



CHAPTER 1

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

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION OF EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION AND STATISTICS

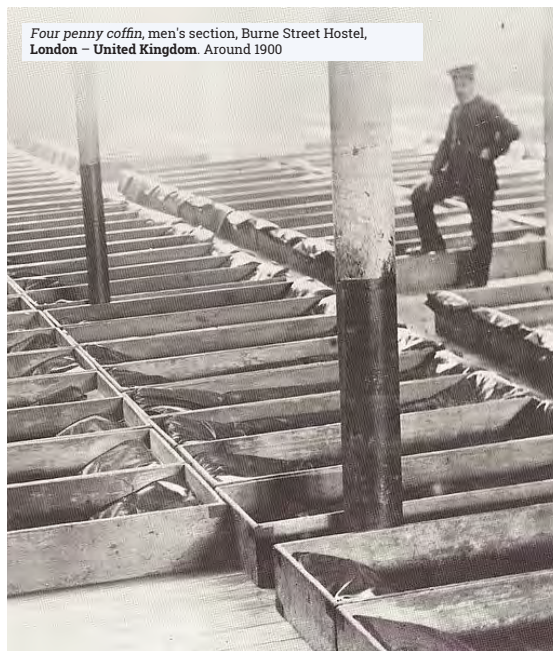
Access to shelter, i.e. accommodation in the event of an emergency, is a fundamental right.

Homelessness is a counterpart to extreme poverty and a consequence of periods of economic recession. Until the middle of the 20th century, vagrancy legislation was very common in Europe: a homeless person was often considered destitute and to be on the margins of society, accused of having an 'anti-social lifestyle', criminalised and sometimes put into the army or forced into labour¹. As part of their charitable work, religious institutions took in the homeless – at that time called 'paupers' or 'vagabonds' – up to the middle of the 20th century. The Salvation Army, for example, was created by a branch of the Protestant Christian church in London in 1865, in order to take care of poor people and vagabonds; it then spread through the majority of European countries.

One of the first emergency shelters was created in Victorian England, offering what was known as the 'four penny coffin', where coffin-shaped beds were available at a small cost.

¹ Y Foundation (2018), 'A Home of Your Own', available at: https://ysaatio.fi/assets/files/2018/01/A_Home_of_Your_Own_lowres_spreads.pdf

OVERSUBSCRIBED, INSECURE AND UNSUITABLE: EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE



Four penny coffin, men's section, Burne Street Hostel, London - United Kingdom. Around 1900



Penny situp at the Salvation Army, Blackfriars, London - United Kingdom, around 1900



Two Penny Hangover
London - United Kingdom, around 1900

For a penny, it was possible to spend the night on a bench in the shelter ('a penny situp'), but sleeping was forbidden. For two pennies, you could have the luxury of sleeping on the benches or leaning on a rope pulled from one end of the bench to the other ('a twopenny hangover'). The ropes were removed at dawn so that the clients would wake quickly and exit the building.

Asylums, psychiatric institutions, and hospitals were also deployed to take in homeless people. From the 1950s on, – in the aftermath of the Second World War – both because of the sheer number of people (the displaced and the baby boom generation) facing serious housing shortages and the explosion in the number of shanty towns, people facing homelessness and housing exclusion, public opinion, civil society and the authorities started to tackle the issue of housing exclusion. In Finland, between 1945 and 1954, bunkers and air-raid shelters were requisitioned

as emergency shelter.² In France, a 1953 law introduced housing benefits and CHRS (accommodation and social rehabilitation centres). From the 1970s on, different social laws were introduced in countries west of the Berlin Wall, in order to support reintegration. In the United Kingdom, the 1977 Homeless Persons Act gave a legal definition of homelessness for the first time and asserted the responsibility of the State in rehousing homeless families.³ The years 1945-1975 then gave way to a steep increase in unemployment and insecurity in the 1980s. Until then, although homelessness was not a very visible problem in Eastern Bloc countries as the communist regimes provided public housing to workers, there were serious problems with regard to housing quality. The 1990s were of course marked in Eastern Europe by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberalisation/privatisation of the housing markets of former communist countries, alongside the rapid development of homelessness as

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Y Foundation (2018),
ibid

3
Housing (Homeless)
Persons Act 1977,
available at :
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1977/48/contents/enacted>

a social problem. In Western Europe, there were ongoing efforts to structure the public responses to homelessness with the introduction of specific management measures that adapt to the varied (and increasingly diverse) profiles of service users. The staircase model functions as follows: homeless people must pass through various stages of social rehabilitation, with a common law lease as the last step, the reward at the end of the rehabilitation journey. Since the 2000s, more and more people have been questioning the validity of this system. 'De-institutionalisation', i.e. the gradual closing of public institutions in favour of local reception centres for particular demographics (child welfare services, disability services for people with physical or mental problems, services for the elderly) has become a European Union objective and has led some to question the institutional nature of certain services for homeless people. Consequently, the first public policies based on the principles of Housing First have since been implemented. In 2008, Finland was the first EU Member State to establish a National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness (PAAVO I) based on the following Housing First principle: *'Resolving social and health problems is not a pre-requisite to gaining a home, rather housing is a pre-requisite that will enable the many problems faced by a homeless person to be resolved'*⁴.

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Y Foundation (2018), *op. cit.*, p.19.

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Cromarty Hannah (2018), 'Rough sleepers: access to services and support (England)', House of Commons Library, available at <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7698>

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http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/temporary_housing_if_youre_homeless

THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF MANAGING EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION MEASURES ACROSS EUROPE

Emergency accommodation services, in the sense of temporary accommodation infrastructure taking in people who need emergency shelter covers a multitude of realities in Europe. This is not only in terms of status and funding

but also in terms of the services offered, the conditions of access and the quality. Assistance services for homeless people were in fact developed to cover the whole spectrum of care from emergency accommodation to permanent housing. The distinction between services within this broad spectrum is not always clear: what is called 'emergency accommodation' in **Ireland** for example is called 'temporary accommodation' in **England** where a distinction is made between 'first-stage' accommodation and 'second-stage' accommodation. First-stage accommodation mainly provides direct access to basic services (shelter, a meal, sanitary facilities) (e.g. cold weather/winter shelters, night shelters, emergency hostels, women's refuges, nightstop schemes for 16-25-year olds) and are usually provided by charitable or religious organisations. Second stage services specialise in support with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration.⁵ There is a fine line between emergency accommodation and temporary accommodation: in the United Kingdom, what we would like to define as emergency accommodation for the purposes of this report includes rooms in hostels and B&Bs in addition to the services referred to above.⁶

The emergency accommodation **service providers** vary widely: non-governmental organisations, not-for-profit organisations, private enterprises, charitable organisations, religious organisations, and public services are all stakeholders that provide emergency accommodation services. Religious organisations are particularly active in the fight against homelessness in Eastern and Southern European countries. In France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands and Portugal, while the majority of services for homeless people are provided by NGOs under the coordination of local and/or regional authorities, these authorities can also directly provide emergency accommodation services.

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Code de l'Action Sociale et des Familles, article L. 345-2-2: 'Toute personne sans-abri et en situation de détresse médicale, psychique ou sociale a accès, à tout moment, à un dispositif d'hébergement d'urgence.' [Any person homeless or in medical, psychological or social distress has access at any point to emergency accommodation measures.]

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Code de l'Action Sociale et des Familles, article L. 345-2-2: '[...] et d'être orientée vers tout professionnel ou toute structure susceptible de lui apporter l'aide justifiée par son état, notamment un centre d'hébergement et de réinsertion sociale, un hébergement de stabilisation, une pension de famille, un logement-foyer, un établissement pour personnes âgées dépendantes, un lit halte soins santé ou un service hospitalier.' [...and to be directed towards professionals or facilities that can assist them according to their needs, namely a CHRS (accommodation and social rehabilitation centre), stabilising accommodation, boarding house, sheltered housing, a home for the dependent elderly, nursing beds in shelters or a hospital.]. Find out more: Jurislogement, Note juridique – Accéder et se maintenir en hébergement d'urgence, Updated November 2018

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *Homelessness Services in Europe*.

The **funding models** differ depending on whether their source is the public sector (local, regional, national or European level), the private sector, or a combination of both. The diversity of sources and models of funding within the Member States themselves is such that in the majority of European countries, we do not know the total amount of funding allocated to emergency accommodation. In some federal states such as Austria, the public budget allocated to emergency accommodation is the responsibility of the Länder and is not coordinated at national level. In other places, it is a central government ministry that is responsible for emergency accommodation, such as the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy in **Poland** for example, or the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion in **France**. In **England**, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government shares its financial resources locally.

These differences are found on a number of levels. Firstly, in terms of **services offered**: some facilities only offer basic humanitarian aid (shelter, sometimes with a meal and sanitary facilities), others provide a full spectrum of services including support towards social reintegration. In **France**, according to the Cour des Comptes, a distinction is made between 'emergency measures' (115 call line, municipal humanitarian services, emergency accommodation centres, hotels) and 'stabilisation measures' (CHRS, supported housing, hostels, boarding houses and housing first). It is the *Préfet* (the State's representative in each *département*), who is responsible for implementing the right to emergency accommodation for homeless people, in the framework of the '*veille sociale*' [social monitoring] mechanism. Emergency accommodation is accessible to people who are homeless or in distress, regardless of their residency status, nationality, age, gender, family situation etc. This is the principle of unconditional

emergency accommodation.⁷ The law stipulates that emergency accommodation must provide services including food, shelter, sanitary facilities as well as a primary medical, psychological and social evaluation.⁸

In terms of the **time the services are available**, some services may be only open at night with users obliged to leave early in the morning, i.e. packing up their belongings for the day and returning at a specific time in the evening. Sometimes they might even have to make another application every day, depending on the availability of places. This is how some front-line services work in **Belgium**, and **France** and how winter emergency accommodation works in England. Other services are open 24/7 and offer nightly accommodation and daytime reception services. In **Slovenia**, there is a distinction made between 'open' emergency accommodation, i.e. with free direct access where users only stay the night and 'closed' emergency accommodation, i.e. where the user pays and can also stay for the day. The length of stays permitted varies, which tends to reduce the distinction between emergency accommodation and temporary accommodation. In the **Czech Republic** for example, emergency accommodation includes night shelters and social services shelters where a person 'in an unfavourable social situation due to loss of housing' can stay for up to one year.⁹ While the majority of emergency services are open all year, extra measures are put in place temporarily for the winter plans: this is what the voluntary sector criticises as 'weather response management' that leads services to put people back out on the streets when the winter plans end in March or April.

With regard to the **population served and ways of accessing the services**, there are low-threshold services (i.e. where access conditions are minimal) and services reserved for particular sections of the population, such as services

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *ibid*

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *ibid*

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Data on the number of people who are homeless in different EU countries are available in an appendix of this report.

