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# Numbers and indicators: How do we count the homeless in Europe

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# HOMELESS *in Europe*

Spring 2002



## Dear Readers,

The **FEANTSA** newsletter has a new look and a new concept for 2002. By moving to a digital format, we hope to bring you a newsletter that is more dynamic and colourful, that is both pleasant and interesting to read. The digital format allows for easy on-screen reading, as well as printing from your desktop printer. Links to interesting websites and articles have been included and can be followed directly from the newsletter.

The new focus on themes allows both contributors and readers to study important issues from different perspectives. In its new format, the newsletter will provide a forum for discussion and commentary on key issues.

This edition focuses on the collection of data and development of homelessness and housing indicators both in different European countries and for the EU as a whole. This issue is of great importance to many **FEANTSA** members, as well as policy-makers and others concerned with determining the size of the homeless population, assessing their needs, and creating appropriate strategies to tackle the problem.

Inside you will find articles that look at the nature of statistics on homelessness; **FEANTSA's** president, Thomas Specht-Kittler, discusses the possibilities of developing sound strategies of data production on different levels with different aims. Dr. Dragana Avramov revisits her own research into the number of homeless people in Europe. Freek Spinnewijn looks to the future and explains the context of the Eurostat Task Force on the feasibility of reaching common indicators on homelessness for the EU.

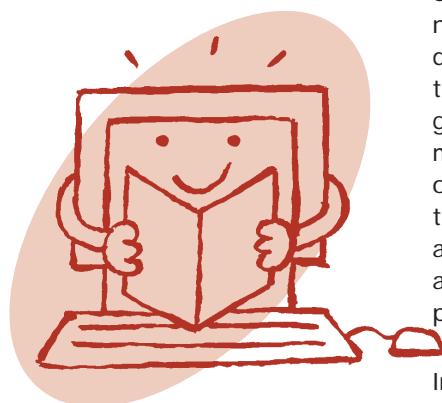
Turning more specifically to indicators themselves, two articles look at the European strategy to combat social exclusion and poverty and the steps being taken to create appropriate indicators. Padraic Kenna outlines the structures in place and the link between homelessness indicators and human rights, while Samara Jones describes the work of the Social Protection Committee's sub-group on indicators and their inability to agree on housing indicators.

Turning to more concrete examples, we look to the EU Member States who have already produced strategies for counting or addressing the homeless. In Austria, Heinz Stoibl has been involved in Salzburg's annual count and comments on its structure. Bill Edgar and Dr. Isobel Anderson provide an insight into Scotland's strategy by focusing on the recently completed Task Force on Homelessness. Moving to the Netherlands, Maria de Cock outlines the work of **FEANTSA** member, Federatie Opvang, in its collection of statistics and user profiles. Finally, we have included a review of the survey carried out by Insee, France's national statistics agency.

Once you have read through the articles, please let us know what you think of the new format. We are also eager for contributions to upcoming editions. At the end of the summer we will put together a newsletter that looks at the National Action Programs – Social Inclusion, and after **FEANTSA's** conference and seminar in Berlin, we will dedicate the winter edition to the issue of immigration and homelessness.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions – please send them to [samara.jones@feantsa.org](mailto:samara.jones@feantsa.org) •

This edition focuses on the collection of data and development of homelessness and housing indicators both in different European countries and for the EU as a whole.





## Homelessness and Numbers: between Fact and Fiction

When it comes to homelessness, debates on numbers, either qualitative or quantitative, tend to be taken to extremes. Even the task of counting rough sleepers can be qualified as impossible. In addition, given the heterogeneous composition and vague borders of the homeless population, qualitative numbers on rates of alcoholism, psychiatric illness, unemployment or family status are highly debated because no common point of reference or defined population exist.

The distance politicians take to numbers on homelessness is closely related to their desire to distance themselves from the basic issues of poverty and homelessness: it is better not to know too much. This attitude gives way to the production of myths on homelessness rather than a description of relevant facts.

It is not easy to produce relevant numbers on homelessness but despite the obvious lack of comprehensive data on homelessness it is possible to develop sound strategies of data production on different levels and with different aims.

### Three main approaches: Research, Documentation and Public Statistics

In the field of statistics on homelessness there is generally a rather confused debate on the scope, descriptive aim and absolute numbers of the homeless population. Numbers are produced for different reasons, with different methods and aims. Thus, before entering into a political debate on the best strategy for producing numbers on homelessness, it is useful to clarify the basic concepts normally used in the "counting business".

In general we can distinguish three general approaches to quantifying social phenomena:

- Quantitative scientific research
- Documentation based on social service record keeping
- Public statistics: statistics produced by official agencies (national or regional)

The approaches are different in terms of their logic, political implications and values, depending on the social phenomena at stake. One can roughly describe the function and structure of the three approaches as follows:

APPROACH	ACTOR	SPECIFIC FUNCTION	POLITICAL IMPLICATION
<b>Research</b>	Universities/ Private research institutes/ Research units	Describing specific or representative populations of homeless people in depth, but usually not on a regular basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no long-term data set available</li> <li>- normally no time-series data for long-term developments</li> <li>- irregular data production due to dependency on research interests</li> </ul>
<b>Documentation</b>	Social services for the homeless	Describing the social profile of homeless service users and sometimes the measures and results within the integration process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if done regularly and standardised, time-series data</li> <li>- restricted to service -users only –not always representative</li> <li>- usually no in depth data in a scientific sense, as data are used for practical reasons</li> </ul>
<b>Public Statistics</b>	Public administration on different levels	Counting the absolute number of all homeless people and those threatened by homelessness and describing their minimum demographic profile produces time-series data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if done properly – will not be restricted to service users of specific services; therefore more representative</li> <li>- official publication ensures public distribution and visibility</li> </ul>





Of course much more could be said about these basic approaches, especially on the different merits and flaws of each. In the end, it is the intelligent and well-balanced combination of all three approaches that will lead to valuable quantitative information on homelessness.

**I think that FEANTSA should ask for better strategies, methods and results in all three approaches:**

1. In every country there should be a minimum of basic quantitative research (targeted surveys), including representative profiling of different parts of the homeless population. There should be national, regional and local studies
2. In every country the social service sector for homeless people should develop an integrated, standardised computer-based record keeping system for clients. It should contain a mechanism by which the statistics of local services can be integrated to a national database on homeless clients of social services.
1. In every country there should be public statistics on homelessness, mainly referring to the dimension of housing need. These statistics should be based on national law and done on a yearly basis. The survey should be based on fluctuation (the period of the year) as well as on a day-count-basis. Covering not only the persons actually homeless but also those threatened by homelessness.

## Social Indicators

We should also clarify the concept of indicators: an indicator in the statistical sense of the word is a quantitative measure which is supposed to give information on a social phenomena, e.g. the decline or growth of the gross national product is generally supposed to give information on economic growth.

In the case of homelessness the overall number of people sleeping rough could be regarded as a measure of:

- a) How open or restrictive the service system is
- b) Development of absolute poverty in a country
- c) Tolerance of the police system towards people sleeping rough

Clearly no number used as an indicator has meaning in itself, but it can be interpreted according to broader concepts.

Most important, however is that indicators are normally constructed on the basis of public statistics, because they are regular, representative and public. Only quantitative measures on this basis can be used as social indicators of any political importance.

Quantitative indicators for the evaluation of the NAPs (National Action Plans – Social Inclusion) can only be politically successful if they are based on statistics gathered by national agencies.

While not arguing against the value of qualitative data, clearly only well-defined quantitative measures will be used in the statistical political agenda of Member States as well as the EU as a whole.

## Definitions of homelessness

The debate on definitions on homelessness on the EU level is long, controversial and complicated by the fact that there are different national traditions of understanding the problem.

Nevertheless it is essential to stop trying to create one single definition of homelessness. Instead, any definition of homelessness has to be looked at in terms of its function and its aim, which sometimes implies a certain contradiction among different definitions.

A solution to this problem of contradiction is the reference to a broad and general definition that must be specified according to its main function and context.

One can make distinctions between the following functions and contexts:

**Legal function and context (important for funding)**

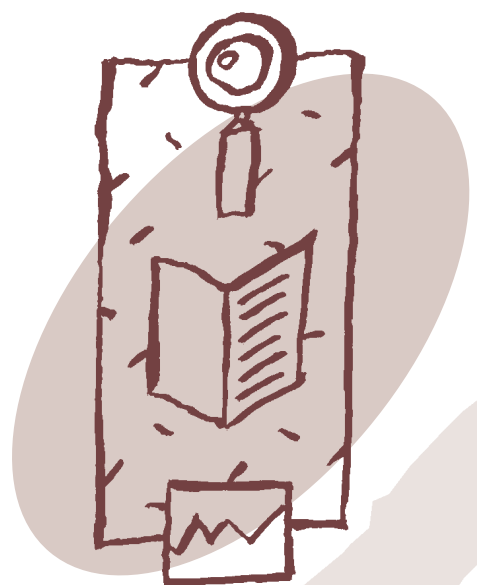
**Integration function (important for social services)**

**Housing function (important for housing providers)**

**Research function (important for empirical and theoretical research)**

These specific definitions might vary within and between countries to a certain extent. A more general definition should be flexible enough to serve all these functions as well as the communication between the respective social actors. Such a general definition does not by itself imply a certain explanation of homelessness but serves as an operational definition.

