

Seminar 11: Measurement of Homelessness (Floor -1, Room 7)

Chair: **Freek Spinnewijn, BE**

Volker Busch-Geertsema, DE: Measuring Homelessness in Germany – The New National Approaches



Prof. Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema has studied social sciences at the University of Bremen and is a senior research fellow and board member at the Association for Innovative Social Research and Social Planning (GISS, Bremen, Germany). Since 2015 he is an honorary Professor at Heriot Watt University Edinburgh. He is a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness since 1995 and since 2009 he is the Coordinator of the Observatory and member of the editorial team of the European Journal of Homelessness. He has conducted a number of extensive research projects on different aspects of homelessness in Germany, Europe and further abroad.

The presentation will report about two distinct approaches to measure homelessness in Germany, both based on new national legislation to implement recurrent measurement of homelessness at national level.

a) Measuring “sheltered homelessness”: The national office of statistics has collected for the first time in 2022 administrative data about all homeless persons provided with different types of shelter and temporary accommodation by municipalities and NGOs. It is a point in time data collection at 31 January 2022 and will be repeated annually in the following years.

The presentation will critically assess the approach, and report about the basic results and reactions by politicians, interest groups and the media.

b) Measuring the extent and profile of “hidden homelessness” and “unsheltered homelessness”: The German Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs has commissioned Kantar Public and GISS with conducting a survey on these two groups of homeless people. A sample survey was conducted in 151 German cities and towns covering more than 700 services of a wide range of providers during the week from 1st of February until 7th February 2022. A large number of service users completed questionnaires and the services provided counts of the two target groups during the week. Similar surveys shall be conducted bi-annually according to the new legislation.

Again, the presentation will critically assess the approach and the lessons learned for future surveys of the target groups, and report about the basic results and reactions.

Sjoerdje van Heerden, Paola Proietti and Silvia Iodice, EU: Homelessness in EU Cities and Towns



Paola Proietti holds a Bachelor and MSc in Economic and Social Sciences from Bocconi University. Later she obtained a PhD in Urban and Regional Science. Her research cuts across Human and Economic Geography, Political Economy, Public Policy. In 2019 she joined the European Commission where she contributes to the Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies focusing on equality and non-discrimination policy, spatial inequalities and cohesion, informal settlements and homelessness, migration and local and regional indicators for sustainable development.

Sjoerdje van Heerden works at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. Her recent research primarily focuses on affordable housing, house price dynamics, and housing financialisation across EU cities. Other research topics include EU sustainable urban development strategies, governance, and immigration and integration policies. Sjoerdje conducts both

quantitative and qualitative research and has published in various peer-reviewed journals (e.g. *Urban Studies*, *Electoral Studies*, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*). She holds a Msc in Urban Studies and a PhD in Political Science from the University of Amsterdam.

Silvia Iodice holds a Ph.D. in Architecture (Doctor Europaeus; thematic area: Urban Planning and Evaluation), at the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples 'Federico II'. Since 2020 she is Contract Agent at the Joint Research Centre (European Commission), working as urban analyst and researcher in the Territorial Development Unit to support European policies with territorial analyses. She is mainly involved in urban-related projects and activities dealing with multi-dimensional phenomena and she takes care of the Community of Practice on Cities (CoP-CITIES), meant as an initiative to improve information sharing and enhance collaborative work among relevant urban stakeholders.

The number of people experiencing homelessness in the EU has increased over the past decade. While the exact consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic still remain to be seen, there is cause for concern. In many cities, a growing number of people are at risk of losing their accommodation. In this context, our study summarises the main findings from a survey conducted among a sample of European cities and towns, composed of 133 local administrations across 16 EU Member States. The survey was conducted in 2021. A specific feature of the research is that findings are also analysed according to city size (ranging from small towns to large metropolitan areas), allowing for the detection of possible differences in terms of homelessness numbers, profiles, trends, and policies between cities, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, there are indications that city size matters when it comes to homelessness, for example, exclusively smaller urban areas report 'zero homelessness', while in smaller urban areas that do experience homelessness, more variation in profile type is observed (e.g. chronic, transitional, episodic). Furthermore, during the pandemic, it was largely the smaller urban areas that maintained stable numbers of homeless people. At the same time, our study makes clear that more research is needed to fully understand the exact cause of these differences. For example, the observation that smaller urban areas more often experience 'zero homelessness' may be rooted in more effective (prevention) policies, migration to larger cities, or due to different definitions or methodologies to measure homelessness. Improving policies that aim to tackle homelessness and precarious living conditions, fits with the 'Leaving No One Behind' principle, which is crucial in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals framework and several EU initiatives, among those the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Arianna Gatta, IT: Making the Invisible Visible: Challenges in Estimating the Homeless Population



Arianna Gatta is a PhD researcher at the European University Institute in the Department of Political and Social Sciences. In terms of methods, her research focuses on quantitative methods for measuring homelessness and hard-to-reach populations, as well as the use of experimental and qualitative approaches. In terms of topics her work focuses on access and consequences of conditional welfare for marginalized groups such as the homeless and the unemployed youth. She collaborates with fio.PSD and is currently visiting at INPS as collaborator of professor Klarita Gërxhani.

In the last 40 years social scientists have developed and applied a wide variety of methods to measure the homeless population. However, estimates tend to differ significantly depending on the method used. This leaves the question "How many homeless are there?" a difficult one to answer, despite being crucial for public policies. Moreover, little is known regarding the degree of comparability of the results produced by the same method over time. In this work strengths and drawbacks of different quantitative methods are outlined, providing insights on what they can and cannot measure. The city of Rome is used as case study, as the total homeless population has been estimated repeatedly over time using capture-recapture method (in years 2002-2011), point-



16th European Research Conference

22nd and 23rd September, 2022



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in-time sampling (in 2014), time-location sampling (in 2011, 2014 and 2021) and through the administrative data of the Anthology platform. A particular focus is dedicated to time-location sampling. Previous homeless population estimates in Rome from the Italian National Statistics (ISTAT) in 2011 and 2014 are compared to those from a novel data collection run in 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Preliminary results show that the 2021 estimate of the homeless population is significantly smaller than the previous ones performed with time-location sampling, and more similar to point-in-time estimates. This might be driven by the reduction in turnover of homeless people across services, resulting from the movement restrictions within and across cities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The estimate of the homeless population is highly sensitive not only to the method used but also to the contingent context. This calls for more attention from researchers and practitioners on these aspects when producing, using and comparing estimates of the homeless population.