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<https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), 'Homelessness Services in Europe'. Even though they are present in the majority of European countries, the least widespread service type is that which immediately provides permanent housing, offering adapted support to help maintain people in the housing.

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FEANTSA (2018), Country Profile for Italy, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/18/country-profile-italy?bcParent=27>

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<https://www.fiopsd.org/osservatorio/>

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European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *op. cit*

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Statistics Lithuania <https://osp.stat.gov.lt>

for particular behaviour patterns, mixed or single-sex services, services for families with children, services for adults only, direct-access or indirect-access services (i.e. individuals must be directed by an organisation, public authority or professional). In **Finland**, emergency accommodation is a low-threshold service for short stays aimed at people who have no other place to live. The aim is to guarantee the shortest stay possible and to organise a permanent housing solution, and/or support for recovery, and/or treatment, in accordance with the person's needs, and in cooperation with the social and health services.¹⁰ In **the Netherlands**, emergency accommodation means night shelters (without day services) and 24-hour shelters (the majority of which are for women and families, with maximum stays of three months which, in practice, can last up to one year). A legal definition was introduced by the 2015 Dutch Social Support Act: 'Emergency accommodation services means making available shelter and support for people who have left their housing – irrespective of whether it poses a risk to their safety due to domestic violence – and who are not able to maintain their independence in society'.¹¹ Depending on the country, accommodating asylum seekers (e.g. in **Germany**), families with children (in **Hungary** and **Sweden**), women and families who are victims of domestic violence, is done separately to the traditional accommodation system.

There are examples of what we might call basic, traditional emergency accommodation services that are publicly run in all European countries. However, in some Member States, such as **Finland** and **Denmark**, there is not much of this type of emergency accommodation left, as it has been replaced with a higher quality service which includes for example individual rooms and access to social support.

THE STATISTICS FOR ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

There is no shared definition for emergency accommodation in Europe. The definitions that exist vary significantly; a shared understanding is absolutely vital in this sector to get beyond the obvious complexities of the support systems and to establish adapted, pragmatic and effective solutions. Defining emergency accommodation requires a definition of homelessness, because the greater the understanding of the homeless population, the broader the spectrum of services will be.¹² The European ETHOS typology¹³ differentiates between emergency accommodation as night shelters (ETHOS category 2.1) where users are considered 'roofless', from temporary and transitional short-term accommodation (ETHOS categories 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) where users are considered 'houseless'. The street (ETHOS category 1.1), the specialised accommodation facilities (ETHOS categories 4, 5 and 6), insecure housing, (ETHOS categories 7, 8, 9, and 10) and inadequate housing (ETHOS categories 11, 12, and 13), in which inhabitants are considered homeless do not count as emergency accommodation as we will discuss here. They are therefore not included in the analysis.

For the purposes of this report, we will understand emergency accommodation **as a reception centre addressing urgent needs for shelter, with or without support, for a limited period of time**. This therefore overlaps with a part of the anglophone term 'temporary accommodation', which includes hotel rooms and B&Bs. A distinction must be made between accommodation/housing that is integration oriented, whether or not it is specialised, where the stay is longer term and offers social support (the CHRS in France, supported housing in England, etc.), and permanent housing where a common law lease

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<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>
In March 2018, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government decided to change the definition of homeless people which had been used to compile statistics, leading to the removal of 1,606 people from the statistics who had previously been recognised as homeless. The data from May 2018 are therefore not comparable with the data from the preceding months and years.

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Spain's National Statistics Institute (2017), 'Encuesta sobre centros y servicios de atención a personas sin hogar', available [in Spanish] at http://www.ine.es/prensa/ecapsh_2016.pdf

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Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2016), Statistical yearbook on labour and social affairs, in FEANTSA (2018), Country Profile of the Czech Republic, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/17/czech-republic?bcParent=27>

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Ibid

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

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These figures do not include the emergency beds that are set up for the winter period, which generally number about 3,000. <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/pomoc-spoleczna/bezdomnosc/materialy-informacyjne-na-temat-bezdomnosc/>

or an open-ended lease is offered, with or without support (halfway houses, boarding houses). Housing First and solutions through housing in the broader sense do have an emergency response role to play; however, their reason for being is permanent housing and not short-term provisional shelter, we do not therefore consider them emergency accommodation services.

In their attempt to create a typology of accommodation services for homeless people, the European Observatory on Homelessness describes three main service groups: low-intensity support services that provide basic assistance and provisional accommodation (emergency or temporary) form the majority of assistance services to homeless people in Europe. Services focused on support and reintegration, within public systems of temporary and transitional accommodation (where the objective is to make the homeless person 'ready for housing' and not to immediately provide housing) forms the second largest service group in Europe. Support, in this group, can be of low or high intensity, can be specialised and can arrange for specific care or treatment.¹⁴

Over the last ten years, the number of homeless people has increased at an alarming rate in almost all European Union countries: broadly speaking, this increase has led to the explosion in the number of people needing emergency accommodation. In **Italy** in 2016, 75% of homeless people were permitted access to emergency accommodation.¹⁵ According to the latest evaluation by fio.PSD members (city councils, social enterprises, foundations, religious organisations) in 2017¹⁶, the number of beds in emergency accommodation has increased in Italy in recent years. This is mainly due to the increased numbers of homeless people and the appearance of new sections of the public that are in very insecure situations. For example, fio.PSD members have stated that they are taking

in more newcomers, asylum seekers, young people (18-25 years), families and the working poor.¹⁷ In **Lithuania**, 62% of the 4,024 homeless people counted in 2017 were in emergency or temporary accommodation (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1).¹⁸ In **Ireland**, between February 2015 and February 2018, the number of homeless people in emergency accommodation financed by the State increased by 151% and by 300% for children. 9,968 people (6,157 adults and 3,811 children) were in emergency accommodation in November 2018.¹⁹ In **Spain**, the number of people taken into emergency and temporary accommodation centres each day on average increased by 20.5% between 2014 and 2016, reaching 16,437 people in 2016.²⁰ In the **Czech Republic**, expansion in the emergency accommodation sector is a recent phenomenon: the number of beds in night shelters has more than tripled between 2006 (459 beds) and 2014 (1,560 beds), the situation is similar for the number of beds in emergency accommodation with services which have almost doubled between 2006 (4,208 beds) and 2015 (7,311 beds).²¹ Despite the recent nature of this expansion, the services are still oversubscribed. 38,624 men and 9,597 women used 79 emergency accommodation centres in the Czech Republic in 2016.²² Data shows that 1,086 homeless rough sleepers could not access these services in 2016 due to a lack of places. In **Poland**, according to a flash survey carried out in February 2017 by the Polish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, 26,900 people were counted in emergency or temporary accommodation (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1).²³ The number of beds in emergency accommodation increased slightly from 22,529 beds in 2010 to 23,589 beds in 2016.²⁴ On the other hand, in **the United Kingdom** and in **France** where the traditional emergency accommodation system is completely oversubscribed, local stakeholders and associations have increasingly had to resort to costly and highly insecure solutions to provide emergency shelter to homeless people.

renting rooms in hotels, B&Bs and apartments on the private rental market on a very short-term basis. In **France**, 101,826 places were open and financed in emergency accommodation on 31 December 2017. Within these emergency places, hotel accommodation has seen the highest increase from about 13,900 places in 2010 to more than 45,000 places in 2017 i.e. an increase of 224% in seven years. Similarly, with places in CHUs (emergency accommodation centres) excluding hotels, they have increased from 18,500 places in 2010 to 45,900 places in 2017, i.e. an increase of 147%.²⁵ In **England**, on 30 June 2018, 82,310 households were placed in temporary accommodation, i.e. an increase of 5% in one year and of 71% since December 2010. 85% (69,690 households) were in independent temporary accommodation, 15% (12,630 households) were in temporary accommodation with shared facilities, of these 6,890 were in B&Bs.

The only European Union country where the trends have reversed is **Finland**, where emergency accommodation has gradually been replaced by permanent housing for the homeless. According to the annual ARA (Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland) study of 15 November 2017, 415 homeless people were counted rough sleeping or in emergency accommodation (ETHOS 1.1 and 2.1), 244 in hostels (ETHOS 3.1), 428 in medical institutions (ETHOS 6.2) and 5,528 provisionally accommodated with family or friends (ETHOS 8.1).

In this chapter, we will try to address the following issues. Are shelter and adequate services being effectively provided to homeless people in European Union countries? Emergency accommodation in Europe is not in fact unconditional (I) and the short-termist accommodation conditions are not adapted to long-term needs (II) which leads to homelessness situations. We will explore why we must put an end to the emergency system in Europe and how we must replace it (III), by doing a review of what makes sense, beyond the right to shelter, in terms of longer term solutions that are more effective and less costly.

25

Ministry for Housing, in Foundation Abbé Pierre (2019), '24^e Rapport sur l'Etat du Mal-Logement en France' [24th Report on Housing Exclusion in France], available [in French] at <https://www.fondation-abbepierre.fr/nos-actions/comprendre-et-interpeller/24e-rapport-sur-letat-du-mal-logement-en-france-2019>.

I. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE IS NOT UNCONDITIONAL

The conditionality of access to emergency accommodation is mainly demonstrated in the way the public response is structured to deal with homelessness: seasonal management that responds to weather conditions, which undermines the need to adopt continuous and constant strategies in the fight against homelessness (1). Access to emergency accommodation is also determined by a difficult admission process, where intermediaries are tasked with assessment (2). Lastly, multiple selection and prioritisation criteria limit access and exemplify the selectiveness of the right to accommodation (3).



Corridor in an emergency accommodation centre,
Paris, France – Source: SAMU Social Paris



Mattresses for emergency shelter in a church, Copenhagen, Denmark - © Anders Rye Skjoldjensen



Dormitory in an emergency shelter, Budapest, Hungary - Source: BMSZKI



Bedroom in an emergency shelter Ljubljana, Slovenia - © Bojan Kuljanac



Corridor in an emergency shelter, Budapest, Hungary - © Végh László/Abctűg

1.

