
An Emerging Research Strand: Housing Exclusion in Central and South East Europe

Boróka Fehér and Nóra Teller

Budapest Social Centre and its Institutions (BMSZKI) – Budapest, Hungary

Metropolitan Research Institute – Budapest, Hungary

› **Abstract_** *There was large-scale restructuring of welfare arrangements in the post-soviet states of CEE and SEE in the post-transition years, with newly emerging social challenges including various forms of housing exclusion and homelessness. In many countries, policy responses have been created ahead of evidence delivered by research, due both to the lack of a tradition of research in homelessness and to the lack of research capacity in general. In some countries, the re-criminalisation of homelessness occurred, which is the gravest example of policy formation that lacks any evidence on both reason and effect. In the past decade, however, the CEE/SEE academy has developed more and more interest in this topic, rooted either in housing research or in welfare analysis. Papers and reports have been focusing on uncovering the nature and scale of homelessness (typically through exploratory studies, both qualitative and quantitative), and also on better understanding pathways in and out of homelessness, the effectiveness of policy responses for selected groups (including issues around the criminalisation of homelessness), and the links between housing exclusion and broader welfare arrangements. This article summarises the state of research and some evidence in the CEE and SEE region. We focus on three broad areas: 1) the generation of figures on homelessness (methods and outputs of such undertakings); 2) analysis of policy interventions and strategic approaches (national and local-level policies and innovative techniques like Housing First in the region); and 3) research on the nature and dynamics of homelessness among selected subgroups like children, women, the elderly, migrants, war victims, etc. We cover Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, the Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Some remarks on Russia's homeless research are also included.*

› **Keywords** *Emerging research, homelessness CEE/SEE, trends in homelessness, interventions*

Introduction: The Foundations of ‘New’ Research on Homelessness in Central and South East Europe

The early nineties was an era of great political and economic change in the CEE and SEE region. In most countries, the transformation period went along peacefully; however, in the former Yugoslav states, it was impacted by heavy conflicts and great demographic changes. New national state formations drastically redrew the map of Central East and South East Europe.

The setting up of new institutions happened at varying paces across the region. After serious reductions in their national gross domestic product levels (especially in the former Soviet countries), the region faced only slow economic recovery with skyrocketing unemployment rates and very low activity rates (Kornai, 2006). These changes have also necessitated institutional changes in welfare arrangements and, more importantly, have created a new role for the formerly state-funded and controlled housing system (Hegedüs, 2012). Variations exist across various economies and adaptation mechanisms, but in all countries “[T]he social rental sector was largely privatized; it became a residual sector that concentrates the most vulnerable social groups. In most countries, politics (and housing policy) only recognised the need for social housing after mass privatization and economic recovery had already taken place. Programs to expand the social rental sector did not lead to a breakthrough, and its social and financial sustainability remains very weak” (Hegedüs, 2012, p.24).

Hence, housing exclusion emerged as a widening social phenomenon and at the same time it appeared as a new political issue in CEE and SEE after the transition. The most extreme form of housing exclusion – homelessness – represents a formerly largely hidden, and in some countries even forbidden ‘behaviour’ (like in the Soviet Union and Hungary). The most visible form of it, rough sleeping, was an issue that the transition governments just learned to understand around the early nineties, and they often simply left it to the equally young civil society organisations and other charitable or faith-based organisations to handle. This resulted in very selective service delivery – not only in geographical terms, but also in the sense that the groups prioritized may not have been the most needy.

Apparently, the backlog in developing and organising homeless services also impacted the discourse on homelessness, and with this, the research on it. We can identify some distinctively different strands for 'new' research on homelessness in the region, like juridical studies, criminology and studies on deviances, mental health and psychological studies, and sociological studies. The juridical strand shows also some variations according to historical developments in the region; the Balkan war caused mass displacement, e.g. in Serbia and Croatia, which has prohibited many people from establishing housing security in new places or returning to their former homes. Thus, it is largely the human rights discourse that frames research on the housing exclusion of such families (Petrovic and Timotijevic, 2013). Another recent example on a juridical approach to the causes of homelessness covers all EU Member States, including those in the CEE region. This study from 2016 focuses on elements of the juridical systems of Member States and their links with broader social protection systems to understand the levels of risk to the most excluded in society in terms of losing their homes (Human European Consultancy, 2016).

