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Homeless in Europe

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Access to Shelter





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Access to Shelter

By **Ian Tilling**, *FEANTSA President and Founder and President of the Casa Ioana Association*

The recent [Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018](#) by FEANTSA and the Abbé Pierre Foundation finds that housing exclusion continues to be a growing problem in Europe, resulting in an increasing demand for support and increased pressure on emergency services.

The numbers of people experiencing homelessness has continued to rise in almost all EU countries. A deterioration in the living conditions of extremely vulnerable families has led to children becoming the largest group of people in emergency shelters, with the numbers of women, young people, those with a migration background, and the working poor, becoming increasingly numerous among the homeless population.

Housing affordability and liveability are emerging as the most challenging social policy issues in Europe, with the ability to access housing adversely affecting young people, those with dependent family members, and migrants.

Shelters are the physical interface of the staircase approach for people experiencing homelessness, with a succession of preparatory interventions, from initial reception to social reintegration. Despite this key role, many shelters are often rundown and equipped with low quality and second-hand furniture, reflecting an image of exclusion and instability. They lack privacy and come with the expectation of cohabitation with strangers. Emergency accommodation is supposedly a temporary solution although, in reality, it prolongs precarious living situations and rarely leads to well-being, recovery and social integration. For many Member States, however, the shelter system is a reality and unlikely to change soon, providing at least some respite from living on the streets, even if it's just during the colder months.

The following articles provide an insight into the relationship of those using sheltered accommodation, those providing and staffing the shelter and the very building itself, as well as an opportunity to better understand some of the national realities and challenges faced by the homelessness sector professionals in different European Member States.

In **Poland**, amendments to the Social Assistance Act have introduced standards that categorise three types of shelters according to the needs of the homeless population. These changes have created challenges in relation to financing the shelters and their access by people experiencing homelessness and may well mean some shelter closures. An unforeseen outcome of these changes has led to those who are not self-reliant being excluded from the homeless support system, although a recent amendment will now meet the needs of this group of people. There might also be an opportunity for NGO funding in this sector as more local authorities contract out their homeless services.

Hélène Chapelet and Carole Lardoux from the Action for Solidarity Federation, discuss **France's** 115 helpline to access emergency accommodation. The 24-hour free service is a major pillar in informing and directing callers to emergency accommodation and other support services. The system centralises requests for accommodation and housing by the geographical area of callers and is now the only entry point to accommodation. It has proved to be a valuable monitoring tool by recording requests for emergency accommodation and has shown a significant increase since its establishment in the number of requests for help, especially from families. Accessing accommodation via the 115 system however, has proven to be a difficult process for callers, especially in regards to a shortage of available and adequate facilities.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, emma.nolan@feantsa.org

The articles in *Homeless in Europe* do not necessarily reflect the views of FEANTSA. Extracts from this publication can be quoted as long as the sources are acknowledged.



The reality in the **Netherlands** is that access to support and housing for homeless people in Amsterdam is inadequate. Despite legislation requiring local authorities to provide support for people experiencing homelessness, many local authorities are not doing so adequately. The process involved in accessing shelter is poor with restricted opening times when someone can apply for support and the strict bureaucratic process involving numerous interviews with many officials. The excessively strict selection criteria are thought to be responsible for the high number of applications for support being rejected, particular those deemed to be 'self-sufficient homeless' people.

A more than 50% rise in homelessness has proven to be a significant challenge to local authorities in **Ireland**, with the rise in family homelessness, causing issues with traditional shelters serving single people. In response, the authorities in Dublin placed families in hotel rooms and guesthouses, although 'Family Hubs', operated by NGOs, were later established to better address the needs of homeless families. Family Hubs remain a form of emergency homeless accommodation, with the length of stay dependant on the availability of safe and secure housing, meaning that securing exits is very challenging.

Marc Uhry from **France** presents the initial results from his research into the costs of the shelter system in Lyon, a city with 15,000 supported homes for the homeless. He splits the shelters into six categories: supported housing, sheltered dwellings, social inclusion shelters, shared buildings, hotels and Housing First for severe mental health issues.

Cristian Campagnaro, Valentina Porcellana, Nicolò di Prima, and Sara Ceraolo from **Italy** discuss whether sheltered accommodation is simply a place to live or a place of wellbeing for the people living in it, as an experiment to look at new strategies to tackle homelessness. Focusing on shelters not originally designed as such, showed that the basic needs of those using the services as well as the shelter's staff were overlooked. Their research aims to stimulate a discussion on buildings and on designing shelters according to the psycho-emotional and social needs of people experiencing homelessness through an inclusiveness.

Finally, Julien Damon from **France** uses a sociological framework to discuss why some rough sleepers refuse accommodation, even if it puts their lives at risk. He argues that just two issues need addressing, each with its own response. Firstly, protocols for admitting people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues need modifying to allow for the compulsory admission to hospital on the request of a third party. Secondly, that shelters and hostels need to improve their provision of adequate and appropriate facilities.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the FEANTSA Homeless in Europe Magazine, and encourage you to get in touch if you would like to contact any of the authors. Furthermore, if you have suggestions for future edition topics, please contact the editor, Emma Nolan: emma.nolan@feantsa.org.



Has the standardisation of homelessness services in Poland facilitated access to shelter?

By **Jakub Wilczek**, *Saint Brother Albert's Aid Society*

In the years 2009-2014, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy,¹ Polish FEANTSA members² have developed a quality standards framework describing services in six areas – social work, housing & shelter, health, outreach, education & employment and local partnership. That framework, published at the end of 2014³, became a cornerstone for a number of legislation amendments aiming at the standardising of services for homeless people. Unfortunately, the scope of the reform was significantly narrower than the range of the framework – it actually focused only on the standardisation of shelter services, excluding even the housing part of the standard, not to mention health or outreach for example. It is unknown if and when the other areas will be introduced to the legislation. Having said this, the reform has changed the terms of access to shelter considerably.

The key Polish legislation act regulating the role of public authorities (and NGOs financed from public sources) in the area of supporting the homeless⁴ is the Social Assistance Act⁵. The Act defines a homeless person as an individual who neither lives in any dwelling⁶ nor is registered under any address⁷ or a person who is registered in a dwelling but has no possibility of using it. The Social Assistance Act also stipulates that each homeless person has a right to shelter (along with a meal and necessary clothes) and that sheltering the homeless is a municipal obligation. The amendments to the Social Assistance Act resulting from the quality standards framework became effective in September 2016. The most important amendments included:

- Introducing definitions of three kinds of shelter services⁸:
 - Homeless shelters – 24hrs shelter facility with services focused on reintegration (315 facilities with 15,226 beds in 2016⁹),
 - Overnight shelters – emergency service available only during the night with very little focus on reintegration, designed for occasional users (116 facilities with 3,321 beds in 2016¹⁰),

- Warming-up stations – supplementary winter emergency service with seats only focused mostly on preventing hypothermia among homeless people sleeping rough (53 facilities with 1,212 seats in 2016¹¹).

- Enabling the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy to issue a Regulation on the standards of the above kinds of services with a deadline for introducing the standards by the service providers by September 2018. The Regulation¹² was issued with a serious delay (in April 2017) giving the service providers just 16 months to introduce the standards.
- Accessibility of the above services was narrowed only to the homeless people who are self-reliant (understood as able to walk, feed themselves and fulfil their hygienic needs without assistance) and whose health condition does not endanger other inhabitants (e.g. by contagious diseases).
- Accessibility of the above services for intoxicated individuals was narrowed only to the warming-up stations (with a possibility of lifting the ban in other kinds of services in extraordinary circumstances – e.g. overcrowding in warming-up stations in harsh winter conditions).
- Facilitating access to emergency services (overnight shelters and warming-up stations) – the emergency facilities are open to anyone in need, with no regard to their local connection or cooperation with the public social assistance system (i.e. no interview with a social worker is required anymore).
- Narrowing the accessibility of the 24hrs shelters with reintegration services only for people cooperating with the public social assistance system (admission to the facility only by an administrative decision preceded by an interview with a social worker and signing a social assistance contract).

1 Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy since autumn 2015.

2 Pomeranian Forum for Leaving Homelessness, St. Brother Albert's Aid Society, Monar Association, Barka Network, Caritas of Kielce Diocese and "Open Door" Association (the last one not being a member of FEANTSA).

3 For a more detailed description of the framework and the ESF project under which it was developed, see Homelessness in Europe Magazine, Summer 2014, p. 16-18.