It is obvious that this definition is not an operational definition for a social service agency for homeless people which has to be



much more specific in terms of problems and needs, but it is broad enough to be functionally specified.

Most importantly however is that this definition assumes a continuum between different situations of social and housing exclusion and clearly includes preventive approaches. Groups at risk must be included to allow for scientific explanations, provision of social services, counting by statistical agencies, and the granting of legal status.

## Outlook

Of course the clarification of concepts is still debatable. It may seem too far-reaching for social workers within the service system. It may be too broad for those politicians who would like to see homelessness restricted to the literal homeless in the streets.

But homelessness will only be solved when all sectors of society work together and that is why we need a broad definition as a starting point.

FEANTSA will follow different paths to improve the numbers: fostering research, developing NGO documentation systems and demanding public statistics. By following these steps, FEANTSA can help to reduce the gap between fact and fiction when it comes to putting numbers on homelessness. •

A definition serving all relevant functions seems to be the following

- People in acute homelessness: all people or households living without a private home
- People threatened by acute homelessness: all people or households directly threatened by the loss of a private home
- People in housing exclusion: all people living in severe forms of housing exclusion such as overcrowding, bad quality housing, areas of urban deprivation

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## Figures on the Extent of Homelessness in the European Union Revisited

In the late 1980s and early 1990s reports from supported accommodation services in several European countries, notably the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, pointed to the considerable growth in the number of people who were provided short-term shelter or permanent housing because they were homeless or threatened by homelessness. Surveys among providers of short-term accommodation in France and the United Kingdom and experts reports from all but one of then 12 European Union countries, Denmark, indicated that there was a remarkable shortage of sheltered accommodation available to people who found themselves homeless. There were indicators of the rising tide of homelessness but no credible data about the extent of the problem and numbers of people affected by homelessness in the European Union.

The starting point for my initial estimates of homelessness for FEANTSA were population census data, local authorities' reports on resettled households or those on waiting lists for housing, surveys on poverty, reports from supported accommodation services on the number of people who passed over the course of the year. Figures from different countries were by default 'standardised'. They reflected the country-specific housing situation, norms regarding standards of adequacy of accommodation, and availability of emergency and long-term accommodation services. Just as in poverty research, the level of income measured in purchasing power parity (PPP) at the same poverty cut-off point (50 percent or less of the median income adjusted for household size) was three times higher in Luxembourg than in Portugal, so did statistics on homelessness reflect different 'social constructions' of homelessness. In the census data of Portugal, for example, a person living in a tent, container, shack or even an elevator cage was not classified as homeless but as someone living in 'units other than conventional dwellings'. In the Swedish census such living premises did not qualify as accommodation.

On the basis of reports from service providers, be it charities giving short-term shelter or local authorities providing permanent accommodation, I estimated the total number of users defined as people who were unable to access accommodation from their own resources. When data from a one-day census were available I adjusted them according to an estimated turn-over rate to give an indication of the number of people who had passed through shelters or benefited from rehousing over the course of one year; and vice versa, when only data on the number of clients over the course of one year were available they were adjusted according to the turn-over rate to give a cross sectional figure. This procedure brought us a step closer to comparing 'raw' data for Denmark (one day census) and Belgium (yearly turn-over). Estimates gave a reasonably comparable picture of the service users who had been assisted or were on waiting lists for accommodation with public or not-for-profit organisations at one point in time and over the course of one year. This procedure was applied to data for Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, Denmark and Luxembourg. The methodological shortcoming of the estimate lies in the fact that it was based on the turn-over rate established for West Germany. It is generally known that turn-over rates may be quite different from country to country and even from one region to another, but I had no research resources to measure them and no primary research was under way in any of the EU countries. A tentative analogy with West German data appeared to be the only feasible tool. I resorted to population census data for France, a survey on extreme poverty for Italy, and informed hypotheses advanced by experts from Greece and Portugal to get an overview on homelessness for the then EU-12.

In order to avoid misleading the public into believing that the figures proposed were actual counts of homeless people I did not produce a table giving relative figures with decimal points (e.g. homeless as a percentage of the total population) in the report drafted for FEANTSA. I did not even add up country-specific figures in a single table. The data were very different: for Denmark, Luxembourg and Ireland, I had exact figures from one-day counts, for France a rough estimate based on the general population census, for Spain reports from the largest charity but not from local authorities. Giving a total in one table could have been misread as an exact count of homeless people rather than an informed estimate.

The estimates made were not meant to serve for mapping homelessness according to different welfare regimes but rather to give a preliminary idea of the extent of the problem in the EU-12. My assessment was: on an average day as many as 1.1 million people may rely on supported accommodation services and over the course of one year the figure may be as high as 1.8 million.





It is the upper end of the range, namely 2.7 million, usually rounded-up for convenience to 3 million, which 10 years later is still generally used as a figure to describe the extent of homelessness in the European Union.

The second step was to look at a variety of data sources ranging from statistical information on severely sub-standard accommodation to expert interviews. I built a database consisting of: figures from general population censuses and poverty research in Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal on vagrants, people living in shacks and premises not meant for human accommodation; indications about the extent of non-assistance in France and the United Kingdom because of the shortage in supply of supported accommodation; figures on temporary accommodation provided to immigrants in Germany; and interviews with experts in the EU-12 regarding people sleeping-rough, squatting, temporarily doubling up with friends or relatives because they could not afford their own accommodation. I proposed the estimate with a rather broad range for the early 1990s - between 2.3 and 2.7 million people may have been homeless over the course of one year.

It is the upper end of the range, namely 2.7 million, usually rounded-up for convenience to 3 million, which 10 years later is still generally used as a figure to describe the extent of homelessness in the European Union.

With a 10-year time span and 10 additional years of research on homelessness, housing stress and social exclusion, insight into the existing databases and currently funded research projects, I believe that similar 'creative' methodology is still the only possible tool to estimate the magnitude of people unable to access accommodation from their own resources at European level.

It appears that in the late 1990s the number of people dependent on services for homeless people or doubling up with friends and relatives may have been decreasing slightly in some countries (notably Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Germany). But changes were small and may have been indicators of fluctuation in the service environment rather than a significant decline in the numbers of people in need of supported accommodation. Indeed, in the early 2000s figures appear to be on a slight increase.

Measuring trends, rather than monitoring indicators, which is what I have been doing up to date, requires good databases that enable the use of advanced statistical methodology. The term 'homeless' has remained, both in research and policy environments, an umbrella concept that encompasses a broad variety of human conditions. To agree on a common definition on homelessness and thus be able to quantify it in order to provide effective and efficient support to people in need, we first need to reach an all-European consensus on standards of social protection, welfare provision and supported accommodation services. This is a road not yet travelled.

Has it been useful to tentatively estimate the extent of homelessness? My answer is a qualified 'yes'. In the late 1990s the policy makers and general public could no longer reduce the social phenomenon to the tip of the iceberg - to the faces of people sleeping rough. Figures drew attention to the fact that it may indeed be said that a small minority of the total EU population was homeless but that this minority includes an unacceptably high number of people.

Finally, if we were to measure successes and failures in combating homelessness in terms of numbers, I would propose going back to the indicators of the rising tide of homelessness in the 1980s. On the basis of the index of growth in the number of people officially recognised by the authorities in England and Wales to be homeless or threatened by homelessness between 1978 and 1992 I had made, at the time, a simple extrapolation. The conclusion was that if public authorities did nothing to prevent homelessness and if only those policies and measures used in the 1980s were pursued the number of homeless people in the European Union could soar to 6.6 million by the turn of the 20th century. Much has been done to prevent this from happening. •

Brussels, 15 April 2002

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*For further reading see projects:*  
*People, Demography and Social Exclusion, Council of Europe*  
*Housing Dimension of Welfare Reform, European Commission*  
*Housing the Poor in Europe, European Commission*  
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### Eurostat Task Force on homelessness

FEANTSA urges for a more important role for NGOs in homelessness statistics!

In the past few years, homelessness has become a more visible issue in EU policy making. In March 2000, the European Council of Lisbon decided to make the fight against homelessness an important part of the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion. As part of this strategy all Member States are required to develop and implement National Action Plans (NAPs), in which measures addressing homelessness should be included.

