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Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Homelessness in Europe

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European Research Conference
CHANGING PROFILES OF HOMELESSNESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES.
BARCELONA, September 22nd, 2017



The Crisis

- In 2015, 1.3 million people sought asylum in the European Union
- Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and other groups
- Double the previous peak, in 1992, during the Balkans war
- From 2016 onwards, levels began to fall back
 - Deal between EU and Turkey
 - Reductions in Mediterranean crossings

The Crisis

- Raw numbers are slightly deceptive
- The number who were given refugee and subsidiary protection status was considerably lower
- 48% across EU as a whole
- A lot of variation between countries
 - Germany, 441,800 applications for asylum
 - UK, 38,370
 - Denmark, 81% given status at first decision
 - Hungary, 15% given status at first decision

The Crisis

- Gatekeeper countries
- Experienced influxes of asylum seekers heading to the North West of Europe
 - Hungary
 - Italy
 - Greece
- Closed Door countries
- Accepting low proportion of asylum seekers
 - UK
 - France

Focus of the Research

- Comparative analysis
- Experts completing a questionnaire, often with the assistance of other researchers, policy makers and service providers
- 12 EU member states
- Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom

Focus of the Research

- Impact of the crisis on homelessness systems
- Resource use for emergency accommodation
- Resource use for homelessness among people given refugee and subsidiary protection status
- Experience and prevalence of homelessness among asylum seekers and refugee groups

Asylum Seeker Impacts

- Depended on presence and extent of emergency and second-line accommodation services for asylum seekers and refugees
- Presence of well-resourced systems meant that there was less direct impact on homelessness services
- And better conditions for asylum seekers were well resourced services were in place
- Numbers of asylum seekers and refugees was obviously important, e.g. negligible numbers in UK, high numbers in Greece and Italy

Greece

- NGOs have stepped in to provide places for asylum seekers
- Existing infrastructure was reported to be insufficient in 2016
- Systems had been overwhelmed
- Although Greece had attempted to react quickly to the influx, resources were an issue

Germany

- System of initial reception facilities
- Movement towards a decision on refugee status within 48 hours, although this process was still underway in 2016
- Second tier accommodation arranged at local level
- Some variations in the standard and nature of this accommodation
- Resources deployed to manage the influx of asylum seekers

Italy

- Systems placed under extreme strain by numbers of migrants
- Reports of poor living conditions
- Asylum seekers living in situations that were effectively a form of homelessness
- In 2015 only about 21% of asylum seekers were being housed in formal services
- 72% housed in temporary structures
- Italy had reacted, but like Greece faced resource issues

Homelessness Services

- Where there are asylum seeker management systems that use various forms of reception centres and other dedicated programmes, pressure on the homelessness sector are low
- Arrangements for people who are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, entire welfare systems, all the primary prevention services, can become available
- Numbers were low in some countries, hence a negligible effect
- Homelessness sector is not always open to these groups

Variations in Access

- France, Greece and Hungary, homeless asylum seekers have an entitlement to homelessness services
- Ireland, no legal restriction, but there are local connection rules
- UK, no access to the statutory homelessness system – illegal under UK laws - and local connection rules
- Services tended to become accessible once someone had refugee status

Asylum Seeker Impact on Homelessness Services

- Low or no impact: Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom
- Some effect: Germany, Hungary
- Tangible effect: France
- High effect: Greece and Italy
- The effects of the migration crisis on the homelessness sector were not constant
- Could be significant
- Could be minor



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Variables

- Existing services for asylum
- Resources
- Pressure
- Migration policy

Rejected Asylum Seekers

- Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden have identity requirements operating within their homeless sectors
 - Cannot access homelessness services
- France, Greece and Italy, registration and repatriation systems have limitations
 - May use homelessness services
- Hungary and United Kingdom would attempt to repatriate any failed asylum seeker
- Ireland, Poland and Portugal could have some use, data are not available, but numbers likely to be low

Immigration and asylum
The Observer

Home Office used charity data map to deport rough sleepers

Emails show that deal with Greater London Authority helped it target homeless EU nationals for removal



