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# THIRD OVERVIEW OF HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE

# 2018

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Abbé Pierre Foundation - FEANTSA





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PUBLICATION  
BY FEANTSA AND  
ABBÉ PIERRE FOUNDATION**

**COORDINATION**

# Chloé Serme-Morin  
# Sarah Coupechoux

**CONTRIBUTORS**

# Maria-José Aldanas  
# Ruth Owen  
# Freek Spinnewijn  
# Manuel Domergue  
# Mauro Striano  
# Tove Samzelius  
# Roswitha Harner & Elisabeth Hammer  
# Caterina Cortese  
# Anne-Claire Vaucher

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# Emma Nolan  
# Tess Vanacker  
# Noria Derdek  
# Laurent Mertens  
# Katerina Glumbikova  
# Les membres du Conseil d'Administration de la FEANTSA  
et son président Ian Tilling  
# Les organisations membres de la FEANTSA  
# Stepan Ripka  
# Sylvie Leroux

**TRANSLATION**

# Elizabeth Hayes et Tara Horan

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

# Genaro Studio

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2018

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# EDITO- RIAL

It has been a year since the publication of our previous report and the systemic change we have been calling for has not materialised. Housing exclusion is still a fast-growing problem, leading to increasingly severe saturation of support systems and increased pressure on emergency services. This past year has resolutely confirmed the existence of another Europe: a Europe not merely ignored but also misunderstood, not just despised but also forgotten - a Europe of the homeless. The homeless population has increased steadily in almost all EU countries. The profiles of homeless people are changing, with children becoming the largest group of people in emergency shelters as a result of a deterioration in the living conditions of extremely vulnerable families. Women, young people, people with a migration background, the working poor, are becoming increasingly numerous among the homeless population.

Across the EU, the last few months have seen vague, incompetent announcements from senior government officials, sometimes announcing figures far below the reality of homelessness, sometimes justifying – in bad faith – the mediocre results of state action by claiming that some people refuse to be housed, or that they even profit from the system by pretending to be homeless to get priority on

ever-growing waiting lists for social housing. Unfortunately, this profound ignorance regarding the situations homeless people find themselves in – often rooted in the lack of rigorous quantitative and qualitative monitoring of housing exclusion – does not stop at awkward political clichés; it creates inappropriate and counter-productive policies, contradicting the very essence of the fundamental right to housing. Local guidelines criminalising people sleeping rough; circulars calling into question the principle of unconditional reception by exerting greater pressure on homeless services to participate in identifying and deporting people who have been denied asylum; domestic legislation defining sleeping rough as an abuse of the right of free movement together with the routine deportation of mobile EU citizens in temporary accommodation; urban facilities that try to outdo each other in their creative attempts to ban homeless people from public spaces; all these initiatives have been put in place by public authorities in various EU Member States, proving the need to recount and document relentlessly the undignified and inhuman daily life that people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion are confronted by, whatever their background.

The confusion over the causes of housing exclusion and the needs of the people who suffer from it leads to confusion over the solutions to be implemented in responding to this social emergency, e.g. the terms "accommodation" and "housing" are often used without distinction by policy makers. Taking this distinction into account is however essential to understand the paradigm shift that a growing number of associations and institutions across Europe are making.

Emergency accommodation refers to supposedly temporary shelter, which in reality, due to a lack of housing solutions, perpetuates precarious living situations and does not offer protection of the right to housing, privacy and inclusion. Long-term housing is a prerequisite for well-being, recovery and social integration. It is a means - and not an end - to the protection of all social rights and personal development of an individual. Housing is a driver of social exclusion when it is inaccessible, inadequate, undignified, insecure or absent. This distinction nourishes the ongoing change to homeless services: the staircase model, which still dominates in the vast majority of Member States can be likened to a meritocracy, deferring individuals' right to housing as they stay indefinitely in shelters, and confiscating the right to shelter from those who do not meet the prerequisites of community life laid down by the services. In Europe, consensus has been building for several years on a model that is the reverse of the staircase model: Housing First. This means putting housing back in its rightful place, namely a fundamental right guaranteed by international and European treaties. Homeless people should be housed permanently, with support that is adapted to their needs and

not merely dependent on the capacity to accommodate them.

Evidence of the inadequacy of emergency homeless services has accumulated over the years. Conversely, the know-how, skills and experiences acquired through other methods of action - prevention and Housing First, for example - have been expanded and have allowed the proliferation of good practice. Model integrated strategies, moving from managing homelessness to eradicating it, have proven effective, particularly in Finland. From now on, effectiveness should no longer be measured by counting the number of places created in emergency accommodation, but by identifying the number of people maintained in their homes as part of prevention measures and the number of people coming off the streets or out of emergency accommodation to be housed with dignity long term.

Although this change has taken root in local and voluntary bodies, a systemic transformation – driven by real political will to reverse homelessness, and finally implement the international obligations of Member States regarding the right to housing – is nonetheless still missing. EU institutions also have a key role to play in facilitating and supporting this transition.

