

15

EPOCH
PRACTICE

INSPIRING PRACTICE BRIEFS

TO BETTER COMBAT HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE



OCTOBER 2025

This publication brings together 15 briefs of Inspiring Practices and is published as part of the EPOCH Practice programme.

It is intended for members of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH) and all stakeholders in the fight against homelessness in Europe.



Co-funded by
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Délégation interministérielle
à l'hébergement et à
l'accès au logement

Acknowledgements

We would like to warmly thank all **the project promoters** for sharing their valuable experiences and for their rich contributions to the development of this compendium.

Special thanks to the members of the Expert Committee for their insights and dedication throughout the process:

- **Birthe Povlsen,**
- **Martinho Dias,**
- **Sarah Coupechoux,**
- **Pascal De Decker,**
- **Gyorgy Sumeghy.**

Their perspectives have greatly helped shape the content and spirit of this publication.

We are also grateful to the **60+ individuals** who took part in the Open Call for Inspiring Practices launched last year, and who generously shared their inspiring projects and initiatives with us.

Their contributions have laid the foundation for a truly diverse and representative selection of practices.

This publication was developed as part of the EPOCH Practice programme, coordinated by FEANTSA, and supported by the European Commission, the French Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing (DIHAL), the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the King Baudouin Foundation.

Emoji Key:



Employment



Housing



Youth



Women



Health



Policy



Participation

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BUILT WITH MANY HANDS

Introduction

In mid-May 2024, I clicked “Publish” on the form for the Open Call for Inspiring Practices. One submission. Then another followed. Quickly, the numbers grew. And by the time the form closed, **over 60 responses** had come in. An incredible pool of inspiring practices from across Europe, covering a wide range of themes related to tackling homelessness.

And a great deal of work ahead for EPOCH Practice and its dedicated Expert Committee: selecting, narrowing down to 15, writing, editing, and formatting. A task that would have been impossible without the help of the submitters — the project promoters — who co-constructed their briefs with us.

This has undoubtedly been the most long-term activity we have carried out under EPOCH Practice — one that has stretched across almost the entire two-year programme. But that is how long it took to do justice to such a highly collaborative process. We hope the result will be useful not only to project promoters and EPOCH members, but **to everyone working to end homelessness across Europe.**

This compendium is one of the traces we leave behind: **a modular, copyright-free document**, ready to be read in full or in parts, to be shared, and to help connect people — whether they work in similar ways or very differently — elsewhere in Europe.

Through EPOCH Practice, we aim to bring **meaning** to the mutual learning effort of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH), by bridging frontline work and European-level policymaking.



Arnaud VERNUS
EPOCH Practice officer
FEANTSA



BRIEF 1

**Empowering Voices: Participation in
Budapest's Homelessness Strategy**
Municipality of Budapest
Budapest, Hungary

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Empowering Voices: Participation in Budapest's Homelessness Strategy

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To include the opinions and experiences of people with lived experience of homelessness in the participatory creation of Budapest's municipal homelessness strategy.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People with lived experience of homelessness, both those currently experiencing homelessness and those with past experience.

IN NUMBERS.

221

individuals with firsthand experience of homelessness included in the participatory strategy design.

13

forums held for individuals to provide their input.

25

individuals with firsthand experience of homelessness included in the Council of Experts by Experience

SUMMARY.

"Home for everyone", Budapest's new ten-year strategy on homelessness, adopted in 2022, attempts to facilitate a paradigm shift in homeless policy. To ensure meaningful involvement of those most affected, the municipality built the strategy around a multi-layered participatory process, prioritising the genuine engagement of people with lived experience of homelessness over tokenistic approaches.



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Municipality of Budapest

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Budapest, Hungary

Project description

Home for Everyone: A Ten-Year Participatory Strategy

“Home for Everyone” is a ten-year plan aiming to reorient homelessness policy towards the provision of affordable housing. The strategy-making process strongly emphasised the inclusion of people with firsthand experience of homelessness. A participatory process engaged 221 individuals through 13 well-publicised forums held in overnight shelters, temporary hostels, family homes, day centres, and one forum among formerly homeless tenants of the Municipality. Additionally, a Council of Experts by Experience was created, composed of 25 formerly homeless individuals, selected via a well-advertised open call to ensure representation across age, gender, and educational background.

The Council took part in interactive workshops co-facilitated by two experienced, formerly homeless activists. Members shared their insights, formulated expectations, gave feedback on the preliminary draft of the strategy, expressed their views directly to the Mayor, and delegated one member to address the City Assembly during the debate on the final version.



Participation as a Core Principle and Ongoing Process

The core principle of participation was based on four rationales: it is the Municipality's duty to involve those most affected; participative methods can improve the quality of policymaking; access to deliberative spaces holds intrinsic value; and inclusion affirms homeless people's equal membership in society. An anonymous survey of the Council indicated high satisfaction with the process. Written feedback included: “I could share my opinion and voice my complaints” and “Our shared problems fostered unity, and we listened to each other.”

Participation continues throughout implementation. For instance, a reform of municipal cash transfers for people experiencing homelessness involved both a survey of recipients and dedicated participatory forums. While the strategy defines priorities over ten years, funding decisions are made annually through the municipal budget.

Inspiration note

From Temporary Shelter to Preventive Housing

The Municipality of Budapest has a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and has traditionally been active in delivering such. However, these efforts have largely focused on symptomatic treatment—providing services to those already homeless—while neglecting measures to prevent homelessness or ensure affordable housing.

This oversight contributed to persistently high levels of chronic homelessness. The Budapest Municipality set out to design a new ten-year homelessness strategy with the goal of shifting the paradigm. By placing housing at the core of its approach and amplifying the voices of homeless citizens, the strategy aims to prioritise prevention and long-term solutions over token measures.

A Bold Stand in a Challenging Political Climate

Homeless services and policies face a fundamental limitation: they attempt to address homelessness, a consequence of systemic wealth and income inequalities, without tackling these root causes. Another key barrier to effective policy lies in the societal perception of "the homeless" as a separate group, seen as incapable or undeserving of housing like other citizens.

Hungarian national government policies have increasingly emphasised the criminalisation of homelessness, focusing on punitive measures rather than social supports for the most vulnerable. State-sponsored media incites intolerance toward homeless people. Within this difficult political climate, Budapest has emerged as a municipality taking a radically different approach to its national administration, thus showing that regions, cities and localities can display agency in creating inclusive local policies.



Birthe Povlsen
Independent Consultant in Social Policy and Homelessness,
Denmark.

An important message to all countries and municipalities: it is essential to involve individuals with lived experience of homelessness in the development of public policy. Their insights not only contribute to more informed and effective decision-making in the fight against homelessness, but also demonstrate that people who have experienced homelessness possess valuable resources. When given the opportunity to participate actively in shaping solutions, they can not only improve their own situations but also contribute to sustainable outcomes for all those at risk of becoming homeless.

BRIEF 2

EU HOMELESSNESS COUNTS KU Leuven and partners

35 cities across 21 EU countries
(2025)

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

European Homelessness Counts

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

Producing comparable evidence on the extent and profile of homelessness, in order to support, on the one hand, local and national policy developments, but also to feed the EU level policy progress.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Relevance to those working on homelessness across the EU, but particularly local, regional and national policymakers who enumerate homelessness and create responding policies.

IN NUMBERS.

15

cities in 10 EU Member States carried out counts in line with the project methodology in 2024.

35

cities in 2025 across 21 EU Member States will carry out counts under the project methodology, including 10 capital cities.

1 in 3

people counted was sleeping rough in Ljubljana's and Kosice's first homelessness count.

SUMMARY.

The European Homelessness Count develops a modular, city-level methodology to produce comparable homelessness data across Europe. Combining headcounts, administrative data, and surveys aligned with ETHOS Light, the project balances local ownership with standardisation. It supports evidence-based policymaking, promotes efforts to explore more hidden forms of homelessness, and fosters cross-city learning, aiming to improve responses and resource allocation for people experiencing homelessness.



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https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu_homelessness_counts

Project description

Building a European Framework for Homelessness Data

The European Homelessness Counts project aims to improve the comparability of homelessness data across Europe by implementing a modular, city-level methodology. In Year 1, 15 cities across 10 EU countries participated; in Year 2, the project expands to 35 cities in 21 countries. Led by KU Leuven with city partners and direct funding from the European Commission (plus city co-funding), it combines administrative data, headcounts, and survey tools to collect robust data aligned with ETHOS Light categories. The modular approach balances standardisation with local ownership, allowing cities to adapt methods while contributing to comparable EU-level data.

Preliminary findings indicate significant variation in homelessness prevalence and profile characteristics across cities. Rough sleeping (ETHOS Light 1) remains highly visible in some urban centres, whereas in others, homelessness is more concealed, often manifesting as temporary and makeshift housing arrangements (ETHOS Light 5). The data underscore the necessity of incorporating multiple methodologies to capture the full spectrum of homelessness experiences.

From Local Action to European Impact

Key strategies included a co-created modular methodology which is feasible and robust across different types of cities and service landscapes, close collaboration of research teams with cities and service providers, training of enumerators, ethical data collection, and engagement with diverse services and levels of administration for data collection and interpretation. Success indicators include scaling up of the methods, increased participation, better data coverage (including hidden homelessness), and uptake of findings in local/national policy. Risks—such as data inconsistency due to local adaptations or limited service infrastructure—are mitigated through harmonised tools.

