



ACCESS TO DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN EUROPE:
CASE STUDIES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

LOCKED OUT

HOUSING SOLUTIONS FOR
VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE
TRANSITIONING TO INDEPENDENCE

WELCOME



CONTENTS

FOREWORD - YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION: A GROWING PROBLEM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION	3
PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE, DECENT AND SUITABLE HOUSING: SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS A STRUCTURAL SOLUTION	6
PROVIDING APPROPRIATE SUPPORT TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN PERMANENT HOUSING	7
MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL FOR MOBILITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOUSING	10
IN CONCLUSION: PROVIDING CROSS-CUTTING SOLUTIONS THAT ALSO ENABLE ACCESS TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT	12
WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE? YOUTH RIGHTS, RIGHT NOW!	13

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION: A GROWING PROBLEM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

All across Europe, the under 30s have been particularly affected by the budget cuts and austerity policies of the last few years. So-called *stay-at-home policies* have proliferated in some European countries (the United Kingdom¹, Germany, Denmark², the Netherlands), on the pretext that the social welfare systems are too generous to young people and that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child's transition to independence. Housing discrimination based on age or income is very commonly experienced by young people. A worrying number of young people in Europe are excluded from the housing market or are inadequately housed. These policies run the risk of relegating an entire generation to the margins of society. In addition to being particularly affected by unfit housing, young people are spending astronomical amounts on housing.

In 2015, in the European Union:

- 45% of 18-34 year olds who lived with their parents were in precarious employment.
- 27% of 16-24 year olds lived in overcrowded housing, compared to 17% for the total European population.
- Among European 20-29 year olds living below the poverty threshold, 15% were living in severe housing deprivation, i.e. living in housing that is both overcrowded and has at least one of the criteria for housing deprivation³, and 47% of this group were overburdened by housing costs in Europe, i.e. spending more than 40% of their income on housing. It is therefore clear that the stability and well-being of almost half of Europe's impoverished young people are endangered by housing expenditure. The countries where this level is more than 50% are Austria (50%), Belgium (53%), Denmark (82%), Germany (64%), the Netherlands (75%), Sweden (54%), the United Kingdom (56%), and Greece where 96% of young people in poverty are overburdened by housing costs - an increase of 37% on 2008⁴.