Another strand approaches homelessness as an expression of deviance, and it is mostly the discourse of criminology that takes stock of the paths into and within the homeless sector. Pleace (2000) claims that this pre-twentieth century popular view on poverty and exclusion continues to impact service provision to date, and we state that this view is basically identical to the 'official ideology' on homelessness in the pre-transition countries in the CEE and SEE region, where it is still prevalent despite major service delivery reforms (Borbíró, 2014). More recently, the re-criminalisation of homelessness – e.g., in Hungary and Poland – delivers new impetus to this strand of research (Browarczyk, 2013; Missetics, 2013). Beyond illuminating the historical development of criminalising homeless or vagrants, Missetics (2013), for example, also works out a nuanced conflict theory-based analytical framework of the state.

Pathways into homelessness represent another core research topic in the CEE and SEE region. Obviously, psychological and mental-health related interpretations of individual paths into the growing levels of housing exclusion have a dominant role in this framework. This regularly involves looking at the interaction of homelessness with addiction or mental health issues (Doherty and Stuttaford, 2007). Studies focusing on the rough sleeper population often address this question (see, e.g., Milackova and Rochovska (2011) for Slovakia; Paksi *et al.* (2010) for Hungary, or Canavan *et al.* (2012) for an international comparison focusing on access to service provision in selected European capital cities).

Similar to the developments in homelessness research in western Europe and elsewhere some two decades ago (Busch-Geertsema, 2010), we are now seeing a reorientation of research in CEE and SEE towards a more structural understanding of homelessness. Under the 'new orthodoxy' transformation of the political and economic systems, welfare provision and the housing system have gained a key role in interpreting issues relating to homelessness and housing exclusion, shifting the focus of research to a broader institutional context, including the privatization of housing and the commoditisation of public services (Hegedüs, 2011), complemented by an increasing number of qualitative and quantitative data collection exercises on homeless people.

In the following sections we focus on the increasingly interdisciplinary research findings on homelessness in the CEE and SEE region in the past 15-20 years. We focus on three broad areas: 1) generation of figures on homelessness (methods and outputs of such undertakings); 2) analysis of policy interventions and strategic approaches (national and local level policies and innovative techniques like HF; 3) research on the nature and dynamics of homelessness among selected subgroups such as children, women, the elderly, migrants, war victims and so on. We highlight selected findings from Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, the Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Some remarks on Russia's homeless research are also included. This review probably covers only a representative fraction of the growing corpus of research findings in CEE.

Who Are the Homeless People? Methods and Output of Explorative Studies

There is a relatively brief history of providing shelters and other services for homeless people in the CEE/SEE region. Thus, research on service provision, the nature of homelessness, the composition of the homeless population at a given point in time, or the dynamics of the population is also rather young. Therefore, in some countries we find more explorative studies. In Romania, for example, the legal definition of homelessness dates back only to 2011 (there were also studies before this date but based on another operational definition (see Nicolaescu and Mândroviceanu, 2013)), and in Slovakia, the first guidance-like document on the homeless population, who they are and how they live, is less than 10 years old (Benova, 2008). In Serbia, the ever first survey of a sub-group of homeless people is even more recent (Petrovic and Timotijevic, 2013).

