card and a work permit in order to get employment. Employers who hire foreign workers need to apply for special permission from the Moscow authorities. In practice, though, most foreign workers (from 70 per cent to 90 per cent, according to different estimates) are employed illegally. They tend to work in construction and the service sector, where employees are often paid cash at the end of the working day. *Gastarbaitery*, who are employed without official contracts, are prone to extreme exploitation and abuse. Employers may refuse to pay, sometimes justifying this by citing unsatisfactory work, sometimes without any justification. They may also take away their passports. Having lost their jobs and without money, *gastarbaitery* cannot go back home. Even if they have some savings, they may be ashamed to go back and so stay on, hoping to earn money somewhere else. Without a place to stay, often without documents, and even without rights to accommodation in shelters for homeless people (which only accept Russian citizens), they move on to cellars, lofts and train stations. Although many Russian and international NGOs provide help to homeless people, very rarely can they offer them some form of accommodation (and even then it is temporary accommodation for limited categories of homeless people such as ex-convicts or Big-Issue type magazines sellers).

Twenty-two year old Sharif from Uzbekistan came to Moscow to look for work. He found a job at a construction site and his employers, who took him on without an official contract, also gave him a place in a hostel on the outskirts of Moscow. He worked just for food. Money was promised at the end of the job. Two weeks before I met him in spring 2005 – in the Moscow City Centre for Medical and Social Assistance to Persons Without Fixed Abode – he was violently beaten by skinheads on the street. He could not continue to work. By then, people from his village who had come with him to



Moscow for work had already left for home. He had no one to turn to. His Russian was very poor. Since he lost his job, he spent nights with other homeless people in cellars and lofts of buildings. While he was on the streets his passport was stolen. He hoped to be admitted to a hospital and stay there until he was better and could work again. But he was refused a referral to a hospital by doctors in the centre, who judged him not to be sufficiently ill (hospitals do not want to accept homeless patients, and the centre's workers try to minimise the number of referrals). The social worker at the centre told him that the only way for him to get to a hospital was to fall down on the street pretending to be unconscious, and then perhaps passers-by would call an ambulance.

Imprisonment continues to be one of the key factors leading to homelessness, with about 30-50% of all street homeless people in Moscow and St. Petersburg being from this category. Some cities (such as Moscow and St. Petersburg) have provisions allowing the local authorities to give housing to those ex-prisoners who have lost their municipal accommodation as a result of incarceration. But to get such housing requires them to go through complex bureaucratic procedures, with the outcome uncertain. Also, according to my homeless interviewees and NGO workers, police often try to frame the ex-prisoners and accuse them of somebody else's crimes, or attempt to turn them into informers.

Grigorii has lived most of his life in Moscow. Several years ago Grigorii became involved in a street fight and was imprisoned for three years. After his release he went back home, but the local police officer started to put pressure on him, demanding that he become an undercover agent. He refused and, as a result, could not get back his passport and registration. He worked for several months on a farm in a neighbouring agricultural region, but then the police discovered that he did not have any documents and forced him to leave. He recently lost his leg in a road accident. Now, he lives in a shelter in Moscow (being a past Moscow resident) and earns his living by begging. He does not want to go back to live with his brothers as both are married and he does not want to be a burden.

There are many other causes of homelessness. People can become displaced and lose access to housing through family conflicts, by losing connections to home through long absence, by falling ill, by being cheated or forced out of their housing by criminals, and through many other private risks and misfortunes. Inability to get stable access to sources of social and public support makes them highly vulnerable to homelessness. Also, the new 2005 Housing Code allows eviction for a number of reasons, including for non-payment of rent and antisocial behaviour.

With the increasing privatisation of urban space in Russia, cities are tightening the nooses on homeless people. They are progressively denied access to communal and residential spaces, and local authorities try to contain them in degraded facilities of institutional care (often established outside the city borders). Any serious response to the problem of homelessness can only be based on acknowledging their citizenship rights (at least where Russian citizens are concerned), but this would require a complete reform of the residential permits system – something that the political regimes in Russia have so far been unwilling to do.

Over the years, the profiles of the homeless people have changed – but the problem of homelessness has remained. From outright criminalisation, the Russian state has moved to very limited welfare provision for homeless people. Largely, however, the response is indifference. Thus, Nikolai, an interviewee who had been in prison in the Soviet times, has decided that his only option of survival was to go back to prison. He told me that he planned to steal expensive food from a supermarket in order to be arrested and put into confinement.

It is telling that since the end of the Soviet penal 'solutions' to the problem of homelessness, homeless people now might feel that – in order not to die on the streets – they have to take matters into their own hands and find their way into prison. In Nikolai's words, "It's good that they don't put people in prisons for vagrancy anymore. But you know...indifference also kills."¹

¹ See the results of the research project on homelessness in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia in Stephenson, S. (2006), *Crossing the Line. Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia*, Ashgate, Aldershot. On street homeless children see Stephenson, S. (2001) Street children in Moscow: using and creating social capital. *The Sociological Review*, Vol.49, No. 4, pp.530-547.