



**AN OVERVIEW OF  
HOUSING EXCLUSION  
IN EUROPE**

**2015**

The Foundation Abbé Pierre - Feantsa





# CHAP. 2

---

# HOMELESSNESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: A SERIOUS SITUATION BUT NOT A HOPELESS ONE

---

The statistical index on housing exclusion in Europe only deals with difficulties experienced by people with housing. It does not give any perspective on the situation of people who are homeless. Extreme poverty, particularly homelessness, is a major challenge to the credibility of the European project. Particularly at a time when Member States are struggling to provide a unified response to various social crises, manifesting in an increase in situations of social distress. In this context Europeans have an increasingly negative perception of how inequality and poverty issues are being dealt with<sup>1</sup>.

No EU Member State and furthermore no developed country, has managed to eradicate homelessness. A European effort could help understand this major shared challenge and contribute to improving political responses.

Homelessness is closely linked to Europe's biggest problems such as how migrants are received, equal rights, free movement and the exclusion of young people. In this sense, homelessness is increasingly becoming a European problem.

To aid understanding of these situations, the ETHOS typology<sup>2</sup> categorises housing difficulties from homelessness to housing quality problems to security of occupation. The lines between homelessness and extreme housing difficulties are often blurred.

Although ETHOS is a widely used reference for understanding and measuring homelessness and housing exclusion, there is still no generally accepted definition in Europe. There remains fairly widespread confusion between the situation of roofless people living rough and the broader situation of those without a home, who may be for example living in a hostel.

In the following analysis, the abridged 'Ethos light' classification will be used as a basic reference definition for homelessness. This is a standardised definition for statistical purposes, as suggested in a 2007 European Commission study on understanding homelessness<sup>3</sup>. It is nonetheless essential to note that the Member State definitions of homelessness are, in general, narrower (or, more unusually, broader).

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2014) Special Eurobarometer 418 - Social Climate Report, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_418\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_418_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120>

<sup>3</sup> Edgar, W., Harrison, M., Watson, P. and Busch-Geertsema, V. (2007), The Measurement of Homelessness at EU level, European Commission, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_inclusion/docs/2007/study\\_homelessness\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2007/study_homelessness_en.pdf)

**TABLE 1**  
**ETHOS LIGHT**

OPERATIONAL CATEGORY		LIVING SITUATION		GENERIC DEFINITION
1	People living rough	1	Public or outdoors space	Living rough or in a public space, without shelter that could be defined as a dwelling unit
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Emergency accommodation	People without a usual place of residence who frequently move from one type of accommodation to another
3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homeless hostel	When the period of stay is less than one year
		4	Temporary accommodation	
		5	Transitional supported accommodation	
4	People living in institutions	6	Women's shelter	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
		7	Medical institutions	
		8	Penal institutions	
5	People living in non-conventional housing due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	When the accommodation is used due to lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
		10	Non-conventional building	
		11	Temporary structure	
6	Homeless person living in temporary conventional housing with family or friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing but not the person's usual place of residence	When accommodation is used due to lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

Source: Edgar et al (2007)



# 1. EXTENT OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE EU: A GENERAL RISE

In the absence of a universally accepted definition, the academic and institutional literature on homelessness in Europe gives an overview that, while patchy, still enables us to address the issue.

**TABLE 2**  
**RECENT REPORTS ON THE EXTENT HOMELESSNESS IN THE EU**

The European Observatory on Homelessness publishes regular statistical updates on the homelessness situation in Europe. The most recent is from 2014<sup>4</sup> and focuses on 15 EU Member States (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). It showed that the number of homeless people increased in recent years in all countries except Finland, where the figure fell.

The OECD recently published assessments of homelessness and the public policies that target it in OECD countries<sup>5</sup>.

The European Commission estimates that there could be up to 410,000 people sleeping rough or in emergency or temporary accommodation on any given night in the European Union. This implies that almost 4.1 million people every year face homelessness for periods of varying length<sup>6</sup>.

The Social Protection Committee has published several reports in recent years demonstrating a rise in the number of homeless people due to the crisis<sup>7</sup>.

In 2011, the census included its first attempt to count the number of homeless people using a common standard. This attempt was overall deemed unsuccessful because it did not accurately reflect the number of homeless people. It did nonetheless enable some countries to improve the quality of their data<sup>8</sup>.

FEANTSA publishes regular reports based on contributions from organisations working with homeless people. Its 2012 monitoring report focused on the extent and nature of homelessness in EU Member States; national expert contributions from 21 countries showed that the number of homeless people had increased over the preceding one to five years in at least 15 of the 21 countries<sup>9</sup>. FEANTSA also publishes 'country fiches' every year that provide an overview of homelessness in the different Member States<sup>10</sup>.

The 2015 report from Housing Europe on the state of housing in the EU highlighted the increase in the number of homeless people in the EU<sup>11</sup>.

**4** Busch-Geertsema, V, Benjaminsen, L, Filipović Hrast, M and Pleace, N (2014) *Extent and Profile of Homelessness in European Member States: A Statistical Update*, EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness, Number 4 – 2014, FEANTSA/EOH, available at: <http://www.feantsaresearch.org/spip.php?article343&lang=en>

**5** OECD (2015), *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233775-en>

**6** SWD(2013) 42 final

**7** *Social Protection Committee (2013), Social Europe: Current challenges and the way forward*, Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee 2012, European Commission, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7405>

**8** Baptista, I, Benjaminsen, L, Pleace, N and Busch-Geertsema, V (2012) *Counting Homeless People in the 2011 Housing and Population Census*, EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness, Number 2 – 2012, FEANTSA/EOH, available at: <http://www.feantsaresearch.org/spip.php?article189&lang=en>

**9** FEANTSA (2012) *On the Way Home? FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe*, FEANTSA, available at: <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article854&lang=en>

**10** See <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&lang=en>

**11** Pittini, A., Ghekiere, L., Dijol, J., Kiss, I. (2015) *The State of Housing in the EU 2015: A Housing Europe Review*, Housing Europe, available at: <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-468/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2015>

**12** Data is available for other regions but cannot be compiled

**13** Includes homeless shelters and women's shelters. Excludes certain types of long-term accommodation such as Housing First, supported housing and transitional accommodation

**14** Non-official shelters, 'negotiated occupation', religious communities

## MEMBER STATES' STATISTICS ON HOMELESSNESS PAINT AN UNCLEAR PICTURE

With the lack of data available on homelessness at EU level, Member State statistics provide the only available data for analysing trends and the gravity of the situation.

We have compiled the most recent statistics on

the number of homeless people in the different Member States (see Table 2.1). In as far as possible, these statistics are based on official figures provided at national level. Where there is a lack of such figures, alternatives are suggested. Also provided is contextual information on definition, methodology and source. The trends refer only to the statistics mentioned. For the purpose of coherence, we have not referred to trends based on information from additional sources.

**TABLE 3**  
**AVAILABLE FIGURES (NON-COMPARABLE) ON THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN EU MEMBER STATES**

MEMBER STATE	REPORTED STATISTICS	PERIOD	NOTES ON DEFINITION AND METHODOLOGY	SOURCE	TRENDS
Austria	16,000 people	Year 2013	This only covers people registered as homeless excluding those living rough.	Ministry for Social Affairs	Increase of 40%: from 11,399 people in 2008 to 16,000 in 2013
Belgium (Brussels <sup>12</sup> )	2,063 people	1 night in 2014	No national statistics. There are data for the other regions but they are not comparable. Survey taken on one night. Broad definition including people sleeping rough, in emergency accommodation, in shelters for homeless people <sup>13</sup> , some non-conventional places <sup>14</sup> and hospitals. Excluding accommodation with family or friends.	La Strada	Increase of 33%: from 1,724 people in 2009 to 2,063 in 2014
Bulgaria	3,486 places taken in homeless assistance services	1 night in 2015	Places taken in shelters for homeless people. Excluding people sleeping rough, people staying with family or with friends, and other people not in accommodation.	Agency for Social Assistance	—
Croatia	462 people	1 night in 2013	This covers homeless people listed as staying in social protection centres on 31 December	Ministry of Social Policy	—
Cyprus	—	—	—	—	—
Czech Republic	11,496 people	1 night in 2011	Result of the census covering only users of homeless hostels on the night of the census.	Czech Statistical Office	—