Ongoing evaluation involves peer exchange, methodological refinement, and qualitative reviews to ensure relevance and impact. Ultimately, the project supports evidence-based policy, better targeting of services, and shared learning across Europe.

More information about the counts project, as well as the Year 1 results for the first 15 cities, can be found via the [project website](#).

TIMELINE

2024

Year 1 of the counts in cities such as Dublin, Catania, Ljubljana, and Košice.

2025

Year 2 with the expansion of the project to 35 EU cities.

Beyond 2025

Aim to establish a robust, scalable EU-wide framework for homelessness data collection.

Inspiration note

A Transformative Approach to Measuring Homelessness

The European Homelessness Count is an innovative response to one of the most persistent social challenges across Europe. Its ambition—to create a comparable, scalable, and locally owned method for counting homelessness—marks a transformative step toward evidence-based policymaking. With participation from 35 cities across 21 countries by its second year, the project demonstrates the power of collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility between local and EU level actors.

What makes this initiative exceptional is its **modular methodology**, which enables cities to tailor data collection efforts to their local realities while contributing to a unified European framework. By combining headcounts, administrative data, and direct surveys aligned with ETHOS Light categories, the project not only maps visible homelessness, such as rough sleeping, but also captures hidden and institutional forms—often experienced by women and other marginalised groups.

This commitment to **inclusivity and accuracy** is matched by a strong ethical foundation: the approach prioritises consent, GDPR compliance, and the principle of "do no harm" in all data collection. It also tackles the "service statistics paradox" head-on, acknowledging that the availability of services can distort visibility, and provides a mixed-methods solution to correct this bias.

From Local Capacity to European Solidarity

The project's impact is already visible. In cities with limited previous data, such as Catania, Košice or Ljubljana, the process of conducting a count built capacity, fostered cooperation, and initiated new dialogues around homelessness. Elsewhere, such as in Dublin or Lyon, it has strengthened the use of existing administrative systems and revealed service gaps. Several cities piloted measurement methods to capture new ETHOS Light groups that so far have not been included in local data collection traditions.

The European Homelessness Count is not just a technical exercise—it is a catalyst for change, offering cities the tools to better understand, serve, and advocate for their homeless populations. It presents a replicable, rights-based model that can reshape how Europe responds to homelessness: with evidence, with nuance, and with solidarity.



Pascal de Decker, PhD
Sociologist and urban planner, Social and Political Sciences,
Emeritus at KU Leuven, Department of Architecture, Belgium

After years of discussions about what homelessness is and even more about the numbers, the ETHOS light has finally found a methodology to count homelessness. To measure is to know. This counting can now be the starting point for a systematic count, a basis on which policy can be developed and a framework for measuring policy effects.

BRIEF 3

HOUSING FIRST AUSTRIA - ARRIVING HOME (hfö) BAWO

Austria, nationwide

INSPIRING PRACTICE

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Housing First Austria – Arriving Home (hfö)

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To sustainably end homelessness by scaling up Housing First across Austria.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as defined by ETHOS.

IN NUMBERS.

2000

individuals housed between May 2021 and September 2024.

68%

of people registered as homeless in Austria are men, while 60% of hfö's adult beneficiaries were women

€11.8M

total **funding** from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Affairs

SUMMARY.

Housing First Austria – Arriving Home (hfö) housed 2,000 people from 2021 to 2024 through a nation-wide NGO network and partnerships with the limited-profit housing sector. Fully funded by the Austrian government, the project's success led to the creation of a national Housing First programme in 2024. This marks a transition from emergency response to sustainable housing policy.



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Project description

From Emergency Response to Structural Change

Initially funded as a Covid-19 emergency response, the project targeted those newly homeless due to the pandemic. The scale of need and impact led to its extension with regular funding, demonstrating governmental commitment to long-term homelessness solutions.

Flexible Implementation and coordinated Governance

The initiative was implemented by 26 NGOs across seven federal states, with BAWO coordinating nationally. Each organisation adapted the implementation of the project to local contexts, supported by shared learning activities. A majority of funds went directly to housing costs and support services.

Structured Impact and a Scalable Model

Hfö produced consistent outcomes across regions, with hundreds stably housed and support systems formalised. The project also created a strong operational backbone—training tools, shared quality standards, data reporting protocols—allowing for harmonised practices among diverse NGOs.

By fostering a robust ecosystem of practitioners and consolidating institutional knowledge, the project set a precedent for structurally embedding Housing First into Austria's homelessness response.

TIMELINE

May 2021

Launch of Housing First Austria with emergency pandemic funding.

2023

Transition to regular government funding as demand persists.

September 2024

Official end of the project after housing 2,000 people.

October 2024

Government launches WOHN SCHIRM Housing First national programme.

End 2026

Target to house 2,500 people under the new national scheme.

Inspiration note

From Local Pilots to National Standards

The success of “Housing First Austria – Arriving Home” accelerated the integration of Housing First into national policy. While Housing First had been implemented on local levels before 2021, this project enabled structural change on a national level. It brought visibility to a method once seen as marginal and laid the foundation for a comprehensive federal strategy. Today, Housing First is no longer an innovation—it is a recognised standard in Austria’s social policy toolbox.

Making It Work at Scale

A key lesson is that scaling up requires not just funding, but trust in civil society. By empowering NGOs to lead implementation, the Austrian government ensured responsiveness to local needs while maintaining consistency through national coordination. This model helped secure buy-in across sectors, from housing providers to public institutions. It also contributed to professionalising support teams, which continue to work within the new national programme.

Embedding Housing First in the Long Term

The launch of the WOHN SCHIRM Housing First in October 2024 marks the start of a new chapter. The goal: house 2,500 people by the end of 2026. Lessons from hfö now inform programme design, with Austria’s Ministry of Social Affairs coordinating the programme and bringing NGO partners on board. WOHN SCHIRM is not limited to Housing First: it also includes eviction prevention and protection from energy supply cuts due to delayed payments, forming a comprehensive social safety net. Though BAWO no longer leads implementation, it remains a key advocate. Austria’s trajectory shows that with political will and shared vision, Housing First can become a lasting solution—not just a temporary fix.

“



Birthe Povlsen
Independent Consultant in Social Policy and Homelessness,
Denmark.

This serves as a strong illustration of how strategic partnerships between non-governmental organisations operating in the housing and social welfare sectors—supported through public funding—can deliver effective outcomes for society’s most vulnerable populations. It further underscores that the successful implementation and scaling of the evidence-based Housing First model is contingent upon sustained, coordinated collaboration between public authorities and civil society actors across the housing and social policy domains, ultimately improving the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.

”

BRIEF 4

MIXED LIVING

Stichting de Tussenvoorziening

Utrecht, The Netherlands

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Mixed Living

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To support formerly homeless individuals by integrating them into mixed living communities, where they live alongside regular tenants and build social networks to aid their transition to stable housing and social inclusion.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Individuals who have experienced homelessness, especially those with weak social networks.

IN NUMBERS.

25

Mixed Living projects
since 2014.

250

individuals housed in these
projects.

93%

housing stability rate for
participants.

SUMMARY.

Mixed Living projects in Utrecht offer stable housing to formerly homeless individuals in shared communities, fostering social networks and rehabilitation. This approach, with professional support over three years, significantly shortens the transition to independent living, promoting long-term recovery and reducing the need for intensive support. It also creates stronger, more cohesive communities, contributing to both individual and collective wellbeing.



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Stichting de Tussenvoorziening

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Project description

Recreate a social environment for isolated individuals

The Mixed Living programme supports homeless individuals with limited social networks. Around 50% of people in shelters lack meaningful support, increasing their risk of returning to homelessness. The programme brings together formerly homeless individuals and regular tenants to create supportive communities. Clients are selected by an intake team based on motivation, network and needs. Regular tenants are chosen by the housing corporation, based on motivation and registration time, in close coordination with the organisation. Each person has a tailored profile and support plan.

A rapidly growing programme

The programme began in 2000 with 't Groene Sticht. In 2014, Majella Wonen marked a key milestone, and between 2019 and 2024, over 25 projects were launched in the Utrecht region. These initiatives have housed around 250 people. The Municipality of Utrecht finances part of the support, and charities contribute to furnishing and initial costs. A study by Hogeschool Utrecht found that 93% of formerly homeless participants remained stably housed over time, demonstrating the programme's long-term effectiveness.

A decreasing annual cost, shared governance

The average annual cost per participant is €25,000, decreasing over time as support needs lessen—reaching €0 after three years. They aim to provide their clients with a personal budget to cover basic needs such as furniture and household items, which depends on private funding. Regular individual guidance is funded through standard care, while extra support like community coaching relies on subsidies. The programme is governed jointly by social organisations, housing corporations and municipalities, ensuring both shared responsibility and sustainability.

TIMELINE

2002

Launch of the first mixed living project, 't Groene Sticht, in Utrecht, and 2003, with the arrival of the first residents.

2014

Second mixed living project, Majella Wonen, initiated, followed by further developments.

2019-2024

Over 25 mixed living projects implemented, housing 250 former homeless individuals.

Inspiration note

A Realistic Way to Do Housing First?