In other countries, there is a more extensive history of data collection, and hence there are outputs based on a variety of research methods. This is also linked with financing research; in some countries, only very small-scale research projects get

funded because homelessness is generally not the focus of policy makers, academia or other research organisations, or the funders of such organisations. Poland seems to have one of the longest research traditions in the region, because both qualitative and quantitative data collection started more than two decades ago. As Debski (2011) puts it: beyond local surveys mostly carried out by NGOs who run specific services, there are surveys that cover even full provinces and that reach out to homeless people who are outside of institutions. In Poland, there were attempts to count homeless people as early as the 2002 census. In 2013, there was a national point-in-time survey, and there were earlier attempts to use register-based elaborations, but the latter ones seemed difficult due to the fragmented availability of data. Despite the advanced nature of homelessness research, Busch-Geertsema *et al.* (2014) add that the various point in-time surveys revealed some methodological challenges in Poland, which were caused by the combination of survey data and social assistance datasets or, more recently, by combining reports from various actors like the police or individual workers, based on voluntary participation, which may have impacted both the coverage and reliability of the data produced. The Polish situation is also particularly advanced in a further sense: since 2001, biannual panel research has taken place in one of the provinces, which includes the collection of data on the spatial location of homeless people outside of institutions, as well as the service needs of the people, based on which improvements of service delivery are designed (Debski, 2011). Wygnańska (2015) points out that, based on lessons learnt from the MPHASIS project – an EU-funded project to harmonise homelessness data-collection methods – a special data collection¹ was launched in 2010 in Warsaw that makes it possible to generate both stock and flow data.

Another country with a long history of data collection is Hungary, where a cross-sectional data collection has been organised on February 3 every year for the past 18 years; based on some anonymised personal information, it allows for follow-up of respondents across the datasets (Győri, 2013). Each year, recurring topical modules are added to the survey, such as on housing episodes, health status, labour market position, history of traumas, etc. One limitation of the yearly February 3 survey is that it is based on the voluntary participation of service providers, and the self-completion questionnaires may result in some inconsistencies of responses (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014).

In response to the shortage of data on homelessness, an attempt was made in Romania to produce information based on available small-scale surveys. Dan and Dan (2005) used the 2003 housing and quality of life survey results to estimate the number of homeless people, combined with data on shelters received from 226

¹ It is called BIWM, which is an acronym that comes from the Polish for ‘homelessness and housing exclusion’: bezdomność i wykluczenie mieszkaniowe.

local councils (representing approximately 85% of Romania's councils). The collected data were cleaned to avoid data bias. Then, based on cluster analysis and additional data on evictions, they extrapolated the figures for various locations in Romania. Since then, some further data estimates were produced for selected sub-groups like children (Briciu, 2014).

In Lithuania, Kanopienė and Mikulionienė (2004a and 2004b) report in detail on the results of a quantitative data collection among some 200 homeless people, on their socio-demographic characteristics and on their life trajectories. More recent quantitative data collection efforts come from Croatia, where seven large cities counted the residents of their shelters and squats in 2009 (Sostarić, 2013) and from Serbia, where the first quantitative survey since the Balkan conflict was carried out in 2011/12 in the three largest cities (Petrović and Timotijević, 2013).

Most recently, the 2011 census circle also delivered figures on homelessness in some countries. Based on expert reports, there are, however, some limitations to the findings from the censuses. For example, the Czech figure contained only people in overnight shelters and in homeless accommodation, and rough sleepers were not counted. The Polish figure included rough sleepers based on local government reports, yet the figure seems lower than in other counts. In Slovenia, the census category for homeless people included people living in inadequate housing situations or having a registered address at a service provider. This caused some imprecision in figures, given the fact that there is a tendency for private landlords to object to registering tenants in their properties so as to remain invisible for tax or other official purposes, such that these people are forced to register at such services. In Hungary, it was exactly the census year when homelessness was re-criminalised; thus, efforts at a complementary homeless count were stopped, especially with regard to rough sleepers or squatters (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014).

