

# HOMELESSNESS IN LUXEMBOURG

## KEY STATISTICS

There is currently no national-level data-collection system on homelessness in Luxembourg.

The only official scientific study on homelessness and housing exclusion in Luxembourg was published by CEPS in 2007, on behalf of the Ministry of the Family. It offered information on adult users of day centres, shelters, hostels, and supported housing during the week beginning 6th February 2006. 715 homeless people were identified, including:

- 30 people who had slept rough the previous night (ETHOS 1.1);
- 136 people who had stayed in a night shelter (ETHOS 2.1);
- 141 people who had stayed in a homeless hostel (ETHOS 3.1);
- 240 people who had stayed in supported housing;
- 40 people who had stayed in hospital or prison (ETHOS 6.1 and 6.2);
- 38 people who were housed by family or friends (ETHOS 8.1).

Since 2012, The Ministry of the Family and Integration collates reports of social service providers and publishes the results two times a year. The report of March 2017 shows that:

- People continue to use classical structures (day and night shelters for urgent situations), suggesting there are not enough long-term housing solutions.
- The total number of people using the hosting structures has increased steadily.
- In emergency accommodations, the male population predominates with 86%.
- In total, 420 people accessed services from about 17 organisations<sup>1</sup>.

### Key pull-out statistics

Number of night shelters users  
Decrease: from 658 to 354 (2010-2016)  
Average number of nights spent in the shelters  
Increase: from 38,6 days to 81,1 days (2010-2016)

*Source: Ministry of Family and Integration*

## INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The annual evaluation of the Ministry of The Family's "winter action plan" in collaboration with Caritas, Inter-Actions and the Red Cross Evaluation identified 297 homeless people during the winter 2008/2009, a figure that rose to 383 people during the winter 2009/2010, 422 people during winter 2010/2011 and reached 519 during winter 2011/2012. During winter 2012/2013, this number rose to 684 homeless people. In the subsequent years the numbers were: 828 in 2013/2014, 674 in 2014/2015, 522 in 2015/2016 and 864 in 2016/17.

We need better national data to draw conclusions, but it is clear the problem is not decreasing.

## CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

According to the 2016 report by the Ministry of Family and Integration, the number of users of night shelters in Luxembourg is decreasing (from 658 in 2010 to 354 in 2016). In 2014 and 2015, this trend stopped, with 396 users in 2014 and 405 users in 2015. However, the average number of nights spent in the shelters has more than doubled between 2010 and 2016 (from 38,6 days to 81,1 days).

The *Ulysse* shelter run by Caritas in Luxembourg City has reported an increase of the number of young people it receives. People under 30 accounted for 20% of its users in 2016, 29% in 2010, 30.2% in 2011, 31.5% in 2012, 27.5% in 2013 and 24% in 2014. Ulysse shelter data also indicates an increasing proportion of people using its services for long periods. This suggests that specific interventions are required for long-term homelessness.

The statistics about staying time vary:

- In 2016: 116 persons staying more than 2 months – 76 persons stayed less than 2 months.
- In 2014: 141 persons staying more than 2 months – 106 persons stayed less than 2 months.
- In 2013: 134 persons staying more than 2 months – 83 persons stayed less than 2 months.

## NATIONAL STRATEGY

In March 2013, the Luxembourg Family and Integration Minister announced and explained the national homelessness strategy. The strategy:

- was adopted on the 18th January 2013 by the Government;
- provides a framework for all the governmental activities to fight homelessness and housing exclusion;
- requires the collaboration of all governmental bodies and the NGOs working in this field;
- is based on the Housing First approach;
- has four main objectives:
  1. Provide homeless people with decent and stable housing;
  2. React rapidly and adequately to urgent situations;
  3. Prevent homelessness;
  4. Boost the existing measures and consolidate governance;
- will be implemented through 14 concrete actions;
- will run from 2013 to 2020.

The Ministry of Family and Integration conducted a mid-term evaluation of the national strategy in 2016. The results showed that the defined measures have been implemented to a high extent<sup>ii</sup>.

## TARGETED PREVENTION

The national strategy emphasises the importance of the issue of people leaving institutions who have lost their housing and are at risk of being unable to access social rights because they lack a legal place of residence. Social housing represents only 2% of all dwellings in Luxembourg, which makes prevention very difficult.

