



FEANTSA

## Germany

### FEANTSA Country Fiche<sup>1</sup>

<p><b>Key Statistics</b></p>	<p>There is no legally-required, nationwide data collection on homelessness in Germany. Relatively extensive data exists but does not cover all regions of the country. BAG W (the umbrella organisation of non-profit homeless service providers) presents annual nationwide estimations based on its own monitoring systems, taking account of developments in the housing market, labour market, migration, social security and drawing on regional statistics and BAG W flash surveys. BAG W also lobbies in an ongoing fashion for the improvement of data collection with a legal basis at national level.</p> <p>According to BAG W's estimations for 2012, the (annual prevalence) number of cases of 'housing exclusion' ("<i>Wohnungsnotfälle</i>") in Germany is 414,000. This breaks down into the two following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Homeless people: 284,000 over the course of a year</li> <li>○ People at risk of becoming homeless: 130,000 over the course of a year</li> </ul> <p>There are comprehensive, regular statistics on homelessness available in North-Rhine Westphalia, the most populous of the 16 <i>Länder</i> in Germany. A data collection strategy has been developed in the framework of a regional homelessness action plan. In 2012, a one-day count on the 30th June recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ People provided with night shelters and temporary accommodation by the local authorities (part of ETHOS 1.2 and 3.2): 10,920</li> <li>○ People who had received some support from the voluntary sector for the homeless in the month leading up to the count (parts of ETHOS 1,2,3,7, 8.1 and 11): 7,271</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase/Decrease in Number of Homeless People</b></p>	<p>According to BAG W estimates, the number of homeless people rose by 15% from 2010 (248,000) to 2012 (284,000). This included a rise in the number of rough sleepers from approximately 22,000 to 24,000 – an increase of about 10%. The number of people at risk of homelessness is estimated to have risen by 22.6% from 106,000 in 2010 to 130,000 in 2012.</p> <p>It is, however, clear that the picture is not uniform across Germany. In some regions, the increase in numbers is smaller than on others, but in all regions, including in North-Rhine Westphalia, there has been an increase. Overall, the number of homeless people in North-Rhine Westphalia fell strongly from 18,533 in 2004 to 11,788 in 2009. The decrease in North-Rhine Westphalia can be explained by a well-developed prevention system as well as a broad network of advice agencies for homeless people. However, in 2012 – although due to a new statistical system numbers are not strictly comparable to former years – an overall number of 18,191 homeless persons were counted: even a qualified prevention system cannot mitigate the effects of the growing housing market crisis in Germany.</p>
<p><b>Change in Profile of Homeless</b></p>	<p>According to BAG W estimates, homelessness amongst single-person households rose faster than family homelessness between 2010 and 2012. Homelessness amongst single-person households is estimated to have increased by 17% from 152,000 to 178,000. Family</p>

<sup>1</sup> Last updated January 2014

<p><b>People</b></p>	<p>homelessness is estimated to have risen by 13% from 2010 to 2012. This reflects in part a shortage of small flats available to house single homeless people.</p> <p>According to BAG W, of about 284,000 homeless people in Germany in 2012, 25% were women (63,000). The share of children and adolescents is estimated at 11% (32,000). Men represent 75% of the homeless population (189,000).</p> <p>BAG W identifies a high proportion of young people and a growing proportion of migrants among the single homeless population. Approximately 31.8% of the single homeless population was under 30 in 2012. This compares to 32.2% in 2010. In the younger age group, the proportion of women is relatively high. In total, the proportion of women among the homeless reached 25% in 2012.</p>
<p><b>National Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>National Strategy</b></p> <p>There is no national strategy in the sense of a federal programme defined in a strategic document. Nonetheless, service provision for homeless people is relatively extensive and provided for by a legislative framework. National legislation sets out the obligations of municipalities in terms of social service provision. Since the mid-1990s, the Social Code has stipulated that all persons who are at risk of losing their homes are entitled to assistance - either in the form of loans or allowances for rent arrears. Police laws in the <i>Bundesländer</i> (regional states) strictly oblige municipalities to provide shelter for roofless people.</p> <p>In 2013, BAG W laid down principles for a National Strategy in a <i>Call for a National Strategy against Homelessness and Poverty</i>, published in September 2013. It will follow up this call in the coming years. The Call focuses on specific local, regional and national level programmes.</p> <p>North-Rhine Westphalia, the most populous region, has a regional action plan on homelessness. The budget for the Programme is 1.12 million Euros a year. Its aim is to develop innovative approaches and support municipalities to tackle homelessness. The main focus is the prevention of homelessness and access to housing. Specific target groups include migrants and older homeless people.</p> <p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>Competence for homelessness lies largely at local and regional level. At central-state level, a department in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for policies supporting homeless people but does not develop political initiatives. Consultation with stakeholders is carried out by BAG W. There is very little inter-ministerial coordination.</p> <p>BAG W provides guidance on policy orientation that aims to frame policy development at local, regional and national level. Germany's extensive homeless service network has been rapidly growing in the past 20 years. There has been a strong focus on the development of <i>housing-led approaches</i> (since 1980), mainly influenced by the policy-orientation work of BAG W. BAG W has also strongly supported the development of <i>prevention approaches</i> since 2000.</p>
<p><b>Targeted Prevention</b></p>	<p>Homelessness policy in Germany is strongly prevention-orientated. In 1994, Social Code provisions on assistance in the case of rent arrears were converted from powers into duties in cases where households were at imminent risk of becoming homeless. A revised handbook on making administrative prevention efforts more effective was published in 1999, while programmes to reorganise and improve preventative services were developed in many municipalities all over Germany.<sup>2</sup> Many municipalities run coordinated prevention services</p>

