

# II. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION, A SHORT-TERM SOLUTION UNSUITED TO LONG-TERM NEEDS

The question of accommodation conditions and the length of the stay arises once a user has secured access to a night shelter. Emergency accommodation facilities should provide services in safe conditions that respect the physical and psychological integrity as well as the private and family life of users.

The non-use of emergency accommodation is a phenomenon that can be observed throughout Europe. Fuelled by statements from politicians and a widespread misunderstanding of the issue, public opinion is fed the idea that people refuse to go to a shelter voluntarily. According to a recent study conducted in **Belfast**, users often perceive emergency accommodation as a persistent potential danger due to the communal nature of the services.<sup>52</sup> A French study commissioned by ONPES from the SAMU Social observatory in **Paris** on the non-use of social<sup>53</sup> accommodation helps in understanding the diverse causes of non-use. These include: the unhygienic and unsafe conditions of centres (resulting in theft and violence); a lack of privacy due to the communal nature of the services and the ensuing overcrowding; the length of stays, which are too short to ensure a proper rest, leading to exhaustion, the discouragement felt by being denied access (due to a lack of places or particularly harsh selection criteria for pet-owners); or a refusal to cohabit with the other users of the centres.

**It is therefore necessary here to understand the challenges faced by people in emergency accommodation: from overcrowded dormitories to 'humanised' accommodation (1), services have tended not to evolve to meet the needs of users (2), causing harmful effects and prolonging the individual's experience of homelessness on a massive scale (3).**

**52**

McMordie L. (2018), 'Chronic Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Placement in Belfast', Heriot Watt University/I-Sphere/Oak Foundation, available at: <https://ihurerblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/chronic-homelessness-and-temporary-accommodation.pdf>

**53**

Observatoire National de la Pauvreté et de l'Exclusion Sociale (2018), *Mal-Logés – Rapport 2017-2018* [Housing exclusion and the homeless – 2017-2018 Report], available [in French] at [http://www.onpes.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/onpes\\_ra2017\\_web.pdf](http://www.onpes.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/onpes_ra2017_web.pdf)

## 1.

**FROM OVERCROWDED DORMITORIES  
TO 'HUMANISED' ACCOMMODATION**

*'Emergency accommodation is the physical interface of the staircase approach for people experiencing homelessness, with a succession of preparatory interventions, from initial reception to social rehabilitation. Despite this key role, many emergency shelters are often rundown and poorly equipped, reflecting an image of exclusion and instability. They lack private spaces and there is an expectation that users should cohabit with strangers. Emergency accommodation is supposed to be a temporary solution but, in reality, it prolongs precarious living conditions and rarely leads to well-being, recovery and social integration.'*

Ian Tilling, President of FEANTSA, in 'Access to shelter',  
Editorial FEANTSA Magazine 'Homeless in Europe', Spring 2018.

The question of material, psychological and symbolic reception conditions lies at the heart of reassessing emergency measures. Overcrowding, lack of respect for private and family life, the impersonal nature of communal spaces, the poor quality of facilities, internal regulations depriving people of their freedoms, are all harmful characteristics often correctly representative of emergency accommodation. The modernisation and humanisation of emergency accommodation services, while important, does not address the shortcomings of shelters as a place to live. How can normal family relationships be had? How can a communal space not chosen by the user be suitable? How can the user have privacy and security of tenure in emergency accommodation, however humanised it is? How can individuals feel secure enough to rebuild and regain self-confidence, to reintegrate into society, to look for work, to search for long-term housing and to tackle various administrative procedures?

It is essential to mention here not only the key role that quality standards of the physical environment in emergency accommodation play, but above all the importance of reflecting on how places can define the well-being of the people who inhabit them, by drawing on a multitude of existing studies.<sup>54</sup> The vast majority of night shelters in Europe reflect an image of exclusion, instability and neglect with equipment sometimes used for other functions, furniture often of poor quality and very little space for privacy or socialisation. Night shelters routinely expect people to cohabit with strangers, and rarely guarantee a place to store personal belongings so that they are protected from theft. These observations were made by an ongoing Italian action-research project launched in 2009 called 'Living in the Dorm' where the authors refer to 'oppressive' places.<sup>55</sup> These services can perpetuate the cycle of rejection and exclusion in which some homeless people are trapped, and they can trigger harmful symptoms and

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<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/design/shelter-design-homeless-recovery-mental-health-selfesteem-a8463041.html>

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Campagnaro C., Porcellana V., Di Prima N. & Ceraolo S. (2018), 'Shelter as a place of well-being and dignity', Homeless in Europe – Access to Shelter, FEANTSA Magazine Spring 2018, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/newsletter/2018/04/25/spring-2018-access-to-shelter?bcParent=27>

## 56

Fitzpatrick S. in FEANTSA (2017), 'Trauma and homelessness', Homeless in Europe – FEANTSA Magazine Winter 2017, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/winter-2017-trauma-and-homelessness-2297258390-271124817.pdf>

## 57

Gazette Nationale 1336 B/ 12.05.2016.

