
Editorial

In June 2010 the European Council adopted the new Europe 2020 strategy, which sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the twenty-first century. In this strategy, the new EU poverty target is defined as 'promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion'.¹ A specific target concerning homelessness has not been set, but the Commission's proposal for Europe 2020 includes a European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which will 'transform the open method of coordination on social exclusion and social protection into a platform for cooperation, peer-review and exchange of good practice, and into an instrument to foster commitment by public and private players to reduce social exclusion, and take concrete action'. One of the tasks for member states mentioned in this context is 'to define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk'. 'The homeless' are explicitly mentioned as one of these groups.²

The *European Journal of Homelessness* seeks to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidence base for policy development and innovation. In September 2009 the European Observatory on Homelessness, in collaboration with the European Network of Housing Research Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion, organised the 4th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe. The theme of the conference was 'Homelessness and Poverty' and a number of papers from this conference are included in this edition of the journal. The publication of this, the fourth volume of the *European Journal of Homelessness*, will, we hope, contribute to the ongoing task of defining and implementing measures to address the needs of homeless people in Europe successfully.

¹ Conclusions of the European Council, 17 June 2010, p.12, www.consilium.europa.eu/App/NewsRoom/loadDocument.aspx?id=339&lang=en&directory=en/ec/&fileName=115346.pdf.

² European Commission (2010) *Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, COM(2010) 2020, pp.17–18, <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>.

Peer-Reviewed Papers

Shinn explains differential rates of lifetime homelessness in the United States and Europe, as indexed by household surveys, by exploring the interrelationships between income inequality and tax and benefit programmes that increase or reduce poverty. Her paper explains the higher rates of homelessness across some nations in terms of four forms of social exclusion based on income, wealth, housing and incarceration, and argues that relative levels of homelessness across societies stem from societal choices in these domains.

In contrast to the wealth of information on homelessness in the US and northern and western Europe, research in central and eastern Europe is limited and Šikić-Mičanović provides new information from a qualitative research project on homeless people in Croatia. The paper demonstrates that homeless people in Croatia are disadvantaged in multifaceted ways that inevitably hinder their routes out of social exclusion.

Warnes, Crane and Coward examine the financial circumstances of 400 single homeless people in England who were resettled into independent accommodation: after six months, nearly nine-tenths had retained their tenancy and only sixteen were known to have become homeless again. Their findings indicate that resettlement into independent accommodation does work for many single homeless people, but that more attention needs to be given to specific aspects of current resettlement practice, most particularly the rarity of advice about the financial implications of being resettled.

The final paper in the peer-reviewed section provides an ethnographic account of the economic strategies that homeless people make use of when managing daily life. Based on interviews and participant observation among persons who have experienced long-term homelessness, Johannessen and Flåto argue that within the 'harvesting economy' the actors rely on their social relationships to cope, and find that their social networks and economic strategies reinforce each other.

Policy Review

The first paper in this section builds on the journal's previous reviews of national homeless strategies in Scotland, Ireland and Finland. Hansen outlines the Danish national homelessness strategy for the period from 2009 to 2012. With an overall aim to reduce homelessness, the strategy has four goals: no one should live on the streets, young people should not stay at homeless hostels, no person should have to stay in a homeless hostel for more than 120 days, and better accommodation solutions must be in place for people being released from prison or leaving institutional care. This paper reviews the main features of the new strategy and argues

that it does not fundamentally alter approaches to homelessness in Denmark, but it does provide a much stronger framework to develop effective initiatives at the local municipality level.

Calandrino explores the process that led to the choice of homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE) as the 2009 social inclusion focus theme of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. The paper highlights the main problems in addressing HHE in the current EU policy framework, and the ways in which they have been overcome. It analyses the activities carried out in 2009 and their main outcomes, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of such a process. Finally, it points at the key factors that could contribute to keeping HHE at the core of EU social policies. Although written on the eve of an important restructuring of the EU governance processes in the context of Europe 2020, this paper aims at drawing the most important procedural lessons from the OMC over the past ten years.

Bosch Meda explores homelessness among migrant groups in Spain. There is evidence that migrants are increasingly strongly represented in the homeless population of Spain. Experience of homelessness also appears to be particularly acute among recent migrants and to be becoming less common among more established migrant groups.

Ferneer, Oldersma and Popping provide a detailed exploration of the process of shelter exits for homeless individuals and for different shelter types in the public shelter system in the city of Groningen in the Netherlands. The results indicate that the use of day shelters, as well as demographic variables such as age, gender and nationality, are associated with a differentiated likelihood of continuing homelessness. The results of this study in the Dutch context are compared with research on the process of homelessness in the US, and the implications of these findings and future directions for research on the process of homelessness are discussed.