15

Single people

Denmark	5,820 people	1 week in 2013	Broad definition. Includes some people staying with families or friends, those coming from institutions, etc.	SFI - The Danish national centre for social research	Increase of 16%: from 4,998 people in 2009 to 5,820 in 2013
Estonia (Tallinn)	1,371 people	2012	No official data. Survey. The definition is 'does not have their own dwelling or rented home, does not have the possibility of permanent accommodation or sleeps somewhere temporarily'.	Tallinn Social Work Centre	—
Finland	7,500 single people & 417 families	1 night in 2013	Broad definition. Includes people staying with families or friends, those coming from institutions, etc.	Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA)	Decrease of 8%: from 8,153 people in 2009 to 7,500 in 2013 <sup>45</sup>
France	141,500 people	One night in 2012	France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) carries out a study every ten years, mainly in towns of over 20,000 inhabitants. It supplements this with another study carried out in small towns. Users of meal and accommodation services are asked where they slept the night before. Geographical coverage is not uniform and this count excludes people who did not use meal or accommodation services. The estimate does however include people in reception centres.	National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE)	Increase of about 50% between 2001 and 2012, to 141,500 people
Germany	284,000 people	2012	Annual prevalence estimation from Germany's federation of services for homeless people (BAG W). On the basis of extrapolations made from a 1992 study. Includes all the ETHOS light categories and the 'hidden' homeless. There are no official data at national level.	BAGW	Increase of 21%: from 234,000 people in 2009 to 284,000 in 2012 (+21%)
Greece	7,720 people	2009	Result of a single study carried out by the Ministry of Health. Excluding migrants and Travellers. Mainly covering people who sleep rough. No regular collection of official data.	The Ministry of Health's National Centre of Social Solidarity (NCSS)	—
Hungary	10,549 people	1 night in 2014	Annual survey by homeless services. Covers people in shelters and those sleeping rough. Participation is voluntary. Not all services and people are covered.	Survey of 3 February by BMSZKI	—
Ireland	3,808 people	1 night in 2011	Night count of people in homeless accommodation or identified as sleeping rough.	Central Statistics Office	—

Italy	47,648 people	1 month in 2011	Survey. Identifies people who have used a soup kitchen or night shelter during the month of the survey.	National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)	—
Latvia	—	—	—	—	—
Lithuania	4,957 people	One night in 2012	Only covers people in shelters and crisis centres for women and children	Statistics Lithuania	—
Luxembourg	1,677 people	1 night in 2015	Survey of the number of people using the 20 homeless accommodation services for adults in the Grande Région de Luxembourg.	Ministry of Family, Integration and the Grande Région	Increase of 20% from 1,336 persons in 2012 to 1,677 in 2015.
Malta	—	—	—	—	—
The Netherlands	25,000 People	1 night in 2013	Annual estimate from the national population registry, from administrative data on social welfare and from information systems on alcohol and drugs. Broad definition including those who occasionally stay with friends or family. The data are not totally complete.	Central Bureau of Statistics	Decrease: from 27,300 in 2012 to 25,000 in 2013
Poland	31,933 people	1 night in 2013	Includes people sleeping rough and in homeless shelters. Participation is voluntary. Count does not have total coverage. The methodology used to enumerate rough sleepers is contested by NGOs.	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS)	—
Portugal	696 people	1 night in 2011	Results of the census from counting the number of people sleeping rough and from a survey mainly covering night shelters.	Statistics Portugal	—
Romania	14,000-15,000 people	2006	Estimate of the number of people sleeping rough and using night shelters.	Research Institute for Quality of Life and National Institute of Statistics	—
Slovakia (Bratislava)	2,000 to 3,000 People	—	—	Depaul International	—
Slovenia	3,829 people	1 night in 2011	Census. People in buildings not designed for habitation and those who use the Centres for Social Work or NGOs as an address <sup>17</sup> . Non-exhaustive.	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia	—

17

Includes some people living in housing in the private rental sector whose landlords do not allow them to use the address officially

**18**

Increase in the number of people in long-term housing on the 'secondary housing market' is not included here, and this figure has increased by almost 600%. In part due to better coverage with this survey, but also because this sector has grown in size.

**19**

N.B. Each of the decentralised governments of the UK collects data on homelessness but they are not strictly comparable and cannot therefore be gathered together. See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/homelessness](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/homelessness) for data on Scotland. See: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness/?lang=en> for Welsh data.

**20**

1996 Housing Act, the Homelessness Act 2002, and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

**21**

See annex 1

Spain	22,939 people	From 13/02 to 25/03 2012	Survey of users of free food and emergency accommodation services in towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants. Does not cover all forms of homelessness nor does it provide complete geographical cover.	National Institute of Statistics (INE)	Increase of 5%: from 21,901 people in 2005 to 22,932 in 2012 (+5%)
Sweden	34,000 People	1 week in 2011	Data collected from a wide range of services that are in contact with homeless people. Broad definition. Includes people staying with families or friends, those about to come out of institutions, etc.	The National Board of Health and Welfare	The number of people sleeping rough, in shelters, in accommodation centres and in institutions who have nowhere to go has increased by 29%: from 6,600 in 2005 to 8,500 in 2011. The number of people staying with friends or family increased by 55%: from 4,400 in 2005 to 6,800 in 2011 <sup>18</sup> .
United Kingdom (England <sup>19</sup> )	13,520 households are 'registered homeless' 2,744 people sleeping rough	From 1/01 to 31/03 2015 1 night between 30/10 and 30/11 2014	The first figure represents the quarterly total of households to whom there is a 'statutory duty' of housing assistance on the part of local authorities. This depends on eligibility, being involuntarily homeless and having 'priority needs' <sup>20</sup> . Only includes households that have turned to the local authorities for assistance. The second figure represents the quarterly total of counts and estimates of the number of people sleeping rough on a given night during the period surveyed, as carried out by the local authorities. The local authorities decide to proceed by counting or by estimating.	Department for Communities and Local Government	For 'statutory homelessness', there was an increase of 4%: from 52,290 in the tax year 2013-2014 to 54,430 for 2014-2015. The number of people sleeping rough increased by 14%: from 2,414 in autumn 2013 to 2,744 in autumn 2014

Source: Various<sup>21</sup>

**Reported statistics from Member States give a confusing image of homelessness in Europe.**

The data are not comparable due to disparities in definitions, methodologies, level, quality and reliability.

Most of the figures conveyed include people sleeping in emergency accommodation. Several others also cover other types of accommodation for homeless people. Several countries exclude people who are sleeping rough (for example Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovenia). A higher proportion of countries exclude people who are staying with family or friends and/or who live in institutions and have nowhere to go when they leave. Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands stand out from the others because they collect data from the widest range of living situations in their official national statistics. France is the only country where people who live in reception centres for asylum seekers are included in the estimated total. In England where applications and granting of assistance with regard to the homelessness legislation are counted, households that do not apply are not counted. As single-person households are unlikely to receive assistance under the law, it is probable that there are many 'hidden homeless' people who are not being counted in this group.

Some countries that seem to have a high level of homelessness include a much wider range of living conditions in their definition of homelessness than just sleeping rough or using emergency accommodation. The countries at the top of the list often have data collection methodologies that are more robust and more exhaustive. It seems for example that the number of homeless people in Portugal is negligible compared to Finland. However, the Portuguese statistics are limited to people sleeping rough and in emergency accommodation. Finland's 2014 statistics, on the other hand, include people that are

temporarily staying with friends, acquaintances or relatives because they have nowhere else to go. The total number of homeless people in Finland was 8,316 of which 75% were living with friends or relatives, according to respondents to the survey carried out in 93% of Finland's municipalities. The number of homeless people in Portugal would be higher than in Finland if the same definitions were used and if the geographical coverage and coverage of services were comparable.

The usefulness of comparisons is equally hampered by the significant divergences with regard to coverage, quality and nature of the data. For some countries, no data was available that we could identify (for example Cyprus, Latvia, and Malta). Others do not have official data, meaning reliance on other sources (Germany, Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania). In Germany, the estimate is based on a 1992 study. In ten countries, the statistics provide a basis for describing trends (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). In several cases, the data only cover a particular region or the capital. The majority of countries collect point in time data. A smaller number of countries use administrative data to record flow data like Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom<sup>22</sup>. Some data are very old and/or are collected very occasionally. Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands collect robust data, on a regular basis, at national level. Ireland and France make good use of census methodologies but these only occur once every ten years.

Overall, these statistics indicate that homelessness exists everywhere in the European Union. There is no reason to think that the situation is any different in the three countries that do not have data i.e. Cyprus, Latvia and Malta.

**22**

Ireland and Denmark also make good use of administrative data but not for the total estimate cited in the statistics conveyed and used here.

## 23

FEANTSA (2012) op. cit, p. 21

## 24

Crisis (2015) English statutory homelessness statistics, available at: [http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/statutory-homelessness-statistics.html#england\\_entitle](http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/statutory-homelessness-statistics.html#england_entitle)

## 25

Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox S., Watts, B. (2015) Homelessness Monitor, England 2015, Crisis, London, available at: [http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness\\_Monitor\\_England\\_2015\\_final\\_web.pdf](http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness_Monitor_England_2015_final_web.pdf)

## 26

See the complete description of the strategy further on in this chapter.