## 58

<https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/NGSF-Framework-FINAL.pdf>

## 59

Foundation Abbé Pierre (2018), 'Projet de loi portant évolution du logement, de l'aménagement et du numérique (Elan) : un texte globalement inquiétant – Analyses et propositions de la Fondation Abbé Pierre', [Draft law to reform housing, planning and digital technology (Elan): a worrisome piece of legislation – analysis and recommendations by Foundation Abbé Pierre], Memorandum of 25 April 2018, available [in French] at: <https://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/documents/pdf/projet-de-loi-portant-evolution-du-logement-fap-mai-2018.pdf>

## 60

FEANTSA (2011), 'The quality of social services: from the perspective of services working with homeless people', Annual Theme 2011, p.10, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/quality-of-social-services-final-report-en50022-41918798757665.pdf>

defence mechanisms (e.g. drug and alcohol abuse, etc.). This concerns in particular chronically homeless people with complex needs as they are the most exposed to trauma: according to a British study, 89% of chronically homeless people were victims of adverse childhood experiences (ACE).<sup>56</sup> Reception services therefore have a crucial role to play in addressing and responding to the lasting effects of trauma and in preventing further trauma, by developing specific approaches (e.g. Trauma Informed Care, Psychologically Informed Care) that take this aspect into account. The longer it takes to access safe, secure housing, the more psychological barriers multiply. The way in which services are designed and delivered is therefore crucial. Reception services cannot be described as decent if they encourage worsening feelings of helplessness, insecurity, guilt and powerlessness. A secure, warm and welcoming space that does not trigger feelings of rejection or powerlessness and where interpersonal relations are prioritised over service provider-to-user relations.

**“It was a place to sleep at night other than the street, but no change was made in your day-to-day life; you were put back out on the street at 7 am, and in the case of drug users, no alternatives were offered to get by.”<sup>61</sup>**

Minimum quality standards exist in almost all European countries. In **Greece**, a ministerial decision<sup>57</sup> sets minimum regulatory standards for accommodation for homeless people (this does not specifically concern emergency accommodation), including central heating/air conditioning, the possibility of taking a hot bath/shower, doing laundry, the availability of snacks and having access to basic health care. A living space of 6 m<sup>2</sup> per person is required. In the **Netherlands**, while there are no regulatory standards defined by legislation, the Association

of Dutch Municipalities has developed quality standards for emergency accommodation and supported housing for people with mental health problems. These standards have been developed in cooperation with users and service providers but are unfortunately not binding. In **Ireland**, a national quality standards framework for homeless services was put forward in 2017, comprising eight main themes, including person-focused, efficient and safe services as well as the health, well-being and personal development of users.<sup>58</sup> However, quality standards do not always cover all categories of emergency accommodation. In **France**, at the end of 2018, the ELAN law on housing abolished the adaptation of the rules on decency in furnished hotels, which had been adopted by a previous law as the government's priority was to maintain the hotel stock to respond to social emergencies. The Foundation Abbé Pierre remarked that 'this total relinquishment of the ambition to enact a modicum of decency in accommodating the destitute is unacceptable'.<sup>59</sup> At EU level, the Social Protection Committee, an advisory committee attached to the EPSCO Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs, adopted a voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services in December 2010, after several years of effort and lively debate focused on the usefulness of developing common approaches to quality. According to this European Framework, the founding principles of quality in the provision of social services are availability, accessibility, affordability, a focus on the individual, comprehensive care, continuity and performance-orientation.<sup>60</sup> But despite all the existing quality standards, often the result of a positive desire to improve the living conditions of homeless people, emergency accommodation does not match the standard of a home.

## 61

Jesus, peer-helper,  
Associao dos Albergues  
Nocturnos do Porto  
(October 2018).

## 62

Yannick in  
'L'expérience de la  
rue – Témoignages  
et recommandations  
depuis le poste de mal-  
logé [The experience of  
the streets – Testimony  
and recommendations  
from those  
experiencing housing  
exclusion], *Les Cahiers  
de la Fondation Abbé  
Pierre #1* – February  
2019.

## 63

Miguel Neves,  
psychologist and  
director, Associao dos  
Albergues Nocturnos  
do Porto (October 2018).