FEANTSA is currently preparing a detailed analysis of the first set of NAPs. From a first reading of the NAPs, it is clear that policies against homelessness remain largely under-developed. It is now up to the EU to advance homelessness policies in the next round of NAPs in 2003 and 2004.

There is however a critical lack of knowledge and expertise on homelessness and severe housing exclusion in the EU institutions. As a result, the EU is prevented from seriously taking up its role as promoter of the fight against homelessness in the framework of the EU strategy.

It has not been possible to reach agreement on indicators for the common European objectives on access to housing and homelessness as set out in the EU strategy, clearly demonstrating this weakness. Obviously these indicators are essential to strengthen future NAPs as regards access to housing and homelessness. In the 'Report on indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion (2001)', the EU acknowledged that a lack of knowledge was the main obstacle reaching an agreement.

In order to make progress on homelessness indicators, the EU asked EUROSTAT to set up a Task Force on Homelessness. EUROSTAT is the statistical office of the European Commission and works closely with the national statistical offices of the Member States. The mandate of the Task Force is to explore the possibilities of statistical analysis of the homelessness phenomenon at EU level.

The Task Force consists of representatives of the national statistical offices of Spain, Italy, Finland, France and The Netherlands. FEANTSA was asked to become member of the Task Force to represent the NGO sector. It is rather unusual for NGOs be members of EUROSTAT expert groups. We believe that FEANTSA's participation was deemed necessary to compensate for the lack of knowledge and expertise on homelessness of the national statistical offices.

The Task Force will present its final conclusions to the Social Protection Committee (SPC) in early 2003. The SPC, which consists of governmental delegates of all Member States, monitors the EU strategy and is responsible for strengthening the strategy in the coming years. The conclusions of the Task Force should help to reinforce the NAPs in terms of homelessness during the next round of NAPs in 2003 and 2004.

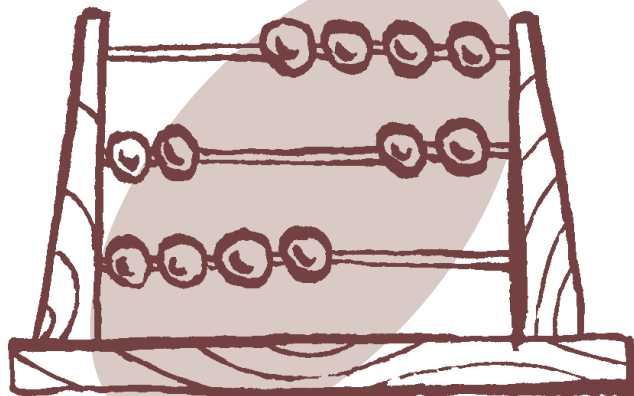
The Task Force's initial discussions demonstrated that EU decision-makers were especially interested in knowing more about the size of the homelessness problem, i.e. the total number of homeless people in the EU. As is the case in many Member States, EU decision-makers regard a head count of the homeless as the best way to evaluate the effect of policies addressing homelessness.

FEANTSA defended a slightly different approach to homelessness statistics at the Task Force meeting. We agree that it would be useful to know the total number of homeless people and how that number evolves over time. FEANTSA believes that public authorities should be responsible for determining this number and to carry out the count. In some Member States, such as Ireland and Finland, public authorities count the total number of homeless people on a regular basis. At the Task Force meeting FEANTSA highlighted the difficulties with counting total numbers. There will always be the danger of excluding some people who are homeless and including others who cannot be considered homeless (any longer). Also the issue of double counting and other statistical problems are difficult to overcome.

FEANTSA understands that counting the homeless can help decision-makers set precise and measurable targets. However, examples in some Member States have proved that there is a danger; reaching these targets often becomes a statistical exercise rather than a matter of policy (e.g. head count of rough sleepers in UK in 2001).

At the Task Force meeting, FEANTSA argued that the profile of the homeless person is more relevant for policy making. The age, gender, ethnic origin, health status, exclusion history, family situation, etc. are important parameters for creating better target policies aimed at the eradication of homelessness. It is clear that an increase in the number of young homeless people or homeless women require specific policy initiatives.

FEANTSA is aware that it is very difficult and very expensive to monitor the changing profile of the homeless population by carrying out regular representative sample surveys. There would probably be very little political support in most Member States for national statistical offices to carry out such surveys. But there is an alternative. Most of the organisations working with homeless people monitor the profile of their clients on a regular basis. In some Member States, such as the Netherlands, data coming from these organisations are collected and processed at national level. The data from these organisations concern the people who use homelessness services, such as shelters, hostels, advice centres, soup kitchens, centres for battered women etc. Certainly there are homeless people who are not using these services. The data should therefore be handled with care. We are convinced however







that the data allow an early identification of trends and changes in the homeless population.

Therefore, we believe that FEANTSA, which represents a substantial part of the homelessness sector in the EU, should be closely involved in statistical monitoring and evaluating of the fight against homelessness in the framework of the EU strategy. The EU should make use of the continuous work of the organisations working with homeless people with regard to data collection.

In order to enforce our position, FEANTSA developed a proposal to research the data collection systems of organisations working with homeless people in the Member States of the EU. The aim of the research is to find out what data are collected on a regular basis, determine the quality of these data, assess whether the data is representative of the homeless popula-

tion and determine whether they are comparable at the level of the EU. We are now looking for support from the European Commission to undertake this research.

In the meantime we would like to call upon all FEANTSA member organisations to inform us about NGO data collection systems in their countries. We would also like to know about recent results or analysis of collected data. •

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### THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HOUSING PANEL

EUROSTAT launched the European Community Household Panel survey in 1994. In 1994 samples of 60,000 households in 12 countries were taken, and in 1995 another 13,000 households were added. (In 1998, Norway also joined the group). Homelessness and homeless families were not included in the survey. All the adults in each household in the sample were initially interviewed in detail about their family structures, their employment and housing, and a wide range of other subjects. The same respondents have been re-interviewed each year since then, forming a representative 'panel' which can be used to follow the experiences of individuals, and whole families, over time. The annual interviews have continued through to 2001; the series will now end, eventually providing continuous coverage over an eight-year period.

A massive database has been building up over the subsequent period that can provide the most direct comparisons between countries. A number of working papers prepared by the European Panel Analysis Group were based directly on the ECHP and can be viewed on their site:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/epag/pubs/index.php>



The last wave of interviewing for the ECHP in its current form was completed in 2001. Eurostat proposes to replace it with a harmonised series of national data sets known collectively as the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). It is not yet clear exactly what form the new survey will take, and how much longitudinal data will be included. EU-SILC will nevertheless provide the primary internationally comparable European data in the coming decade, and it will as important for socio-economic research in the European Research Area as the ECHP has been.

This information was taken from the above website. Please follow the link for more details.





### What are we talking about when it comes to indicators on homelessness?

Homeless people across Europe have received a new prominence in the past two years. At the European Council of Lisbon in March 2000 the heads of state and government decided to put the fight against social exclusion and poverty onto the EU agenda. The Council of Lisbon set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: *"to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"*. In Lisbon, the European Council decided on a number of important social initiatives in its conclusions, under the heading "Modernising the European social model by investing in people and building an active welfare state." This new strategy is based on a method of open co-ordination that combines activities at both EU and national level and respects the competencies of the Member States.

The EU strategy sets out clear objectives and called upon Member States to create national two-year action plans (NAPs/incl) for combating poverty and social exclusion. From 2001, progress would be made on the basis of the indicators adopted by the States in their national action plans, towards achieving compatibility as regards those indicators and the defining of commonly agreed indicators<sup>1</sup>. It was recognized that Social Protection must be modernised, since social protection systems are an essential component of the European social model, and although they remain the responsibility of each Member State, they face common challenges<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the EU Social Protection Committee has now developed a set of indicators that *"address social outcomes rather than the means by which they are achieved."*<sup>3</sup>

*A special concern was raised in our discussions – homelessness...We therefore concluded that National Action Plans should contain quantitative information covering three issues – decent housing, housing costs, homelessness and other precarious housing conditions. As far as homeless people and people living in institutions were concerned, it was agreed that it would be necessary to have better information on these groups. On the basis of survey work already carried out in Member States, Eurostat and the Commission should explore the possibility of better comparable data across the EU on homeless people and people living in precarious housing conditions.*<sup>4</sup>

Of course, FEANTSA is supporting this initiative, having already built up and published a range of comparative data and analysis of homelessness across Europe over the past ten years.