The Mixed Living project offers a practical and effective implementation of the Housing First approach by providing formerly homeless individuals with stable housing from the outset. This eliminates the need for intermediate steps, such as staying in shelters, which are often barriers to long-term stability. By integrating these individuals into mixed communities with regular tenants, they gain not only a home but also a supportive social network that aids their rehabilitation. The project's success lies in its collaborative model, involving housing corporations, social organisations, and municipalities, with professional guidance tapering off over three years. This enables a smooth transition to independent living, reducing the likelihood of relapse into homelessness and promoting long-term recovery.

The Importance of Social Mixing and Combating Isolation

Social mixing is a key element of the Mixed Living project, as it fosters interactions between formerly homeless individuals and regular tenants, creating a sense of community and shared responsibility. This integration helps break down the stigma surrounding homelessness and facilitates the development of social bonds, which are essential for long-term stability. By working closely together in community activities and daily life, individuals build trust and mutual understanding, combating the isolation that many homeless people experience. This approach is crucial, as research shows that isolation and lack of a supportive network are significant factors in preventing successful reintegration into society.

Inspiring Success Factors of the Mixed Living Project

The success of the Mixed Living initiative can be attributed to several key factors. One of the most important is the active commitment of all parties involved—housing corporations, local municipalities, and care organisations—which ensures the project's sustainability. The project also benefits from motivated residents who choose to be part of the community, contributing to a positive and engaged atmosphere. Additionally, the focus on providing individual homes for each resident ensures that they can live independently while still being part of a supportive community, making this a model of inclusive and sustainable housing.



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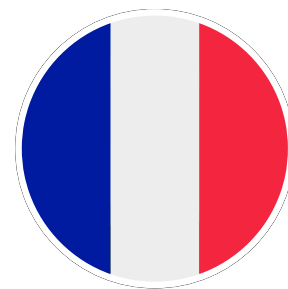
People who have been homeless usually have weak social networks. ID Card supports homeless people by housing them in a mixed community. What is especially essential, no time pressure is put on them. Those involved have three years to develop a social network, since a network does not build up overnight, especially people with a past in homelessness.

BRIEF 5

STREETS TO CONGREGATE HOMES
Municipality of Paris
Paris, France

INSPIRING PRACTICE

ID CARD



Paris, France

POLICY TITLE.

(From the) Streets to Congregate Homes

(Démarche de la rue aux Pensions de Famille, in French)

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

Increase access to Congregate Housing for rough sleepers and homeless individuals by creating direct pathways from the streets to housing.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Chronic rough sleepers and homeless individuals in Paris.

IN NUMBERS.

1700

Congregate housing first units - called Pensions de Famille - in Paris in 2025, funded by City Hall and other public funders over the last 25 years.

70

sites where these Congregate housing units are located across Paris.

56%

of congregate units allocated to homeless households in 2023 (up from 28% in 2022).

SUMMARY.

The "Streets to Congregate Homes" initiative, launched in 2023, sought to improve the allocation of congregate housing to rough sleepers. The initiative is modelled on the experience of 'Amsterdam', a congregate housing* site. Its success led to a shift in Paris' allocations policy, leading to a marked increase in the percentage of allocations made to homeless - and particularly rough sleeping - households.

**Congregate homes are residential facilities where several people live together and share common spaces. They usually provide some level of support or supervision while allowing residents a degree of independence.*

CONTACT.



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Le Plan parisien pour le logement d'abord - Ville de Paris



Paris City Hall (Ville de Paris)

[Paris.fr](https://paris.fr),

Project description

Addressing Barriers to Housing for Rough Sleepers

Congregate Housing sites have been a cornerstone of Paris City Hall's homelessness strategy for 25 years. Despite their effectiveness, chronic rough sleepers with complex needs faced significant barriers to access. The 'Streets to Congregate Homes' initiative was launched in 2023 to overcome these challenges by directly linking street outreach teams with available units in newly developed congregate housing sites. This measure is part of a broader local policy aimed at addressing the significant issue of homelessness in the French capital.

A Partnership-Based Approach to Increase Allocations

The initiative leveraged structured collaboration between Paris City Hall, the arrondissements, NGOs managing housing units, and outreach teams. The model was first tested when four chronic rough sleepers were successfully housed in 'Amsterdam', a new congregate site in the 8th arrondissement. Based on this success, four additional sites across Paris adopted the same approach, prioritising direct referrals from the streets from the local neighbourhood for a minimum of half of all new units.

Impact and Long-Term Policy Change

By demonstrating a replicable model, the initiative influenced broader housing allocation policies. The percentage of Congregate Housing units allocated to homeless individuals doubled from 28% in 2022 to 56%* in 2023. Despite a slight increase in refusal rates due to complex health needs, overall acceptance rates improved. The initiative remained cost-neutral, using existing resources while strengthening inter-agency coordination. From January 2024, the approach was mainstreamed into Paris City Hall's housing allocation policy.

*including only people sleeping rough and those classified as 'without stable accommodation'

TIMELINE

Autumn 2022

First 4 rough sleepers housed in pilot site in the 8th arrondissement.

January 2023

Launch of 'Streets to Congregate Homes' pilot covering all 4 new congregate housing sites delivered in 2023

December 2023

An evaluation confirms the impact of the pilot, with 56% in 2023 of units allocated to homeless households compared to 28% in 2022.

January 2024

Based on the success of the pilot, the approach was mainstreamed. Half of all new units are now ring-fenced for rough sleepers.

Inspiration note

Pensions de Famille as a Pillar of Housing First in France

In France, *pensions de famille* are a form of congregate housing developed as part of the national Housing First strategy. They offer permanent supportive housing through individual units combined with shared communal spaces and on-site social support. Aimed at people experiencing long-term housing exclusion, including those with complex health and social needs, these small-scale residences (typically 15 to 25 units) promote autonomy and foster a sense of community. Primarily funded through national budgets, with additional local contributions, pensions de famille provide secure, stable tenancies and serve as a long-term alternative to shelters and hostels.

Lessons from Paris: Removing Structural Barriers to Housing

This approach highlights the importance of reviewing allocation practices to remove structural obstacles that prevent rough sleepers from accessing long-term housing. By using existing resources and fostering collaboration between municipalities, homelessness outreach teams, housing providers, and social services, the initiative demonstrates that even cost-neutral policy adjustments can have a profound impact on reducing homelessness. The Paris case provides a replicable model for other cities seeking to strengthen Housing First implementation through congregate housing and direct access to permanent housing solutions.

The development of this sort of 'streets to homes' approach has however raised challenges for the support service teams of these sites. Paris City Hall has therefore launched an action training programme aimed at supporting these teams to provide high fidelity housing first support services that integrate risk reduction and recovery approaches.



Ruth Owen
Deputy Director, FEANTSA, Belgium

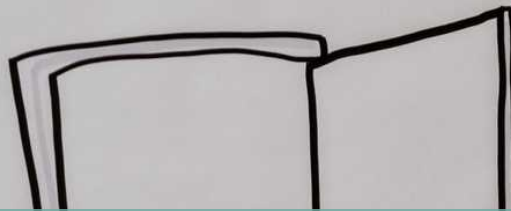
Pension de famille provide very affordable housing with a community & support dimension, in the context of a full tenancy agreement. This in itself could be a source of inspiration. The Paris "Streets to Congregate Homes" initiative shows that structural barriers in housing allocation can be overcome without new resources, simply by rethinking pathways and strengthening partnerships.

By ring-fencing half of all new congregate housing units for direct referrals from street outreach, Paris doubled the share of allocations to homeless households in just one year (from 28% to 56%).

This cost-neutral, partnership-based approach provides a replicable model for other European cities: aligning local housing providers, municipalities and outreach teams can unlock existing housing stock for rough sleepers while reinforcing Housing First strategies.



HEREIN
SPAZIERT



BRIEF 6

NEUNERHAUS PEER CAMPUS
neunerhaus

Vienna, Austria

WILLKOMMEN
am PEER

CAMPUS

ID CARD



Vienna, Austria

POLICY TITLE.

neunerhaus Peer Campus

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To train people with experience of homelessness to become peer workers in interdisciplinary teams in homelessness services, and to support the further professional development of peer work in Vienna.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People with lived experience of homelessness, organisations employing peer workers, and professionals in the homelessness sector.

IN NUMBERS.

118

individuals have graduated from the peer certification course since 2019.

75

peer workers employed in homelessness services in Vienna.

€500k

Approx. annual budget funded by the Vienna Social Fund (FSW).

SUMMARY.

The neunerhaus Peer Campus provides free, certified training for people with experience of homelessness to become peer workers. It supports their integration as employees in interdisciplinary teams in homelessness services, offers professional development through networking and further training opportunities, and supports organisations employing peer workers. By organising workshops, networking events, and strategic collaborations, the Peer Campus enhances the impact of peer work in homelessness services, both in Vienna and beyond.

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Project description

Developing Peer Work as a Profession

Since 2017, neunerhaus has worked to embed peer work within Vienna's homelessness sector. In collaboration with the Vienna Social Fund (FSW) from the City of Vienna and other social organisations, it developed a 7-month peer certification course. The programme includes seven modules, an internship, and a final project. In addition to the modules, further settings and formats help participants deepen their skills and prepare for both peer work and entry into the primary labour market. Course participants reflect on their lived experience and transform this into professional expertise. The course is free for participants. Graduates are then employed in interdisciplinary teams, adding unique value alongside social work and other expertise.

