

# Editorial

A decade has passed since *Homeless in Europe* was last dedicated to migration and asylum. During this period, the European Union has confronted new challenges - from a war waged at its borders to the intensification of conflicts, persecutions, and regime changes outside Europe. Since February 2022, more than four million individuals fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine have settled in EU countries. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive has enabled swift entry and access to rights; however, in the context of the protracted war, signs suggest that support measures are being rolled back at the national level. In 2024, the highest numbers of refugees arriving in Europe were from Syria, Venezuela, and Afghanistan, with a record number of Palestinians (12,000) applying for asylum. Palestinians fleeing Israeli military occupation, or living in refugee camps such as those in Lebanon, arrived in high numbers in Belgium, becoming the largest group of asylum seekers in the country. No other EU country has received more Palestinian asylum seekers than Belgium, where they are often among those forced to sleep rough, squatting, or in homeless shelters, in a context where, since 2021, more than 10,000 applicants have not been accommodated by FEDASIL (the Belgian Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers).

Despite several attempts to reform and harmonise European legislation on migration and asylum over the last 10 years, the situation on the ground has remained, worryingly, very similar to the one in 2015. Homelessness has become an integrated part of the asylum process in too many countries, and beneficiaries of international protection continue to be at high risk of homelessness after they have obtained refugee status. Meanwhile, the criminalisation of undocumented migrants (and those supporting them) has proliferated in the current policy context. Adding to this, the ongoing affordable housing crisis combined with heightened levels of discrimination against migrants fuels a similar reality in 2025: migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, continue to be denied their fundamental rights, and are forced to sleep on the streets of Europe.

European migration and asylum laws, and how Member States choose to implement them, often work to restrict access to rights (including housing) and support rather than enable it. Instead of creating paths to security and inclusion, they create barriers

which lead people into precarity, destitution, and homelessness. The EU's newest legislation under the Migration and Asylum Pact is expected to inevitably lead to increased border control, criminalisation of immigration, increased detention of migrants and decreased safeguards; simultaneously, the EU and its member states are strengthening their focus on returns, to the detriment of a system based on shared responsibility and support measures for the inclusion of migrants.

The prevalence of homelessness among migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, is not, and never has been, an accidental by-product of flawed systems; it is a predictable outcome of legislation and policy choices. FEANTSA rejects the idea that homelessness can be addressed while excluding certain groups or without first addressing the systems that push people further into the margins. Ending homelessness means ending homelessness for everyone; migrants are no exception. This means recognising access to housing as a basic human right, not a privilege based on residence status. Housing rights are universal.

The articles in this edition of *Homeless in Europe* address a variety of issues at the intersection of homelessness and migration. From the importance of trauma informed approaches, insights into how Housing First can be adapted for undocumented migrants, and reflections on the impact of policy, we return to the topic of homelessness among asylum seekers and refugees, not because it is new, but because it persists. The prevalence of homelessness among migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, is directly tied to political will. As the articles in this edition highlight, if the system fails to change, and it will be the most vulnerable who continue to pay the price.



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