Naturally, at the heart of this issue is a sensitive question: how can housing, which is increasingly perceived and used as an asset and a financial product, be concretely transformed into a guaranteed right in the context of scarce affordable housing and increasing inequality? It is becoming increasingly clear that the fight against homelessness and housing exclusion must be accompanied by market interventions. This is needed to correct the dysfunctional

nature of Europe's housing markets because they are excluding a growing share of the population. Unfortunately, most countries are dismantling and weakening existing affordable housing provision systems, and they lack the courage to develop new, bold measures to meet the current challenges.

However, many initiatives have already provided answers: investment in social and very social housing, use of vacant properties as affordable housing, "socialisation" of private rental stock, intermediate leases (shared or temporary ownership), cooperative housing, modular housing, anti-speculation clauses of the Community Land Trusts are all inspiring initiatives that are already being disseminated throughout Europe. Beyond the practical issue of producing decent and affordable housing, all relevant sectoral policies (health, employment, social protection, training, migration and justice) must be taken into account leading to coordinated action towards a common goal: eradicating homelessness by 2030 and ensuring the right to adequate and affordable housing for all, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN 2030 Agenda.

This report, in addition to being a repeated call for local, national and European authorities to act, is also a basis for action, recommending strategies to be adopted and pitfalls to be avoided for the implementation of integrated strategies to reduce and eradicate homelessness. Analysis of the Eurostat/EU-SILC data on housing exclusion, carried out annually for the European Housing Exclusion Index, shows that while the quality of housing is gradually improving at European level, the continuous increase in housing costs is putting more and more pressure on all households. The most

vulnerable households are at the forefront: inequalities in housing exclusion have increased between 2010 and 2016, with the situation of people below the poverty line having worsened in particular. Finally, an analysis of the implementation of the right to housing in Europe in 2017 reveals the growing gap between the rights guaranteed by European and international treaties and the reality of local and national situations. Member States have a legal obligation to respect the right to housing for all. International and European institutions guarantee the respect of this right.

By mobilising a legal base, political will and strategic planning simultaneously, the eradication of homelessness and the fight against housing exclusion cease to be out of reach and become imperatives of human dignity as well as proof of the credibility of the European social project.

**Freek Spinnewijn**  
FEANTSA Director

**Christophe Robert**  
Managing Director  
of the Foundation Abbé Pierre

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# THE OTHER EUROPE

## COLD REALITY FIGURES ON HOMELESSNESS

\*NON-COMPARABLE



**+150%**  
From 2014 to 2016

**GERMANY**  
**860,000**  
Homeless in 2016

**+169%**  
From 2010 to 2017

**ENGLAND**  
**4,751**  
Homeless sleeping rough on one night in 2017

**+32%**  
From 2008 to 2016

**AUSTRIA**  
**15,090**  
Statutory homeless people 2016

**+96%**  
From 2008 to 2016

**BELGIUM BRUSSELS**  
**3,386**  
Homeless on one night in November 2016

**+8%**  
From 2015 to 2017

**DENMARK**  
**6,635**  
Homeless (one week in 2017)

**+20.5%**  
From 2014 to 2016

**SPAIN**  
**16,437**  
People per day on average in emergency shelters in 2016

**-18%**  
From 2009 to 2016

**FINLAND**  
**6,644**  
Homeless people (one night in November 2016)

**+17%**  
From 2016 to 2017

**FRANCE**  
**20,845**  
People called the 115 homeless helpline requesting accommodation (one month June 2017)

**HUNGARY**  
**10,206**  
Homeless (1 night in February 2016)

**+145%**  
From 2014 to 2017

**IRELAND**  
**8,857**  
People in emergency accommodation (November 2017)

**+16.2%**  
From 2015 to 2016

**LITHUANIA**  
**4,569**  
In temporary accommodation (one night in 2016)

**+11%**  
From 2011 to 2016

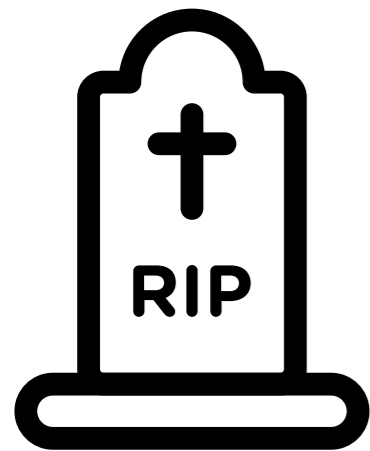
**THE NETHERLANDS**  
**60,120**  
People in homeless accommodation services in 2016

**CZECH REPUBLIC**  
**68,500**  
Homeless in 2016

**SWEDEN**  
**33,000**  
Homeless (1 week in 2017)

See sources and more detailed information in appendices, page 100.