Among the ten countries that have data on trends, eight indicate an increase in the number of homeless people in recent years. Among possible explanations for this increase are structural problems in housing and labour markets; the functioning of and changes to social protection systems and support services (mental health, asylum, youth, etc.); the impact of the crisis and the austerity measures that resulted; and the weakness of policies aimed at preventing and combating homelessness.

The statistics do not really enable us to determine whether the countries hardest hit by the crisis are experiencing the largest increase in the number of homeless people. Among the countries subjected to a *Memorandum of Understanding*, only Spain publishes data. However, this data focuses on a relatively narrow section of the population and undoubtedly, is not an accurate reflection of the problem. According to NGO reports in Spain, Greece and Portugal, there has been a 25 to 30% increase in demand for homeless services in the aftermath of the crisis<sup>23</sup>. Some countries that had managed to reduce the number of homeless people over the last decade have seen that success slip since the crisis. In the United Kingdom (England), the number of households to which local authorities owed a statutory duty of housing assistance had been continuously falling between 2003/2004 and 2009/2010, dropping from 135,420 to 40,020. The number then started to increase again reaching 54,430 in 2014/2015<sup>24</sup>. It seems likely that welfare reform, particularly in the area of housing allowances, but also the introduction of an overall benefits cap, more use of sanctions, the reduction of services for homeless people particularly with regard to prevention, and the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' which penalises social housing tenants who have more space than they need, have all contributed to the changing trend<sup>25</sup>.

The Netherlands and Finland are the only two Member States to report a recent reduction in the number of homeless people. In Finland, the reduction is credited to a programme that aims to end long-term homelessness. It seems that this strategy has helped Finland to address the problem of 'chronic' homelessness among people with multiple and complex problems<sup>26</sup>. In the Netherlands, the recent reduction probably results from the end of an increase in homelessness reported due to the recession. Between 2010 and 2012, the total number of homeless people had increased from 23,000 to 27,000. On 1 January 2013, it had fallen again to 25,000. During the previous decade, the Netherlands had managed to reduce the number of homeless people through a strategic plan which initially focused on four main cities, before being rolled out across all municipalities.

Statistics concerning homelessness do not always accurately reflect the reality. Their limits, as mentioned above, mean that the number of homeless people is often underestimated. We therefore present our 'best estimates' regarding the level of probable precision of the statistics recorded. These 'best estimates' are based on the quality and coverage of the data collection systems, and the extent of disagreement on the official figures coming from NGOs working with homeless people in the country. They also take into consideration the general context of social protection. In the 'best estimates', we indicate if the figures are, in reality, likely to be 'higher' or 'similar' to the reported statistics. We have used the term 'similar, but...' in cases where the figures are probably close to reality, but where certain clarifications are nonetheless necessary.

TABLE 4

## 'BEST ESTIMATES' LEVELS RECORDED WITH REGARD TO HOMELESSNESS

MEMBER STATE	STATISTICS	PERIOD	SOURCE	BEST ESTIMATES
Austria	16,000 people	Year 2013	Ministry for Social Affairs	Higher
Belgium (Brussels only)	1,944 people	1 night in 2010	La Strada	Higher
Bulgaria	3,486 places taken up in services	1 night in 2015	Agency for Social Assistance	Higher
Croatia	462 people	1 night in 2013	Ministry of Social Policy	Higher
Cyprus	–	–	–	Higher
Czech Republic	11,496 people	1 night in 2011	Czech Statistical Office	Higher
Denmark	5,820 people	1 week in 2013	SFI - The Danish national centre for social research	Similar
Estonia (Tallinn only)	1,371 people	2012	Tallinn Social Work Centre	Higher
Finland	7,500 single people and 417 families	1 night in 2013	Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA)	Similar
France	141,500 people	2012	National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE)	Similar, but...
Germany	284,000 people	2012	BAGW	Similar, but...
Greece	7,720 people	2009	The Ministry of Health's National Centre of Social Solidarity (NCSS)	Higher
Hungary	10,549 people	1 night in 2014	Survey of 3 February by BMSZKI	Higher
Ireland	3,808 people	1 night in 2011	Central Statistics Office	Similar, but...
Italy	47,648 people	1 month in 2011	National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)	Similar, but...
Latvia	–	–	–	Higher
Lithuania	4,957 people	1 night in 2012	Statistics Lithuania	Higher
Luxembourg	1,677 people	1 night in 2015	Ministry of Family, Integration and the Grande Région	Higher
Malta	–	–	–	Higher
The Netherlands	25,000 people	1 night in 2013	Central Bureau of Statistics	Similar
Poland	31,933 people	1 night in 2013	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS)	Similar, but...
Portugal	696 people	1 night in 2011	Statistics Portugal	Higher
Romania	14,000-15,000 people	2006	Research Institute for Quality of Life and National Institute of Statistics	Higher



27

N.B. Each of the decentralised governments of the UK collects data on homelessness but they are not strictly comparable and cannot therefore be gathered together.

28

See annex 1

29

Report from FEANTSA members

<b>Slovakia (Bratislava only)</b>	2,000 to 3,000 people	–	Depaul International	Higher
<b>Slovenia</b>	3,829 people	1 night in 2011	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia	Higher
<b>Spain</b>	22,939 people	From 13/02 to 25/03 2012	National Institute of Statistics (INE)	Similar, but...
<b>Sweden</b>	34,000 people	1 week in 2012	The National Board of Health and Welfare	Similar
<b>United Kingdom (England only)<sup>27</sup></b>	13,520 households are 'registered homeless' 2,744 people sleeping rough	From 1/01 to 31/03 2015 1 night between 30/10 and 30/11 2014	Department for Communities and Local Government	Similar, but...

Source: Various<sup>28</sup>

**In at least 17 Member States (Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Greece, Hungary, Estonia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and the Czech Republic), the available statistics underestimate the number of homeless people.**

This reflects the fact that the definitions are narrow, that the geographical coverage is limited (often due to local level of competencies), and that the data is hampered by quality issues and/or the lack of a national data-collection strategy.

**With regard to the other 11 Member States (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom), the statistics are probably more in line with reality.**

In seven of these countries, there are still significant limits in terms of definitions and/or coverage of the data. For Germany, the statistics do not come from official sources but from an estimate established by the voluntary sector and based on an already outdated study. In France, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom, measuring the number of homeless people with reference to a broader definition and/or providing greater data coverage would give a more complete picture of the situation and would probably show a higher number of homeless people. In Poland, the survey methodology leads to an underes-

timation of the number of people living rough and to the omission of several categories of supported housing. According to the NGOs, the exact number would be closer to 40,000, rather than the 32,000 reported<sup>29</sup>. In Spain, the survey methodology only targets municipalities of a certain size and only reaches people who use meal services and accommodation services. The data is similarly limited in Italy. In Ireland, the statistics do not count people living in institutions, in non-conventional housing or with third parties due to lack of housing. In the United Kingdom, and in particular in England, the data tells us more about how the legislation on homelessness works than about their overall situation.

**Only four Member States have official statistics that allow a fairly complete picture to be established of the number of homeless people and the trends in homelessness (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden).**

## 2.

## RANGE OF FACTORS IMPACTING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The above analysis shows how difficult it is, based on the existing statistics, to accurately compare the number of homeless people in light of wider trends in poverty and social protection. Furthermore a wide range of factors affect the number of homeless people. There is not necessarily a systematic correlation between the level of poverty, the level of social protection and the number of homeless people. This is due in part to the differences in data quality. However, there are also a wide range of additional factors to consider - the housing market, the extent and nature of social housing policies, the employment situation, migration and health contexts, and the existence of effective policies to prevent and resolve homelessness. Another issue is the extent of private solidarity, in particular family structures. Changes in any of these areas can have an impact on the number of homeless people. The exclusion of some groups of people (e.g. young people or migrants) from certain benefits, property bubbles, the closure of care institutions (e.g. psychiatric hospitals) without organising community-based alternatives, migratory flows without adequate political responses, etc. all have profound implications on the size and composition of the homeless population. What is more, well-conceived policies that are well funded and have the necessary political will behind them to deal with homelessness can bring significant results even in difficult contexts.

30

Not to be confused with secondary residences. The secondary housing market is housing stock where allocation and management is more socially oriented than on the free market. It could also be called a 'second-chance market'.

31

Benjaminsen, L. & Dyb, E. The Effectiveness of Homeless Policies - Variations among the Scandinavian Countries, European Journal of Homelessness, Volume 2, December 2008, p 49 - 49, available at: <http://www.feantsaresearch.org/spip.php?article32&lang=en>.

