Immigration and Homelessness

Nicholas Pleace

Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, England, UK

❯ **Abstract_** *Migrant homelessness has become increasingly visible in some parts of the EU in recent years and was the subject of a European conference in 2002, with FEANTSA publishing a research review on the issue by Edgar* ***et al*** *in 2004. Since the 2004 review, evidence of undocumented migrants among people living rough throughout Europe has mounted. In the West of the EU, recent data on people living rough show what appear to be quite high numbers of economic migrants from the Central and Eastern EU living on the streets and in emergency shelters. Housing exclusion and homelessness also appear to remain prevalent among Roma groups. This chapter reviews the evidence on the extent and nature of this problem, finding that there are still significant shortfalls in the available data, but arguing that it nevertheless possible to produce a broad typology of migrant homelessness in the EU.*

❯ **Keywords_** *Migrant, immigrant, undocumented, economic migrant*

Introduction

A European Conference on Immigration and Homelessness, hosted by FEANTSA and BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe, took place at the beginning of November 2002. The conference had been arranged in the light of mounting evidence of an over-representation of some migrant groups among homeless people (Daly, 1996). In 2004 an important book by Bill Edgar, Joe Doherty and Henk Meert, entitled *Immigration and Homelessness in Europe*, reviewed the state of knowledge on the issue in the EU-15[1] for the first time. The review drew on a series of national reports that had been commissioned by FEANTSA (Anderson, 2002; Busch-Geertsema, 2002; FEANTSA, 2002).

Failed asylum seekers and other undocumented migrants were appearing at increasing rates among roofless people and in low-threshold homelessness services. People who had been accepted as refugees and who were awaiting asylum assessments were also appearing in homeless populations (Edgar *et al*., 2004). In 1998, 37 per cent of the people using Austrian homelessness shelters and 11 per cent of the people using German homelessness services were reported as foreign (FEANTSA, 2002). There was growing evidence of a distinct Europe-wide social problem of migrant homelessness, particularly within major urban areas (Daly, 1996; Anderson, 2002; FEANTSA, 2002; Edgar *et al*., 2004; Harrison *et al*., 2005).

Some specific ethnic and cultural groups who were not recent migrants also appeared to experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate. These included Roma people in much of the EU-15 (Harrison *et al*., 2005; Stephens *et al*., 2010) and British citizens with a Black African or Black Caribbean ethnic origin in the UK (Anderson, 2002). People with specific ethnic backgrounds were also disproportionately concentrated in some of most deprived areas, living in housing exclusion, in major cities throughout the EU-15 (Harrison *et al*., 2005).

Writing in 2004, Edgar *et al*. concluded that a combination of relative disadvantage in labour markets, and thus in housing markets, coupled with encountering prejudice and outright racism, created the situation in which housing exclusion and homelessness became more likely for some immigrant groups. If a homeless migrant found it difficult to access the welfare system due to language or cultural barriers, or was an asylum seeker or an undocumented migrant explicitly barred from accessing welfare payments or social housing, the risk of homelessness became still greater.

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[1]   The fifteen member states of the EU prior to enlargement in 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

A key finding was that the capacity of EU member states to counteract racial and cultural prejudice in housing systems was dependent on wider housing policy. A country like the UK or France, with relatively extensive social housing, could directly influence the administration of a key part of affordable housing supply and attempt to prevent prejudice and inequality. However, most housing in the EU is accessed through owner occupied and private rental markets. Governments could not control housing markets, they could only aim to ensure that general equality legislation was applied to those markets (Edgar *et al*., 2004; see also Harrison *et al*., 2005).

Work on migrant homelessness, including that by FEANTSA (2002) and Edgar *et al*. (2004), reveals that available data are often extremely poor. It is difficult to be precise about what sorts of numbers are involved or what the characteristics of migrant homeless people are. Some British-led research reported anecdotal evidence of what was referred to as 'diversity within difference', i.e. migrant homelessness might actually exist in several distinct forms (Anderson, 2002; Harrison *et al*., 2005).