4 33,408 homeless people on 8/9 February 2017 according to the countrywide headcount commissioned by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/download/gfx/mpips/pl/defaultopisy/9462/1/1/Sprawozdanie%20z%20realizacji%20dzialan%20na%20rzecz%20ludzi%20bezdomych%20za%202016.pdf> (Polish only)

5 Social Assistance Act of 12.04.2004 (Dz.U. 2004 Nr 64 poz. 593), <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20040640593/U/D20040593Lj.pdf> (Polish only)

6 Meaning a dwelling complying with the requirements of the Tenants' Rights Protection and the Municipal Housing Stock Act of 21.06.2001.

7 Registration according to the Population Registry Act of 24.09.2010.

8 The Report on actions supporting the homeless people issued by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy in 2017 mentions however other kinds of facilities that are available for homeless (but also for people in housing crisis who are not homeless according to the law) – centres for mothers with underage children and pregnant women, crisis intervention centres and centres for domestic violence victims with a total of 3,830 beds in 2016, <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/download/gfx/mpips/pl/defaultopisy/9462/1/1/Sprawozdanie%20z%20realizacji%20dzialan%20na%20rzecz%20ludzi%20bezdomych%20za%202016.pdf> (Polish only)

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Regulation on Standards of Overnight Shelters, Homeless Shelters and Warming-up Stations Issued by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy on 28.04.2017 (Dz.U. 2017 poz. 953), <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170000953/O/D20170953.pdf> (Polish only)



The minimum standards of services issued in the Minister's Regulation include such factors as:

- timescale of provision of services (yearly/seasonal, 24hrs/night-only),
- range of services available in different kinds of facilities (meals, clothes, bathing, social reintegration, vocational activation, information on available support, access to a social worker),
- minimum temperature in facilities,
- staff requirements,
- maximum number of inhabitants per staff member / per social worker,
- maximum number of inhabitants per facility / per room,
- minimum square footage per inhabitant in the bedrooms,
- bedroom furnishings,
- sanitary facilities and maximum number of inhabitants per facility,
- other rooms necessary for services provision (kitchen, eating room, laundry, storages, room for individual meetings, access to computer).

Noticeably, neither the amendments to the Social Assistance Act nor the Regulation on standardisation of services say anything about financing the introduction of standards. That of course is a major problem for non-governmental service providers, whose facilities are not in compliance with the standards. The Ministry's stance is that the financing of the standardisation issues is a municipal responsibility, thus even though there are some central funds available for infrastructural investments in shelters, they cover a very small part of the needs – the regulatory impact assessment¹³ prepared by the Ministry estimates that 593.8 million PLN will be needed (ca. € 141.7 million), while the central funds are to cover only ca. 12% of that sum. Obviously, the municipalities are not very keen on increasing their expenses on homelessness which puts the NGO service providers between a rock and a hard place and may even result in closing some of the services.

Another issue is lowering the access threshold to the emergency services, which now are open to anyone in need. While this is obviously a good idea, the new legislation forces the municipalities with overnight shelters to host homeless people from any other municipality without receiving any refund. Since this is the complete opposite to what has been the case for the last 30 years, the largest municipalities, which are basically homeless hubs, are strongly opposing it by closing overnight shelters or turning them into substandard 24hrs shelters (they may still do that since the standards are not introduced yet). An online survey conducted in spring 2016 by the National Federation for Solving the Problem of Homelessness has shown that out of 28 overnight shelters surveyed, 11 were in a threat of closure or transformation into a 24hrs shelter with access restrictions. On the other hand, smaller municipalities who only have 24hrs shelters are unable to support a homeless person in an emergency – the administrative pathway (including an interview, issuing a decision and signing a contract) is simply too long to serve as an emergency measure.

To answer these threats, the Ministry issued Guidelines in 2017 for supporting homeless people¹⁴ which included the information that each of the 2,500 municipalities in Poland should provide homeless people with the possibility to use each of the three kinds of services – by providing the services directly, commissioning the services to an NGO or signing a contract with another municipality that provides or commissions such services. Unfortunately, the guidelines are not legally binding and so the municipalities are not obligated to adhere to them.

Arguably the worst unforeseen outcome of the new legislation was the formal exclusion of the homeless people who are not self-reliant from the homeless support system. This exclusion was partly based on the demands of the service providers who had pointed out that the lack of coordination between social assistance and healthcare systems resulted in releasing homeless people from hospitals with complex rehabilitation needs and placing them in shelters which did not provide any nursing and/or rehabilitation services. Yet, instead of coordinating the services, the Ministry cut out all homeless people who were not self-reliant from the shelters without giving any real alternative. The Ministry stated that municipalities should refer such clients to nursing homes and other care centres in which all their needs would be satisfied adequately. The problem is that the waiting time for such institutions in major cities ranges from a few months to a few years (in the case of clients with mental health problems) which does not make it much of an emergency measure. In such circumstances, most of the NGOs continued to service clients who were not self-reliant, risking an administrative penalty of up to 5,000€. However, it seems that under heavy pressure from the NGO sector, backed up by an unprecedented media coverage, the public authorities have so far resigned from executing this law, since no cases of penalising an NGO for servicing such clients in a homeless shelter are yet known.

A similar situation occurred in case of homeless mothers with children. In spring 2017, the Ministry issued a letter to all Voivodes (regional governors who are in charge of overseeing the homeless shelter system) saying that the homeless shelters should not host children and they should be placed in centres for mothers with underage children and pregnant women. Again, in theory this seems like a good idea, since a homeless shelter is not the most suitable place to raise children. But again, they were given no real alternative, since at the moment of issuing the letter there was no more than some 30 to 50 centres for mothers with underage children and pregnant women throughout the whole country. As it was the case with the clients who were not self-reliant, the National Federation for Solving the Problem of Homelessness started a campaign against this solution and used the media to influence the Ministry. After two months the Ministry backed out and issued a statement saying that there is no law against placing mothers with children in homeless shelters, however such cases should be as short-term as possible and lasting only until a more suitable solution is found. At the same time a new fund for the creation of centres for mothers with underage children and pregnant women was founded.

“Arguably the worst unforeseen outcome of the new legislation was the formal exclusion of the homeless people who are not self-reliant from the homeless support system”

¹³ <http://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/docs/525/12287801/12367762/dokument269425.docx> (Polish only)

¹⁴ http://bezdomnosc.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81:wytuczne-mrpips-w-zakresie-pomocy-osobom-bezdomnym&catid=9:blog&Itemid=101 (Polish only)



At the beginning of 2017, the Ministry started debating the issues surrounding the 2016 amendments with the NGO service providers. The negotiations resulted in yet another amendment to the Social Assistance Act¹⁵ that has recently been enacted in the lower house of the Parliament (Sejm) and is estimated to enter into force in April 2018. The major changes include:

- adding a fourth type of shelter service – the homeless shelter with nursing services,
- emergency admission to a homeless shelter without administrative decision,
- changing the role of the Voivode’s homeless shelters registry – instead of a list of shelters existing in a given region, it will become a register of facilities in which a given municipality provides shelter for homeless,
- prolonging the deadline for introducing the standards to December 2020.

According to the project of the amendment, the new kind of shelter is designed for clients who, due to their age, illness or disability, require partial care and support in fulfilling their everyday needs, yet who do not require fulltime nursing, rehabilitation or medical services, including clients awaiting their place in a nursing home (no longer though than for four months). The services described in the new standard include enhancing the social activeness of the clients and (accordingly to their capabilities) leaving homelessness and becoming independent. The new standard also requires a quality of service on a much higher level than in an ordinary homeless shelter, including fewer people per room, adjusting the facilities to the needs of people with motion disabilities, considerably more staff involvement, and of course nursing services including facilitating access to necessary health services, feeding and sanitary/hygienic care. This of course means that the shelters with nursing services will be considerably more expensive compared to ordinary shelters, not only due to the costs of adhering to the higher building standards, but mostly due to the increased labour expenditure. Again, there is no information on financing the new kind of service, meaning it is laid almost solely on municipalities.

An interesting move that may significantly improve access to shelter is changing the role of the so-called Voivode’s registry. According to the amended Social Assistance Act, it will become a tool for checking whether a given municipality is fulfilling its obligations in providing shelter services and may work as an incentive (mostly for the small municipalities who never did that before) to start contracting services. Also, resigning from the administrative pathway to a homeless shelter in emergency cases should considerably facilitate access to shelter in municipalities without low threshold services. The next few years will show whether the introduced changes are working for the benefit of homeless people, though it mostly depends on the municipalities’ attitude now. The NGO sector, including the Polish FEANTSA members and the Polish umbrella federation will closely look at the developments in this area and attempt to put pressure on the municipalities to act accordingly to the new regulations.