WEATHER-RESPONSE MANAGEMENT:
HOW THE PUBLIC RESPONSE
TO HOMELESSNESS IS PART
OF THE PROBLEM

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Collectif Les Morts de la Rue (2018), 'Mortalité des personnes sans-domicile 2017 – Enquête dénombrer et décrire' [Mortality among homeless people 2017 – Study counting and describing the problem], available in French at: http://www.mortsdelarue.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_2017_Mis_en_PAGE_a_Imprimer.pdf

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Bertrand F. for La Strada (2018), 'Du Givre sur les ronces – Evaluation du plan hiver 2017-2018 – Propositions pour un plan pluriannuel à l'horizon 2020' [Frost on the Brambles – Evaluation of the winter plan 2017-2018 – Proposals for a multiannual plan for Horizon 2020], available in French at: <https://www.lastrada.brussels/portail/images/PDF/RapportHiver2018-Fr-05-BAT.pdf>

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Homeless Link (2018), 'Severe Weather Responses 2017-18 – Survey of winter provision for people sleeping rough', available at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/SWEP%20surveys%20report%202017-18.pdf>

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AMA (2018), 'Dispositif Hiver 86.400 – Rapport d'activités 2017-2018 Partie 2', [Dispositif Hiver 86.400 – Annual Report 2017-2018 Part 2] p. 23, available [in French] at: <http://www.86400.be/publications/>

By managing homelessness as though it is a seasonal problem, European public policy makes access to accommodation dependent on the time of the year and on the weather. Each year, in November, the 'measures taken' and the 'efforts made' to temporarily increase the accommodation capacity for homeless people during the coldest months are reported in the media. In April of the following year, in the same media outlets, a variation on the following can be found: 'End of the winter plan: hundreds of people unable to find accommodation'. Winter plans, which are present across the majority of European countries, have over time become the most commonly used management policy for homelessness. The main goal of these plans is to prevent deaths of people rough sleeping during the winter months. However, according to statistics, winter is not more fatal than summer as rough sleepers die all year round. Studies have shown that the seasonality of deaths, with a slight increase in winter, is in line with that observed in the population as a whole. In **France**, according to studies by Collectif Les Morts de la Rue, mortality peaks are observed in October, January and during the summer time²⁶.

The services mobilised as part of the winter plans generally aim to direct users towards more permanent measures; nonetheless, evaluations of winter plans (when they are carried out) demonstrate the failure of weather-response management and the burnout of professionals in the field: 'The ineffectiveness of seasonal management is demonstrated by

*insufficient long-term accommodation that would last beyond winter. It does not just add to the insecurity of homeless people who find themselves without a housing solution once winter is over, but it also constitutes a disadvantage for social workers who are limited in how they can support homeless people. Furthermore, it has been proven that the accommodation needs are the same in summer as in winter'*²⁷

In **England**, according to a Homeless Link study on the provision of services to homeless people during the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) of 2017-2018, only 27% of service users surveyed obtained more stable accommodation at the end of SWEP, while 28% returned to the streets and, notably, 45% were not followed up on.²⁸ In **Belgium**, the conclusions of the stakeholder associations are categoric: 'Financing increased capacity in the sector during a specific period of the year only makes sense if it is considered within a full and global vision of homelessness, by viewing this winter doctrine as a key moment, among others, that enables social workers to initiate support/orientation/reintegration/development of a care pathway that will be effective in the long term'.²⁹ For this reason, in **Brussels**, some stakeholders are working towards coordinating services to 'break down barriers': 'between day and night'; 'between winter and the rest of the year'; 'between those working within the sector'; 'between the relevant sectors'; and 'between budgets, competencies and action levels'.³⁰ The 'Hiver 86.400' measure is the result of collaborative work initiated by 13 active partners in the daytime support of home-

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AMA (2018), *ibid.*

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Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité (2018), 'Baromètre 115 de novembre 2017 – L'hiver, toujours plus dur pour les sans-abri' [Barometer of 115 emergency calls November 2017 – Winter, still tough for homeless people], available [in French] at: <https://www.federationsolidarite.org/publications-federation/barometre-115/8428-barom%C3%A8tre-115-de-novembre-2017-%E2%80%99hiver-toujours-plus-dur-pour-les-sans-abri>

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35% of people were directed to a CHU (emergency accommodation centre) or a hotel, 16% were provided with other accommodation solutions, 3% obtained sheltered housing, 3% entered into a common law lease.

less people. It offers improved day reception and support services for homeless people, who register for the day services as a complement to the night reception aspect of the winter measures. It aims to restore a sense of meaning to the word 'shelter', and to replace winter accommodation with a view to the long-term social rehabilitation of service users.

Weather response plans are an obstacle to making shelter available on an unconditional basis. The lack of available places and of alternative ways out of homelessness turn the emergency measures into an oversubscribed holding pen. In **France** in November 2017, in five départements dealing with homelessness, the lack of sites that can be deployed for accommodation and the critical lack of places have left them unable to address the majority of requests for shelter. In Paris, of the 35,380 requests for shelter made via the 115 emergency number (representing 5,900 individuals), only 25% were successful in finding accommodation for one or several nights. In France's Nord and Rhône départements, only 6% and 8% respectively of

requests led to shelter being provided. Added to this is the incompatibility of existing emergency accommodation services, which are still largely unsuitable for certain households as is evidenced by the significant number of families whose requests go unfulfilled. In Paris, according to the same data, of the requests for accommodation, 53% were made by families, 33% were made by lone men, and 10% were made by lone women.³¹ In **France**, according to the 2017-2018 review of the winter plan, the proportion of users leaving winter shelters without a housing solution reached 36%, up from 26% after the winter of 2016-2017.³² In **Amsterdam** in January 2017, the waiting time for housing or shelter for people eligible for emergency accommodation and integration services was on average 1.2 years. The dire lack of emergency accommodation throughout the entire year is the first obstacle to accessing accommodation.

“(For many associations, homeless people only die in winter time. But in summer time, there are almost no teams on patrol, soup kitchens or food packages.)”³³

2.

A DIFFICULT ROUTE TO ADMISSION, SUBJECT TO THE INTERVENTION OF DIAGNOSTIC EXPERTS

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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.

People who want to access emergency accommodation services must go through an admission process that can sometimes be long and complex, in particular if prior authorisation from an organisation, public authority or a professional is required. The role of a social worker in accessing emergency accommodation is vital. Through interviews and preliminary evaluations, social workers have the power to direct and make

decisions regarding a person's pathway, while at the same time being subject to the pressures of the front line. The training of facilitators – whether they are professionals, volunteers or peer supporters – must be built around respect for fundamental rights, for the dignity and the lived experience of the service users. In some countries, including **France, Portugal** and **Hungary**, emergency telephone numbers have been set up

to centralise demand for accommodation/housing according to region. These one-stop service providers were originally intended to enable a fast social assessment of the caller so that they could then be directed to a service suited to their needs. However, due to the constant increase in demand and the overcrowding in reception services, the social assessment acts as a filter at the point of entry.

In **France**, the 115 number is the sole point of entry to emergency accommodation. It is managed by the SIAO (Integrated reception and orientation services) which centralises demand at département level. Professionals answering 115 calls report a continuous and alarming increase in the number of callers and also problems adapting the emergency housing stock both in terms of quantity and in terms of users' needs.³⁴ According to the French Cour des Comptes, 'in the context of a general increase in unmet demand, the SIAO seems unable to systematically suggest solutions, making their day-to-day work difficult and leading to often critical reviews from associations and from people who call the service. The stress is even greater for the 115 phone counsellors who have to actually filter the calls requesting emergency accommodation: their decisions are based on criteria mostly determined in advance, but the application of these criteria is ultimately up to the counsellor alone. In this way, at the 115 offices in Paris, not only is the family composition, age of children and time spent on the streets taken into consideration but also the distress of the caller as felt by the counsellor'.³⁵ In **England**, to access the majority of temporary hostels and night shelters (outside of the most basic services, 'self-referral'), a person must be sent there through an organisation or government services who contact the institution in place of the person themselves. In **the Netherlands**, the application procedure is described by the Audit Office of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area as inadequate:

'Homeless people often feel they are going to a job interview. They will emphasise the things that are going well for them, leading them to be judged as fairly independent which in turn reduces their chance of getting accommodation or housing'.³⁶ The extra difficulties inherent in the procedure for accessing emergency accommodation, which furthermore can differ depending on a person's profile, have led some people to reject support services outright; people who are not aware of the procedures are lost to the system entirely. The breaking up of support services and working in silos (separation of services for accommodation, housing, employment, social security, education, health, justice, citizenship, etc.) are extra barriers, particularly for people who require intensive support. To remedy this situation, centralising services around the person and their needs is, for example, at the heart of the new anti-homelessness strategy in **Portugal**. The NPISAs (Planning and Intervention Centres for Homeless People) were created locally within the Local Boards for Social Action in order to implement the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (ENIPSA) and to structure the various public bodies involved in homelessness under the coordination of the city council. NPISAs are also responsible for assigning a social worker to each homeless person who will be their point of contact throughout the person's entire integration process.

“(The sense of being infantilised, of being sent from one service to the next, of being discussed when you're not even there; all this contributes to feeling socially excluded. Everything happens as though exclusion was not a transitional phase in the life of an ordinary person, but a state that keeps them outside of our collective experience of humanity. The person's experience is not seen as a scandal but as the typical situation for someone of their social standing.”³⁷)

34

Chapelet H. & Lardoux C. for the Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité (2018), 'Access to Shelter in France', Homeless in Europe – FEANTSA Magazine - Spring 2018, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/access-to-shelter-in-france-3385873972280013712.pdf>

35

Cour des Comptes (2017), *Ibid.*, p. 294

36

De Ridder J., Kok A. & Van Doorn M. for the Audit Office of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, 'Access to homelessness services and housing in Amsterdam', Homeless in Europe – FEANTSA Magazine - Spring 2018, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/access-to-homeless-services-in-amsterdam-6478753421177587927.pdf>

37

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.

3. ADMISSION CRITERIA AND PRIORITISATION: THE SELECTIVENESS OF THE RIGHT TO ACCOMMODATION

There are many, sometimes contradictory, criteria that can hinder access to (at least some) emergency accommodation in European countries. These criteria may be established formally and legally by local, regional or national legislation or informally through practices and regulations specific to service providers.

A financial contribution, which the wider public may not know about, is sometimes required to access emergency accommodation services. In the **Netherlands**, users of night shelters can pay between EUR 3.50 and EUR 9 per night. In the **United Kingdom**, night shelters are generally free but can sometimes demand between GBP 2 and GBP 5 per night. The majority of hostels require rent to be paid, requiring the user to claim housing assistance which obliges the user to demonstrate that they have taken the necessary steps and that they have proven their identity. Service charges of between GBP 10 and GBP 35 per week are also payable for meals, heating, washing powder, and services that are not covered by housing assistance. In the **Czech Republic**, a night in homeless accommodation costs the user about CZK 45 (EUR 1.50/EUR 2) with alternative payment options available such as vouchers paid for by third parties. In **Hungary**, the price of a night in emergency accommodation is about HUF 1283 (EUR 3.97). In **Slovenia**, while night shelters are generally free, the price of a month's stay in 24-hour accommodation varies between EUR 150 and EUR 300, i.e. 15% to 25% of the monthly median income.