## 64

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-april-to-june-2018>

## 65

Gambi L, Sheridan S. & Hoey D. (2018), Insights into Family Homelessness No. 16: Causes of Family Homelessness in the Dublin Region during 2016 and 2017, in Lambert S, O'Callaghan D. & Jump O. (2018), Young Families in the Homeless Crisis: Challenges and Solutions, Dublin: Focus Ireland, available at: <https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Lambert-et-al-2018-Young-Families-in-the-Homeless-Crisis-Full-Report.pdf>

## 66

Györi P. (2017), Homelessness – the Roma – Child Poverty, FEANTSА European Research Conference September 2017, available at: <https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/peter-gyori-798329104366035360.pdf>

**The humanisation of accommodation: an unfinished transformation**

In France, a plan to 'humanise' shelters was launched in 2009 to improve safety, comfort and privacy in emergency shelters and homeless facilities. The initial intention was to replace dormitories with single or double bedrooms, build more sanitary facilities, repaint and renovate common areas (shared kitchens, reception rooms) and even construct entirely new units. In 2015, this programme to humanise residential centres was assessed: of the 205 establishments that replied to the survey, 64% of the centres had been renovated, 76% of which had installed individualised facilities. But even after the renovations, 21% of the establishments still had no reception area while 59% had no luggage space. In addition, while 56% of the institutions had adjusted their social projects, less than half had changed their support services. Finally, more than 40% of emergency facilities remained closed during the day.

DIHAL (2015), *Hébergement et accès au logement : le programme d'humanisation des centres d'hébergement- Synthèse quantitative* [Accommodation and access to housing: the humanisation programme for accommodation centres – quantitative summary], available [in French] at: <https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2017/03/humanisation-centres-hebergement-evaluation-quantitative-synthese5-ecran.pdf>

In England, a similar programme to improve hostels (i.e. temporary accommodation for homeless people) called 'Places of Change' was implemented between 2005 and 2008. Here again, while living conditions for users have improved, the structure of the institution has remained intact, preventing a radical paradigm shift in this area.

Communities and Local Government (2007), *Creating Places of Change: Lessons learnt from the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme 2005-2008*, available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/2010203045459/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/563964.pdf>

“Some of the 115 service shelters are dirty. And you can't sleep, they wake you up around 6 am and you're only allowed to stay in the common room until noon. If you want a coffee, they point you towards the vending machine where a cup costs 40 cents.<sup>62</sup>”

“Users are the reason for the existence of this house. They deserve our respect. The building is theirs.<sup>63</sup>”

## 2. SERVICES THAT HAVE NOT EVOLVED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF USERS

A change in homelessness that is common to all European countries has been observed in recent years: a diversification of the profiles of homeless people. For a long time, the majority of homeless people were lone men. Homelessness now also affects women and families of all ages, creating new needs within emergency accommodation services, which are not adapted to accommodate these new profiles.

**Families with children and young lone-parent families** are increasingly common among the homeless. In **Germany**, BAGW estimated a 31% increase in homeless families between 2014 and 2016. In **England**, official data counted 82,310 households (+5% compared to the previous year, +71% since December 2010) and 123,630 children in temporary accommodation as at 30 June 2018.<sup>64</sup> According to the charity Shelter, the total number of homeless children in the UK has increased by 59% in five years. A recent Focus **Ireland** study found that 20 to 25% of homeless parents in Ireland are between the ages of 18 and 24, and that for 9% of these families the first place to live after leaving their original family is in emergency accommodation.<sup>65</sup> In **Hungary**, in families where children live in poverty, there is convincing evidence of a strong correlation between low levels of education, unemployment, low income, a lack of social assistance, housing insecurity and parental and child exclusion with generation-to-generation homelessness.<sup>66</sup>

Prolonged stays in emergency accommodation has drastic consequences for families: beyond the cases of family separation observed in several countries, maintaining a normal family life is rendered impossible under the accommoda-