### INSIGHT INTO THE SPECIFIC CONTEXTS OF THREE NORDIC COUNTRIES: DENMARK, FINLAND AND SWEDEN

The relevant comparisons can only be established between countries that have the same

quality of information on the homelessness issue. We have chosen to compare the number of homeless people across Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

The statistics above reveal that Sweden reports a greater number of homeless people than its Nordic neighbours which are also EU Member States. Given their relatively similar contexts of social protection, this might seem surprising.

The explanation for this lies partly in the wide use of a 'secondary housing market'<sup>30</sup>, introduced as an interim solution for homeless people while they are preparing to live independently in conventional housing. Tenants in this market are counted in the statistics for homeless people in Sweden but not in Denmark or in Finland. This difference in definition is explained by the fact that the secondary housing market plays a very significant role in the state's response to homelessness in Sweden, unlike in the two other countries. Tenants on the secondary housing market often face many obstacles when they want to move on to conventional housing and thus find themselves trapped in the secondary housing market. There has been, as a result of this, a very significant increase in the secondary housing market in recent years. Municipalities often introduce conditions into the leases on this market, for example engagement with social support, which can complicate the tenants' position.

Even taking into consideration the differences in definition, it seems that the level of homelessness is higher in Sweden than in the neighbouring Nordic countries<sup>31</sup>. There are several possible explanations for this difference. A major factor could be the recent liberalisation of Sweden's public housing and its adoption of a more commercial approach. This libera-



lisation resulted in largely putting an end to municipal waiting lists and the referral system, giving municipal social housing companies more control over the allocation of housing. This reform probably works to the detriment of the most vulnerable households, particularly homeless people.

In recent years, both Denmark and Finland have implemented ambitious strategies for improving the situation of homeless people (see the analysis presented in the second part of this chapter). These strategies have led to improved policy coordination and large-scale promotion of Housing First, developed to help people who have complex problems to quickly move into their own home and be supported therein. Caution is nonetheless necessary when judging the impact of such strategies compared to wider structural

factors. It does seem credible however that political engagement along with funding has enabled state homeless policies to achieve greater effect in Denmark and Finland than in Sweden, which has not had a coordinated strategy since 2009 (even if the seemingly worse results from Sweden also need to be counterbalanced by the different categorisations and a broader definition of the notion of homelessness which further reinforces the impression of an increase in homelessness).

**Even when comparing contexts that have broadly similar social protection systems, factors such as the existence of a robust strategy for combatting homelessness and the social housing system, seem to play a significant role in terms of the number of homeless people.**

## 3. THE PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN EUROPE

This chapter is based on the latest comparative studies carried out by the European Observatory on Homelessness in coordination with FEANTSA<sup>32</sup>. We focus on three demographic dimensions: gender, age and the proportion of migrants amongst homeless people.

### GENDER

According to the statistics, **the majority of homeless people in most countries are male**. The European Observatory on Homelessness showed that in most of the 15 Member States studied in 2014, **75 to 85% of homeless people are male**<sup>33</sup>.

Women are nonetheless present within the homeless population and in increasing numbers<sup>34</sup>. The proportion of women is relatively high in France (38%) and in Sweden (36%)<sup>35</sup>. In these countries, women staying in shelters for victims of domestic violence are counted as part of the homeless population. The definition of 'homeless person' also includes people in longer term housing without a permanent contract. The proportion of women in these two situations is relatively high. The patterns in terms of gender distribution are, in part, a function of the definition of the term 'homeless people'.

In France, the proportion of women is higher among young homeless people (48% among 18-29 year olds and 31% among those over 50)<sup>36</sup>. In other countries like Germany and Ireland, this overlap between young and female homeless people is also observed<sup>37</sup>.

The situation of homeless women is often described as relatively invisible. Women are more likely to resort to informal arrange-

ments with friends, family or acquaintances. Recent research carried out in Ireland shows that homeless women tend to avoid homeless accommodation services<sup>38</sup>. Generally speaking, homeless women perhaps use other services more frequently than men. In France, there is a higher representation of homeless women as well as households with children staying in hotels. Some 63% of the homeless people staying in hotels are women. A very small proportion of people sleeping rough (5%) and people staying in night shelters (9%) are women. Conversely, 52% of people staying in housing provided by associations are women<sup>39</sup>. In terms of prevention, in several countries, the social protection systems have specific provisions for households with children which serve in part to protect women exposed to the risk of homelessness. The situation of homeless women is closely linked to the situation of homeless families. The number of families within the homeless population varies from one country to the next, depending on how well-targeted the social welfare and solidarity services are.

### YOUNG PEOPLE: MORE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

The available statistics indicate that **homeless people in Europe are mostly young people and middle-aged people**. In several countries, the 30 to 49 year age bracket is, in general, the highest represented group and makes up almost half of all homeless people. The 18 to 29 year age bracket makes up 20 to 30% of the total number of homeless people in the majority of countries<sup>40</sup>.

**32**  
Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit. and FEANTSA (2012) op. cit.

**33**  
Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

**34**  
FEANTSA (2012) op. cit.

**35**  
Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

**36**  
INSEE (2012) op. cit.

**37**  
Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

**38**  
Mayock, P. and Sheridan, S. (2012) Women's Journeys' to Homelessness: Key Findings from a Biographical Study of Homeless Women in Ireland, Women and Homelessness in Ireland, Research Paper 1 (Dublin: School of Social Work and Social Policy & Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin),

**39**  
INSEE (2012) op. cit.

**40**  
Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

41

Iacovou, M (2011) Leaving Home: Independence, togetherness and income in Europe, Population Division Expert Paper No. 2011/10, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, available at: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/expert/2011\\_10\\_iacovou\\_Expert-paper.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/expert/2011_10_iacovou_Expert-paper.pdf).

42

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

43

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

44

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

45

FEANTSA (2015) Does the EU Youth Guarantee address young homeless people's needs?, available at: <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article705&lang=en>

46

FEANTSA (2012) op. cit.

Generally, the highest proportion of young people within the homeless population is found in northern and western Europe. **Taking account of the specific challenges and life situations of young people, this probably reflects that countries with a narrower definition of homelessness do not adequately capture the magnitude of the housing difficulties encountered by young people. Besides, young adults tend to leave the family home earlier in northern and western Europe than in southern and eastern Europe.**

The reasons for this phenomenon are complex: the age for setting up home, for getting married, further education, the price of rent and the rates of unemployment are different<sup>41</sup>. Here are some examples of this general trend among homeless young people<sup>42</sup>:

- In France and in the Netherlands, about one quarter of homeless people are aged between 18 and 29 years. In Denmark, this age bracket makes up almost one third of homeless people.
- In Hungary and Poland in 2011, only 6% of the homeless population were aged between 20 and 29 years.
- In Spain, where one might expect to see a high number of homeless young people given the context of high youth unemployment due to the crisis, only 16% of the homeless population is aged between 18 and 29 years.
- Italy is an interesting exception: 32% of the general population is aged between 18 and 34 years. This age bracket only represents 10% of Italy's homeless population however. Within the foreign population, this age bracket represents 47%. The influence of migrants, who tend to be young, is very significant in the general age profile of the homeless population in Italy.

Only a few countries, like Poland (52%) and Hungary (55%)<sup>43</sup>, are seeing an overrepresentation of people over 50 among their homeless population. This possibly reflects older people's insufficient income.

Given the high level of youth unemployment due to the crisis, **the growth in the number of homeless young people over the last few years is becoming a major concern in several countries. Young people's rights to social benefits are becoming increasingly limited which is a significant factor in this worrying trend.** In addition, leaving institutional youth care represents a major risk factor for homelessness. The transition to adulthood can be associated with domestic violence, family breakdown, drugs, mental health problems, issues related to sexuality, etc. The most striking example of an increase in the number of homeless young people comes from Denmark, which has seen an 80% increase in homeless people aged 18 to 24 years between 2009 and 2011. During this period, the number has risen from 633 to 1,002<sup>44</sup>. While Member States are indeed acting to deal with issues of youth unemployment and exclusion, particularly within the framework of the 'Youth Guarantee', they must also guarantee the establishment of measures to prevent and manage the situation of homeless young people<sup>45</sup>.

## MIGRATION

**In the majority of Member States, migrants are overrepresented in the homeless population.** This seems to be a growing trend, particularly in the EU-15 countries. In 2012, FEANTSA members in 14 out of 21 Member States under review reported an increase in the number of migrants who were homeless<sup>46</sup>.

The term 'migrant' does not always carry the same meaning in different contexts. Migrants can be asylum seekers, refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, people whose residence permit has expired, people waiting to be sent back to their country of origin, and EU citizens exercising their right to free movement.

Migrants can be exposed to the risk of finding themselves homeless for different reasons. The administrative status given to them by the host country is the determining factor in their access to work, to social welfare allowances and in some countries, to basic services such as shelters. Migrants and people with immigrant backgrounds can find themselves facing discrimination on the housing market. Furthermore, institutional factors such as employment-related restrictions for migrants can expose them to the risk of becoming homeless.

