CHAPTER 1

THE MANY FACES
OF HOMELESSNESS
IN EUROPE
Ever since the first 'Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe' was published in 2015, FEANTSA and the Foundation Abbé Pierre have been sounding the alarm on the unprecedented rise in homelessness in Europe. Over the last decade, the profiles of homeless people throughout the European Union have changed to include families with children, single-parent families, women, young people, the elderly, foreign nationals, etc. — and not merely single men as was formerly the predominant case. Therefore, while access to dignified, adequate and affordable housing is a need and an essential right for every human being, the requirements in terms of support vary greatly — an 18-year-old homeless person from Afghanistan seeking asylum in a European Union country will not have the same support needs as a 58-year-old single woman with mental health problems or a family with young children.
In general, homeless people are in poorer health and have a shorter life expectancy than the population as a whole – living on the streets still kills people in Europe today. However, there are nonetheless no comparable European data on homelessness. The people affected are excluded from housing and consequently from Eurostat data, which poses real problems of invisibility and recognition. A wide variety of definitions, methodologies and sources are used in this report. Official national data on homelessness exist in some Member States but are non-existent in others. In such cases, we favour the use of regional or local data. The main methodologies for quantifying the number of homeless people are:

- surveys conducted at a specific time, i.e. counting visible homeless people in urban areas over a given time period (one night or longer)
- censuses by service providers (day centres, accommodation centres, etc.)
- prevalence data, i.e. surveys combining previous homelessness studies and extrapolation calculations

Where possible, we will give preference here to data from the first two methodologies as they are more reliable.

In this report, a ‘homeless’ person is defined according to the European ETHOS typology developed by FEANTSA. It is based on the premise that the concept of a ‘home’ is composed of three domains, the absence of which can constitute a form of housing exclusion. Having a home can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his or her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations (social domain) and having legal title to occupation (legal domain). Four main categories of homelessness are based on this housing concept:rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing – all of which indicate a lack of suitable housing. These conceptual categories are divided into 13 operational categories that are useful in the development, monitoring and evaluation of homelessness policies.

FEANTSA and the Foundation Abbé Pierre estimate that 700,000 homeless people are currently sleeping rough or living in emergency or temporary accommodation across the European Union. This is a 70% increase in the space of ten years. These results are not based on a sum of the data below, which correspond to completely different time-frames, but of a methodology implemented by FEANTSA in 2009, which only uses data from surveys conducted at a specific time (e.g. one night or one week), using different methodologies, in the countries where they are available. They should therefore be viewed with caution and be seen in the context of a lack of common definitions and approaches as well as the flagrant lack of a standardised statistical European framework.

1 The ETHOS typology is available in several languages: https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion?bcParent=27