# THE OTHER EUROPE



## SLEEPING ROUGH ON EUROPE'S STREETS KILLS

**FRANCE**  
(Source : Morts de la Rue)  
**13,371**  
Estimated deaths among homeless people in France between 2012 and 2016 (2,369 "declared" to the organisation)

### AVERAGE AGE OF DEATH

**FRANCE**  
**49.6 years old**

**GREAT BRITAIN**  
**47 years old**

**BELGIUM**  
**Between 45 and 50 years old**

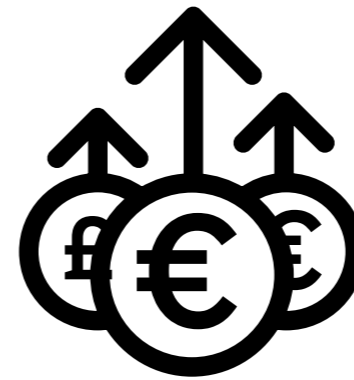
**THE NETHERLANDS/ROTTERDAM**  
Mortality rate among homeless people  
**3.5 times higher than**  
for the population as a whole.

**30 YEARS**

**SHORTER LIFE EXPECTANCY THAN THE REST OF THE POPULATION**

**10.3 YEARS**

**AVERAGE AMOUNT OF PERSON'S LIFE SPENT HOMELESS**



## HIKE IN SPENDING ON EMERGENCY MEASURES

**FRANCE**  
• Between 2010-16: people seeking overnight hotel stays up **206%**  
• Winter 2017: **48% of people left without a solution** having called the 115 helpline for emergency accommodation (a 3-years plan has been adopted in 2015 in FR to reduce overnight stays in hotels)

**GREAT BRITAIN**  
**78,170** households in temporary accommodation in March 2017 = up **62** since March 2011  
• Shift in local authority spending (NAO) towards emergency accommodation at the expense of housing/prevention.  
• In 2010-2011, the local authorities spent **16%** of their funding for homelessness on temporary accommodation (22% of which was spent on hotels/B&Bs) and **75%** on housing services.  
• In 2015-2016, **29%** of spending was on temporary accommodation and (44% of which was spent on hotels/B&Bs) and 61% on housing services.

**IRELAND/DUBLIN**  
• Dublin City Council spent **€ 39 million** on hotel nights for homeless people in 2016, while **€ 10.7 million** was spent on prevention and supported housing.

**206% MORE**

REQUESTS FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS IN HOTELS  
— FRANCE | 2010-16 —

**29%**

OF FUNDING SPENT ON TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION  
— GREAT BRITAIN | 2015-16 —

**48%**

LEFT WITHOUT A SOLUTION AFTER CALLING 115, THE HOMELESS HELPLINE  
— FRANCE | 2017 —



**4,000**  
HOMELESS CHILDREN  
— THE NETHERLANDS | 2015 —

**78,170**  
HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION  
— GREAT BRITAIN | 2017 —

## CHILDREN ON THE FRONTLINE OF HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

**IRELAND**  
• **3,333 children** were homeless in November 2017, up **276%** since November 2014.  
• In Ireland, more than one homeless person in three is a child.

**SWEDEN**  
• **Between 10,000 and 15,000 children** were homeless in April 2017.  
• **60%** increase in the number of children in emergency accommodation between 2011 and 2017.

**THE NETHERLANDS**  
• **4,000 children registered homeless** with the local authorities in 2015, **60%** up on 2013.

**FRANCE**  
• In 2012, **30,100 children** were homeless.  
• **33%** of people in homeless accommodation were under 18 years making them the largest age group in homelessness.

**1/3**  
OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN IRELAND ARE CHILDREN



See sources in appendices, page 102.



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# CHAPTER 1

# ZERO HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

HOW DO WE GET  
THERE?

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# I. ENDING HOMELESSNESS: A STRATEGY, NOT A FANTASY

Over the last number of years, only two European countries have seen a reduction in the number of homeless people.

- In Finland, there was a 10% drop in the number of homeless individuals in 2016 compared to 2013.
- In Norway, there was a 36% drop observed in the number of homeless people between 2012 (6,259) and 2016 (3,909) (these are the lowest figures since records began in 1996)<sup>1</sup>.

In both these cases, homelessness was approached as a housing problem and a violation of fundamental rights, both solvable, and not as an inevitable social problem resulting from personal issues. The above-mentioned countries established integrated and decentralised strategies that had specific, measurable and reachable targets, set in a clear time frame.

1

National study led by the City of Oslo, the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) and Akershus University.

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Reducing the number of people who are homeless, and in time, eradicating homelessness completely, is a public policy issue. A strategy that involves setting quantified targets and coordinated implementation is therefore indispensable. The ultimate objective of eradicating homelessness may seem overly ambitious, particularly in the current context of significant increases in homelessness in many countries, and it is still much debated, even within the voluntary sector. However, this ambition is vital in reaffirming the importance of moving away from

systems of simply managing homelessness, i.e. in a reactive and short-term manner, with disparate and one-off actions, to systems for resolving and preventing homelessness in the long term with continuous and integrated initiatives. There is consensus among European and international bodies, including the UN's Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing and its Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, as well as the European Commission, on the fact that integrated strategies must be put in place in order to eradicate homelessness.