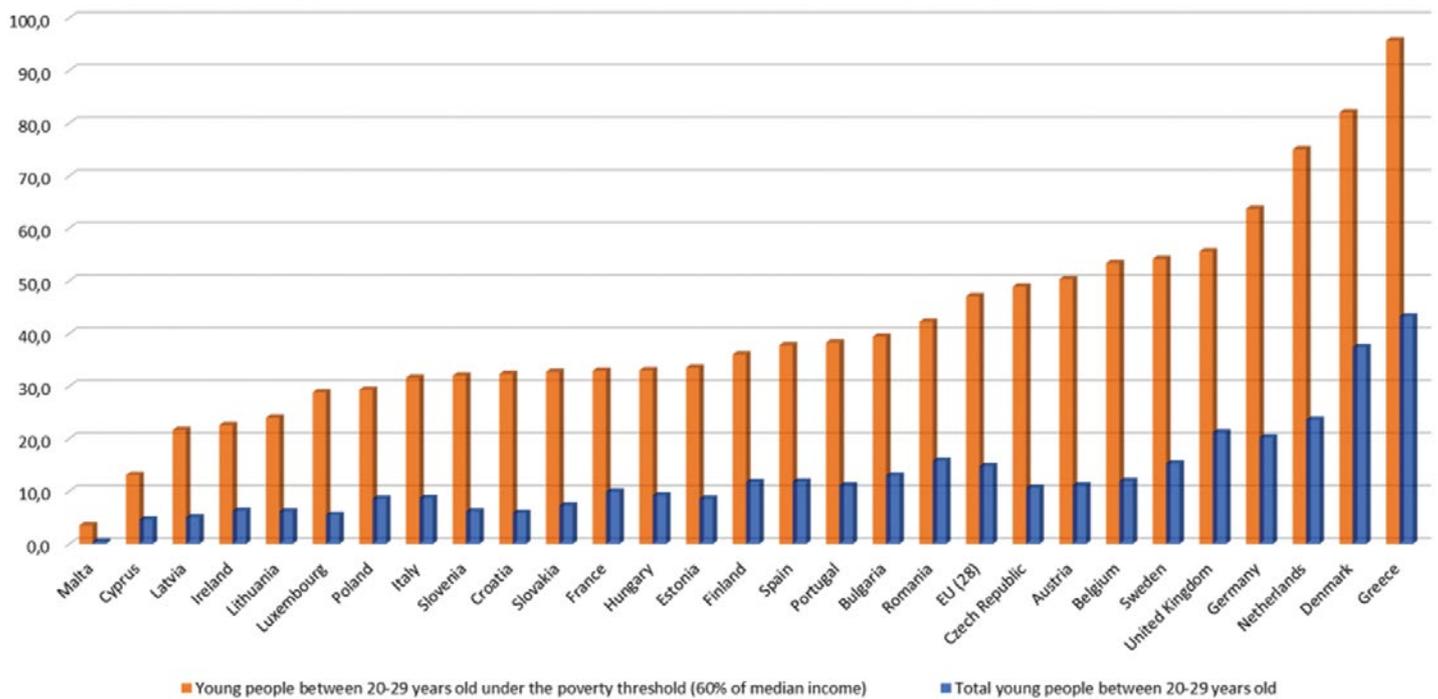
¹ In the United Kingdom, the 'automatic' right of 18-21 year olds to receive housing benefit was removed. Housing benefit for single people under 35 who are renting in the private sector is subject to the *shared accommodation rate*, which stipulates that the maximum amount of benefit received be equivalent to the rental price of a single room in shared accommodation. This discourages independent living. In the 2014 Homeless Link survey, service providers estimated that, compared to 2013, a larger proportion of the young homeless people they worked with found themselves in that situation due to financial problems and benefit cuts. Overcrowding and rent or mortgage debt also appeared to play a greater role in their situation than in 2013 (Homeless Link, 2014d).

² <http://www.feantsaresearch.all2all.org/IMG/pdf/feantsa-ejh2009-article-5.pdf>: The results of this study indicate that structural conditions, including the interplay of benefit levels and the lack of affordable housing, affect young people in particular. Furthermore, in an evaluation of the 'city programme' which aimed to improve social services for vulnerable groups in Denmark's six largest cities, several service providers and other local stakeholders stated that it was particularly difficult for young homeless people to find affordable housing (Benjaminsen et al., 2006).

³ Leaks in the ceiling, lack of shower/bath or inside toilet, lack of adequate lighting.

⁴ Source: Eurostat EUSILC 2015. In general, the countries with the highest proportion of young people being pushed out of the housing market due to costs or living in housing deprivation are found in northern and western Europe. This is probably reflective of the fact that countries with more limited definitions of housing deprivation, such as southern and eastern European countries, do not record the full breadth of housing difficulties that young people face. Furthermore, young adults tend to leave the family home earlier in the north and west than in the south and east of Europe. The reasons for this are complex: the age they set up home, get married, undertake training, the cost of housing and the unemployment rate all vary from one country to another.

Young people between 20 and 29 years old in housing cost overburden (in %, in 2015) i.e spending more than 40% of their disposable income in housing



In the economic context of fiscal austerity, unemployment and increased poverty, young people in vulnerable situations have been particularly affected.

Young people who are especially vulnerable and facing housing exclusion and housing deprivation may be:

- **Young people who cannot stay in the family home for various reasons**, such as family breakdown, violence and domestic abuse
- **Young people coming out of the care system or specialist institutions**: once they are considered adults, they are mostly excluded from the support system which means they no longer have supported access to education, social welfare or housing
- **Young migrants with or without legal status**, who may be facing cultural isolation, language barriers, precarious or low-value employment, family tensions or family stress
- **Young victims of discrimination**, particularly the young LGBTQ2S community
- **Young people with addiction problems**
- **Young people coming out of penal institutions**, who often have difficulty, when released, in accessing support for housing, social welfare and integrating into employment
- **Young people with mental health problems**: the majority of young homeless people are dealing with mental health issues, which can add risks and obstacles to an experience that is already difficult

