**FEANTSA**

# ETHOS

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Is this an official EU definition of homelessness and housing exclusion ?**

No, this is a typology developed by FEANTSA which is increasingly used for policy, research and measurement debates on homelessness.

**Is the intention of ETHOS to harmonise existing national definitions of homelessness?**

ETHOS does not attempt to harmonise national definitions of homelessness in Europe. Rather it tries to provide a common language for comparing different national definitions, or comparing different data on homelessness. For example, countries have different figures on homelessness. It is useful to use ETHOS then to interpret these different figures and better understand what categories are included in existing figures.

**What is the relation between the conceptual model based on three domains (physical, social, and legal) and the ETHOS typology?**

In order to define homelessness in an operational way, we identified three domains which constitute a *home*, the absence of which can be taken to delineate homelessness. Having a home can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain) and having legal title to occupation (legal domain). Using this conceptual understanding of homelessness, FEANTSA adopted a conceptual definition of homelessness and housing exclusion based on four categories: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. This is discussed in the 2004 Review of statistics on homelessness in Europe.

**This definition of homelessness is too wide – many of these living situations are not recognised as homelessness in my country.**

ETHOS is a typology of homelessness AND housing exclusion, since these are intrinsically linked. The dividing line between homelessness and housing exclusion will vary from country to country. ETHOS is a European compromise which attempts to cover all existing forms of homelessness in EU27.

**Why homelessness AND housing exclusion?**

Homelessness is perceived as a process (rather than a static phenomenon) that affects many vulnerable households at different points in their lives. This typology allows for measurement of different types of homeless policies – emergency, rehabilitation, prevention. This typology was

originally developed for data collection purposes, and aims to monitor both homelessness and situations where people are at risk of homelessness, for developing effective prevention policies for example.

**Do these ETHOS categories describe services or living situations?**

These categories describe housing or "living situations". These categories do not describe services. They do not describe causes of homelessness either.

**Homelessness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon – where are the health, employment and other dimensions in this typology ?**

Indeed, this is a typology of *living situations*. People in these living situations have housing needs, sometimes coupled with various support needs (independent living, health, employment).

**Is ETHOS a hierarchy of living situations - from extreme to less extreme forms of exclusion?**

No, ETHOS is not to be interpreted as a hierarchy of situations. People in the insecure and inadequate categories are not necessarily better off than people in the houseless or roofless categories.

**People in insecure housing and in inadequate housing are not homeless, but rather at risk of homelessness.**

The aim of these two conceptual categories is not to say that all people in insecure or inadequate housing are homeless. Rather, the aim is to highlight situations of insecure or inadequate housing which are considered as forms of homelessness in many countries. In some countries, these two categories are considered as forms of homelessness, in other countries not. As mentioned previously, the dividing line between homelessness and housing exclusion is according to national practices and definitions.

**Do you have examples of how ETHOS is used?**

The FEANTSA office monitors use of ETHOS in research, in policy, in political debates, in social work, and other areas. Some examples are collected in the paper of September 2006 : see "ETHOS – Taking Stock". Other more recent examples include:

2009: West Pomerania (region in Poland) carries out survey of homeless profiles based on ETHOS living situations (PL http://www.bezdomnosc.edu.pl/content/view/90/1/)
2009: European report of the Independent experts on social inclusion (EN http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2009/homelessness-and-housing-exclusion)


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