

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editorial • Challenges, Opportunities and Diversity

FEANTSA and enlargement

- 3 Enlargement of FEANTSA
An unprecedented opportunity or a certain catastrophe?
- 5 Building Partnerships in the Fight Against Homelessness
Access to housing in accession states: what are the key challenges?

European NGOs and Enlargement

- 7 CECODHAS in an enlarging Europe
- 8 Poverty and social exclusion in the accession countries: a European concern

National perspectives

- 9 Homelessness in Romania
- 11 Homelessness in Hungary
- 13 Homelessness in Poland
- 15 Homelessness in the Baltic Countries
- 16 Social policy, Housing situation and Homelessness in Estonia
- 18 Moving towards the European Union - Homelessness in Slovenia
- 19 Homelessness in Ukraine - A bit of history
- 21 Enlargement Links

Enlargement



Building Partnerships in the Fight Against Homelessness

Page 5



HOMELESS *in Europe*

Spring 2003



Challenges, Opportunities and Diversity

The enlargement of the European Union is almost upon us. In just over one year, the membership of the Union will jump from 15 to 25 and the scope of the EU will change dramatically. This is an exciting time for all Member States and Accession Countries as everyone is entering the final phase of preparation for this historic occasion.

FEANTSA is no different; we are looking forward to enlargement as unique experience, but not without some trepidation. This edition of **Homeless in Europe** brings together a varied collection of articles that reflects some of the many questions that face **FEANTSA**. Freek Spinnewijn's article outlines the specific challenges that await **FEANTSA** in the very near future: just how will we enlarge our network? In his article, John Evans looks back at the Phare-Access project that began in 2001. This project was **FEANTSA**'s first real steps beyond the borders of the EU and has proved a very informative and effective exercise for all partners – those within the EU and those about to join. The key issues surrounding access to housing in the accession countries are outlined in a short article on page 6, which highlights the very different housing context in most accession countries.

FEANTSA is not the only European NGO facing these challenges: both CECOD-HAS (European Liaison Committee for Social Housing) and EAPN (the European Anti-Poverty Network) are also contemplating the impact of enlargement on their own organisations. EAPN in particular provides some key insights into the social inclusion process in accession countries.

The second half of this newsletter deals exclusively with case studies from six different regions/countries. **FEANTSA**'s approach to enlargement thus far has been to try to get a feeling for the situation of homelessness in the accession states. For those countries where **FEANTSA** already has members, this task is considerably easier. We asked our members in Romania, Hungary and Poland to contribute articles that explain the nature and scope of homelessness in those countries, as well as touching on their own activities. For those countries where **FEANTSA**'s contacts are looser if not completely undeveloped, we have sought interested authors with a distinct perspective on homelessness. Volker Busch-Geertsema, German correspondent for the European Observatory on Homelessness, has very generously offered a few reflections on the situation of homelessness in the Baltic states, gleaned primarily from the organisation of a conference last year in Rendsburg. Jüri Kõre provides us with an academic's insights into the development of social policy, the housing situation and homelessness in Estonia. Tjasa Tabaj a journalist from Slovenia contacted us late last year in her research on a story about homelessness in Europe; she has now returned the favour and contributes a short piece about homelessness in Slovenia.

Our final article comes from Ukraine, a country with which **FEANTSA** has ties, but one that is not yet a candidate for European membership. The situation in the Ukraine is particularly interesting, however, as the article charts the very valuable experience gained from cooperation with a Dutch organisation – some first steps towards transnational exchange.

Finally we've included a list of some key Internet links that will help you in your own pursuit of information about homelessness in accession countries. Enlargement provides us with fantastic opportunities to share experiences and knowledge across the continent, but the sheer diversity of language, culture and political history does not make it easy. Finding information, organisations, and potential partners – these are all key challenges for **FEANTSA** over the next months and years.

Please do not hesitate to send us your comments: we are eager for more contacts with people involved in providing services to homeless people in accession countries and hope that this newsletter sparks some interest and provokes reactions! samara.jones@feantsa.org •



Enlargement of FEANTSA An unprecedented opportunity or a certain catastrophe?

By the middle of 2004, 10 new countries will have joined the European Union. The Union will have to undergo major restructuring in order to remain operational and effective. But European social NGOs also face major challenges and will have to substantially adapt their way of working in order to survive in and contribute to an enlarged Union.

The enlargement of the Union is a historic opportunity to demonstrate the added value of transnational co-operation. European social NGOs must play a part in the major effort to make the enlargement of the Union a success both for the acceding countries and the current Member States. In order to take up this role European social NGOs must enlarge their own network first of all. For several European social NGOs this is a complex and burdensome process.

The enlargement of **FEANTSA** will allow us to strengthen our work. We will be able to broaden and deepen our expertise on issues related to homelessness and severe housing exclusion. But we do not want to ignore the problems and the risks enlargement will bring. It is very difficult to anticipate the implications of enlargement for **FEANTSA**: Will it jeopardise the cohesion between our members? How will it affect our lobbying strength? Will it change our approach to homelessness? Will we be able to maintain a strong bottom-up approach? Etc.

FEANTSA is aware of the need to enlarge its network quickly, but we are careful and will enlarge in a sustainable way. We are currently developing a comprehensive strategy, which includes two important challenges: enlarging our membership, and enlarging our work programme. It is obvious that both these challenges will affect our methods of working and our decision-making processes.

Enlarging **FEANTSA**'s membership into the accession states is more difficult than it looks at first sight. **FEANTSA**'s current member organisations are mostly national and regional networks of organisations working with the homeless. We try to limit the membership of local associations. In this way our European network remains manageable without compromising our representativeness and effectiveness. The voluntary homeless sector in most accession states however remains largely underdeveloped. The sector often consists of mostly local service providers - hostels, night shelters, etc. - which do not or only incidentally co-operate at regional or national level. Consequently the sector's impact on and interest for policy making at regional, national and certainly European levels is limited. **FEANTSA** is currently carefully

mapping the voluntary homeless sector in all accession states in order to have a better idea of who are the main actors and how they co-operate. We will develop a strategy to enlarge our membership on the basis of this mapping exercise. We believe this is the only way we can remain representative and effective. Because of the difficulties accessing information on homelessness and the homeless sector in accession states, this mapping exercise will take time and require resources. It is very likely, therefore that we will not have member organisations in all accession states by the middle of 2004. The European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs) has been unable to support our efforts to prepare for enlargement up till now. It would therefore not be realistic to expect **FEANTSA** to have homeless organisations from all accession states lined up to join our network in the next few months.

Enlarging our annual work programme will probably be even more difficult. With enlargement the expectations from our members will be more diverse and varied and probably also more difficult to reconcile. The aim and the outcome of our work will probably change after enlargement. During the last few years **FEANTSA**'s work programme included four important parts: lobbying, transnational exchange of information and experiences; research; and information.

The differences between the Member States with regard to the scope and the nature of homelessness, the policies addressing homelessness, the approaches of the voluntary sector to homelessness, the legal framework with regard to housing and social welfare, etc. will increase substantially after enlargement. These differences are a source of new ideas for our member organisations, which could make the transnational exchange of information and experiences more valuable and more interesting. But at the same time these increased differences between the Member States after enlargement will complicate our lobbying. It will probably become much more difficult to adopt common **FEANTSA** positions on issues related to homelessness and severe housing exclusion. A lobbying strategy based solely on common positions will probably not be possible any longer.

Enlargement also brings new opportunities for lobbying. Considering the deplorable state of the housing stock and its close relation with (extreme) poverty in most accession states, it will be much more difficult for the EU to ignore housing as a key instrument in its social inclusion and social cohesion policies.



The enlargement of FEANTSA will allow us to strengthen our work.

We will be able to broaden and deepen our expertise on issues related to homelessness and severe housing exclusion. But we do not want to ignore the problems and the risks enlargement will bring.

We believe that EU institutions should be aware of the major changes many European social NGOs will undergo. Common positions should not be considered any longer as the main contribution from European NGOs. EU policy makers should consider the variety of opinions and viewpoints existing within European social NGOs as a resource rather than as a sign of failure or ineffectiveness of the NGOs.

It is obvious that the enlargement of **FEANTSA** will also affect our research strategy. Enlarging our European Observatory on Homelessness and integrating new researchers from accession states will take time and require substantial additional resources. The lack and reliability of data and primary research on homelessness is a problem in most of the current Member States of the EU and limits to a certain extent the possibilities for European research conducted by the Observatory. In several accession states the lack of data and primary research is an even more serious problem and could render good quality secondary research on homelessness extremely difficult or even impossible. We have started to change the research approach and the research strategy of European Observatory to make it more flexible and to facilitate the integration of researchers from acceding countries.

Information and communication will become a very important part of our work after enlargement. Information and communication will be key to keep the European network of FEANTSA together. We want to continue to provide infor-

mation from regional and national level as well as from the EU level. It is obvious that we will need additional resources to cover homelessness and related issues in the 10 new countries.

As mentioned before the enlargement of the membership and the work programme will have important effects on the structure and decision making procedures of FEANTSA. It could jeopardise our bottom up approach and lead to a democratic deficit. Substantial additional resources will be required to maintain the democratic functioning of European NGOs.

FEANTSA was created more than 10 years ago and has developed, with the support of the European Commission, an effective European network that keeps a good balance between serving the needs of its member organisations and being a valuable partner for EU institutions in developing a comprehensive social policy. The challenge will be to keep this balance after enlargement. Both FEANTSA and the European Commission - as the main provider of funding for **FEANTSA** - are responsible for making the transition as smooth as possible. We have started to develop a strategy to integrate the voluntary homeless sector in our network. The Commission should be aware that time and resources that will be required for this integration and the effects of the enlargement on the (outcome of) work of European social NGOs such as FEANTSA. It would be a shame that the effectiveness of European social NGOs would be put in danger by an underestimation of the impact of enlargement. •

Freek Spinnewijn - Director, FEANTSA
Freek.Spinnewijn@feantsa.org



Building Partnerships in the Fight Against Homelessness

This Phare Access 99 programme was promoted by the Czech organisations S.A.D. (Association of Czech Hostels and lead applicant), Amada Spasy and NADEJE. It is the first time that FEANTSA has been actively involved in a formal way in the Accession Countries and springs from several years of informal contact including attendance at conferences and fact finding missions by FEANTSA staff and Administrative Council members.