It is reported that 18-29 year olds represent 20-30% of the total number of homeless people in the majority of European countries⁵. While more and more young people are seeking assistance from social services, many young homeless people still avoid asking for assistance until their situation is really untenable. They tend to use up their alternative options by staying with friends, family or other contacts before asking for assistance from the sector. These situations are rarely visible and may lead to danger or abuse. In the United Kingdom, the annual Homeless Link report estimates that about half of those passing through emergency accommodation and supported housing projects are in the 18-24 age bracket. The number of young homeless people has increased significantly in several countries:

by 50% in the Netherlands between 2015 and 2016⁶, by 78% in Ireland over the last three years⁷, and by 85% in Denmark between 2009 and 2015⁸.

While the structural shortage of affordable housing particularly affects young people, there are some adapted housing solutions for young people in general (such as, for example, building innovative student housing⁹). This paper will look at the affordable housing initiatives targeted at young people in vulnerable situations. **Homelessness is experienced differently by young people than by adults: the causes and conditions are different, so the responses and solutions must also be different. The road to independence is unavoidably via housing.**

Innovation and solutions are elusive concepts, shifting with the points of view of those who use them. For some, 'innovation' can mean the deregulation of housing standards so that smaller, cheaper housing units can be produced¹⁰. Within this series of publications, we want to highlight the experiences that go further than papering over the cracks in the market, and that put housing back where it belongs: not as an investment product but as a right enshrined in international treaties¹¹.

⁵ Busch-Geertsema, Benjaminsen, Filipović Hrast & Pleace, 2014.

⁶ Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2016), available (in Dutch) at: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/51/dakloos-vaker-jong-en-niet-westers>

⁷ Department of Housing, <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/number-of-homeless-18-to-24-year-olds-soared-by-78pc-over-the-last-three-years-35628893.html>

⁸ Benjaminsen & Hesselberg Lauritzen, 2015.

⁹ For example, floating student villages in Sweden and Denmark: <https://euobserver.com/regions/135030> and (in French) <https://www.letemps.ch/economie/2016/10/04/une-societe-danoise-teste-logements-flottants-etudiants>

¹⁰ "Private housing developers should build homes with smaller rooms that do not meet existing minimum space standards so that young people can afford to buy them". Gavin Barwell, UK Minister of State for Housing and Planning, during the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham in September 2016 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/housing-crisis-gavin-barwell-flats-smaller-pocket-a7344061.html>

¹¹ See Foundation Abbé Pierre & FEANTSA, *Housing-related binding obligations on States*, available at: http://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/sites/default/files/content-files/files/housing-related_binding_obligations_on_states.pdf

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE, DECENT AND SUITABLE HOUSING: SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS A STRUCTURAL SOLUTION

Emergency accommodation is not a sustainable solution to the problems that young homeless people are facing, and it can even make matters worse. Short-term accommodation and non-specialised emergency centres should therefore be used only as a last resort. Investing in social housing is vital for housing accessibility.

In the **Netherlands**, social housing organisations work with the health services in order to provide suitable housing to young people in difficulty (house shares, shared apartments) and to support them in their transition to independence¹². Some innovative partnership projects have also come to fruition. For example, there is the case of **Startblok Riekerhaven**¹³ in **Amsterdam**, supported by the housing organisation *De Key* in cooperation with *Socius Wonen* and the City of Amsterdam. For this, a former sports ground was made available for a project of 565 housing units for both young refugees and young Dutch people (students, young workers, job seekers), between 18 and 28 years old. An innovative system of governance was established with the organisation of the project being self-managed by the community of young residents.

Some programmes encourage intergenerational exchange within social housing. In **Milan, Italy**, the **Ospitalità' Solidale**, led by the *Dar Casa* and *Comunita Progetto* cooperatives and by the organisation, *Arci Milano*, enables 23 young people aged 18-30 to be housed in renovated and furnished rooms in social housing in the north and south of Milan in areas where older people require occasional help. The young people contribute to the well-being of the older people and bring life to the area while volunteering for at least 10 hours per month (this time is worked around the young person's employment or training). They can also access support to help become independent in housing and employment matters. In exchange, they pay a reduced rent (up to €370 per month including charges).