**Countries on the borders of Europe, transit countries, and countries with a larger number of migrants in the wider population, have a high level of migrants among the homeless population.** In Italy, the majority of people recorded in a 2011 survey on the situation of homeless people were foreign nationals (60%)<sup>47</sup>. In Greece, despite the absence of official statistics, it is clear that many migrants are homeless. In Spain, the most recent survey on homelessness showed that 46% of the 12,100 homeless respondents were foreign nationals<sup>48</sup>. Among them, more than half (56%) were African. France has a relatively high proportion of foreign nationals within its homeless population. This figure rose from 38% in 2001 to 52% in 2012<sup>49</sup>. As the issue of common EU asylum policy has become central in the context of massive influxes, Member States are debating the possibility of a quota system. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of people are facing living conditions that, without a doubt, constitute homelessness and which highlight the manifest lack of adequate reception capacity.

**Even in countries where a large majority of the homeless population is made up of nationals, an overrepresentation of migrants can be observed.** In Finland, for example, migrants represented 26% of the homeless population in 2013 but just 5% of the general population. Since 2009, a 273% increase in the number of

homeless migrants can be observed (from 532 to 1,986 people)<sup>50</sup>.

**EU citizens from other Member States are increasingly being observed in the homeless population of the EU15.** In London, almost 35% of the people sleeping rough come from central and eastern European countries (the 'A10' countries - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia)<sup>51</sup>. In certain areas of Paris, up to 40% of users of homeless services come from eastern Europe<sup>52</sup>. In the absence of a clear EU framework on the rights of EU citizens to access basic services, Member States have developed divergent approaches to the issue. **Some countries, like Denmark, refuse people without residence rights access to emergency accommodation<sup>53</sup>. An increasing number of Member States have developed programmes to help repatriate people to their country of origin.** The question remains however as to the extent that people who find themselves in such a vulnerable position as sleeping rough can exercise free choice with regard to these programmes. Besides, the situation that these people find themselves in on return to their country of origin is highly unpredictable.

In certain rural contexts, **seasonal farm workers live in situations that constitute homelessness.** For example, there are encampments and non-conventional dwellings without proper sanitary facilities in Spain and Italy's agricultural regions.

47

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

48

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

49

INSEE (2012) op. cit.

50

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

51

CHAIN database <https://files.datapress.com/london/dataset/chain-reports/CHAIN%20Greater%20London%20bulletin%202014-15.pdf>

52

Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.

53

N.B. The situation is changing; in Copenhagen, there is currently a pilot project to provide accommodation for illegal immigrants.

# 4. GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO TACKLE HOMELESSNESS

54

<http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article328&lang=fr>

56

N.B. Each of the United Kingdom's governments (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales) has their own strategy and they are becoming ever more divergent.

## STRATEGIES PUT IN PLACE IN EUROPE

In the EU, a growing number of Member States have announced the establishment of integrated strategies to combat homelessness. In 2010, a European consensus conference on homelessness concluded that **putting an end to homelessness is possible and we must gradually work towards this**<sup>54</sup>, expressing for the first time a consensus on this aim i.e. it is not about managing these problems but about solving them. To achieve this, the consensus conference recommended all Member States develop integrated strategies at local and national level. While the 'frontline' in combating homelessness is at local level, national strategies can provide a general framework to support advancement. The European Commission called on all Member States to develop such strategies.

**Eleven countries announced the creation of national strategies to combat homelessness in recent years - the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.**

How this is put into action very much depends on the context:

- **Strategies that seem to have had a significant impact both during the period of the strategy and after, in Denmark, Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands and Scotland**<sup>56</sup>. The Netherlands, Finland and Scotland have all seen a reduction in at least one form of homelessness which can, at least in part, be attributed to these strategies.
- **Strategies that it is too early to judge because they are still in their initial stages, for example in Spain (in the finalisation phase), the Czech**

**Republic, Luxembourg and Wales.**

- **Strategies that have become obsolete due to not being adequately implemented or funded.**

In Sweden, where there has not been a national strategy since 2009; in Portugal where the strategy was never properly funded or implemented by the government.

- **Strategies that in the past produced results but that have since been downgraded.**

England implemented a relatively exhaustive strategy including a ringfenced budget to support municipalities address homelessness, the system of statutory assistance for homeless people, and coordination with social landlords. The joint work of these authorities meant progress was made between 1990 and 2009. The number of homeless people started to rise again with the financial crisis and since the budget for homeless services was cut, housing assistance and welfare benefits were capped and the legislation-based security net for homeless people was weakened.

- **Strategies for which it is hard to gauge the state of progress.**

France made combating homelessness a 'national priority' for the period 2008-2012, presenting a range of objectives and actions. Among these objectives was the implementation of a full evaluation of the supply and demand for shelters and housing in all départements, a reduction in the number of hotel nights by 10,000 in three years and the provision of 13,000 alternatives, the construction of 150,000 social housing units, with a section of them earmarked as 'very social' housing. At this point, the programme has not been clearly followed up on or evaluated, and the funding fell far short of producing a supply of social housing accessible to people on very low incomes, in spite of this being the official key point of 'Housing First'.

58

FEANTSA toolkits on homelessness strategies, available at: <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article630&lang=en>

## 17 MEMBER STATES HAVE NOT ANNOUNCED AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

The political approach to this challenge varies widely from one country to the next:

- Countries like Austria, Belgium, and Germany where, due to regional competencies on combating homelessness, we see **the strategic approaches varying greatly in terms of intensity from one region to the next**. On the whole, these countries have multiple policies and services in place to combat homelessness. Some regions in particular, such as Flanders (ongoing) and North Rhine-Westphalia, have developed relatively effective strategies.
- Countries **that are moving towards a more strategic approach to combating homelessness**, despite the existing obstacles. Italy, for example, is largely decentralised with regard to social policy, but it has just published policy guidelines for the regions with the aim of combating homelessness. Italy is in this way trying to maximise the opportunities offered by EU structural funds.
- **In the majority of new Member States, the situation of homeless people has only recently been seen as a policy issue**. In these countries, an expansion of services (to varying degrees) was observed but, to date, they have not been very focused on setting up strategies that aim to progressively reduce the number of homeless people.
- In Greece, the crisis gave a new impetus to combating homelessness, but it is impossible to predict, given the current context, how that will translate into a concrete strategy.
- **Some countries do not have any strategy and have very limited measures for combating homelessness: Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia.**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

FEANTSA identified ten elements for an integrated strategy to combat homelessness. Figure 4.2 summarises these, giving a few short examples from different Member States<sup>58</sup>.

### Ten elements from the FEANTSA toolkit for developing an integrated strategy to combat homelessness

#### 1. Evidence-based approach

Understanding the problem of housing exclusion is the essential starting point. In practice, this consists of having a good data-collection strategy; using research and analysis to direct policy decisions; regularly revising policies on the basis of evidence about emerging needs and about the effectiveness of the measures taken.

**Example:** *Denmark systematically uses evidence to develop and evaluate its policy on a continuous basis. This is done through detailed follow-up and an evaluation of the strategies in order to continuously direct the policymaking process.*

#### 2. Comprehensive approach

A comprehensive approach includes a good balance between the emergency responses, resettlement and reintegration of homeless people along with prevention of homelessness. In many countries, prevention, resettlement and reintegration are underdeveloped compared to emergency responses. As a consequence, the strategy must aim to find a balance in its approach so that its reach is more comprehensive.

**Example:** *In its strategy, Ireland has an approach that is 'housing-led'. This means it is deliberately focused on housing. The emphasis is on quickly providing secure housing with, if necessary, support in order to guarantee a sustainable rental property.*



**3. Multi-dimensional approach**

A multi-dimensional approach involves integrating the housing, health, employment and education angles. This also assumes that the different services work together and that there is cross-sector cooperation in the provision of services. Interdepartmental cooperation is another important aspect of the multi-dimensional approach.

**Example:** *The implementation of a new strategy in the Czech Republic was monitored by an interdepartmental working group on preventing and combating homelessness. This working group is made up of representatives from the departments involved as well as members of an expert group. It is too early to judge the operational success of the Czech approach but a large number of the countries with an advanced strategy have developed a multi-dimensional approach with oversight mechanisms to ensure its functioning.*

**4. Rights-based approach**

A rights-based approach consists of promoting access to decent, stable housing as an indispensable pre-condition to exercising most of the other fundamental rights. In practice, this means using housing rights as a basis for the strategy, focusing on the enforceable right to housing and recognising the interdependence of the right to housing and other rights such as the right to live in dignity and the right to health.