The project consisted of a number of activities aimed at information gathering, mutual understanding and training.

Briefly, activity one took place in the Czech Republic with visits to projects for homeless people in Prague and Pilsen, followed by a seminar at which partners were able to get to know each other and begin to establish the foundations for future networking. The event was particularly beneficial in enabling partners to meet each other face to face. NGOs working in European Union countries and those in Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia also working in the fields of exclusion and homelessness had the opportunity to begin to develop an understanding of each other's situation. In particular, the homeless sector in the Czech Republic - legislation, social and private housing situation, level of State care, NGO projects and such were explored first hand.

The second activity took place in Posnan, Poland and was hosted by the Barka Foundation. In addition to basic fact finding the focus was on supported accommodation and the transition to reintegration into the community. Again the time was split into field visits and a seminar. The former included looking at projects ranging from night shelters to communal supported living, a communal farm and supported workshops run on a semi-commercial basis. At the seminar Polish NGOs and also Public Authorities presented their views. It was no surprise that the inadequacy of the social housing supply was a major issue and one that recurred consistently throughout the project. An interesting insight was also given into the principles of the Kofeod School - guiding clients to self-help and engaging those who have progressed through the programme to both encourage and lead those who follow on.

A five-day seminar made up the third activity. This was reserved for partner organisations from the Accession States with input from them and from EU experts. The contribution from FEANTSA staff and member organisations was particularly valuable here with a wide range of

areas covered. Day one began with finance and funding and very practical guidance on the European Social Fund and preparation of project applications. This was followed by sessions on lobbying at local and national level and the importance of establishing contacts and networking with all relevant actors in the public, private and NGO sectors. Day three looked at the value of accurate data collection and its evaluation and the fourth session began to explore the questions of fundraising and the employment of volunteers. The final day presented the possibilities of EU programmes and looked in detail at Igloo and Equal. The aim of these programmes being the development of practical solutions for the reintegration into society through work and housing of those who are socially excluded.

The fourth and final activity was a study visit to Vienna with a twofold aim. Firstly to learn about the work of the Austrian and German homelessness umbrella organisations - BAWO and BAGW. Secondly to look at the innovative ways homelessness is being tackled in Austria.

The last phase of the project will be the publication of a booklet entitled "Examples of Best Practise in the Fight against Homelessness". This will describe and analyse the activities of the whole project and is intended to serve as a handbook for NGOs working with homeless people.

So where from here? Perhaps the one common outstanding problem in all the Accession States is the lack of any reasonable supply of affordable social housing and the lack of all but a very small private rented sector. This coupled with the generally poor quality of what housing stock there is means there is virtually no accommodation available to offer to homeless people. As is the common experience in the EU, rehabilitation programmes are of little use - whatever the level of support offered - without a supply of good quality, affordable houses as the end result for people to live in. A massive investment in bricks and mortar is required to achieve this in the Accession Countries.

Moving on from this general point it is important to emphasise that there are major differences between Accession States with regard to homelessness as is the case within the EU. Romania and Estonia, for example, have a population of street children which is not evident elsewhere. However throughout all countries Roma People are particularly susceptible to becoming homeless and probably also receive the poorest services - frequently being seen as Stateless persons.

Perhaps the one common outstanding problem in all the Accession States is the lack of any reasonable supply of affordable social housing and the lack of all but a very small private rented sector.



Currently most homeless services are of necessity providing an emergency response to a growing homelessness crisis in Central Europe. There are exceptions, most notably the work of the Barka Foundation in Poland. Such however is the actual and potential future scale of the problem that a major investment in resources at every level is urgently required. It would, for example, be simply impossible to replicate the work of Barka, admirable as it is, on a scale to address the issue. Innovative and lateral thinking is required, both to address current homelessness in the Accession States and to prevent it in the future. If there is one lesson to learn from the EU countries it must surely be that to fail to invest in a programme of homelessness prevention in parallel with assisting those currently in need is a recipe for continuing and growing problems.

Finally definitions and statistics. These go hand in hand. It is clear from what statistical information is available that comparisons and accuracy are impossible. It would be a great step forward if FEANTSA's definition of homelessness was adopted as universally as possible. Currently statistical information from the Accession States is based on estimates from NGOs on the one hand and government statistics on the other with little clear indication as to the basis of the estimates. The extent of homelessness today and tomorrow may well be far greater than we fear. In a very short space of time it will be a European Union problem and one which cannot be ignored. •

John Evans - FEANTSA
johnandlyn@evans.3rdwave.co.uk

Access to housing in accession states: what are the key challenges?

The housing markets and therefore access to housing for vulnerable groups differs considerably from one accession state to the other. Nevertheless there are some common characteristics resulting from the common heritage of communist regimes and the rapid change to democracy and a free market.

SHRINKING ROLE OF THE STATE

Under communist rule the State owned a large part of the housing stock. After the collapse of the communist regime, extensive privatisation of the public housing stock took place in all accession states. In most countries the privatisation happened in two stages: first the rental housing owned by the State was transferred to the municipalities, and then the municipalities sold most of the rental stock - often at large discounts and sometimes even for free - to the sitting tenants. As a result there is an acute lack of social/public housing in most accession states.

In many accession states, the local authorities are the main players in housing policy. They often have extensive liberty to set housing policies (e.g. allocation of social housing, rent levels, etc.), but are confronted with acute shortage of resources. This is the main reason why local authorities transferred most of the public housing stock to the tenants. A national framework for housing policies remains underdeveloped or is inexistent in most accession states.

HIGH RATES OF HOMEOWNERSHIP

In most accession states there is a very/too high level of homeownership - sometimes more than 90% of the population are homeowners. In most accession states a large part of the homeowners have severe financial problems and can often not even pay for the basic maintenance of their dwellings. Poverty amongst homeowners is a huge problem in most accession states compared to the current EU Member States where it is a relatively minor phenomenon. Condominium ownership is the most widespread form of homeownership in many accession states. Condominium ownership developed during the privatisation of the multi-flat housing stock. There are many low-income families who own a flat as part of a condominium.

POOR QUALITY OF THE HOUSING STOCK

The poor quality of the housing stock is a serious problem in most accession states. A large segment of the housing stock - in particular in urban areas - consists of prefabricated panel buildings. These buildings are often in a deplorable state and in need of urgent modernisation. In some accession states an important part of the housing stock will become inhabitable in the near future if no urgent renovation measures are taken.

AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING

Because of the high rates of homeownership, important determinants of affordability are the utility costs and the costs related to the maintenance of the dwellings. Many maintenance services and utility services have been privatised and became much more expensive as a result. A considerable number of homeowners in accession states cannot pay for the most basic maintenance of their

dwellings, which has a dramatic effect on the quality of the housing stock and on the quality of life of the homeowners.

Newcomers on the housing market - in particular low-income families - experience great problems to access decent housing. In recent years the house prices and rents increased much faster than the average income, which makes housing unaffordable for many households. In several accession states the number of household in arrears (rents, mortgages) increased dramatically.

The situation described above requires specific policy responses to increase access to housing for vulnerable groups. The EU will have to take account of the particular situation with regard to housing in accession states in the development of its social inclusion and social cohesion policies.

It will be very interesting to look at the scope and nature of homelessness and the policy measures to combat and prevent homelessness in this particular housing context. It could be a source of new and effective approaches to homelessness, which could be transferred to countries or regions facing similar housing problems.

It is clear that access to housing is a huge problem in accession states. It determines to a much larger extent than in the current EU Member States the quality of life of the population. After enlargement, the EU will have to address the problematic housing situation in the accession states in all relevant EU policy areas such as social inclusion, competition, free movement, etc.

Freek Spinnewijn
Freek.Spinnewijn@feantsa.org



CECODHAS in an enlarging Europe

At last December's Copenhagen Summit, the EU opened its doors to ten accession countries. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta will join the EU as full members in May 2004. CECODHAS has been involving the associate members in its activities long since. But what we have not yet done is to get to know the social housing sector in these countries. To address that failing and give more prominence to each member's singular characteristics, it was felt important to devote a workshop to a more detailed study of our partners' housing sectors.

That is what CECODHAS' joint initiative with the Secretariat of the United Nations Regional Office for Europe aims to do with a discussion workshop on social housing on 19 and 20 May 2003 in Prague. The workshop sets out to promote discussion on the different systems and definitions of social housing. It will take the form of topic-centred panel discussions illustrated by case histories and will foster exchanges and future cooperation between social housing agencies.

The accession countries almost without exception face monumental challenges. The sell-off of the state-owned rented housing stock to tenants at rock-bottom prices in the 1990s wrought far-reaching changes to a sector where there was no real market. Some properties under a specific total floor area were even just handed over to their tenant occupiers. According to a report by the UN ECE "the proportion of privatized state-owned housing varies with the country. In some countries in transition (Bulgaria, Slovenia, Estonia) over 90% of this housing stock is now privately-owned. Elsewhere (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland) the privatization process has been comparatively slow and more limited".

While privatization led to the creation of a housing market and addressed the issue of former tenants' quasi-possession rights, it has created new problems. One is that the new owners cannot afford essential renovations to their commonhold properties, while the authorities are now unable to provide homes for low-income families. The ECE report claims that "privatization has to a large extent been socially inequitable: the more luxurious, better-located state-owned properties were obviously occupied by families from the former ruling class, who were the main beneficiaries of an open-handed privatization system".