Due to the dire lack of places and the increase in demand, the services established a **prioritisation in accordance with needs**, which demonstrates

the crisis in the emergency accommodation system. This has led to a kind of sordid competition of who is the most vulnerable: in **Paris** during the winter of 2017, for example, due to overcrowding in the services offered by the 115 phone line, a family with a child over three years old was no longer considered a priority.³⁸ The reception services can refuse to help people if they are **judged 'too independent'** and do not present with enough 'social problems'. In **the Netherlands**, legislation provides for access to emergency accommodation and integration services for people who 'are not able to survive independently in society', but in practice there is a tendency to prioritise people who have psycho-social, psychiatric or addiction problems.³⁹ The strict nature of admission criteria is demonstrated in the statistics. In **Amsterdam** 1,076 of the 1,612 homeless people requesting assistance (aged 23 years or over) were turned away in 2016 because there were not eligible according to the selection process. Of these, 867 were considered too independent. People who are ineligible are thus forced to return to the streets or to turn to their relatives or find other unsuitable solutions.⁴⁰ In several other European countries, such as **Sweden**, for example, having any type of housing even if it is inadequate (squat, staying with a third party, place unsuitable for habitation, etc.), is considered a factor of stability which removes the priority element of the application. In **Denmark**, the target group for emergency accommodation centres is defined as 'people with particular social problems, who do not have a home or who cannot sleep there, and who need accommodation and support'.⁴¹

38

Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité (2018), 'Sans-abri l'inquiétude des associations à la veille de l'hiver' ['Homelessness: charities concerned as winter arrives'], available [in French] at: <https://www.federationsolidarite.org/champs-d-action/accueil-orientation/9305-fg>

39

De Ridder J., Kok A. & Van Doorn M. for the Audit Office of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (2018), *op. cit.*

40

Ibid. & Trimbos Instituut (2017), Practical Test on Accessibility for Social Daycare 2017.

41

Bekendtgørelse af lov om social service [Order on Act on Social Service], § 110.

42

If someone is evicted from their home, kicked out by their family or relatives, left their home due to violence, unable to stay in their home due to fire or flooding, living on the streets. There is no legal status if the person is 'only' at risk of homelessness.

43

People are recognised as having priority needs: if they are a family with child(ren) under 16 (or 19 if they are still dependent), if they are pregnant, if they are coming out of care (aged 18 to 20 years), if they are homeless due to fire, flooding or other damage, if they are classed as 'vulnerable' (i.e. have a disability or serious health problem, are at risk of domestic violence), if they are 16-17 years old.

44

The local authority arbitrarily decides upon these criteria. A person is considered 'intentionally' homeless if they were evicted due to antisocial or criminal behaviour, if they did not pay their rent or mortgage even though it was affordable or they left their home even though they could have stayed there. If the local authority considers the conditions for eligibility for emergency accommodation to have been met but the situation to be 'intentional', they must provide emergency accommodation for a 'reasonable period' (usually a few weeks).

45

This condition of having a local connection was called into question by European case law in the Netherlands, which led to a revision of the legislation: see FEANTSA v. The Netherlands, Collective Complaint no. 86/2012, available at: <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/page/state-housing-rights-13>

Some countries have established a **statutory definition of homelessness**: in **England**, this defines whether or not a person is eligible for housing and assistance from the council. To be allowed access emergency accommodation, a person must be legally homeless,⁴² be legally in the country, be considered to have priority needs.⁴³ If a person is considered 'intentionally' homeless, this could restrict access to emergency accommodation.⁴⁴ Once the first two conditions are met, the local authority is obliged to provide temporary accommodation that can last up to two years, and during this period, stable rehousing is sought and guaranteed. Migrants without residency rights cannot access public accommodation centres.

Showing **administrative documents** can also prove a barrier to accessing emergency accommodation for people who are already outside the administrative processes and support services. Some services require people to have **no criminal convictions, to be legally in the country or even simply to provide identification** such as in Greece, where the majority of night shelters require a tax statement and proof of identification. **Having a 'local connection'** with the region where the services are being provided, and as such having to prove the connection is another frequently used condition. In **Italy, Portugal and the Netherlands** until recently,⁴⁵ the emer-

gency facilities financed by the local authorities could refuse access to a homeless person from another administrative district⁴⁶. In **Germany**, informal local connection criteria are used by local authorities: those practices are unlawful and firmly condemned by associations helping homeless people. In **Poland**, these criteria were removed: city councils must henceforth provide emergency accommodation for the night to any person without reference to geographical considerations. The removal of these criteria had unintended consequences: some city councils started to restrict or close their services to avoid sheltering more people and paying for services for people from outside the locality,⁴⁷ which ultimately risked reducing the number of accessible services⁴⁸.

Age, gender and nationality are also considered when 'categorising' people for accommodation: children and young people (under 18) can be refused access to some emergency accommodation, regardless of whether there are alternatives or not. Mixed services are largely the norm in Europe, although some countries differentiate traditional emergency accommodation from shelters for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Similarly, the majority of countries have an accommodation system for asylum seekers that is separate from the common law system.

Health problems as factors excluding people from emergency accommodation

Having disabling physical health problems is often an obstacle to accessing emergency accommodation. In the **Czech Republic**, people accepted into emergency accommodation must be physically independent. In **Greece**, any communicable diseases or skin diseases detected during the X-ray and screening process carried out on arrival at the emergency accommodation results in exclusion. In **Hungary**, a service user can be removed if they are diagnosed with tuberculosis. In almost all European countries, there are no binding standards to enable physical access to emergency accommodation for people with limited mobility.

Having mental health problems can also be an obstacle to accessing emergency accommodation. In **Greece**, a psychiatric consultation is carried out on entry to emergency accommodation: a person who is seeking shelter should not suffer from psychiatric problems. In many countries, if a user has mental health problems that affect behaviour, this can give them a reputation among service providers and prevent access to emergency accommodation. In **Hungary**, the 1993 Social Law⁴⁹ stipulates that emergency accommodation is meant for 'people capable of taking care of themselves and living as part of a community'. In **Poland**, the standardisation of emergency accommodation services since 2016 has resulted in formal exclusion from the system of non-independent homeless people. As such, people with health problems that reduce their independence and people coming out of hospital with significant rehabilitation needs, no longer have access to emergency accommodation. Instead of coordinating the social support services and the health system, the Ministry banned these people from the system without providing any alternative, by requiring city councils to direct these people to adapted care centres. However, the waiting list for accessing such institutions is very long (from several months to several years), which does not address these people's need for emergency solutions. In this context, the majority of NGOs have continued to provide assistance to people considered 'non-independent', risking being penalised with fines of up to EUR 5,000. In reality, public pressure, the NGOs' position and media coverage of the issue have meant that the law has not been fully applied and so far, there have been no cases of fines reported.⁵⁰

With regard to drug/alcohol consumption, emergency accommodation services are often based on abstinence. Internal rules almost systematically call for the expulsion of any service user who represents 'a threat to staff or other service users' in **Hungary**, simply being under the influence of drugs or alcohol is considered a threat. However, in some countries such as the **United Kingdom**, risk reduction is common practice; services based on abstinence exist but are in the minority.

In practice, several services verify the background of people asking for accommodation by calling other service providers to obtain the person's history, gauging their '**social reputation**' including any evictions or complaints made against them in the past.

There are also services where access is not subject to such criteria. In **Brussels**, for example, some night shelters use a lottery system to allocate the places available. Services that have a low-threshold for access see themselves as unconditional. In **Finland**, for example, specific recommendations were formalised by the

Ministry for Social Affairs and Health in 2002 on the quality of services for drug/alcohol users and on the importance of low-threshold services and facilitating access to emergency services. As such, emergency accommodation must be accessible to people who are under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

46

For more, see the European Observatory on Homelessness' Comparative Study 2015, 'Local connection – Rules and Access to Homelessness Services in Europe', available at: https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/feantsa-studies_05_web_7437249621511918755.pdf

47

Wilczek J. for Saint Brother Albert's Aid Society, 'Has the Standardisation of homelessness services in Poland facilitated access to shelter?', Access to Shelter - Homeless in Europe – FEANTSA Magazine – Spring 2018, available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/standardisation-of-shelters-in-poland-3184181181272185870.pdf>

48

European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *op. cit.*

49

1993 Social Law:III, 84§(1).

50

Wilczek J. for Saint Brother Albert's Aid Society (2018), *op. cit.*

Access to emergency accommodation for irregular migrants

Migrants make up a significant proportion of the homeless population in several EU Member States. They often live in housing that is overcrowded or lacks basic facilities; they sometimes have access to emergency accommodation but are often forced to sleep on the streets due to a lack of capacity in the accommodation or restrictions related to their residency status. There is no common legislation at EU level that establishes minimum standards regarding access to accommodation and the level of access can thus differ substantially from one country to another and even from one region to another. There are some countries where access to accommodation is guaranteed regardless of the administrative status and other countries where irregularly-residing migrants have practically zero access to basic services.

In **Belgium**, access to accommodation is regulated at regional level. At national level, the only significant measure stipulates that irregularly-residing families have the right to material assistance including access to accommodation. In the Brussels region, emergency accommodation services are unconditional and free for people who hold a right to reside. Irregularly-residing people from third countries and citizens of other EU countries have access to emergency accommodation and to reception centres but, in these cases, the right is not enforceable in the court system. According to legislation from the Brussels-Capital Region, homeless people can immediately access emergency accommodation between 8pm and 8am depending on places available, and a sufficient number of places must be reserved for people with a right to reside, thus excluding irregularly-residing migrants and EU citizens who do not hold a right to reside.

In **Denmark**, according to Danish legislation, there are two conditions for accessing services: the first is to reside 'legally', the second is to be part of the target group of 'people with particular social problems, who do not have a home or who cannot sleep there, and who need accommodation and support'. Access to public accommodation centres is therefore forbidden to irregularly-residing migrants. Furthermore, providing assistance to people who do not have a legal residence is considered an offence by Danish migration legislation. Providing accommodation for irregularly-residing migrants can result in a fine or a prison sentence of up to two years.

In **Italy**, on the basis of Italian migration legislation, a person must be 'regularly residing' in the country to be able to access public accommodation centres. Article 40 of the Testo Unico Immigrazione [Italy's Consolidated Immigration Act] stipulates that the regions of Italy can provide accommodation, in the same accommodation centres that are used by Italians and EU citizens, only to migrants with a right to reside. Today, even though irregularly-residing migrants do not have the right to access public accommodation centres, regulations may be adopted by the city councils as part of the winter programmes allowing access to the accommodation centres regardless of the administrative status.