The Commission report<sup>5</sup> on the NAPs/incl revealed a wide disparity in definitions and measures adopted in relation to homelessness, and that lack of access to adequate housing or accommodation is a significant factor in increasing isolation and exclusion. Particular groups such as immigrants and ethnic minorities (notably the Roma and Travellers) can also face greater difficulties in securing adequate accommodation and thus experience greater exclusion. Many Member States, notably Austria, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, the UK and Finland, highlight serious problems of homelessness, and some have attempted to estimate the numbers involved.<sup>6</sup>

*The information on homelessness in the NAPs/incl however is generally poor. Moreover, whenever indicators are available, they often reflect administrative concerns and outputs (people dealt with by homelessness services) instead of focusing on outcomes. Most Member States admit that they know (too) little about both the magnitude and the nature of the problem, which also prevents them from developing more strategic and preventive measures against homelessness.*

*A few Member States provide an estimate of the number of homeless...some Member States recognise that homelessness may be increasing, but this perception is not shared by all...There are indications that homeless populations comprise rising proportions of women, young people, people of foreign origin, persons with mental health and/or addiction problems...Five Member States indicate in their NAPs/incl a commitment to strengthen indicators and their information systems on homelessness.*<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile at EU level – a group of 15 national experts – the Subgroup on Indicators, under the auspices of the EU Social Protection Committee, is working on the development of indicators on housing and homelessness. FEANTSA also decided last year to set up a permanent Working Group on Data Collection and Statistics with the intention of bringing together the expertise of service managers and academic researchers. Naturally, any attempt to collect data about homeless people must respect the right to privacy and freedom of choice of each individual. Organisations that provide services for homeless people are in a unique position to collect information about the homeless population.





"A human rights indicator is a piece of information used in measuring the extent to which a legal right is being fulfilled or enjoyed in a given situation."

Data on indicators of homelessness can follow a continuum from street sleeping to overcrowded accommodation. At a macro level, homelessness can be measured by the extent of exclusion from the housing market or social housing. Thus, creating a common definition of homelessness can involve the minimalist approach of simple (but often inaccurate) headcounts of people sleeping rough. More holistic definitions encompass those living in shelters, institutions, poor quality, unaffordable, and overcrowded accommodation, women fleeing violence, refugees and Travellers/Gypsies and Roma. Clearly, the definitions adopted have important administrative outcomes, and FEANTSA has an important role in ensuring that the definition of homelessness is not confined to absence of physical shelter, at any level, or ignores the structural changes taking place in European housing systems.

Of course, indicators relate largely to statistical data, based on definitions and criteria. General averages can hide pockets of deprivation, as well as individual and group disadvantage. Questions arise in relation to how data collected on vulnerable and marginalised groups will be used. While there is a commitment under the EU strategy to monitor States' NAPs/incl and to improve them in the future, what involvement for the homeless person is allowed? Will the development of European wide data result in centralised solutions, or will the needs of each individual be addressed?

Indeed, there is another approach to indicators, which views homelessness as a denial of rights - to housing, to healthcare, to an adequate standard of living etc. These rights are enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* among others. All European States have accepted these obligations and regularly report to the relevant monitoring bodies on how they are giving effect to these rights. The monitoring of the "progressive development" of these rights, including the right to housing, is based on indicators:

*"A human rights indicator is a piece of information used in measuring the extent to which a legal right is being fulfilled or enjoyed in a given situation."<sup>8</sup>*

Indeed, the report on the NAP/incl accepted that this rights-based approach was deficient in the National Action Plans, despite the fact that all these States make regular reports on the implementation of international rights within their jurisdictions.

*Perhaps surprisingly given the emphasis in the Nice objectives on access to rights, the issue of access to the law and justice only features in a few NAPs/incl...Access to law and justice is a fundamental right. Where necessary citizens must be able to obtain the expert legal assistance they require in order to obtain their rights. The law is thus a critical means of enforcing people's fundamental rights. For some vulnerable groups access to the law can be particularly important but also problematic...<sup>9</sup>*

Accurate indicators and data collection are important in monitoring the extent and level of homelessness across Europe, and to develop policy measures in each State under the EU strategy. Indeed, FEANTSA has a vital role to play in this welcome development. But we must not lose sight of the rights guaranteed to homeless people by international agreements and instruments. Perhaps we are actually measuring the enjoyment or denial of these rights when we talk of indicators on homelessness. ●

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<sup>1</sup> Presidency Conclusions. Nice European Council Meeting 7, 8 and 9 December 2000. Annex 1. para. 11. Website: [europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec2000/dec2000](http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec2000/dec2000) Section III.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Section IV.

<sup>3</sup> Social Protection Committee, Indicators Sub-Group. October 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., paras. 56-58.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Draft joint report on social inclusion 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Green, M. "What we talk about when we talk about Indicators: Current Approaches to Human Rights Measurement. Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 23 (2001) pp. 1062-1097.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Draft joint report on social inclusion., p. 46.



### What about housing indicators?

The development of indicators to measure social inclusion, or more precisely the effect or efficiency of social inclusion policies, is a complicated and delicate matter. Elaborating such indicators at the national level requires the agreement of many different actors; establishing common indicators on a European level poses a whole range of new problems in terms of finding consensus. Member States of the European Union may share a desire to combat social exclusion and eliminate poverty, but national agendas tend to feature different sets of priorities.

#### The Social Protection Committee and the development of indicators

Following the creation of the EU Strategy to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Social Protection Committee was established to monitor the progress towards the objectives set by the Nice treaty. The Committee, made up of governmental experts, works with the Commission. At the Stockholm Spring Council in 2001, the heads of state and government gave a clear political mandate to the Social Protection Committee to develop common European indicators to help facilitate the measurement of policy output. The Social Protection Committee (SPC) thus created a sub-group on indicators and appointed experts from all 15 Member States to begin the arduous task of finding and agreeing upon common indicators.

The SPC sub-group had a clear task: develop and agree on social inclusion indicators by the end of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union. The Belgian Presidency made important progress on indicators, first, by making the development of indicators a political priority, and ensuring that social inclusion in general and indicators specifically remained on the EU's agenda for the last six months of 2001. Secondly, the Belgian government helped the sub-group in its labours by asking a group of experts to write a scientific report to feed the discussion on indicators and to give the sub-group a basis for its work. The Atkinson et al report provided an important insight into the issues surrounding the development of social inclusion indicators. Thirdly, a major European conference in Antwerp in October 2001 allowed the sub-group to discuss the report in depth with its authors and with knowledgeable participants from all over the continent.

#### 18 indicators, but what about housing?

The sub-group had reached agreement on 18 solid indicators that cover four dimen-

sions of social exclusion by the December 2001 deadline. In its report to the Council on 3 December 2001, the sub-group presented indicators on:

1. income and poverty
2. work, with particular emphasis on long-term unemployment
3. health, with a unique focus on the self-perception of health of the rich and the poor
4. education

The fifth dimension of social exclusion, homelessness and housing was conspicuously absent from the sub-group's report in 2001. FEANTSA expressed its disappointment at the lack of housing or homelessness indicators, and wondered why such key indications of social exclusion had not been taken into account.

#### Some consolations

While the sub-group had not managed to agree on indicators for housing or homelessness, the Laeken Declaration of 15 December 2001 clearly indicates their importance. Paragraph 28 of the Belgian Presidency Conclusions states that "a set of common indicators constitute important elements in the policy defined at Lisbon for eradicating poverty and promoting social inclusion" including "health and housing". Obviously the heads of state and government still considered the creation of housing indicators to be a priority.

#### Obstacles to developing housing indicators

The sub-group on indicators encountered numerous obstacles in its attempt to develop housing and homelessness indicators. The recurring issue of available data caused severe problems: in some countries no data exists, in the countries where statistics can be found, they simply cannot be compared with other European data sets. The experts could not agree that the European housing data collected first by the Commission and later by the Dutch and Finnish governments were the 'right' data to use in the development of indicators.

In addition the notion of quality of housing also provoked debate; southern and northern countries hold understandably different opinions about the necessity of proper heating. Furthermore, the 15 national experts found it difficult to agree on using such things as waiting lists for social housing as indicators, simply because the definition of social housing varies from country to country. The Atkinson et al report included some interesting suggestions for housing indicators.

The group took considerable time to discuss the propositions, but could not reach an agreement.

One of the many challenges faced by the group was the complex nature of indicators. Indicators must be created in a manner that reduces the possibility of misinterpretation. The sub-group focused on developing outcome indicators rather than input indicators that compare different policies. Outcome indicators assess the quality of life of those groups being surveyed, and thus analyse the efficiency of the policy.

