



Barriers on the pathway to secure homes – the experience of EU funded homelessness programmes in Hungary

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Context I: Number and profile of homeless people

- Only estimates on number of homeless people, 20-30 thousands of people in one year, (in five years 50 thousands in the yearly homeless survey) – 2-3%, 5% of the population
- Budapest and other cities: 1/3 – 2/3
- The number of homeless people has been growing after the 2008 GFC
- 60% is over 60 year old
- After GFC the labour market and thus the income situation of homeless considerably worsened
- Social benefits for homeless are scarce

Context II. Homeless provision system

- Homeless accommodation capacity (beds) (2014)
 - Night shelters 4528
 - Temporary accommodations 5137
 - Other accommodation 1376
 - Altogether 11041
- Capacity of day-time shelters for homeless (2013): 9108 persons
- Capacity of street outreach services (2013):
 - 95 service providers
 - 12 706 actual service user
- Fairly well differentiated homeless service provision system
- Significant lack of capacity
- Separated from the main social and health service system
- Lack of tools/services to support exit from homelessness

Sources: Győri Péter (2014): Hajléktalanügyi országjelentés. Készült az Új Széchenyi Terv támogatásával.

<http://www.bmszki.hu/sites/default/files/field/uploads/vegso-orszagjelentés2013-szallitasra.pdf>

Context III. Former programs supporting homeless people to exit from homelessness

- Housing programs:
 - Ministry for social affairs financed by 2005-2009: special housing allowance for one year plus accompanying social work, till 2007/2008 altogether 1206 homeless people get housed. No data on sustainability.
 - Pilis Forest program for homeless living in shacks (2007-2009): allowing more flexible housing forms, 152 persons out of which 40% stayed in housing until the end of the program
 - „Back from the street” program (2012-2013): 227 street homeless persons, out of which 114 persons got housed; 47 persons from homeless accommodation got housed
- Some other programs supported the labour market integration of homeless people – both national and EU funded programs but less accentuated than housing programs:
 - Providing competence development trainings, vocational trainings
 - Supporting the employment of homeless people
- Separate housing and labour market integration programs!

The EU funded complex programs

- Title: „Supporting the social and labour market integration of homeless people” – SROP 5.3.3
- Aim: support 3500 homeless people in their social and housing integration through labour market integration.
- Altogether 9 calls for tenders 2008-2013: in 2011 the aim, target groups changed significantly. Aim shifted to decrease of street homelessness, and instead of placement to employment, the increase of employability was emphasized.
- Measures:
 - Individually tailored social work throughout the whole project, plus other needed services – mainly health related, trainings to help the development of general life skills,
 - Competence development trainings and vocational trainings to enhance employability
 - Housing related services and housing allowances.
- Max. length of the projects varied by calls: 1-2 year

Change in target groups

- The first two waves of calls (2008, 2010) targeted those homeless people who were either in homeless accommodation or lived on the streets (roofless) – prioritization between the two groups
- From 2011 the „Housing First” approach became more accentuated:
 - Primary target group: roofless - at least 50%, out of which at least 30% should be placed into housing
 - Secondary target group: those who lived in homeless accommodation
 - Roofless could be placed to temporary homeless accommodation; while from the secondary target group people could be housed if their placement provided extra capacity in the hostel for roofless.

Technical assistance to project implementers

- A Key Project (SROP 5.3.2) supported the service providers that implemented the complex project
- Aim of the key project was to:
 - Provide methodological help during the implementation of the complex projects
 - Elaborate methodological guidances to service providers how to support the social integration of homeless people
 - Help the networking, the change of experiences/knowledge among service providers

Method of the Evaluation

- The classic method of evaluation was not possible because of lack of data:
 - Measuring the starting and the end status of the participants
 - Comparing it to a control group
- Data only from the project indicators (output, outcome indicators) – secondary data analysis
- Qualitative methods as quantitative was not possible
- Review of related literature and former evaluations
- Main tool was structured interviews
 - with 10 service providers on
 - the process of implementation of the projects (positive outcomes, difficulties)
 - 37 individual cases of defined categories („successful”, dropouts, substance abuse, etc.)
 - with the public foundation responsible for the key project

Scope of the programme I.

- 52 projects (out of 82 proposals)
- 3.1 billion HUF (€10 million),
€ 192 thousand / project, €5000/persons
- Approx. 2000 persons were involved in the programme
- Spatially uneven distribution: the less developed eastern regions implemented less projects
- 27 towns, cities participated
- 13 municipal organisations, 22 NGOs/church organisations, 3 nonprofit Ltd.
- The service providers had very different experiences, knowledge with project aiming integration:
 - Some of them implemented quite many, especially EU funded projects with strict rules
 - Others had much less experiences, EU funded projects meant a substantial challenge in management

Scope of the programme II.

- The usage of the programme initially was under the expectations:
 - Strict indicators (placement into employment and housing)
 - Exclusions of those organisations that did not completed former projects from subsequent calls, exclusion of people who already took part in former projects

Three dimensions of the evaluation

The evaluation focused on what results the projects could achieve along three dimensions:

- Mental stability, motivation
- Employment, income stability
- Housing stability

Mental stability, motivation I.