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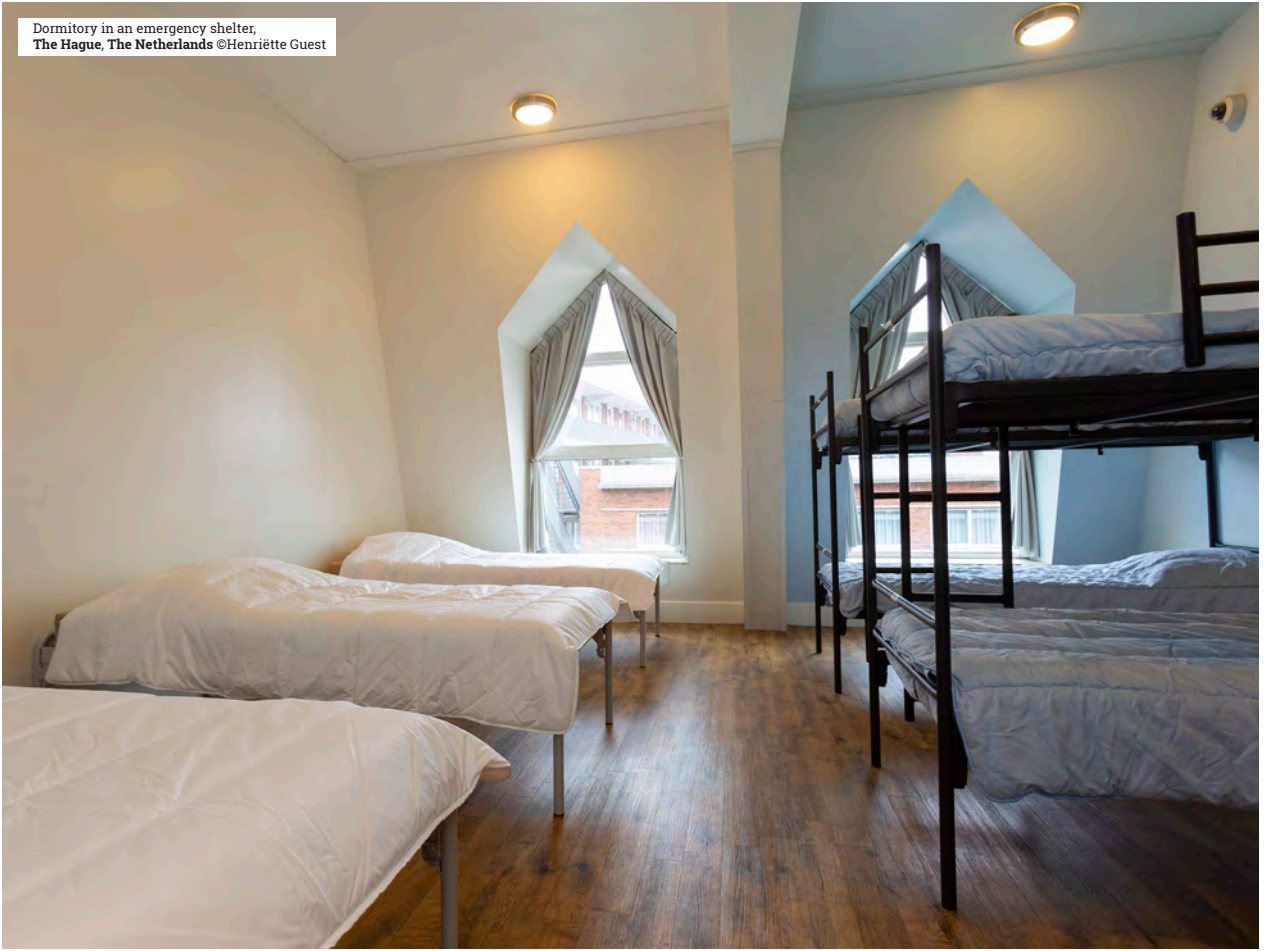
Danièle in
*'L'expérience de la
rue - Témoignages
et recommandations
depuis le poste
de mal-logé'*
[The experience
of the streets -
Testimony and
recommendations
from those
experiencing
housing exclusion],
Les Cahiers de la
Fondation Abbé
Pierre #1 - February
2019.

In **Spain**, Spanish legislation allows access to basic services including access to accommodation centres. Article 14 of Spain's Organic Law 4/2000 stipulates that foreigners, regardless of their administrative status have the right to access basic social services. Housing exclusion is considered to be under the jurisdiction of local authorities and each city council thus offers different types of services but, in theory, according to national legislation, the city councils must protect irregularly-residing migrants who find themselves in a vulnerable situation. Madrid, for example, as part of its winter programme makes no distinction between people based on administrative status.

In the **United Kingdom**, irregularly-residing migrants cannot access public funds. Section 115 of the 1999 UK Immigration and Asylum Act stipulates that a person cannot access public funds if they are 'subject to immigration control'. A person who cannot access public funds cannot in turn access the specific social services and social housing, including public assistance for home-lessness as provided for in the 1996 UK Housing Act. As a result, irregularly-residing migrants, including EU citizens who do not hold a right to reside, cannot access public accommodation centres.

((With being in and out of the hospital, this idea that everyone is sharing everything really bothered me. [...] When we return somewhere, we want to say "stop, I'm here now. Let's move forward." But no, they keep bringing up your past failings.⁵¹))

Dormitory in an emergency shelter,
The Hague, The Netherlands ©Henriëtte Guest



Emergency shelter from the winter plan for lone men. Access between 5.30 pm and 9 am only.
Münster, Germany Source: BAGW



Bedroom in an emergency shelter,
Malmö, Sweden - © Matilda Jägerden



Dormitory in an emergency shelter,
Wrocław, St Brother Albert's Aid Society, Poland - © Dariusz Dobrowolski



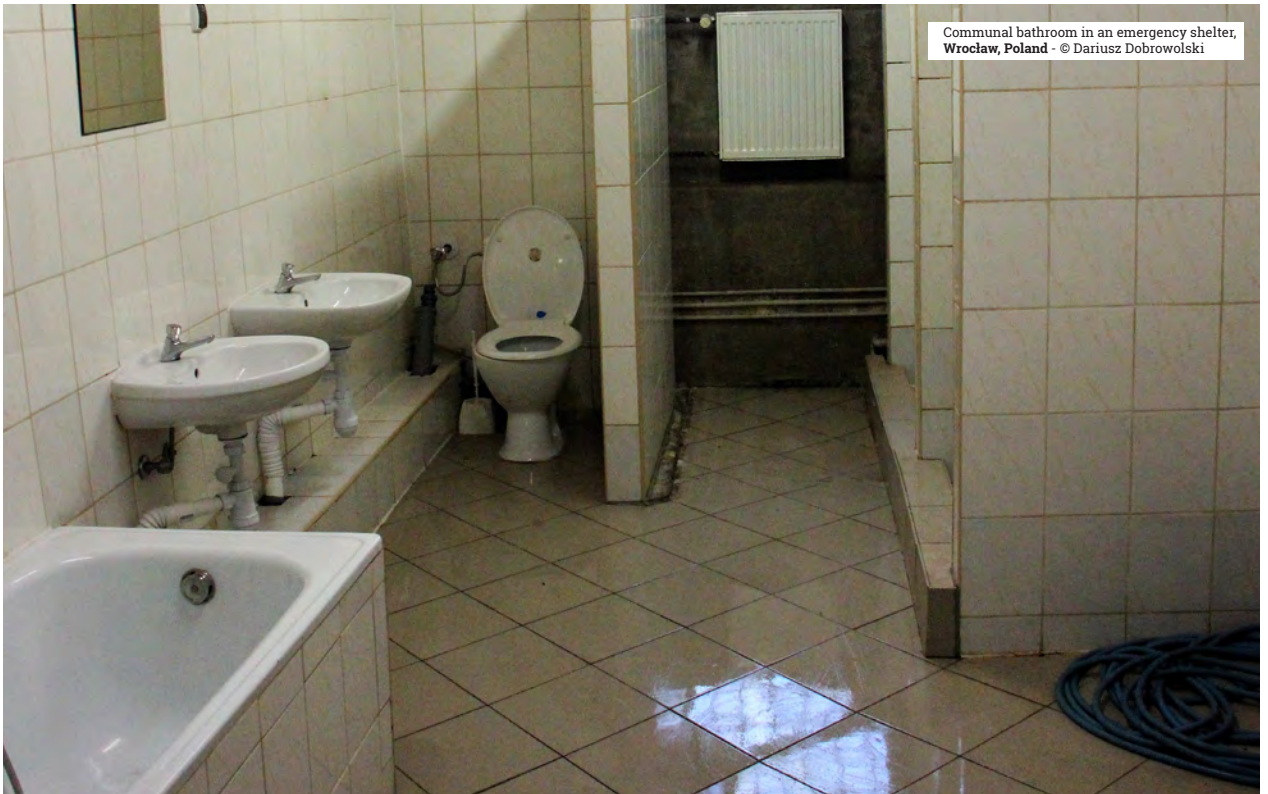
Dormitory of an emergency shelter,
Budapest, Hungary - © Végh László/Abcúg



Ceiling of an emergency shelter,
Budapest, Hungary - © Végh László/Abcúg



Communal showers in an emergency shelter,
Munich, Germany © Thomas Friedl, KMFV-München



Communal bathroom in an emergency shelter,
Wrocław, Poland - © Dariusz Dobrowolski

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.⁵² A French study commissioned by ONPES from the SAMU Social observatory in **Paris** on the non-use of social⁵³ 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

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.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ These services can perpetuate the cycle of rejection and exclusion in which some homeless people are trapped, and they can trigger harmful symptoms and

54

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

55

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>

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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).⁵⁶ 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.”⁶¹

Minimum quality standards exist in almost all European countries. In **Greece**, a ministerial decision⁵⁷ 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 m² 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.⁵⁸ 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'.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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>

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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>

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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.⁶²”

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

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 2018.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶

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,⁶⁷ 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.).⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰

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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>

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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>

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<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>

72

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>

73

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>

74

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.

76

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

77

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

78

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,⁷¹ 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 34.⁷² 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).⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ 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”⁷⁵”

Many **people leaving institutions (i.e. hospitals and prisons)** without a housing solution find themselves homeless.⁷⁶ 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 report⁷⁸, 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 patients⁷⁹ 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 institution⁸⁰.

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

79

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

81

Marie-Ange, op. cit.

82

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.⁸² 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.⁸³ 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 life⁸⁴.

“(I can’t share the sanitary facilities. I experienced communal showers before, when I was in hospital⁸⁵)”

3. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

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:⁸⁶ 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).⁸⁷ 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'.⁸⁸ 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'.⁸⁹ 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).⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹

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-

86

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.*

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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.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>

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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

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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.

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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

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Shelter (2018), 'Briefing - In work, but out of a home', available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1545412/2018_07_19_Working_Homelessness_Briefing.pdf

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Foundation Abbé Pierre (2019), 'L'État du Mal-Logement en France' [Housing exclusion in France], available at: <https://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/>

99

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**,⁹² 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'.⁹³ 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),⁹⁴ 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.⁹⁵ 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.⁹⁶ 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 2017.⁹⁷ 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%)⁹⁸.