In **France**, as in other countries¹⁴, 'rental intermediation' is a tool that allows private housing stock to be used for affordable housing. France's **AIVS (Social Rental Agencies)** can be called upon, even though they are not solely oriented towards housing for young people.

One such agency in **Brest**¹⁵ aims to make independent housing available to young people, in the context of a shortage of places in the *Foyers Jeunes Travailleurs* (residence for young workers) and the unsuitability of the CHRS (accommodation and social rehabilitation centres).

Innovations in fast and inexpensive construction have enabled projects that house young people who are priced out of the market, such as the **Y:Cube** project in **England**, supported by the *YMCA*¹⁶. This is a modular system of independent housing units, for medium-term use. The first project of this type opened in **Mitcham** in **south-west London** in September 2015: There are 36 apartments, rented at 65% of local rental prices for the benefit of people on social welfare; the rental amount is based on the local housing allowance. The off-site construction method (the units are placed on the foundations after construction), the speed of construction (about 5 months) and installation keeps the production costs much lower than an equivalent conventionally built unit (about 25% cheaper). An innovative, patented construction system, based on a 'Panelised Wall & Roof System', means that construction costs can be reduced and, at the same time, advanced energy efficiency can be achieved. The *Y:Cube* units are a scalable solution because they can be adapted to the land that has been bought or rented and they can be installed on brownfield sites that are not suitable for traditional construction. Originally, the project was intended to house individuals coming from emergency accommodation or from the *YMCA*'s supported accommodation. It was then extended to young people coming from child protection services, to students and to underprivileged families. The rental contracts are for a period of 3 to 5 years. The project was conceived as a way of providing an extra step in the medium term to people who need affordable housing.

¹² <http://www.triviumzhh.nl/tm%2018/kamertrainingenb.html>

¹³ <http://www.startblok.amsterdam/en/>

¹⁴ <http://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2012/05/11/social-rental-agencies-an-innovative-housing-led-response-to-homelessness?bcParent=27>

¹⁵ <http://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/actualites/brest-la-fondation-soutient-le-logement-des-jeunes>

¹⁶ <http://www.ymcalsw.org/ycube/>

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE SUPPORT TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN PERMANENT HOUSING

Access to affordable housing without preconditions is essential: the varied needs of young people in difficulty must be taken into consideration so that the process of inclusion through housing is as appropriate as possible. This is why *Housing First for Youth* as a human-rights based approach is essential for any youth homelessness strategy. Young homeless people or young people coming out of child protection services are the priority for these projects, which are thriving in Finland, Ireland¹⁷, Scotland¹⁸ and Italy¹⁹, where a Housing First project also offers support to young homeless migrants²⁰. Some local Housing First for Youth projects were also set up in France and in Belgium.

Housing First for Youth projects should fit five main principles¹⁹:

1. Immediate access to housing with no preconditions
2. Youth voice – youth choice – and self-determination
3. Positive youth development and wellness orientation
4. Individualized and client-driven supports
5. Social and community integration

In **Mulhouse, France**, the *SURSO* association initiated the ***Logis Jeunes*** project in 2010 which has made 40 housing units available to homeless 18-25 year olds through rental intermediation. Housing is made

available alongside a personalised support plan. The contract can last between 1 and 2 years, without a predefined end date and can be ended when the lease falls or when the person is rehoused. One of the most innovative aspects of this project lies in its flexibility regarding rental payment: young people pay a minimum rent if they have an income but do not pay if they do not have the means. Foundation Abbé Pierre provides funding for furniture. Young people benefiting from this project are those attending day centres (living on the streets, in squats, housed by charitable organisation *le 115*, or with third parties) and young people facing family breakdown, who are unemployed or have no access to stable resources. In **France**, there are also well-known facilities such as the ***Foyers de Jeunes (Youth homes)*** and the ***Résidences Habitat Jeunes (Youth residences)*** which provide both collective accommodation and socio-educational projects to young people relocating for work reasons, in training or integrating into the workforce. These initiatives promote exchange and social diversity²². There are also **boarding houses/halfway houses**, which provide housing of indeterminate duration that is both personal and collective. Such homes have a warm atmosphere due to their small size, are intergenerational and come with personalised support provided by the hosts²³.

