Point-in-time Homelessness Counts in Belgium

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Measuring homelessness in Belgium

- **MEHOBEL study** (Demaerschalk, e.a., 2018)

  → development of a monitoring strategy to measure homelessness

  - National point-in-time count
  - Administrative databases and service provider registration systems
  - Capture-recapture methods to estimate the extent of homelessness

- From a national approach to **bottom-up approach**
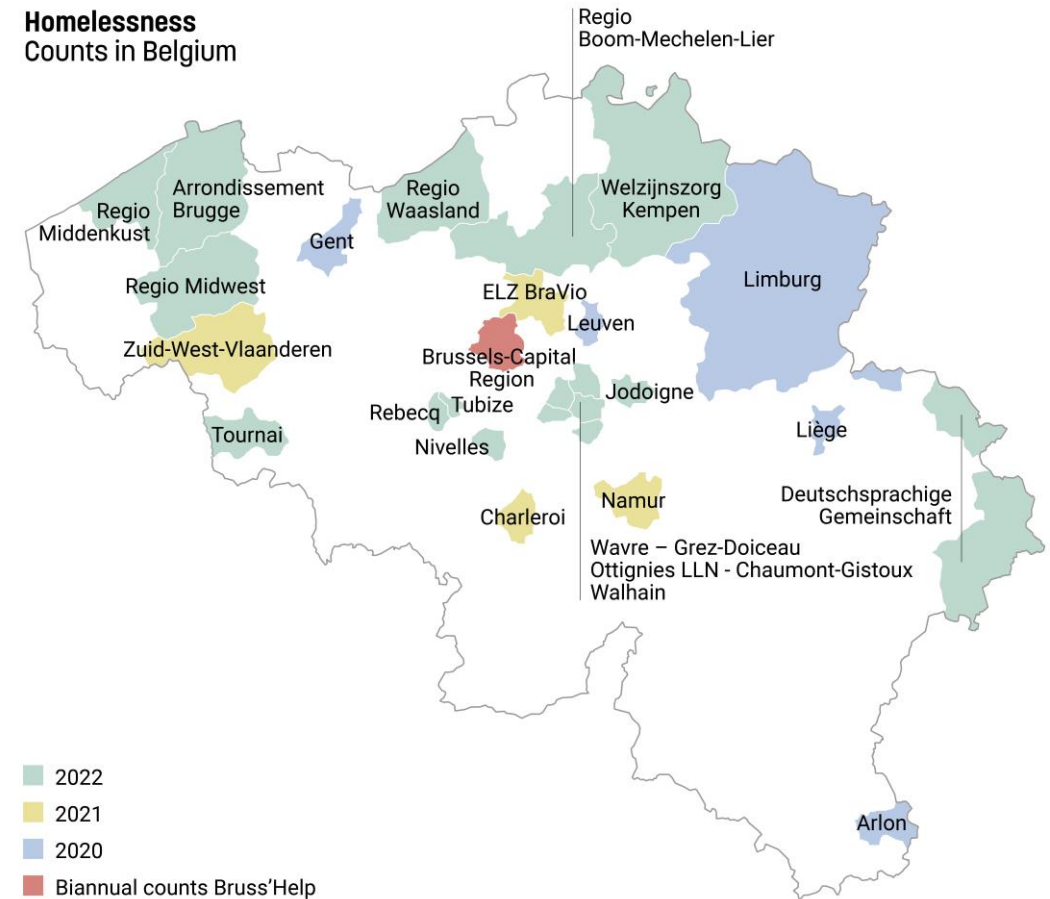- **King Baudouin Foundation**

Point-in-time counts in Belgium

2020

- Leuven, Ghent and Limburg

- Liège and Arlon (University of Liège)

- Creation of a manual

2021

- BraVio and South West Flanders

- Namur and Charleroi (UC Louvain)

2022

- Bruges district, Middenkust, Midwest, Waasland, Boom-Mechelen-Lier, Kempen

- Tournai, Walloon Brabant, German community (UC Louvain)

Homelessness Counts in Belgium

Legend:
- 2022
- 2021
- 2020
- Biannual counts Bruss'Help

Point-in-time count: five guiding questions

1. **Who do we count?**

    → ETHOS Light

2. **Who is counting?**

    → A wide range of services

3. **What do we want to know?**

    → Extent and profile characteristics

4. **How can we measure this?**

    → Short questionnaire

5. **How do we communicate?**

    → Services, local governments, press

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OPERATIONAL CATEGORY		LIVING SITUATION		DEFINITION
1	People living rough	1	Public spaces / external spaces	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homeless hostels	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided
		4	Temporary accommodation	
		5	Transitional supported accommodation	
		6	Women's shelters or refuge accommodation	
4	People living in institutions	7	Health care institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
		8	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
		10	Non-conventional buildings	
		11	Temporary structures	
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

7 At risk for eviction within 30 days

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- Specific services for people being homeless
  night shelters, residental centers, day centers, outreach team, …
- Regular social services (public and non-profit)
- Health services and institutions
  hospitals, psychiatric institutions, prisons, refugee centers, …
- Low-threshold services
  social restaurants, drop-in centers, volunteer organizations, …
- Social housing companies

→ local coordinator(s)
→ training sessions

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   - Age, identity, income, health, nationality, residence documents
   - Children, household composition
   - Living situation
   - Duration, perceived causes of homelessness
   - Assistance of social services

4. **How can we measure this?**
   → Short questionnaire

5. **How do we communicate?**
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4. **How can we measure this?** ⟶
    → Short questionnaire