“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'.¹⁰⁰ 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 people¹⁰¹.

“The institution expects supported people to comply with a system of relationships designed without them”¹⁰²

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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

102

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



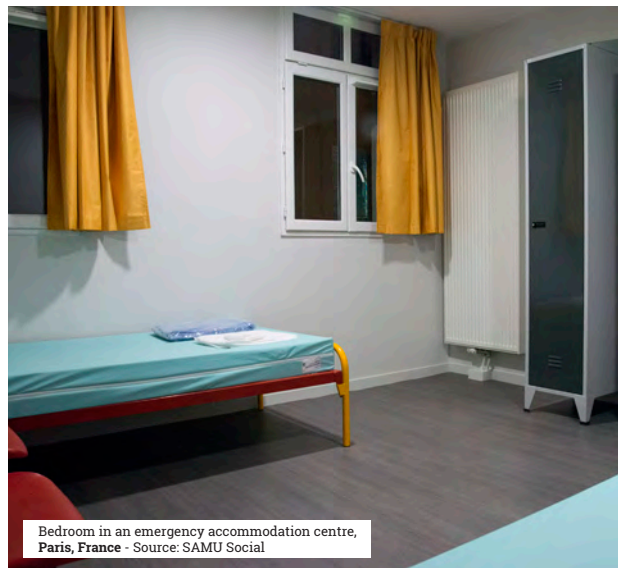
Common areas of an emergency shelter after renovation as part of the 'Living in the dorm' action-research project, Turin, Italy
Design: Department of Architecture and Design - Politecnico di Torino for Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus © Daniele Lazzaretto - Lilithphoto



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

III. WHY AND TOWARDS WHAT A WAY OUT MUST BE FOUND

The right to accommodation is a fundamental right, which must not be called into question. It does not run counter to the right to housing; it is a backup in emergency situations. In Europe, the emergency reception system fulfils a role that it should not have to. Systematised emergency accommodation is a reactive response to homelessness (neither curative nor preventive), disorganised (without strategy) and segmented (not continuous). The usefulness of dedicated emergency accommodation is not in question here; it is the widespread and institutionalised use of emergency accommodation as the main system of response to homelessness that needs to be challenged. Where homelessness has been successfully tackled, emergency accommodation is still present, in a residual way. In **Helsinki**, after the implementation of a proactive and integrated homelessness eradication policy based on Housing First principles, there are now 52 emergency beds where people only stay for a very short of time because they are supported and redirected as quickly as possible to a safe housing solution.

1.

THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

The human and social cost of the rise in homelessness in Europe is enormous. The fact that today, throughout Europe, more and more people are living on the streets or in unsuitable emergency accommodation for a long time is a continuing violation of the most basic human rights. But in reality, political decision-making is at least as much motivated by the cost-effectiveness of public policies as by the respect and implementation of human rights. It is therefore important to stress that the failure to combat homelessness and the maintenance of ineffective homelessness policies also have real economic costs, which are sometimes greatly underestimated. When it becomes a long-term stop-gap solution and loses its primary function of responding to emergencies, accommodation inevitably entails very high costs¹⁰³.

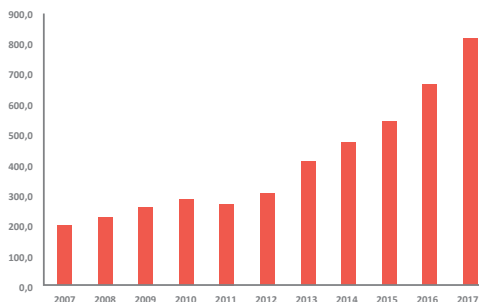
103

See European Observatory on Homelessness (2013), 'The Costs of Homelessness in Europe – An assessment of the current evidence base', EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness, available at: http://www.housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/feantsa-studies_03_web-Cost-of-Homelessness.pdf

104

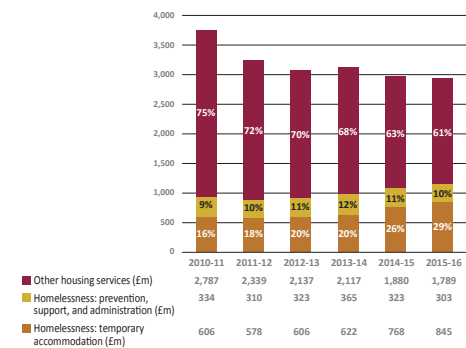
National Audit Office - England (2017), 'Homelessness Report', available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Homelessness-Summary.pdf>

TRENDS IN SPENDING ON EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN FRANCE (IN MILLION EURO)



Source: Foundation Abbé Pierre (2019), 24e Rapport sur l'état du mal-logement en France [24th Report on housing exclusion in France].

TRENDS IN LOCAL AUTHORITY SPENDING IN ENGLAND ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING HOMELESSNESS



Source: National Audit Office (2017), *Homelessness Report*.

In **England**, the National Audit Office, which is in charge of evaluating public policies, criticised the ineffectiveness of public measures to combat homelessness, particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness, in 2017. It pointed to the increase in public spending on homelessness services coupled with the simultaneous reduction in spending on prevention. Local authorities' spending on temporary emergency accommodation increased by 39% between 2010-2011 and 2016-2017, while spending on housing services decreased by 21% over the same period.¹⁰⁴ In Ireland, public spending on emergency and temporary accommodation increased from EUR 19 million in 2013 to EUR 46 million in 2017, according to Focus Ireland. There is also the question of delegating services to private stakeholders. In Dublin in 2017, more than 50% of emergency accommodation

OVERSUBSCRIBED, INSECURE AND UNSUITABLE: EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

105

European Observatory on Homelessness (2019), *op. cit.*

106

Foundation Abbé Pierre (2019), *24e Rapport sur l'Etat du Mal Logement en France* [24th report on housing exclusion in France], *op. cit.*, p. 298.

107

Pleace N. & al. (2013), in Demaerschalk E., Lescauwae D. (2015), *The Costs of Flemish Homeless Care*, European Journal of Homelessness Vol. 9, No. 1, June 2015, available at: <https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/article-4-4165792000-4194371024.pdf>

108

Sullivan & al. (2000), in Demaerschalk E., Lescauwae D. (2015), *op. cit.*

109

Van Leerdam J. (2013), 'Analysing Costs and Benefits of Homelessness Policies in the Netherlands: Lessons for Europe', European Journal of Homelessness Vol. 7 No. 2, available at: https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/jvl_review/172622809360155612.pdf

110

The scope of the cost includes the contribution of the public authorities to housing, fees, rent (e.g. subsidies/grants, housing assistance); the cost of social assistance, if any; the cost of social or adapted property management, where appropriate; and the cost of using health services. Agence Nouvelle des Solidarités Actives (2017), *Le Logement d'abord, et après – Bilan et propositions pour la généralisation du logement d'abord en France* [Housing first and foremost – summary and recommendations for the general application of a "Housing First" policy in France], pp. 14-15 available [in French] at: https://www.solidarites-actives.com/sites/default/files/2018-03/Ansa-AT-Logementdabord-Rapport_2017_VF.pdf

spending was directed to private for-profit operators, whose objectives are not always in line with the needs of the people accommodated. In the same year, the top service providers for homeless households were hoteliers/B&Bs and five voluntary organisations.¹⁰⁵ In Dublin, annual spending on stays in hotels and guesthouses increased from EUR 455,000 in 2012 to EUR 36 million in 2016. Allocating public money to lucrative entities that do not, in the first instance, have the desire, expertise or experience to provide decent accommodation for homeless people is absolute nonsense, especially when one considers the drastic consequences of living in hotels on families and children, as described above. In **France**, the use of hotels represents an average daily cost of EUR 17.10 (compared to an average of EUR 6.70 per day for a place in rental intermediation), or nearly EUR 281 million for 45,139 places in 2017.¹⁰⁶ Contrary to popular belief, night shelters are not the cheapest option in terms of public spending. The expenses incurred by one night in a shelter have been estimated by various studies. On average one night costs EUR 53 in **Flanders** (including spending on staff, infrastructure, maintenance, as well as morning and evening snacks), EUR 43 in **France**, EUR 54 in **Germany** and EUR 78 in the **Netherlands**.¹⁰⁷

The costs associated with homelessness go beyond those associated with emergency accommodation alone: a homeless person may cross paths with health, police and court services along his or her journey. In **Flanders**, the annual cost of a person who has spent eight months in emergency shelter and four months in prison is estimated at EUR 28,320; a person who has spent six months in an emergency shelter and six months in psychiatric service costs EUR 62,280 per year. It should be noted, however, that not all homeless people involve such a high level of public spending given that not all homeless people go through night shel-

ters, the psychiatric services or prison services. For example, some studies show that homeless people with psychiatric problems actually use public services less than the general population.¹⁰⁸ According to a cost-benefit study conducted in 2013 in the **Netherlands**, investing EUR 1 in effective homelessness eradication policies reduces public spending on other important ancillary areas (health, criminal justice, housing) by at least EUR 2: prevention is better, in human and financial terms, than cure.¹⁰⁹ Research in **France** has estimated that over five years, the paths of homeless people who have managed to access social housing cost an average of EUR 9,000 per person per year, while the paths of people who went back and forth between the streets and the accident and emergency department cost around EUR 20,000 per person per year, more than twice as much.¹¹⁰ According to a study by Crisis, in **England**, allowing a person to sleep rough for 12 months costs public authorities, in addition to the human cost, GBP 20,128 (about EUR 23,000), compared to GBP 1,426 (about EUR 1,629) if a successful prevention response were implemented.¹¹¹

More generally, the total annual cost of housing exclusion in Europe is estimated by Eurofound at EUR 194 billion. The transformation of inadequate housing, or at least the upgrading of sub-standard units to an acceptable level, would cost around EUR 295 billion (based on 2011 prices). If all improvements were made immediately, the cost to European economies would be repaid within 18 months through the estimated savings (health care gains and improved societal benefits). In other words, for every three euros invested, two euros would be recovered in one year.¹¹²

Governments must invest in the eradication of homelessness. Across Europe, the number of people in need of emergency accommodation is increasing, or at best remaining stable, and ways

111

Crisis (2015), 'At What Cost', available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/>

112

Eurofound (2016), 'Inadequate housing in Europe: Costs and consequences', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/fr/publications/report/2016/quality-of-life-social-policies/inadequate-housing-in-europe-costs-and-consequences>

113

For more information on integrated strategies to eradicate homelessness, see FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre (2018), 'Third Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018', available at <https://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2018/03/21/the-second-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe-2017>

2.**INVESTING IN A 'HOME'****114**

Pleace N, Quilgars D. (2013), 'Improving Health and Social Integration through Housing First | A Review', Centre for Housing Policy/ University of York and European Observatory on Homelessness, available at: https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/improving_health_and_social_integration_through_housing_first_a_review.pdf

115

<https://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2018/03/21/the-second-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe-2017>

116

Y-Foundation (2018), 'A Home of Your Own', *op. cit.*, p. 30.

out are blocked. Simply continuing to increase public spending on emergency measures will not solve the system being overwhelmed. The implementation of real strategies, allowing targeted investment in the prevention and a lasting way out of homelessness, is the only effective solution.¹¹³ It is against this backdrop that emergency accommodation will be able to fulfil its

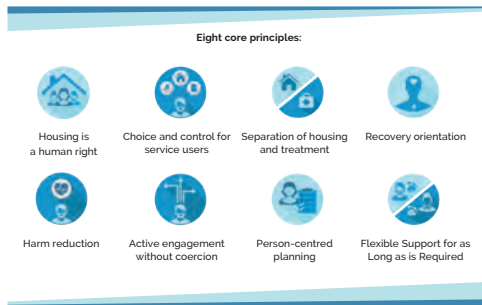
function, more humanely and with greater dignity, as an emergency solution only. It has been proven through a number of studies that Housing First represents a more efficient use of public money than other services. The reason for this is simple: Housing First's success rates in ending chronic homelessness are higher than any other service model¹¹⁴.