Supporting Peer Workers and Organisations

The Peer Campus supports the ongoing professional development of peer workers, through specialised training, networking sessions, and advisory services for peer workers and employers. Workshops help organisations integrate peer workers into their teams and services effectively. Regular forums and the biennial "exPEERience" conference facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices. Annually, the Peer Campus has around 400 interactions with peer workers and other professionals, demonstrating the growing impact of peer work in homelessness services.

Stable Funding and Strategic Partnerships

The initiative is primarily funded by the FSW. This stability enables the Peer Campus to expand its activities, including research collaborations and knowledge sharing. A key milestone was the 2023 publication of "PEER we are!", a German-language resource on peer work in homelessness services. Ongoing evaluations and feedback from graduates and employers guide programme development, ensuring lasting impact. The strong cooperation with funders and stakeholders provides a solid foundation for growth and sustainability.

TIMELINE

2017-2019

Initial development of peer work with the FSW and partner organisations.

2019

Pilot of the first peer certification course.

2019

Peer work integrated into the FSW's homelessness sector strategy.

2020

First "exPEERience" conference on peer work in Vienna.

2023

Publication of "PEER we are!", a guide to peer work in the sector.

2025

Upcoming EPOCH Practice training in collaboration with the FSW in Vienna.

Inspiration note

Peer Work as a Transformative Force

By supporting the integration of peer workers into interdisciplinary teams, the Peer Campus contributes to a transformation in the culture of homelessness services. Peer workers apply their lived expertise to break barriers between service users and providers, foster trust, and improve service delivery through their unique perspectives and relationship-building. Their presence challenges traditional hierarchies in social services, fostering a more inclusive and human-centred approach to support. This shift ensures that the perspectives of those with lived experience remain at the core of service design and delivery.

A Systemic Approach to Peer Work

Unlike one-off training schemes, the Peer Campus ensures long-term success by providing continuous professional development, networking opportunities, and organisational support. Peer workers receive structured training and post-certification mentoring, while organisations benefit from expert guidance and support on employing peer workers. This dual approach strengthens the entire homelessness support ecosystem, leading to improved collaboration, enhanced services, and better outcomes for both professionals and service users.

Institutional Recognition and Sustainable Growth

The Peer Campus has successfully positioned peer work as a recognised and funded career path within Vienna's homelessness sector. With strategic partnerships, ongoing research, and policy integration, it serves as a model for cities looking to embed peer work into their homelessness response strategies. The initiative demonstrates that meaningful participation of people with lived experience in service provision not only benefits individuals but also leads to systemic improvements. By fostering a structured and sustainable approach, the Peer Campus paves the way for peer work to be acknowledged as a core element of effective homelessness interventions.



Martinho Dias
Peer worker at CRESCER, Portugal

The neunerhaus Peer Campus in Vienna is a pioneering initiative that empowers individuals with lived experience of homelessness by training them as Peer Workers. Through a structured seven-month certification programme, participants transform personal challenges into professional expertise, offering invaluable support to those currently facing housing insecurity. This approach not only enriches social services with authentic insights but also fosters employment opportunities.

By integrating Peer Workers into multidisciplinary teams, Neunerhaus promotes a more empathetic and effective response to homelessness, setting a compelling example of participatory practices in social care.

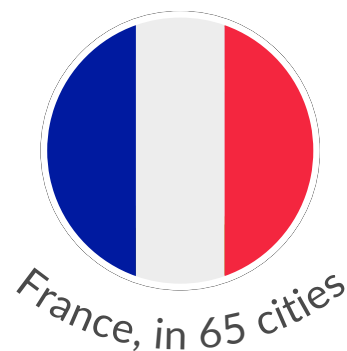
BRIEF 7

First Working Hours Convergence France

France, in 65 cities

INSPIRING PRACTICE

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

First Working Hours (Premières Heures en Chantier - PHC, in French)

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

First Working Hours is a programme that leverages work to help homeless individuals regain dignity and self-motivation, offering a highly individualised transition phase within Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) to support their re-engagement in housing, employment, and health.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Convergence France collaborates with WISEs to support individuals primarily facing homelessness or living in emergency accommodation, and who are legally eligible to work in France.

IN NUMBERS.

69

WISEs are involved in implementing First Working Hours across 39 French départements.

1023

individuals participated in the programme (2024), with projections indicating that this figure will double by 2027.

67%

of people participating in the programme who were living in the street have found a shelter, in 2024.

SUMMARY.

First Working Hours leverages work to help homeless individuals regain dignity and self-motivation, offering highly excluded people—those sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation—a gradual (re)entry into professional activity through a highly individualised approach, with an hour-by-hour work schedule. Implemented by WISEs, it serves as a stepping stone, empowering individuals to actively seek solutions in housing, health, mental health, and professional integration.

CONTACT.



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Convergence France website



Convergence France

70, rue de la Plaine 75020 PARIS

Project description

An Effective Programme to Reach Those Furthest from Employment

Through the WISEs' network, First Working Hours reaches the 350,000 people in France sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation, a number that has more than doubled in the past decade. In 2024, First Working Hours supported more than 1,000 homeless individuals, aiming to double this by 2027. The average age of participants is 41, 76% are male, 86% are single, and 92% have experienced homelessness, with 50% sleeping rough for over two years.

Core Principles and Support through WISEs

First Working Hours prioritises work as a key lever for overcoming barriers and regaining self-confidence and stability. Key principles include:

- Co-working: Building trust through direct, field-based relationships with socio-professional educators.
- Adaptation and Progressiveness: A recruitment process with no selection criteria or prerequisites, and a programme tailored to individual needs, with rewards like cash payment in the first month.
- Multidisciplinary Support: Collaboration with social workers and WISE managers ensures continued support for long-term integration.

A Solid Budget Delivering Strong Results

In 2024, 69% of previously homeless individuals found shelter, 44% gained employment, and 69% of those with a detected health problem agreed to receive health support. Implementing PHC in one WISE for one year, supporting 15 homeless people, costs €66K, with public funding covering employee salaries. In 2023, the national budget was €3.6M, with €400K funded by Convergence France and the rest from local public funders.

TIMELINE

2009

Creation of the First Working Hours programme by Emmaüs Défi, aimed at helping homeless individuals re-enter the workforce through a tailored work integration approach.

2016-2018

First Working Hours entered a consolidation phase, leading to its inclusion in the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and securing national funding.

2020-2024

Under Convergence France, the programme expanded to over 60 WISEs across France.

Inspiration note

Employment as a Starting Point

The Housing First approach asserts that people experiencing homelessness should not have to prove their "housing readiness" before being offered stable housing. Similarly, the First Working Hours programme challenges the idea of "employment readiness" by adapting work to the individual rather than expecting them to adapt to work. Employment is more than an economic necessity; it is a gateway to social inclusion, self-confidence, and a sense of normality. By allowing people to access employment without preconditions, First Working Hours helps rebuild social connections, establish a daily routine, and access resources that aid reintegration. For some, employment is highly motivating, as it helps combat social exclusion and boredom on the streets.

A Work Environment Adapted to the Most Excluded

First Working Hours operates within Work Integration Social Enterprises (WiSEs), managed by NGOs supporting vulnerable workers. The programme's approach is unique: no productivity targets, a flexible workload (starting at just four hours per week), and continuous support from a socio-professional educator (ESP). This hands-on support fosters trust and helps develop professional and personal skills. Importantly, First Working Hours recognises that progress is not always linear—failure is not penalised but seen as part of the process, allowing participants to pause and return to the programme without losing their chance to re-engage. First Working Hours ensures a structured path towards sustainable employment, either within the WiSE sector for up to 5 years* or, when possible, the mainstream job market. By integrating excluded individuals into supportive work environments, First Working Hours lays the foundation for long-term social and economic inclusion.

**In France, the legal framework for integration employment contracts in WiSEs is limited to 2 years, except in exceptional cases. With the introduction of programmes like First Working Hours, the law has been amended to allow an extension to 5 years, providing more time for social support to address additional challenges faced by the employee.*



Arnaud VERNUS
EPOCH Practice officer, FEANTSA, France

First Working Hours offers a unique pathway to work integration for people experiencing homelessness, providing social connection, recognition, income, and a sense of normality. With gradual hours and no productivity demands, work adapts to the person. The programme opens a discussion on other effective practices such as Housing First, highlighting that employment can also be a starting point if properly adapted. In France, this programme is grounded in solid experience, and its principles can be readily adapted to other countries and contexts by building on existing work integration projects.

BRIEF 8

Cluster Wonen - MoWe's Housing and Homeless Support Services

Flanders, Belgium

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Cluster Wonen – MoWe's Housing and Homeless Support Services

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To offer low-threshold, tailored housing support to people facing homelessness, including undocumented migrants, through a mix of practical assistance, emergency shelter, transitional housing, volunteer-led mentoring, and empowerment towards autonomy.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Homeless individuals and families, undocumented migrants, newcomers, and people in urgent housing need in the Lier region and beyond.

IN NUMBERS.

82

individuals accommodated in transitional housing in 2024.

€10,319

spent on **emergency hostel/hotel accommodation** for homeless people in 2024.

613

households supported through Housing Help, with **405** new cases in 2024.

SUMMARY.

MoWe supports homeless people and housing seekers without exclusion criteria. Its services range from day shelter and intensive guidance to transitional housing, rental mediation and a housing fund. People receive food, rest, digital access, and tailored mentoring from volunteers. Special attention is given to undocumented migrants and newcomers, ensuring they too can find a pathway towards autonomy, integration and long-term stable housing.