In **Belgium**, in the towns of **Bonheiden** and **Mechelen**, the ***Kaizen***²⁴ project, inspired by the Housing First model, was created by the *Jeugdorp* association and provides homes for 18-25 year olds at risk of homelessness. These young people are experiencing psychological difficulties regarding personal and social independence, and need a combination of housing and support to

¹⁷ 'Housing First for Youth' projects by Focus Ireland in Limerick (which has housed 40 young people), in partnership with Limerick County Council and Tusla, has been extended to Cork, Waterford, North Tipperary, Dublin and Clare.

¹⁸ <http://www.rocktrust.org/>

¹⁹ The Housing First project, supported by the Apriti Cuore and Caritas associations in Palermo can provide homes for six young people coming out of child protection services.

²⁰ The Housing First project at Ragusa, provides homes for families and for young isolated migrants with or without legal status, among others, and supports them in accessing housing, health, linguistic mediation, integration and, if necessary, gaining legal status. Funding for the project comes from the Diocese of Ragusa, private donations, government and the European Investment Fund. If the beneficiary does not have a minimum income or receive social welfare, the rent is entirely covered by Housing First Ragusa. The housing is sourced from within the private rental stock.

²¹ Definition by A Way Home Canada: <http://awayhome.ca/2016/09/14/housing-first-for-youth-hf4y-a-way-homes-collaborative-vision/>

²² For more information: <http://www.arfj.asso.fr/>

²³ For more information: <http://www.unafo.org/les-pensions-de-famille.html>

²⁴ <http://www.jeugdorp.be/afdelingen.php?qf=6>

navigate the transition from the end of adolescence into adulthood. The team is mindful of establishing gradual changes towards the young person's independence in terms of their living conditions. It relies on an informal network of partnerships with other social services in the community and neighbouring areas. The project comprises 8 studios in a residential care establishment that belongs to the *Jeugdorp* association and 11 apartments in Mechelen town that are rented by the association. The methodology is adaptable: the main objective is to create stable and secure living conditions, around a structured daily programme. The resident is a fully participating stakeholder in the project whose active participation is key to the *Kaizen* approach. One of the features of the approach lies in the idea that a part of the solution to the person's problems is already accessible but that they need to be supported and facilitated. The length of stay varies between 6 and 12 months, the prospect of 6 months stretched out ahead is particularly important to those young people who are directed towards *Kaizen*.

The Housing First strategy has been central to the national strategy for reducing homelessness in **Finland** since 2008²⁵. Against this backdrop, to complement the referral services for housing available to young people, several local authorities and NGOs have developed preventive measures. For example, classes on housing are offered to young people who are homeless or have been evicted and mobile services are offered giving support to young people (under 29 years) in contacting the relevant public services²⁶. Routes back to housing have also been developed for young people in long-term homelessness, with psycho-social support covering different aspects of daily life along with individual and

collective support that aims to secure stable housing and social inclusion. Housing First-type programmes are available to young homeless drug users among others²⁷. The level of support can be expanded for young people suffering from addiction and/or with mental health problems²⁸.

The Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL) is the main national organisation developing housing assistance services aimed at young people. In addition to providing housing – 4000 young people are housed by NAL in Finland – the association offers individual support services devised to meet the needs of young people (under 30 years), whether they are employed or in search of employment. This support is adapted on a case-by-case basis according to the needs of the young person, and goes from providing support in finding a home (*housing advice*), to ongoing support in housing (*housing guidance*) and greater support when housed (*supported housing*). *Supported housing* puts the housing advisor at the centre of their overall support, by helping the young resident in all aspects of their daily life (housing, but also leisure time, finding work/training and linking up with the authorities and public services). *Housing guidance* aims to ensure a successful transition to independence, while strengthening cooperation between the apartment management and the resident; this type of support is aimed, in particular, at young people who have problems managing their budget and paying their rent. This support means the advisor is solely focusing on the housing side of daily life (managing rent, apartment maintenance etc.). The association works closely with the municipalities and other social assistance services. The residents also have the option of continuing to live in the same apartment

²⁵ PAAVO I and PAAVO II programmes, for more information: https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/153258/YMr_3en_2015.pdf?sequence=5

²⁶ These mobile services include assistance on the streets, mobile social work and concentrated efforts to target specific vulnerable groups/environments. The *Vamos* project, led by the Helsinki Institute in partnership with the City of Helsinki, the Region, the Ministry of Education and the European Social Fund, was initiated to provide support for 17-29 year olds not in education and it has been particularly successful. The model has therefore been replicated in different projects, for example, projects aimed at young immigrants and young asylum seekers, among others. For more information, see <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/fr/2016/06/finland-vamos-services-reached-over-1400-young-people/>

²⁷ The Ruusulankatu housing unit is a Housing First unit specifically for young adults.