This chapter seeks to update and critically assess FEANTSA's work on migrant homelessness. It reviews the current evidence base and moves on to attempt to produce a typology of migrant homelessness in the EU. The importance of variations in how migrant groups are defined and how this relates to an attempt to produce a typology is then discussed. An overview of the questions surrounding the balance between immigration controls and humane responses precedes a discussion of areas in which more research would be productive.

The Evidence Base

Research on migrant homelessness has faced problems because of data limitations. Many studies have not been well resourced, which means that there has been quite widespread dependence on restricted qualitative samples (Järvinen, 2003; Robinson *et al*., 2007; Huszar *et al*., 2010). This has limited some studies in that they tend to report largely on one city and, in several cases, on homelessness within one migrant group. While there are practical advantages to commissioning a series of 'country reports' from national experts for comparative research across several member states, the quality of these reports can also vary according to the data available in each country (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Edgar, 2004; Edgar *et al*., 2004).

It is not always possible to interrogate existing data to look for specific patterns. Sometimes this is because the data are primarily administrative and sometimes because only a few questions are asked. In 2007, Paris could not be precise about how many homeless undocumented migrants were in the emergency accommodation beds in the city, estimating that the figure was some 30 per cent of the total. A separate exercise suggested as many as 50 per cent of the 2000 people sleeping rough in Parisian parks were from eastern Europe and the Ukraine (Horréard, 2007). London sounded more precise about homeless east European nationals in the city in 2006, reporting 15 per cent of 4365 low-threshold homelessness service contacts were with this group. However, the data were restricted to service 'contacts' rather than an attempt to count individuals (Briheim-Crookall, 2006). Neither city had a complete picture of what was happening.

The problems in understanding migrant homelessness extend beyond simple data quality. Writing in 2010, Fonseca *et al*. note that comparative EU-level quantitative research is equally hampered by varying definitions of what a 'migrant' is, by the practical difficulties of controlling for the huge diversity within migrant populations and, not least, by the tendency of undocumented migrants to conceal themselves for fear of repatriation. They report that the Czech Republic estimates that its last census undercounted foreign nationals by 60 per cent. Further, the replacement of census surveys with register-based censuses (using administrative data) in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany and Sweden was in their view likely to increase the risk of this population being undercounted. The definitional problem with migrant homelessness can be the same as with the various European definitions of homelessness, in that what is measured, and indeed whether it is measured at all, varies between countries (Edgar, 2009).

Towards a New Typology of Migrant Homelessness?

Since the original work by FEANTSA and Edgar *et al*. (2004) the EU has expanded to include another twelve member states. New concerns have developed about the movement of migrant workers from the eastern countries of the EU among the north-western and Scandinavian member states. This concern centres on the possible additional strain that A-10[2] economic migrants might place on affordable housing supply and welfare services (Robinson and Reeve, 2006; Robinson *et al*., 2007; Czischke *et al*., 2007; Garapitch, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Stephens *et al*., 2010). Concerns that undocumented migrants, failed asylum seekers and some refugee groups may be present among homeless people have continued. In addition, evidence persists that certain ethnic and cultural minorities who are not recent migrants are over-represented among homeless people.

Three broad concerns may be identified at EU level in respect of migrant homelessness (Philips, 2006, 2009; Horréard, 2007; Huszar *et al*., 2010; Stephens *et al*., 2010):

- A growing representation of A-10 citizens in the homeless populations of EU-15 member states, particularly people living rough and houseless people using emergency and low-threshold[3] homelessness services.

- Evidence of the presence of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants among homeless people, again centred on people living rough and using emergency and low-threshold homelessness services.

- Ethnic and cultural minorities who appear to be at a disproportionate risk of homelessness but who are not recent migrants.[4]

Table 7.1 summarises an attempt at a broad typology of migrant homelessness.

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[2] The 2004 A-8 accession states: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, plus the 2007 accession states, Bulgaria and Romania.