#### Moving forward

Over the course of one year and approximately 13 meetings, the sub-group devoted the majority of its time to finding common indicators for social inclusion. The deadline – the end of the Belgian Presidency – witnessed success on many fronts, but not in terms of housing indicators. Thus, the sub-group delegated the task of finding common housing indicators to the Member States. The national governments are now responsible for reporting on three aspects: homelessness, housing costs and quality of housing. In the very likely event that the fifteen EU countries come up with diverging indicators, the sub-group is prepared to go back to work. It is hoped that common housing indicators will be developed in the sub-group in the next few months, on the sole condition that this process is placed high on the political agenda of the EU. Without strong political backing and an official mandate from the heads of state and government, and tangible support from the country holding the Presidency, it will remain impossible for the sub-group to come to a consensus on housing indicators. Pressure from the European Commission, organisations like FEANTSA and its members, academics and policy advisors is not enough: a political impetus is essential to motivate the Member States to reach an agreement.

#### Room for lobbying

Perhaps FEANTSA and its members should take it upon themselves to actively lobby the Danish Presidency to address the issue of housing indicators in conjunction with its round-table on poverty and social exclusion. This focus would complement the Danish Presidency's professed desire to make the National Action Plans – Social Inclusion a priority. •

Samara Jones, FEANTSA

## Some national perspectives on tackling homeless (National perspectives)



### Quantitative aspects of homelessness in Austria Salzburg, 2/02

#### 1. Homelessness in Austria – a nationwide overview

In Austria there is a lack of research on homelessness so it is still impossible to quantify the extent and structure of homelessness. There has been only one serious attempt, undertaken by the umbrella organisation of the service providers for the homeless in Austria (BAWO) in 1997, which gives a figure and an empirical basis for nationwide estimations.

In 1997 all services for homeless people in Austria, as well as social services dealing with homeless clients, were invited to take part in a survey. This survey produced an overview of the services, of individual support and of supported housing (Eitel, Schoibl 1999). But with this kind of survey it is impossible to reach the hidden homeless, for example young adults and women in extreme housing stress. Furthermore this survey could not deal with the services for migrant households and refugees, thus this significant section of the homeless population is not adequately included.

#### The results of the BAWO-survey can be summarised as follows:

- About 21 000 people were homeless and in contact with services for the homeless in 1998 (about 0.3% of the inhabitants of Austria).
- Approximately 2 000 of these persons were sleeping rough (0.03%).
- Another 12 000 persons stayed in facilities (such as shelters and/or supported accommodations) for the homeless – about 25% of the clients of shelters and supported accommodations are women.
- About 7 000 migrants from non EU-countries lived in refugee camps and facilities for migrants from non EU-countries.
- The survey also gives evidence that there are huge local and regional differences in measures against homelessness and in standards of supported housing, specific services for target groups and levels of individual support, especially in the rural areas of Austria where almost no services are provided.

For a more detailed view on the extent and structure of homelessness in Austria it is necessary to look at additional surveys on homelessness at local and / or regional level. In the following section you can find a summary of the results of a recent survey on homelessness in the city of Salzburg (2001).

#### 2. Annual survey on homelessness in the City of Salzburg

Each autumn since 1994, service providers for the homeless in Salzburg undertake a survey on homelessness (Gözlner, Wrba 2002). The survey focuses on homelessness in the city of Salzburg because there are no services in the rural parts of the county of Salzburg and it is not possible to provide adequate data about homelessness outside of the city.

#### Homelessness in the city of Salzburg, October 2001

- **519 adult homeless**, 19% of them are women,
- **34 juvenile homeless** (less than 18 years), 38% of them are female.

An annual follow up survey on homelessness is completed with information from the service providers for the homeless and other social services (social workers in prisons, hospitals etc.) who give data about clients who have experienced extreme housing stress or even homelessness during the period of the month of October 2001<sup>1</sup>.

The city of Salzburg has 150 000 residents, and the 553 homeless people make up approximately 0.35% of the total population. The survey on homelessness in

Salzburg shows where these homeless people live, or at least spend the night.

It is evident that only 22% of the known homeless adults live in services for the homeless like supported housing in shared or single accommodation. But there are differences between the rate of provisions for male and female homeless people. A significantly higher percentage of homeless women compared to homeless men live in supported accommodations (28% of the women and 21% of the men). The same is true in other housing categories. So the male homeless are more often in unsupported boarding houses, in emergency shelters, sleeping rough or in prison than women.

On the other hand, the survey on homelessness in Salzburg proves that the services for the homeless have difficulties reaching young adults and women with housing stress or homelessness due to issues of eligibility and/or a lack of age and gender specific provisions of support. The share of young and female clients is decreases in people over 18 years old.

In long-term comparisons of the surveys there is almost no observable development of the extent and structure of homelessness aside from some meagre effects of certain changes in the system of services provided for the homeless.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING CONDITIONS / ADULT HOMELESS ONLY; N= 582

HOUSING SITUATION	TOTAL	IN %	MEN	IN %	WOMEN	IN %
at friends etc.	131	22%	106	22.0%	25	22%
supported housing in shared or single apartments	129	21%	98	20.0%	31	28%
emergency shelter	100	17%	85	17.0%	15	13%
boarding house etc.	93	15%	77	16.0%	16	14%
sleeping rough	42	7%	35	7.0%	7	6%
in prisons	41	7%	34	7.0%	7	6%
in semi-permanent or permanent treatment in hospitals	42	7%	51	10.0%	10	9%
in abbeys etc.	4	1%	3	0.6%	1	1%
	582	---	489	---	112	---

(In this table homeless people who were named twice are not excluded so the total number of housing is higher than the number of homeless persons)

<sup>1</sup> In the appendix you can find detailed information about the methodology of the local surveys in the city of Salzburg.



### 3. Homelessness in urban areas

Since 1994 a number of surveys have been undertaken in several Austrian cities and regions. These surveys are the empirical base for an estimate on the demand for services and provisions in terms of housing stress and homelessness (Eitel, Schoibl 1999), relating to surveys in the cities of Vienna, Salzburg, Linz and Innsbruck. Experience from service providers in other cities and regions confirm these figures. For cities and regions with nearly no professional services for homeless people (e.g. Graz, Klagenfurt) an extrapolation is not possible hence there is no empirically based evidence on homelessness. In Austria almost 3.5 million inhabitants lived in cities with more than 10 000 residents in 1991 (last census). This number will serve as the total for the following estimations of the extent of homelessness in the Austrian cities:

- 2% of urban residents (about 70 000 persons in Austria) are threatened by eviction in the period of one year; about half of them (48%) are women (FAWOS 1/97).
- 0.35% of urban residents (about 12 500 people) are homeless every month and thus need services and support. Approximately 21% of them are female (survey on homelessness in Salzburg, 10/2000).
- Approximately 0.1% of the urban residents (approximately 3 500 people) live in supported housing (at least in those cities where services for homeless are provided).
- Approximately 0.2% of the urban residents (approximately 7 000 persons) live in unsupported accommodations like boarding houses (mainly with very low living and housing standards) or with friends etc. (survey on homelessness in the city of Salzburg 10/2000).
- Approximately 0.05% of the urban residents (approximately 1 750 persons) actually sleep rough – in the streets etc. (survey on homelessness in the city of Salzburg 10/2000).

### 4. Homelessness in the rural areas of Austria – widely unknown

Due to the unavailability of sufficient data it is simply impossible to estimate the amount of housing stress and homelessness in villages and small towns in the countryside. There are no services for the homeless, no empirical statistics and no scientific surveys. The practical experience of social services in rural parts of Austria shows that there are problems like poverty and social exclusion. Recent research on poverty in Austria shows that the risk of becoming poor and socially excluded is even higher, living in a village or small town, than in an urban area (Wiesinger 2000).

POVERTY RISK ACCORDING TO A URBAN – RURAL – TYPOLOGY

TYPES OF REGIONS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN POVERTY RISK	POVERTY RATE IN %
rural settlements	350 000	17%
small towns	320 000	12%
medium and large towns	270 000	10%
total	940 000	13%

The practical experience of the social services in rural areas shows that homelessness will be hidden as long as possible and that, if this strategy does not work anymore, the homeless person is forced to leave the rural society and move to one of the nearby larger cities. The problem is exported into urban areas. Individual motives for moving to the cities include seeking employment, affordable accommodation and – last but not least – to flee stigmatisation in the rural society.

### 5. Homelessness of migrant households

Migrant households without EU-citizenship do not contact services for homeless even if they are in urgent housing stress due to the specific legal and administrative barriers and risks (e.g. loss of permit of residence). Furthermore the services for the homeless in almost all Austrian counties are funded by the welfare system and non-EU immigrants only have limited access to welfare benefits. These restrictions mean that services for the homeless in some counties are not even allowed to provide immigrants and refugees with support on a systematic level. As the target group of non EU-citizens is excluded from most of the services there is very little evidence of their social problems and needs. Therefore the BAWO-survey (Eitel / Schoibl 1999) had to rely on the simple estimations of 7000 homeless migrants from non-EU-countries – actually based on insufficiently updated and incomparable reports of migrant offices and service providers. For example: in 1999 approximately 4 500 people were placed in detention because their applications for asylum were denied but they could not be sent back ("anti refoulement"). De facto illegalised they have no access to social benefits, social housing or social services. The correct figure of homeless refugees and migrant households is likely to be much higher than the given estimate.

