



How can we effectively work together to prevent and end youth homelessness?



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- **A children's rights perspective on homeless children?**
- **Research results from a small research we conducted (jan–april 2016)**
 - Interviews with 25 families (parents and children) and youngsters
- **Suggestions**, resulting from combining the research results and the



A children's rights perspective on homeless children?

- 'Not-yet child' in a separate 'child & youth world'
- Individualizing & translating social problems into educational problems
- Consequence: this narrows our view on children

Expl: children who flee commit a status offence, no subjective right on social housing, social



A children's rights perspective on homeless children?

- Social position of double dependence
 - Human and children's right
 - What if responsibilities are not fulfilled?
 - What if other children's rights are involved?



Research: Protecting children against homelessness

- Starting point:
 - +/- 220 eviction procedures are started each week
 - 1 out of 3 homeless people is a minor
 - broader research question
- Interviews:
 - 25 families and youngsters (women-, family-, youth-, crisis-shelter, social



Research: Protecting children against homelessness

- Research question:
 - Why do you want to participate? What happened? What happened in the past? Children's rights? Future?
 - Interviews:
 - 25 families and youngsters (women-, family-, youth-, crisis-shelter, social apartments, private houses)



What happened? An ‘and-and’ story with a clear start

- maltreatment buy the owner, new owners, debts and poverty, flee from violence
 - Homeless because of the owner
 - the story of Zaid, a boy of Antwerp: ‘Our owner wanted more money. We couldn’t give to him. From one day to another I my 2 brothers, my mum and my little sister lived on the streets ‘
 - Homeless because of poverty and no adequate social house available



What happened? An 'and-and' story with a clear start

- Homeless because of violence
 - Parent and child = the story of Kelly: 'I don't want my mother to return to my father'
 - Child with child = the story of Sabrina: 'I flee with my brother from my father when I was a little child. We stayed in the park and an empty apartment'
 - Child/youngster alone = the story of Maria: 'I flee from my aunt, I slept on the streets, stayed with friends and did a lot of illegal things to survive'
 - Parent alone = the story of Patricia: 'I felt I wanted to kill my husband so I ran away'



Where did you go to? A helping hand

- Friends, parents of friends, ex-homeless people, mother's new boyfriend, lovers and mistresses
 - Friends and parents of friends = the story of Patricia: 'I stayed with friends and when I got pregnant I stayed with his parents. I was 14 - 15 years old'
 - Lovers and mistresses = the story of Sarah: 'I run away from my mother into the arms of my lover. He was a rich entrepreneur. He gave me money,



Where did you go to? No helping hand

- Teachers, policeman, school director
 - the story of Sophia: 'My teacher Nederlands helped me'



Refugee in your own country

- To start over again: school, friends, neighborhood
 - the story of Robin: ‘We stayed in different shelter houses, they were in different cities or communities. Each time I had to start over again’
 - the story of Dina: ‘This is my third school’
 - the story of Anouchka: ‘I kept my school, my hobbies, my friends’



Child-friendly shelter makes a difference but not on the long term

- Shelters with and shelter without a child-policy
 - Family support (crèche -school- educational-financial)
 - Children's activities - children to play with
 - A balance between responsibilities of the parents and responsibilities of the shelter
 - Contact with other parent



Child-friendly shelter makes a difference but not on the long term

- Shelters with and shelter without a child-policy
 - A long stay in a shelterhouse:
 - Lose hope, weighs on the atmosphere, psychological health,
 - the story of Rebecca: ‘After a while it’s very difficult here. The other mothers interfere with my sister. They always give comments. The rules become a burdom’
 - Financial repercussions, debts keep growing
 - the story of Marjan: ‘My stay here with my 4 children is



Suggestions and food for discussion

- Society level
 - The need for a global policy on homelessness implemented on a local level. Children's continuity in life and their rights are at stake.
 - Right to adequate housing as a subjective right for children/youngsters?
 - Give space to the agency of youngsters?
- Individual level
 - Integral prevention of homelessness (violence – budget – social services/ security) ?
 - housing first principle for families?
 - Child-friendly shelters?
 - More social houses?



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