The previous edition of this report¹¹⁵ showed that the eradication of homelessness was not utopian but required the adoption of integrated, proactive, realistic strategies based on access to housing as a fundamental right. The transition from a system of managing emergencies to an effective homelessness policy must be supported in financial and political terms: a place in secure emergency accommodation cannot be replaced by the availability of a single place in individual housing. In **Finland**, the experience of implementing a Housing First public policy has shown that a place in secure emergency accommodation should be offset by making five new places available in individual housing. For example, Helsinki's largest night shelter Alppikatu 25 was converted into 81 supported housing units between 2009 and 2011. A

common goal for improvement was set, residents were included from the very beginning in the planning and implementation of changes, rules were redesigned to no longer throw anyone out without a solution, restrictions were replaced with rights and responsibilities teams were trained in new measures and more professionals were hired. Overall in Helsinki, night shelters and hotels had 2,121 places for homeless people in 1985, compared to 52 in 2016. On the other hand, the number of people in supported housing has increased since the 1980s and since the adoption of Housing First principles in 2008. In Helsinki, the number of supported housing places increased from 127 in 1985 to 1,309 in 2016 and the number of places in independent rental units from 65 in 1985 to 2,433 in 2016¹¹⁶.

OVERSUBSCRIBED, INSECURE AND UNSUITABLE: EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF HOUSING FIRST IMPLEMENTATION HAVE BEEN DETAILED BY THE HOUSING FIRST EUROPEAN HUB¹¹⁷.



Certain conditions must be met to implement the transition.¹¹⁸ These include a better understanding and rigorous monitoring of homelessness; respect for the unconditional right to accommodation; massive provision of affordable housing and the mobilisation of a strong non-re-sidualised social housing sector; organising support in housing according to the needs of the individual; strengthening capacity for leadership, training and change among professionals in the homeless sector and related sectors; as well as strengthening cross-disciplinary, preventive and integrated approaches.

117

<https://housingfirsteurope.eu/>

118

See Haut Comité pour le Logement des Personnes Défavorisées (2018), *5 conditions nécessaires à la mise en œuvre du "Logement d'Abord"* [Five conditions necessary for the implementation of "Housing First" policies], available [in French] at: <http://www.hcpld.gouv.fr/parution-du-rapport-annuel-cinq-conditions-a-la-a176.html>

119

Rosary H. & Lardoux C. (2018), *op. cit.*

'... But how can housing be found?'

Member States and cities as well as the different levels of local, regional, national and supranational governance must get better at cooperating and leaving more room for manoeuvre. In parallel with putting a halt to social welfare cutbacks under austerity, particularly in relation to housing, there is no shortage of levers that could be used. The mobilisation of social and 'very social' housing, the private housing stock, and vacant housing for social purposes as well as the

regulation of the private rental market, support for temporary occupancies in urban areas, etc. are all potential levers. A necessary cultural and perception shift in political leaders and the general public is essential in order to promote housing as a right and not as a commodity. The criminalisation of homelessness and the creeping privatisation of public space should be strongly condemned.

In Scotland, the law requires local authorities to provide permanent accommodation for homeless people. To make the law effective, local authorities rely on social housing. In Edinburgh, 75% of public housing places were allocated to homeless households in 2016/2017.

Budget cuts at the expense of emergency accommodation services in the name of Housing First are a major concern, e.g. in France and the United Kingdom, and rightly so.¹¹⁹ Reducing the emergency accommodation stock should not be taken as a starting point for the implementation of a Housing First plan, but as the result of such a plan, proving its effectiveness.

Emergency accommodation in its rightful place must become a short-term transition service, accessible to all, and a platform for redirecting people to appropriate solutions. Empowerment, peer support, adaptation of the environment and professional practices to the needs and resources of the people being cared for must be at the centre of homeless services. The psychological, emotional and social needs of the people being cared for must become the basis for action by the services, through an inclusive approach, both in the physical environment and in interpersonal relations.

“Roberto is an alcohol-dependent wheelchair-bound resident who has complex needs. He consumes five litres of alcohol per day. He made a lot of trips back and forth between services, until he came here. We asked him what the minimum amount of alcohol he could handle in a day was. He told us three litres. So, we made an arrangement: the nurse gives him one litre in the morning, one litre at noon, one litre in the evening; he pays for the alcohol, we administer it. It’s been five months since he arrived at the residence and his situation has greatly improved.”¹²⁰ JJ

The principle of continuity of care in emergency accommodation must not only make it possible to avoid putting people back out on the streets after one night, which is key to safeguarding people’s dignity, but also to ensure that solutions are always ‘a step up’ i.e. towards sustainable, secure, safe and affordable housing solutions for housing, supported or not, depending on the individual’s needs. Prevention and early intervention have a key role to play here. It is important for service providers to understand behaviours as well as to focus more on the needs and difficulties of people who are chronically homeless. There is a vicious circle between homelessness and trauma. Housing should be obtained as soon as possible to minimise the possibility of traumatic experiences being accumulated.

“Professionals are not sufficiently aware of low-threshold treatment. It is essential to train teams in this. All stakeholders must understand that there are people who will never reintegrate, not in the way we understand it. These people need to be helped, too. That’s the meaning of not abandoning anyone.”¹²¹ JJ

120

Sonia Veloso,
medical doctor and
director, URPSA,
Porto (October 2018).

121

Sonia Veloso,
medical doctor and
director, URPSA,
Porto (October 2018).

122

National Audit Office
(2017), *op. cit.*

Homelessness is a structural problem, caused by the perpetuation of inequality, poverty, and the failure of social, housing, migration and health policies. A cross-disciplinary approach, meaning the end of public action being taken in isolation, is therefore key to making an effective transition. The failure of austerity to public policies is obvious. Irrespective of whether we are talking about specialised child welfare centres, hospitals, prisons, institutional and community mental health facilities, or support systems for asylum seekers, budgetary restrictions make it impossible to monitor long-term progress.

In general, the drastic austerity measures applied to social policies has had a direct impact on homelessness. The reform of housing benefits in **England**, by making housing even less affordable for people receiving benefits, has been criticised by the Court of Auditors as one factor that explains the increase in the number of homeless people.¹²² Since 2012, the termination of a private rental contract has become the leading cause of homelessness in England. According to studies conducted by Shelter, by 2020, 83% of housing in England will be unaffordable for tenants receiving housing assistance. It is therefore essential, and possible, to combat housing exclusion at its source, through homelessness prevention policies closely linked to policies to combat social exclusion. Effective prevention would consist of ensuring that in all public social services it is possible to ensure their users benefit from decent and safe housing at any given moment and without exception.

Prevention is now at the centre of the 2016-2019 national strategy to end homelessness in **Finland**.¹²³ In Vienna, **Austria**, an effective eviction prevention model for the entire rental sector has been put in place by the city council. The courts are obliged to inform the social services department of an eviction order, which results in better support for the households

concerned. Examples of integrated prevention policies also exist in the **United Kingdom** where a system of legal obligations for local authorities to prevent homelessness has been established. Local authorities in Wales and England have an almost universal duty to try to prevent homelessness for anyone within their administrative borders who is at risk of homelessness within 56 days. This is achieved by setting up a Housing Options team. The team is assigned to a 'at risk' person and gets in touch with other services depending on the circumstances (i.e. security deposits, housing advice and legal assistance, local social housing and letting agencies with quick access to housing as well as comprehensive support for addictions, debts, physical and mental health, social assistance, etc.). These services work closely with homelessness relief services, which aim to rehouse users as quickly as possible and minimise the experience of homelessness when it occurs. The results of this legislation are encouraging. However, 'while legislation may be successful, it will always be compromised by more pressing social problems, such as the lack of available housing, ongoing social reforms that push many people towards homelessness, and chronic cuts in local authority funding'.¹²⁴ In Scotland, the same types of Housing Options services were introduced in 2009 with an implementation fund for local authorities which created local platforms for the exchange of good prevention practices.¹²⁵ Through the introduction of these prevention services as well as the adoption of local Housing First policies and the abolition of some priority access criteria in 2012, the number of requests for assistance for homeless people fell sharply between 2009 and 2014 in Scotland, and then stabilised.

123

Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019, disponible sur : <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/action-plan-preventing-homelessness-finland-2016%E2%80%932019>

124

University of Salford Manchester (2018), 'Lessons 'need to be learned' from Welsh homelessness law', disponible sur : <https://www.salford.ac.uk/news/articles/2018/lessons-need-to-be-learned-from-welsh-homelessness-law>

125

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/homelessness/housing-options/>

What is meant by 'ending homelessness'?

- **No one lives on the street**, in tents or in their cars any more.
- **Everyone has a secure and stable place to live**, no-one lives in emergency accommodation in the medium or long term without a quick exit plan to access permanent housing.
- **Where homelessness can be predicted, it can be prevented** : no one leaves their home, or is forced to leave their home or an institution (prison, hospital, child welfare services, etc.) without a housing solution.

Crisis (2018), Everybody in: How to end homelessness in Great Britain, available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/executive-summary/>

WHAT SHOULD EUROPE DO?

The European Union has a responsibility towards people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion. Dignity and human rights are fundamental values of the EU. The EU's commitment to social rights and objectives are at the heart of the European project, in parallel with its economic objectives. This commitment has been strengthened over the years and were enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. In light of repercussions from the 2008 economic crisis to the rise of Euroscepticism and nationalism, the European Union is trying to relaunch its social ambitions and to convince citizens that social progress is always possible. Jean-Claude Juncker's 'Social Triple A' commitment, the European Union's investment plan, which includes an increasingly important social dimension, the Sustainable Development Goals 1.1 and 11.1, and more recently the European Pillar of Social Rights, are all initiatives that provide the European institutions with powerful levers for contributing to the reduction in homelessness.



