

HOMELESSNESS IN HUNGARY

KEY STATISTICS

Since 1999, a survey of homelessness in Hungary is conducted every year on 3 February. Researchers, municipalities and NGO service providers commit on a voluntary basis to the initiative. Initially, it covered only Budapest, but the survey has now been expanded to a growing number of municipalities. In 2016 there were 253 homeless service providers from 78 municipalities across the country. The Third of February Homeless Survey is not a census of all homeless people, nor is it a tool to estimate the number of homeless people. The survey only covers those people who are in touch with shelters or outreach teams who volunteer to take part at the time of the survey.

At national level, there are registers of certain types of homeless services provided under the Social Care Act, but there are a number of limitations regarding the reliability of the data.

On 3 February 2016, 10,206 homeless people took part in the survey. This includedⁱ:

- People living in public space/outdoors (ETHOS 1.1): 3,422
- People staying in hostels (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1): 6,784

INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

These figures have remained stable over the years. As it is not a comprehensive head count of homeless people, we cannot draw conclusions concerning the decrease or increase of the number of homeless people.

Looking at the figures from **the past 5 years**, the survey found that there were **at least 50,000 people** who experienced homelessness by sleeping rough or residing in a homeless shelter, be it a long-term or short-term stay. The proportion of women as part of the overall homeless population has increased from 13% to 14%.

Key pull-out statistics

In 2016: 10,206 homeless people
 3,422 sleeping rough
 6,784 staying in hostels
Source: Third of February Survey

CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

33% of the respondents live in Budapest, while the remaining 67% live in other cities and settlements of the country. 10% of the respondents lived on less than 30 eurocents a day in January. 25% of the homeless people participating in the survey have a daily income equivalent to 1.9 USD. 115 of the respondents became homeless during the 34 days before the survey (between 1 January 2016 and 3 February 2016). The survey did not involve homeless families with children, nor did it cover the number of homeless migrants.

A recent analysisⁱⁱ suggests a growing percentage of the Roma population among homeless people, especially young homeless people, as well as an increase in people coming from large, impoverished families. Homelessness seems thus to be passed on from generation to generation.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

There have been two initiatives aimed at a national homelessness strategy.

The first and more comprehensive strategy proposal was drafted in 2008, but was not approved by the government. However, certain elements of it were referred to and implemented by governmental entities. (E.g. those implemented by ESF funding.)

The second strategic document was drafted in 2015 with the involvement of national on homelessness. It defined the most vulnerable groups of homeless people and suggested solutions to their problems. Some of the recommendations of the strategic paper have been incorporated in the relevant legislation regulating homeless service provision.

REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

- **Positive**

There will be ESF funding made available for projects providing Housing First. Project applications have been submitted and are awaiting evaluation. However, the project span is a maximum of 36 months, thus any initiative has to find independent funding afterwards to sustain results and support people in their housing in the long term.

- **Negative**

The focus is still on providing accommodation in congregated, shelter-like settings. The state even seems to offer homeless hostels to citizens facing a housing crisis. While deinstitutionalization has started for big services accommodating people with disabilities, psychiatric problems, homeless people and services have been removed from the list of eligible target groups. Funding for homeless services does not cover the costs of these services. Funding for homeless services has remained unchanged for many years for shelters and hostels, or has even been reduced e.g. that of day centres.

Still no progress on the horizon in terms of increasing the affordable proportion of social housing within the housing stock. There is a threat to cut back on the already minimal social benefits, and housing continues to be defined as a personal problem, with no official support. Local authorities can offer a housing subsidy, which normally does not exceed 10 euros/month.

REFERENCES

ⁱ <http://www.bmszki.hu/sites/default/files/field/uploads/f-3-2016-sajto-vegleges.pdf>

ⁱⁱ www.feantsaresearch.org/download/peter-gyori8798329104366035360.pdf