From the available literature, we can conclude that most CEE and SEE states have a larger corpus of qualitative research on homelessness when compared to quantitative output. For example, beyond summing up research results since 2005, Briciu (2014) reports on a more recent Romanian qualitative study on clients of one of Bucharest's service providers, which looks both at pathways into homelessness and challenges within the homeless provision system. Debski (2011) lists a whole range of reports, for example on pathways into homelessness in Poland, which is also an important topic for research in other countries, like in Slovakia where Benova (2008) describes various reasons for homelessness and people's survival strategies, or in Croatia, where Sikic-Micanovic (2010) elaborates pathways into homelessness and how (repeated) episodes of homelessness impact the identity of homeless people. In a Czech stock-taking, Lindovska (2014) lists the estimates on and reasons for homelessness by earlier authors. Last but not least, in Russia, Stephenson (2006)

attempts to deliver a better understanding of the process of displacement and the dead-end road that people experience, based on in-depth biographical interviews with rough sleepers. Beyond Fehér (2011), who deals with traumatic events in the life-course of Hungarian homeless adults, the Hungarian corpus is also relatively rich, because there are accompanying qualitative studies to the yearly survey on such diverse aspects as paths, strategies, housing episodes, mental dispositions and service delivery challenges (Győri and the Working Groups, 2015). Unfortunately, we find only limited research in Bulgaria to date, where Ilieva (2014) attempts to deliver some figures based on service providers and highlights some of the institutional issues related to housing exclusion based on interviews with institutional players and Hristoskova (2016) offers a thesis on the constituents of the meaning of homelessness framed by a philosophical discourse and based on a hermeneutic production of meaning. One of the first Estonian papers on the causes of homelessness, based on biographical interviews, is from 2003 (Linnas, 2003); it aims at developing guidance for social workers for more effective work with adult homeless people. In Lithuania, the research tradition is also over 15 years old; in addition to the 2003 survey, further qualitative research was carried out in more recent years on the pathways into and reasons for homelessness, the attitudes and strategies of homeless people, and the perspective of social workers on homeless people (Sadauskas, 2008).

All the above analyses deliver some insights into the emergence of and dynamic changes to homelessness in the region. The developments can partly be interpreted as identical to the general trends in western Europe. A broader understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness – beyond rough sleepers or the most visible forms of homelessness – is being developed, and analyses on the changes and restrictions to welfare arrangements, which also impact housing markets, are being published, showing how different levels of vulnerabilities among selected groups, such as young people, children, women and elderly people, contribute to homelessness.

Analyses of the Policy Environment and Strategic Approaches to Homelessness

Political and institutional transformations in the region have been feeding into research focusing on welfare arrangements and policy developments. In all countries we find descriptive papers on national and local homeless policies, the mapping of institutional arrangements and innovative service provision techniques, like housing-led or Housing First approaches. Often, such analyses deliver conclusions based on governance changes and welfare regimes discourse (Hegedüs, 2011), or they try to contextualise some of the observed changes in the housing system in general (Edgar *et al.*, 2007; see also last section of this article).

Similarly, to how qualitative research has been dealing with the question of pathways into homelessness as a core topic, there are also prominent topics in policy-oriented research reports. The largest share of institutional analyses focuses on: 1) national policies; 2) the role of different institutions in tackling or reproducing homelessness; 3) quality and cost of service delivery; and, last but not least, 4) innovations within or outside the mainstream services.

Recent examples of the analysis or review of national level strategies include Lux's (2014) elaboration on Czech developments. He points out that the process of developing the first ever Czech national strategy on homelessness was evidence-based; while this makes it unique among strategy formulations, it is also the case that structural factors like the lack of social housing policy reform or the highly decentralised nature of relevant policies may hinder the implementation of the proposed measures. A slightly earlier review of the Polish strategy by Wygnańska (2009) focuses on aspects of the window of opportunity that served to accommodate innovations in the homeless service sector and sums up the challenges that were faced during the process.

