



FEANTSA

Poland

FEANTSA Country Fiche¹

<p>Key Statistics</p>	<p>There is no national data-collection strategy for homelessness in Poland. Homelessness was addressed by the 2001 and 2011 Housing and Population Censuses but there were considerable limitations to the methodologies and definitions used.</p> <p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy collects annual Social Welfare Statistics from all social welfare centres in Poland, including on homeless assistance. The Ministry also holds a register of homeless service providers. Furthermore, since 2010, the Ministry has produced a yearly national study on homelessness. However, NGOs in the homelessness sector have many objections to the research methodology used and therefore consider the figures to be inaccurate.</p> <p>NGO service providers collect homeless data in some regions e.g. the Pomeranian Forum in aid of Getting Out of Homelessness (PFWB) carries out very comprehensive biennial surveys of homelessness in the Pomeranian region. A data-collection standard on users of services for the homeless and a methodology for aggregating data on unique users of various services has also been developed in Warsaw by the “Shipyard” Foundation for Social Innovation and Research.</p> <p>Census Data 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people sleeping rough: approx. 9,600 on a given night (ETHOS 1.1, Census 2011 - 15/16.04.2011) ○ Number of people living in group accommodation facilities for longer than 3 months: 14,500 on a given night (ETHOS 2 and 3, Census 2011 – 15/16.04.2011) <p>Total: 24,100</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy data on homelessness gathered in a point-in-time headcount of February 2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people rough sleeping: 8,554 (ETHOS 1) ○ Number of people living in overnight shelters and homeless hostels: 22,158 (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1) <p>Total: 30,712</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy welfare services yearly statistics of 2012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people who were provided with a shelter: 16,735 (mostly ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1) ○ Number of persons who received financial support because of homelessness in 2010: 43,206
<p>Increase/Decrease</p>	<p>According to social welfare statistics, there has been steady growth in the number of homeless</p>

¹ Last updated January 2014

in Number of Homeless People	<p>people in Poland from 33,785 in 2005 to 43,206 in 2012. This trend was slightly disturbed by the Polish accession to the EU in 2004, which resulted in a wave of emigration and related changes to the domestic labour market. There is some anecdotal evidence from service providers in Poland of the possible intensification of an already existent increase in homelessness as a result of the crisis and specifically the return of emigrants whose prospects for employment in other Member States have worsened.</p>
Change in Profile of Homeless People	<p>There is a lack of national-level data on the gender, age or nationality of social welfare clients. Local data and service-provider experience indicates an ageing of the homeless population and a continuing over-representation of men. The 2011 Census results reported a significant number of homeless children and a growing problem of family homelessness, although comparison with earlier data is not possible.</p>
National Strategy	<p>National Strategy</p> <p>There is no national integrated homelessness strategy. Between 2008 and 2010, work on such a strategy was undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, upon the request of the Parliamentary Commission for Social Policy and the Family. Key NGO service providers were invited to provide input through a working group. In May 2008, the working group presented a proposal which was discussed at a conference hosted by the Ministry. Unfortunately, cooperation on the strategy broke down and, in January 2009, a less ambitious document was presented by the Ministry, focusing on the regulation of specific elements of homeless services and lacking strategic objectives to reduce homelessness over the longer term. Eventually, this less ambitious initiative was shelved with the financial crisis as a justification.</p> <p>At the current time, five of six Polish FEANTSA members² are working on proposals for a homelessness strategy entitled “National Programme for Combating Homelessness and Housing Exclusion 2014-2020”. This work is taking place in the framework of an ESF project ‘Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services’ (see below under ‘Quality of Services’). The document was submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in December 2013. 5 key priorities have been developed: needs diagnosis, prevention, intervention, inclusion and quality of services. In the meantime, the Ministry prepared a separate, more comprehensive, strategic document aimed at combating poverty, which mentions homeless people among other groups in need of support, called the National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014-2020.</p> <p>Article 75 of the National Constitution obliges public authorities to pursue a policy favouring the fulfilment of citizens’ housing needs, and in particular, to combat homelessness and support social housing and citizens’ efforts to obtain accommodation. Homelessness is also mentioned in two important strategic Government documents. The first is the Social Welfare Strategy 2007-13, which includes the need to assess homelessness as well as to invest in social housing and sheltered housing stock. The second is the Municipal Strategy for Solving Social Problems which concerns municipal duties to provide shelter, food and clothes to deprived individuals (article 17, section 1 of the Social Welfare Act). The Social Welfare Act provides a legal definition of homelessness (article 6, section 8) and clearly states homelessness as a reason for benefitting from the social welfare services (art. 7, sect. 3). Moreover, the Social Welfare Act dictates the obligations of the different levels of government.</p> <p>The following programmes are particularly important in framing homeless policy and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Governmental Programme of Financial Support for the Creation of Social Housing, Sheltered Housing, Overnight Shelters and Homeless Shelters