tion conditions offered by night shelters, hotels and B&Bs. This is reflected in the absence of regular personalised social support,<sup>67</sup> accommodation in overcrowded spaces with shared everyday living facilities (e.g. kitchen, bathrooms, etc.) and even the absence of communal catering and cooking in the case of hotels. Every winter, all over Europe, gyms, schools and other public buildings not designed for accommodation are requisitioned at the last minute as part of cold weather plans to shelter families; there is nothing suitable to accommodate children and their families in safe peaceful conditions. Some 'solutions' designed for the accommodation of homeless families, such as 'family hubs' in **Ireland**, try to offer alternatives to hotels and B&Bs; but existing studies still point to the lack of a long-term structural vision, with rules and conditions of stay still very restrictive even within these 'hubs' (strict curfews, visitors forbidden, regulated absences, etc.).<sup>68</sup> A US study by the Boston Medical Center has shown the devastating effects of homelessness on children's health: children who have been homeless for at least six months are more likely to experience recurring hospitalisation, be underweight or suffer developmental delays.<sup>69</sup> In Ireland, a Focus Ireland study also showed that children living in emergency accommodation face daily violations of their dignity. These include an absence of the cooking facilities required for a healthy diet and regular meals, a lack of recreational areas, problems doing homework, concentrating, and inviting friends over, all constraints that cause stress, insecurity, shame, developmental and social problems.<sup>70</sup>

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In France, for example, hotel accommodation provided by the SAMU Social de Paris provides for only two annual visits.

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Heane R. & Murphy M. (2018), *An absence of rights: Homeless families and social housing marketisation in Ireland*, Administration – Journal of Public Administration of Ireland, Vol. 66 no. 2 (2018), pp. 9-31, available at: <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/admin/66/2/article-p9.xml>

### 69

Sandel M., Sheward R., Ettlinger de Cuba S., Coleman S., Heeren T., Black M., Casey P., Chilton M., Cook J., Becker Cutts D., Rose-Jacobs R. and Frank D. (2018), *Timing and Duration of Pre- and Postnatal Homelessness and the Health of Young Children*, Pediatrics, available at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/4/e20174254>

### 70

<http://www.thejournal.ie/homeless-families-children-food-3536615-Aug2017/>

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<https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/51/dakloos-vaker-jong-en-niet-westers>

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Fio.PSD (2018), *Elaboration by Italian Caritas Dataset*, available in FEANTSA Country Profile Italy 2018: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/18/country-profile-italy?bcParent=27>

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Biennial national homeless census (2017), available in FEANTSA Country Profile Denmark 2017: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/18/country-profile-denmark?bcParent=27>

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St Mungo's, 'Rebuilding Shattered Lives – The final report', available at: <https://www.mungos.org/publication/rebuilding-shattered-lives-final-report/>

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Marie-Ange in 'L'expérience de la rue – *Témoignages et recommandations depuis le poste de mal-logé*' [The experience of the streets – Testimony and recommendations from those experiencing housing exclusion], *Les Cahiers de la Fondation Abbé Pierre #1* – February 2019.

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Fondation Abbé Pierre (2019), *op. cit.*

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<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports?resource=edb4d244e-ab51-44e1-96dd-c8bfa68a62a>

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The Howard League for Penal Reform (2016), 'No Fixed Abode – The implications for homeless people in the criminal justice system', available at: <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/No-fixed-abode-report.pdf>

**Lone young people (especially those leaving child welfare services, LGBTQ2S, unaccompanied minors)** are also increasingly represented among the homeless. The needs of an 18-year-old are not the same as those of a 50-year-old homeless adult. The first experiences of independence and working life, the 'leap into the void' after being raised in a childcare facility, discrimination on the grounds of age or sexual orientation, subsistence and education in the face of poverty, are all specific challenges that homeless young people face. Young people with complex needs are particularly vulnerable in strained and unaffordable housing markets, partly because they have little (or no) access to social welfare (depending on the country). In the **Netherlands**, according to official statistics,<sup>71</sup> the proportion of homeless young people (18 to 30 years) increased from 27% in 2015 (8,300 people) to 41% in 2016 (12,400 people). These young people are more likely to have an immigrant background (59%) than the homeless population as a whole (49%). In **Italy**, 33% of homeless people who used Caritas social services in 2017 were young people aged 18 to 34.<sup>72</sup> In **Denmark**, a 102% increase in homeless young people (18 to 24 years) was observed between 2009 and 2017 (from 633 to 1,278 people).<sup>73</sup> In **France**, a quarter of homeless people (born in France) were known to child welfare services. Emergency services do not provide support that is centred on the needs of these young people.

Extremely vulnerable **women**, who are often the victims of violence, are an invisible facet of homelessness as they are less likely to use services due to a lack of security, privacy and dedicated services. Despite this, available figures show that across Europe, women account for 25 to 30% of users of homeless services. In **Germany** in 2016, according to BAGW, of the estimated 420,000 homeless people in 2016 (excluding refugees), 27% were women. In **Italy**, 30% of homeless people who used Caritas social ser-

vices in 2017 were women. Their most important need is security, as they often have a history of living with domestic violence and abuse, generally beginning in childhood and continuing with an abusive partner. A publication from the British organisation St Mungo's outlines the specific needs and adaptations that should be made within the services for homeless women.<sup>74</sup> Secure services must be made available to them. Further research on their needs is required to develop services that take into account the specific experience of homeless women. Services accessible to couples should also be developed.