[3] A low-threshold service asks no or few questions of those seeking to use it and is open to anyone. Such services tend to be basic.

[4] There are debates as to whether this should be regarded as a 'migrant' homelessness issue at all, or whether it is homelessness among EU citizens arising in part from systemic disadvantage linked to racism and cultural prejudice. These questions are considered below.

Table 7.1: Attempted broad typology of the different forms of migrant homelessness

Group affected	Possible characteristics	Possible causation
People seeking asylum and refugees	May have support needs linked to their experiences May have little or no knowledge of the country they have applied for refugee status in, including having no knowledge of the language or culture Educational attainment and capacity to secure work may vary May lack any financial resources	Primarily linked to the level of support provided by the state. Where this is inadequate (e.g. because access to welfare services is deliberately limited), homelessness will tend to occur and this group will appear among the users of low-threshold homelessness services May be prevented from taking up legal paid work
Failed asylum seekers and undocumented migrants	Likely to share many of the characteristics of refugees and asylum seekers, including lacking language skills	The response of a state will generally be to seek to repatriate people in this group if they can be located. Access to welfare services, social housing and even some low-threshold homelessness services may be prohibited May be prevented from taking up legal paid work
Women and children from outside the EU who lose their immigration status when escaping domestic violence from a violent man	The support needs that can exist among women and children escaping domestic violence can exist alongside disadvantages centred on not speaking the national language and not understanding the national culture or welfare service systems	There is some limited evidence that women will sometimes use migration as an opportunity to escape domestic violence The extent to which homelessness occurs will depend on service responses Some countries will actively seek to expel this group if they lose refugee status or conditional citizenship
A-10 economic migrants who have become homeless in EU-15 member states	Most A-10 economic migrants secure work and accommodation and do not experience homeless-ness in EU-15 countries Those who do experience homeless-ness may have characteristics that parallel those of the local population of homeless people. This population appears to be over-represented among users of low-threshold homelessness services, although evidence is patchy	As with other migrant groups, the extent to which they can access welfare systems and homelessness services is crucial. Many services in EU-15 states are not accessible to this group or are only accessible after they have been in paid work for some time Little or no access to welfare and housing services. Some countries (e.g. Ireland and the UK) attempt to repatriate A-10 economic migrants who have become homeless rather than providing welfare or housing services

Group affected	Possible characteristics	Possible causation
Ethnic and cultural minorities who appear to be at a disproportionate risk of homelessness but who are not recent migrants	This group is problematic to define because of variations in how a 'migrant' is defined across different member states. A foreign-born individual who is a 'citizen' in one member state will be defined as a 'migrant' in another The children of migrants are also regarded as 'foreign' in member states that define citizenship by ethnicity and culture rather than place of birth Some member states define this issue as homelessness among ethnic minority citizens and not as migrant homelessness	Definition of 'migrant' and associated entitlement to services in different member states Racism hampering access to welfare systems, labour markets and affordable housing Immigration and urban planning policies that regard spatial concentrations of ethnic and cultural minorities as a destabilising influence on society and may restrict access to some affordable housing

Asylum seekers and refugees

UNHCR-sponsored research in Budapest reported that homelessness among Somali refugees was linked to poor service access (Huszar *et al*., 2010). In the most developed welfare regimes, formal systems to avoid homelessness among asylum seekers should be in place, although, as is the case in the UK and Germany, those arrangements may offer only very restricted support. Someone who has refugee status should have access to the entire range of supports available to citizens. As noted elsewhere, the level of support available to refugees across the EU will vary according to general levels of welfare and homelessness service provision and also the extent to which welfare systems are contribution-based (i.e. some benefits are linked to duration of paid work) (Edgar *et al*., 2004; Sainsbury, 2006; Stephens *et al*., 2010).

Failed asylum seekers and undocumented migrants

The numbers of undocumented migrants who are homeless is uncertain. If members of this group of people make contact with homelessness services at all, it will be with low-threshold services that do not record much, or any, data about them. In France, where there is no expectation that low-threshold services should not assist undocumented migrants, there is strong evidence of an over-representation of foreign nationals, including undocumented people, within the homelessness system (Horréard, 2007; Brousse, 2009).