    - All adults or 16+

    - With or without the person
    - Anonymous ID

5. **How do we communicate?**
    → Services, local governments, press

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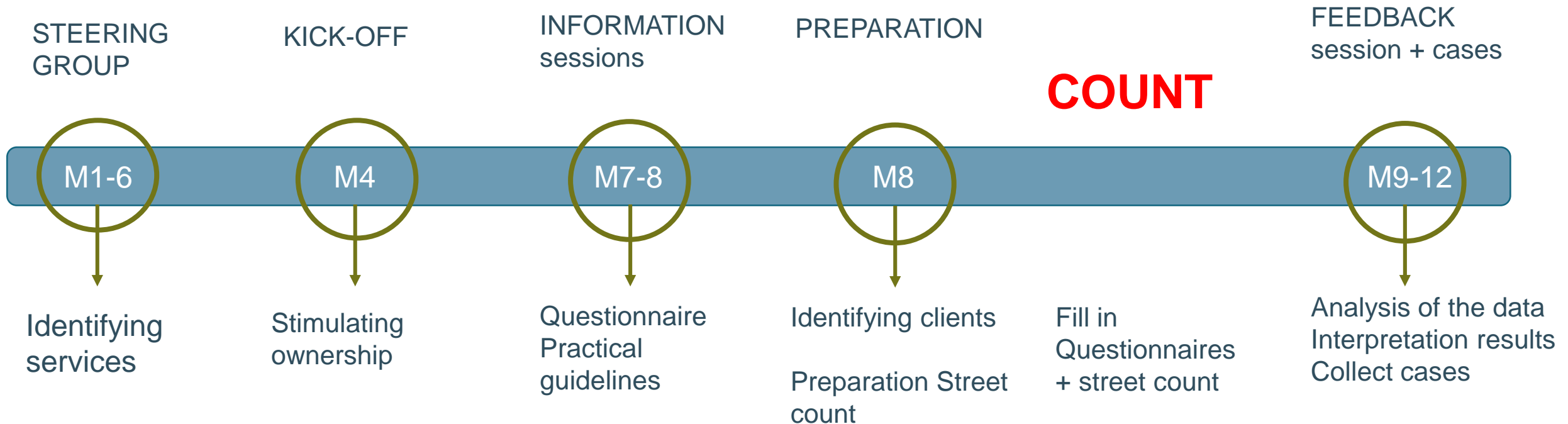4. **How can we measure this?**
    → Short questionnaire

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    → Services, local governments, press

    - Focus group
    - Preview of the results
    - Press conference, webinar, seminars

A process of 12 months

STEERING GROUP

KICK-OFF

INFORMATION sessions

PREPARATION

COUNT

FEEDBACK session + cases

M1-6

M4

M7-8

M8

M9-12

Identifying services

Stimulating ownership

Questionnaire
Practical guidelines

Identifying clients

Preparation Street count

Fill in Questionnaires + street count

Analysis of the data
Interpretation results
Collect cases

Results: general findings

→ **more sophisticated policies**

→ **new research questions**

- **ETHOS 1-2-3**: 1 in 3 of the total population → ETHOS 6 is the largest category

- **Chronic homelessness**: 1 in 3 > 1 year homeless

- Homelessness in **less urban areas**: present but less visible

- **Housing First** target group

- More in-depth view on **specific groups** e.g. homeless young adults

Results: general findings

Young adults (16 - 25 yrs)

- 20 - 25% of the total population

- 40 - 50% in ETHOS 6

- 15 - 30% in youth institutions

- More due to conflict parents/family

- Homeless for a shorter period of time

Women

- 30 - 40% of the total population

- ETHOS 3 and 6

- More frequently homeless with partner and/or children

- More due to relationship problems (incl. violence)

Migration

- Diversity

- Precarious or fluctuating residence

Results: general findings

Directly involved children

- 27%

- ETHOS 3, 6 and category 7

- Indirectly involved children

ETHOS Light category	Number of adults	%	Number of children (0-18yrs)	%
1) Public space	662	5,6	22	0,5
2) Night shelter	489	4,2	49	1,1
3) Temporary accomodation for homeless people	2532	21,6	1901	**43,3**
4) Institution	1394	11,9	237	5,4
5) Non-conventional dwelling	1460	12,5	312	7,1
6) Staying with family/friends	4085	34,8	1148	**26,1**
7) Risk of eviction	848	7,2	669	**15,2**
Missing/unknown	259	2,2	56	1,3
TOTAL	11.729	100,0	4394	100,0

Results: upscaling in Flanders

Upscaling method

- 2 → 6 regions

- Flemish government

  STEUNPUNT
  **WELZIJN
  VOLKSGEZONDHEID &
  GEZIN**

Extrapolations

Category	Number of residents	% of residents in count	Number of adults	Number of adults per 1,000 residents	Number of children	Number of children per 1,000 residents
0-15,000 res.						
15,001-30,000 res.						
30,001-50,000 res.						
50,001-120,000 res.						
> 120,000 res.						
TOTAL						

Some lessons learned and new questions

- Importance of anonimity >< identification of persons
  - Role of **independent research institution** for data collection and analysis

- Cooperation and preparation are **key**: inventory of services for homeless people + local coordinator

- (**Local**) numbers and stories

- Points of attention e.g. **involvement** people experiencing homelessness

- **Limitations**
  - 'point in time' versus the **dynamism** of homelessness
  - only people **known** to the organizations are included; service statistics paradox
  - **time-intensive** for local coordinator and services

Next steps

2023

- Leuven+ and Ghent

- Antwerp

- La Louvière, district Mons-Borinage, province of Luxembourg (UC Louvain)

- Specific groups:
  women, people with mental health problems, homelessness in rural communities and cities

- Collaboration Hogeschool Utrecht and Kansenfonds

Questions and feedback

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