It is now imperative that social housing policies be developed to address the demand for affordable housing. New systems have been established in several of these countries. In most cases, responsibilities have been transferred to local government, but with little state assistance to address housing demand. Growing inequalities and their impacts on social inclusion and cohesion, coupled with the major challenge posed by the renovation of dilapidated commonhold properties, mean that only long-term supply-side housing policies can make a difference. That is why the European Structural Funds must put a focus on housing in cohesion policies. The challenges faced by the accession countries are of a scale that means state resources must be concentrated on co-financing eligible actions under the Structural Funds. Which comes down to saying that without changes to the present rules, the housing sector will not be a priority for structural investments anytime soon.

It is vital to give the European institutions a wake-up call on this issue, and make it clear that future structural policies must include a housing aspect. Poverty and insecurity rates in the accession countries are very high. Better housing conditions are a force against exclusion, and the idea is to create a Europe for all citizens! •

Luc Laurent
President of CECODHAS

CECODHAS, the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing, is a non-profit making organisation, representing its member organisations to European and International Institutions.

www.cecodhas.org





EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK

Poverty and social exclusion in the accession countries: a European concern

The adoption of a European Union strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion in March 2000 has been a positive and welcome development in the struggle to build a more inclusive Union. The strategy, which aims at making an impact on the eradication of poverty and exclusion by 2010, finally responds to the need for a political drive in addressing in a concerted way the reality of over 56 million people in the European Union living at risk of poverty, with one in ten people experiencing consistent poverty. With the enlargement of the European Union fast approaching, a new momentum in the fight against poverty and social exclusion at a European level is now needed.

In the accession countries there is a common sense of poverty and exclusion being a severe emerging problem. Candidate countries have been extremely rapid in conforming to EU membership requirements and very resilient in facing up to massive transition costs, yet the transition to a market economy has also meant in most cases an increase in levels of poverty and having to face situations previously unknown.

A recent European Commission study on the social protection systems of the 13 candidate countries¹ shows that there are clear differences in the scale and depth of poverty and exclusion in the accession countries, but also that the comparable measurement of poverty across the candidate countries is a difficult exercise, particularly in relation to the EU definition. Poverty rates range from 13.6% in Slovenia to 23-30% in Romania, differences which are linked to population size, the economic, social and political context, income levels and income distribution, but also to the social protection systems in place, with some countries having very underdeveloped basic safety nets.

Nonetheless, there is overall a quite consistent trend among countries with regard to the groups most at risk of exclusion - the long-term unemployed, large or one-parent families, people with low education, also increasingly older people, ethnic minorities, with particularly deep poverty pockets among Roma communities, and, in some countries, a persistent increase in poverty among children and young people. Some of the common drivers are seen as being the jobless growth, but also low pay jobs, increases in family breakdown, inadequacy of the social protection systems, poor financing of education and regional inequalities.

Addressing the issue at a European level

So, with the ten new countries at its doorstep, and with the experience of three years of development, implementation and evaluation of the European social inclusion strategy, how is the European Union preparing to tackle these issues from within its borders? Some steps have already been taken: the scope of the strategy is being extended to the accession countries, who are currently drafting Joint Inclusion Memoranda (JIMs) to be signed by the end of the year, and who have signed up to participate in the Social Exclusion Action Programme, allowing for transnational and European level activities to be funded.

Along the lines of the National Action Plans on social inclusion in the EU countries, although not binding as these, the JIMs should help build up capacity in governmental bodies and mobilise other stakeholders active in fighting poverty and social exclusion. The JIMs should also assist with measuring the extent of poverty and social exclusion and identify the major problems, the immediate and long-term challenges affecting each accession country in this respect, increase accession countries' awareness of the common broad objectives agreed in the European Council of Nice, and develop on the

basis of existing elements, a national integrated strategy to fight effectively poverty and social exclusion, taking into account the EU agreed objectives. This process should also lead to increased recognition and support for the work of NGOs fighting poverty and exclusion in the accession countries.

Poverty and social exclusion take complex and multi-dimensional forms which require an integrated approach combining a wide range of policies in domains such as social security, social assistance, employment, education, healthcare, housing, etc. The JIMs should be an opportunity for reinforcing co-ordination mechanisms in accession countries so as to improve synergies between different strands of policy, but also for ensuring that the reforms in place in the context of accession negotiations are not done at the expense of the principles of fundamental rights, universality, equality and inclusion.

Ensuring participation

The requirement to develop policy tools such as the JIMs to address poverty and social exclusion in the accession countries prior to their joining the EU fully gives out a positive sign in terms of the priorities which the Union is setting for the future. The enlarged Union must be a Social Union.

The fight against poverty and exclusion must nonetheless not purely translate in a reporting exercise from National governments to Brussels - we have been stating the same in the context of the National Action Plans on social inclusion. The accession countries should ensure that the application of the social inclusion strategy represents an opportunity for large participation of other key stakeholders active in fighting poverty and social exclusion, including non-governmental organisations. A healthy dialogue with civil society, which should allow for direct involvement in policy making of people experiencing poverty and exclusion themselves, is the only possible guarantee of a socially inclusive enlarged European Union. •

*Patrizia Brandellero, Policy and Development officer,
European Anti-Poverty Network*

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent coalition of non-governmental organisations and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in all the Member states of the European Union. EAPN's main aim is to put the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the top of the political agenda of the EU.

www.eapn.org
team@eapn.skynet.be

¹ Study on social protection in the 13 candidate countries, European Commission, January 2003, available at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/jan/conf_en.html

Homelessness in Romania



It can be said that the challenge facing Romania is not the poverty and social exclusion arising from a normal evolution of society, but an explosion of poverty and social exclusion generated by a long period of socialism and a transition crisis that started 25 years ago.

Homelessness is possibly the most extreme manifestation of social exclusion and a number of developments can be identified which have resulted in increased levels of homelessness and insecure, inadequate housing for low-income groups. Demographic changes have meant that more people are living alone as single adults for longer periods than in previous decades and as life expectancy extends, more and more people are living independently for longer periods after retirement, and the level of demand for housing units and in particular for those that are suitable for smaller households, has grown rapidly.

Socio-economic changes have resulted from major trends such as economic transition to a liberal regional and global market and industrial restructuring have combined to cause big reductions in the number of reasonably-paid full-time jobs in the traditional economic sectors. Thousands of redundant workers have been forced either to depend on restricted social welfare benefits, or take insecure low-paid jobs. Growing numbers of people are to be found living in poverty, on low or sometimes no income at all. Most of these people simply cannot afford to pay for or maintain adequate accommodation on the private housing market and virtually all are denied access to the rapidly shrinking social housing market.

Dramatic changes in the provision of social welfare have had an impact on an increasing number of people. As the numbers of unemployed, pensions and low-paid workers have grown, so more individuals and families have been left with no choice but to depend on payments and other services made available through the social welfare system. However, there has been a gradual trend towards limiting the level of these benefits, which have fallen in relation to average incomes, while imposing tighter restrictions on their availability, with tougher conditions that people must meet before qualifying for payments. Meanwhile, concerning the most vulnerable adults - young adults leaving institutional care and those with mental illness or drug and alcohol related problems - there has been a shift away from institutional care towards community-based services. However, the resources allocated to these community-based services are not sufficient for a proper response to the specific needs of individual cases.

Changes in the housing market have affected an increasing number of households as a result of the privatisation of housing and decentralisation of responsibilities. There has been a noticeable decline in the provision of social rented housing whilst the private rental sector has seen an increase in rent levels. This trend towards substitution of the public rental sector by private rental housing, ruled by the laws of the market, has led to low-income groups becoming increasingly deprived of adequate housing.

The situation in Romania is the heritage of both the communist regime and the outcome of the harsh economic transition. Despite its principals and objectives, in reality the communist administration failed to provide suitable housing for everyone. Hidden homelessness (namely those living inappropriately in prisons, psychiatric institutions, factory hostels and other institutions) already existed in socialist times, although national authorities insisted in denying its existence. The closing of workers' hostels and children's institutions, increased family dysfunction and lack of adequate resources, high unemployment or family responsibilities preventing employment, has led to some of the most vulnerable losing their homes and living on the streets. Many individuals who become homeless have multiple problems associated with a history of institutional care or confinement, family breakdown, alcoholism, mental and physical health problems, unemployment and a lack of financial resources.

Although the key determinants of housing exclusion are similar to those in the European Union, it must be stressed that the magnitude of the population at risk of homelessness is higher here and other former socialist countries in the region. Moreover, the living conditions of those who become homeless tend to be harsher and many situations seem to acquire features of long-lasting social and housing exclusion, with very limited assistance available. Nowadays, public authorities are unable to supply affordable housing to everyone and an increasing number of people have no access to decent and affordable housing.

Thousands of redundant workers have been forced either to depend on restricted social welfare benefits, or take insecure low-paid jobs. Growing numbers of people are to be found living in poverty, on low or sometimes no income at all.



It is impossible to estimate the number of 'roofless' homeless people living in Romania's urban areas, particularly the larger cities, but the numbers have increased dramatically. According to the international NGO Médecins sans Frontières the number of homeless people living on the streets of Romania's capital city (population 2.2 million) is approximately 5,000.

Reactions from authorities to the increased social-economic problems facing the general population have been strained. What little the government has been able to do has been directed at creating new work places for unemployed people and giving re-qualifications from employers. Consequently, there have been gradual changes in attitudes towards NGOs. By one measure, the 1996 change of government in Romania "came a little too late". The government came to power on the promise of democratising the country, however this has not improved people's situations. The government has tried to address legal, funding and other circumstances pertaining to NGOs.

Despite the high numbers of homeless people living in the country's major cities, only six municipalities provide night shelter and/or hostel type accommodation and four NGOs. These municipalities are:

- Arad (population 184,408) night shelter with 30 places;
- Bistrita (population 87,165) night shelter with 50 places;
- Brasov (population 314,225) planned night shelter with 60 places;
- Cluj Napoca (population 332,498) night shelter and hostel accommodation for 60 men, 25 women and 6 children.
- Oradea (population 222,239) night shelter and hostel accommodation with 150 places; and
- Târgu Mures (population 165,153) night shelter with 35 places.