### APPENDIX

#### Target groups and methodological aspects of the annual Salzburg surveys on homelessness

The survey on homelessness in the city of Salzburg is exclusively based on a questionnaire completed by service providers and institutions like supported housing, emergency shelter, counselling services, supported employment, churches and abbeys, boarding houses, social services in hospitals

and jails, facilities in the range of psychosocial / psychiatric services.

The survey is mainly focused on acute homelessness of adult EU-citizens. Inhabitants of long-term accommodations and specific supported housing institutions like therapeutic communities, housing for ex-homeless seniors etc. are not categorised as homeless. Services for migrant people do not participate in these surveys because legal and administrative differences hinder a common definition of homelessness or a transfer of reliable data.

Further details:

- The survey on homelessness in Salzburg is not funded by local or regional authorities –it must be conducted with the available resources of the local service providers;
- the annual follow up survey on homelessness started in November 1994;
- each of these surveys covers the period of one month; recently the month of October;
- the main instrument is a questionnaire, with additional questions and clarifications by telephone;
- services for immigrants are excluded from the survey because the results in the earlier surveys (1994 to 1996) were insufficient and there was no realistic chance to improve the data;
- in spite of repeated contact with social security and social benefit providers at the local and regional level these institutions refuse to participate in any form of delivering or checking data;
- these surveys are strictly anonymous but based on socio-demographic data like gender, date of birth, family status, first letter of the last name – so it is possible to eliminate double votes;
- these surveys only include one aspect of the definition of homelessness according to BAWO: acute homelessness (based on data from service providers, it is impossible to maintain systematic data on inadequate, overcrowded or unsafe housing as well as the threat of homelessness due to insecure tenancy contracts, danger of eviction etc.);
- the interpretation of the data is edv-based.

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This article focuses on recent developments in Scotland, and in particular on the work of the Homelessness Task Force, which published its final report in February 2002.

## Homelessness research and policy development in Scotland: the work of the homelessness Task Force.



Homelessness remains high on the policy agenda in the United Kingdom. This article focuses on recent developments in Scotland, and in particular on the work of the Homelessness Task Force, which published its final report in February 2002.

### Devolving homelessness policy in the UK

The Scottish Parliament was created in 1999, as part of a programme of devolution of government within the UK. There are also National Assemblies for Wales and Northern Ireland, and a Greater London Assembly. However, the Scottish Parliament has the greatest degree of autonomy. Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) are elected by proportional representation. While New Labour have an overall majority in the UK Parliament, the current government in Scotland, is a New Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition. Housing policy is fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament as are health and social care, along with education and most employment policy. Homelessness policy is now within the 'Social Justice' remit in recognition that it is 'not just a housing issue'. While Scotland already had its own legislative procedures, post-1999 the opportunities for divergence from the rest of the UK have increased as the Scottish Parliament acquired greater freedom to set priorities across different policy areas.

### The Homelessness Task Force

As in England and Wales, the Scottish Parliament embarked on a comprehensive review of housing policy. As part of this process, a Homelessness Task Force (HTF) was set up in August 1999. Its remit was:

'to review the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland; to examine current practice in dealing with cases of homelessness; and to make recommendations on how homelessness in Scotland can best be prevented and, where it does occur, tackled effectively'. (HTF, final report, p1).

Task Forces have been a feature of New Labour's approach to policy review in the UK, as a mechanism for incorporating a wide range of 'stakeholders' into the process. Membership of the Scottish HTF included:

- The Ministers for Social Justice who held office during the period of operation
- Staff of the Scottish Executive and Scottish Homes (the national housing agency, now fully part of the Scottish Executive and renamed Communities Scotland)

- Representatives from
  - The Department for Work and Pensions (Westminster Government)
  - Local Government: housing and social work authorities
  - Housing and homelessness NGOs, including Robert Aldridge of Scottish Council for Single Homelessness, the UK's FEANTSA representative.
  - The academic/research community.

The Task Force held 30 meetings, over a period of more than two years. An interim report was published in April 2000, in order that early recommendations could feed into the legislative process. The subsequent Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed new duties on local government to develop comprehensive local homelessness strategies. Existing duties to provide assistance to homeless households were also extended to include the provision of temporary accommodation for those without the defined 'priority need groups'. Previously, such households had no clear entitlement to help beyond general 'advice and assistance'.

### Homelessness Research Programme

The Task Force commissioned a programme of research to inform its deliberations. Some 13 projects were completed on the two main themes of understanding homelessness and documenting 'what works' in terms of good practice in tackling homelessness.

All of the research reports have been published and are available from either the Scottish Executive or Scottish Homes/Communities Scotland. A summary of the main findings from the research programme was also published to accompany the final report of the Task Force.

### Helping Homeless People

The final report of the Homelessness Task Force was published by the Scottish Executive in February 2002. In principle, the Minister for Social Justice has accepted all of its recommendations. Effectively, the report constitutes an action plan for preventing and responding to homelessness in Scotland. Given the Membership of the Task Force, the recommendations represent a broad consensus across statutory and non-statutory agencies, as to the best way forward.

The report sets the problem of homelessness firmly within the context of the current housing system, mechanisms for care and support, and economic opportunities. It recognises the struc-

tural causes of homelessness, the range of crisis situations which trigger homelessness, and the need for comprehensive, long term solutions to reduce the incidence of homelessness in Scotland. Some of the key recommendations include:

- Promotion of the empowerment of homeless people and their participation in policy, practice and service delivery
- Phasing out of the differential treatment of households according to 'priority' or 'non-priority' need status by 2012
- A wide range of recommendations regarding collaborative working across service providers to prevent homelessness and to support homeless people through the resettlement process
- A commitment to liaise with the Westminster government regarding improving the benefits system for homeless people.

The report has been well received by the housing and homelessness policy communities in Scotland and is generally considered to set out a package which now leads the other UK principalities in terms of a progressive approach to tackling homelessness.

## Implementation and evaluation

As we move to the implementation stage of the process, it is worth noting some key issues emerging from the HTF research programme. Scotland and the rest of the UK have a very substantial research evidence base on the nature, causes and consequences of homelessness. However, a review of the studies reveals that the robust evaluation of policy and practice initiatives, and especially the measurement of outcomes, is much less well developed.

Key weaknesses in policy and practice evaluation include:

- A lack of clarity of aims, objectives and criteria for evaluation at policy and project level.

- A lack of planning for evaluation. Implementation often leads evaluation, which may then constrain the collection of key monitoring data.
- Evaluations are often too early, and too short, to determine the full impact of a particular initiative.
- Available resources are often inadequate for a comprehensive study.

The Scottish Executive, in partnership with Scottish housing and support providers, now have an opportunity to make a significant impact on the alleviation of homelessness. It is imperative that the changes implemented in response to the HTF recommendations are adequately monitored and evaluated. Otherwise, it will not be possible to judge its success. Should the political climate change to one less favourable to the homelessness cause, quality data on the outcomes from new initiatives will be crucial to protecting essential funding and the sustainability of developments in policy and practice over the long term. The time to put a robust evaluation strategy in place is now.

***Helping homeless people: an action plan for prevention and effective response. Homelessness Task Force Final Report. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive. February 2002.***

The report can be viewed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/society/htff-00.asp>

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The UN-Habitat website allows visitors to access its Global Urban Observatory (GUO). The GUO was established by UN-HABITAT in response to a decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, which called for a mechanism to monitor global progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda and to monitor and evaluate global urban conditions and trends.

The site seeks to address the urgent need to improve the worldwide base of urban knowledge by helping governments, local authorities and organizations of the civil society develop and apply policy-oriented urban indicators, statistics and other urban information.

The site contains information on over 1000 cities, so it can take a while to load and view the data. The Global Urban databases are very important resources and are worth a look.

<http://www.unhabitat.org/guo/>





## Homeless statistics – data collection in Scotland



Under new legislation every local authority in Scotland now has to prepare a Homelessness Strategy. The first strategies are to be submitted to the Scottish Executive for approval by April 2003. These strategies are to be based on an analysis of the scale, nature and causes of homelessness and a quantitative and qualitative analysis of provision and gaps in provision of accommodation and services. This requirement assumes that local authorities have adequate information available to make such an assessment. For this reason the Homelessness Task Force – which was the consultative group used in preparation of the legislation – changed the method and content of data collection by local authorities.

From September 2002 local authorities have a duty to provide either interim or temporary accommodation for all people who apply to them as homeless. Information is collected on all homeless people applying to the local authority to be accepted as homeless. The basic information includes :

### Household Characteristics:

number of adults by age and gender  
number of children by age and gender  
ethnic group.