²⁸ The Alppikatu and Aurora House housing units are specialist units for young people with particularly complex needs. The challenge here is building trust with some young people who may be reluctant to the help offered, in order to be able to support their transition from these units into a more independent lifestyle.

after the support period. The preventive approach taken involves considered selection of residents (where the advisor and the property administrator meet with the future resident to look at the potential for independent living and direct them towards the most suitable option), focus on orientation, fast intervention in the event of housing-related problems, and reinforcing the resident's communal responsibility via group activities.

The housing with strengthened support systems provided by *NAL* are particularly suitable for 16-34 year olds from complex family situations, coming from

child protection services²⁹, for young migrants, for young families, for young people coming out of prison and for young people recovering from mental health problems or drug abuse issues. The association has also developed a series of publications on housing young people, to address the lack of knowledge regarding renters' rights and obligations, and to support trainers and advisers via regularly updated documents. The success of the '**ABCs of Housing**' guides led *NAL* to publish a guide every year called '**Home of your own**'³⁰, which is accessible in several languages including English and Arabic.

²⁹ Young people coming from child protection services have a right to individual support with regard to housing, social services, and integrating into employment to be provided by the child protection authorities.

³⁰ *Home of your own – A Young Person's Guide for Becoming Independent*, available in English at: <http://www.nal.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Omaankotiin-2015-2016-EN.pdf>

MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL FOR MOBILITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOUSING

Young people in difficulty pass through different life stages. Stakeholders in the field speak of the young person's rollercoaster ride through all their issues (employment, housing, family relationships, addiction, etc.). Marginalisation often results from an accumulation of low points affecting different areas of life. The majority of young people will experience low points that are more spread out and this is what enables them to stay on track. Managing to spread out these low points helps to avoid falling into the trap of exclusion. For example, stability with regard to housing should alleviate employment problems. Given the instability of these life stages for young adults, it is vital that they find a balance between feeling secure and having the possibility to move to different housing types. This is why it is so important to have a range of available options, which ideally should be interconnected and complementary. This should be taken with caution: this flexibility should never hurt access to housing with no preconditions for young people.

In **England**, local authorities have used *supported lodgings* in order to reduce homelessness among young people³¹, which has eliminated the need for resorting to *B&Bs*. These lodgings consist of a room in a family home where the young person shares a living area with the host (a family, a couple, or a single person). While not suitable for every young person, this is an interesting model for improving employability, managing substance abuse problems, as well as countering the isolation felt by many of these young people. The issue of isolation is also a driving force in the *peer landlords*³² projects, which create a balance between support and independence by offering homes where the young person lives with a 'mentor' who has experience of being homeless themselves. In each house, support is provided by the *peer landlord*, who is one of the residents. The peer landlords themselves receive support and training for their role as an informal, positive guide for the other residents. Due to the low, subsidised rent, the residents learn the required skills for an independent life and can save for their future independent housing.

In Scotland, *Crisis* and the *Rock Trust* have become experts in *shared tenancies* for young homeless people. The *Trust in Fife* organisation manages a successful system of *RDGS (Rent Deposit Guarantee Schemes)*. It launched its *Tenancy Share* project in June 2013. This project involves supporting young homeless people in shared tenancies on the private

rental market by providing the necessary expertise for home maintenance and assisting in the search for adequate housing and housemates³³.