A final thought is – where in all that is housing? For the last 30 years, Poland has been a country with a homeless support system which mostly relies on shelters and there is not much hope for changing it in the near future. It may seem that the government is trying to involve the NGO sector in all the developments in the shelter services standardisation to keep us occupied enough so we have no time left for a discussion on housing. For the last four years (since publishing the Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness), there has not been much debate on housing the homeless among the major service providers, even though the quality standards framework included housing as an equal solution to shelters. The government seems to avoid the subject and any debate aiming at including housing-led solutions for homeless people in national law. Yet, from the municipal point of view, all works on standardisation of shelter services result in increasing costs of “managing” homelessness locally. Perhaps, when the shelters become expensive enough, there will be a grass-root shift from shelters to housing? Let us hope so. There are many other areas in the homeless support that need improving in Poland, but we are not letting this one go.

15 [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/2111_u/\\$file/2111_u.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/2111_u/$file/2111_u.pdf) (Polish only)



Access to shelter in France

By **Hélène Chapelet** and **Carole Lardoux** (Project Officers at *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité* (Action for Solidarity Federation))

Support and accommodation services for homeless people are generally delivered by NGOs which are funded by the state. In a context of ever-increasing numbers of homeless people and people experiencing housing deprivation, the current system – marked by an insufficient supply of temporary accommodation, which is accessed via an emergency number that is overwhelmed by the volume of calls – struggles to provide appropriate, long-term responses, adapted to these people's needs.

THE 115 HELPLINE: THE WAY TO ACCESS EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

In France, access to accommodation is through an emergency number for homeless people: 115. In use since 1997, this emergency number is one of the main pillars of service provision to homeless people, and is managed by geographical area, the French *départements*.¹ It is free to call 115 and calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Its aim is to provide information about and signposting to available services over the phone to people who ask for help through it (single people or families, young homeless people, women fleeing domestic violence, etc...) but also general information to individuals or information for social workers about:

- Emergency accommodation and day centres available in the area;
- Facilities providing access to health care, showers, free food, etc.

The legal principle of unconditional access to shelter for “any person who is homeless and in a medical, mental health or social emergency” is one of the mainstays of the homelessness sector in France.

With a phonecall to 115, people can be signposted to hostels ('emergency accommodation centres' or 'CHU'), night stops,² low-cost hotels paid for by the 115 service, temporary accommodation ('centres for accommodation and social reintegration', 'CHRS'), even supported accommodation units, as well as facilities that are only open in winter (hostels, gymnasia, etc.).

Spaces are managed according to what is available on the day:

- Someone who has not managed to get through to 115 – because of a lack of call handlers – or who has not been found a solution on a particular day must ring back the next day, and the next day until they get a positive response;
- People can be given a space in accommodation for a night, several nights (a set number of nights) or for an unspecified time depending on which services they are signposted to.

So as to make the process of providing solutions fairer and to increase the reach of the 115 service, in 2010 the State set up Integrated accommodation and advice services (SIAO). They coordinate all roofless service provision (the 115 helpline, outreach teams, day centres), accommodation (CHU and CHRS) and housing with support (family hostels, move-on housing, temporary accommodation with support). The aim is to centralise provision and requests for accommodation and housing by geographical area, *still* at *département* level, through an emergency component (the 115 helpline) and a social integration component. Everyone who asks for help from the SIAO is given an assessment of their social circumstances, carried out by a social worker. This is now the only entrance point into accommodation. The SIAO has put an end to providing accommodation 'on the door' that previously went on in parallel with the 115 helpline service: homeless people could access shelter by going straight there or after a phonecall from a social worker who contacted the unit directly.

THE 115 MONITOR: A TOOL FOR MEASURING ACCESS TO ACCOMMODATION

For several years now, the *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité* (Action for Solidarity Federation), which brings together most NGOs and accommodation providers, has regularly produced a “115 Monitor”. This tracks, month by month, the trends in requests for emergency accommodation received by the 115 helpline, the solutions provided on the day and the profiles of the people making those requests. The data, coming from around forty *départements* that

¹ For information, there are 101 *départements* in France (Metropolitan and Overseas).

² Place intended to provide people with shelter but in theory not intended for bedding down.



regularly collect information on 115 helpline activity using software called ProGdis 115/SIAO,³ is compared with that of the previous month and the previous year at the same time. This way, the monitor gives objective indicators of how effective the accommodation services are.⁴

The government has developed its own software to measure the activity of the SIAO, which it has been using since 2010: SI SIAO (information system for the integrated accommodation and advice service). It will be used by all SIAOs by the end of 2018. The challenge for the *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité* is to carry on independently producing a study of the social situation by analysing the solutions found for homeless people.

UPSURGE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE PHONING THE 115 HELPLINE, WITH A NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES

For several years, the monitor has been showing a significant increase in the number of people asking for help from the 115 helpline, especially families. The count carried out on the night of 4th September, the day schools went back after the summer, demonstrated an alarming state of affairs.

That night, more than 50% of the requests for accommodation came from families, amounting to 2,120 different people, compared with 32% from single males, 8% from single females, 5% from couples with no children and 1% from groups with no children and unaccompanied minors. Children included in a request for accommodation made up 29% of the whole population recorded by the 115 helpline. Minors are therefore the most represented age group and 363 children among them were under three years of age. More than half (58%) of these children were not provided with accommodation.

On 4th September 2017, only 36% of the people asking for help from the 115 helpline were accommodated. Of these, 39% were single males, 40% were single females, 25% were couples with no children, 34% were families and 30% were groups without children. 1,404 people in families were therefore left without accommodation.

Each night in Paris, the 115 service accommodates more than 4,500 families, amounting to more than 14,000 people. Even so, not all requests are answered with accommodation. On 4th September 2017, 247 families (743 people, of whom 386 minors) made a new request to the Paris 115 service. Of these families, only 33 (67 people, of whom 34 minors) got a positive response. 214 families (678 people, of whom 352 minors) were therefore left without accommodation because of a lack of available spaces – more than 87%.

Clearly, in France, accommodation stock is grossly inadequate for the number of homeless people, but neither is it adapted to the profiles of people: temporary accommodation for families is few and far between. That's why, in the majority of cases, families are accommodated in hotels. A hotel room cannot be an adequate and long-term solution that guarantees a child's development. Conditions are overcrowded and there is a lack of privacy, there is nowhere to cook meals, nowhere for children to do their homework and nowhere to relax, children can't have friends over, etc. Because of this situation, the system of accommodation for homeless people urgently needs redesigning, giving precedence to direct access to housing, to ensure accommodation and living conditions that are adapted to people's needs and respect their dignity and their privacy, as well as their right to family unity.

Lastly, the stiffening of migration policy and the increase in the number of people fleeing war and persecution have led to worsening conditions of service provision for foreigners in France. Today, half of all asylum seekers do not have access to accommodation centres for asylum seekers, which forces people to seek help from the general accommodation services through the 115 helpline. What's more, people whose status relates to the Dublin regulations and foreigners with no leave to remain, including refused asylum seekers, are doomed to living in extremely deprived conditions, between rough sleeping, makeshift shelters and emergency accommodation, because of limited escape routes. Being granted leave to remain, that allows access to housing and work is, still today, the only sustainable solution for these people and, more widely, the whole of society.

3 This way, *départements* with a lot of activity like Rhône, Isère, Bouches-du-Rhône, Val-d'Oise and more rural *départements* like Aisne, Dordogne, Charente, Guadeloupe, etc are included. This diverse sample reflects the activity of the 115 helplines. Data on the Paris 115 helpline is also presented separately.

4 It is important to point out that the 115 helpline activity does not give a complete picture of the phenomenon of homelessness in France, as a significant proportion of homeless people never or no longer try to access emergency accommodation structures, as shown by the latest point-in-time outreach survey carried out at the end of September 2017: 77% of people met on the day of the outreach activity had not used the 115 helpline.



“Clearly, in France, accommodation stock is grossly inadequate for the number of homeless people, but neither is it adapted to the profiles of people: temporary accommodation for families is few and far between.”

STILL ALLOWING THE THERMOMETER TO DICTATE PRACTICE

Every year in France, from the 1st November to the 31st March, the volume of accommodation is expanded by opening temporary spaces – opened when temperatures oblige it – and evictions are suspended.