Reactions by NGOs to the critically ill equipped population have been frantic. While NGOs are "urgently" seeking ways to combat poverty, the task is not an easy one. During a time of major social changes and despite facing a serious lack of basic resources, a very small number of NGOs have worked hard to provide assistance to the homeless. This is confirmed by the fact that only three NGOs provide services for the homeless, in the following cities:

- Bucharest (population 2,016,131) day centre, night shelter, transition accommodation and integration services for 55 men and 30 women and children.
- Iasi (population 348,070) a small protected community with up to four emergency night shelter places; and
- Timisoara (population 324,304) night shelter with approximately 20 places.

The services provided by these NGOs have emerged in a legal and institutional vacuum, facing financial and organisational difficulties and without the political support from the public authorities. Demand far outweighs the supply of even basic shelter resulting in difficulties in trying to accommodate the needs of more and more people being referred to these organisations by hospitals, local authority social assistance and child protection departments, the police, other NGOs and the general public. •

Article contributed by *Casa Ioana*, a FEANTSA member organisation in Romania

<http://www.casaioana.org>



Homelessness in Hungary



Hungary is a country with just over than 10 million inhabitants. The estimated number of homeless people is between 30,000 and 40,000 – depending on the point of view and the definition of homelessness. The majority of the homeless live in the capital, Budapest, which also is home to one fifth of the population.

The history of homeless is similar to that of many other countries in the region during the socialist times, big industrial centres were created, unskilled and semi-skilled workers were attracted to these jobs. They lived in workers' hostels and in many cases lost contact with the families left behind. When these big companies were privatised, the hostels were closed and due to the lack of other cheap housing, many of the workers not only lost their jobs but also became homeless.

Another group is formed by people who have been raised by the state: those who are over thirty, left the orphanages with absolutely no money to start their independent lives, while those under thirty got some financial help. Many of these young people could not use this allowance wisely and after a few years of their grown-up life, they are left penniless. There are many who are homeless because of psychiatric hospitals closing down.

Meanwhile, the state and the local governments have privatised much of their housing stock. Private rents went up, and there is almost no social housing available anymore. The average salary is barely enough to make ends meet, not to mention those who have children to take care of as well.

There is quite a high rate of illegal employment. Illegal employment means that if one gets sick, he does not only lose his job, but also his salary, then his rented apartment. There is no unemployment benefit for those uninsured, either. It is also widespread that people have official contracts for their work, but they are not allowed to take paid holidays, or are worked extra hours for no additional pay. And it often happens that employees only find out that they have not been registered when they become sick or are fired.

One the other hand, Hungary is in a unique position among the former socialist states: **there is a legal background to the services for the homeless.** The state finances all licensed service providers if they are operating one of the types of services defined by the law, while there are funds available for other types of services.

There are two legal definitions of homelessness as defined in the law regarding social benefits (1993:III):

1. **A person is homeless if he does not have an official address or if his official address is that of a homeless institution.**
2. **A person is homeless if he does not live in a proper lodging (but in a cave, in the forest, in the basement of an apartment building, etc.)**

The same bill also defines what services are to be established and maintained for the benefit of homeless people (these are financed by the state). These services are the following:

- Day Centres (each local government of more than 20 000 inhabitants is required to open and maintain a day centre for the homeless)
- Night Shelters (each local government of more than 30 000 inhabitants is required to open and maintain a night shelter for the homeless)
- Hostels (each local government of more than 30 000 inhabitants is required to open and maintain a hostel for the homeless)

The legislation also states how these services are to be financed: there is a quota per place/bed that the state provides to all licensed service providers, while the local government can add extra resources. Hostels are also allowed to ask for contributions from the clients.

The law also defines the conditions of how these services should function: how much space is needed for each individual, what are the attributes of the different types of services, what kind of staff is required, etc. There are yearly check-ups by state or local government officials at the institutions to see that the requirements are met.

At least in the capital, there is also a system of health care for the homeless. There are mobile doctors (visiting patients on the street with an ambulance car), and doctors with an office exclusively for the homeless. There are some beds in hospital wards especially for the homeless as well as hostels for those who do not require full time care any more but are not fit return to living in the street.

Outreach (street work) is carried out by a number of organizations, and at least in this one area, there has been good cooperation, common teams, common organizing of the winter projects.

So on the one hand, there has been a lot done in the field of homelessness after the change of system in 1989. However, the situation is still not ideal. What are some of the problems?

First, there are only 6000 beds in the whole country. In the winter there are more temporary shelters operating, so at least in theory everyone can be indoors for the night. There are no places where couples without children can stay together, and those who do not want to separate from their dogs (their best friend) are also left out in the cold. If a family is left without a roof, they might have to wait weeks before they can have a room in a shelter or a hostel.

Many organizations complain that the money they receive from the state is not enough to cover all their expenses. They are required to hire a certain number of qualified staff and if they wish to keep them, they have to pay them as much as in other institutions. The other problem is that there are some services, like the win-



One the other hand, Hungary is in a unique position among the former socialist states: **there is a legal background to the services for the homeless.**

ter soup kitchens, temporary winter shelters or street work, that have no stable funds allocated. Year after year, those service providers who are involved in these projects, have to apply for money and hope that they will be able to operate the following year...

Another problem is lack of prevention. There are some services for families with debts, but those renting apartments in the private sector do not have time for negotiating debts. If one gets sick without sick pay, he is not entitled to any financial aid that would enable him to keep paying the rent of his apartment. There is no official help for ex-prisoners to integrate back into society.

It is also problematic that there are not many options for moving on from shelters and hostels. As it has been said earlier, there are only very few social apartments available: last year there were 5 such apartments offered by one of the districts of Budapest (of 200 000 inhabitants), which received 3000 applications! It is also difficult to find an apartment for rent where the landlord is willing to sign a contract – but if there is no contract, the person can be asked to move out with one day's notice, leaving him too little time to find another apartment! More move-on housing and more social housing is needed!

Homeless people face difficulties when they have no address or when their address is a homeless shelter. Employers often do not hire workers who are known to be homeless, or they get fired when it is revealed. Many benefits are given by the local government - in case of the homeless, there is a separate Homeless Local Government, which offers only a smaller range of financial help.

Even though homeless people are entitled to the same type of health care as "normal" citizens, the average hospital is not happy to receive them. They are often released earlier than their physical state would allow it, which results in a deterioration of their health back on the street. There are some sick wards for the homeless, but the beds available are too few, especially knowing that homeless people are less healthy than the average population. Adequate psychiatric care is also lacking. Most homeless institutions cannot afford to hire a psychologist or psychiatrist, so they either neglect the psychological problems of the patient, or send them to the "normal" specialists. It is very unlikely that a patient would receive free psychotherapy (for the above mentioned district of 200 000 inhabitants, there is only one psychologist whose services are covered by social insurance!). Some homeless patients are given prescriptions for medication – they still have to buy the medicine themselves.

The work with the homeless is burdened by the rivalry between service providers. Unfortunately the relationship between social workers working for different organizations is not always ideal, which is also reflected in the lack of an efficient umbrella organization. However, we should be optimistic: there have been attempts to make the existing umbrella organization more active and there are also partnerships being formed between the various service providers.

It is also encouraging that the professionals in daily contact with the homeless are being asked about what changes there should be in the legislation, what projects are to be given priority, what areas need more attention. More and more service providers realize the importance of good networking both on the national and the international level. •

Article contributed by **Boróka Fehér** from *Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat, the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service Budapest, a member of FEANTSA* -

<http://www.kronos.hu/mmszbp/homeless.htm> and mmszbp@hu.inter.net

MAGYARORSZÁG

Zagreb

HRVATSKA

BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA

BOSNIA I HERZEGOVINA

Homelessness in Poland



I – Introduction

The socio-economic reforms undertaken during the times of transformation, linked with the decentralisation and privatisation created, from one side, new conditions to build the new reality and simultaneously, from the other side, generated serious side effects, without any social security support. Workers dismissed from huge companies, without receiving adequate social security, were gradually losing their possibilities of providing for the existence of their families and maintenance of their houses. Owners of private buildings had then legal basis to evict people, even whole families, frequently without an opportunities to go into social housing. This process was accompanied by the degradation of whole areas, leading to increased poverty, homelessness, addiction and criminality.

Unemployment is a key social problem in Poland with the rate ranging from 19% to 40% in areas (mainly rural areas). This picture is accompanied by mental problems linked with helplessness, low professional qualifications and insufficient education. A huge problem in Poland presently is the low education level. According to statistics, about 60% of the Polish people do not have indispensable professional skills and very frequently have only elementary education or incomplete vocational level, which places them in a very difficult situation in light of the principles of free market competitiveness. These groups are the first to be hit by job cutbacks, have problems finding work and ultimately are condemned to marginalisation and become "clients" of social support. Furthermore, unemployment generates homelessness. According to the official data of the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy there are about 200,000 homeless people in Poland, for whom there are only 15% places in shelters and accommodations organised by non-governmental organisations. NGOs face an especially difficult situation during wintertime, when shelters are besieged and people are sleeping on mattresses. Lots of these people do not have a chance of receiving shelter and are condemned to stay at railroad stations, in cellars, heating pipes, summer huts or cabins, etc. Every winter many people freeze to death (in the winter 2002-2003 over 300 froze to death).

The responsibility for securing social premises for the homeless is of the local governments. There is a section in the Law on Social Support that the local government should guarantee a roof, indispensable clothing and one meal a day to the homeless persons. The directives of this Law generally are not respected, and the emerging citizens' society has yet not enough courage and awareness of their rights to begin to speak publicly, demand changes, protest and criticise.