**Example:** *the DALO law (law no. 2007-290 of 5 March 2007) in France enabled the introduction of an enforceable right to housing. People who are homeless, inadequately housed, or who have waited more than three years for social housing (six years in Paris) can demand the right to be rehoused by the State. The law provides the right to housing to people who are not managing to procure housing or keep housing on their own. The State is bound by an obligation as to results and not only as to means. There is a procedure for the effective allocation of housing, involving ini-*

*tial recourse to the département-level mediation commission and then, failing that, proceedings in the Administrative Court. Although effective implementation of the law remains difficult, it is without question an unprecedented move.*

**5. Participatory approach**

This means total involvement of the stakeholders concerned in the strategic development of policies. It includes homeless people, the service providers who work with them, public authorities and others. All stakeholders concerned must be involved in policy development, evaluation and implementation. This is to ensure development of the appropriate structures.

**Example:** *Denmark has a legal basis for the participation of homeless people in decisions that affect their lives. The law on social services stipulates that local authorities must guarantee that all users of shelters (known as Section 110 accommodation) can exercise influence on the organisation and services. This led to the establishment of users' committees within shelters. These committees are also organised at regional level and since 2001, a national users' committee has been in place (SAND). SAND plays an active role in the development of policies.*

**6. Statutory approach**

A statutory approach is a strategy to combat homelessness underpinned by legislation. The existence of a legal framework at local/regional level brings coherence and accountability. The regulatory objectives also enable support for effective monitoring and evaluation of policy progress.

**Example:** *Scotland's basis for its strategy to combat homelessness is the 2001 (Scottish) law on housing and the 2003 (Scottish) law on homelessness. Since the end of 2012, all households that are unintentionally homeless have the right to settled accommodation provided by the local authority. This has put an end to the long-standing distinction that was made between households with 'priority needs' and others. The criteria for priority needs*

*meant that local authorities were only obliged to provide a home for households that met the specific criteria for vulnerability. By amending its legislation, Scotland enlarged the ambition of its policy to combat homelessness and, in so doing, created a right to housing for all households that find themselves unintentionally homeless.*

**7. Sustainable approach**

A sustainable approach can be ensured through adequate funding, political commitment at all levels (national, regional and local) and public support.

**Example:** *The substantial investment made by municipalities, associations and the State is a fundamental part of the success of Finland's strategy to combat long-term homelessness (see case-study later in this chapter). Another critical factor was the extended, long-term cooperation between national and local level. Letters of intent were signed between the municipalities and the central government in order to implement the strategy. They contained detailed agreements regarding construction projects, land use, investments, financing for housing and support services etc. Political support at the highest level has been continuous despite changes in government. This strategy was based on consensus by well-known experts regarding the policy direction to take.*

**8. Needs-based approach**

The starting point for these strategies must be the needs of individual homeless people rather than those of institutions. This involves regular evaluation of the needs and social support mechanisms, using individualised integration plans. A needs-based approach involves regular revision of the policies and structures in accordance with changing needs.

**Example:** *phase one of the Dutch strategy was focused on the four largest cities in the period from 2008 to 2013. It was based on a detailed needs analysis and a commitment to a user-centred*

*approach with individualised step-by-step plans, and individual case management. Some 10,000 homeless people were identified and, based on their needs, an individual response was sought for each of them. This response brings with it income, accommodation, an individual care plan and, as far as possible, a realistic form of employment.*

**9. Pragmatic approach**

A pragmatic approach consists of setting realistic and achievable objectives based on a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of the situation of homeless people, their needs, changes in the housing and employment market and other areas. It is necessary, in order to create a credible basis for progress, as well as to establish a clear and realistic schedule with medium- and long-term objectives.

**Example:** *Finland, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland stand out as countries that have set specific, measurable objectives as part of their strategy to combat homelessness on the basis of an in-depth evaluation of the context.*

**10. Bottom-up approach**

A bottom-up approach consists of recognising the importance of the local level within the framework of effectively combating homelessness. This involves guaranteeing that local authorities play a central role in the development and implementation of the strategies and that services are developed as close as possible to their end-users. In several countries, we are currently seeing a dangerous trend whereby the competencies for homelessness are being decentralised without a sufficient transfer of resources. This is not really a bottom-up approach but rather reveals the failure of the State in playing its role as facilitator.

**Example:** *Local authorities play a central role in strategies to improve the conditions of homeless people in many countries, including Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.*

## 59

Hermans, K., The Dutch Strategy to Combat Homelessness: From Ambition to Window Dressing? European Journal of Homelessness

## 60

FEANTSA v. The Netherlands (collective complaint 86/2013) and CEC v. The Netherlands (collective complaint 90/2013)

## THE RISK OF 'WINDOW DRESSINGS'

Do these national strategies, which are growing in number across Europe, demonstrate a genuine desire to progressively improve the conditions for homeless people? There is a risk that such strategies are little more than 'window dressing' or 'smoke and mirrors'.

'Paper strategies' are ones with good intentions but that are not adequately underpinned by evidence, resources, political commitment, legislation, a legal basis, complete understanding of the problem or other necessary elements to ensure their success. A surprising number of strategies recently published by EU Member States do not even specify in concrete terms the resources that will be allocated to ensure implementation. Conversely, some strategies have been a real driving force for positive change. The ten elements detailed above represent a good starting point for evaluating strategies.

Another important element is the continuity of the strategies. Strategies that disappear from the agenda during or after the period of time they cover have little chance of bringing significant transformative change. The risk in judging the quality of strategies is that they will have evolved and have become more or less ambitious during the period of their implementation.

The implementation details are critical and can undermine what seemed to be strong commitment to the rights of homeless people. France's problems in effectively implementing the DALO law are an example of this. There were almost 60,000 households recognised as 'priority' waiting for housing in 2014. According to a recent judgement by the European Court of Human Rights, France is in violation of Article 6, paragraph 1 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights because it did not implement a decision for three and a half years, requiring that housing be allocated in

accordance with the DALO law. Another example is the problematic implementation of the strategy to address homelessness at local level in the Netherlands. Within the context of austerity, there is concern about *'the growing gap between the discourse on homelessness and the implemented local policies that limit homeless people's access to services'*<sup>59</sup>. In concrete terms, the problem lies in using criteria based on having residency and a 'local connection' to refuse access to a shelter. This issue was dealt with by the European Committee of Social Rights in two recent decisions<sup>60</sup>. The Committee believed that access to emergency accommodation should be provided to all, regardless of the person's residency status and without giving consideration to other limiting criteria related to local connection, age, etc. The Committee stated, furthermore, that the community must provide legal residents with either long-term accommodation suitable for their situation or housing of an appropriate standard. These examples show both that it is necessary to follow up closely on the implementation of homeless policies and that human rights legislation can play a role in this regard.

The commitments expressed within the framework of the integrated strategies may be undermined by repressive or even criminalising measures. Even in cases where governments develop integrated strategies to combat homelessness, these policies can be undermined by local, regional or even national policies that criminalise and penalise homeless people.

## FINLAND: CASE STUDY OF AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

Finland's recent programmes aiming to end long-term homelessness - Paavo I and Paavo

## 61

Culhane, D., Granfelt, R., Knutagard, M., Pleace, N (2015). The Finnish Homelessness Strategy. An International Review, available at: <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/153258>

## 62

Helstinki is a community of 602,000 inhabitants in an urban area of 1,345,000 inhabitants.

II - are an interesting case study in integrated strategies. These programmes were the subject of an in-depth evaluation (Culhane et al 2015<sup>61</sup>), the main elements of which are summarised here.

## Overview

**Finnish programme to reduce the number of long-term homeless people 2008-2011 (Paavo I) and to end long-term homelessness 2011-2015 (Paavo II).**

## Scope

Focus on the ten largest centres of urban growth with Helsinki being the biggest priority. Housing first was the central concept that underpinned the whole strategy.

## Objectives

The objective of the 2008-2011 phase was to reduce by half the number of long-term homeless people and to develop more effective prevention measures with regard to homelessness. There was a quantitative objective to provide 1,250 housing units<sup>62</sup>, supported accommodation units and places in care centres for homeless people. The objective of the 2011-2015 phase was to end homelessness through the provision of 1,250 extra apartments and flexible support services.

## Responsibilities

The Ministry of the Environment coordinated the programme in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) and the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY) which part-financed the programme. Implementation was carried out through signed letters of intent with the municipalities.

## Resources

At least EUR 300 million for the entire programme coming from the central government, municipalities and RAY.

## Results

During these programmes, 2,500 housing units were built and 350 extra social workers were employed to help homeless people. The number of long-term homeless people has fallen by 1,200 since 2008. It is also estimated that prevention has helped 200 more people per year avoid ending up sleeping rough.

## Some noteworthy points from the evaluation of this policy

## The convergence of objectives

- The property market: the insufficient supply of affordable housing for rent has a bearing on all policies combating homelessness. A programme aiming to convert homeless shelters into proper housing;
- The prevention of evictions, with the help of housing-related advice and assistance and help to find alternative housing if evicted;
- Housing First and the related support services.