In spite of a large increase in the number of accommodation spaces this winter, more than half of people who phoned the emergency number on 13th March 2018 was not accommodated,⁵ according to a survey carried out by the *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité* in five of the most over-stretched areas.⁶ The enhancement of accommodation capacity in winter-time is not enough to meet demand completely. What's more, for the first time, this winter the SIAO were instructed to prioritise accommodation for families, whatever the facilities made available: hotels, temporary accommodation, night stops, gymnasia, etc. Although the situation is clearly worrying, prioritising groups in this way goes against the principle of unconditional access to accommodation which must allow every homeless person access to emergency accommodation. Moreover, these temporary shelter facilities are not adequate, long-term solutions allowing people to integrate into society. This violates the law that says that emergency accommodation must offer “accommodation conditions that respect human dignity”.⁷

On a different note, those people who are accommodated over the winter are confronted with the lack of places from the 1st April, which marks the closing of the winter structures. Living conditions for rough sleepers are difficult all year round, the more so since some services for rough sleepers, like day centres and outreach teams, work reduced hours in summertime.

Between 10th June and 10th July 2017, the monitor actually showed 11% more requests than in January 2017 (when the winter effort was at its highest).⁸ It also showed the worsening in accommodation conditions compared to summer 2016: increase in the number of single-night stays (+44%) and huge increase in the use of accommodation in hotels (+75%). People accommodated for one night had to ring 115 every day in the hope of getting a more stable and long-term accommodation solution. The worsening and inappropriateness of the available accommodation drive a significant number of homeless people to stop trying the 115 helpline.

Consequently, accessing the accommodation system remains a laborious process for all homeless people who seek help from the 115 helpline, in view of the shortage in places and the inappropriate facilities. When competition between population groups is introduced, this system leans towards prioritising and “creaming” among the profiles they accommodate, jeopardising the unconditionality of accommodation provision. Direct access to housing for homeless people is one of the solutions, which is why the *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité* supports the five-year *Housing First* plan announced by the government last September. Still, the success of this type of policy presupposes the preservation of the temporary accommodation units that today are feeling the impact of drastic budget cuts. The reduction in accommodation stock must be the result of a Housing First policy that is working, not its starting point.

You can find all the monitoring reports published by the Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité on its website: <http://federationsolidarite.org/>

5 In the week beginning 13th March 2018, 15,848 extra accommodation spaces were opened as part of the winter reinforcement; these were added to 133,354 long-term accommodation spaces open all year round [According to the Ministry for regional cohesion website, accessed on 03/04/2018].

6 Survey carried out using 115 data from Paris and four *départements* (Seine Saint Denis, Val d'Oise, Rhône, Bas-Rhin).

7 Article L.345-2-2 of the Code for social care and families

8 Between 10th June and 10th July 2017, more than 92,500 calls were made to 115 in the 41 *départements* in the monitor. Of these, 84,468 requests for accommodation were made by 20,845 different people.



Access to homelessness services and housing in Amsterdam

By Jan de Ridder, Arjan Kok and Marcella van Doorn, *Audit Office Metropool, Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

You would expect housing and homelessness services to be well organised in a prosperous country like the Netherlands, with its longstanding tradition as a welfare state. In reality, however, it's rather disappointing, as demonstrated by research from the Amsterdam audit office. Access to support and housing for homeless people in Amsterdam is not adequate¹ and the facilities that are available are often considered to be quite rigid in their rules of conduct and procedures. Homeless people, who often come from stressful situations, don't always receive much support when requesting housing or shelter.

The departure point in terms of Dutch law is that the country's inhabitants who need support must always be given that support.⁴ They can seek housing in any municipality. In December 2017, the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports informed the House of Representatives that a number of local governments were not consistent in their application of this law and were not acting according to the spirit or letter of the law. In addition, he reiterated that it was up to local governments to ensure that the key questions coming from the homeless are examined thoroughly and that adequate support is provided for homeless people with and without mental health or drug addiction issues.⁵

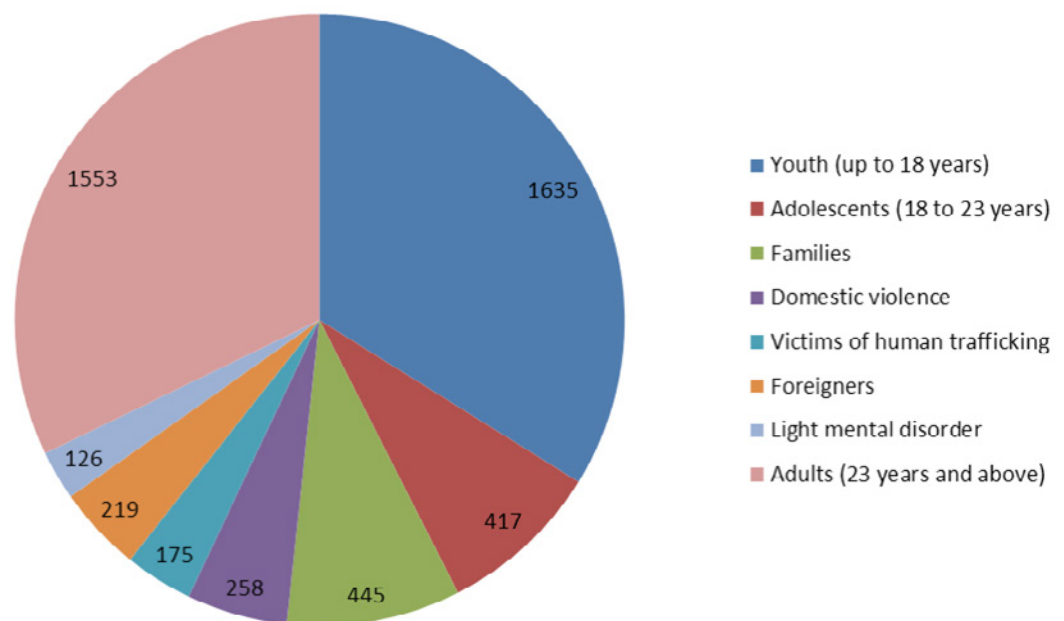
THE SITUATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

The number of homeless people increased from 17,500 in 2009 to 30,500 in 2016. Approximately 13,000 live in one of the country's four major cities (Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht)². That's why the audit offices³ in these four cities decided to conduct research into shelter for the homeless.

SITUATION IN AMSTERDAM

At the beginning of 2017, Amsterdam provided shelter for approximately 4,800 homeless people (see fig. 1).⁶ The audit office in Amsterdam carried out research into homeless people aged 23 and over. 1,553 of the people in this group were in homeless shelters on January 1st, 2017.

Figure 1. Number of homeless people in 2017 split into different categories



Source: <https://www.rekenkamer.amsterdam.nl/onderzoeksopzet-opvang-dak-en-thuislozen/>

1 Access to support is judged according to the five dimensions of access to care for the elderly. (availability, accessibility, accommodation, affordability, and acceptability). See Schipper, E. C. C., Challenges of access: Client and provider perspectives on the access process to long-term care for older people, 2016
2 <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/51/dakloos-vaker-jong-en-niet-westers>
3 These local audit offices are responsible for making independent audits on effectiveness and efficiency (performance). With public reports including findings and recommendations, the local audit offices not only support the city council but try to strengthen the city administration and are the watchdog for public and tax-payer interests. The audit offices are independent, choose their subjects for audits without consent of the city council, have access rights to all information and places in local government, and have the authority to present audit reports to the city council and publish them at the same time.
4 Artikel 1.2.1 van de Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning 2015 (Article 1.2.1 of the Social Support Act 2015)
5 Letter to chairman of House of Representatives, 18th January 2018
6 Statistics in the categories "youth" and "domestic violence" relate to homeless support in 2016. Remaining statistics relate to the situation as per 1 January 2017.



In 2016, 1,612 homeless people (age of 23 and above) applied for support in Amsterdam. In 2016, 1,076 homeless people were not eligible for support on the basis of the screening and 307 were eligible.⁷ For those who were granted access, the wait for housing or shelter starts and they are given the support they need. The average waiting time in January 2017 was 1.2 years. In April, that number fell to 0.9 years. The availability of 24-hour homeless shelters is limited for this group. Other homeless people seek shelter with friends and family, in overnight shelters, or on the street.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SHELTER IS INADEQUATE

Despite Amsterdam's continuous efforts at the local government level, access to shelter and support remains insufficient. Firstly, the public office where shelter can be requested is only open four mornings a week (every weekday except Wednesday). Online applications are being increasingly encouraged. This potentially offers better opportunities for a section of the target group. Secondly, applicants are often ill informed. They are provided with no explanation regarding the application process and its duration or the questions they can expect to be asked. According to client support organisations, homeless people don't know what to expect during a first intake interview, as demonstrated by the quote below:

“Homeless people often feel as though they are going for a job interview. They will emphasise the things that are going well, which means they will be judged as being self sufficient, reducing their chances being given shelter or housing. Because they don't know what lies ahead, they are less open, which does not serve the effectiveness of the services well”.