The report on NGOs' activities in Poland, elaborated by the Centre of Analyses of NGOs, shows that 50% of organisations have budget lower than 5 000 Euro annually, 60% of NGOs do not employ workers at all, 36.6% of organisations act in the sphere of sport and recreation and only 4.6% in the sphere of social support. The majority of these 4.6% of NGOs run temporary shelters and accommodation for the homeless. These activities do not offer any perspective of a pathway to personal independence: do not create diverse forms of self-education, self-help or employment. Frequently, in shelters there are problems with alcohol and divisions between the personnel and

the so called "clients", provoking a feeling of social exclusion in these places. The notorious lack of creative activities and perspectives of development and real change causes feelings of apathy and helplessness in the people who stay in these places. In Poland, there is a general lack of programmes aimed at development, education, activation and entrepreneurship of the socially excluded groups.

After 13 years of transformation we are still facing ineffectiveness of activities of the diverse organisations/institutions providing social support and lack of cooperation between NGOs and the public sector. Rival attitudes continue to hamper collaboration and bureaucracy take precedent over developing good contacts and partner cooperation with the needy.

Since 2002 the Polish Government undertook activities aimed at the introduction of new legal regulations regarding principles of cooperation between the public sector and the citizens' society, creating the **Law on Public Benefit and Volunteering**. This law will come into force this year and will fundamentally change the ways of NGOs function, enabling them to benefit from diverse facilities, exemptions and donations. To benefit from the new instruments, NGOs have to register as organisations of added public benefit. This law will help to reshape a wide range of traditional structures of social support into structures of cooperation and generation of activities with educative and entrepreneur characteristics for the homeless and long term unemployed persons.

II – Concrete solutions

The first trials regarding the implementation of programmes for professional and entrepreneurial activation of homeless persons were started in Poland by a small number of NGOs since 1989. Among them, the **Barka Foundation for Mutual Help** made a meaningful contribution, whose experience shows the existing possibilities of development and transformation of every human being, by fulfilling specific conditions.

Presently, Barka Foundation carries out several programmes creating a cohesive system, which enables the "creation of roots" of the homeless persons, education, employment and social housing building. Today, 20 diverse Barka units running the above mentioned programmes are functioning in Poland. About 3000 persons benefit from diverse forms of support annually. One of the most relevant programmes implemented by Barka is the socio-educational programme. The idea of this programme is based on the principle of linking social support with participation in diverse types of educational and vocational activities for the homeless persons and families.

This kind of activities is not yet sufficiently recognized and disseminated in Poland, but constitutes an important contribution to building a new social experience. This experience was noticed by the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy and represented an inspiration for the elaboration of the project of the **Law on Social Employment** regarding activities for people with life problems,



including the homeless. The law makes reference to experiences of the Barka-Kofoed School and will come into force this year.

The law specifies directives for the creation of Centers of Social Integration (CIS-Centrum Integracji Społecznej), which should fulfil integration and educational functions. The participants of the Centres will receive a subsidy for their participation in educational and work activities in the amount of 100 Euro per month during a period of 1 to 1½ years. After this time they will be employed by the Centre or by enterprises of the free market economy. These enterprises will receive tax benefits for a period of one year for employing the graduates of the Centre. The Law refers also to preparation of participants to be able to set up their own social cooperatives. These cooperatives will be exempt from social security (ZUS) during the period of one year.

The introduction of the Law on Social Employment changes the existing stereotype of "charity" based on relief measures and distribution of clothing and food. It gives possibilities to NGOs to develop educational programmes and activate entrepreneurship. It also creates the conditions to build systematic solutions to regulate such questions as volunteer work, unpaid work of the participants of the programme on behalf of the Centre, the extent and time of activities (up to 1½ years), gives the perspective of becoming independent (which may be through employment in the Centre, setting up an enterprise or a job in the free market economy).

The introduction of this Law may give rise to the beginning of a new practice of activities aimed at social integration of neglected areas, and also to the creation of successive legal instruments regarding the creation of social cooperatives, social enterprises and building of social housing. These social cooperatives and social enterprises should be created on the basis of the experience of other European countries and the existing legal instruments (from Italy and Finland, for example), which would give preferences to social enterprises in public bids and tax benefits from the side of the State during their initial stages.

III. Conclusions

1. There exist the need of urgent changes in the National social policy, and also changes in the attitudes of leaders of diverse institutions/organisations and partners of social support services.
2. Positive system-related tendencies, similar to European Union countries, may be achieved in Poland which is building a model of "solidary" economy.
3. Citizens' and their organisations' experiences should be taken into consideration in changes in the system and new legal regulations proposed by the State, and also in the National Strategy for Social Reintegration.
4. The worsening socio-economic situation in Poland requires cooperation of all environments and institutions working to solve the problems of socially excluded people.
5. The process of including Poland in European Union structures should be accompanied by activities aimed at compensating for the lack of solutions of recent years with regard to development of non-governmental organisations and their preparation for the cooperation in the implementation of European programmes linked with homelessness and social exclusion. •

Written by **Barbara Sadowska** – Barka Foundation
www.barka.org.pl

Information on Barka's activities on the Ministry's website:

www.mpips.gov.pl >>> **e-gazeta** >>>

"Nie czekaja – dzialaja!" (They are not waiting – they are acting!)"

Barka Foundation helps the needy;

E-gazeta's FORUM – Late law – talk with Tomasz Sadowski;

Inauguration meeting of the Task Team for Social Reintegration issues.

To read more about NGOs and homelessness in Poland, please follow this link:

www.feantsa.org/enlargement/ngos_and_homelessness_in_poland.doc

Homelessness in the Baltic Countries

The author of this article is not a specialist on Eastern European countries in general nor on the three Baltic countries in particular. But last year he was involved in the organisation of an international conference on Poverty and Homelessness in the Countries Bordering the Baltic Sea, hosted by the German NGO Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein. At this event lecturers from the three Baltic States Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia reported - among others - on the situation of the homeless and measures to tackle homelessness as an extreme and rapidly growing form of social exclusion in their countries.

All three authors (Iveta Berkolde from the Diaconia Center in Riga, Dr. Vita Karpuskiene from Vilnius University, and Jüri Kõre from the University of Tartu, Estonia's second largest city) described homelessness as becoming a more and more acute social issue. During the Soviet period poverty as well as homelessness were ignored ideologically as an impossible outcome of communist policy, but it should not be forgotten that a high number of people were detained by the militia for such offences like "vagrancy" and "parasitic way of life".

After the restitution of independence of the three Baltic countries the economic reforms and the collapse of many public enterprises resulted in rapidly growing numbers of unemployed and poor people. Under the Soviet regime state housing for rent had played an important role in all three countries, as it is typical of centrally planned economies. Housing was relatively cheap and rents represented only a very small proportion of income. Privatisation of the state housing sector and enormous increases in housing costs (including utility costs) contributed to an increased risk of homelessness for parts of the population. Today owner occupation is the dominating tenure and especially in Estonia and Lithuania only a very small part of the total housing stock remains available for rent. According to a recent report of COHRE (The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions) on "Housing Rights in Latvia", in 1998 53,000 eviction cases came to court in this country, with a population of 2.6 million. Evictions without court rulings frequently occur when a written contract or lease is lacking. Iveta Berkolde also reports of a recent development in Latvia, where owner occupiers or tenants are "tricked" out of their current accommodation: "In short, this occurs when

trusting individuals hand the legal power to buy, sell or exchange their apartments over to real estate agents who prove to be dishonest. The agents lure families out of one flat with the promise of another and then do not provide a new flat as promised." According to Berkolde households made homeless in this way recently made up nearly half of the persons occupying the 200 beds in Riga's shelters.

Not surprisingly in none of the countries do we find official definitions and statistics of homelessness. But public awareness of these social problems seems to be increasing. Sources about the profile and the background of the homeless are mostly social workers and administrative staff involved with services for the homeless from the municipalities or from NGOs. From all three countries studies on poverty and social exclusion are quoted, but only very few targeted studies on homelessness as such (mainly students surveys) are available.

Homelessness is described by our informants as predominantly an urban issue, the numbers in rural regions and small towns still being relatively low. Estimates on the total number of homeless people range between 0.2 and 0.4 per cent of the total population, but the empirical basis is often vague and the operational definitions vary a lot.

Groups with particularly high risks of homelessness are people released from prison, persons dependent on alcohol and illegal drugs, and unemployed people. Single parents and families with more than three children are also mentioned as a risk group. Street children are taken to be a particular problem group.

Among the structural factors mostly mentioned as causing or contributing to homelessness are

- cutbacks in housing policy
- growing unemployment
- shortcomings and weaknesses in the social welfare system
- shortcomings in the legal protection system
- inadequate rehabilitation systems for persons with special needs (ex-prisoners, the mentally ill etc.)

Particular problems exist for some who lack identity documents as well as problems of registration of residency; two conditions for government allowances and registering as unemployed.

In all three countries the number of places in shelters and other types of temporary accommodation has increased significantly during the last decade and night shelters are still overcrowded especially during autumn and winter. Support for the homeless is often focused on providing for very basic needs (food, clothes, shelter, basic medical services). Many shelters are financed and run by local authorities, but NGOs play an increasing role in providing accommodation and services for the homeless.

An urgent need is reported for more fundamental policies in order to prevent and to reduce homelessness. There is a clear need for enlarging or creating a subsidised sector for low cost rented housing with preferential access for those who cannot otherwise procure their own permanent housing. Schemes to create jobs for long-term unemployed and less productive persons are needed. Experts ask for the development of better cooperation between institutions which come into contact with homeless people (the police, health care institutions, employment offices, pension board, social workers, providers of permanent housing) and for increasing the relative importance of preventive work in social work and social administration. More professional rehabilitation programmes should be developed and implemented.