## Housing-related advice and support services

A central point of the homelessness prevention policy. As an example, in 2012-2013 in Helsinki, 16,000 households were advised on housing matters and 280 evictions were cancelled due to this support. It is estimated that between 2001 and 2008, these services helped reduce evictions in Helsinki by 32%.

The support services also represent an important cornerstone for better social integration. These services, which are provided to people with housing, enable links to be made with other social policies but also provide users with indispensable support (psychiatric, health, etc.). They enable housing to be secured for a longer period and studies, comparing it with other countries (United States, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), show that support that decreases in intensity is an appropriate method.

**Comprehensiveness**

It is important to put the most recent programmes in context within the Paavo I and Paavo II strategies. Finland saw an increase in the number of homeless people in the 1980s and implemented a series of policy measures, in particular increasing the number of affordable social housing units with the aim of improving the situation. In 2008, when Paavo I entered into force, Finland had already reduced the rate of homelessness to a relatively minor social problem, i.e. the number of homeless people was among the lowest in Europe. Unquestionably, homelessness resulting from a structural lack of housing, mainly linked to economic factors and the provision of affordable housing, had largely been resolved. While the population of homeless people was 18,000 at the end of the 1980s, this figure had fallen to 8,000 in 2008 and the Paavo programmes were established to further reduce this figure.

An essential point is that the first phase, Paavo I, was focused on the situation of long-term homelessness, often associated with co-morbidity of serious mental health problems and alcohol/drug problems. This focus was chosen because it was found that the existing services were not leading to a reduction in the number of long-term homeless people, which remained at 45% of the total homeless population. Achieving a total reduction in the number of homeless people therefore necessitated the establishment of an effective response to the more chronic needs.

In the second phase, Paavo II, emphasis was still put on reducing the number of long-term homeless people, but new objectives were introduced which focused on the residual forms of homelessness. Prevention services were already quite widespread in the largest cities, but Paavo II concentrated on further developing these services. There was also greater coordination between social housing providers, and Finland tried to improve access to social housing for all homeless people and to increase the number of housing units to meet their needs.

The continuity of a results-focused policy also seems to be an important element; Finland's national homelessness strategy was established in the 1980s, coordinating housing, health and social policies within the framework of decentralising implementation of this national objective. The strategy was supported by a significant budget, but also indicators to prove the social effectiveness of the spending. This policy was very effective: the number of homeless people sleeping in shelters, institutions, outside or in hotels decreased from 10,000 in 1985 to 2,000 in 2012.

**Coordination**

Political support was carefully and systematically worked on; the central government cooperated with the municipalities, requiring them to sign letters of intent committing them to the strategy. The coordination guaranteed the cooperation of the voluntary sector, social landlords and Foundation Y (Finland's main social housing provider).

**Evidence based**

The Finns learned the lessons from their own experience regarding effective design of services and decided to remodel their existing services for long-term homeless people to move towards what they called a 'Housing First' approach. Finland independently arrived at a Housing First-type model, but once they realised that there was a close link to what was happening in other countries, they actively set about learning more about the North American and European experiences.

Although Finland took some of the lessons learned from examples abroad, they were adapted to its specific national context. Finland pragmatically decided to extensively use existing buildings to provide permanent apartments to homeless people. In particular in the first phase of the programme, large buildings (notably some of the existing emergency accommodation) were transformed into apartments occupied solely by

users of Housing First services with staff on site. This was a source of controversy because one of the key principles of Housing First was the use of dispersed accommodation. It is nonetheless important to stress that Finland also used a lot of ordinary apartments, within communities, and mobile support that was less intense. The grouped living solutions have proved to be well suited to certain needs.

The programme was carefully evaluated and monitored during and after its implementation. The number of long-term homeless people fell, both in absolute and in relative terms. There were 25% fewer long-term homeless people in 2013 than in 2008 and the proportion of long-term homeless people fell from 45% to 36%. The objective of reducing the number of long-term homeless people by 50% by 2011 was not reached nor was the subsequent objective of completely eradicating long-term homelessness by 2015. However, the figures were reduced and have remained very low.

In 2014, Finland asked a panel of international experts, who worked alongside a Finnish expert, to examine the effectiveness of their national strategy. The group's conclusions were that although some problems had not yet been resolved and they had not managed to end homelessness, the number of homeless people was very low in comparison to other EU Member States and other OECD countries. The combination of preventive services, increasing access to the affordable and adequate housing, as well as specific strategies to meet the needs of people with complex needs, particularly the long-term homeless and others like former prisoners facing a lack of housing, was deemed to be very effective. The long-term commitment to end homelessness in Finland is still in place with a third phase to the national strategy being planned.

The Finnish strategy was characterised by a willingness to set, examine and externally evaluate strategic objectives. Finland was also broadly inspired by other countries' good practice and

stressed the importance of communicating and sharing the Finnish plans along with both positive results and problems encountered. One of the results of the continuous review process is that the characteristics of Finland's homeless population are changing and the country is starting to adapt to this. For example, a greater number of young homeless people are being seen and there has been a shift among long-term homeless people, from alcoholism to multiple drug addictions.

**Sustainability**

Finland is committed, on an ongoing basis, to the prevention and reduction of homelessness. This country is making sustained political effort and devoting significant resources to its national strategy. It is widely accepted that systematic effort aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness will be necessary in order to keep the numbers low.

Homelessness has unquestionably been reduced to the point that it can now be considered a minor social problem. The number of homeless people is currently so low that although it has not been eradicated, only a very small minority of Finnish people are likely to find themselves homeless and, if they do find themselves at risk of it, it is likely that the situation will either be managed or it will not be long term. Maintaining this positive situation nonetheless requires continuous work, and ongoing efforts need to be made with particular attention being given to emerging needs such as those of homeless families and homeless migrants.

Finland offers an excellent example of a truly coordinated, exhaustive and especially effective response to the situation of homeless people. Of course, this strategy must be viewed in the context of a rich country with a robust social protection system and a relatively low level of immigration. Although caution is required and the fall in the number of homeless people should not be solely attributed to this strategy, it does seem to have had a transformative effect.



## ANNEX 1

REFERENCES FOR MEMBER STATES' STATISTICS<sup>63</sup>

63

N.B.: In cases where there were no national data available, data from the capital (region) was transmitted where possible.

MEMBER STATE	REFERENCE
Austria	Ministry of Social Affairs (2015) 2015 National Social Report Austria, available at: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?policyArea=750&amp;subCategory=758&amp;type=0&amp;country=0&amp;year=0&amp;advSearchKey=SPCNationalSocialReport&amp;mode=advancedSubmit&amp;langId=en">http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?policyArea=750&amp;subCategory=758&amp;type=0&amp;country=0&amp;year=0&amp;advSearchKey=SPCNationalSocialReport&amp;mode=advancedSubmit&amp;langId=en</a>
Belgium	La Strada (2014) Third census of people who are roofless, <i>Homeless, and in inadequate housing in the Brussels-Capital Region</i> . 6 November 2014, available in French at: <a href="http://www.lstb.be/images/LaStrada_Denombrement_2014_rapport_FR.pdf">http://www.lstb.be/images/LaStrada_Denombrement_2014_rapport_FR.pdf</a>
Bulgaria	Agency for Social Assistance (2015) quoted in <i>Bulgaria 2015 Strategic Social Reporting Questionnaire</i> , available at: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13903&amp;langId=en">http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13903&amp;langId=en</a>
Croatia	Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (2015) National Social Report 2015, Republic of Croatia, available at: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=SPCNationalSocialReport&amp;mode=advancedSubmit&amp;langId=en&amp;policyArea=&amp;type=0&amp;country=34&amp;year=0">http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=SPCNationalSocialReport&amp;mode=advancedSubmit&amp;langId=en&amp;policyArea=&amp;type=0&amp;country=34&amp;year=0</a>
Czech Republic	Hradecký, I. et al. (2012): Souhrnný materiál pro tvorbu Koncepce práce s bezdomovci v ČR na období do roku 2020 [Summary Document for Drafting the Concept of Work with the Homeless in the Czech Republic for the Period until 2020]. online, available in Czech at: <a href="http://www.esfcr.cz/file/8471/[18.06.2014]">http://www.esfcr.cz/file/8471/[18.06.2014]</a> cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Denmark	Benjaminsen, L. and Lauritzen, H.H. (2013) <i>Hjemløshed i Danmark 2013. National kortlægning</i> , Report 13: 21 [Situation of homeless people in Denmark, 2013: national mapping]. (Copenhagen: SFI), cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Estonia	Wagner, L.; Korp, E. and Walters, C. (2014) Homelessness in Estonia, Overview and Analysis <i>European Journal of Homelessness</i> 8(2), 231-244, available at: <a href="http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/profiling-homelessness-2.pdf">http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/profiling-homelessness-2.pdf</a>
Finland	ARA (2014) <i>Asunnottomat 2013</i> , Selvitys 2/2014 [Homelessness, 2013]. (Lahti: ARA), cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
France	Yaouancq, F., Lebrère A., Marpsat, M., Régnier, V., Legleye, S. and Quaglia, M. (2013) <i>Housing the homeless in 2012. Different accommodation solutions depending on family situation</i> , INSEE, First N°1455, (Paris: INSEE, available in French at: <a href="http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/ipweb/ip1455/ip1455.pdf">http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/ipweb/ip1455/ip1455.pdf</a>
Germany	BAG W, (2014) <i>Schätzung der Wohnungslosigkeit in Deutschland 2003-2012</i> [Estimation of the homeless situation in Germany 2003-2012]. (Berlin: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe) [online] available in German at: <a href="http://www.bagw.de/de/themen/zahl_der_wohnungslosen/">http://www.bagw.de/de/themen/zahl_der_wohnungslosen/</a> [01.09.2014], cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Greece	FEANTSA (2014) Greece's Country Fiche, available at: <a href="http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en">http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en</a>
Hungary	Györi, P., Gurály, Z. and Szabó, A. (2014) <i>Gyorsjelentés a hajléktalan emberek 2014 február 3-1 kérdőíves adatfelvételéről</i> [Report on the third of February homeless survey - 2014], [online] available at: <a href="http://www.bmszki.hu/hu/eves-adatfelvetelek">http://www.bmszki.hu/hu/eves-adatfelvetelek</a> [24.11.2014] cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Ireland	Central Statistics Office (2012) <i>Homeless persons in Ireland: A special Census report</i> , available at: <a href="http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/homelesspersonsinireland/Homeless_persons_in_Ireland_A_special_Census_report.pdf">http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/homelesspersonsinireland/Homeless_persons_in_Ireland_A_special_Census_report.pdf</a>