CONTACT.



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Project description

Warmth, Shelter and Immediate Relief

MoWe provides unconditional, first-line support to people facing homelessness, including undocumented migrants and newcomers. Its welcoming day shelter offers food, hot drinks, access to electricity and internet, and a safe place to rest. People with no income receive purchase vouchers for local supermarkets (€2,340 in 2024). When no accommodation is available, MoWe pays for short stays in hostels or hotels (€10,319.22 in 2024), ensuring no one is left without a roof. This low-threshold access is unique in Flanders.

Housing Transitions with Volunteer Support

MoWe manages 19 transitional housing units and 8 rented homes across seven municipalities. Residents are supported by trained volunteer “housing mentors” who help them adjust to local habits, maintain housing standards, connect with neighbours, and access services like schools or GPs. This person-centred approach strengthens autonomy and prevents evictions. Volunteers also act as a bridge to wider networks, making integration smoother for newly arrived families or isolated individuals.

Integrated Pathways to Stable Housing

Through Housing Help and “Woonclubs,” MoWe organises weekly group sessions to search for homes, arrange viewings, and secure rental agreements. In 2024, 733 new households requested support, and 613 were actively guided, including 50 homeless families. Thanks to MoWe's flexible assistance and the Housing Fund, 190 households found stable housing—many of them undocumented, recently evicted or coming from shelters. The support continues until full residential stability is reached.

TIMELINE

2024

82 people housed in transitional homes, with 5 moving to stable housing.

2025

Three new transitional homes to be opened in Malle and Mortsel.

Inspiration note

A Truly Barrier-Free Entry Point

MoWe's commitment to inclusivity is exemplified by its absence of any eligibility criteria for accessing housing support. This is exceptionally rare in the broader social support landscape, where undocumented migrants and people without official papers often face exclusion. By providing support regardless of legal or financial status, MoWe addresses a critical gap, ensuring that the most marginalised populations can access shelter, guidance, and housing pathways without fear or discrimination. This unconditional acceptance transforms MoWe into a lifeline for many invisible groups, who otherwise might remain excluded from help due to bureaucratic hurdles or systemic prejudice.

Volunteer-Driven Human Connection as a Cornerstone

At the heart of MoWe's approach lies the profound involvement of volunteer housing mentors. These individuals offer far more than practical advice; they provide cultural translation, emotional support, and community bridges. The personalised accompaniment creates a sense of belonging and dignity that institutional interventions often lack. This human scale engagement builds trust, encourages empowerment, and nurtures autonomy, turning what could be an isolating experience into a collaborative journey of rebuilding a home and life. Volunteers often become advocates, mediators, and steady companions, highlighting the power of grassroots solidarity in addressing homelessness.

Holistic, Phased Housing as a Dynamic Process

This organisation truly recognises how difficult and complex the journey to secure housing can be, especially for those with incomplete or uncertain legal status. Rather than seeing housing as a fixed outcome, they understand it as a fluid and ongoing process that requires support at every step – from emergency shelters and day centres, through transitional accommodation, to rental guarantee schemes. Their approach takes into account the many ups and downs people face along the way, highlighting that stable housing comes not just from handing over keys, but through patience, persistence, and a broad network of social support.



Pascal de Decker, PhD
Sociologist and urban planner, Social and Political Sciences,
Emeritus at KU Leuven, Department of Architecture, Belgium

Finding your way in a new environment, be it a city, town or country, is not easy because of its unknown terrain, with no knowledge of norms and values. This is especially true for newcomers. Being housed helps. Finding a house is very difficult for newcomers for many reasons. MoWe helps them finding a house, without exclusion rules - a rarity in the social support landscape.

BRIEF 9

HOUSING FIRST FOR THE MORAVIAN-SILESIA REGION II

Romodrom o.p.s. + Nová možnost, z.ú.

Czech Republic

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Housing First for the Moravian and Silesian Region II

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

Facilitate access to stable housing for socially excluded people, through a Housing First approach and collaboration with private landlords.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People in housing need, homeless individuals, and those at risk of social exclusion, particularly Roma communities.

IN NUMBERS.

40

households housed since
September 2022

3

-year project funded by the
European Social Fund

€890K

CZK 22 million total budget

SUMMARY.

The "Housing First for the Moravian-Silesian Region II" project helps socially excluded individuals, particularly Roma, find standard housing on the open market. Run by Romodrom and Nová možnost, it follows Housing First principles. The initiative involves social workers and a social real estate agency to support clients in securing long-term housing solutions, including cooperation with private landlords, addressing common barriers like deposits.

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Romodrom Housing First

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Nová možnost, z.ú.

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Project description

Support for Helping the Most Socially Excluded Access Housing

The project focuses on people in housing need, particularly socially excluded individuals, including Roma communities. The initiative uses a tailored approach, offering long-term housing solutions through the Housing First model. Beneficiaries receive comprehensive support from social workers, and housing managers. These professionals help navigate the housing market, ensuring clients find appropriate accommodations while providing continuous assistance to maintain stability and prevent future homelessness.

Engaging Private Landlords and Overcoming Housing Barriers

A central component of the project is the cooperation with private housing owners, a relatively new approach in the Czech Republic. By working closely with landlords, the project overcomes common barriers such as high deposits that often prevent disadvantaged individuals from accessing housing. The development of a social real estate agency aims to sustain these partnerships beyond the project's duration, creating a lasting solution for the housing needs of socially excluded and homeless people.

Sustainable Funding and Impact Evaluation to Ensure Long-Term Success

The project is funded by the European Social Fund, with financial support allocated to staffing, housing solutions, and the creation of a guarantee fund to cover rental deposits. The governance structure involves continuous evaluation by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to assess the project's impact. This ensures that the initiative remains effective, with findings used to inform future policies and practices regarding housing for vulnerable populations. Regular reports and evaluations help shape ongoing efforts and ensure the project's sustainability.

TIMELINE

September 2022

The project began on 1st September 2022.

August 2023

The evaluation report, conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was published in August 2023.

June 2023

Similar project also implemented in the South Bohemian Region, in the town of Písek.

Inspiration note

Challenging Discrimination and Expanding Access

Roma communities often face compounded barriers in accessing private rental housing due to persistent discrimination. Many landlords refuse to rent to Roma tenants, reinforcing exclusion. The project actively counters this by mediating between tenants and landlords, providing guarantees, and showing that stable housing benefits both sides. A guarantee fund helps remove financial obstacles such as rental deposits, making housing more accessible and reducing risks for property owners. Monitoring the number of beneficiaries and landlord participation will be essential to evaluate the project's long-term effectiveness.

Building Long-Term Partnerships in the Private Sector

To ensure sustainable impact, a social real estate agency is being developed. This model fosters ongoing collaboration with landlords, supports tenants, and helps maintain affordable rental options beyond the project's scope. It also aims to improve housing security by offering guidance and quick responses to emerging issues. Through this approach, the project creates structures that can be adapted and replicated in other regions.

Supporting Tenants and Preventing Relapse

From the initial assessment phase to long-term tenancy support, the project provides tailored assistance based on each participant's needs. Support includes budget coaching, crisis funds, welfare advice, and help increasing income. Staff also work on identifying hidden risks such as health problems, domestic violence, or addiction, and create ad hoc support networks involving relevant services. Strengthening neighbour relations, preventing eviction, and fostering client autonomy are central to the project's housing retention strategy.



Gyorgy Sumeghy
Associate Director, Policy and Advocacy
Europe and the Middle East, Habitat for Humanity International

In lack of a well-functioning social housing system, it's essential in former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe to utilize existing housing and to develop alternative models for affordable rental housing. This project is unique in many ways in the whole CEE region: it combines housing first principles with establishing social rental agencies, using EU funds in a smart way and partly targeting the most disadvantaged group, the Roma minority. A great example for the housing organizations in the whole CEE.

BRIEF 10

GAT IN-Mouraria

Lisbon, Portugal

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

GAT IN-Mouraria (INM)

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

GAT IN-Mouraria is a community-based center for integrated responses aimed to reduce the risks and harm associated with drug use.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People who use drugs and people experiencing homelessness

IN NUMBERS.

686

individuals benefited from the INM in 2024

554

individuals were either rough sleeping, in accommodation subsidised by public rent assistance, squats, cars, shelters and Housing First solutions

242

individuals used the address of INM as their residency in 2024

SUMMARY.

GAT IN Mouraria, opened in 2013, is a community-based center offering rapid, anonymous, and free testing for HIV, hepatitis B/C, and syphilis, mainly for people who use drugs. Services include peer counseling, health and social support, condom and harm reduction material distribution, and a drop-in space. Open to all within capacity, the center also advocates for the rights of drug users and contributes to knowledge production. Registered with the Health Regulatory Authority (E126027)

CONTACT.



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Project description

A Local Solution to Structural Barriers

GAT IN Mouraria was established in 2013 in one of Lisbon's oldest and most diverse neighbourhoods, known for its high concentration of migrants, low-income residents, sex workers, and people who use drugs. It operates within a nationally recognised framework rooted in Portugal's public health-oriented drug policy, especially since the decriminalisation of drug use in 2001. Despite this progressive approach, many marginalised populations still face barriers to healthcare due to stigma, bureaucracy, or limited accessibility. In response, Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos launched the centre to bridge these gaps.