### Applicant Characteristics

Has applicant come from the family home  
Has any member of the household slept rough in previous 3 months  
Has any member of the household slept rough last night  
Was most recent accommodation settled (i.e. had lived there for 6 months)  
Where was last settled accommodation  
Reasons for homelessness (32 reasons identified)

### Assessment

Homeless, potentially homeless, not homeless  
In priority need (i.e. local authority has duty to house)  
Category of priority need (see below for description of this)

### Housing Outcome

Lost contact  
Offered tenancy (local authority, housing association or private)  
Temporary accommodation provided (and who provided it)  
Referred to another local authority  
Information and advice only  
Was accommodation provided with support  
Was social work involved (contacted)  
Was route to permanent accommodation through temporary accommodation

Because the duties of the local authority relate mainly to people in priority need it is maybe helpful to explain the types of need which are recorded as having priority for housing. These include:

Household with children or household member is pregnant.  
Vulnerable due to – old age, mental illness, learning disability, physical disability, medical condition, drink/drug problem.  
Young person under 21 (previously in care)  
Young person aged 16-17  
Young person vulnerable due to youth (no age limit)  
Household fleeing domestic violence  
Household fleeing violence from persons outside the household  
Household fleeing racial violence  
Asylum seeker, refugee  
Woman suffering miscarriage or in abortion  
Household discharged from institution (including hospital or prison)  
Homeless as a result of an emergency (fire, flood, storm etc.). ●

**Mr W. Edgar** co-ordinates FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness and directs the Joint Centre for Scottish Housing Research (JCSHR).



**New Cronos** <http://www.datashop.org/en/bases/newcronos.html> offers visitors a wide range of statistics covering all EU member states, the candidate countries and principal economic partners of the EU. The site contains more than **180 million social and economic statistical data** which may be **daily, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly** or **annual**, according to the statistical domain covered – are expressed in a whole range of different units.

The site divides its statistics into nine themes, which cover several domains and includes sections on Income and Living Conditions as well as Housing. **A fee is charged to enter the database.** Visitors can select the criteria for their search and send their request by email.



## Federatie Opvang and data collection from service providers



**Federatie Opvang** is a federation of institutions in the area of social relief work (social support services) and is mainly concerned with promoting interests and providing services. All forms of care and assistance aimed at clients from the lowest levels of society and at those in a vulnerable situation due to (sexual) violence are represented.

### Federatie Opvang

- closely monitors developments in this field and calls attention to trends and problem areas. Federatie Opvang interprets these, for example, for leaders at state and municipal level and for policy makers.
- plays a role in public debate and brings social signals to the notice of the general public through articles, congresses and publications.
- offers support by providing specialized services to institutions or social work units in the area of quality control, client registration and consultancy work.

Every year, **Federatie Opvang** collects figures on social support centres and women's shelters. These figures come from FO's own registration system (Klimop) and from the Salvation Army's registration system (Klaver). Annual surveys are also carried out among social boarding houses and transition centres and among all institutions with regard to capacity, sources of subsidies, personnel, absence due to illness, etc.

In cooperation with the NIZW (the Dutch institute for health and welfare, an independent organisation aimed at reform and improvements in the health and welfare sector), figures are turned into clear tables that can then be used to make analyses. The latter are published in brochures and in a detailed report.

### Some alarming signals from the 2000 figures

- An increase in the number of children being cared for in centres for the homeless, due to a lack of space in women's shelters
  - Insufficient financial means to expand capacity
  - A serious personnel shortage because of absence due to illness (12 – 15%)
  - Total numbers of (mainly young) accompanying children rose from 4,900 in 1999 to 5,162 in 2000 in women's shelters. In other types of social support or relief centres, the total rose from 1,676 to 1,873 with the sharpest rise (11%!) being seen in crisis centres.
- Some 55% of these children are under the age of 6 and 86% under the age of 12.

- Total registrations at both women's and other social relief centres rose sharply, from 32,581 (1999) to 34,626 (2000) for the former and from 32,417 (1999) to 35,681 (2000) for the latter.

**Federatie Opvang** continues to stress the issue to the government: more money is needed for adequately trained personnel, more beds, improved security, etc.

In order to maintain social and women's relief work and centres, a minimum amount of 95 million EUR is required.

**Monitor Maatschappelijke Opvang (MMO)** was set up in 2000 on the initiative of VWS, the Dutch government department for health.

The aim of MMO is to maintain and gain an insight into social relief or social support services, more specifically with regard to supply, demand and municipal policy. MMO's task is to promote three functions, under the responsibility of different but cooperating authorities:

- carrying out monitoring activities
- coordinating activities
- presenting and incorporating data from these activities in reports to State and municipal authorities, to institutions and other actors such as Federatie Opvang and the VNG.

Once a year, MMO publishes a review (Annual Report) with figures for demand and supply of social support centres as well as women's shelters. Every year, information on municipal policy is added to this. Information is mainly based on nationally available registration figures from the so-called Klimop system, FO's own registration system and from annual surveys carried out among institutions affiliated to FO.

Collection and presentation of information by MMO take place based on so-called central indicators. By regularly monitoring developments in these central indicators, it is possible to call attention to trends and also to determine the relationship between policy, practice and research. At the end of 2001, central indicators were definitively established for monitoring demand and offer for residential relief centres. The indicators for demand and supply for non-residential relief or social support centres and for street children will follow in mid-2002.

**The Trimbos institute acts as the monitoring authority.** Trimbos is an independent national research institute that works to promote people's mental health. It is both a research institute and a service provider. These services include providing guidance

and information, providing advice on the quality and organization of relief work or social support services, promoting the expertise of professionals, and scientific research. The orientation towards the practical side distinguishes Trimbos from university institutions. Trimbos takes into account many different sectors of society: healthcare, welfare, education, the authorities (national, provincial and municipal), the justice and prison systems and the Dutch population.

Through MMO, the VWS (Ministry of Health) aims to make more use of locally available information and is therefore making contacts and building up cooperation with local monitors in municipal centres. Within the framework of MMO, the ministry also wishes to carry out annual research on different themes and topics. In 2001, the Trimbos institute began research on the increased demand for women's shelters and started an inventory of the services available for street children. •

*Maria de Cock is a member of FEANTSA's working group on Data Collection; she works with Federatie Opvang in The Netherlands.*



*Some alarming signals from the 2000 figures*



## Insee's survey of homelessness

Insee, the French National Statistics agency, recently published the results of its survey on the use of accommodation and hot-meal services.



### INSEE STUDY ON PERSONS USING ACCOMMODATION SERVICES OR HOT MEAL DISTRIBUTION POINTS

In traditional surveys, the persons concerned are identified according to their accommodation; persons of no fixed abode are therefore excluded from most statistics.

As we do not have a basis for a survey among persons of no fixed abode, the method used consists in sampling the welfare services mainly intended for these people. The methodology of the survey is based on the work of the Institut national d'études démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies) (1995 and 1998) and that of the American Census Bureau (1996).

The survey was conducted from 15 January to 15 February 2001 among a sample of 4,109 users of free (or low-cost) accommodation services or hot meal distribution points. The welfare services distributing takeaway food packs are not included in the scope of the survey as they are normally intended for persons with accommodation.

#### Sample

The sample is the result of a three-tiered selection:

- 1 80 towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants were selected according to size. A complete census of accommodation and hot meal distribution services was carried out in these 80 towns by consulting the files of the Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité (Ministry of Employment) and the INSEE file on establishments and by conducting surveys among associations, regional authorities and places of worship; this census made it possible to identify 2,398 services and to measure their reception capacity and their average use.
- 2 In the second stage, the statistical unit used was the "service x day of use" pair; 1,225 such pairs were selected according to the average use per type of service; the major services covered several days. The cooperation of the services was excellent, with fewer than 2% of them refusing to take part in the survey.

- 3 In the third stage, the researchers selected two or four users at random on each visit, either from a registration list or by selecting an order of arrival number, for an interview lasting about an hour.

#### Collection

It sometimes happened that the researcher could not carry out the interview because the person did not speak French or was unable to answer the questions or refused to be interviewed. It was frequently impossible to conduct the survey at mobile food distribution points in the evening. In such cases, the researchers noted the sex, apparent age and motive and selected another person at random: in all, 6,281 contacts were required in order to obtain 4,109 completed questionnaires.

Once accepted, the interviews went well. According to the reports by the researchers, incidents occurred in 3% of interviews, especially at mobile food distribution points with persons under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication. The researchers also noted that the questions were clearly understood; they experienced problems of understanding with only 4% of the respondents.

#### Weighting

With this survey method, persons using the services every day are more likely to be included in the survey than those only using them occasionally. Part of the questionnaire allowed utilisation to be evaluated over a week, so as to correct this bias by means of differentiated weighting.