Bradshaw and Mayhew provide an authoritative overview of the debates on how best to measure poverty in the EU. The EU headline measure of poverty is the at-risk-of-poverty measure derived from the percentage of the population in households with incomes less than 60 per cent of the median. It has been incorporated into the EU 2020 poverty and social exclusion target, although combined with other indicators. The paper provides a critique of this approach, especially that it underestimates poverty in the new member states, and suggests alternative methods of measurement.

Think Pieces

We are keen to stimulate debate on aspects of homelessness in Europe and this volume of the journal contains four contributions seeking to provoke such discussions.

Fernández Evangelista attempts to apply Amartya Sen's 'capabilities theory' to the study of homelessness. This involves understanding the concept of social exclusion as a constituent part of poverty that incidentally highlights the relational roots of poverty. The paper first provides definitions of 'home', 'homeless people' and 'homelessness' in terms of capabilities, in order to show that in many cases government policies are assessed according to the budget allocated to the area, or the amount of specific assets offered, rather than according to the entitlements of people and the capabilities they generate.

Boswell observes that older ex-homeless people are rarely regarded as contenders in the employment market and that it has been argued that resources aimed at improving their employability are unlikely to provide a sufficient return. Yet, routes out of homelessness are frequently identified as requiring shifts in lifestyles and networks. This paper looks at two organisations (one in Poland and one in the UK) that work with homeless people who are or have been roofless. It is argued that the language and ideology framing the work of an organisation strongly influence its model of provision and that a holistic approach with community and meaningful activity at its centre may be the way forward for some homeless people. There are two responses to this contribution in the debates section of the journal.

The German welfare state has undergone comprehensive reforms, especially in the field of integration of unemployed welfare recipients, and Specht highlights the negative consequences of these reforms on service provision for homeless people. This paper argues that, together with the appearance of new forms of poverty, the structure of homelessness has altered and the system of service provision for this target group must change accordingly. This requires more prevention services, greater cooperation between private and public bodies and a new vision of what social inclusion/integration into social life means in a radically restructured society.

Misetics provides an account of recent efforts to exclude homeless people from public spaces in Hungary through police sweeps, exclusionary adaptation of public furniture and anti-begging ordinances. The paper argues that such punitive measures gain legitimacy from a discourse that dehumanises homeless people, excludes them from the moral community and blames them for their homelessness.

Debates

This section provides an opportunity for people to respond to other contributions to the journal.

Paasche outlines the lively debate that has emerged about the role that people experiencing homelessness should (or should not) play in designing, implementing and evaluating homelessness strategies and policies at local, national and European levels. With reference to the criteria for an ideal speech situation, as developed by Jürgen Habermas, the paper examines the validity of some of the key arguments that are usually put forward against the political participation of homeless people at European level. It concludes that, from the perspective of deliberative democracy, there is little scope to oppose the political participation or mobilisation of homeless people at European level without implicitly questioning one's own legitimacy to participate in the political discourse.

The next two contributions are responses to Boswell's paper in the policy review section of this volume on the experiences of the Barka and Emmaus organisations in providing self-help services to the homeless. Focusing on the Barka communities in Poland, Dębski questions whether they are suitable for all homeless persons, regardless of age, causes of homelessness or current life situation and contends that such communities do not help individuals to gain independence and integrate with society. On the contrary, he argues that they sometimes create an addiction to assistance and to the community of the homeless. Johnsen reflections on some of these issues from the perspective of a UK-based homelessness researcher. She advises that advocates of such communities, who endorse the model as an effective means of empowering homeless people and of fostering their economic independence, should exercise caution until the evidence base relating to these outcomes is more comprehensive.

Conclusion

Our thanks go to all the contributors for ensuring that Volume 4 of the *European Journal of Homelessness* maintains the high standard set in the first three volumes. Collectively, the papers provide an important basis for reflection and debate on homelessness and dimensions of poverty across Europe.

We are pleased to announce that the journal will comprise two issues per annum from 2011 onwards. The first will be a themed issue, largely based on the theme of the previous year's research conference organised by the European Observatory on Homelessness and its partners. The second issue will be open to all papers that address aspects of homelessness in Europe. We look forward to receiving contributions to future volumes of the *European Journal of Homelessness* and the call for papers for the 2011 issues can be found at www.feantsaresearch.org.