Peer-Led, Low-Threshold, Integrated Care

Grounded in harm reduction and peer-led models, the centre offers low-threshold, community-based services through a multidisciplinary team that includes harm reduction specialists, peer workers, doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Care is delivered in a non-judgemental, inclusive environment where peer workers with lived experience play a key role in building trust and fostering dignity. Their involvement helps reach people who are often excluded from mainstream services, and ensures the support is relevant and accessible.

Sustained Impact Through Public Investment

To deliver its services, GAT IN Mouraria receives funding primarily from ACSS (Central Administration of the Health Service), the Municipality of Lisbon, the Institute for Addictive Behaviours and Addictions (ICAD), and the Social Security Institute (ISS). Since its opening, the centre has significantly improved access to healthcare for regular users, notably through support with managing therapies and increasing health literacy. Strong peer involvement continues to enhance trust, reduce risk behaviours, and improve overall physical and mental health outcomes.

TIMELINE

2013

Opening of the service.

2019

Opening of Hepatitis C decentralised medical centre.

2020

Start of mental health support service: psychiatrist and psychologist.

2021

Opening of safe consumption room.

2024

The authorisation for the safe consumption room was formalised.

Inspiration note

Meeting People Where They Are, Not Where Systems Expect Them to Be

GAT IN-Mouraria is a powerful example of how services can become genuinely accessible, inclusive, and rooted in dignity. In a context where traditional systems often exclude the most vulnerable, this project stands out for its practical and human-centred approach.

People who use drugs and experience homelessness face overlapping forms of exclusion—unstable housing, discrimination in healthcare and housing markets, and rigid, underfunded support structures. Legal and bureaucratic barriers, such as drug-related criminalisation or unclear residency status, can make even basic healthcare out of reach. Many existing services remain built on abstinence-based or one-size-fits-all models, detached from the lived realities of the people they aim to support. Meanwhile, gentrification and NIMBYism further isolate these communities from the networks they depend on.

A Model Built on Trust, Dignity, and Realism

Within this difficult environment, GAT IN-Mouraria plays a vital role. By offering low-threshold, community-based, and harm reduction-oriented services, the centre fills crucial gaps left by mainstream systems. It does not wait for people to conform—it adapts to their realities, both physically and emotionally. The integration of peer workers is key to its effectiveness: they foster trust, reduce stigma, and ensure that the support remains grounded in lived experience.

The project's outcomes reflect a model that places human connection and inclusion at its core—elements still too often missing from conventional systems.



Martinho Dias
Peer worker at CRESCER, Portugal

Gat IN Mouraria, established in 2013 in Lisbon's historic Mouraria district, stands as a beacon of community-led harm reduction. The centre offers a comprehensive range of services, including rapid testing and harm reduction materials.

Notably, it employs individuals with lived experience as Peer Workers, ensuring that interventions are empathetic and grounded in real-world understanding.

People have access to healthcare, social support, and peer counselling. This model enhances the quality and accessibility of care for people experiencing homelessness and substance use.



BRIEF 11

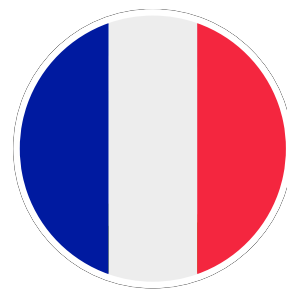
MAISON CORINNE MASIERO
Abej SOLIDARITE + CèdrAgir

Lille, France



INSPIRING PRACTICE

ID CARD



Lille, France

PROJECT TITLE.

Maison Corinne Masiero

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To provide harm reduction support and housing for highly marginalised women experiencing homelessness with addictions, ensuring safety, stability, and comprehensive social and medical support.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Women experiencing homelessness who face severe marginalisation, addiction, and gender-based violence.

IN NUMBERS.

54

women accommodated since March 2023.

11

accommodation units available.

€800K

annual budget.

SUMMARY.

Maison Corinne Masiero offers gender-specific, harm reduction-focused housing for women experiencing homelessness with long-term addictions. With 24/7 social and medical support, it provides a safe environment for stabilisation and recovery. The initiative fosters autonomy without imposing rigid conditions, ensuring accessibility for those excluded from traditional services. An independent evaluation highlights its success in engaging this vulnerable population.

CONTACT.



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CèdrAgir

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<https://www.cedragir.fr>

Project description

A Safe Space for Recovery and Empowerment

Maison Corinne Masiero addresses the specific needs of women experiencing homelessness who face addiction and gender-based violence. By providing a safe, women-only space, the project fosters stability and recovery through a harm reduction approach. The facility operates with 24/7 support from social workers, a nurse, and a psychologist, allowing residents to engage with services at their own pace. Developed by abej SOLIDARITÉ and CèdrAgir, the initiative benefits from their complementary expertise: abej SOLIDARITÉ specialises in supporting people in extreme marginalisation, while CèdrAgir brings its knowledge in addiction care. Since its launch in March 2023, 54 women have benefited from the programme, which offers a rare, long-term alternative to traditional shelters.

Securing the Future of an Innovative Approach

With an annual budget of €800,000, the initiative is funded primarily by the Regional Health Agency (€600,000 for addiction support) and the French government's housing and social inclusion fund (€200,000 for services targeting highly marginalised individuals). An independent agency has assessed the project's impact, with findings highlighting improvements in stability, health, and substance use reduction. The final evaluation, conducted in September 2024, informed the decision to make the initiative permanent. It underlined key lessons on housing stability, collective living dynamics, and the adaptability of support methods. Now extended beyond 2025, the model is set to serve as a blueprint for similar projects across France.

TIMELINE

March 2023

Opening of Maison Corinne Masiero with 11 places available.

Mars 2024

Independent agency completes first year evaluation.

September 2024

Final evaluation report presented to funders.

End 2024

Decision on securing long-term funding and potential expansion.

Inspiration note

A Flexible Path to Support

Maison Corinne Masiero uses a harm reduction approach that allows women experiencing homelessness, addiction, and trauma to engage with support at their own pace. By not imposing strict conditions or predefined treatment goals, the initiative provides an inclusive and flexible environment. This approach is particularly effective for individuals who have experienced long-term marginalisation, enabling them to stabilise and gradually engage with services without feeling forced or judged.

Creating Safe Spaces for Healing

The project's women-only accommodation model ensures a safe, supportive space where residents can feel protected from gender-based violence and exploitation. The facility provides individual rooms and shared spaces, promoting privacy while fostering a sense of community. This non-mixed environment is crucial for women who have faced abuse, offering them the safety they need to rebuild trust, regain autonomy, and focus on recovery. The model has been successful in attracting women who have previously been reluctant to engage with traditional shelters.

A Collaborative Approach to Care

Collaboration between abej SOLIDARITÉ and CèdrAgir ensures that the project offers holistic support to the women it serves. abej SOLIDARITÉ provides outreach and social care, while CèdrAgir's addiction expertise helps address substance use issues. Together, these two associations bring complementary skills and resources, creating a comprehensive support system that addresses the complex needs of the residents. This partnership has proven effective in delivering integrated care, improving residents' health and well-being.



Martinho Dias
Peer worker at CRESCER, Portugal

The Maison Corinne Masiero is a pioneering initiative dedicated to supporting highly marginalised women. Named after the French actress and activist Corinne Masiero, the project offers a safe and supportive environment where women can access housing, harm reduction services, and peer-led support.

By integrating lived experience into its framework, the Maison fosters empowerment and community among its residents. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate needs but also promotes long-term stability and reintegration, making it an inspiring model for inclusive and compassionate care.

BRIEF 12

HOMES FOR HEALTH RECOVERY Hogar Si + FMAAS

Spain, nationwide

ID CARD



Spain

PROJECT TITLE.

Homes for Health Recovery – A Socio-Health Solution for Homelessness

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

Ensure the right to health for homeless individuals by providing a structured socio-health programme that facilitates recovery, social reintegration, and access to healthcare.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Homeless individuals over 18 years old who need non-hospital medical care, including those recovering from illness, managing chronic conditions, or requiring palliative care.

IN NUMBERS.

1000+

people supported since launch
(approx. 170 per year).

€34,485

saved per person per year by
reducing hospital stays.

1/3

of participants transition to
standard housing.

SUMMARY.

Homes for Health Recovery is an innovative socio-health programme designed to bridge the gap between homelessness and healthcare. It provides temporary housing with 24/7 professional support, enabling health recovery, social reintegration, and effective access to rights. The programme works across Madrid, Murcia, and Andalusia, in collaboration with hospitals and social services, ensuring a cost-effective solution that enhances the well-being and stability of homeless individuals.

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HOGAR SÍ y FMAAS

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Project description

A Holistic Approach to Health and Social Recovery

Homes for health recovery go beyond simply providing housing – they integrate healthcare with stable accommodation to support the full spectrum of well-being for homeless individuals. With 24/7 professional support, participants receive medical attention while working towards social reintegration. This integrated approach helps manage chronic conditions, improves medication adherence, and promotes a more sustainable lifestyle. It also reduces reliance on emergency services, offering recovery in a dignified, community-based setting.

Cost-Effective and Efficient Collaboration

Strategic partnerships with public administrations have secured sustainable funding in Madrid (70 places), with expansion towards Murcia (18) and Andalusia (13). By shifting care from emergency to community-based support, the programme eases pressure on the healthcare system and ensures efficient resource use. It reduces hospitalisation and generates savings of €34,485 per person annually – proving the value of investing in integrated care for homeless individuals.