"All levels of government should design and implement policies, laws and strategies to prevent and remedy homelessness. Failure to do so reflects that homelessness has neither been recognised nor addressed as a violation of human rights. What is lacking at all levels is a shared commitment to ensuring enjoyment of the right to adequate housing – and related rights such as life and health." *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, United Nations General Assembly, 30 December 2015*

## WHAT IS AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS?

The concept of "integrated strategies" has been much used in recent years, not only by FEANTSA but also by the European Commission, political leaders and various stakeholders in housing policy. FEANTSA and the Abbé Pierre Foundation use this concept to define an appropriate public policy on homelessness, including, as a minimum, quantified targets for reducing homelessness with a view to eradicating it completely, and a realistic action plan. This plan must be based on housing and support and on interdisciplinary work carried out on a partnership basis that brings together all stakeholders. Finally, it must be endowed with the necessary resources

2

[http://www.urbancentre.toronto.ca/pdfs/eLibrary/NAEH\\_End-ILN-10-Years\\_2000.pdf](http://www.urbancentre.toronto.ca/pdfs/eLibrary/NAEH_End-ILN-10-Years_2000.pdf)

to reach the objective and allow for a rigorous evaluation mechanism.

Recent experiences in North America demonstrate the effectiveness of such strategies. In 2000, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (United States) published a report calling for radical revision of the methods for fighting homelessness. The report (*A Plan, Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*)<sup>2</sup> details a bottom-up framework based on examples of ground-breaking local experiences, that transformed the goal of simply managing the homelessness problem into a goal of eradicating the problem within 10 years.

According to this document, the four steps to be implemented simultaneously are: **Plan for outcomes**, based on quality local data collection and a planning process focussing on the objective of eradicating homelessness;

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"Close the front door", i.e. invest in measures to prevent homelessness across all social services in order to give them more responsibility towards the most vulnerable people; "Open the back door", i.e. sustainably rehouse every homeless person, as quickly as possible, (the **Housing First** model is at play here); **housing must be the first step towards reintegration, and cannot be dependent on resolving individual social difficulties**; Finally, **build the infrastructure**, i.e. make eradicating homelessness part of a wider fight against the systemic problems that cause extreme poverty, by creating affordable housing, ensuring adequate income for a decent life, and developing services adapted to users' needs.

Six years later, in 2006, local efforts to end homelessness were flourishing. This widespread adoption of the plan over the last ten years represents a collective commitment, at national level, to eradicate homelessness, that has given rise to several follow-up studies. 234 ten-year plans were thus initiated at the beginning of the 2000s, all across the United States (185 were city or county plans, 25 were state-wide plans and 24 were regional plans). In order to evaluate implementation, the Alliance identified four essential factors for successfully implementing of a plan: **identifying a body responsible for implementation, setting quantifiable outcomes, identifying a funding source, and setting a clear implementation timeline**. Plans based on the same model were also established in Canada: the results, upon evaluation, are quite encouraging<sup>3</sup>. In cases where they are not – the progress made in such a strategy is influenced by a wide variety of factors – it is at least evidence of effort being made to break the existing ineffective system and lay the foundations for a better methodology.

3

<http://homelesshub.ca/research/community-planning/10-year-plans-canada>; in Calgary, Alberta, where the first Canadian Housing First-based ten-year plan was implemented, the number of homeless people fell by 26% between the first year of the plan in 2008 and 2018, according to the Calgary Homeless Foundation. <https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2018/01/16/1290077/0/en/Calgary-s-10-Year-Plan-to-End-Homelessness-enters-its-final-year.html>

4

See UK National Audit Office (2017), *Homelessness Report*, <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>, or Northern Ireland National Audit Office (2017), *Homelessness in Northern Ireland*, <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/homelessness-northern-ireland-0>

In Europe, more than half of EU Member States have announced a strategy to fight homelessness over the last twenty years, marking a significant improvement. Nonetheless, a majority of these policies were incomplete and "non-integrated", due to either their short-term nature, a lack of coordinated and multifaceted planning and implementation, inefficient management, budgets that were too low or poorly allocated, ignorance of the target public and the realities on the ground, or skipping of the evaluation process. They therefore did not have the intended effect. The various statistics showing an increase and a worsening of homeless situations everywhere in Europe are evidence of these failures.

These alarm bells are being noted by stakeholders in the social sector but also increasingly by independent bodies responsible for monitoring public spending and issue warnings on inefficient and ineffective strategies<sup>4</sup>.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATED STRATEGIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS ACCORDING TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The [Social Investment Package](#) adopted by the European Commission in 2013 encouraged Member States for the first time to:

- Adopt long-term, housing-focused, integrated homelessness strategies at national, regional and local level;
- introduce efficient policies to prevent evictions.

According to the Commission, the efficacy of strategies to fight homelessness rests upon prevention and early intervention, quality homelessness service delivery, rapid re-housing, systematic data collection, monitoring the issue, and using shared definitions ([ETHOS typology](#)).

The European Union can support measures taken by Member States, thanks largely to funding from the [European Social Fund](#) (ESF), the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) and the [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived](#) (FEAD).

The Commission provided [guidance on confronting homelessness](#) (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52013SC0042>) within the framework of its Social Investment Package. This describes trends in homelessness, good practices by Member States and core elements of integrated homelessness strategies, highlighting the support role of the EU.

