Editorial

The challenges in ending homelessness across all member states of the European Union remain considerable, and in many cases, existing challenges were exacerbated by the economic crisis. Nonetheless, an increasing number of member states have devised and implemented strategies that formally aim to end or substantially reduce homelessness, with many of the strategies adopting a housing led, or at least elements of a housing led approach. In this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness (EJH)*, Lux provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of the Czech homelessness strategy, its strengths and weaknesses. As is the case in many other member states, a key structural constraint in the Czech context is the limited supply of social housing. This allied to high rents in the private sector limit the options available for those attempting to exit homelessness, and push many into homelessness.

In this context of limited affordable housing options across the European Union, Hegedüs and colleagues provide a detailed overview of efforts to address these structural housing market constraints, by exploring the role of Social Rental Agencies (SRAs) in 'socialising' the private rented sector in a number of member states, with a particular focus on Hungary. They conclude that the private rented sector, via SRAs, has the potential to enhance the supply of affordable rental housing. A detailed case study of the operation of a SRA in a city in Ireland is outlined by Lalor, who argues that SRA's could potentially add to the stock of private rented accommodation for homeless households, and provide value for money.

Securing affordable housing for homeless households is a key component of any homelessness strategy, but equally important is ensuring that those households that secure affordable housing, retain that accommodation. Gerull's exploration of evictions in 14 member states notes that member states with advanced homeless strategies do not necessarily have strategies to prevent homelessness from evictions. Research on the prevention of homelessness has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years and Maher and Allen provide a state of the art overview of these debates by exploring a homelessness prevention strategy in Ireland. They and others, while welcoming very specific targeted measures that can prevent homelessness, ultimately conclude that homelessness prevention strategies must start with the adequate provision of affordable housing. In addition, the development of effective preventative policies is dependent on robust and reliable research, and the increasing deployment of longitudinal, rather than cross-sectional, research

in homelessness research has facilitated a greater understanding of the dynamics of homelessness. Williamson and colleagues in their paper highlight the ethical, practical and methodological challenges involved in tracking a group of homeless women over a two-year period.

The importance of housing in ending homelessness, while seemingly self-evident, was not and is not always the primary response to homelessness, despite the increasingly robust evidence base for housing led approaches that have been reported in previous editions of the *EJH*. In a further contribution to this discussion, Gaetz argues that a housing led approach is applicable, not only to homeless adults, but to young people as well. Acknowledging that such an approach for young people need to adapt the model and incorporate what we know about the developmental needs of adolescents and young adults, Gaetz nonetheless argues that Housing First models for young people should be seen as an important component in ending their homelessness.

A mantra in many member states is that policies at national and local level should shift from an emphasis on managing homelessness, to ending homelessness. Nonetheless, despite the development of national strategies, at a local level managing homelessness, or more specifically, managing the siting of homeless services is problematic. Karsten provides an assessment of the siting policies in the Netherlands, where a number of new facilities were deemed to be required for homeless people and how the siting policies were determined by what are termed 'fair share policies.'

The varying levels and types of services for homeless people across the European Union are reflected in our special section on the Baltic States, where service provision remains relatively rudimentary. The Editorial Team hope that these contributions will spark a debate on the responses to homelessness in these member states. Defining homelessness, and particularly the utility of the ETHOS definition of homelessness, is one area where a vibrant and productive debate is on going, and García and Brändle in their contribution argue for an extension of the indicators of homelessness and housing exclusion utilised in ETHOS.

This edition of the *EJH* also contains a number of 'response pieces' to contributions on *EJH 7(2),* in addition to a range of book reviews on aspects of homelessness in Europe, with a particular focus on reviewing books and reports, not published in English. As ever, the Editorial Team hope that the diverse readership of the *EJH* find the contributions informative, provocative and stimulating, and we welcome feedback on any aspect of the Journal.