Thirdly, the process of applying for shelter includes multiple steps in which a number of different officials play a role, and not enough information is provided to the applicant. Just to get on a waiting list, a homeless person will already have to deal with three, or often up to six officials. Fourthly, the legal position of the applicant is often jeopardised. The legally required steps (such as an official proof of application, writing a research report, or dealing with a negative outcome) that must be taken during the application process are often not followed. The homeless person then often does not get what he or she is legally entitled to. Lastly, for half of the applications that are received, the entire application process takes longer than eight weeks. In these cases, the local government is in breach of the legally required norm for the

time needed to reach an outcome. For the applicant, this means that it will often take a long time just to get on the waiting list for shelter or support, much less be granted long-term housing.

THE PROCESS IS VIEWED AS STRICT

When considering whether or not someone is eligible, an important question is the extent to which the person in question is self-reliant. During this process, local government professionals use the Dutch variant of the self-sufficiency matrix. Psychiatric and psychosocial problems are often crucial for determining self-sufficiency. For example, if the professional decides that a homeless person is not self sufficient when it comes to 'daily activities' and 'societal participation' and is not fully self sufficient in terms of 'finance' and 'social network', the professional will still conclude that the applicant is self sufficient enough and not eligible for the support.⁸ This was the case for 867 of the 1,076 clients that applied in 2016. Experts and client support organisations are of the opinion that the high percentage of rejected applications is linked to excessively strict selection criteria.

THE SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IS INSUFFICIENT

There is no active support from local government for the largest group of homeless people that don't qualify for shelter to help improve their situation. Homeless people are given insufficient information with regard to their rights, including the right to independent client support, and they are not actively referred to other opportunities for support like temporary shelter, social services, debt support groups, or assistance in seeking employment. On a national scale, the perception persists that homeless people who do not suffer from psychological disorders or addiction are not given enough help.⁹ Homeless people who are taken in and waiting for shelter are not much better off in Amsterdam. They have a right to support from the local government, but at 2.5 hours per month per client, it's rather limited. They are often referred for support or shelter that is general in nature and doesn't suit their specific needs.

CONCLUSIONS

A variety of national studies have recently been published that further support the findings of research carried out by the audit office in Amsterdam. This research shows that these findings don't only apply to Amsterdam, but are playing out on a larger scale in the Netherlands. 'Mystery shopper' research carried out by the Trimbos Institute showed that homeless people are often unable to seek shelter or housing in 43 different municipalities because local government and housing and shelter services are too strict when it comes to the criteria in connection to the region.¹⁰

“You would expect housing and homelessness services to be well organised in a prosperous country like the Netherlands [...] In reality, however, it's rather disappointing”

7 For some of the homeless people who were in the screening in 2016, – 2016 above was still ongoing. Another part has decided not to fully screen.

8 ECLI:NL:RBAMS:2017:3835

9 <https://www.platform-investico.nl/artikel/geen-plek-meer-de-opvang-voor-daklozen-zonder-stoornis-verslaving/> 54% of those asked indicated that they 'disagree' with the statement that there is enough help for homeless people without a mental disorder or addiction.

10 Trimbos Instituut, *Praktijktest maatschappelijke opvang 2017*, December 2017. Connection to the region is established in Amsterdam by determining whether or not the applicant has spent at least two of the last three years in Amsterdam



There's a good chance that, during this time, the situation for the person concerned will have worsened, even though research shows that initial support is important to prevent applicants from slipping into worse circumstances.¹¹

National research revealed that homeless people who don't suffer from addiction or mental illness, but who have lost their home through bad luck or bad finances, are being rejected in large numbers by homeless services.¹² Local governments have indicated that they simply do not have the resources to help this group of 'self-sufficient homeless' people. The available research shows that the way homelessness services are currently organised, in many cases, can cause the situation to deteriorate further. This is partly due to restructuring in the Netherlands, which has left local government with the overall responsibility for this target group. Many processes have yet to be sufficiently established. But it also involves a certain reluctance towards the people knocking at the door for help. The conviction in the public and government debate surrounding homelessness is that the people themselves must take responsibility. In this scenario, government must not be too hasty when it comes to taking responsibility. Furthermore, becoming part of the group of homeless people who cannot fend for themselves is considered detrimental to the mental wellbeing and resourcefulness of the (relatively) self-sufficient group of homeless people.

We think it would be good to be less supply oriented and put the client's needs first. People who report themselves as homeless at the council are there for a reason. This is a stressful situation for those concerned and people are often not entirely rational under these circumstances. Stress, regardless of intelligence or knowledge, can often lead to reduced comprehension, bad choices and an escalation of the issues, which negatively impacts the way in which they handle the situation.¹³ At this point, in other words, support is required for someone to be able to regain control of the situation.

During the initial screening at the door, it is important not to make assumptions with regard to whether or not a homeless person is eligible for support, but what is needed to help improve the situation of the person in front of the counter must be established. This can vary from a nudge in the right direction to more long-term support aimed at recovery and becoming self-sufficient, in order to provide a more structural and permanent solution. Governments that make bad choices at this point create more problems than they solve. A lot of ground can be gained at the start of this process. By investing quickly in early, suitable support, deteriorating circumstances and the need for more intensive and costly support can be prevented. This is not only good for the client, it is more effective.

11 Trimbos instituut, *Factsheet Dakloze personen zonder OGGZ-problematiek en hun ondersteuning*, 2015.

12 Revealed in research carried out by investigative journalism platform *Investico* in collaboration with current events programme *Nieuwsuur* and the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer*.

13 WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid), *Weten is nog geen doen. Een realistisch perspectief op redzaamheid*, 24th April 2017



Shelter costs in Ireland and the transition to secure more effective responses to homelessness

By **Pat Doyle**, *CEO of Peter McVerry Trust*

In recent years, Ireland's homeless crisis has been characterised by a sustained increase in the total number of people accessing state-funded emergency homeless accommodation¹. As of January 2018, a total of 9,104 people were accessing homeless accommodation, a 59% increase in two years. This has presented significant challenges to local government, homeless agencies and voluntary homeless organisations who are seeking to ensure adequate provision of emergency shelter at a time of acute housing shortage.

As a result of the growing need for emergency accommodation, and in the absence of appropriate housing output, the spending on emergency homeless accommodation has risen substantially. Central government's allocation to local government for the provision of homeless services across Ireland rose from €70 million in 2016², to €98 million in 2017 and is expected to be almost €120 million in 2018³. This funding is then supplemented by allocations from within each local government's own budget and through fundraising by voluntary homeless organisations.

The rapid rise in the national homeless budget is not only linked to the increasing number of people in need of supports, but also the profile of those impacted by homelessness in Ireland, which has changed over the past five years. There has been rapid increases in the number of young people aged 18-24, as well as people in employment who are experiencing homelessness. More recently, there are also signs that rural homelessness is beginning to rise. However, in the context of access to shelter, it has been the issue of family homelessness which has had the biggest impact on budgets. This is due to the number of families who have become homeless and the provision of emergency accommodation through commercial and private operators, which caused such a budget increase in a short period of time.

By late 2012, the number of families presenting as homeless in Ireland began to rise quite quickly, particularly in Dublin. Ireland's pre-existing emergency accommodation structures had been created for single people, and to a lesser extent couples, and as such this system was clearly unsuitable for families.

In the absence of housing options and family specific emergency accommodation, the immediate response from local government and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive was to secure shelter in the form of hotel rooms and guest houses from private, commercial operators⁴. This type of reaction was intended as a short-term emergency reaction to family homelessness, as local government sought to put in place measures to secure pathways into private rental accommodation

and new social housing schemes. This included plans to deliver a new form of housing, known as rapid build modular housing, with programmes specifically developed to meet the housing needs of the rising number of homeless families.