Strongly linked with analyses of national policy formation are accounts of institutional and governance challenges. The emerging homelessness challenges and the backlog of reactions by states or social service providers in general seem to have resulted in very diverse solutions. For example, when comparing the Slovenian and Hungarian developments, Filipovic-Hrast *et al.* (2009) show that, despite very similar arrangements during pre-transition decades and the sudden emergence of visible homelessness right after or around 1990, these countries have arrived at different institutional settings and outcomes. The differences are mainly linked with varying levels of decentralisation in the two states and the scope of activity undertaken by NGOs. Whereas Slovenian service provision seems to involve a well-developed national public network, in Hungary, over two thirds of service provision is run by private players. For the Czech Republic, Hradecký (2008) points to a further issue, which is how an emerging institutional system has to deal with difficulties and tensions between 'indigenous' and 'external' service providers in meeting the needs of homeless people and dealing with selectivity in terms of clientele. Many branches of western European faith-based organisations emerged as players in the Czech Republic, and it took only short time for dedicated local volunteer organisations to become professionalised step-by-step. What seems to make the Czech case unique is that cooperation and coordination was organised in the early years by an umbrella organisation.

A more recent research strand focuses more on the day-to-day operation of the homeless provision sector. Back in 2007, a comparative analysis of UK and Poland hostel standards concluded that gaps in the quality of service delivery are closely

related to the physical conditions of providers' stock, and while self-regulatory mechanisms prove to be useful, for example in Poland, there should be benchmarks and monitoring in place (like in the UK) to ensure a clearer picture of what outcomes are generated in the sector, and how these are generated – especially from the perspective of users (Fitzpatrick and Wygnańska, 2007). Sostaric (2013) reviews social risk challenges of the past decades and the service responses offered to date in Croatia, and claims that despite a great step forward in 2012, when social benefits were finally – at least by law – made available for homeless people, service delivery does not fulfil its primary purpose – that is, to provide temporary accommodation until permanent housing is available. On the daily operation of the sector, she highlights the fact that there are no service standards, no coordination of activities, the competence of staff is unregulated, and there are no specialised services that enable people to leave institutions.

Accounts of the costs of homelessness from the service provision perspective are also few in number in CEE/SEE. The first analysis on costs within the sector was the FEANSTA comparative study of 2013, for which data on Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were collected (Pleace *et al.*, 2013), and this fuelled further national-level research, albeit with different methodologies. For example in 2016, Radziwill (2016) reported on the cost savings of the Camillian Mission of Social Assistance compared to regular shelters in Poland, and in Hungary, Somogyi *et al.* (2015) compared the costs of service provision in the criminalised Hungarian service delivery context versus service delivery in housing-led projects, demonstrating that there are potential cost savings in housing-led projects.

More attention has been paid to selected projects in the field, especially since there have been larger-scale initiatives of housing-led or Housing First projects in Europe (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). Examples include Poland, where a housing reintegration project offering housing, work and health integration elements was started as early as 2004, and was followed up and monitored (Starzynsky and Wygnańska, 2007). In Hungary, in addition to short case studies published in one of the Hungarian language professional social work journals, Fehér and Balogi (2013; Balogi and Fehér, 2014) published in English on the first waves of Housing First projects, which paved the way for more sophisticated and longer-term interventions – for example, on how intensified social work assisted in putting people from the forest into private or social rental housing. On the Czech Housing First approach, Lindovska (2014) offers a critical analysis. A further recent report sums up local initiatives in Romania, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic on cooperation of local governments with various NGOs that house homeless people and offer floating services, or that offer preventative programmes/interventions to tackle evictions (Fehér *et al.*, 2016). In a very recent publication looking at potential clients for Housing First projects, Wygnańska (2016) shows that serving the primary target group – that is, rough

sleepers with high care needs – with scattered housing from the private rental market should be combined with various other housing options to deliver a feasible Housing First service model in Poland.