Dignity at the End of Life

The programme also provides palliative care for homeless people with terminal illnesses. It ensures a dignified environment, symptom management and emotional support from nurses, social workers and psychologists. This care allows individuals to spend their final days with dignity while reducing hospitalisation, highlighting housing's essential role in safeguarding health, even at life's end.

TIMELINE

2015

The programme became part of the Community of Madrid's portfolio of services.

2016 and 2018

The programme was launched in Murcia and Andalusia, respectively.

2025

Madrid added 10 places in autonomous housing for individuals with greater independence and lower support needs, increasing the total capacity to 70 places.

Inspiration note

Addressing Health in All Its Dimensions

The Homes for Health Recovery programme takes a comprehensive approach to health that aligns with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) three dimensions of well-being—physical, mental, and social. It goes beyond just medical care, recognising the complex realities of homelessness where poor health is both a cause and consequence. The programme provides not only essential healthcare but also psychosocial support, access to stable housing, and a pathway to social reintegration. By addressing the interconnectedness of health and housing, it enables participants to achieve lasting recovery and a significant improvement in their overall quality of life.

Investing in Prevention to Reduce Future Costs

This programme demonstrates the long-term financial benefits of investing in prevention. By prioritising comprehensive support at the earliest stages, it reduces the need for costly crisis interventions later on. The shift from reactive to proactive care not only leads to better outcomes for participants but also alleviates the strain on public services, particularly healthcare and emergency services. Through strategic investment in social-health policies, Homes for Health Recovery offers a sustainable, cost-effective model that reduces the future financial burden of untreated homelessness and chronic health issues.

Strengthening Access to Public Health Services

One of the key successes of the programme is its ability to bridge the gap between homelessness and mainstream healthcare. The programme supports every participant in securing essential health documentation, gaining access to medical professionals, and seamlessly integrating into the national healthcare system. This ensures continuity of care and a smoother transition from emergency-based healthcare to long-term, community-based support. By fostering these connections, the programme reduces long-term exclusion from health services, enabling participants to achieve lasting stability, better health outcomes, and inclusion in society.



Silvia Busi
EPOCH Practice officer, FEANTSA, Italy

The Homes for Health Recovery Programme is a unique initiative fostering true collaboration between health and social sectors. It demonstrates significant cost savings and reduced emergency use by shifting care from crisis to personalised and human support. The programme improves lives, eases pressure on services, and offers a replicable, sustainable model for continued impact across diverse contexts.

BRIEF 13

LOGIS JEUNES
Fondation Acolea

Métropole de Lyon, France

ID CARD



PROJECT TITLE.

Logis Jeunes

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To provide Housing First services for young people aged 18 to 25 leaving Children's Social Care, aiming to prevent homelessness and promote social and professional integration.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Young people aged 18 to 25, leaving Children's Social Care in the Lyon metropolitan area, with priority given to those aged 18/19.

IN NUMBERS.

57

young people supported in 2024, including 34 women, and 40% receiving or applying for the Disability Living Allowance.

46

housing units made available to young people.

24

tenancy transfers between 2021 and 2024, with an average subletting period of 2 years.

SUMMARY.

Logis Jeunes, launched in 2019, helps young people aged 18 to 25 leaving child protection in the Lyon area by offering stable housing and a flexible support system. The service focuses on outreach, social reintegration, and building a sustainable future for vulnerable youth. The programme operates under the Housing First model, providing immediate housing without prerequisites, followed by social and professional support.

CONTACT.



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Logis Jeune website



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Project description

Addressing the Housing Needs of Vulnerable Young People Leaving Children's Social Care

Logis Jeunes addresses the needs of young people aged 18 to 25 leaving the child protection system in the Lyon metropolitan area. Many of these individuals face social vulnerability and are at risk of homelessness or long-term social exclusion. By providing Housing First services, Logis Jeunes aims to prevent disruptions in their lives and offer a sustainable transition to independence. The initiative started in 2019 and has been gradually expanding.

A Housing First Approach to Social Integration and Support

The programme follows a Housing First model, offering stable housing as the first step towards social integration. A mobile team of social workers provides ongoing support, ensuring young people gain access to employment, healthcare, and build a social network. The approach is outreach-based, with a focus on identifying strengths and harm reduction. The team works flexibly, meeting young people where they are, including their homes, cafés, and public spaces.

Collaborative Support and Financial Sustainability

Logis Jeunes receives funding from both the Métropole de Lyon (€330K annually) and the State (€330K annually). It is closely coordinated with the local child protection services (DPPE) and the Maison de la Veille Sociale (social monitoring and support centre that coordinates assistance for homeless individuals). These partnerships ensure that young people in need of support are appropriately referred and that resources are optimally allocated. The service relies on multi-disciplinary cooperation to address both immediate housing needs and long-term integration goals.

TIMELINE

2019

Launch of the Logis Jeunes programme.

2019–2021

Progressive scaling up of support for young people.

2022

Reached 51 young people in stable housing.

2024- 2025

Collaboration with University of Lyon 2 for impact study.

Inspiration note

Exit from Child Protection and Prevention of Homelessness

Logis Jeunes addresses a critical gap in social services by specifically focusing on young adults aged 18 to 25 leaving children's social care. This transition period is particularly vulnerable as young people often face disruptions, with no clear support system once they exit care.

In addition, young people are often not allowed to access benefits that would precisely help them in this transition. For example, in France, the *Revenu de Solidarité Active* (RSA), a welfare benefit granted to anyone without resources, is not available to young people aged 18 to 25, except in very specific cases. This creates a gap in support for young people and increases the risk of homelessness.

In the Lyon metropolitan area, an initiative has been launched to provide young people aged 18 to 25 with access to financial support (*Revenu de Solidarité Jeune*). This is a unique scheme in France, strongly advocated by organisations working with homeless individuals, including the Acolea Foundation.

The Logis Jeunes programme is part of the Metropolitan Strategy to Combat Homelessness, which funds several project partners, particularly those committed to preventing homelessness among young people leaving institutions such as prisons, hospitals, and the child protection system.

Long-Term Support Tailored to Young People

The Logis Jeunes initiative provides young people with flexible, independent housing, avoiding the rigid structures of traditional accommodation. By applying a Housing First approach, it grants them autonomy to make life and career choices while offering the time and support needed to stabilise their situation.

Unlike programmes with fixed timelines, Logis Jeunes provides long-term assistance, ensuring access to housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities without pressure to "graduate" too soon. A peer worker reinforces this personalised approach, serving as a role model for social reintegration. This holistic support helps young people rebuild their identity and integrate into society at their own pace.



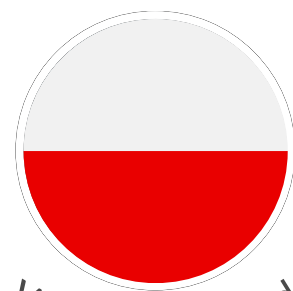
Sarah Coupechoux,
Europe Lead, Fondation pour le Logement, France

The transition from childhood to adulthood is a key period in young people's development. We know that leaving child welfare institutions is an aggravating factor in the risk of homelessness. This project responds to the needs for stability and support of a population in the midst of development. Based on the principles of Housing First, it gives these young people the foundations for a better life.

BRIEF 14

THE AMBIVALENCE PROGRAMME
Housing First Poland Foundation HFPP
and Municipality of Warsaw
Warsaw, Poland

ID CARD



Warsaw, Poland

PROJECT TITLE.

The Ambivalence Programme

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To provide support in line with Housing First values to individuals transitioning from long-term homelessness to municipal housing, focusing on mental health challenges, housing retention, and overall well-being.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

Individuals with experience of long-term homelessness and mental health crises who have accessed municipal housing or decided to apply for it.

IN NUMBERS.

2021

launch of the Ambivalence Programme by Housing First Poland Foundation for 5 participants

€262

per month: **average cost** of the Ambivalence Programme per participant in 2023

66

individuals supported by the Ambivalence service since its introduction by the Municipality of Warsaw.

SUMMARY.

The Ambivalence Programme supports individuals transitioning from long term homelessness to stable housing, addressing both psychological and housing retention challenges. It employs a mobile outreach team of mental health professionals and removes barriers in access to health and housing services available in the community. Funded by regional and EU grants, the programme adapts Housing First Model to local challenges in Poland ensuring that core Housing First values are met.

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Project description

Empowering Transitions through Intensive and Personalised Support

The Ambivalence Programme provides intensive support for individuals transitioning from long-term homelessness to municipal housing, addressing both their housing needs and mental health challenges. It includes a mobile outreach team of psychologists, trauma specialists, and motivational interviewers, helping participants navigate the complex emotions linked to their new situation. This includes managing ambivalence towards their new role as tenants.

From Pilot to Policy in Advancing Housing First in Warsaw

First tested in Poland's 2019–2023 Housing First pilot, this service has been run by the Housing First Poland Foundation (HFPP) since 2021 as the Ambivalence Programme. In 2023, it was integrated into Warsaw's local legislation to support long-term and at-risk homeless individuals. Today, it reaches 55 people: 40 via the Municipality of Warsaw, 15 via HFPP. Grounded in Housing First principles, it offers secure tenancies and person-centred support, using public housing and NGO partnerships to provide real alternatives to traditional shelters and abstinence-based systems.