Unfortunately, the plan to deliver rapid build modular housing schemes, which was critical in an increasingly dysfunctional rental market, faced varying degrees of delay and was shelved in late 2014⁵. It was reinstated in 2015 but only 22 housing units were delivered by the end of 2016⁶. Meanwhile, the unsuitable arrangement of placing families in commercial hotels and guesthouses continued. This form of emergency accommodation provision has proven to be very expensive. In Dublin, for example, the annual spend on hotels and guesthouse went from €455,000 in 2012, to €36 million in 2016 and was expected to reach €49 million in 2017. In addition, other funding was provided to homeless organisations offering in-reach supports to some families in hotels and guest houses.

MAKING THE SHIFT TO COST EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

By the summer of 2016, the government had published 'Rebuilding Ireland', a strategy document to tackle the housing and homeless crisis in Ireland⁷. The plan set out to significantly increase investment in social housing and to increase all forms of housing output in the period up to 2021. This of course would ensure a greater availability of housing, which would make it more likely that a housing led response to homelessness could be achieved, an approach that was re-confirmed as the government's preferred approach to the homeless issue. However, the new housing schemes would not appear overnight and with growing numbers of families in hotels a stop-gap intervention was needed.

It was at this point that the then Minister for Housing, Simon Coveney TD, committed to ending the use of commercial hotels and guesthouses for the purposes of accommodating homeless families by July 2017⁸. Though this was a goal with huge merit, it would be challenging to achieve given the consistent levels of new presentations of families into homelessness. His commitment was based on a decision to roll out a new form of supported temporary accommodation services for homeless families, known as Family Hubs⁹.

The new Family Hubs would, in the main, be operated by existing NGO providers of homeless services. They offer a cheaper alternative to hotels and guest houses but more importantly they undoubtedly provide a better response to the needs of families. The

1 <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>

2 <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/2016-budget-details-homelessness>

3 <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/minister-murphy-announces-housing-budget>

4 <https://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0220/505648-dublin-housing/>

5 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/plan-for-prefabricated-homes-for-dublin-homeless-shelved-1.2041560>

6 <http://www.thejournal.ie/rapid-build-housing-381797-Jan2018/>

7 <http://rebuildingireland.ie/>

8 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/housing-action-plan-simon-coveney-bets-his-career-on-promise-to-end-homelessness-411270.html>

9 The commitment was to provide better emergency shelter rather than house all homeless families accessing hotels.



“Ireland’s pre-existing emergency accommodation structures had been created for single people, and to a lesser extent couples, and as such this system was clearly unsuitable for families”

majority of these new services operate with 24/7 on site access to case workers and support workers. They also provided cooking and laundry facilities and play areas for children, something which almost all hotels and guest houses do not offer.

However, Family Hubs remain as a form of emergency homeless accommodation, and like all forms of homeless accommodation, the length of stay for people in the service depends largely on the availability of safe and secure housing. The current housing crisis in Ireland, and the lack of affordable and social housing move-on options, means that securing exits is very challenging, but it is happening and in record numbers as the current Minister for Housing, Eoghan Murphy, announced in January 2018¹⁰ with 4,000 adults exiting homelessness in 2017.

HOUSING FIRST AND OTHER LOWER COST HIGH IMPACT SERVICES

While families made up a significant number of the adult exits in 2017, this should not mask the other important and cost effective homeless interventions such as those who exited via a Housing First programme. The small-scale funding intervention, when compared to the sums spent on family hotel accommodation, through a Housing First model has resulted in over 170 individuals being accommodated in Dublin in the past few years, with half of those exits delivered in 2017.

In Dublin, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive funds a Housing First programme which is delivered jointly by Peter McVerry Trust and Focus Ireland¹¹. The programme initially targeted 100 people sleeping rough but was subsequently expanded with the overall target raised to 300 people and to also include long term homeless shelter users.

The move to target individuals who had very long stays in emergency accommodation was part of a strategic effort to progressively reduce the average length of stay in homeless services. Another reason to broaden the initial target group was that the individuals identified would be unlikely to secure an exit from homeless services without an intervention such as Housing First. These long-term service users were also those viewed as taking up the most resources and bed-nights in the sector and thus by securing a housing move-on, with wraparound supports, beds space and resources could be freed up to benefit other individuals who would likely exit the system more quickly.

While considerable attention is given to individuals in homelessness and securing exits into housing, less attention - or at the very least, less funding - is provided to *prevent* people coming into homelessness in the first instance. Even the measures that currently exist are focused primarily on the late stage emergency prevention interventions, such as assisting tenants who have been served a notice of eviction by their landlord. While these are important in helping reduce the flow of people into homelessness, there are other areas with significant scope for early stage prevention measures that could more effectively reduce and prevent homelessness in the long term. The Peter McVerry Trust has long advocated and campaigned for better strategic investment in areas such as childcare, education, employment, health and training for communities in which homelessness is prevalent or more likely to arise. Sustained and ongoing investment in these areas is the only way in the long term to stop the cycle of homelessness and ensure that we arrive at a point of eliminating homelessness. Rebuilding Ireland, the Government’s housing and homeless strategy, is the first comprehensive attempt to drive a cross-departmental response to the issue of housing and homelessness. It gives us the opportunity to improve all aspects of how we approach homelessness and the needs of those at risk and those impacted by the issue. It is in all our interests to ensure that Rebuilding Ireland is a success.

¹⁰ <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/minister-murphy-publishes-december-2017-homelessness-report>
¹¹ <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/housing-first-service>



The Cheaper, The Better? Housing the Homeless in France

By **Marc Uhry**, *Consultant on Housing Policies*

France is well known for its administrative creativity, setting up fifty shades of shelters, determined by standards, public targets, statutory occupation and services provided. The “supported homes” sector dedicated to homelessness provides a wide range of shelters (disability and health issues depend on still other categories).

Last December, the national government launched a call for proposals on “accelerating the implementation of Housing First.” Housing First precisely undermines this excess of categorisation, with the link between services and shelters more than individuals, the predefinition of needs according to situations. The call for proposals itself mentions conversion from shelters to Housing First. That perspective takes place in a context of a tightened budget for social policies, as well as huge pressure such as long-term unemployment, migration, age, vacuity of mental health policies, weakening youth policies etc.

As the shelter system is being questioned both by Housing First and by budget restrictions, it is time to evaluate the respective costs (or prices, to be more precise) of shelter systems. Let’s take the example of Lyon, a city under average pressure, with around 15 000 supported homes for homeless people, managed by NGO’s. There are many forms, many exceptions, so below are detailed only the main classified trends:

Supported housing (1 400€/year) on the public or private rental market. These are ordinary housing, managed by a social rental agency or close organisation, with a social support, mostly of another NGO. This costs the social sector around 800€/y for the Social Rental Agency, and 600€/y for specific support on housing issues. People have an ordinary tenant status or a “sub-tenant” status offering very close protections on quality standards, rent regulation, protection against eviction etc. There are some hidden costs: i.e. other social issues are dealt with by municipal social services. The tenant also receives a housing allowance¹. But these hidden costs don’t represent a burden on the social budget, because they are apart from it. This is an issue for the national budget, for municipalities, but not for the social budget as such, as other types of shelter depend exclusively on it.

Sheltered dwellings (Résidences sociales, subsidies for the whole building 12 200€ (below 50 rooms) to 25 000€ depending (over 100 rooms), but in an average NGO, only 25% of the dwellings are subsidised. At the end of the day, this would mean 62€ per room, per year, so NGOs rent a portion of their rooms to the state as emergency shelters, so they can reach 250€/year on ordinary rooms. As well as “optimized” individual allowances, to cover heating, electricity, water, here included in rent calculation). Résidences Sociales come mainly from former chambers for migrants or young workers, and have been converted into autonomous small dwellings, with private sanitation, own small kitchen or place to cook. Still, there are some technical and social workers, in very tiny proportion, to support households who are mainly single persons. Households have a weird status. Here again, there are hidden costs: local social services and housing allowances.

Social Inclusion Shelters: (CHRS, used to cost 30€/day per person, meaning 11 000€/year, 44 000€ for a couple with two children, now more diverse and reform proceeding should end with a lower price). These shelters are dedicated to people with a lack of autonomy. This amount includes social support and rent (no allowance for people in these shelters, which makes them open to migrants not eligible for allowances. Equivalent in allowances would cost 3 000€), including water, heat electricity.

The support is not distributed to the people inside the shelters, but to NGO’s managing these shelters. They depend on an agreement that is not linked to housing shape, so it can be used in separated flats, in containers, etc.

The calculation per person makes it more profitable to host families than single persons. Added to some provisions in low quality containers, this created a debate on links between costs and prices.