- The main risk of service providers was the ability of cooperation, the level of motivation on clients' side
 - Whether the clients could see real opportunity to exit from homelessness or they just see the project as temporary opportunity
 - short-term projects with strictly scheduled services and results had to be completed by clients
- Creaming off: project indicators meant a pressure to select the less problematic clients, but
 - Eligibility criteria limited this (second wave of calls)
 - In former projects the „better” clients were already selected
- Efficient tools for increasing motivation, cooperation:
 - Competence development trainings (life skills, conflict resolution etc.)
 - Community/group social work, community events

Mental stability, motivation II.

- Main difficulty was to handle substance abuse problems, mental illnesses
 - Lack of capacities of psychiatric, psychological services
 - Social workers often did not know how to motivate clients to use the existing psychological, psychiatric services
- Differences between target groups:
 - Street homeless people more able to lead independent life, arrange every-day duties even in housing, but less willing to follow rules
 - Those who stayed in temporary accommodation more willing to cooperate with the social workers but less independent and have more difficulties when housed (hospitalisation)
- Even when successfully housed, employed many clients would have needed longer-term social work support with varying intensity

Employment, income stability

- Competence development trainings had high significance in the ability/chance to find employment – regularity, communication skills etc.
- Vocational trainings – quite many projects implemented: higher chance to get jobs, higher benefits during the training: mostly not based on individual needs, some trainings tailored to homeless people's specificities (more practical education)
- Employment – the employability of the clients varied; debts!
- The sheltered employment forms had high significance (social coops, public employment etc.)
- Relatively quite many found job in the open labour market (GFC – unemployment rate still high), informal employment significant!
- Most of the people needed longer term social work support even after they got employed
- Service providers often had a kind of guarantee role in job search both in sheltered employment and labour market

Housing stability

- Mostly private rental housing! Municipal housing is scarce—empty units are in bad condition, no resources to renew them
- Difficulties in finding housing
 - Private rental market operate in the grey sector, insufficient regulation, high risk for both tenants and owners
 - Discrimination in private rental market → different kind of rental contracts, service providers had a kind of guarantee role though no financing was available for this
 - Diversity of rents regionally and according to the size of the city, but the amount the resources was the same to finance housing allowance.
 - Worker hostels were also used
- Affordability issue
 - Typically low income and not regular, pensioners had the highest and most stable income
 - More person lived in one apartment, co-habitation had both positive effect (separation) and negative (source of conflicts) – couples had better chance!
 - Quality of the housing: standard housing but also substandard housing were involved

Organisational issues

- Result oriented social work was new to many service providers
- No additional staff was employed though projects required substantial extra social work – low wages, extra income for the original staff
- New roles for social workers: agent in the housing and labour market
- Implicit guarantee role of the organisations – they will intervene when problem occurs though there was no resources for this
- The projects meant an intensive learning process for the organisations and the social workers – acquired new skills
- The support from the key project was important to service providers – networking, share of knowledge, experiences. Even more intensive communication would have been needed.
- The programme had very bureaucratic procedures – MA was inflexible → significant challenges in management of the projects.

Sustainability of the results I.

■ Employment, income level

- ❑ Labour market still volatile, sheltered employment only for specific period → often not sustainable solutions, higher income level often could not be sustained
- ❑ Mentoring in employment was not possible after the project closure – lack of financing

■ Housing

- ❑ Affordability is the basic problem – no housing allowance is available in the mainstream social benefit system as private tenants usually cannot have registered address, or if available not sufficient!
- ❑ generally those had chance to sustain housing who could stay together
- ❑ Couples had higher chance
- ❑ Often landlords decreased rents after project closure in case of reliable tenants
- ❑ Some people moved to cheaper housing
- ❑ Some special solution – owner provided housing for gardening
- ❑ Some cases reunification with family

Sustainability of the results II.

- Mental stability
 - Social work support could not be continued – lack of financing, although even in case of people with better mental status crisis situation can occur when they would need some support to maintain their employment, housing
 - To transfer clients to the mainstream social provision system was not an option
 - Psychological, psychiatric treatment, services are not available or very scarce in the mainstream service provision system

Main conclusions I.

- First complex programme combining employment, housing, social work
- Important learning process for the organisations:
 - Street homeless can be housed (Housing First approach)
 - Social integration oriented social work instead of crisis management
- Project design, indicators created perverse incentives both on service providers' and clients' side
- Projects cannot solve the problem of basic deficiencies of the mainstream provision system
 - Insufficient housing allowance and social benefit systems
 - Underfinanced social service system
 - Lack of services in (mental) health provision system
- This hinders the involvement of homeless people with highest needs, and the sustainability of project results

Main conclusions II.

- Some service providers manage to maintain housing services on the long run - Case of city of Szombathely
 - Requires constant involvement of extra funding (projects)
 - Interventions in the employment sector – different kind of employment related services, own capacity to employ people – maintaining sheltered employment, links to labour market
 - Close cooperation with and support from the municipality
 - Funding some extra social work
 - Providing municipal housing for homeless people
 - Close and longer term cooperation with some private landlords

Recommendations to the next call

- Longer term projects: 3-4 years allowing for continuous involvement of clients
- Two-phase project design: intensive and follow-up support according to individual needs
- More differentiated interventions according to the individual needs
- Allowing for more flexible financing of services
- Housing: increase the interest of municipalities to provide their own housing (support the renewal of vacant units)
- More systematic use of sheltered employment
- Trainings for social workers – agent role, cope with mental instability problems
- Strengthen methodological support – networking!
- More flexible indicators (new call: Number of nights in integrated housing forms)