

## POLAND

### ● Recent data on homelessness

There is no systematic strategy at national level for collecting data on homelessness in Poland. The 2001 and 2011 Housing and Populations census carried out every ten years covered the issue of homelessness but there were considerable limitations to this regarding methodology and definitions.

Furthermore, the Polish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy collects statistics every year from welfare centres across the country including statistics on assistance to homeless people. The annual data from 2017 counted 18,135 people who received shelter (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1) and 41,011 people who received financial assistance due to being homeless.

Since 2011, the Ministry has produced a study every two years on homelessness. However, the voluntary sector has identified a large degree of methodological bias and thus considers the data unreliable. According to the February 2017 study, it was estimated that there were 33,408 people homeless, of which 6,508 were sleeping rough (ETHOS 1) and 26,900 were sleeping in night shelters or emergency shelters (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1).

The annual data on social assistance indicates that following a peak in 2013-2014 (more than 45,000 homeless people received financial assistance), these numbers were falling until 2017. In the absence of any national strategy on homelessness, the reasons for this fall can be found in a combination of positive macroeconomic measures, the increase in projects funded by the EU and new general measures for social benefits, in particular a programme introduced in 2016 enabling each Polish family to receive a monthly allowance of PLN 500 (about EUR 115) per child (not including the eldest), without ref-

**Total population on 1 January 2017:**  
37,972,964 people

**GDP/resident in 2017 (purchasing power parity – Index: EU 28 = 100): 70**

**Number of homeless people known: estimated at 33,408 in 2017**

**Percentage of poor households: 15%**

Sources: Eurostat/EU-SILC 2017 & FEANTSAs

erence to the family's financial situation. The 'National Housing Programme', introduced at the end of 2016 by the Polish government, set positive goals for the fight against homelessness but the practical details of the programme have become counter-productive according to associations on the ground. The focus is still on developing an emergency accommodation system, rather than on a gradual transition to integration services through housing. The programme also lacks reliable financial instruments for the infrastructure necessary to provide assistance services to homeless people.

The average duration of homelessness episodes is on the increase in Poland: in 2017, about one-quarter of the homeless population had been in the same situation for over ten years<sup>27</sup>.

### ● Housing market situation in Poland

In Poland in 2017, 84% of the population were homeowners (11.1% with a mortgage, 73.1% without a mortgage) and 16% were tenants (4.3% at market price, 11.5% at reduced-rent prices or free).<sup>28</sup> According to the 2011 national census, 10.7% of housing stock is rented at a reduced price, of which 5.7% is social or municipal housing, 2.1% are cooperative rentals, 1.2% is housing managed by State enterprises and 1.2% is

#### 27

To find out more, see FEANTSAs's 2018 Country Profile for Poland: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-poland?bcParent=27>

managed by the State Treasury. The demand for buying houses in Poland is growing due to country's strong economic performance, salary increases, the falling unemployment rate and historically low interest rates. The lack of supply, the price of construction and changes in the public housing programmes have led purchase prices to resurge since 2014. However, in major cities, prices remain below the peaks that preceded the 2008 recession. From 2004 to 2007, the Polish property bubble was stoked by the inflow of investment that followed EU accession as well as by low interest rates and the growing mortgage market. After the recession, the Polish Zloty was heavily devalued and mortgages, which were mainly denominated in foreign currencies, became difficult to repay.

The 'Housing the Young' programme was ended in January 2018, which led to a fall in the sale of low-cost housing units. This subsidy programme was introduced in 2014 to help people

under 35 years old, either as individuals or part of a family, to buy their first apartment. The new government led by the Law and Justice Party (PiS) replaced this programme with a 'National Housing Programme', started at the end of 2016 and includes the development of affordable rental units with an option to purchase.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the criticism mentioned above regarding the fight against homelessness, the legislation related to the programme has been subject to considerable criticism due to the lack of protection for tenants' rights that in turn make it easy to evict people.

A transnational call for Housing First projects financed by the European Social Fund was announced in 2018 with a budget of PLN 45 million (about EUR 10.5 million). The projects will be implemented in the period 2019-2023.<sup>30</sup> In Poland, social and affordable housing programmes have already benefited from the Juncker investment plan<sup>31</sup>.

**28**

Eurostat 2017.

**29**

<https://www.globalpropertyguide.com/Europe/Poland/Price-History>

**30**

FEANTSA's Country Profile for Poland 2018, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-poland?bcParent=27>

**31**

To find out more: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/katainen/announcements/investment-plan-europe-eib-and-bkg-establish-investment-platform-social-and-affordable-housing\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/katainen/announcements/investment-plan-europe-eib-and-bkg-establish-investment-platform-social-and-affordable-housing_en)

● Key statistics on housing exclusion and changes between 2007 and 2017

General population			
Indicator	2017	2007-2017 change	2016-2017 change
Housing cost overburden rate	Total: 6.7% Poor: 30.4%	Total: -36% Poor: -8%	Total: -13% Poor: +3%
<b>Total cost of housing (€ PPP/month)</b>	<b>Total: € 320.4 PPP/month</b> <b>Poor: € 257.2 PPP/month</b>	<b>Total: +51%</b> <b>Poor: +54%</b>	Total: -4% Poor: -5%
Mortgage/rent arrears	Total: 1.1% Poor: 1.6%	Total: -8% Poor: -30%	Total: -15% Poor: -33%
<b>Overcrowding</b>	<b>Total: 40.5%</b> <b>Poor: 49.8%</b>	Total: -23% Poor: -28%	Total: 0% Poor: -16%
<b>Severe housing deprivation</b>	<b>Total: 9.8%</b> <b>Poor: 16%</b>	Total: -62% Poor: -66%	Total: +4% Poor: -19%
Experiencing difficulty in maintaining adequate household temperature	Total: 6% Poor: 15.1%	Total: -74% Poor: -62%	Total: -15% Poor: -9%
Young people aged between 18 and 24 years			
Indicator	2017	2007-2017 change	2016-2017 change
Housing cost overburden rate	Total: 8.4% Poor: 28.8%	Total: 19% Poor: -8%	Total: +6% Poor: +14%
Children under 18 years			
Indicator	2017	2007-2017 change	2016-2017 change
Overcrowding	<b>Total: 51.5%</b> <b>Poor: 62.5%</b>	Total: -20% Poor: -18%	Total: 0% Poor: -15%

Price indicators (housing cost overburden rate, arrears) remained below the European average in Poland despite a 51% increase in the total cost of housing between 2007 and 2017. The Polish population however remains largely housed inadequately with a rate of overcrowding and severe housing deprivation that is among the

worst in Europe, although these percentages fell between 2007 and 2017. Overcrowding affects children under 18 years particularly: 62.5% of children below the poverty threshold are living in overcrowded housing