**“Once a friend of mine rang 115 for me. She was told “had you asked for a man...we don't have any vacancies for a woman for the whole summer”<sup>75</sup>”**

Many **people leaving institutions (i.e. hospitals and prisons)** without a housing solution find themselves homeless.<sup>76</sup> In **London**, according to CHAIN data, one third of homeless people sleeping rough in 2015/2016 have already spent time in prison. In **England**, according to a Howard League report<sup>78</sup>, about a third of people released from prison have nowhere to stay. The issue of discharge from medical institutions should also be highlighted. For homeless people, the length of a hospital stay can be three times longer than for other patients<sup>79</sup> due to greater and more complex health needs which are often linked to multi morbidity (e.g. a combination of mental health, physical health and drug or alcohol abuse problems). In the absence of standardised integration services through housing, hospitalised homeless people alternate between hospital stays and sleeping rough, a vicious circle that could be prevented in the first instance through the integration of dedicated services within the institution<sup>80</sup>.



**“(Hospitals abandon people who need heavy treatment: “here’s your medication, now go shoot up and sleep outside”<sup>81</sup>)”**

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Hewett N, Halligan A, & Boyce T (2012), ‘A general practitioner and nurse led approach to improving hospital care for homeless people’, *BMJ* 2012;345:e5999. Available at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e5999>

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See for example Homeless Link & St Mungo’s (2012), ‘Improving hospital admission and discharge for people who are homeless’, available at: [https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/HOSPITAL\\_ADMISSION\\_AND\\_DISCHARGE\\_REPORTdoc.pdf](https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/HOSPITAL_ADMISSION_AND_DISCHARGE_REPORTdoc.pdf)

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Marie-Ange, op. cit.

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ARA (2018), ‘Homelessness in Finland 2017 – Annual Report 2018’, available at: [http://www.aia.fi/en-US/Materials/Homelessness\\_reports/Homelessness\\_in\\_Finland\\_2017\(46471\)](http://www.aia.fi/en-US/Materials/Homelessness_reports/Homelessness_in_Finland_2017(46471))

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Cour des Comptes (2017), *ibid.*, p. 287.

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National Alliance to End Homelessness (2018), ‘Changing Punitive Shelter Rules to Simple Community Expectations’, available at: <https://endhomelessness.org/changing-punitive-shelter-rules-simple-community-expectations/>

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Danièle in ‘L’expérience de la rue – Témoignages et recommandations depuis le poste de mal-logé’ [‘The experience of the streets – Testimony and recommendations from those experiencing housing exclusion’], *Les Cahiers de la Fondation Abbé Pierre #1* – February 2019.

**People with a migration background** are also strongly represented among homeless populations. In **Finland**, at the end of 2017, 26.3% of lone homeless people were immigrants.<sup>82</sup> In **France** in January 2016, 40% of asylum seekers were housed outside the services managed by the Ministry of the Interior, either by their own means or in emergency accommodation.<sup>83</sup> Whether they are individuals, families or unaccompanied minors, whose profiles and needs vary, the dignified reception of migrants requires social workers to be trained in administrative procedures and appropriate language skills.

Emergency accommodation is a symptom of a multitude of other dysfunctional public policies. These include a failure on the part of welfare agencies to monitor children’s journeys once they reach the age of 18 and on the part of hospital or prison services to continue monitoring people released without housing solutions as well as ineffectual migration flow management policies. The objectives of these policies have focused on performance and budgetary effectiveness criteria, particularly since the implementation of austerity measures in Europe, and this takes precedence over monitoring the paths of those who are supposed to be at the heart of these policies.

Taking into account the different needs, specific to each person, is essential to adapting solutions and making them effective. These needs can become complex due to an accumulation of factors that leave a person vulnerable. These include a criminal past, trauma, physical health problems, mental health problems, substance abuse, etc. When these issues are compounded, access to emergency accommodation becomes increasingly complicated, particularly when ser-

vices impose restrictive and exclusive internal rules (e.g. on alcohol/drug use, pet ownership, anti-social behaviour, mutual respect, schedules, hygiene rules, payment for services, etc.), offering unsafe living conditions with no privacy. A transformation towards person-centred services, structured around self-determination and respect for individual choices, is vital. This can start, for example, with the transformation of strict and severe internal regulations into simple house rules that respect communal life<sup>84</sup>.

