



HOMELESSNESS IN LITHUANIA

KEY STATISTICS

The department of statistics (Statistics Lithuania) collects data on homelessness every 10 years within the framework of the general population census. In 2011, the census instructions defined homeless people as those who have no permanent place of residence and no money to rent or buy at least a basic lodging, and for this reason they live on the streets (ETHOS 1), in places not intended for human habitation, in institutions for temporary living (night shelters (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1), crisis centers and shelters for mothers and children (ETHOS 4.1).

Statistics Lithuania (<http://osp.stat.gov.lt/>) recorded about 4 827 homeless people in Lithuania over 2015. Of these:

- 2 487 persons were living in shelters for homeless people (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1);
- 2 340 persons were living in crisis centers and shelters for mothers and children (ETHOS 4.1).

Urban areas usually has the highest rate of homelessness – the largest number of homeless people living in night shelters in 2014 were in Kaunas district (second biggest city) – 642, in Vilnius district - 610. 1 678 – the largest number of persons living in crisis centres and shelter for mothers and children in 2014 were in Vilnius district.

According to the head of the housing support department of Ministry of Social Security and Labour (<http://www.socmin.lt/en/home.html>) for September of 2016 there were 14 766 persons/families waiting for social housing: 2 417 in Vilnius and 2 931 households in Kaunas were on the waiting list.

INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Homelessness has been steadily increasing over the past decade. The number of residents in shelters for homeless people slightly decreased in 2015 – 2 487 (annual prevalence) compared to 2014 – 2 601. The number decreased by 4.4 %, but looking in the long term perspective this number increased by 27 % from 2007 to 2015. Similar situation is observed with the number of people residing in crisis centers and shelters for mothers and children: the number in 2015 decreased by 3 %

compared to 2014 – from 2 410 to 2 340, but in long term perspective it increased by 32 % from 2007 to 2015.

The number of households waiting for social housing strongly decreased - from more than 32 000 in 2014 to 14 766 households in 2016 (September) on the waiting list for a social housing. This number decreased after the list was revised. But according to the head of the housing support department of Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the average time people have to wait for social housing in biggest cities (Vilnius and Kaunas) remains similar – it is about 10-15 years.

CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The number of homeless people residing in night shelter more than 6 month increased from 888 in 2013 to 911 in 2015. This number slightly varies year after year but the tendency that most of the homeless people stay in night shelter more than 6 month remains.

The changes in population of homeless men and homeless women are not significant.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

National Strategy

There is no specific integrated strategy for tackling homelessness in Lithuania. There is a housing strategy with goals that are indirectly linked to homelessness such as the expansion of housing options to all social groups.

Vilnius has adopted a program on homelessness for the period of 2013-2018, covering accommodation and reintegration.

In 2015 the action plan for development/expansion of social housing pool for 2015-2020 was approved. It is granted by EU funds.

Governance

The Ministry of Social Security and Labor has the main responsibility for issues relating to homelessness, also for coordinating governmental policies regarding State assistance for housing acquisition or rental. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring the provision of social services. Under the Constitution, the municipalities are autonomous in respect to the development of local policy. Hence, there are regional disparities in the quality of social services, the infrastructure of services etc.

municipality, but if a homeless person doesn't live in a night shelter – then he/she can have difficulties to get registered to the municipality. For now there are about 11 000 persons who will lose their right to social benefits if they do not declare their living place to certain municipality or address.

Budget evolution

There is no specific budget for homelessness interventions. There was a plan in the budget of 2015 to foresee about 5.2 millions of euros for compensation of part of the rent or lease. In general 172 millions of euros are foreseen from EU funds for the development of social housing till 2020. Funds allocated to the housing programs and the housing policy implementation agencies are managed by the Ministry of Finance. Social services are financed by municipal funds, specific grants allocated to municipalities, and personal contributions paid for social services.

REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Positive

The new law concerning support for housing acquisition or rental came into force from the beginning of 2015 in order to deliver changes in the system of social housing.

Negative

There is a lack of systematic and concerted actions to combat and prevent homelessness as a specific social issue.

There is weak policy on social housing, 97 % of housing sector is private. The rental sector is fully unregulated, so the rent is expensive. The support for housing rental covers small part of the rent.

The prevention of homelessness is very weak.

The action plan for development of social housing for 2015-2020 was approved, but the biggest cities (Vilnius and Kaunas) didn't adopt yet the strategic plan of social housing development.

The law concerning the duty to declare the living place to the address will come into force from 2017; otherwise a person will lose possibility to get social services, pensions, etc. Persons who stay in night shelter can declare their living place to the