A publication of the conference contributions from the Baltic countries as well as lectures about different aspects of poverty and homelessness in Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden (all contributions in English and German) will be available in May 2003 and may be ordered from <http://www.verlagsozialehilfe.de>

Busch-Geertsema, V./Ruhstrat, E.-U./Thobaben, P.(ed.) Poverty and Homelessness in the Countries Bordering the Baltic Sea, VSH Verlag Soziale Hilfe, Bielefeld, 2003. •

Volker Busch-Geertsema,
GISS, Bremen, Germany
giss-bremen@t-online.de



Social policy, Housing situation and Homelessness in Estonia

Assistant Prof. Jüri Kõre,
University of Tartu and member of the City Council of Tartu,
jyrik@ut.ee



1. GENERAL SITUATION

During the one hundred years when European nations were building up their modern welfare states, Estonians led their lives mainly under foreign rulers. A new ruler has always brought about a new social order, including a new social protection system.

By 1940 Estonia had a quite well developed system of social protection. It was an example of a classical conservative (corporative) pattern of social policy.

The Soviet-type social protection system introduced in Estonia in the 1950s was also a selective regime that possessed strong corporative features and offered insurance or support of a different extent and at different levels to different social strata. Homelessness as a phenomenon also existed at that time but was kept under the control of public institutions (militia) relatively well.

Social protection in Estonia has been radically changed in 1991, from Soviet-type to modern welfare state.

2. DEFINITIONS AND THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS.

In Estonia the homeless are not officially defined. The United Nations definition of homelessness and relative homelessness from 1987 establishes extremely high requirements for accommodation that is considered "normal" and acceptable. As a result of the analyses of the definition of homelessness in different countries (the USA, Germany, Sweden, Finland, etc.), it can be stated that the one most suitable for Estonia comes from Sweden: **the homeless are those persons who do not have their own or rented accommodation, who do not live in any permanent lodging situation and who are referred to temporary residential alternatives or who sleep outdoors** (Swärd, 1995).

Homelessness as a phenomenon has developed during 1994-1996. The census conducted in Estonia on March 31, 2000, registered living spaces besides dwellings, apartments and rooms, other accommodations, as well as institutions. People (with no living space) who lacked any permanent lodging to stay overnight were listed as homeless. According to this (very limited) definition, the census of 2000 registered only 369 homeless people in Estonia (i.e., 0.03 % of the total population).

During the whole period of Soviet occupation (1944-1991) there was a deficiency of living space in Estonia. At the census of 1989 the number of households in Estonia exceeded the number of accommodations by 2 %. According to the data of the census of 2000 the number of accommodations exceeded that of the households by 5 %. Nowadays homelessness is not caused by the shortage of accommodations, but rather by low or non-existent income, high rent rates and social problems, which make a person as an unsuitable tenant in the eyes of landlords.

The Western experts who have assessed the social welfare system in East European countries maintain that homelessness in these countries is first and foremost a problem of capitals (big cities) (Eatwell, Ellmann, Karlsson, Mario Nuti, Shapiro, 2000). Capital cities are the most dynamic places, where the social relations and networks between their inhabitants are weaker, capitals converge social strata of different backgrounds all over the country. A more detailed analysis shows that, in addition to the capital (Tallinn), marginalization in the most general sense, including homelessness, also poses a problem in other bigger towns of Estonia: Tartu, Narva, Kohtla-Järve, Pärnu. The total number of the homeless based on expert estimations made by different specialist (social workers, policemen, personnel of emergency medical aid, housing market specialists, etc.) amounts to 3000-3500 people; i.e., 0.25 - 0.3 % of the total population. Governmental institutions (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia) quote 5000 as the number of homeless people in their estimates, which constitutes 0.4 % of the whole population. The number can be treated as the maximum possible number of the homeless.

The official social statistics provide figures about the number of shelters, beds available, as well as the number of the users. During the last five years the number of places in shelters and social rehabilitation centres has doubled in Estonia, and the number of the persons who use the services of the institutions has increased accordingly. If we compare the total number of the people who use the services of the institutions and the number of those who stayed in an institution for the first time for a whole day, we can claim that approxi-

mately half of the users changed during a year, and the other half was made up of regular clients (persons who visit the institution during period longer than a year). (Table 1)

3. CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

In Estonia different approaches are used as explanations for homelessness. The theories of poverty as a culture and homelessness as a culture (Swärdi, 1999) are both spread among liberal politicians. Still another theory explaining homelessness is the marginalization theory, according to which the reasons causing homelessness are divided into two large groups: first, the ones proceeding from the level of the individual and, second, the structural ones related to the distribution of public resources. While the list of individual factors causing homelessness is varied, the structural factors quoted are as follows:

- Drawbacks in housing policy;
- Employment problems;
- Shortcomings and weaknesses in the social welfare system;
- Inadequate social rehabilitation for people with special needs (those released from prison, the mentally retarded, etc.) (Sergeyeva, Yakovleva, 1998).

In the practical (applied) studies of homelessness conducted in Tartu and Narva three groups of people are differentiated:

- The homeless (persons living in the streets or in shelters);
- Persons in a crisis situation (those who have been evicted by a judicial decision, those who live in uninhabitable buildings, who have family problems and therefore have to leave their former place of residence, etc.);
- The marginal group, i.e., the persons who owe more than four-months' rent, who have been unemployed for a long time, and so on.

According to estimations, two thirds of persons in a crisis situation and one third of representatives of the marginal group may lose their accommodation (dwelling place) - they could exchange their dwelling place for something smaller or cheaper, or they might leave to live with their relatives etc. The number of those who become homeless is not clear.

In Estonia two thirds of the homeless are men and one third is constituted by women. These people are mainly single or divorced (separated), most of whom have broken their ties with the families and relatives and get no support whatever from them. Contacts with the close family or friends have been broken off mainly because of alcoholism or drug addiction.

4. SOCIAL WORK WITH HOMELESS

According to Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, "the Estonian citizen is entitled to get assistance from the state in the case of old age, disability, need, and loss of a supporter". Yet, by the Law on Social Welfare (1995) the state delegates the responsibility for taking care of those in need to local authorities.

- a) Municipal authorities are obliged to provide with accommodation persons or families who are not able to do it themselves, and, if need be, make it possible for those people to rent interim apartments.
- b) A person, who happens to be in a socially helpless situation due to lack or loss of means of subsistence, is provided with indispensable social security benefits (food, clothing, and, in case of necessity, also shelter). Indispensable social security benefits are provided by persons or institutions appointed or authorized by commune administrations or municipal authorities.

The law does not specify who needs a social dwelling, shelter, indispensable social security benefits, etc., neither is it defined whether shelters are established by the state or local authorities. Therefore the Estonian welfare system, in spite of the small size of the country, varies at different levels in different regions.

The work done with adult homeless people can be divided into two different parts:

- Offering them temporary lodging;
- Different social rehabilitation services.

Temporary lodging (a shelter or a social rehabilitation centre) is not a solution to the problems of homeless people. It is quite simple and relatively cheap to establish and run a shelter. Yet shelters in Estonia can provide accommodation for approximately one fifth to one fourth of the potential homeless. Shelters are financed by local authorities. Although the shelter system has aroused much criticism (Johson, Cnaan, 1995), this is the only way to organize work with the homeless in nowadays Estonia.

The real rehabilitation of people necessitates the solution of at least three problems:

- Restoring a person's individual coping ability (skills);
- A person's individual regular income;
- Minimum supportive network.

Work with the homeless is based on the principle "from a simpler solution to a more complex one".

- 1) Restoration and procuring documents, etc.;
 - 2) restoration of a person's social rights (drawing up documents for them to get old-age or disablement pension, social benefits, etc.);
 - 3) reestablishment of a person's contacts with their families, relatives, friends;
 - 4) finding a solution for a person's social problems (alcoholism, drug addiction);
 - 5) reestablishing a person's coping ability and improving their competitiveness (educating in coping, professional or refresher courses);
 - 6) job search;
 - 7) search for permanent accommodation.
- The most complicated links in this chain are the solution of a person's social problems and job search. These are likely to fail if it is not possible to re-establish a person's relations with their families or those close to them. To create new jobs, social workers as private persons have, for example, founded non-profit associations, through which they have offered jobs to their clients – the homeless or others who have difficulties in coping with their lives. •

References

Adamson, S., Kangas, O., Kliimask, J., Kotka, J., Kutsar, D., Käärik, E., Kõre, J. (1999). *Poverty reduction in Estonia. Background and Guidelines*. Tartu.

Eatwell, J., Ellmann, M., Karlsson, M., Mario Nuti, D., Shapiro, J. (2000). *Hard Budgets, Soft States. Social policy choices in central and eastern Europe*. IPPR,

Hallik, L. (2000). *Homelessness as a result of marginalisation - causes and solutions*. Bachelor Thesis. Tartu

Geißler, R. (1996). *Die Sozialstruktur Deutschlands*. Bonn

Hendrikson, M., Iisjan, V., Kask, U., Kõre, J. (2000). *Living conditions*. Tallinn

Johson, A.K., Cnaan, R.A. (1995). *Social Work Practice With Homeless Persons: State of Art. Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 5, no 3, 340-382

Kõre, J. (1998). *The Social Protection System in Estonia*. In: *Social Protection in Estonia. Handbooc & Dictionary*. Phare.

Sergejev, V., Jakovleva, J. (1998). *Study of homeless people in Narva under project "CHAREST"*. Narva

Swärd, H. (1999). *Homelessness in Sweden - discussion, patterns, and causes*. *European Journal of Social Work*, vol 2, no 3, 289-303

Interviews with

Toompuu, A. - Social welfare and health department Tallinn City Government

Kruuse, T. - Social welfare department Tartu City Government

Kivi, R. - Social welfare department Pärnu City Government

Tarum, M. - Social welfare department Kohtla-Järve City Government

TABLE 1

Shelters and social rehabilitation centres in Estonia, 1996-2001								
	Number of institutions		Number of places		Number of persons, who used the services of the institution		Number of persons, staying in an institution for the first time	
	1996	2001	1996	2001	1996	2001	1996	2001
Shelters	11	20	212	438	1707	2901	1211	1360
Social rehabilitation centres	8	15	158	276	644	2317	954_	1584

_1997

Source: Statistical Office of Estonia

*Moving towards the European Union***Homelessness in Slovenia**

Slovenia is entering the European Union in 2004. It is a small country, but although it is small it has homelessness problems like other countries. For the moment the National social security plan is the main policy addressing poverty and homelessness; Slovenia is not yet represented by NGOs in FEANTSA.