² CMSA are not participating

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Programme Supporting Homeless People’s Return to Society ○ A European Social Fund project implemented by NGOs in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. This systemic project called ‘Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services’ includes a stream on the ‘Standardisation of the Support for Homeless People’, including the introduction of municipal standards on exiting homelessness. <p>Governance</p> <p>According to article 23 of the Social Welfare Act, the minister responsible for social security issues develops social welfare concepts; defines the direction of development and commissions research and analyses in the area of social welfare. There is no national steering group dedicated exclusively to homelessness. However, in some regions of Poland there are local and regional bodies bringing together governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on homelessness. The General Governance structure is as follows: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is obliged to coordinate and organise the cooperation of public administrations and social service providers, including non-governmental organisations, in the field of social security. The Provincial Marshals, through the Regional Social Policy Centre, supervise the subordinate social welfare organisational units, in particular in the area of financial and administrative matters. The Governor’s task is to oversee the execution of the tasks of the municipality, county and province, including the quality of the social welfare agencies and the quality of services, the standards of which are defined by the Minister responsible for social security. The main shortcoming of the current governance model is that there is a lack of cooperation between the ministries responsible for issues which are directly related to homelessness (social policy, housing, health, justice).</p>
<p>Targeted Prevention</p>	<p>Interventions to prevent homelessness are a small part of overall service delivery.</p> <p>New legislation was introduced in 2005 to prevent evictions to the street, a situation which was extremely common in the 1990s. Unless the court grants the tenant the right to accommodation in social housing, the bailiff has to suspend the eviction until the owner, tenant or municipality secures a temporary accommodation solution. If this falls to the municipality and they are not able to provide temporary accommodation within 6 months, or in cases of domestic violence or anti-social behaviour, the tenant can be housed in a night shelter or homeless hostel (as of 2011). FEANTSA members have raised concerns that this legislation may actually serve to increase homelessness as municipalities do not have the resources to provide temporary accommodation and are therefore obliged to push people into homelessness.</p> <p>Whilst early intervention is generally not well developed overall, some municipalities do implement preventive measures such as eviction prevention based on cooperation between social welfare services and the housing sector, as well as measures targeting debt.</p> <p>The link between institutional release and homelessness is only addressed to a limited extent. The Social Welfare Act stipulates that social support must be provided for people leaving prison that have difficulty adapting, as well as for children leaving care institutions. This includes support for obtaining adequate accommodation, including accommodation in sheltered housing.</p>

Housing-Led Approaches	<p>Homeless services are not generally housing-led in Poland.</p> <p>A new Regulation on Sheltered Housing was adopted in March 2012. This defines sheltered housing, the conditions of access to it and the technical standards for the units. A range of support can be provided to people in sheltered housing, including social work and specialist counselling. People who are already homeless are not a specific target group and the new regulation seems to favour other vulnerable groups (who may be considered at risk of homelessness) – i.e. adolescents leaving foster care, elderly people, people with disabilities and those who have mental health issues. Thus, the new regulation has not triggered a significant change in homeless people’s access to housing.</p> <p>Two municipalities in Poland have tested the Housing First approach (6 flats altogether), targeting individuals who have not benefited from the traditional homeless support system and offering them immediate access to housing with support from a social worker. Conclusions are very positive and encourage the further development of this approach in Poland. However, some local governments, e.g. the Municipality of Warsaw which has been offered a partnership in implementing a Housing First pilot project, are very reluctant due to expected costs and controversy over the idea of “giving flats to the homeless for free”.</p>
Quality of Homeless Services	<p>There has been rapid expansion of the homeless sector – both in terms of its extent and the range of services provided in recent years.</p> <p>A project is currently underway to develop quality standards for homeless services in the context of municipal ‘Strategies for Addressing Social Issues’. It is an ESF-funded project entitled ‘Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services’. The project is led by the Human Resources Development Centre, the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. A wide variety of stakeholders have been involved, including academics and service providers. The project represents a substantial step forward in terms of strategic planning and reflection about effective homeless services. The quality framework ‘Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness’ aims to improve the overall system in terms of its capacity to end and prevent homelessness by developing standards for services which can be applied in a statutory framework. The quality framework was tested in 19 municipalities in 2012-13 period with mostly positive responses. The remarks and conclusions were gathered and implemented into the revised framework, which has been submitted for approval to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in December 2013 along with numerous recommendations for changes in the legislation.</p> <p>The Regulation on funding for overnight shelters and homeless hostels contains a standard for new and refurbished services. As a minimum requirement, rooms in overnight shelters should have at least 5m² per person, up to 15 people per room, and 50 people per institution. Rooms in hostels should have a maximum of 5 people per room and up to 50 per institution. A softer standard has been prepared under the project ‘Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness’ (described above) which is more realistic for older institutions and states that overnight shelters should allow 3m² per person, up to 15 people per room and up to 80 people per institution. Hostels should allow at least 4m² per person, up to 10 persons per room, and 80 per institution. There are currently no countrywide standards for the number of staff for residential homeless services. The proposed standard under the quality framework described above is one staff member per 25-50 service users (depending on the kind of service).</p> <p>Apart from the above mentioned efforts to improve quality of homelessness services by implementing performance standards, outcome measures for effectiveness continue to be very rare.</p>
Remarks on	<p>No research has been commissioned in the framework of national homelessness policy.</p>