It is within the framework of the [National Reform Programmes](#) of the European Semester and the [Social Open Method of Coordination \(Social OMC\)](#) that the majority of Member States register their progress in/towards establishing a strategy to fight homelessness.

More recently, the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) laid down twenty key principles for delivering stronger protection of social rights for citizens. The 19th principle is focussed on the right to housing and assistance for the homeless as follows:

- Access to social housing or high-quality housing assistance shall be provided for those in need.
- Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless to promote their social inclusion.

### ASSOCIATIONS CALL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED STRATEGIES FOR ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

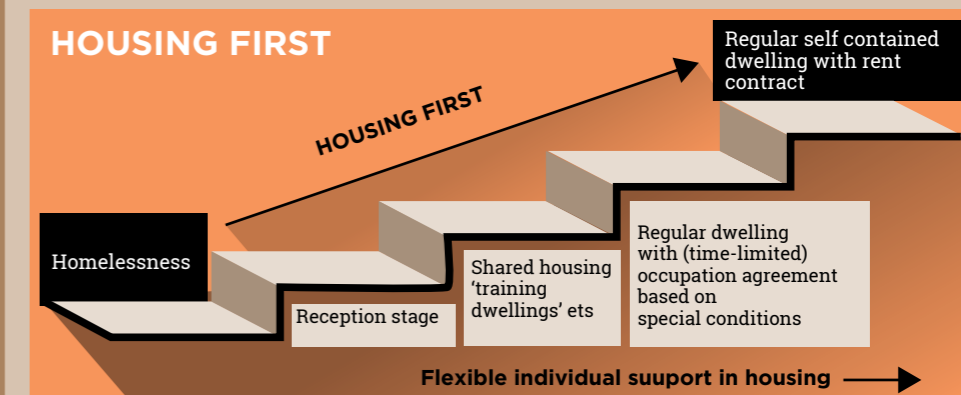
In places where the national strategies for fighting homelessness are incomplete, under financed or not adapted to the realities on the ground, civil society tries to bring about action to encourage politicians to embrace the idea of a society with zero homelessness: the "SDF: objectif zéro" plan by the Abbé Pierre Foundation, FEANTSA's "Ending Homelessness is Possible" campaign, #HomelessZero from the Italian organisation fio.PSD, not forgetting the [European End Street Homelessness Campaign](#), coordinated by the BSHF and launched in 2015, which now has ten European cities committed to eradicating homelessness together.

**An integrated strategy is therefore a detailed, sustainable and ongoing action plan directed and coordinated with a suitable and cross-cutting system of governance that is adequately financed, based on the reality of homelessness and an understanding of the needs of those targeted, and, finally, that is evaluated regularly in order to measure the progress towards the ultimate goal of eradicating homelessness. When turning to how such a strategy can be properly designed, the issue of implementation is obviously crucial.**

### HOUSING FIRST: BRINGING ABOUT SYSTEMIC CHANGE BY SHIFTING THE PARADIGM

Housing First is a model to end homelessness among people with high support needs that has been successfully applied in the United States, Canada and in several European countries. Originally devised for people who require significant support, the strategy targets, in the majority of cases, people who are long-term homeless or repeatedly homeless and/or who have psychological problems; severe mental illness; drug or alcohol addiction; are in poor physical health and/or are disabled.

Within this approach, housing is seen as the departure point rather than the final goal. A Housing First service is first and foremost concerned with *providing housing* immediately or very quickly, combined with support that is adapted to the individual. Within this framework, immediate focus is put on enabling the person to live in their own home. The approach is also centred on improving the health and well-being, as well as (re)creating social connections for the supported person. As an approach, it is very different to the more traditional assistance services in which there is an attempt to render the person "ready for housing" before allowing them to access housing. In these approaches, service users are expected to be sober, to follow their treatment regularly and to be sufficiently independent before they are provided with housing. Within these types of services, housing comes last.



Overview of the differences between the Housing First model and the "staircase" model

In the United States, Canada and Europe, research has shown that the Housing First model put an end to homelessness for at least eight people out of every ten.

In some EU countries such as Finland and Denmark, large-scale implementation of Housing First policies (at national level in Finland and in the large Danish cities) represented a cornerstone on which to base strategies for reducing and eradicating homelessness.

PLACEA N. (2016), *Guide to Housing First in Europe*, available at [https://housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HFG\\_full\\_Digital.pdf](https://housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HFG_full_Digital.pdf)

# II. LEARNING LESSONS FROM EUROPE'S EXISTING STRATEGIES FOR FIGHTING HOMELESSNESS

Across the European Union, an increasing number of local/regional authorities and national governments are establishing strategies to fight homelessness. A few years ago, FEANTSA created a toolbox to develop such strategies (the ten key approaches are detailed in the 2015 edition of this report)<sup>5</sup> along with the FEANTSA toolkit for developing an integrated strategy to fight homelessness<sup>6</sup>. The transition from a system based on emergency response and one based on reducing (and, in time, eradicating) homelessness will benefit from these European experiences, as each experience is embedded in its own policy approach, its own funding, its own governance, its own implementation as well as its own successes and failures. We are calling on political decision-makers to take note of the main elements to retain and those to be avoided at all costs, when developing an integrated strategy for the reduction and eradication of homelessness. We are also calling on EU institutions to actively support this transition, by more effectively using the existing policy instruments, by supporting homeless people across all relevant sectors, by monitoring progress made with regard to homelessness and housing exclusion at Member State level, by defending the rights of homeless people and by investing more EU funds into eradicating homelessness.