Shared buildings: (16€/day/person, 5 840€/year for a single person, 23 360€ for a couple with two children), they are buildings with 10-15 little flats, autonomous, but with also shared spaces, day presence of a housekeeper. It’s dedicated to people with a long experience of severe social exclusion (i.e. rough

¹ Allowances are a right, defined and distributed by the national State, depending on dwelling cost, household size and income. Maximum is 257€ per month for a single person, 405€ for a couple with two children, in a big city; a little bit more in Paris. Undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and some of EU citizens under « unreasonable burden » circumstances are not eligible.



“As the shelter system is being questioned both by Housing First and by budget restrictions, it is time to evaluate the respective costs (or prices, to be more precise) of shelter systems”

sleeping for years), and some are specialised with mental health associated troubles. People have an ordinary tenure, with individual allowances.

This is nowadays promoted by the public authorities and some NGOs extend this type of provision to families living in autonomous flats with shared spaces, for example when they have more administrative troubles than social problems. Then they have no allowances, but less social support, in some cheap buildings negotiated with cities, congregations and so on, it is possible to host families and provide them food for a far cheaper price (and sometimes better provisions) than any other type of emergency provision.

Hotels (21€/day per person + 3€/day for social support, meaning 8 760€/year/person, 35 040€ for a couple with two children). This is the lowest quality/

price ratio, with often a single room for four people, impossibility to cook, noisy neighbourhood, inconvenient location. But this is the “reserve army” of vacant places able to be mobilized very quickly, even if it’s not possible 100% of the time. During winter 2017, hotels were unable to provide the 500 places contracted with the authorities, 150 places were missing, because all was full with ordinary clients.

Housing First for Severe Mental Health issues (« Un chez-soi d’abord », 38€/day per person, 14 000€/year in social/health support, plus external services around 11 000€/year: total 25 000€/year per person).

People are hosted in ordinary housing, with a very strong support, large costs justified by the avoided costs in health system, far more expensive.

Synthesis table - homeless provision yearly cost

	1 PERSON	COUPLE +2	EXTERNAL COST (1P.)
Supported housing	1 400€	1 400€	3 000€ (allowances)
Sheltered dwellings	250€	500€	3 500€ (allowances)
Social Inclusion Shelters	11 000€	44 000€	None
Shared buildings	5 840€	23 360€	3 000€ (allowances)
Hotel	8 760€	35 040€	None
Housing First MH	25 000€	Doesn’t exist	None



Shelter as a place of wellbeing and dignity

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Is a shelter just somewhere to sleep or can it be a place of wellbeing of people who live in it? Is beauty something superfluous for homeless people, almost disrespectful to those who can only meet their primary needs?

These are two of the questions which the action research “Living in the dorm” was set up to address. Since 2009, an interdisciplinary research-group, composed of designers from Politecnico di Torino and anthropologists from Università di Torino have been working in the field of homelessness in several Italian cities, in cooperation with the local bodies and with the patronage and support of fio.PSD (Italian Federation of Organization for Homeless people).¹

From housing support to employment, from training to food and health, the aim of the research is to experiment with new strategies to tackle homelessness. Even though several topics have been investigated, improvements to shelter is a permanent focus and it relates to the majority of the actions in the research framework.

These actions investigate how the services shelters host are delivered to homeless people and how places have the power to define the wellbeing of people that inhabit them. They look at the way spaces and objects interact with users and with social operators. They also aim to understand how, successfully or not, individuals interact with places and products in there. The discussion is about the purpose of housing for homeless people not only in terms of cost reduction, but also in terms of dignity, service quality, psycho-emotional wellbeing, citizenship, and welfare. It will lead to the development of design concepts to solve the issues detected during a multidimensional and

multidisciplinary inquiry phase that outlines needs referring to classes of privacy, usability, safety, health and management.

The overall objectives of interventions are:

- Re-thinking and re-design the existing buildings and their inner spaces (Campagnaro, Porcellana, 2016),
- To furnish those spaces with equipment that is (both in quality and quantity) suitable for the needs of people (Campagnaro, Porcellana, 2013).
- To involve operators and users in the actions, giving value to people’s skills and aspirations (Campagnaro, 2018).
- To establish a shared and co-designed reference framework to be used in the future design of shelters (Campagnaro, Giordano, 2017)

1. A PLACE THAT INHIBIT

We decided to implement our design anthropology interventions in shelters as these places have never been designed for their purpose and they seem to overlook the basic needs of homeless people and social operators.

This happens despite the fact that about 75% of Italian homeless people seems to be hosted in shelters (fio.PSD, 2016, p. 23). This data represents the importance of shelters even today, despite new people-oriented, community-based housing services and support models taking a lead in Italy, “drawing a long-term plan and building a model of policies [...] in order to address any situation of need with appropriate tools to resolve it in a stable and durable manner” (ibid.).

¹ The research “Living in the dorm” is managed by professor Cristian Campagnaro (Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino) and anthropologist Valentina Porcellana (Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences, Università di Torino) in the cities of Torino, Verona, Agrigento e Milano.



Shelters are the physical interface of the service system for homelessness. They refer to an organisational and interventional model called the «staircase approach», which envisages “a succession of preparatory interventions, from initial reception to social reintegration” (ibid. p. 26). The person accesses housing solutions through a progressive emancipation from these services. Therefore, the shelter appears to be the place where the work of social services must come into play, before the adaptation to the new status of fragility becomes complete and every medium, or long-term, recovery plan becomes too difficult to achieve.

Despite this key role, most dormitories we visited in our research reflect an image of exclusion and instability (Porcellana, 2011). The buildings are often run down. They are often facilities designed for other functions. They are equipped with low quality and second-hand furniture. They are lacking in space for socialising and privacy. Accommodation provided to people envisages cohabitation among strangers and rarely guarantees space for storing personal belongings safely while being protected against theft.

2. A PARTICIPANT TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

a) Participant

From the beginning we have chosen not to be only observers of this situation of discomfort but also to be agents of change, according to the idea that the best way to understand something is trying to change it, and vice-versa. In this sense, for us, entering the system for homeless people with concrete design actions means understanding the functionality of the institutions from within, to stimulate them, and to work with all stakeholders to fully meet people's needs. Therefore, the change we experienced is the result of an incremental and participatory approach that fosters a transformational outlook. While this approach may be imperfect, it remains undeniably proactive, recalling the ‘concrete utopias’ discussed by Franco Basaglia. The research interlinks analysis with concrete actions that could have tangible effects on the spaces for the guests and those working therein. Concrete actions are useful analytical tools in reaching more in-depth understanding of the institutional policies and the mechanisms that regulate housing services, as well as enabling an immediate improvement within the context of study.

b) Transformative

Shelters, and in particular spaces and equipment, have been investigated and designed as devices of the educational and support work carried out therein. Particular attention has been paid to the way spaces and objects interact with the lives of the users and the operators and how these can qualify and facilitate the service delivered.

The design concepts come from a situated inquiry into the relationships between people and the objects, spaces, environments, and services around them. The project's outcomes are linked to the needs concerning workers' tasks and guests' time in the shelters: sleeping, eating, taking care of personal hygiene, spending time with others or seeking privacy, inhabiting the spaces safely, receiving and delivering information, accessing welfare services, testing one's abilities, and experiencing new aspiration.

The projects deal with architectural solutions, interior design, wall painting interventions, signposting and communication devices, bed systems, collective sitting, cell phone charging stations, and other furnishing items. The conceived solutions outline an idea of beauty that goes beyond the contemplative dimension and tends towards functionality and usability, facilitating the reduction of the conflict, of the psychological and ergonomic load, and facilitating the use of a service and the promotion of individual.

c) Participatory

The projects are of a variety of types and sizes, some highly complex, others extremely simple. The project team always includes both beneficiaries and other stakeholders. This ensures that every project is meaningful for the group who conceives and realises it. The projects come out of a collective and creative process, based on an exchange of knowledge among members of the community of practice gathered around the specific project requests. By moving from the individual to the design group, we encourage a bottom-up design instead of a top-down intervention. Homeless people and care-givers are involved as expert user assigning them a significant role in the inquiry and in the interventions. This promotes their skills within a rich, relational system. From consultation to customer involvement, from person-centred design to co-design, and even co-production, the person is given a “voice”. This approach reverses the



mechanism of exclusion suffered by people in a life lived on the streets, inviting them to express themselves, make choices, work together and take care of each other. Likewise, these forms of involvement are also important triggers for the empowerment of the operators of these services.