**“(I can’t share the sanitary facilities. I experienced communal showers before, when I was in hospital<sup>85</sup>)”**



# 3. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

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See <https://www.feantsa.org/download/fr/2525022567407186066.pdf>

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Luxembourg Country Profile 2018 FEANTSA.

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Cour des Comptes (2017), *Ibid.*

89

Cour des Comptes (2017), *Ibid.*, p. 296.

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Morrin H. (2018), 'Using administrative data to inform operational and policy developments relating to family homelessness in the Dublin Region', available at: [https://www.feantsa-research.org/download/203\\_morning\\_ws\\_6\\_morrin\\_2819245005932973749.pdf](https://www.feantsa-research.org/download/203_morning_ws_6_morrin_2819245005932973749.pdf)

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Data for 2017, available on the FEANTSA Country Profile Poland 2018: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-poland?bcParent=27>

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Legal A. (2015), 'Le recours aux prestations et services de protection sociale des personnes sans domicile' [The use of social welfare and services by homeless people], *Minima sociaux et prestations sociales - édition 2015*, DREES, available [in French] at: <https://drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/dossier2.pdf>

## A shelter allows survival but does not guarantee the recovery of an individual over the long term.

However, throughout Europe, emergency accommodation is becoming the only solution for homeless people due to the lack of decent and affordable housing. This situation goes hand in hand with chronic insecurity and homelessness.

Emergency accommodation lacks the three characteristics that determine the concept of 'housing' according to the ETHOS typology:<sup>86</sup> it is not a dwelling that a person and his or her family can exercise possession over (physical domain), nor a private space where relations can be maintained (social domain), and does not offer any legal title of occupation (legal domain). Prolonged stays in emergency accommodation is not an integration solution but a temporary stopgap in the absence of better alternatives: it is not a long-term lease but renewed short-term agreements. The lack of coherent support over time makes it impossible for an individual to plan for the future and for professionals to carry out in-depth work over the long term.

In **Italy**, according to a national survey on homelessness published in 2015 by ISTAT, the average length of a stay in emergency accommodation is 2.5 years. In **Luxembourg**, according to a report by the Ministry of Family and Integration in 2016, the average number of nights spent in night shelters more than doubled between 2010 and 2016 (from 40 to 100 days on average per user).<sup>87</sup> In **France**, according to the Cour des Comptes, 'in Paris, the average number of nights per person increased between 2010 and 2015 from 45 to 99 per year for lone people and couples, and from 130 to 191 for families. [...] These

longer stays reveals the difficulties encountered in finding a way out of emergency accommodation, either because the facilities sought or ordinary accommodation are not available or because the person does not meet the administrative criteria for access to them'.<sup>88</sup> The same was observed in hotels. 'Hotel stays are sometimes very long [...] in the Île de France region, in 2014, 36% of households had been staying in hotels for more than a year; this percentage reached 64% in Paris'.<sup>89</sup> A university study highlighted the experience of homeless families in the **Dublin** area. In 2018, 58% of families who lived in emergency accommodation the previous year had a rental contract (32% in 2017) while 18% had left emergency accommodation without any known reason or follow-up (17% in 2017). 25% were still in emergency accommodation (48% in 2017).<sup>90</sup> In Ireland, one in seven families leave emergency accommodation without any follow-up from community or public services. In **Poland**, the 'severe inefficiency' of the emergency services in terms of reintegration is pointed out by associations in the sector, with almost a quarter of homeless people remaining homeless for more than ten years.<sup>91</sup>

This chronic homelessness, with significant consequences on the quality of life, dignity and progress of the people accommodated, is taking place because of disruptions, and then a complete breakdown, in relations between the person and the services that can meet their needs. For example, the links between housing conditions and the health of users have been the subject of numerous publications. According to all existing studies, health problems are system-

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ONPES 2017, *op. cit.*, p.197.

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Shelter (2004), 'Sick and tired: the impact of temporary accommodation on the health of homeless families', available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/48465/Research\\_report\\_Sick\\_and\\_Tired\\_Dec\\_2004.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/48465/Research_report_Sick_and_Tired_Dec_2004.pdf)

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Rice B. (2006), 'Against the Odds', Shelter, available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/against\\_the\\_odds](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/policy_library_folder/against_the_odds).

