

19th SEPTEMBER, FRIDAY

9h30 – 10h50

SEMINAR SESSION 2 - Participants will be asked to select one of these 6 parallel seminars

Seminar 7: Measurement Methods I (Room: X) - Chair: Nóra Teller, HU

Volker Busch-Geertsema and Marie-Therese Haj Ahmad, DE: Aligning an EU-wide Data Collection on Homelessness with Existing National Data Collection Systems

The aim of the project “European Homelessness Counts”, commissioned by the European Commission, is to develop a common methodology of data collection on homelessness in the European Union. While this is necessary in order to verify whether the measures implemented to tackle homelessness in the EU are effective, this project nevertheless faces several challenges. One of them is to align an EU-wide data collection with already existing data collection systems on a national level.

In several member states there is a well-established, even legally implemented, national data collection in place, such as in Denmark or Germany. Since 2022 all municipalities in Germany are obliged by law to report the number of PEH in shelters and any form of temporary accommodation for PEH (ETHOS Light 2 & 3) on 31st of January each year. Additionally, the national government is committed to report on PEH sleeping rough (ETHOS Light 1) and PEH in so-called ‘hidden homelessness’ (ETHOS Light 6) every second year. Following the German debates and struggles for such a data collection, this law is a great achievement at national level, and it can be assumed that there is no ‘way back’. This raises the question of how to Europeanize data collections on homelessness, so that neither additional data collections need to be conducted in these countries nor a methodology from a specific national context is transferred to other Member States.

Based on theoretical considerations on Europeanization in the field of Social Policy, on learnings from the project “European Homelessness Counts” as well as from other processes of harmonizing data collection within the EU, we suggest developing an understanding of ‘common methodology’ that goes beyond implementing the same method in every Member State. Rather, we propose establishing a methodological framework that takes into account the different local/national contexts.



Prof. Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema has studied social sciences at the University of Bremen and is a senior research fellow and board member at the Association for Innovative Social Research and Social Planning (GISS, Bremen, Germany). Since 2015 he is an honorary Professor at Heriot Watt University Edinburgh. He has been a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness since 1995 and since 2009 he is the Coordinator of the Observatory and member of the editorial team of the European Journal of Homelessness. He has conducted a number of extensive research projects on different aspects of homelessness in Germany, Europe and further abroad.



Marie-Therese Haj Ahmad is research assistant at the Society of Innovative Social Research and Social Planning (GISS) in Bremen, Germany. Her research focuses primarily on (tackling) homelessness and the intersection of homelessness and migration. As a social worker she worked several years with people experiencing homelessness. In her ethnographic PhD research she analysed homelessness of mobile EU citizens in Germany in the light of critical migration studies.

Evelien Demaerschalk, Nana Mertens, Koen Hermans, Nóra Teller, BE/HU: The European Homelessness Count

The “European Homelessness Count” project commissioned by the European Commission aims to develop a uniform methodology for city-level homelessness counts. During the first year of the project a modular approach to data collection was developed, and tested across 15 European cities of varying size and service density in 10 countries, allowing cities to choose from three strategies: Basic Count (headcounts and administrative data), Elaborate Count (survey-based data collection), and Comprehensive Count (extended service-based approach). This flexibility ensures local adaptation while maintaining methodological rigor and comparability. In 2025, the methodology will be tested in

35 cities in 21 member states.

In this presentation, we present the main figures from the 15 counts in 2025. The figures reveal significant variations in homelessness prevalence and characteristics across cities. Rough sleeping is highly visible in some areas, while in others, homelessness is more concealed. In the second part of the presentation we present the main lessons learned about developing and implementing a common point in time methodology.



Evelien Demaerschalk is a researcher at LUCAS, Center for Care Research and Consultancy. Her work focuses on the care and support for vulnerable and underserved populations in society. Currently she is involved in the development and organization of local and regional homelessness counts in Belgium and Europe.



Nana Mertens is a researcher at LUCAS, Center for Care Research and Consultancy, KU Leuven. She works on the research topics of care and support for vulnerable and underserved populations in society. In recent years, she has focused on the development and organization of local and regional homelessness counts in Belgium and Europe.



Koen Hermans, Belgium is Associate Professor of Social Work and Social Policy at the Centre for Sociological Research, KU Leuven. He is also project leader at LUCAS, Centre for Care Research and Consultancy. His research focuses on the care and support for vulnerable and underserved populations in society, such as homeless persons, persons with disability and youngsters with complex needs. He was the coordinator of the COST Action on 'Measuring homelessness in Europe' (2016-2020). In Belgium, he is responsible for the development and organization of local and regional homelessness counts.



Nóra Teller (PhD, Sociology) works at the Metropolitan Research Institute. She is member of the European Observatory on Homelessness and has co-edited the European Journal of Homelessness for 16 years. She has 24 years of research and consultancy experience in social inclusion and housing inclusion measures, homelessness research, and housing desegregation in the urban and rural context.