Spanish surveys of the users of some homelessness services suggest very sharp rises in the number of migrants using those services, reaching 63 per cent in 2008. There was evidence of this homeless population being made up of large numbers of Africans, particularly Moroccans, alongside a smaller number of A-10 migrants.

The extent to which this population was undocumented was unclear, but street counts in Barcelona and in Madrid in 2008 reported that 14 and 10 per cent respectively of people found sleeping rough were undocumented (Bosch-Meda, 2010).

Italian research based on administrative data from a health service provider focused on undocumented migrants in Milan and found extremely high reliance on friends and relatives for a place to stay, with some women with domestic jobs living with employers. Homelessness was quite unusual but was associated with lacking employment: 4 per cent of men who were unemployed were homeless, compared with under 1 per cent of employed men; it was generally very uncommon among women (Devillanova and Frattini, 2006). A small qualitative study in Italy looking at a migrant Senegalese community in Brescia also showed very high reliance on social networks as a means of securing and sustaining accommodation. The Senegalese made little or no attempt to access state or charitable services or the formal welfare system to meet their housing needs (Kaag, 2008).

There is some evidence that even low-threshold services might attempt to minimise and avoid contact from this group. In Greece, providing assistance to undocumented migrants might result in criminal prosecution for homelessness services, so it is difficult to say anything definite about possible numbers (FEANTSA, 2002; Arapoglu, 2004). In the UK, an NGO homelessness service that reported high contact rates with undocumented migrants might start to be viewed negatively by service commissioners such as municipal governments (Dumper *et al*., 2006).

Besides sometimes being barred from services or from undertaking paid work legally, both asylum seekers and undocumented migrants can face difficulties linked to racism and cultural assumptions that underpin welfare systems (Huszar *et al*., 2010; Edgar *et al*., 2004). In Denmark, there is some evidence of racist attitudes among homeless Danes towards homeless migrants (Järvinen, 2003), something that has also been reported in London among British homeless people (Pleace and Quilgars, 1996).

Even where access to low-threshold homelessness services is possible, there is nowhere in the EU where undocumented migrants can legally access the social housing sector or secure access to welfare benefits to make private sector rents affordable (FEANTSA, 2002; Edgar, 2004; Edgar *et al*., 2004). Undocumented homeless migrants are dependent on low-threshold homelessness services or on securing enough legal or illegal earned income to access either the regulated or unregulated private rented sector; they can expect no help from the state (Dörr and Faist, 1997; Harrison *et al*., 2005; Czischke *et al*., 2007; Rutter and Latorre, 2009; Robinson, 2010).

Homelessness has been described as a 'residual' social problem in member states with highly extensive welfare systems (Meert, 2005; see also Stephens *et al*., 2010). Being an undocumented homeless person in these societies means much, or all, of the supports provided by welfare benefits, social housing and homelessness services are not available. The 'advantage' of being homeless in a 'service rich' country disappears to some extent if someone is a homeless person who is also an undocumented migrant (FEANTSA, 2002; Edgar *et al*., 2004; Stephens *et al*., 2010).

Women and children from outside the EU who lose their immigration status when escaping domestic violence from a violent man

Evidence is highly limited in respect of this group. However, there are a sufficient number of reports from domestic violence services to suggest that immigrant women and children who lose their immigration status, as the spouse of a male refugee or legal migrant worker, are an issue (Anderson, 2002; Skich, 2008). Women and children in this group also face all the problems and issues that can confront any immigrant homeless person, such as not speaking the language. More research is needed in this field (see also Chapter 8).

Homelessness among A-10 migrant workers

EU-15 member states do not wish to pay the welfare costs of A-10 migrant workers who become homeless while within their territory (Robinson *et al*., 2007; Robinson, 2010). Several countries have responded to this issue with attempts at repatriation of A-10 migrants found among people sleeping rough and/or using low-threshold homelessness services (Bergin and Lalor, 2006; Garapitch, 2008).