Research on the Nature and Dynamics of Homelessness Among Selected Subgroups

As research has delivered more and more evidence on the profile of homelessness in the CEE/SEE region, the dynamics of particular subgroups have become the focus of further in-depth analysis. The generic picture of the middle-aged lone man who has been rough sleeping for an average of three to six years has become more nuanced thanks to insightful analyses of youth and child homelessness (e.g., within EU-funded research projects such as CSEYHP or DAPHNE, or by the WHEN network, all of which cover CEE/SEE countries) or of housing exclusion among elderly people, migrants and war victims, to list some of the groups of interest. Analyses on homeless women in the region are still emerging, and are largely framed by the domestic violence discourse (Szoboszlai, 2012).

Most of the studies apply a qualitative methodology and use in-depth life course interviews to uncover the episodes and the range of issues leading to homelessness. A European-wide comparative report of child homelessness published by FEANTSA in 2007 covers some CEE countries (European Observatory on Homelessness, 2007). A more recent report, though with a Czech national focus, is authored by Muhic-Dizdarevic and Smith (2011), who, based on expert interviews and 54 interviews with young people, explore the core issues of child and adulthood transitions that bear the risk of housing exclusion and homelessness. They also highlight the main methodological challenges of reaching out to young homeless clients/respondents, as perceived by social workers.

Migrants have been the focus of much homeless research, especially because of the dramatically low-capacity social service provision for refugees and asylum-seekers, exacerbated by the tight housing market situation. For example, in Hungary, in the post-2008 era, the visibility of homeless refugees grew. The analysis of housing pathways of migrants into and within Hungary by Kiss (2012) reveals deficiencies in service provision and the discriminatory attitudes of landlords that contribute to their homelessness. The housing exclusion of Polish migrants in western European cities is the topic of Mostowska's research, which includes the strategies and challenges of homeless Polish people in Brussels and Oslo (Mostowska, 2011). She concludes that even in accessing low-threshold services, the lack of individual resources, especially communication skills, may interplay with legal eligibility and ultimately lead to the exclusion of migrants even from such services.

An example of increasing attention to the needs of the elderly is presented from an international perspective by Boswell (2010), who argues that tackling isolation can be one of the core elements in the reintegration process of elderly homeless people in Poland. Debski (2010) challenges this position by showing how communities of elderly people are created and operated by one of the foundations, ultimately causing even more social isolation.

Rough sleepers are regularly the focus of research; thus, there is vast literature on the profile, housing pathways, health and mental health conditions of people living in the streets. Examples of interdisciplinary research on health, addiction and drug abuse include Paksi *et al.* (2010) in Hungary, who contrast the drug abuse phenomenon among Hungarian rough sleepers with the data of other European countries and of non-homeless drug addicts. They conclude that the prevalence of drug consumption among rough sleepers may be up to two or three times higher than in the general population, and that their addiction is much more entrenched than that of others who may become sober/clean sooner. There is also research on the perception of homeless people, for example by Milackova and Rochovska (2011), who analyse the historical development of homelessness in Slovakia and investigate discussions about homeless people. A further paper on the (re)presentation of homeless people in the media in Slovenia by Filipovic-Hrast (2008) claims that the representation of homeless people in the media reinforces the absence of inclusion policies or adequate housing policies.

Societal Transformations and Homelessness – Further Selected Topics in Recent Research

As already discussed above, explorative research on homelessness is more and more established throughout the region. Whereas such studies focus on the homeless population and the client groups of various services, research beyond this focus tends to centre more on structural-institutional issues that exacerbate homelessness.