5

FEANTSA and the Foundation Abbé Pierre (2015), An Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe, 2015, p. 69 <http://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2016/09/17/an-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe?bcParent=27>

6

FEANTSA (2010), Ending Homelessness: A Handbook for Policy Makers, p. 23 [http://www.feantsa.org/download/feantsa\\_handbook\\_en\\_final-2-15169925525089897430.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/download/feantsa_handbook_en_final-2-15169925525089897430.pdf)

## 1. FIVE FACTORS TO NOTE IN DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR REDUCING AND ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS

### USERS AND THEIR RIGHTS SHOULD BE AT THE CENTRE OF THE STRATEGY

The needs and the rights of the individual should be the starting point for any strategy to fight homelessness.

A needs-based assessment is first conducted via **quality data collection**: the definition of homelessness must be broad, based on the European typology on housing<sup>7</sup> to cover all the situations that cause housing deprivation. Specific groups with their own issues (young people, families, people with mental health issues, long-term homeless people, those who are coming out of institutions, etc.) must be identified within the data collection process so that they can be targeted, and suitable solutions can be created within the action plan. Data and qualitative documentation must be produced on a regular basis: changes in the number of homeless people and the comparison over time (of the specific issues highlighted at the start of the strategy) should be the true test of the strategy's effectiveness at local, regional and/or national level.

The involvement of all stakeholders in policy implementation is essential to the functioning of any strategy for fighting homelessness. The needs-based approach must therefore also intersect with a participatory approach<sup>8</sup>. According to analysis from a British think-tank on the reform of public services in the United Kingdom, "[by] focusing entirely on people's needs – rather than what they can contribute – services have tended to disempower their users and have done little to

prevent needs arising in the first place. [...] Since services largely ignore people's abilities, their continuing need has often become their only asset in their battle for help<sup>9</sup>. The participation of those who have experienced homelessness should therefore serve to improve the quality of services delivered and of policies. In practice, participation consists of: recognising that those affected by homelessness have the right to have their opinions and points of view heard; creating structures whereby those points of view can be heard; acting on the information shared; and giving feedback to people on the impact of their contribution. FEANTSA's participation toolkit details what it means to empower people and offers practical tools for making use of these methods<sup>10</sup>. In Denmark, the Law on social services stipulates that local authorities must guarantee that all users of shelters (known as Section 110 accommodation) can exercise influence on the organisation and services. Users' committees have been set up within these shelters. Since 2001 a local committee of service users, SAND, has been operational: it plays an active role in the development of public policies.

A homeless person has, above all, **rights**: access to a stable and decent home is indispensable for exercising the majority of their fundamental rights, among which the right to health, the right to dignity, the right to a private and family life. International treaties protecting the right to housing<sup>11</sup> must be the starting point for the development of any strategy to fight homelessness, and emphasis must be put on how the right to housing is applied to ensure that this right can be exercised. Housing, as an enforceable right

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See FEANTSA (2007), ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, available at: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2017/09/12/updated?bcParent=27>

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See FEANTSA (2013), Participation Toolkit : <http://www.feantsa.org/n/toolkit/2013/10/19/participation-toolkit-get-a-different-result-get-people-participating?bcParent=27>

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Boyle D, Harris M. (2009), « The Challenge of Coproduction », NESTA | NE. [https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_challenge\\_of\\_coproduction.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_challenge_of_coproduction.pdf)

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FEANTSA (2013), Participation Toolkit, Op. Cit.

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See <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/>



enshrined in legislation, only exists in France and Scotland. In **France**, the 5 March 2007 Law establishing an enforceable right to housing enables people experiencing housing exclusion or who are on social housing waiting lists long term to assert their right to housing. The Law establishes right of appeal, both amicable and contentious, for cases where the State-guaranteed right is not respected. This 5 March 2007 Law introduces the concept of not returning any person housed in an emergency shelter to the street. This rule is enshrined in Article L. 345-2-3 of the Family and Social Action Code. Access to housing measures are available at any time to any homeless person experiencing distress or medical, psychological or social problems. The 25 March 2009 Law details the right to social support that people in housing are entitled to. In effect, ten years after it entered into force, the effectiveness of the enforceable right to housing remains mixed due to it only being partially applied by public authorities<sup>12</sup>. In **Scotland**, the right to housing for homeless people is enshrined in law, and a national strategic framework (the 2001 Housing Act and the 2003 Homelessness Act) set the goal that all households that find themselves involuntarily homeless have a right to housing.