Concerns that increasingly limited resources will be further stretched by homeless A-10 economic migrants are not groundless, but there is now some evidence that they may have been exaggerated. Three trends have become evident. The first is British evidence that almost all the economic migrants from the A-10 countries tend to secure and then keep paid work and that the great majority do not become homeless or make any claim on welfare systems (Pollard *et al*., 2008; Garapitch, 2008). The second evidenced trend is that, having worked in another country for a few years, sometimes with the goal of saving up money, economic migrants do quite often opt to go home (Pollard *et al*., 2008).

The third trend is that numbers may not be that great overall. Kahanec and Zimmerman (2009) report the consensus as being that between 2 and 4 per cent of the population of the A-10 may eventually move to the EU-15 at most, although they criticise the often shaky assumptions for these projections. The UK, Ireland and Sweden opened up their labour markets to A-10 migrants first and seem to have received more migrants than others in the EU-15. Yet numbers were not actually that great and flows more generally have been limited (Kahanec and

Zimmerman, 2009). There are inherent limits on the number of people who actually want to leave home, their friends, family and social supports. (Hárs *et al*., 2004; Kahanec and Zimmerman, 2009). It should, however, be noted that transition arrangements still restrict potential flows of A-10 economic migrants into some EU-15 states (Verschueren, 2010).

There is evidence that people from A-10 countries are appearing in the low-threshold homelessness services and among the roofless populations of cities such as Paris (Horréard, 2007), Barcelona and Madrid (Bosch-Meda, 2010). Low-threshold homelessness services in Dublin and in London have reported a strain on resources because they are dealing with more migrants from the eastern EU countries. They also report difficulties linked to language barriers and the fact that limited entitlements among A-10 migrants mean they cannot be referred on to other services (Bergin and Lalor, 2006; Briheim-Crookall, 2006; Binley, 2007).

This group appears to be growing more significant, but in absolute terms the numbers are not that great (i.e. there are proportionately more homeless A-10 migrants, but not large increases in overall homelessness). While there is definitely a concern, limits on the extent of both A-10 economic migration and homelessness among A-10 economic migrants do also need to be borne in mind. Whether the current economic and financial recession will cause more A-10 homelessness in the EU-15 is uncertain, flows into the EU-15 may reduce as employment opportunities constrict and those faced with homelessness may opt to return home (Stephens *et al*., 2010).

Research is finding some vulnerable, ill-prepared people from A-10 countries who are homeless and who have no social support, no knowledge of local labour markets, culture or language and who have needs such as severe mental illness and substance misuse (Garapitch, 2008). Depending on where they become homeless, such people may have restricted rights to support from welfare systems and are generally unlikely to be able to access social housing (Robinson, 2010).

However, it does appear to be the case that only a minority of economic migrants from A-10 countries are actually becoming homeless. Those economic migrants who do become homeless also share characteristics with other homeless people, in terms of support needs and negative life experiences (Binley, 2007; Garapitch, 2008). More research in this area is needed to confirm this apparent pattern.

Many economic migrants to the major cities of the EU are, of course, relatively speaking, very wealthy individuals. While homelessness may arise among A-10 migrants, it is worth also bearing in mind that migration of executives and their families may be significant in helping to create the extraordinarily expensive housing markets that exist in major EU cities. London, for example, has an entire housing market of very high-cost rental housing for the staff of global corporations,

including, for example, a specific sub-market for Japanese executives (White and Hurdley, 2003). Just as urban gentrification can restrict affordable housing in globally prominent European cities, so might the presence of significant numbers of highly affluent economic migrants seeking high status housing.