4. BEAUTY AS EXPERIENCE

The processes of the research-action promote an idea of beauty that is a concrete experience that can benefit everyone. The design solutions speak in a hopeful language of transformation. Furthermore, in our experience, beauty is also found in the participative process itself. The project becomes validated because everyone has personally contributed to. It is the assumption of a role, without delegation, credit, or debt. It is the ambition to achieve something that somebody thinks they are not entitled to. It is the request for an opinion. It is a space, an opportunity to discuss and meet someone who wants “to do something with you, instead of for you”.

5. PERSPECTIVES FOR CHANGE

Coherently with the «Guidelines for tackling homelessness» (fio.PSD, 2016), which define the “*minimum essential levels*” to be reached by services to fight homelessness, our research aims to stimulate a discussion on buildings, on their improvement, and their new design, according to the psycho-emotional and social needs of homeless people through an inclusive method.

The findings of our research are open to evaluation, verification, and improvement shared with all the stakeholders. At a local level, for example in the City of Turin, this topic is now part of the re-design process of the reception services in the framework of the activities funded by the 2014 – 2020 National Operational Plan (PON). At a national level, the discus-

sion of the results will take place within forthcoming national cooperative research that the two universities are going to develop in collaboration with the Italian Federation of Organisations for Homeless People.

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“Is beauty something superfluous for homeless people, almost disrespectful to those who can only meet their primary needs?”



Rough Sleepers Have Their Reasons

By Julien Damon – Associate Professor at Sciences Po

WHY DO SOME ROUGH SLEEPERS REFUSE ACCOMMODATION?

It's true, there are those who refuse services intended to help them. The problem comes crashing into the limelight when, during periods of extreme cold weather, some rough sleepers put their lives at risk by doing so. Refusals of this sort often come from those people who are clearly in greatest need. Services have also been approved and set up for them over the past thirty or so years and are expected to deal with problems labelled "social crises" and "extreme exclusion". This observation attracts extensive press coverage. By contrast, the reasons why these people refuse help are very rarely examined in detail.

Services come across this refusal and rejection of accommodation on a daily basis. In Paris, but also in numerous other towns in France and in Europe, mobile outreach units, like the *Samu Sociaux*, and specialist prevention or volunteer teams providing street-based services for homeless people in areas of the city, are confronted every day with rough sleepers who decline, in sometimes less than delicate terms, help that is offered to them. They might say yes to a coffee, a blanket or a meal, but they refuse to go into an emergency hostel or to get into a vehicle that might take them to one. Often, among those people found dead on the street are rough sleepers who had already come into contact with services several times, even in the hours immediately before their death. But each time they refused the offer of accommodation.

USING A SOCIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND THESE REFUSALS

Traditional sociological theory can allow us to explore the hypothesis of this behaviour, which on the face of it seems absurd, being rational. Let us dispel straight away a mistaken assumption, that has been disproven many times and yet reused as many times: we should not try to say that all homeless people are always reasonable individuals; instead we need to ask, methodologically, what makes sense for rough sleepers as social actors.

This 'rationalist' perspective is not limited to instrumental rationality and is not about simply working out what rough sleepers expected to gain from their actions. Just as for other social actors, the explanation of rough sleepers' behaviour must take other types of rationality into account. The work of Raymond Boudon, following on from Max Weber's analysis, distinguishes instrumental, bounded, cognitive and axiological dimensions of rationality.

In their daily life, rough sleepers (like every one of us, in fact) have specific goals: (*instrumental rationality*): accessing a service structure, receiving a service. It is also important to remember that rough sleepers have to decide where to go, where to ask for services, where to find a place to rest in a service landscape that not even the authorities know the full makeup of. Their choices can therefore not be about real utility maximisation, but rather are about looking for a solution that is good enough (*bounded rationality*). Rough sleepers are faced with a lack of information, that's clear, but above all they find themselves in situations where there is no simple way out of. They have to come up with theories to explain the situation they are in and to try to get out of it. In order to decide on daily activities and perhaps more long-term strategies, they need to come up with beliefs. They have to stick to these beliefs and, in sticking to them, understand what they have them for (*cognitive rationality*). Lastly, like all other social actors, rough sleepers have opinions, ideas and values. These lead them to make reasoned choices – which can sometimes be misunderstood (for example refusing accommodation in order to preserve one's dignity more than one's safety) – in their contacts with accommodation-providing services (*axiological rationality*).

All in all, believing that rough sleepers have needs, but also ideas and principles, means seeing them as real social actors. This premise allows a real understanding of rough sleepers' realities, that goes deeper than approaches limited to identifying mental illnesses, 'desocialisation' or a specific sub-culture.

The rationality premise is a humanist perspective that does not make rough sleepers out to be completely dominated agents with such a limited ability to act that it is not worth studying in detail anyway. A premise of this sort recognises that people thought to be 'in greatest difficulty' should also have the greatest dignity. As such, it links up with the aims of many campaigners for an end to extreme poverty.

OTHER REASONS FOR REFUSAL

Analysis of rough sleepers' refusal of accommodation services usually falls back on cursory explanations that make reference to rough-sleeper behaviour as associated with mental illnesses specific to their situation. It is alleged that people refuse accommodation because they have issues like not being able to imagine the benefits that they could gain from different services. This explanation of course has its benefits in pathological terms but it seems lacking because it cannot be the explanation for every situation, far from it.

"All in all, believing that rough sleepers have needs, but also ideas and principles, means seeing them as real social actors."



It is useful to think seriously about the contexts behind these refusals, and listen to the reasons rough sleepers give to explain them. These reasons, given by rough sleepers or by those who help them, can be very varied: violence in hostels, inflexible rules, not being able to participate in the community, lack of information, humiliation, etc.

Not accepting help can thus be explained by reasons that have nothing to do with mental illness. Homeless people have their reasons, in the opinion of past or potential users of the services, and they also talk about them quite freely when they are asked about them.

Some rough sleepers refuse accommodation because they fear the consequences of going into an emergency hostel: being separated from their partner, violence at night, detection by the police. This is *instrumental rationality*: the refusals are understandable because they have their uses.

What's more, most rough sleepers have a regular routine and have reasons for following it in their daily life. The activities and plans that they have set out for themselves can clash with the services offered and provided by the state. Leaving an area where you have put down roots carries the risk of not being able to be accepted there again or find belongings left behind there. This is *bounded rationality*, those concerned cannot know exactly what is going to happen.

We must also realise that rough sleepers, who have been dealing with a difficult situation for several years, have preferences, ideas and beliefs that have developed over time. Having realised how useless or even dangerous it is to use certain services, they can develop a reasoned argument based on theories that are very critical of the service system. Taking this *cognitive dimension of rationality* into account means giving rough sleepers the status of social actors capable of analysing, whilst still not having complete control over, their experiences.

Lastly, it is important to remember that rough sleepers will have ideas and goals - of course - but they also have values. Not wanting to be at close quarters with lots of other people, wanting to preserve their dignity, not wishing to be identified, even after years, as a rough sleeper, are elements of an *axiological ration-*

ality that allow us to understand why they do not seek help from support services or why they send outreach teams away. At the end of the day, not seeking help, refusing and rejecting services can stem from completely rational choices.

Even if rough sleepers have their reasons not to ask for or accept help from services and accommodation providers does not mean they are right to do so. The aim of this article is just to understand why they may do so.

ACTUALLY TWO SEPARATE PROBLEMS

What can be done? This is not such a complicated issue as it seems. There are really just two different problems that emerge and that warrant different responses.

Mental illness. Some street homeless people – as commentators invariably point out – have serious mental illnesses. They are incapable of taking stock of their situation. A situation that will not get better while they are on the street. Probably what is needed for them – the difficulty being distinguishing them from the others – is to look again at protocols for compulsory admission to hospital or hospitalisation at the request of a third party, so that they enter the service system in an appropriate way. It is pointless to complain about rough sleepers and their mental health problems, as has been done for years. If it is the case that they have mental health needs, we must act and protect them. For this to happen, enforcement will be necessary.

Inappropriate service provision. It can't be denied, many homeless people feel that hostel services are not for them. This can be because of poor hygiene, very high populations and little privacy or a real possibility of danger. The billions of euros that have been spent and are still being spent on emergency accommodation and its improvement over many years would greatly benefit from being looked at again... We must be able to do better.

All these issues are clearly sensitive and complicated. Still, they can be easily summed up in these two situations. In both cases, it seems inappropriate not to think that some form of compulsion, or at least of guidance, is necessary. Not admitting this characteristic of a dangerous form of wishful thinking.

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