<sup>2</sup> Busch-Geertsema, V and Fitzpatrick, S. (2008) 'Effective Homelessness Prevention? Explaining Reductions in Homelessness in Germany and England' in *European Journal of Homelessness "Effectiveness of Policies and Services for Homelessness"* , - Volume 2, December 2008, Brussels

	focusing on rent arrears. Social ‘support in housing’ for formerly homeless people and for those who have faced a housing crisis at some stage has also been extended in recent years.	
<b>Housing-Led Approaches</b>	<p>Long-term housing solutions as the main response to homelessness have been the dominant approach in Germany since 1990, according to official statements. Since 1984, the social laws of the Federal Republic strongly reflect the legal principle that outpatient care has priority over inpatient care.</p> <p>However, the emphasis on access to housing as early as possible as a response to <i>all</i> types of homelessness has limits, especially for single homeless people. The staircase approach is still prevalent in some areas. Overall, BAG W concludes that around 75% of NGO based homeless services use a “counselling approach” in the context of housing-led strategies and 25% a more “institutional” approach in the context of hostels and special institutions. A survey on supported housing, organised by service providers for homeless people, reported almost 5,800 formerly homeless people were receiving “support in housing” from 261 different service providers on a single day in 2003. However, about 47% of the housing provided was time-limited including 20% in shared accommodation. Approximately half of the service users were in regular dwellings with full tenancy rights.<sup>3</sup></p>	
<b>Quality of Homeless Services</b>	There are still some low-standard public shelters run by municipalities, especially in rural areas, namely in the eastern parts of Germany. In institutional services run by NGOs, the staffing is usually of very high quality and most accommodation involves single rooms.	
<b>Remarks on Research</b>	In the framework of North-Rhine Westphalia’s homelessness programme, a study of homelessness amongst immigrants and a strategy against youth homelessness have been commissioned. Furthermore, a study on the prevention of homelessness is underway.	
<b>Remarks on Budget Evolution</b>	Funding for social services for homeless people is legally guaranteed in Germany. There have been major decreases in national funding in the field of employment services (30% and more in the context of the crisis).	
<b>Remarks on Key Policy Developments</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
	<p>The level of the subsistence benefit has been revised slightly upwards (although it is still not enough) after the intervention of the national court in 2010.</p> <p>A rent control regime for new rents was introduced in 2013 and will be further developed in 2014.</p>	<p>Ceilings of the housing benefit regime are too low in a context of rising rents.</p> <p>There is no major investment in social housing.</p> <p>The growing regulation of public space has led to stricter control of public places, also affecting homeless people.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Busch-Geertsema, V. and Evers, J. (2004) *Auf dem Weg zur Normalität. Bestandsaufnahme der persönlichen Hilfen in Wohnungen im Bereich der Hilfen in Wohnungsnotfällen* [On the Way to Normality. Stock Taking of Support in Housing for People in Urgent Need of Housing]. (Bremen: GISS)