Ethnic and cultural minorities who appear to be at a disproportionate risk of homelessness but who are not recent migrants

The extent to which recently arrived people can integrate into a society is also influenced by how attuned they are to that society, its language and cultural norms. The *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans granted full citizenship despite being new migrants) were quickly integrated because of their entitlements to secure paid work, housing and welfare services, but also because they often spoke German and had shared cultural norms (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Sainsbury, 2006). Equally, despite large numbers of Latin American migrants, Spanish research does not report disproportionate numbers of this group among homeless people, suggesting that shared language and culture might help lessen risks of homelessness (Bosch-Meda, 2010). Some researchers have linked a review of *Aussiedler* policy in Germany to a falling level of cultural similarity between more recently admitted *Aussiedler* groups and German-born citizens (Sainsbury, 2006).

More generally, research tentatively suggests that duration of residence sometimes brings about an acclimatisation that reduces the risk of homelessness. Experience of homelessness among migrant groups in Spain falls as their length of residence increases and their degree of economic and social integration increases (Bosch-Meda, 2010). Some ethnic minorities in the UK, particularly people of Indian origin, are highly economically and socially integrated with the general population and appear unlikely to become homeless (Burrows, 1997; Robinson, 2010).

There is great diversity among the migrant and ethnic and cultural minority groups that are resident in the EU (Fonseca *et al.*, 2010; Kahanec and Zimmerman, 2009). The over-representation of Roma people among the homeless population in parts of Italy is a distinct issue, as is the over-representation of British citizens with African or Caribbean ethnic origins in the UK. Limited evidence of an over-representation of long-resident ethnic Russians in the homeless populations of some of the Baltic states is another example of an ethnicity-related homelessness problem that exists in a specific context (FEANTSA, 2009).

Even widely reported issues, such as the systematic disadvantage of Roma people across the EU, do not exist to the same extent or manner in different member states (Cahn and Guild, 2008; FRA, 2009). While there are commonalities in the experience of ethnic and cultural minorities at increased risk of homelessness in a broad sense

(i.e. social and economic exclusion, which is in turn linked to structural and individual racism), the nature of the problem is not uniform across member states (Harrison *et al*., 2005).

Varying Definitions of 'Migrant' and Implications for the Attempted Typology of Migrant Homelessness

Definitions are fundamentally important in understanding migrant homelessness in the EU because they govern the degree to which migrant groups can receive state-funded assistance. Denmark, for example, defines migrants as people who are not native born; thus, 'migrant' homelessness can occur at any point during their lives, even if they live most of those lives in Denmark (Järvinen, 2003).

In Germany, citizenship is based in part on ethnic and cultural origin and more than three million foreign-born ethnic Germans, *Aussiedler*, have been accepted as citizens (Busch-Geertsema, 2002). Until recently, the *Aussiedler* had a very different experience from those without German heritage and from groups such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants whose rights to housing are restricted (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Sainsbury, 2006). If neither parent has a residence permit or is a German citizen, it is possible to be born in Germany but to not have German citizenship. In contrast, the UK's statutory homelessness system is inaccessible to British-born people who have not been resident in the country for a sustained period, however, anyone born in Britain is automatically a citizen and would be eligible for assistance.

These distinctions can have fundamental implications. Both Germany and the UK are prepared to provide only basic accommodation to asylum seekers, prohibit access to most welfare benefits and actively seek to expel, rather than assist, any undocumented homeless person (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Sainsbury, 2006; Stephens *et al*., 2010). Ireland and the UK also seek to repatriate any A-10 economic migrants found among homeless people rather than to assist them (Bergin and Lalor, 2006; Garapitch, 2008; Verschueren, 2010). However, a country such as the UK enforces anti-discrimination legislation against its own citizens with ethnic minority backgrounds with some vigour, particularly in respect of social housing (Harrison *et al*., 2005). Edgar *et al*. (2004) reported a tension in the EU-15 between seeking greater equity for ethnic minority citizens and simultaneously seeking to expel many migrant groups.