6,131

Mark Townsend

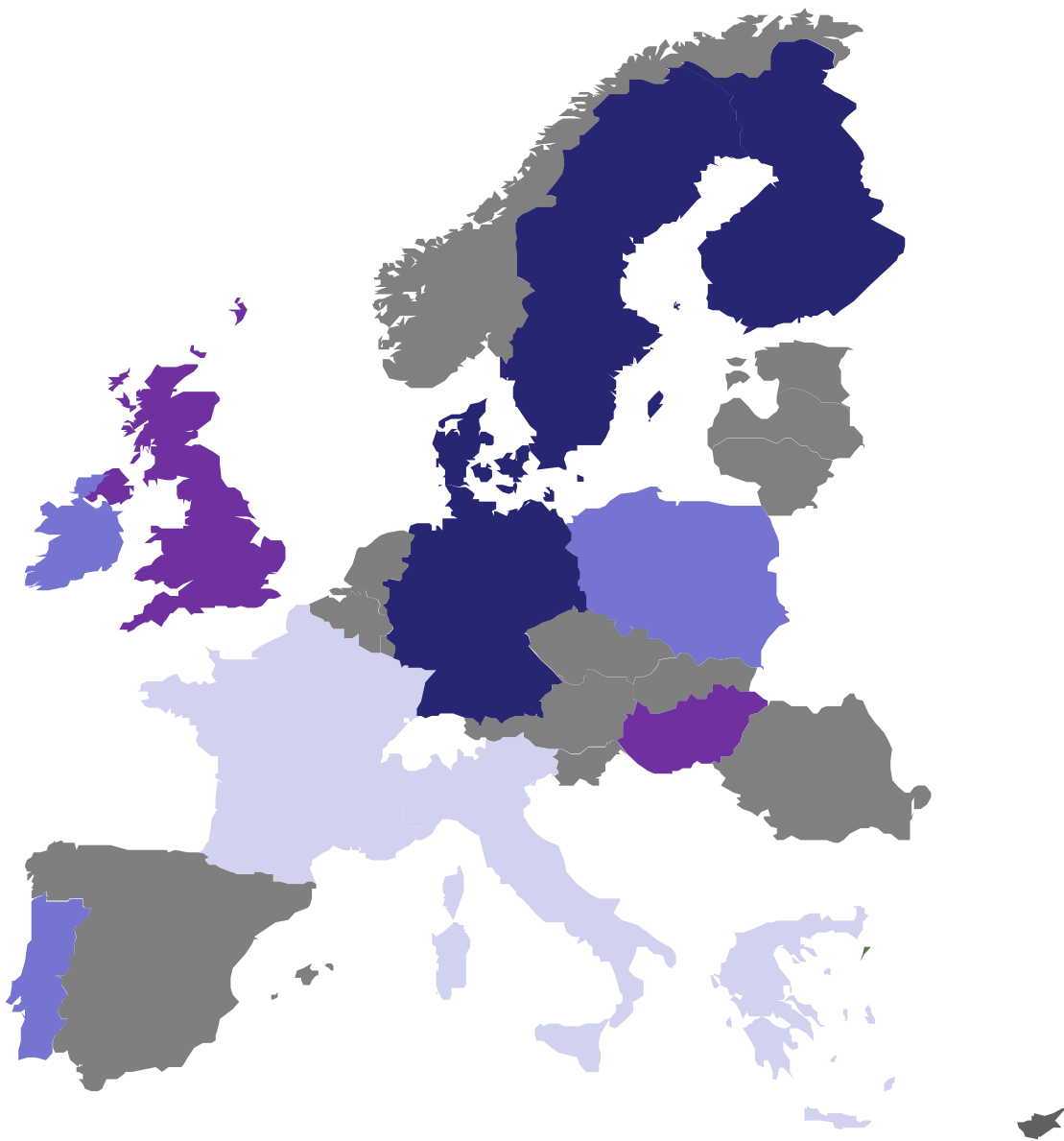
@townsendmark

Saturday 19 August 2017 22.14 BST



Charities say data collected to help charities identify vulnerable individuals was used against them by the Home Office. Photograph: Jack Taylor/Getty Images

The Home Office secretly acquired sensitive data, showing the nationality of people sleeping rough on the streets, in order to remove them from Britain, the *Observer* can reveal.



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Increasing Pressures?

- Critical shortages of affordable housing, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Sweden
- Early evidence of increased pressure on Danish social housing
- Would also apply in the UK, if it let many asylum seekers in...
- Depends on nature and extent of those given refugee or subsidiary protection status
- States are more sympathetic to children
- Homelessness services may be worried about political image 'supporting' migration

Increasing Pressure?

- Not entirely clear what will happen
- The numbers seen in 2015 have been brought down
- And countries are not accepting everyone seeking asylum
- But migrants may face discrimination, racism, economic and social exclusion and economic marginalisation
- They may also sometimes have high and complex needs
- All part of the mix of factors that can be associated with a heightened risk of homelessness

Not a Simple Issue

- There are other dimensions to this question
- Ask the UK about EU citizens who are economic migrants and there is definitely an effect on homelessness and use of homelessness services
- And elsewhere, France, Ireland
- Central, Eastern and Southern Europeans experiencing homelessness in the North West
- Complex questions about the balance between a humanitarian response and border control
- Profound, emotive and political questions

Thanks for Listening

Professor Nicholas Pleace
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