Research	<p>Some regional/local research is co-financed by local governments in the framework of local/regional policy making. NGOs and independent academic researchers also conduct various studies on homelessness in Poland. Some of the research fields explored so far include: a socio-demographic portrait of the homeless, data-collection methodologies, the role of low-cost housing in social integration, quantitative evaluation of social and municipal housing conditions in the largest Polish cities, socio-institutional aspects of homelessness, migration and homelessness and others.</p> <p>Two major research programmes were carried out under the ESF project 'Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services'. One was a complex diagnosis of the homelessness situation in 30 municipalities. Another was a scientific audit of the test implementation of the quality standards framework in 19 municipalities.</p>	
Remarks on Budget Evolution	<p>There is no consolidated budget dedicated to combating homelessness in Poland. Overall, there has been a steady increase in available municipal funding for shelter services in recent years (from €5,042,835 in 2006 to €9,714,104 in 2012).</p> <p>Budgets for other major homelessness related programmes, such as the Supporting Homeless People to Return to Society Programme, the Governmental Programme of Financial Support for the Creation of Social and Sheltered Housing and the Co-Financing Fund for Overnight Shelters and Homeless Shelters have remained stable in recent years. However, the latter programme faces a major problem, which is the low and falling take-up of funds for new places in shelters and hostels in recent years due to the unattractive conditions of financing which deter NGOs. Grant values vary from 30-50% of the total investment cost.</p> <p>A positive exception to the above was the €3,600,000 budget for testing the quality of services framework ('Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness') in 2012-13.</p>	
Remarks on Key Policy Developments	<p>Positive</p> <p>In 2011, the Ombudsman for Citizens' Rights proposed to undertake work to simplify procedures, including the creation of a legal basis for funding of the medical care for those not covered by the health insurance, as well as shortening the waiting time for uninsured and homeless people needing to stay in curative care institutions and nursing homes by adjusting the admission procedures to the situation of these people.</p> <p>The subsistence benefit entitlement is dependent on the so-called income criterion specified by the Social Welfare Act. The criterion was raised in 2012 from €114.66 to €130.29 per single person and from €84.37 to €109.61 per person for families. Whilst the increase is a positive development, it should be noted that this hardly covers the ca. 20% inflation that has occurred since the last change in 2006.</p> <p>Work on strategic documents concerning homelessness and poverty have been taken up again after a standstill of several years.</p>	<p>Negative</p> <p>While temporary health insurance coverage exists, some homeless people still encounter difficulties in accessing health services due to bureaucratic requirements and also due to the reluctance of healthcare institutions to apply the relevant legislation.</p> <p>A persisting lack of initiatives to improve the knowledge of the real costs of public homelessness policy (e.g. costs of employment-led policy, costs of dwelling in public space) and a lack of efficiency requirements for existing mainstream services i.e. shelters and programmes for exiting homelessness (also those provided by NGO service providers).</p>

	<p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has presented the National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014-2020, while the partnership of NGOs working on the ESF-funded quality framework project prepared the National Programme for Combating Homelessness and Housing Exclusion 2014-2020. There is, however, a concern that the Ministry may not be interested in further work on the document provided by the NGOs, while these NGOs consider the Ministry's programme too general and comprehensive to correctly describe and handle all the needs and problems that require solving in the area of homelessness.</p>	
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