In **Brussels** and **Charleroi, Belgium**, there are transit housing projects for young homeless people (aged 16-25) in difficulty, known as *KAP* (temporary independent lodgings). *CEMO*, a not-for-profit open education centre has ten fully-equipped transit apartments available. The goal is to offer independent and temporary housing as well as to create the necessary conditions for general educational and psycho-social support with a view to resolving the situation and improving future prospects (family situation, education, independence, etc.). The person can stay for three months, then renew for another three months up to a maximum stay of one year. The association is supported by the youth sector. *CEMO* works in partnership with different AIS (social housing agencies) such as AIS Saint-Gilles, AIS *Logement Pour Tous/Housing For All* and bases the rental amount on the social housing agencies' reference grid. This amount includes the rental cost, utilities and an amount to be saved on a monthly basis³⁴.

The housing access systems available to young people coming out of child protection services vary widely from country to country³⁵. The **Irish system of aftercare** is particularly innovative in this regard. In 2015, an amendment to the *Child Care Act* was signed which made it incumbent upon The Child and Family

³¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7861/makingadifference.pdf

³² <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/our-projects/peer-landlord-london>

³³ <https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/blogs/though-sharing-is-often-the-only-option-it-can-be-a-good-one/> See also the sharing solutions programme put together by the Rock Trust: <http://www.rocktrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Creating-Shared-Tenancies-Natalie-Dawson-Crisis.pdf>

³⁴ For more information, see <http://www.cemoasbl.be/>

³⁵ See the report *Accelerate to independence: Aftercare guarantee in youth care via personal budget*, available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/aftercareguarantee/tasks/outcomes>

Agency (*Tusla*) to prepare a plan for every eligible child or young person on exiting child protection services³⁶. This plan is based on a skills and needs assessment of the person. While the care leavers have the right to aftercare services, it's their choice to take part, if they choose not to take part in aftercare support to begin with, they can change their mind at any time up until they turn 21 years of age. This right can be extended until the end of any studies the young person may have undertaken (up to the age of 23). The Aftercare Plan is not set up for – it is set up with the beneficiary. An Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan is included, allowing care leavers engaged in training and education to receive a weekly Standardised Aftercare Allowance of 300€ per week³⁷.

In most other European countries, this right is not recognised and young people coming from child protection services on reaching adulthood can find themselves at the mercy of highly selective and exclusive housing and labour markets. These markets have very different rules to those in social services, which the young people have been familiar with to this point. Some projects, such as **La Touline** in **France**, led by *Les Apprentis d'Auteuil* and offering integration support to young people (aged 17-25) who have left child protection services in the preceding three years³⁸, attempt to compensate for the lack of action taken by national public authorities. However, these projects do not have the capacity or resources required to address this systemic problem.

³⁶ The legislation is available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/45/enacted/en/html>

³⁷ http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Final_Statement_Foster_Care_Version_17th_September_2015.pdf

³⁸ <http://www.la-croix.com/France/Exclusion/Avec-Touline-Apprentis-dAuteuil-gardent-2017-03-24-1200834386>

IN CONCLUSION: PROVIDING CROSS-CUTTING SOLUTIONS THAT ALSO ENABLE ACCESS TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Access to employment is a key factor in inclusion. However, for vulnerable young people, employment cannot succeed without prior access to stable, secure and suitable housing. This often involves developing adapted plans for integrating into employment. For this reason, projects that bring together access to housing and support for integrating into work and training are particularly interesting. Young homeless people often face a variety of complex problems which prevent them from fully accessing the mechanisms that have been established for integrating into employment and training. The route into traditional employment or even into employment in a social enterprise will always be longer and more difficult for some young homeless people. Intensive support and stable housing are indispensable for these young people so that they can make the most of job opportunities. This is one of the reasons why the **Youth Guarantee Scheme**, developed by the European Commission, that aims to guarantee a job offer, training or an apprenticeship to all young people (under 25) in the 4 months after becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, has not worked for vulnerable young people with complex needs³⁹. Several social inclusion projects bringing together access to housing and access to employment/training for young people in difficulty have yet been developed across Europe.

The **Foyers de Jeunes (Youth homes)** model described above, originally developed in **France**, encourages young homeless people to live together in communal housing for a fixed duration, and focuses on training (including the basic skills necessary for independence) and access to employment.