## HOUSING FIRST

While homelessness is not just a housing issue, it is always a housing issue that is the source. The **Housing First** model has thus spread throughout Europe, giving rise to experiments in a high number of Member States<sup>13</sup>; the Finnish case, described in the 2015 edition of this report, is often highlighted as the first large-scale implementation of the principle. A Housing First Europe Hub was created by the Finnish organisation the Y Foundation, and FEANTSA, in order to promote and support activities for sharing experiences

and the expansion of Housing First<sup>14</sup>. However, moving from experimentation to structural application of the principle as the starting point to an integrated strategy has still proven elusive for the majority of Member States.

Outside of the European Union, in Norway, another successful example of an integrated strategy based on the core principles of Housing First can be found. Norwegian policies for fighting homelessness are, in effect, based on making housing rapidly and systematically available along with support services that are adapted to and requested by the user – rather than a "staircase" approach whereby the user must be judged "ready" before housing is provided. Housing is seen as each citizen's fundamental right, and the resident has influence over their housing, their location and their particular support services. The number of homeless people in Norway has fallen from almost 6,300 in 2012 to about 3,900 in 2016, representing a 36% fall according to a report by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR)<sup>15</sup>. The reduction in the number of homeless people has been most significant in Trondheim with a fall of 58% (from 350 to 146 people). Some towns, such as Verdal, Steinkjer, Molde and Melhus have virtually no homelessness whatsoever. This reduction was particularly significant among groups deemed priority: young people (including refugees with residency permits) and families with children. According to the report, the decline is the result of a national, long-term strategy of successful cooperation between the State, local authorities, the Housing Bank (*Husbanken*) and local stakeholders. The institutional roots of the Housing Bank as principle coordinator and funding source of the strategy allowed for an intervention model focused on housing, allowing for the development

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See the report (in French) by Marie-Arlette Carlotti, "L'effectivité du droit au logement opposable – Mission d'évaluation dans 14 départements", December 2016, available at [http://www.hclpd.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport\\_mission\\_carlotti\\_dec\\_2016.pdf](http://www.hclpd.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_mission_carlotti_dec_2016.pdf)

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See the Housing First Europe Guide: <http://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/>

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<http://housingfirsteurope.eu/>

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[https://www.husbanken.no/bibliotek/bib\\_holigpolitikk/bostedslose-i-norge-2016-en-kartlegging/](https://www.husbanken.no/bibliotek/bib_holigpolitikk/bostedslose-i-norge-2016-en-kartlegging/)

## FUNDING THE STRATEGY: MOBILISING ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO REACH ITS GOALS

A strategy will only produce results if it is **adequately financed**. Substantial investment is indispensable: many strategies are quite comprehensive, yet without adequate resources, they are destined to fail. That said, the amount spent in the fight against homelessness does not necessarily determine the effectiveness of the policies. The largest budgets are not necessarily the most efficient: in **England** public spending on homelessness has increased in general in recent years – in 2015-2016 local authorities in England spent more than £1.1 billion on the issue. More than three quarters of this was spent on temporary accommodation (£845 million). Spending on temporary accommodation has increased by 39% since 2010-2011. At the same time as local authorities have increased their spending on temporary accommodation, they have reduced the amount spent on prevention measures: spending on general housing services has reduced by 21% since 2010-2011. For example, the Supporting People programme has seen its funding cut by 59%, and yet the goal of this particular programme is to help vulnerable people to live independently and to stay in their homes<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, the reform of housing allowances in England is a good example of bad financial management of the tools for promoting access to housing for the most vulnerable: in 2011, the housing allowance system was reformed, with the stated goal being reducing the cost of the benefit that was causing price hikes and thereby increasing tenants' solvency. Instead of being calculated based on average local rent, housing allowances are now calculated based on a reference rent that is lower than market rates. In one year, between 2012 and 2013, the average amount of housing allowances fell by £27 per

of new housing and service measures in central Norwegian cities and towns. From 2009, within the Social Housing Development Programmes, long-term partnership agreements have been signed between the Housing Bank and some local authorities with these local authorities setting specific goals based on an external evaluation and a national framework. The issue of homelessness was at the core of this programme<sup>16</sup>. The municipality of Trondheim has, among other measures, systematically worked to increase mobility in municipal rental housing, and to guarantee personalised support to vulnerable households renting in the private market. The households targeted are low-income families, young people who are not in employment or training, refugees, former prisoners, disabled people, and people with addiction problems and/or mental health issues. Major construction programmes for student housing and optimising the rental market in the municipality have increased access to housing and reduced waiting times for homeless people. Trondheim also used loan and grant programmes from the Housing Bank, both for housing construction and to help individuals to rent or buy property.

The construction of affordable housing is therefore fundamental to planning this type of policy. The fight against housing exclusion must, as a prerequisite, be supported by intervention in the housing markets, which are dysfunctional as they exclude an ever-growing section of the population. Build and invest in social and very social housing, use vacant housing as an opportunity to provide affordable housing, create mechanisms to "socialise" the private rental stock, encourage intermediate leases (shared or temporary ownership), and create housing cooperatives and modular housing; these are all solutions worth embracing in order to provide the most vulnerable people with decent and affordable housing.