Penninx (2007), writing about the impact of immigration on housing and homelessness in the small Finnish city of Turku, neatly summarises the definitional ambiguities that can arise in respect of migrant homelessness. The migrant population of Turku is 4.2 per cent if migrants are defined as 'non-Finnish' in origin, but this rises to 6 per

cent if people of 'non-Finnish' ethnic groups are used to define this group. If language is used as the criteria, the figure rises to 11 per cent because Turku contains a significant minority of people whose first language is Swedish, although almost all of these are Finnish citizens. If people who speak neither Finnish nor Swedish as a first language are defined as immigrants, the figure drops to 5.6 per cent.

Sainsbury, writing in 2006 about migrant groups' access to welfare systems in the US, Germany and Sweden, describes outcomes for migrants as being linked to the interplay between welfare regimes and immigration regimes. Welfare systems respond to homelessness differently and responses are in turn influenced by immigration regimes. A highly developed welfare state that might provide excellent supports to homeless people who are its own citizens may provide little help to an undocumented migrant, A-10 economic migrant or an asylum seeker because of strict immigration policy. Adopting this logic, the outcomes for homeless migrants depend both on welfare regimes and on immigration regimes (see also Daly, 1996; Edgar *et al*., 2004; Stephens *et al*., 2010).

This chapter does not presume to attempt a universally applicable definition of migrant homelessness because that would be incompatible with the reality of diverse immigration regimes in the EU (Sainsbury, 2006; Fonseca *et al*., 2010). What is important to bear in mind in relation to the typology presented in Table 7.1, and in particular in relation to ethnic and cultural groups that are not recent migrants, is the interplay between immigration regimes, welfare regimes and homelessness services at national level. This means that while Table 7.1 provides an overview at EU level it will sometimes not be directly applicable to specific member states.

Balancing Immigration Control with Humane and Ethical Responses to Migrant Homelessness

Responses to homelessness among economic migrants from the A-10 countries and undocumented migrants in context

This section of the chapter is focused on homelessness among A-10 economic migrants and undocumented migrants. These forms of migration are viewed with increasing hostility by significant parts of the EU population, by the Far Right in EU politics and by sections of the mass media (Edgar, 2004). Threats are perceived to national identity, to culture and to the well-being and economic prosperity of the indigenous population (Philmore and Goodson, 2006; Pollard *et al*., 2008).

UK research has argued that British politicians are unwilling to tackle the popular conviction that these forms of migration are a threat for fear of losing mass support (Rutter and Latorre, 2009; Robinson, 2010). Research in Italy has reported similar

findings in respect of political attitudes to migrant African populations (Kaag, 2008). Arapoglu (2004) claims that politicians blame street homelessness in Athens on 'immigrants' and that this is used to conceal the extent of homelessness directly affecting Greek citizens.

Homelessness among fellow citizens is also frequently seen as an 'external' problem. Even though research often finds evidence that local homelessness is mainly being experienced by local people, the belief that homeless people are 'outsiders' can be widespread (Lindquist *et al*., 1999; Cloke *et al*., 2001).

Homelessness among A-10 economic migrants and undocumented migrants is, in a populist sense, doubly 'deviant' because it comprises alien people in an alien state. Debate based simply on evidence becomes instantly problematic when dealing with a subject as ideologically and politically charged as migrant homelessness.

There are of course major practical barriers to dealing with these forms of homelessness. Even the most prosperous EU member states cannot afford to effectively import social problems. Irish and British homelessness service providers have been reported arguing that immigration services and A-10 states should facilitate repatriation of these groups of homeless people where practical (Bergin and Lalor, 2006; Briheim-Crookall, 2006; Binley, 2007; Stephens *et al*., 2010). It has also been argued that it is not practical to expect a generous welfare-led response to these forms of homelessness because that would simply not be tolerated by the mainstream European mass media and politicians (Edgar, 2004; Dwyer, 2005).

This suggests that a two-tier strategy of necessary emergency assistance coupled with humane systems of repatriation is probably the best approach that is practical. However, undocumented and A-10 migrants who become homeless may often face unequal treatment and receive less support than indigenous citizens.