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Digby A., Fu E. (2017), 'Impacts of homelessness on children - research with teachers', Shelter, available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/1474652/2017\\_12\\_20\\_Homelessness\\_and\\_School\\_Children.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1474652/2017_12_20_Homelessness_and_School_Children.pdf)

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Secondary school teacher, in Shelter (2017), *op. cit.*

atically much more prevalent among the homeless than among the general population. Access to treatment, medicines, health insurance and services is much more difficult for homeless people. According to a study by the DREES in **France**,<sup>92</sup> which identifies a relationship between housing conditions and the use of a health or social professional, 'just as social epidemiologists point to the existence of a "social gradient" in health' (the most favoured social category is characterised by better health indicators than the category immediately below), there is a gradient in housing situations for homeless people. The more favourable their housing conditions, the more likely they are to seek help from a doctor or social worker or to visit a health organisation. A person living in supported housing is three times more likely to see a doctor and 2.7 times more likely to meet with a social worker than a person sleeping in a place not intended for habitation'.<sup>93</sup> Prolonged stays in emergency or temporary accommodation have direct consequences on the health of families. These include depression, increased hospital attendance, decreased self-esteem and activity, vulnerability to certain diseases (e.g. bronchitis, tuberculosis, asthma),<sup>94</sup> etc. The health and schooling of children living in emergency accommodation has been the subject of various studies by Shelter in **England**: children facing housing exclusion are twice as likely to leave school without a certificate of education as other children.<sup>95</sup> Teachers and educational professionals describe serious consequences of housing deprivation on children and their schooling. These include the practical problems of access to sanitation and laundry facilities, lost belongings and a lack of quiet spaces to do homework; issues caused by the emotional trauma of losing a home, overwhelming feelings associated with being constantly on the move leading to stress and anxiety-related emotional and behavioural problems; exhaustion as well as problems social-

ising and maintaining relationships with other children and teachers due to long commutes to school.<sup>96</sup> According to a study by Shelter, more than half of households in temporary accommodation in England are employed: this proportion rose from 44% in 2013 to 55% in 2017.<sup>97</sup> The absence of a stable permanent home can have serious consequences on job retention: homeless people face stigma and ostracism relating to their circumstances, unstable living conditions which can cause repeated delays and absences over time; inflexible work schedules and long commutes from the accommodation; increased stress; low self-esteem; family difficulties; and health problems caused by the accommodation situation, etc.

The shortage of 'ways out' towards permanent, decent and affordable housing does not leave service operators much choice. Faced with the growing demand and reduced supply of emergency accommodation, some operators extend the length of stays to avoid pushing people back out onto the streets while others reduce the number of nights allocated to distribute places among as many people as possible. In **France**, in response to growing demand and to help the highest number of people, many 115 and SIAO emergency services practice this alternating assistance with overnight stays representing 52% of the total allocation between 10 June and 10 July 2017, a level roughly equivalent to that observed in winter (57%)<sup>98</sup>.

**“Not having a permanent home has a massive impact on children's ability to actively take part in school successfully in terms of participating in lessons and social participation... in terms of building their friendships... It can hold them back as they feel different to everybody.”**

Emergency accommodation is the subject of 'a type of institutionalisation specific to homelessness, referring to the effects of prolonged dependence on institutional regimes that tend to dominate the daily routines of a homeless person so that longer term life paths and objectives become impossible even to envisage'.<sup>100</sup> The institutional nature of emergency accommodation is therefore at the root of a form of segregation of homeless people who, by being isolated from the rest of society and forced to cohabit with each other, find themselves losing control over their own lives, no longer having any power over the decisions that affect them. The requirements and conditions of the institution take precedence over the individual needs of residents. Accordingly, the European 'de-institutionalisation' agenda, which mainly concerns childcare facilities, care facilities for people with disabilities and the elderly, should include institutionalised emergency accommodation for homeless people<sup>101</sup>.

**“The institution expects supported people to comply with a system of relationships designed without them”<sup>102</sup>**

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Arapoglu et al. (2015), 'Revisiting the Concept of Shelterization: Insights from Athens, Greece', *European Journal of Homelessness* 9(2), pp. 137-157. Glumbikova K. & Nedelnikova D. (2017), 'Experiencing a Stay in a Shelter in the Context of a Lack of Social Housing', *European Journal of Homelessness* 11(2), pp. 163-173, available at: <https://www.feantsa.eu/research-note-27637362245047919608.pdf>

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See FEANTSA (2013), 'Time for transition: from institutional to community-based services in the fight against homelessness', available at: [https://www.feantsa.eu/download/final\\_feantsa\\_policy\\_statement\\_dil\\_367\\_673173804\\_5986026.pdf](https://www.feantsa.eu/download/final_feantsa_policy_statement_dil_367_673173804_5986026.pdf)

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Atlantide Merlat in 'L'expérience de la rue - Témoignages et recommandations depuis le poste de mal-logé' [The experience of the streets - Testimony and recommendations from those experiencing housing exclusion], *Les Cahiers de la Fondation Abbé Pierre* #1 - February 2019.