In the late eighties (and even earlier in Poland and the former Yugoslavia), the loosening of state control and emerging alternative models of housing investment (self-help housing and housing cooperatives) drew increasingly on the development capacity of the general population, which contributed step-by-step to the commodification of housing in the region (Szelényi, 1989). At the same time, 'poverty' was taken off the political agendas of state socialist or communist parties, as it was incompatible with the social foundation of state ideology and state arrangements in general. Thus, the 'taboo of poverty' was revealed only after around 1989 (Romano, 2014), and it became obvious not only that policies tackling poverty were

non-explicit before the political transition, but that the structures available to adapt welfare services to expanding needs were mostly ineffective. Moreover, homelessness used to be criminalised in some countries and in most large cities (Szelényi, 1996; Bence and Udvarhelyi, 2013), and its scale and scope remained, therefore, largely invisible to both the social welfare system and the general population. In addition, large groups of people effectively lost their housing with the restructuring of employment in industrial centres – for example, when workers' hostels were closed in the Czech Republic (Hradecky, 2008) and in Hungary (Misetics, 2013).

Filipovic-Hrast *et al.* (2009) point out that, historically, state interventions in the homeless provision sector are launched with a backlog throughout the countries of the region, and interventions are largely based on the activities, achievements or challenges of the immature NGO sector. The slow reaction and take up of challenges by states is linked with a number of issues; in most countries, social housing and housing production were at the core of welfare provision under state socialism, and housing was perceived (and produced) as a (scarce) public good. There were housing shortages in the region, but housing amenities like water, heating and electricity were price controlled, and housing was thus affordable for the masses (Hegedüs, 2012).

After a short period of a 'welfare gap', when services were largely still under development, research focused on various institutional aspects of societal transformation. For example, Stephenson (2006) identified the hiatus of housing legislation, growing numbers of evictions, widespread corruption in bureaucracy, which at the same time resulted in serious housing exclusion. She also discussed patterns in the lives of homeless people, which were reminiscent of a 'mainstream' survival strategy. She concluded that around 2005, participation in the informal economy still played a role in maintaining some attachment with society in general, despite creating many vulnerabilities. Győri (2014) came to a similar conclusion for Hungary, exploring the drastic decrease in the labour market participation of homeless people since 2008 (from close to 50% to 7% in 2014), which also meant a dramatic decrease in available financial resources. Analyses throughout the region echo the gaps in social safety nets and the problems caused by the homeownership-based housing systems for homelessness (e.g., Edgar *et al.*, 2007; Fehér *et al.*, 2011; Hegedüs, 2011; Nicolaescu and Mândroviceanu, 2013; Petrovic and Timotijevic, 2013; Sostaric, 2013; Briciu, 2014). Many authors explicitly discuss the lack of financial resources as a barrier to welfare service delivery in general, whilst others are clear that more efficient use of public funds could better tackle the housing exclusion of the most vulnerable groups (Udvarhelyi, 2013), if the harmonisation of housing support programmes and benefit schemes could be designed more effectively (Fehér *et al.*, 2011).

Conclusion

Based on the review of paradigmatic (and available) research outputs in the central and south east European countries, we can claim that much has been accomplished in terms of methodological developments, coverage of topics and interpretative frameworks, and that there is still room to do more, especially compared with the Anglo-Saxon research tradition.

We also see how much the broader European research community impacts the region's development. Not only has there been knowledge transfer relating to research findings and methods 'filtering' into the region, but some policy directions have been excitedly taken up by some countries. Moreover, financial incentives in the pre-accession years to reform social service delivery, and EU-funding in general – e.g., for Housing First or housing-led approaches, have proven powerful tools in bringing the CEE/SEE community dealing with homeless research and their other European counterparts closer (see Arapoglou on policy transfers in this volume). Ferge and Juhász (2004) or Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) made such observations already a decade ago, and more recent accounts for Poland by Wygnańska (2008) address such policy transfer mechanisms.

More comparative research on the region and across selected CEE/SEE countries could help understand some of the mechanisms leading to recurring patterns of homelessness across the countries, contextualised by converging housing systems and policies but very heterogeneous conditions of service provision. Applied research could also contribute to more effective policy formation and fuel discussions on current issues like the costs of criminalising homelessness, better profiling and diversifying service delivery for homeless people, or understanding the links between pathways out of homelessness and the constraints caused by features of the housing systems.

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