## HOUSING-LED APPROACHES

The national strategy is based on housing-led approaches, but the shift is not yet complete.

One of the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation was to amend the future strategy with aspects of employment, occupation facilities and health.

## QUALITY OF HOMELESS SERVICES

The *offer of homeless services* run by Caritas can serve as a case study giving some insight into the quality of different services. Caritas provides day centres and overnight shelters. One of the night shelters from Caritas has place 64 people, with dormitories with 2, 4, or 7 beds and single rooms. The other two night shelters in Luxembourg (Abrigado from the organization CNDS and Abrisud from the municipality Esch sur Alzette) have mostly dormitories with between 4 and 8 beds.

### New projects

In 2015, a "Low-threshold day centre" for homeless persons (alcohol consumption is allowed) was opened by Caritas welcoming a maximum of 49 people in Luxembourg City.

In April 2017, two "Low-threshold night centres" for very vulnerable homeless people were established for 10 persons each, run by the Red Cross and by Caritas.

## REMARKS ON RESEARCH

A scientific study on homelessness and housing exclusion in Luxembourg conducted by CEPS was published in 2007 (see above).

The preparatory work on a national strategy has underlined the need for better research, including statistical monitoring of homelessness and the impact of the future strategy. Caritas Home and Solidarity in collaboration with the Public Health Research Centre (PRC Health) have launched a study on the number of people who stay for long time in night shelters without managing to find another housing solution.

A qualitative evaluation of one of the housing first projects in Luxembourg was conducted from 2015 to 2016 and underlined the improved quality of life for the participating homeless people.

The study "*Analyse du mal-logement et de l'exclusion liée au logement*" from the research centre LISER identified two categories of households with financial fragility and/or living in poor housing conditions: tenants on the private market, who were heavily impacted by the sharp increase of rents over the last decade, and poor young households that spend often more than 40% of their income on rent.

## REMARKS ON BUDGET EVOLUTION

The Ministry of Family and Integration and the two biggest municipalities have gradually increased the budget for care for homeless people. Recent investments have been made in the area of youth homelessness and, in line with the homelessness strategy, there are plans to invest in a more housing-led approach in the future.

The service LEA (*logements encadrés et accompagnés*) of Caritas applies a Housing First approach since 2004. Caritas, together with other social organisations, continues working on Housing First inspired initiatives. In 2015 a "Communal Housing first project" for long term homeless people has been put in place. A second "Pathways housing first" project for homeless people with mental or psychiatric issues is planned. Both are organized in intense cooperation with external partners (CHNP, Hellef Doheem, Help).

Others have also engaged in housing first inspired projects (CNDS, CHNP, Abrisud).

## REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

- **Positive**

Housing is considered as the most urgent policy issue at national level and debates about policy solutions are widespread at local and national level.

The social rental agency "AIS" created in 2009 is growing regularly. At the end of 2016, the agency provided access to 363 dwellings for 1420 people with a housing problem defined by ETHOS.

The new social agency "AIS Kordall" was created in the south of Luxembourg at the end of 2015 and provided 51 dwellings for 192 people by the end of 2016.

Since 2013, social housing construction has been intensified and comprises currently 533 residential construction projects with a total number of 10,981 residential units. Municipalities initiated half of the most recent construction projects (61 construction projects).

- **Negative**

In the context of the debate on the decentralisation of services for homeless people, municipalities have rarely been willing to accept any establishment of transitional or emergency structures, even permanent housing for homeless people within their territories. Housing costs continue to increase with an average of 4-5% per year, adding to the already delicate housing situation. Recent measures like a new subsidy ("subvention de loyer") have only produced very limited impact.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/RecensementStructuresHebergement\\_15mars2017.pdf](http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/RecensementStructuresHebergement_15mars2017.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/Evaluation-intermediare-strategie-nationale-contre-le-sans-abrisme-et-l-exclusion-liee-au-logement-2013-2020\\_.pdf](http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/Evaluation-intermediare-strategie-nationale-contre-le-sans-abrisme-et-l-exclusion-liee-au-logement-2013-2020_.pdf)