2 On the need to work towards a uniform statistical framework on homelessness, see OECD (2020), Better data and policies to fight homelessness in the OECD, Policy Brief on Affordable Housing, OECD, Paris, available at: http://oe.cd/homelessness-2020
Recent estimates of the number of homeless people in European countries (not comparable in terms of methodology and the given definition of homelessness)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of homeless people</th>
<th>Relevant year</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>337,000</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Estimate on a given night¹</td>
<td>Full but... (all ETHOS light categories⁴, except for people in shelters for victims of domestic violence and persons leaving institutions)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>21,567</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Annual estimate⁵</td>
<td>Partial (only includes some ETHOS categories - homeless registered by social services)</td>
<td>+21.4% from 2008 to 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Unknown at national level</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>4,187</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Survey conducted over a given night⁶</td>
<td>Full but... (all ETHOS categories except people staying with family/friends)</td>
<td>+142.2% from 2008 to 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>6,431</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Census taken over a given week⁷</td>
<td>Full (all ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>+28.7% from 2009 to 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>22,938</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Estimate over a given month⁸</td>
<td>Partial (cities &gt; 20,000 inhabitants &amp; only certain ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Census taken on a given night⁹</td>
<td>Full (all ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>-32% between 2015 and 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>143,000</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Census taken on a given night¹⁰</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>+50% from 2001 to 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Unknown at national level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attica</td>
<td>17,720</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Annual estimate¹¹</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>8,568</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Census taken on a given night¹²</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>10,148</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Census taken over a given week¹³</td>
<td>Partial (state-run emergency accommodation)</td>
<td>+211% from 2014 to 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>50,724</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Estimate over a given month¹⁴</td>
<td>Partial (cities &gt; 250,000 inhabitants &amp; only certain ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>+6.5% from 2011 to 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Number of homeless people</td>
<td>Relevant year</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>6,877</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Annual estimate (^{15})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>4,806</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Annual estimate (^{16})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Winter census (^{17})</td>
<td>Partial (winter census)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>39,300</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Annual estimate (^{18})</td>
<td>Full (all ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>+120.8% from 2009 to 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>30,330</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Estimate on a given night (^{19})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3,396</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Estimate over a four-month period (^{20})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>21,230</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Estimate over a given week (^{21})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Unknown at national level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>87,410</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Census taken on a given night (^{22})</td>
<td>Partial (temporary accommodation)</td>
<td>+72% from 2011 to 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual census of applications for homeless status (^{23})</td>
<td>Full but… (applications for homeless status)</td>
<td>+3% from 2018 to 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>36,465</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Annual census of people accepted as facing statutory homelessness (^{24})</td>
<td>Full but… (statutory homelessness)</td>
<td>+4% from 2018 to 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>11,715</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Annual census of applications for homeless status (^{25})</td>
<td>Full but… (applications for homeless status)</td>
<td>-2% from 2009 to 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>18,180</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Annual census of applications for homeless status (^{26})</td>
<td>Full but… (applications for homeless status)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>23,483</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Annual estimate (^{27})</td>
<td>Partial (only some ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>4,029</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Annual estimate (^{27})</td>
<td>Partial (some ETHOS categories - homeless registered by social services)</td>
<td>+67.3% from 2013 to 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>33,300</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Census taken over one week (^{28})</td>
<td>Full (all ETHOS categories)</td>
<td>+8% from 2011 to 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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FIFTH OVERVIEW OF HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE 2020 | FEANTSJA - FONDATION ABBÉ PIERRE


10 INSEE (2013), ‘L’hébergement des sans-domicile en 2012’ [Housing the homeless in 2012], available [in French] at: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/828124


data


**THE MANY FACES OF HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE**

**HOMELESSNESS: FROM 0 TO 99 YEARS OLD, ALL GENDERS COMBINED**

**IN IRELAND**
1 in 3 homeless people in temporary accommodation was a **child**.

**IN ENGLAND**
90% of single parent families applying for public support for homeless people were **women**.

**IN SWEDEN**
Between 1993 and 2017, the share of **women** amongst the homeless population increased from 17% to 38%.

**IN THE NETHERLANDS**
The number of homeless **young people** increased from **4,000** in 2009 to **12,600** in 2018.

**FOREIGN NATIONALS OVER-REPRESENTED AMONG THE HOMELESS**

**IN GERMANY**
Families with **children** account for **27.2%** of homeless refugees, compared to 13% of the rest of the homeless population.

**IN FINLAND**
A **quarter** of homeless families are **immigrants**.

**IN BARCELONA, SPAIN**
52.3% of homeless people are **third-country** nationals.

**IN GREECE**
51% of the **3,774 unaccompanied minors** are homeless.
The prolongation of homelessness: longer periods of homelessness

**IN POLAND**
43% of people who were homeless in 2013 had been so for more than five years, a proportion that increased to 54.6% in 2019.

**IN ITALY**
The percentage of people who were homeless for more than two years increased from 27.4% to 41.1% and the percentage who were homeless for more than four years increased from 16% to 21.4% between 2011 and 2014.

**IN AUSTRIA**
Homeless people had a mortality risk 4 times higher than the rest of the population.

**IN HUNGARY**
1 in 4 homeless people reported having mental health problems and 1 in every 2 homeless people said they have a serious physical health problem.

**IN LONDON**
The coronavirus mortality rate of homeless people living in emergency accommodation has been 25 times higher than that of the general adult population.

**IN FRANCE**
495 homeless people died in the streets in 2019. The average age of death is 48.7 years old.

There are no homogeneous or comparable data on homelessness in Europe. Details of these data, derived from different sources and methodologies, are available in Annex 1.