A Scalable and Sustainable Model

The Ambivalence Programme of HFPP is funded through local and regional grants, European funding, and private contributions. As an NGO-led initiative, it faces funding sustainability challenges—particularly for specialised mental health services, which are in high demand in Poland. Municipal and regional bodies occasionally finance the programme via tenders. Despite these challenges, its alignment with Housing First values and integration into municipal policy make it a strong model for future replication.

TIMELINE

2021

Launch of The Ambivalence Programme of Housing First Poland Foundation.

2023

Official recognition of the Ambivalence Programme as a Housing First service by the Municipality of Warsaw.

2023-2024

Public procurements for the service by the Municipality of Warsaw and expansion from 20 to 40 Participants.

2024-2027

Ambivalence Programme of HFPP becomes part of the SOLACE-CEE Partnership cofunded by the European Commission.

Inspiration note

Addressing Homelessness and Mental Health Crises

The Ambivalence Programme offers a compelling model for addressing the intersection of homelessness and mental health crises, particularly in regions with limited resources. It blends the principles of Housing First with a locally adapted approach, ensuring that housing as a right, self-determination, and recovery are central to its design. By addressing psychological needs alongside housing, the programme ensures participants not only gain housing but are equipped to maintain it successfully.

Adaptability and Flexibility in Local Contexts

A key strength of the programme is its adaptability. While it adheres to Housing First principles, it remains flexible in how these are implemented within the Polish context. This adaptability has been crucial in overcoming challenges such as limited affordable housing and mental health service access. The integration of municipal housing enables scalability, reducing the burden on NGOs to secure housing, which is often in short supply. By using available resources efficiently, the programme's implementation is more sustainable, paving the way for future expansion in similar settings.

A Tool for Preventing Returns to Homelessness

The Ambivalence Programme is an innovative initiative that complements municipal housing access policies by supporting long-term housing retention and preventing returns to homelessness. Acknowledging the complexity of homelessness, the programme fully recognises the ongoing challenges individuals face when transitioning from life on the streets to stable housing. By providing motivational support to help participants manage the psychological impacts of homelessness, it addresses these difficulties holistically, helping tenants sustain their housing while also reassuring social landlords, strengthening trust in the long-term viability of housing solutions.



Saoirse Browne
EPOCH Practice officer, FEANTSA, Ireland

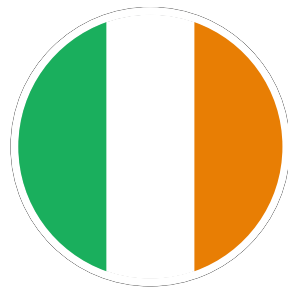
The Ambivalence Programme highlights the principle of 'housing first, but not housing only.' For some, the shift from homelessness to stable housing brings new challenges—developing the skills to sustain a tenancy and adapting to a different daily rhythm. By offering tailored, ongoing support, the Ambivalence Programme reinforces the core values of Housing First, ensuring that the transition does not simply interrupt homelessness but provides the foundation to end it permanently.

BRIEF 15

VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE Focus Ireland

Ireland, nationwide

ID CARD



Ireland

PROJECT TITLE.

Voter Registration Drive

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

An Irish national campaign run by Focus Ireland using recent legislative changes to help people without an address to register to vote. Voter registration drives were held throughout the country to register as many people as possible for elections.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People without an address who were otherwise eligible to vote.

IN NUMBERS.

16.098

individuals relying on state-funded emergency accommodation in Ireland as of July 2025. This figure does not include those in 'own-door' temporary accommodation, domestic violence refuges, asylum seekers, people sleeping rough, and hidden homeless.

32.725

individuals seeking international protection accommodated in centres run by the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) as of May 2025, eligible to vote in local elections.

SUMMARY.

This 10-week nationwide voter registration campaign helped and encouraged people without an address, asylum seekers, and others affected by homelessness to register and to vote. Backed by An Post, the national postal service, and launched with the support of the Electoral Commission, the campaign featured national media coverage, staff training, and partnerships with NGOs. It aimed to empower marginalised communities, influence policy, and make homelessness a key political issue in the run up to the elections.

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Project description

Opening the Ballot Box to All

In early 2024, a 10-week national campaign was launched by Focus Ireland to help people experiencing homelessness register to vote, using new legislation that allows registration without a fixed address. The campaign targeted over 10,000 homeless individuals, 30,000 asylum seekers, and others affected by housing insecurity. It aimed to empower marginalised communities to engage in the democratic process and push for policy changes to end homelessness.

The initiative involved training frontline staff on the Irish PR-STV voting system and voter registration processes. Staff held registration drives across the country and incorporated voter education into daily service delivery. The campaign launched with support from An Post and The Electoral Commission. The campaign's main investment was staff time, alongside resources provided by An Post to support the launch.

From Barriers to Ballots: A New Pathway

In practical terms, The Electoral Reform Act 2022 enacted the simplification of the voting registration procedure and the introduction of online registration. Previously, the lack of a permanent address was a significant barrier to registration due to requirements to provide proof of address. This was a severe form of disenfranchisement for marginalised people, excluding those most in need of state services from the democratic process.

Since the reform, registration is more accessible, requiring a personal public service number, email address and an Eircode (postal code). For people without a permanent address, they can utilise the free Address Point service offered by An Post. It enables people without a fixed home to receive regular post, access essential services and crucially, provides an Eircode. A person can choose a post office within the area that they spend the most time, they will be assigned an Eircode, and thereafter they can register to vote in that constituency.

TIMELINE

December 2023

Staff training using 'train the trainer' methodology, whereby key staff could translate the learning back to their own teams for implementation.

March 2024

Launch of campaign.

March – May 2024

Campaign ran up to the date of the local elections.

October 2025

The campaign will run again in the lead-up to the Irish Presidential elections.

Inspiration note

Turning Voter Registration into Lasting Change

The Voter Registration campaign by Focus Ireland fostered civic empowerment, improved advocacy leverage, and positioned homelessness as a pressing electoral issue, increasing political accountability. While no formal evaluation has yet been conducted, the long-term goal is to embed voter engagement in services and make political participation a norm. The initiative is now fully sustainable through ongoing work in normal key working sessions with service users and with specific, targeted campaigns when an election is called. Focus Ireland intends to implement the practice again in October 2025 in light of the Irish Presidential elections.

Homelessness as a Political Force

Policymakers need to see people experiencing homelessness as not just rights holders, but as a significant political lobby. As the housing crisis deepens in Ireland, many people are acutely aware that a Notice of Termination can leave them at risk of homelessness. It is not just the 15,000+ people who are currently experiencing homelessness, but the 120,000 other households who are on the social housing list and the 60,000 households in receipt of HAP (Housing Assistance Payment) and are in the private rental sector. Harnessing the full political power of this group will ensure ending homelessness is prioritised. Helping people to register to vote and to engage with democracy is empowering for individuals in this position.

Three Wins for Democracy

There are 3 main benefits from running a campaign such as this. 1. It offers service users an opportunity to feel engaged and involved in positive change. 2. It allows Focus Ireland, as an advocacy organisation, to better engage with politicians when they can say they have a significant cohort of voters supporting their key asks. 3. Politicians will know that votes are available if they make ending homelessness one of their priorities. The original campaign included '4 Asks' for candidates, which accompanied the registration drive, and can be read in the [Spring 2024 issue of the FEANTSA Magazine](#).



Birthe Povlsen
Independent Consultant in Social Policy and Homelessness,
Denmark.

A project that demonstrates the importance of providing the right frameworks for people experiencing homelessness, enabling them to participate on an equal footing in democratic processes, while at the same time challenging the assumption that citizens in homelessness are incapable of taking part in ordinary situations such as forming political positions and influencing the political system at both local and national levels.



BEYOND THE BRIEFS

Conclusion

Thus concludes an important chapter of the EPOCH Practice project.

We are very grateful for all the responses to our Open Call for inspiring practices, to the Expert Committee, and to everyone who will read it.

This compendium shows:

- The multi-dimensional nature of homelessness and the need to respond with a wide range of solutions;
- The valuable expertise that people with lived experience bring to policy & practice;
- The importance of partnership work – between public authorities, NGOs, and people with lived experience, as well as across different sectors;
- The many common challenges faced by those working on homelessness across Europe;
- The commitment & capacity for innovation that exists in the homeless sector, even in tough circumstances.

We hope that these briefs will be more than a publication: we hope that they will facilitate further dialogue, exchange and reflection. Among the selection criteria defined by our Expert Committee, the transferability of practices across Europe was a central concern. We believe that each of them can, in whole or in part, serve as inspiration for the development of better services and policies to address homelessness.

Whilst none of these initiatives provides a silver-bullet or a one size fits all solution, we hope that they can all provide inspiration and nourish reflection. The list presented here is by no means exhaustive. It calls for continued enrichment and upkeep.

Both structural policy changes and practice-level improvements are needed to make better progress towards ending homelessness. We hope this compendium has put a spotlight on what is already happening and provided some inspiration on how to fill the many gaps.



Ruth OWEN
Deputy Director
FEANTSA

CONTACT + FEEDBACK

For questions, collaborations, or more information about this compendium, please get in touch with us:

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EPOCH
PRACTICE

INSPIRING PRACTICE BRIEFS

TO BETTER COMBAT HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE



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Délégation interministérielle
à l'hébergement et à
l'accès au logement