Renovation workshop as part of the 'Living in the dorm' action-research project, **Turin, Italy**
Department of Architecture and Design - Politecnico di Torino for Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus © Daniele Lazzaretto - Lilithphoto

However, there is a long way to go to prove to citizens that the European Union and its institutions can work together for social progress. The fact that homelessness not only persists but is rapidly increasing in the majority of EU countries is an alarming reminder: European integration has not eliminated poverty or provided a decent quality of life for all its people. Despite the 'leaving no one behind' pledge in the Sustainable Development Goals, a proportion of the European population has been abandoned to homelessness and unfit housing.

The European Pillar of Social Rights has raised new expectations with regard to the EU's role on this front.¹²⁶ It amounts to a political commitment, which establishes housing and assistance to homeless people as one of the 20 areas

in which Member States should concentrate their efforts. Announced in November 2017, it is non-binding on Member States and it has not yet led to a concrete implementation plan. Through Article 19 on housing and assistance for the homeless, the European Commission asserts the right of 'access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality' which 'shall be provided for those in need', 'appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction' for vulnerable people, and finally 'adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion'.

We have identified four levers through which European action can be structured and the right to housing for all can be implemented.

126

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_fr

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S DEFENCE OF FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The European Union has a unique role to play in protecting fundamental rights, human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law: the EU must ensure that Member States' policies respect human rights and do not contribute to the criminalisation of homelessness. The banning of begging, or of sleeping or camping in public spaces must be strongly condemned. The European Commission's silence on the criminalisation of homelessness, which has existed in Hungary since 2018 - and is what's more enshrined in its Constitution - is a flagrant dereliction of the Commission's duty. We are calling for firm condemnation of this inhumane policy which has been instigated by the Hungarian government.

We are inviting European cities to sign the Homeless Bill of Rights¹²⁷ to reaffirm their commitment to fundamental human rights. In their capacity as guardians of the European Treaties, the European Commission is the Member States' guarantor for the obligations that stem from fundamental human rights. The unconditional right to emergency accommodation must be clearly asserted in order to end the arbitrary distribution of available places to various vulnerable groups.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Organisations that fight housing exclusion are fully aware of the importance of the principle of subsidiarity for the European Institutions and the European Union's lack of competency in the area of housing. Nonetheless, housing is not an island: homelessness stems from the failure of multiple public policies that do not protect their targeted demographic from the loss of housing. The EU must stop hiding behind the argument that it lacks competency in order justify its inaction. Instead, it must recognise the

impact of the European competencies on the issue of housing and act accordingly. European legislation on issues such as migration, free movement, discrimination, disability, taxation, consumer protection, competition, energy and macro-economic governance must take into consideration reducing homelessness and the rights of homeless people.

With regard to free movement, for example, uncertainty about interpreting European law on the issue is leaving too much room for manoeuvre with regard to local policies which are more influenced by the local political climate than by an understanding of our common values. The European Commission must strengthen its control measures and its sanctions in relation to Member States who infringe European legislation on free movement. It should also establish a new legislative framework that would guarantee access to basic services, including accommodation, to mobile European citizens in order to protect their fundamental rights, similar to the directive on reception conditions for asylum applicants.¹²⁸

More generally speaking, regarding migration, the EU should consider homelessness amongst migrants as the result of structural factors, including inadequate reception facilities and an inability to deal with irregularly-residing migrants. The European Commission must guarantee continuity in housing for all people in the process of seeking asylum.¹²⁹ It should invest in housing and accommodation solutions to promote the integration of migrants. It should guarantee access to basic services (such as food, health-care and accommodation) regardless of administrative status and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to the services who work with these people.

Other legislative powers, such as those that govern consumer protection or discrimination, for example, could be put to use in order

127

<https://www.housingrightswatch.org/fr/billofrights>

128

FEANTSA (2018), 'Effectively tackling homelessness amongst mobile EU citizens: the role of homelessness services, cities, Member States and the EU', available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/effectively-tackling-homelessness-amongst-mobile-eu-citizens7332890560782313964.pdf>

129

FEANTSA & Greek Network for the Right to Shelter and Housing (2019), 'A Home for Refugees: The Need for Housing Throughout Asylum Procedures and Beyond', available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2019/02/01/news-feantsa-and>

to ensure that European legislation does not neglect people who are citizens with rights prior to becoming homeless. Legislative improvement in consumer protection could include rules protecting citizens from evictions and repossessions within the framework of the European banking union.

INVESTMENT

The European budget is one of the most important tools at the disposal of Member States to help them reduce homelessness. The European Union budget is set in a multiannual framework. In the current multiannual financial framework (2014-2020), structural funds and investment funds support initiatives in the fight against housing exclusion, particularly through the European Social Fund (at least 20% of the ESF in each Member State must be spent on promoting social inclusion, the fight against poverty and discrimination), the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Furthermore, the 'Juncker' investment plan for Europe provides an EU guarantee to mobilise investment to relaunch growth. This instrument, launched in 2015, has the potential to mobilise investment that is earmarked for affordable housing in order to fight homelessness.

The future multiannual financial framework (2021-2027) currently being negotiated, opens up further possibilities for financing measures to reduce homelessness, both through structural funds and through the future investment programme that will follow the 'Juncker' plan: InvestEU. The draft regulation for the future ESF+ and ERDF is positive in terms of the simplified use of these instruments for the fight against homelessness. InvestEU envisages increased emphasis on social investment, in particular on social infrastructure, with affordable housing as a priority.

It is important to remember that the main responsibility for organising and financing measures to fight homelessness lies at local, regional and national level. The added value of European financing should be to improve policies and services. The best initiatives to combat housing deprivation financed by the EU support the transition from managing homelessness to eradicating homelessness. Unfortunately, investment in homelessness, whether from national or European funds, focuses on short-termist measures to manage the issue rather than strategic approaches that aim to end homelessness. So far, we have, for example, noted a very small proportion of European funds being invested in housing infrastructure to provide a permanent home for homeless people. Generally speaking, European structural and investment funds very rarely reach the most vulnerable people. There are, however, examples of best practice that are paving the way: the role of European funds is to support stakeholders who want to transform their practices and to encourage the transition from emergency-based systems towards strategic policies that will prevent and reduce homelessness through housing.¹³⁰

Structural funds and the investment programme must both be used to promote the reduction of homelessness. Mobilising traditional subsidies and investment instruments is required. The challenge lies in ensuring that these instruments reach the most excluded people in our society, by for example financing 'very affordable' housing and Housing First policies. This will bring real added value and will serve to compensate for the failures of the housing market. Housing people who are most in need offers an excellent return on investment for Europe, because housing exclusion has a very high human and economic cost. It is now up to decision-makers and stakehold-

130

See FEANTSA (2017), 'FEANTSA Ending homelessness Awards 2017 – A handbook on using the European Social Fund to fight homelessness', available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/fea-007-17-eu-funding_ok_7885765817773537732.pdf et <https://www.feantsa.org/en/event/2018/11/05/feantsa-ending-homelessness-awards-2018>.

ers at European, national and regional level to seize these opportunities and to use the European budget to eradicate homelessness. The Commission should explore the possibility of developing specific instruments for the eradication of homelessness in the framework of the InvestEU programme, such as an investment platform or a dedicated fund.

The support funds for the European Commission's structural reforms must encourage the Member States to finance the scaling up of homeless reduction policies through housing. France's Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing, for example, has tendered a bid to receive this technical assistance in order to implement its national Housing First plan. The investment requirements are significant: transformation/creation of new infrastructure, training via ongoing educational material and job creation in the sector are all key to the plan.

FOLLOW-UP, COORDINATION AND GUIDANCE

With regard to homelessness, the European institutions have a role to play in guiding policies, sharing best practices and pooling know-how. While this role has already been endorsed by the institutions, it must now be strengthened and become more dynamic if it is to lead to concrete results, in particular given the dramatic deterioration of the situation. Eurobarometer surveys show that access to affordable housing is a major concern for EU citizens. The fight against homelessness is top of the political agenda in a growing number of Member States. This gives the EU a window of opportunity to step up its follow-up, coordination and direction of Member States' actions in this area. The establishment of a European strategy for eradicating homelessness by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, would be

an opportunity to implement in practice principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on housing exclusion.

At EU level, we still lack a robust mechanism to fully comprehend and monitor the extent of homelessness and housing exclusion. We also lack policies to address these issues. Homeless people are rendered invisible within European social statistics. Europe claims to monitor the social situation of Member States without knowing if citizens have a decent place to live. While efforts have been made to include, the effects of the housing crisis more systematically and rigorously in some European Semester documents¹³¹ and to trial a module on 'housing difficulties' via Eurostat-EUSILC, the EU's social dashboard still does not include adequate indicators on housing exclusion. A proper follow-up mechanism on homelessness in Europe must therefore be established as soon as possible, to enable data comparison of homelessness and housing exclusion and an evaluation of Member States' performance to be carried out.

“Every now and then I hear some cynical and sceptical comments claiming the idea of ending homelessness is a utopian ideology. But in a world where we see dystopia emerging around us each day, this is exactly what is needed: passion, solidarity and a lot of idealism.”¹³²”

131

See FEANTSA (2018), 'Growing homelessness & housing exclusion flagged in the Autumn Package... but you'll have to read the small print!', available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/download/feantsa-position-2019-european-semester6924921379300054734.pdf>

132

Juha Kaakinen, CEO of the Y-Foundation – Finland, December 2018, in Y-Säätiö (2019), 'Homelessness in 2030: Essays on possible futures', p. 7, available at: <https://ysaatio.fi/assets/files/2019/01/Y-Foundation-Homelessness2030-Web.pdf>

The inability of emergency services to reduce homelessness is not simply the fault of the homeless support sector but rather it is a global failure of public policies to prevent situations of extreme insecurity and the loss of one's home. The general attitude towards people affected by housing exclusion and homelessness must change: we should stop pre-judging people's capacity to be housed or not. This does not work. Housing is a right, not a reward. Ending homelessness does not mean that nobody will ever be deprived of housing. This means that there will be rare situations, but that there will also be dignified, immediate and sustainable solutions available to resolve the problem. European citizens expect a fairer Europe, one that leaves no one behind. It is the very future of the European project that is at stake. Committing to putting an end to the scandal of homelessness would be the perfect way to invest in this future



Bedroom in an emergency shelter,
Dublin, Ireland - © Peter McVerry Trust



Double bedroom in an emergency shelter,
Genoa, Italy - © fio.PSD



Dormitory in an emergency shelter, Warsaw,
MONAR, Poland - © Sylwia Stefaniak