

## Seminar 4: Impact of COVID-19 I

Chair: Nicholas Pleace, UK

### Caterina Cortese, Sabina Licursi, Serena Quarta, Gianfranco Zucca, Roberta Pascucci, IT: Learnings from the Pandemic: The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Services for Homeless People in Italy



**Caterina Cortese** is Sociologist with a PhD in Policy Analysis. Since 2013 she has been working at fio.PSD (Italian Federation of Organizations working with Homeless People) in charge of Study, Research and Cultural Promotion Office on the condition of Homeless People. She carries out activities related to National Surveys on Adult marginalization, Homelessness Services, and Data collection on Housing First. Her articles and productions are available also on the online Library <https://www.fiopds.org/biblioteca/>. Latest is "The impacts of the pandemic crisis on Homelessness" (2020) (co-author).

**Sabina Licursi**, Associated Professor in Sociology, University of Calabria. She teaches Social Policy and Methods of Social research. Her main topics of interest are Solidarity, Poverty, Homelessness, Education.



**Roberta Pascucci** is a Sociologist with a PhD in Sociology and Social Research. Expert in Methodology of Social Research, her fields of interest are Poverty, Social Inequality and Social Policy. She collaborates with the Social Policy and Research office in fio.PSD.



**Serena Quarta** is a researcher in Sociology in the Department of Political and social studies of the University of Salerno. She teaches Methodology of social research. She collaborates with the Caritas Italiana and is Responsible for the Observatory on Poverty for the Caritas in the city of Lecce.



**Gianfranco Zucca** studied Philosophy of the language, with the specialization in Social research and Qualitative Methods. Since 2003 he has been a researcher in IREF (Institute of Research for the Education and Training). His main areas of study are labour market, training, migration.



After the government lockdown imposed for national security reasons (March 2020) and the responsible appeal #iorestoacasa (#Istayathome) it was clear that for homeless people "staying at home" was not a plausible option. A great number of people with precarious health conditions, vulnerabilities and difficult living situations, found themselves in a sort of "emergency in the emergency." At the same time, homelessness services had to adapt solutions and support systems to cope with the pandemic. The aim of the article is to analyze the impact of the pandemic on Services for Homeless People in Italy. It presents the results of an Instant research, launched at the end of the first national lockdown (May 2020), focused on the reorganization processes of services and the responses adopted at the beginning of the lockdown, the relationship with service users and the inter-institutional collaboration.

More than thirty coordinators and directors of services from the public and private sectors were interviewed, in 30 cities across the North, Central and South of Italy. Main findings are referred to the strong resilience of services, the adaptation of strategies, networks, creative and shared solutions, rethinking of services for homeless people overcoming low-threshold models. On the other hand, critical issues emerged, such as the possibility of sheltering, the availability of protection equipment, insufficient space,

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unavailability of places for isolation and quarantines, the suspension of inclusion and insertion job training. Moreover, unexpected effects arose from the forced cohabitation in 24h shelters: on one side, an unprecedented and voluntary collaboration between social workers and users highlights the capability of services to stimulate immediately autonomy in homeless people, and on the other, how complex and severe health and living conditions are for a portion of users.

Final reflections are dedicated to the learnings from the pandemic crises, referring to forthcoming services for homeless people.

## **Eva Hart, NL: Corona and Self-sufficiency – The Influence of the Corona Crisis on Welfare Policies**



***Eva Hart** works as a junior researcher for the research department of HVO-Querido, a care organization providing shelter, supervised living and day activities in Amsterdam and the surrounding regions. The research department aims to be the linking pin between research and the practice of care. It also initiates research with the goal to contribute to the improvement of care. Eva has a master degree in Sociology and combines research activities with a job as policy advisor.*

Self-sufficiency has been a common theme in Dutch welfare policies, as a way of determining access to facilities and as a goal during the trajectories. These facilities include homeless shelters, sheltered living settings and Housing First trajectories. Anecdotal evidence from the first wave of corona in the Netherlands showed a change in the approach towards self-sufficiency, both in the daily practice of care and in temporary policies that were developed to deal with the effects of the social distancing measures. Therefore research was done to answer the question: Does the corona crisis influence the way of thinking about self-sufficiency on both an execution and policy level in the longer term? The focus is specifically on policies in Amsterdam.

For this research, a focused analysis was done by using qualitative data from 'Kwetsbaar in Amsterdam' (Vulnerable in Amsterdam), a research project on the impact of corona, led by the Free University of Amsterdam. Policy documents and additional interviews with managers from a social care organization were also used. The analysis shows that the use of self-sufficiency is often criticized. It is seen as a tool with limits, like the lack of a client's own perspective, or as a tool to divide scarcity and withhold people from needed support. Recent policy developments mostly have a focus on prevention of homelessness and (alternative) housing possibilities, built on the advice- and research reports that were initiated after an increase of homelessness numbers in the Netherlands. Though there is a discussion on the usage of self-sufficiency, it does not have its origins in the corona crisis and the temporary approach. The crisis did result in new challenges that emphasized the importance of the discussion, for example the visibility of the housing problem and the risk of an increase in numbers of homeless people.