In **Birmingham England**, an innovative **Live and Work Scheme** was created by the *St Basils* association in partnership with the *West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust*. Social investors and various local partners also

got involved to repurpose a vacant building belonging to the NHS. Housing, along with paid training in the field of health, is offered to young homeless people⁴⁰. The selection procedure (a training period to support the young person in their application, and interview) is intended for young people already engaged in the inclusion process and not requiring intensive support. Also in **England**, a charitable association in the property sector called *LandAid*⁴¹, focuses on fundraising, raising awareness and providing free property advice for associations working with young homeless people.

In **Finland**, the **Oman Muotoinen Koti** ('A Home that Fits') initiative was launched to address, through innovative methods, homelessness among the under-25s. The first year of the project was financed by the European Social Fund, but this work is now continuing with support from the City of Helsinki Innovation Fund⁴². Permanent housing projects are run within this initiative, with the main idea being to enable young people to carry out community work in exchange for part-payment of their rent⁴³.

Today, Europe's young people are first in line to feel the effects of the consequences of austerity policies, budget cuts in social expenditure and the lack of affordable housing. A distinction should be made between young people made homeless due to low income and high rental prices, and young homeless people who, in addition to a home, require further adapted support services (such as trauma-informed care for instance). The effectiveness of solutions to fight homelessness among young people depends on how adaptable, targeted, cross-cutting and diverse these solutions are. **Regardless of the situation, a stable and secure home is an essential and indispensable prerequisite to social and professional inclusion as well as to gaining independence.**

³⁹ See the conclusions of a Eurofund analysis of the Finnish and Swedish experiences: "Youth guarantees seem to be more effective for young people who are work-ready and therefore tend to focus more on new labour market entrants than on long-term unemployed young people. [...] The youth guarantees have not proven to be as successful with deeply entrenched and 'hard-to-help' unemployed groups" (Mascherini M., Eurofund, 2012). Also see European Court of Auditors, *Youth unemployment – have EU policies made a difference? An assessment of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative*, 2017, available at: http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_5/SR_YOUTH_GUARANTEE_EN.pdf

⁴⁰ <http://www.stbasils.org.uk/news-resources/news/innovative-new-sandwell-live-and-work-scheme-for-young-homeless-will-make-use-of-empty-nhs-properties/>

⁴¹ <http://www.landaid.org/what-we-do>

⁴² For more information, see: <http://omanmuotoinenkoti.munstadi.fi/in-english/>

⁴³ The idea came from the Netherlands (Woensel West), where each person who moves into the area commits to work for two years for the community, in exchange for part-payment of their rent (€100). Since 2015 in Helsinki, a pilot project of affordable rental housing for young people in a state-run care home has proven to be successful: in exchange for cheap rent, the youngsters spend five hours a week socialising with the elderly residents. For more information, see: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jun/21/young-people-renting-rooms-helsinki-care-home>

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE? YOUTH RIGHTS, RIGHT NOW!

Within the framework of the European Union's Youth Strategy, the European Commission and the Member States must urgently deal with the issue of homeless young people:

- By ear-marking part of the Youth Guarantee Fund for the support of homeless young people and by monitoring the extent to which this initiative is addressing homelessness among young people.
- By complementing the Youth Guarantee with a 'follow-up Guarantee' to ensure quality support for young people transitioning from child protection services into an independent life. An initiative of this kind might look to Ireland's *aftercare* system for inspiration.
- By guaranteeing that structural reforms in Member States do not push young people into homelessness, for example by using the European Semester to discourage *stay at home* policies that have been unwisely established by some governments.
- By taking measures to guarantee a place for vulnerable young people in the EU's efforts to promote quality training and apprenticeships.
- By ensuring that the European Youth Portal, the most recent Commission initiative aimed at young people, provides opportunities to all young people, including those in a vulnerable situation, and prioritises urgent social challenges such as homelessness.

Within the framework of their national public policies, the Member States must consider the specific elements of homelessness in young people, and establish targeted strategies with adequate financial resources based on human rights⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ The guide '*Youth Rights! Right Now!*', created by various organisations including Canada Without Poverty, A Way Home Canada and FEANTSA, has been translated for various European contexts. It describes the main steps to be taken to establish this strategy. The guide is available in eight languages at: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2016/12/07/youth?bcParent=27>.



**ACCESS TO DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN EUROPE:
CASE STUDIES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**