Slovenia is a young country, which became independent in June 1991. Before that it was a part of Yugoslavia, which had a socialist regime. Under the socialist regime there was no or very little data about the number of homeless people and thus there were no facilities for homeless people. In 1990, it was estimated that 320 homeless people lived in Slovenia. After the attainment of independence the number of homeless people started to increase. The newest statistical data shows that there are approximately 800 homeless people now living in Slovenia. This number however includes only 'disclosed' or 'visible' homeless people. That means only people who have asked for help in institutions that provide services for homeless people. But there are many others who never look for help. It is commonly accepted that homeless people do not easily accept and even reject institutional forms of help.

Homeless people are for the most part men, who have different problems or have no financial incomes and no place to stay. Women and as well whole families, are also homeless, and need different services and facilities.

Slovenia is trying to reduce number of homeless people. In trying to achieve this goal Slovenia is following all the guidelines that are used in the European Union. Slovenia has signed a memorandum of cooperation (Joint Inclusion Memoranda). The goal of the plan is to promote employment and to solve housing problems. The measures for reducing the number of homeless people are: to provide the possibility of access to social security for as many people as possible, the increased supply of socially rented accommodations, financial social support to those who need it to survive, the carefully planned evolution of new social security programmes, which will enable wider incorporation of individuals in the whole country, to increase the number of beds for homeless people and to support programmes which help homeless people.

Slovenia is a small country with less than 2 millions inhabitants and there are many small towns and only a few bigger towns, the homeless are concentrated in the larger cities. In the three biggest cities there are three shelters, that provide 68 beds for homeless people. The municipalities along with non-governmental organisations have to provide financial funds for the activities of the shelters. Of course the state finances these programmes too. These shelters provide food as well as beds. These shelters are special because people, who decide to live there, can stay for a long period or until they find a better place to live. This is a permanent kind of shelter. People must apply for the bed and once it is granted, they must remain in the shelter and respect house rules. In exchange for this commitment, they are entitled to health insurance that is paid by the municipality. Those who can work also look for jobs. In towns without shelters there are food distribution points. Slovenian Caritas and the government operate four shelters where people can eat, get new clothes, wash themselves and have their hair cut.

An outpatient clinic opened in 2002 to provide health care to those without health insurance in the capital city, Ljubljana, which has the most residents and also the biggest number of homeless people. Doctors and retired doctors volunteer their time to provide services for free to the homeless and give referrals to specialists. Another similar outpatients' clinic is planned for the second biggest city, Maribor.

In Ljubljana, a transitional shelter is planned which will differ from the other shelters in that people will not have to apply for places. The beds will be available on a nightly basis. It is not known when the shelter will open, due to the high cost of the programme.

After independence the implementation of some democratic reforms, Slovenia started to address homelessness and new ideas how to help people in need are constantly arising. Slovenia has a National programme of social security up to year 2005, whose goal is to anticipate social needs. In this field non-governmental organisations like Slovenian Caritas and the Red Cross are important, because they are part of civil society and they can easily articulate specific needs of individuals and groups of people. The plan is to establish a uniform social security system on a national level. Non-governmental organisations will operate within this system and implement the social inclusion policies. The Ministry of Work, Family, and Social Affairs encourages the development of non-governmental organisations, and sponsors activities as well as opening public competitions for co-financing of programmes. Many of these programmes were very successful and professional, so in 1998 the Ministry decided to finance these programmes for a period of five consecutive years and is now financing 54 programmes. With this stable financing organisations can work with longer-term plans (for five years), which are more successful.

A national housing programme provides possibilities for getting and using flats for those people who cannot manage to find or afford accommodation. In the future local authorities will have to be able to provide for temporary or provisional residences for homeless people.

Although Slovenia is following all the directives of European Union there is a possibility that with accession to the European Union the number of homeless people will increase because Slovenian GDP is one of the lowest among the Member States of the European Union. The consequences of entering the European Union should not be long-term. Initially the number of homeless people will probably increase, but over time the number will decrease. Slovenia has already begun to tackle homelessness and develop strategies to deal with the problem. •

Tjasa Tabaj
journalist and student of International Relations in Ljubljana.
tjasa.tabaj@guest.arnes.si

Homelessness in Ukraine



A bit of history

Some 10 –15 years ago most Ukrainians, as well as Russians and other peoples of the former Soviet Union had a very vague idea of homelessness. The notion “homeless” meaning people sleeping rough, begging, looking for food in waste-bins, living in social isolation has been known as a characteristic feature of a capitalist society, mentioned in school books on history as the opposite to the bright future guaranteed to all the members of the socialist community. Being not free to travel abroad, one of the first questions people asked those who managed to cross the border upon their return was: “Have you seen homeless in the streets?”

In the Soviet Union there was no place for homelessness: everyone had a job and a place to live thanks to the planned economy which guaranteed the demand for all the goods produced by numerous huge factories, and social programs supported the workforce in many respects, including housing. Vagabonds were prosecuted by law. They were condemned by public opinion, too: the opportunities to make one’s way in life existed, by choosing to be a vagabond these “irresponsible elements”, as they were called, placed themselves immediately in opposition to the state (the militia arrested such persons) and society.

Many things have changed since the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine gained its independence. The process of economic transformation is accompanied by changes in attitudes and understanding, a growing number of opinions concerning all aspects of life, a feeling of freedom and nostalgia for the past – when people could afford not to take too much responsibility.

Recent situation

The necessity of taking responsibility for one’s own well-being in a country floating through the turbulence of transformation turned out to be an unexpected challenge for many people. Society was confronted with unknown problems, and reacted to them slowly while the problems were proving to be very complicated in nature and with deep roots.

Homelessness has become one of these problems. Poorly dressed people, begging or searching the waste bins, as well as those sleeping in the underground or in staircases were called homeless. Their number was growing, and again, in the public understanding, it was their “choice”.

Gradually society started to realise that the homeless might need help and care: homeless children received most attention. Public organisations with support from international donors, followed by the Ukrainian state institutions, started a number of activities, creating shelters, rehabilitation centres, foster families, etc. A lot of programs work in this sphere; some statistical and analytical information on homeless children is available in the media as well as specialised publications.

What about homeless adults? Not much can be said here. In fact, looking for some general information as to the situation of homeless people, one will discover that there’s more information available on homeless animals. Up till now only a few NGOs have started providing services to homeless people. At the state level there are no official statistics, not a single sentence in the national legislation regarding the homeless or explaining what is meant by “homeless”, and nothing indicating what the homeless can expect from the state social assistance programs.

At the local level, though, especially in bigger cities, the authorities are further on their way towards recognising and addressing the problem. In Kyiv (Kiev), for example, there is a social adaptation centre for homeless men, financed by the city. There is no unanimity about its work: on the one hand it is considered to be an aggravating factor to social isolation, being located outside the city, on the other hand – at least there is something specially aimed at the homeless. There is also a crisis centre in Kyiv, which gives temporary shelter to women who suffer from domestic violence, but not specifically homeless women.

How the problem is tackled now

One can’t say the state ignores the homeless completely: the same militia, which was responsible for dealing with vagabonds in previous years is now taking “suspicious” people without identification papers from the streets to the reception unit for persons without a place of permanent residence. They are kept until identified, and not longer than 30 days. During this period homeless people undergo a medical check-up, receive meals three times a day, a shower once a week and a bed in a room shared by up to 20 people. In cold seasons this seems to be a solution, but the two women we talked to while visiting the reception unit were looking forward to the end of the 30-day period. They felt imprisoned.

According to the data, provided by the militia reception unit, in 2002 they had above 5000 detainees, 221 persons more than in 2001. The number of homeless people (though absence of identification papers does not automatically mean absence of home, in most cases people taken to the reception unit are homeless) is growing. The number of homeless women shows the same tendency: during a 10 months period in 2001, 541 women were taken to the reception unit, 115 less than in the same period in 2002. More than half of homeless women are in their thirties or younger, able to work, most have professional education and documented work experience.

When speaking with the reception unit officers, we learnt more about the problems they have: just like any police force, they are responsible for keeping the streets safe and quiet. So, following tradition, they take the homeless to the reception unit, and are now confronted with manifold problems of their “clients”, apart from absence of ID papers, which include: illnesses, alcohol and substance addictions, psychological imbalance, lost social connections. The militia has neither the instruments to tackle these problems, nor a mechanism of receiving help from relevant institutions.

“I came from Russia some 9 years ago, since then have no home, live in the street. I have a husband, he lives in the street as well, and a child, he is in the orphanage, I visit him from time to time. Would like to work, yes, very much! But I can’t. Why? Alcohol. Most of women here have alcohol, sometimes drug addiction. Almost everyone. I can sew, but who is going to hire me?”

Svitlana, from the conversation in the reception unit

Homeless women are considered to run a bigger risk than homeless men in everyday life: they are less resistant to abuse, more often maltreated, more easily addicted to drugs or alcohol, their problems are often connected with the problems of neglected children.

“Reintegration of homeless women: an integral approach at the local level”

Homelessness is known as a problem of the capital (Kiyv with a population of almost 3 million) and larger cities. Local authorities have been taking episodic measures for several years already, but no clear policy in this field has been formulated.



Last year the Main Directorate for Social Protection of the Kyiv Municipality took the initiative to create a structure in Kyiv that would facilitate aiding homeless women in finding their way to a more "normal" life. Together with the International Projects Department of the Association of Netherlands municipalities (VNG International), it initiated a joint project "Reintegration of homeless women in Kyiv: an integral approach at the local level", co-financed by the Kyiv municipal budget and the MATRA program of the Dutch government.