Refugee and asylum seeker homelessness

Refugee and asylum seeker homelessness is another matter because countries are concerned to appear humane. The numbers involved are also small. Germany, the Netherlands, France and the UK received 114 380 applications for asylum in 2009, many of those would not be granted refugee status. The 2009 asylum applications in these countries were equivalent to 0.05 per cent of their collective population of some 221 million people (UNHCR, 2010). It is also the case, although the evidence is not very robust, that only some refugees are actually at heightened risk of homelessness (Robinson and Reeve, 2006).

Homelessness among ethnic and cultural minorities who are not recent migrants

This is not a simple policy area. What is discrimination and racism against ethnic and cultural minority citizens in one country is discrimination against migrants, who by definition have more limited rights, in another country.

Several member states regard spatial concentrations of some ethnic and cultural minorities as potentially damaging to social cohesion. At first the concern was that spatial separation would bring social and economic isolation and disadvantage because it highlighted difference; later the concern extended to domestic security in respect of Muslim populations (Philips, 2006, 2009; Robinson, 2010). This is despite questions about the extent to which ethnic minorities actually choose to live in spatial concentrations, or just pool in areas where housing is most affordable (Philips, 2009) and evidence that these forms of spatial concentration, where self-selected, may have beneficial effects (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Robinson, 2010).

While a concentration of Muslim people in Bradford in northern England is seen as a potentially divisive social problem (Robinson, 2005), a concentration of Polish people and Polish-run businesses in a London borough is not (Garapitch, 2008). However benign the intent, a subsection of the population is being treated differently from other citizens. This is part of what Harrison *et al*. (2005) argue is a 'hierarchy of inclusion' in EU housing systems more generally, which is linked to the perceived degree of difference with local populations.

The presence of disproportionately high numbers of specific ethnic and cultural groups of EU citizens in homeless populations may well be indicative of ongoing exclusion on a number of levels (Stephens *et al*., 2010; Cahn and Guild, 2008; FRA, 2009). As Edgar *et al*. argued in 2004, the state must enforce equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation in respect of housing and labour markets (see also Harrison *et al*., 2005; Stephens *et al*., 2010) and there are arguments to be made about whether urban policy towards some ethnic minorities should be distinct (Busch-Geertsema, 2002; Robinson, 2010).

Areas for Additional Research

It must be ensured that refugees have access to the same protections and supports as are available to the general population. However, the evidence base on the extent of refugee homelessness is limited. Some refugees have extensive personal resources (such as command of relevant languages, familiarity with cultural and professional qualifications) that may reduce the risk of their becoming homeless, whereas others will be far more vulnerable. More information about the actual extent of refugee homelessness is needed. British research found evidence of an over-representation in the statutory homelessness system of former refugees who had become British citizens (Pleace *et al*., 2008); if this is occurring elsewhere, it is a concern.

EU-wide monitoring or surveys need to be undertaken to understand the extent, nature and implications of migrant homelessness. More data are needed, particularly to ensure that the scale and nature of undocumented migrant and A-10 economic migrant homelessness is properly understood. As Fonseca *et al*. (2010) argue, EU, UN and OECD calls for common data on migration have been ignored by national governments for too long. This is not the call from social scientific researchers in universities for better data, it is a general plea for better data because there is very little knowledge of what is actually happening in many respects, a problem that all too often still extends to homelessness itself (Edgar, 2009).

Finally, the balance between migration control and proper service responses to undocumented migrants and homelessness among A-10 economic migrants needs to be systematically researched. Practical, integrated responses that are as humane as possible while maintaining and supporting immigration regimes need to be developed and evaluated if undocumented and A-10 migrant homelessness is to be tackled. Clearly there is an argument for emergency services to stop groups such as undocumented migrants sleeping on the street and for the authorities to ensure that these individuals are healthy before taking a decision about their future. Homelessness services for migrants that provide support, help an individual to stabilise but which, when deemed necessary, facilitate repatriation must be contemplated. These questions are not just practical, they are also political and moral, and require independent, neutral and robust assessment if the most effective and the most humane service responses are to be pursued.

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