**What do politicians have to say about the situation?**

**“I’m 52 years old. I was in the army. To be honest, for me, sleeping rough in central London is a lot more comfortable than going on exercise when I was in the army.”**

**Adam Holloway**, Member of the UK Parliament, April 2018

**“[...] If I take the example of the beggars in Namur, which have the RIS [social insertion income], it's a lifestyle choice that I cannot understand.”**

**Claude Eerdekens**, Mayor of Andenne, Belgium, August 2018

**“Let's be under no illusion here, when someone becomes homeless it doesn't happen overnight, it probably takes years of bad behaviour, or behaviour that isn't the behaviour of you and me. [...] They're afraid to come in, they are reluctant, they're quite satisfied to continue with the chaotic lifestyle they have.”**

**Eileen Gleeson**, Head of Dublin Homeless Executive, November 2017.

**“I get asked quite regularly “do you give money to people out on the streets” and the answer is no I don't because the chances are you are likely to be feeding a habit [...]”**

**Nigel Adams**, Member of the UK Parliament, September 2018

**OVERSUBSCRIBED, INSECURE AND UNSUITABLE:  
EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE**

“There are many reasons why a homeless person refuses shelter: not being part of a community, some have complicated psychological problems, others wish to stay together as a couple, others are pet owners (...). The figure we have is that fifty homeless people a day sleep in the cold outside voluntarily. [...] For the vast majority, it is their choice, yes [to sleep rough, editor's note].”

**Sylvain Maillard**,

*MEP – France, February 2018*

“We continuously allow ourselves to be goaded by people in advocacy, which in any other field would be called lobbying, into trying to ignore the fact that we have equivalent levels of homelessness, which is an incredible human tragedy, to every other major country in Europe. It's normal.”

**Conor Skehan**, *former Chair of the Housing Agency – Ireland, January 2019*

“These 1,500 places in temporary accommodation centres will be available in the Île-de-France region but refugees can also go to somewhere else if the housing crisis in Paris means they won't be accommodated. However, if they don't want to and prefer to sleep rough, that's their choice, they're free.”

**Didier Leschi**, *Director of the French Office of Immigration and Integration – France, January 2019.*

“For people in a difficult situation, we will try to make them take more responsibility. Because some are doing the right thing, and some are just messing around.”

**Emmanuel Macron**, *President of the French Republic, January 2019*

“We need a mass cleaning, street by street, square by square, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. We have to be tough because there are entire parts of our cities, entire parts of Italy, that are out of control.”

**Matteo Salvini**, *Italian Interior Minister, on the census of Italy's Roma community, June 2018*



Bedroom in an emergency shelter after renovation as part of the 'Living in the dorm' action-research project, Turin, Italy  
Design: Department of Architecture and Design - Politecnico di Torino for Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus © Daniele Lazzaretto - Lilithphoto



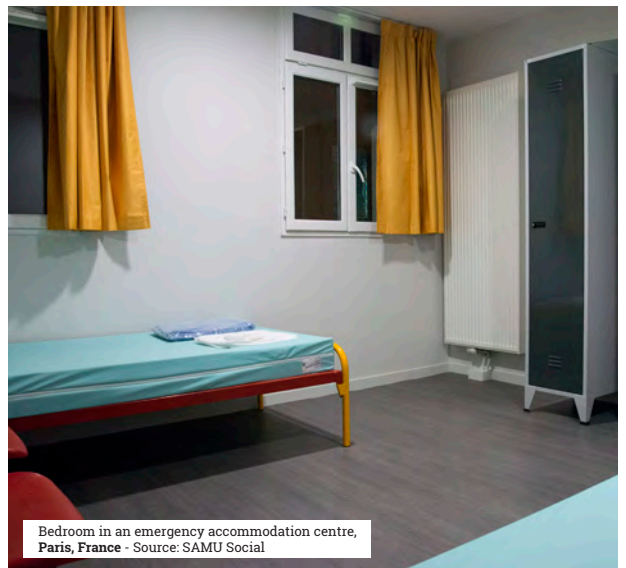
Common areas of an emergency shelter after renovation as part of the 'Living in the dorm' action-research project, Turin, Italy  
Design: Department of Architecture and Design - Politecnico di Torino for Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus © Daniele Lazzaretto - Lilithphoto



Refectory in an emergency shelter,  
Barcelona, Spain – Source: City of Barcelona



Night shelter,  
Berlin, Germany - Source: BAGW



Bedroom in an emergency accommodation centre,  
Paris, France - Source: SAMU Social