"The main objective of the three-year project is to develop effective social strategies and policy instruments in Kyiv with a large emphasis on the role of NGOs in order to cope with the growing problems of homeless people. Crucial for this approach is the close collaboration between the different agencies of the local government and the NGOs in the social sector. A number of activities are aimed at the creation of new coalitions and joint efforts between the city administration and the private organisations. The project's experiment should lead to a greater number of reintegrated homeless women, to a structural increase of the capacity of the city of Kyiv to deal effectively with the growing number of homeless people, to a strengthening of the involved NGOs leading to a stronger civil society, to a better understanding of the problem of homeless people by the public of Kyiv at large, and to the dissemination of project results to other cities and NGOs in Ukraine with similar problems."

From the project description

Out of the three phases distinguished in the project plan: **Inception** (creation of a working structure bringing together the efforts of the local government and NGO's in addressing homelessness); **Implementation** (the main activities, mainly directed to the strengthening of Social Adaptation Centre for homeless women and the participating NGO's); **Adaptation and dissemination** (interpretation of results to the new social policies of the Main Directorate for Social Protection and general policy advices to be disseminated to other Ukrainian municipalities) – the first phase – inception – is coming to its end.

First results

It is already possible to speak about the first results achieved by the project:

Visible results include: the renovated premises of the Social Adaptation Centre with the sleeping block capacity of 80 places in 2 and 3-bed rooms; the reintegration unit with four staff members created for the first time within

the structure of a social institution; the necessary documentation regulating the process of reintegration step by step with regard to the Dutch and Ukrainian experience; the first group of volunteers trained and ready to contact the potential clients and bring them to the centre; **Invisible, but crucial results such as:** a set of contacts with many participating parties, including specialised NGOs helping to attract volunteers, the militia reception unit ready to help with identification papers, health institutions – to assist in solving medical problems, employment centres (government as well non-governmental) – to provide professional training and assist in finding jobs, etc.

The project is a challenging one and demands a lot of efforts from its participants: the scheme has no national analogy, different institutions, each with its culture and traditions are brought together in one big undertaking and have to develop a model of constructive co-operation. The lack of knowledge in the sphere of homelessness in Ukraine makes the process more complicated. It is expected that the Social Work School of the Ukrainian Kyiv Mohyla Academy will contribute to the further development of national approaches to the problem. The school is providing professional trainings for the representatives of different institutions and organisations involved in the project, executing the social research and monitoring of the project results.

Conclusions

The process has started, slow in the beginning, but now it is gradually beginning to cover broader aspects of social life, and involves more and more actors. "Learning by doing" is complicated, especially when it is both learning and teaching at the same time: to attract the necessary assistance the project actors have first to explain what it is all about and why it is really important right now, and not later, when the general level of prosperity grows. The Dutch experience, now available thanks to the common project, contributes significantly to the faster development of services for the homeless in Ukraine.

As an example: the local policy in the field of homelessness has already gone further than it was initially foreseen by the project: the centre, planned as a first institution in the social protection sphere dealing with homeless, is now viewed as the second stage of a three-layer system including night shelters, social adaptation centres and half-way social hotels, aimed at meeting the needs of different categories of homeless people and complex work with them. •

Iryna Batyreva

Local project leader "Reintegration of homeless women in Kyiv city: an integral approach at the local level"

bia@zahyst.kyiv-city.gov.ua



Enlargement represents a huge challenge in terms of identifying and gathering relevant and representative information about homelessness and related issues in the in the candidate countries. It is often the case that homelessness is not identifiable as a specific and individual research, discussion or policy topic.

Below is a list of useful Internet links including key enlargement information sites, government departments, existing FEANTSA members and research documents. It is not

yet possible for us to provide a comprehensive list. Rather, the list below represents the beginnings of our own research and contact with the candidate countries. It is clear that there is great variation between candidate countries as to the nature and scope of information available.

Our hope is that this list of links may be useful in building a basic and initial understanding of social exclusion, civil society, housing and as yet where possible, homelessness, in each country.

GENERAL INFORMATION

European Commission's Official Enlargement Homepage: These pages offer a general overview of the enlargement process including the enlargement agenda, a calendar of key events, information on each candidate country and a list of further enlargement links.

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm

European Parliament Enlargement Homepage: General information including a draft of the accession treaty, calendar of key events, a summary of the state of negotiations and information on the candidate countries.

www.europarl.eu.int/enlargement/default_en.htm

Enlargement Address Book: This online publication provides an extensive list of key people and organisations involved in the pre-accession strategy, including contacts to those involved in the Phare programme.

www.europa.eu.int/enlargement/pas/phare/abook/htm

European Commission Employment and Social Affairs on Enlargement: Information on the employment situation and labour market policies in the candidate countries, the impact of accession on employment and labour markets in the EU, plus data and statistics on key issues and developments.

www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl_esf/enlargement_en.htm

UNECE Country Profiles on the Housing Sector: Individual overviews of the housing sector in Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria.

www.unece.org/env/hs/cph/welcome.html

Bulgaria

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Bulgaria and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/bulgaria/index.htm

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: Contains information on Bulgaria's 'New Social Policy Strategy'.

www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/index.asp

National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria: Provides data, indicators and statistics on social affairs.

www.nsi.bg/Public_e/Publications.htm

Czech Republic

Shortcut to Europa's overview of the Czech Republic and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/czech/index.htm

Mission of the Czech Republic to the European Communities: General information, links and documents including the 'Czech National Development Programme', March 2003.

www.mfa.cz/missionEU/

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: Information on migration, employment, social policy, equal rights and Czech legislation.

www.mpsv.cz/scripts/default.asp?lg=2

Czech Statistical Office: Information on Labour and Social statistics including living standards, employment and social security.

www.czso.cz/eng/angl.htm

Government Council for Non-State Non-Profit Organizations: An advisory, initiation and co-ordination body of non-state, non-profit organisations.

www.vlada.cz/1250/eng/vybody.htm

FEANTSA Member Organisations:

Armáda Spásy (Salvation Army),
www.armadaspasy.cz/strana3.htm

- S.A.D Association of Hostels for the Homeless
- Nadeje, www.nadeje.cz

Cyprus

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Cyprus and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/cyprus/index.htm

The Republic of Cyprus Statistical Service: Wide ranging statistical data and publications.

www.pio.gov.cy/dsr/index.html

Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office: Key government information, documents and links.

www.pio.gov.cy/docs/index.htm

Estonia

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Estonia and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/estonia/index.htm

Statistical Office of Estonia: Data and statistics on social and economic affairs.

www.stat.ee/

Hungary

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Hungary and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/hungary/index.htm

The Hungarian Government Portal: Access to government agencies and documents including the Ministry for Health, Social and Family Affairs.

www.ekormanyzat.hu/english/

Hungarian Central Statistical Office:

www.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/

FEANTSA Member Organisations:

- Hajszolt www.refomix.hu
- Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat, www.kronos.hu/mmszbp/homeless.html

Latvia

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Latvia and Enlargement:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/latvia/index.htm



Centre for Non-Governmental Organisations: Represents, educates and lobbies on behalf of the Latvian third sector. www.unece.org/env/hs/cph/welcome.html

Ministry of Welfare: Information on social policy development, social 'insurance' and assistance. The key documents 'Social Report 2001' and 'Latvia Human Development Report 2000-2001' are also available. www.lm.gov.lv

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia: Data on social and economic issues, including housing. www.csb.lv/avidus.cfm

Lithuania

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Lithuania and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/lithuania/index.htm

Government Of Lithuania: Key government information, documents and links. www.on.lt/index.htm

Department of Statistics to the Republic of Lithuania: www.std.lt/default_e.htm

Malta

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Malta and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/malta/index.htm

Government of the Republic of Malta: www.gov.mt/index.asp?l=2

National Statistics Office: Data and publications on economic and social affairs. www.nso.gov.mt/

Poland

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Poland and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/poland/index.htm

Mission of The Republic of Poland to the European Union: General information including the 'National Programme of Preparation for membership in the EU'. www.pol-mission-eu.be/

Polish NGO office in Brussels: Provides a useful directory of Polish NGOs and Partners which contains the main social NGO umbrella organisations. www.eu.ngo.pl/strona.asp?id=170&s=1

Portal of Non-Profit Organisation: Thematic site covering the history, laws, organisation and key projects and partnerships of the third sector. Also, contains interesting comparative information and analysis including the 'NGO Sustainability Index 2001' and 'Nations of Transit'. english.ngo.pl/strona.asp?id=1240

FEANTSA Member Organisation: The Barka Foundation www.barka.org.pl

Government of Poland: Provides a list of Polish institutions and organisations including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Polish Statistics Office. www.gksoft.com/govt/en/pl.htm

Romania

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Romania and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/romania/index.htm

Romania Government: Links to government institutions and key strategy papers. www.gov.ro/

Ministry of Public Works, Transports and Housing: Overview of statistics, legislation, research and government strategies in the area of housing. www.mt.ro

Romania Factbook 2003: Useful statistical resources, regional reports on land use and demographics. www.factbook.net/

Slovakia

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Slovakia and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/slovakia/index.htm#overview

European Commission delegation in the Slovak Republic: Particularly useful is the online version of the 'Second Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion', January 2003 www.europa.sk/english/index.htm

Slovakia Government: www.government.gov.sk

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Key documents including the 'Population and Housing Census 2001'. www.statistics.sk/

National Human Development Report 2000: 'Faces of Poverty in Slovakia, Poverty and Social Exclusion'. www.cphr.sk/english/undp2000.htm

Slovenia

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Slovenia and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/slovenia/index.htm#interesting_links

Government of the Republic of Slovenia: <http://www.sigov.si/>

Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: Particularly useful is the 'Statistical Yearbook 2002'. www.gov.si/zrs/eng/index.html

Turkey

Shortcut to Europa's overview of Turkey and Enlargement: www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/turkey/index.htm

European Commission Delegation in Turkey: www.deltur.cec.eu.int/

Turkish Government: www.turkishnews.com/DiscoverTurkey/government/

