Editorial

As this edition of the EJH goes to print, many countries of the Global North are experiencing a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. In response to the first wave, governments expended unprecedented sums of public funding on services for households experiencing homelessness. This public funding provided additional emergency accommodation, primarily in hotels which were largely empty following the collapse of tourism due to travel restrictions, to accommodate those literally homeless, and to 'thin out' existing congregate temporary and emergency facilities to allow social distancing and self-isolation / shielding. Although data is scant and still emerging, these responses appear to have been largely successful in limiting the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases and Covid-19 related deaths amongst households experiencing homelessness.

Indeed, it has been argued that the response of central and local governments across a number of countries to meeting the needs of those experiencing homelessness during Covid-19 'stands out for its urgency and activism' (Parsell et al, 2020, p.4). They argue that the motivation for this 'urgency and activism' was motivated by a concern that households experiencing homelessness were at high risk of contracting Covid-19. This was due to the fact that many were accommodated in congregate accommodation facilities where social distancing and self-isolation were going to be hugely difficult to achieve, and for those who were literally homelessness, the impossibility of 'staying at home' to prevent the spread of the virus, and hence the need to secure accommodation for them.

But they also argue that this unprecedented response was motived by an additional concern; a concern that households experiencing homelessness were not only at risk of contracting the virus, but these same households as a consequence of their inadequate accommodation or absolute lack of, could also spread the virus to non-homeless households. They also note that these responses do not address the key drivers that result in households experiencing homelessness in the first instance such as housing insecurity and poverty. There was also ample evidence, prior to emergence of the pandemic in early 2020, of the ineffectiveness and high cost of providing congregate shelters as the primary response to residential instability and of the adverse consequences on the health, both physical and mental, of households experiencing homelessness. Although the reframing of homelessness as a public health issue rather than one of individual dysfunction and disability may on the surface seem a positive development, it may in fact negatively confirm a view

of those experiencing homelessness as a threat to the health of others, rather than households who are experiencing housing instability and exclusion. These issues of the underlying drivers of homelessness, how we conceptualise those experiencing homelessness and how to successfully prevent households entering homelessness in the first place, and to rapidly re-house those who do experience residential instability and homelessness are key themes in the contributions to this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness.

We have evidence that the moratoria on evictions in a significant number of countries (Kholodilin, 2020) arising from the pandemic dramatically slowed the rate of new entries to homelessness, and Stenberg and colleagues in their contribution to this edition of the EJH provide evidence from Sweden, based on an analysis of longitudinal data, of the policies changes required to prevent eviction and stem its consequences. Various legislative and administrative rules that restricted access to emergency accommodation for certain migrants were also suspended in many countries during the initial period of the pandemic. Bénoliel, in her contribution highlights the inability of the existing EU equality framework to effectively tackle this discrimination and offers a number of pointers to address this issue, and Oudshoorn and colleagues provide evidence from Canada on how to prevent refugees from entering emergency accommodation. In addition to legislative and policy changes that can stem the flow of households into homelessness, or restrict access to emergency services, if new evidence-based responses to homelessness are be to forged out of the pandemic, how we think and conceptualise homelessness also requires radical change, no more so than in relation to women's experience of homelessness as demonstrated in the contributions by Mayock, Sheridan, Mostowska and Dębska. In addition, Ayed and colleagues argue that a relational lens may provide greater understanding of people's experiences, the relationships they form and ways to redress the impact of homelessness.

Other contributions provide thoughtful analyses of the discourses surrounding begging on the London Overground rail network (Willmsen); and ethnographic account of the practices of individuals experiencing literal homelessness in St. Peter's square in Rome (Gesuelli); the experiences of front-line staff in homelessness services in finding a deceased resident (Valoroso and Stedmon) and accessing mental health services (Devine and Bergin**)**; the importance and effectiveness of different models of peer-support to facilitate sustained exists from homelessness (Barker and colleagues), and the importance of local context in discussions of 'fidelity' in implementing Housing First outside of North America (Wygnańska**).** Finally, this edition concludes with a number of book reviews. We hope that you find the contributions to this edition of the EJH informative and stimulating as we rethink our responses to homelessness in these very challenging times.

References

Kholodilin, K.A. (2020) *Housing Policies Worldwide during Coronavirus Crisis: Challenges and Solutions* (Berlin: DIW Berlin – German Institute of Economic Research).

Parsell, C., Clarke, A. and E. Kuskoff (2020) Understanding Responses to Homelessness during COVID-19: An Examination of Australia, *Housing Studies,* DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2020.1829564