The sample was also conventionally rectified according to type of service and size of town.

#### National estimate

To extrapolate the results for towns of over 20,000 inhabitants to the country as a whole, the capacity and utilisation of services over the rest of the territory were estimated by means of a survey on services in 80 towns of 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants selected at random. We also used the 1999 population census (census of accommodation centres) in small towns of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants and in rural communes. Towns with over 20,000 inhabitants provide 85% of services.

#### Limit to the survey: persons of no fixed abode who never use welfare services.

Some persons of no fixed abode sleeping on the streets or in places not designed for habitation in January 2001 were not taken into account in this study.

Firstly, those having spent a very short period on the streets without using the welfare network and,



secondly, those forced to sleep in the street for one night, following domestic violence, for example, were not counted in the study.

Nor did the survey cover persons of no fixed abode having spent several days on the streets in January 2001 without ever going to an accommodation centre or a hot meal distribution point, either through ignorance of their existence or through choice. These persons survive through various means of subsistence: welfare allowances, begging from passers-by, casual jobs, help from inhabitants of the neighbourhood, food picked up at markets, products given by shopkeepers.

Finally, the study does not cover persons of no fixed abode living in towns with no accommodation or hot meal distribution services. Here, it is mostly a question of small towns.

All in all, these omissions probably represent only a small percentage. An additional methodological study carried out by the Institut national d'études démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies) in collaboration with INSEE uses other methods in an attempt to assess the proportion of persons of no fixed abode who have no contact with accommodation and food distribution services.

## Persons of no fixed abode

**A person is said to have no fixed abode if he or she sleeps on the streets or in a place not designed for habitation or is taken charge of by an organisation providing free or low-cost accommodation.** This accommodation consists of communal structures, hotel rooms or ordinary apartments; it can be offered for one night or several months.

Places not designed for habitation are as follows:

- streets, bridges, public gardens, waste land, ruins, building sites;
- underground (metro) stations, railway stations, shopping malls, car parks;
- factories, warehouses, farm buildings;
- communal parts of apartment blocks, cellars;
- cars, wagons, sheds, boats, etc., with no cooking facilities.

The organisations offering accommodation comprise:

- accommodation and social rehabilitation centres;
- mothers-and-children centres;
- social hostels;
- municipal or associative reception centres;
- places reserved for emergencies in youth hostels, hostels for migrant workers or social residences;
- public bodies or associations reserving hotel rooms or apartments;
- working communities;

- accommodation centres for asylum seekers, temporary accommodation centres and staging centres.

The survey was not conducted in the last-mentioned centres due to language problems; the populations housed in accommodation centres for asylum seekers, temporary accommodation centres and staging centres are estimated at 6,500 by France Terre d'Asile (an NGO).

Defined in this way, **the category of persons of no fixed abode is larger than that of the homeless**; it includes persons housed for long periods, such as women living in mothers-and-children centres.

Conversely, this definition may appear restrictive. It regards certain forms of precarious housing as an "abode" and also excludes persons with no personal domicile who are forced to sleep in a hotel (at their own expense) or to stay with friends.

Thus, some people live in buildings not originally designed for habitation but fitted out, often in a rudimentary fashion, through the installation of cooking facilities. They are not regarded as persons of no fixed abode, even though they are clearly badly housed. The 1999 census counted 41,000 people living in these makeshift dwellings, such as building site huts, immobilised caravans or converted farm buildings or sheds.

The 1999 census also counted 51,000 people for whom a hotel room constitutes the main residence.

According to the housing survey of 1996, 80,000 people between 17 and 60 years of age and having completed their full-time education live with friends or distant relatives because they cannot live on their own.

Furthermore, persons living in dwellings without the right to do so (squatters) are not regarded as being of no fixed abode even though these dwellings are often dilapidated or awaiting demolition.

## FOREIGNERS OF NO FIXED ABODE

Some foreigners of no fixed abode are refugees housed in accommodation centres for asylum seekers, temporary accommodation centres and staging centres. These centres did not fall within the scope of the survey. During the winter of 2001 they housed about 6,500 people.

Other foreigners of no fixed abode using accommodation or hot meal distribution services were selected at random in the sample, as with French people. However, those unable to speak French were not included in the survey: a third of the fruitless contacts made were due to the persons concerned not being French-speakers.

In the findings of the survey, the global estimates take account of non French-speaking foreigners, but the description of situations does not. The particularly precarious situation of foreigners included in the survey would certainly be aggravated if the non French-speakers had been able to reply.

The Institut national d'études démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies) is embarking upon an additional survey among these populations with the help of interpreters.

## Partners

- Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion (National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion)
- Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité, direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et de la statistique (Ministry of Employment – department of research and statistics)
- Ministère de l'équipement, du transport et du logement, direction générale de l'urbanisme, de l'habitat et de la construction (Ministry of Transport and Housing – department of urbanisation)
- Institut national d'études démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies)
- Caisse nationale d'allocations familiales (National Family Benefit Office)
- Conseil de l'emploi, des revenus et de la cohésion sociale (Council on employment, salaries and social cohesion) •

*Report prepared by Cécile Brousse, Division Conditions de vie des ménages, INSEE (Department for living conditions and households)*

Much of the INSEE site has been translated into English and offers a wide range of interesting statistics and analyses. [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)







## Calendar of events

FEANTSA would like to thank all those who contributed to this edition of the newsletter, and to encourage others to do so in the future. If you have information or articles on this subject that might interest other readers, please do not hesitate to send it to FEANTSA. Comments and additional items on the theme of Counting and Indicators will be posted on the FEANTSA website ([www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)).

### IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

The National Action Plans – Social Inclusion are of vital importance to FEANTSA member organisations, policy makers and others involved in the field of homelessness. Following its June 2002 seminar on the NAPs, FEANTSA will put together an edition of the newsletter focusing on the impact of the NAPs in different European countries. All readers are encouraged to consider contributing, as this newsletter should be a forum for different perspectives. If you are interested in writing an article for the next newsletter, please contact [samara.jones@feantsa.org](mailto:samara.jones@feantsa.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

*With the support of the European Commission,  
DG Employment and Social Affairs.*



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### May 14, 2002. Brussels, Belgium

#### Flemish Congress on Homelessness

Organised by Steunpunt, please contact [Peter.Dekoster@steunpunt.be](mailto:Peter.Dekoster@steunpunt.be) for more information.

### May 23 – 24, 2002. Brussels, Belgium

#### European Conference on young transients –

hosted by the non-profit organisation: **Prévention Santé** as part of a European Project on social inclusion. For more information contact Catherine Bilger: [mbilger@club.internet.fr](mailto:mbilger@club.internet.fr)

### June 14, 2002. Barcelona, Spain

#### FEANTSA seminar on the NAPs incl

For more information contact [office@feantsa.org](mailto:office@feantsa.org)

### 24-28 juin 2002. Rotterdam, Pays-Bas.

#### 30th International Conference on Social Welfare

organised by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)  
For more information, please contact:  
Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare – Conference Office  
at e-mail: [icsw2002@nizw.nl](mailto:icsw2002@nizw.nl). Tel +31 30 2306510,  
website: [www.nizw.nl/icsw2002](http://www.nizw.nl/icsw2002)

### June 12–14, 2002. Casablanca, Morocco

#### Innovative strategies for the habitat of the poor – Stratégies innovantes pour l'habitat des pauvres:

#### Analysis and perspectives for the 21st century – Bilan et perspectives pour le 21e siècle

An international symposium hosted by the Moroccan secretary of state for Housing in partnership with the World Bank and the World Urban Development Forum. For more information contact: [colhabmaroc@hotmail.com](mailto:colhabmaroc@hotmail.com)

### July 1 – 5, 2002. Vienna, Austria

#### International Research Conference – Centre for Urban Dialogue and European Policy

Organised by Europaforum and the ENHR

#### Housing Cultures – Convergence and Diversity

Pre-Conference for PhD students and other young housing researchers  
June 29-30, 2002 Vienna

For details please contact:

Europaforum Wien

Rahlgasse 3/2

A-1060 Wien

Tel. +43 (1) 585 85 10 24,

Fax. +43 (1) 585 85 10 30,

[Enhr2002@europaforum.or.at](mailto:Enhr2002@europaforum.or.at)

### September 20-21, 2002. Brussels, Belgium

#### FEANTSA Communications Seminar

For more information, please contact [Samara.Jones@feantsa.org](mailto:Samara.Jones@feantsa.org)

### October 17 – 18, 2002. Aarhus, Denmark

#### First European Round Table on Social

Co-ordinated by the European Commission and the Danish Presidency

### November 7-8, 2002. Berlin, Germany

#### FEANTSA Conference on Migration

For more information, please contact [office@feantsa.org](mailto:office@feantsa.org)