Italy	ISTAT (2013) Homelessness. [online], available at: <a href="http://www.istat.it/en/files/2013/06/Homeless.pdf?title=The+homeless+-+10+Jun+2013+-+Full+text.pdf">http://www.istat.it/en/files/2013/06/Homeless.pdf?title=The+homeless+-+10+Jun+2013+-+Full+text.pdf</a> [24.11.2014] cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Lithuania	FEANTSA (2014) <i>Lithuania's Country Fiche</i> , available at: <a href="http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en">http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en</a>
Luxembourg	Ministry of the Family, Integration and the Grande Region (2015) <i>Recensement des structures d'hébergement à la date du 15 mars 2015</i> [Enumeration of accommodation for homeless people 15 March 2015]
The Netherlands	Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2015) <i>Rising trend in homelessness appears to have come to an end</i> , press release 5 March 2015, available at: <a href="http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/veiligheid-recht/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2015/stijging-aantal-daklozen-lijkt-voorbij.htm">http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/veiligheid-recht/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2015/stijging-aantal-daklozen-lijkt-voorbij.htm</a>
Poland	MPiPS (2013) <i>Sprawozdanie z realizacji działań na rzecz ludzi bezdomnych (7-8 February 2013) i Badania Socjodemograficznego. Materiał informacyjny</i> [Report on the implementation of measures for the homeless (7-8 February 2013) and socio-demographic research. Information material]. (Warsaw: MPiPS). [online], available at: <a href="http://www.mpips.gov.pl/pomoc-spoleczna/bezdomnosc/sprawozdanie-z-realizacji-dzialan-na-rzecz-ludzi-bezdomnych-w-województwach-w-roku-2012-oraz-wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych-78-luty-2013-/">http://www.mpips.gov.pl/pomoc-spoleczna/bezdomnosc/sprawozdanie-z-realizacji-dzialan-na-rzecz-ludzi-bezdomnych-w-województwach-w-roku-2012-oraz-wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych-78-luty-2013-/</a> [24.11.2014] cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Portugal	ISS (2009) <i>Relatório de caracterização</i> [Characterisation report]. (Internal document), cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Romania	FEANTSA (2014) Romania's Country Fiche, available at: <a href="http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en">http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&amp;lang=en</a>
Slovakia	De Paul International (2015) <i>Why is homelessness such a problem in Slovakia?</i> [online] available at: <a href="http://www.depaulinternational.org/our-services/slovakia/causes-of-homelessness-in-slovakia/">http://www.depaulinternational.org/our-services/slovakia/causes-of-homelessness-in-slovakia/</a> [20.09.2015]
Slovenia	SORS (2011) <i>Occupied Housing, Slovenia, 1 January 2011</i> - Provisional data (Ljubljana: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia), cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Spain	INE (2012) <i>Encuesta a las Personas sin Hogar 2012</i> (metodología, diseño de registros y micro datos) [2012 Study on homelessness (Methodology, design of records, and micro-data)]. [online], available at: <a href="http://www.ine.es/produser/micro_epsh.htm">http://www.ine.es/produser/micro_epsh.htm</a> [24.11.2014] cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
Sweden	NBHW (2012) <i>Hemlöshet och utestängning från bostadsmarknaden 2011 - omfattning och karaktär</i> [The situation of homeless people and exclusion from the housing market 2011 - Extent and characteristics]. (Stockholm: The National Board of Health and Welfare, cited in Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2014) op. cit.
United Kingdom	DCLG (2015) <i>Statutory Homelessness: January to March Quarter 2015</i> England, Housing Statistical Release, 24 June 2015, national statistics, available at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437273/201503_Statutory_Homelessness.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437273/201503_Statutory_Homelessness.pdf</a> DCLG (2015) <i>Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2014</i> , Homelessness Statistical Release, 26 February 2015, available at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407030/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_England_-_Autumn_2014.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407030/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_England_-_Autumn_2014.pdf</a>

# HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE: THE KEY STATISTICS

203,171,221

100% NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

22,348,834

HOUSING COST OVERBURDEN  
(MORE THAN 40 % OF DISPOSABLE INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING)

11%

35,148,621

17.3% OVERCROWDED  
HOUSING

10,564,903

SEVERE HOUSING DEPRIVATION

5.2%

! NUMBER UNKNOWN  
HOMELESS

24,177,375

DIFFICULTY ACCESSING  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT

11.9%

6,501,479

3.2% RENT OR MORTGAGE  
ARREARS

21,942,491

DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING  
ADEQUATE HOUSEHOLD  
TEMPERATURE

10.8%

11,174,417

5.5% AT RISK OF HAVING TO MOVE  
HOUSE IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS  
DUE TO HOUSING COSTS

%

POURCENTAGE  
OF THE EUROPEAN  
POPULATION

A HOUSEHOLD  
CONSTITUTES ALL  
THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE SAME  
DWELLING.  
THE POPULATION  
OF EUROPE IS 508.1  
MILLION PEOPLE  
FOR 203.2  
HOUSEHOLDS,  
SO 2.5 PEOPLE  
ON AVERAGE  
PER HOUSEHOLD.  
BUT IT WOULD  
BE RASH TO  
EXTRAPOLATE  
HOUSING  
DIFFICULTIES BY  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE  
ON THE BASIS  
OF THIS AVERAGE.  
THE FIGURES CANNOT  
BE SIMPLY ADDED  
TOGETHER BECAUSE  
A SINGLE HOUSEHOLD  
MAY BE AFFECTED  
BY SEVERAL HOUSING  
DIFFICULTIES.

SOURCE: EUROSTAT

Photo credits:  
Perednianskina, Javi Indy,  
Twin Design, Sarah Jane  
Taylor (Shutterstock),  
Fatykhov (Fotolia)



## TENS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN EUROPE ARE EXPERIENCING HOUSING EXCLUSION

Who are they? How did they end up there? What do we know about homelessness? What does European legislation and case law have to say about the right to housing?

These are the questions addressed in this Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe, which reveals a rise in the number of homeless people in the majority of countries, the impact of the crisis on home ownership, the particular difficulties experienced by central and southern European countries, the differences in how countries manage evictions and more.

Some problems are local and so the responses should also be local. However, certain issues are emerging at a European level, some instruments exist at European level, and some solutions can only be found at European level. First and foremost, we can learn from each other: how Austria has succeeded in abolishing rental evictions, how Scotland manages to guarantee housing, how Finland has reformed its emergency accommodation services for much greater effectiveness.

From our shared problems, we can build common tools that will provide solutions: a regulatory framework, financial resources, stakeholder training, and citizen mobilisation. Greater understanding of the issues and knowledge-sharing are necessary to better adapt the future tools to needs. We hope that this document represents the first step towards future solutions: the European contribution to combating housing exclusion.