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See E. DYB (2017), "Homelessness in Norway - Housing Led Policy", presentation à Focus Ireland, Dublin, 7 November 2017, available at: [https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwji9dOVsfPYAhWDEcAKHQwpDIQQFghVMAY&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.focusireland.ie%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2016%2F08%2FEvelyn-Dyb-Presentation-Focus-Ireland-07112017.pptx&usq=A0vVaw1gUMr-ocTGfmOb\\_3ZqGM6K](https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwji9dOVsfPYAhWDEcAKHQwpDIQQFghVMAY&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.focusireland.ie%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2016%2F08%2FEvelyn-Dyb-Presentation-Focus-Ireland-07112017.pptx&usq=A0vVaw1gUMr-ocTGfmOb_3ZqGM6K)

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National Audit Office (2017), Homelessness Report, <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>

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Government Social Research – Department for Work & Pensions (2014), *The impact of recent reforms to Local Housing Allowances: Summary of key findings*, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/329902/r1874-lha-impact-of-recent-reforms-summary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329902/r1874-lha-impact-of-recent-reforms-summary.pdf)

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<http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/cost-analysis-homelessness>

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<https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Orange-County-Cost-Study-Homeless-Executive-Summary.pdf>

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<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/>

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<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article-abstract/47/5/1534/2622376/Cost-Offsets-of-Supportive-Housing-Evidence-for?redirected-From=fulltext>

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The Finnish Slot Machine Association was the national not-for-profit games organisation. In 2017, the three operators on the market – Finoto, RAY and Veikkaus Oy – merged into one entity managed by the State: Veikkaus Oy. Its revenue is spent entirely on charitable activity, social protection and health. Annual profit from Veikkaus Oy betting is estimated at about one billion euro.

week, i.e. about €156 per month. According to a study by Government Social Research, 94% of this reduction was borne by the tenants and just 6% by a reduction in rent (and thus by landlords)<sup>18</sup>, which seriously calls into question the supposed link between rental rates and housing allowance rates. Furthermore, due to increased demand for housing allowances from renters in the private sector (+56% in 5 years), between 2011 and 2013, the budget allocated to these benefits increased by 9%. In 2013, the housing allowance budget was £25 billion, i.e. €33 billion. The result of this reform is that 46% of households whose housing allowances were changed state that they have had to make sacrifices when buying their daily essentials. 47% of landlords said that they have experienced an increase in rent arrears since the reform was introduced.

The actual cost of weather response plans and emergency plans for homeless people are, in the long term, very high. Compare this to the "negative costs" and the positive externalities that result from homelessness prevention. Studies in **Canada**<sup>19</sup>, **the United States**<sup>20</sup>, **England**<sup>21</sup> and **Australia**<sup>22</sup> prove that efficient and integrated upstream interventions reduce the individual and financial cost of homelessness, including costs related to public services, health services, legal services, and emergency accommodation. Resorting to hotels is widely condemned these days yet governments simply do not know how to get out of this terrible spiral of emergency management which is above all harmful to the dignity of those receiving shelter but also to the efficient use of public funds.

The fight against homelessness is a **long-term investment** which requires significant funds being allocated to a strategy in order to effect change. Against the backdrop of austerity budgets, and the corresponding fall in local authority resources and service providers at local level, it

is vital to move from a scenario of under-investment to one of strengthened, durable and efficient investment in the two essential aspects of any strategy to fight homelessness: housing and support. The support teams, and the training that is provided to them, must be adequately funded.

In **Finland**, financing for the 2012-2015 strategy was shared between the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA, €24.2 million), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (STM, €10 million) and the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY, €65 million)<sup>23</sup>. In total, from 2012 to 2015, the Finnish government allocated more than €10 million to local authorities for the recruitment of support teams.

In **Italy**, resorting to different EU funds enabled the creation of innovative and adapted financial packages for local issues. The European Social Fund is being used to bolster the assistance services for homeless people, to train social workers, to open up training and work opportunities to people living in poverty, and to support pilot projects. The European Regional Development Fund is being used to reorganise emergency accommodation and to renovate and build affordable housing. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived is used to provide basic necessities. While EU funds cannot replace adequate local resources to address requirements, they can certainly be important sources for introducing new practices and supporting innovative policies.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONTINUOUS AND CONSTANT STRATEGY: THE NEWS FROM FINLAND

When we speak of integrated strategies with a proven success record regarding the fight against homelessness in Europe, the policies established in **Finland** twenty years ago have proven to be the

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During the PAAVO I (2008-2011) and PAAVO II (2012-2015) programmes, about 2,500 new housing units were built or acquired for homeless people, and about 350 new social housing professionals were employed to work in the homeless sector. In the period 2012-2013, all stakeholders in the strategy (the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, the Criminal Sanctions Agency, the Finnish Slot Machine Association) funded the programme to the tune of €34.6 million (€21 million for housing construction and €13.6 million for service provision). Emergency accommodation was replaced with modern housing units. The quality and safety of the housing was improved. By investing in prevention, particularly in keeping people in their homes, it was possible to prevent about 200 inhabitants per year from becoming homeless. Long-term homelessness was reduced by about 1,200 people between 2008 and 2014 and this figure continues to fall. PLEACE N. CULHANE D. GRANFELT R. KNUHTAGARD M. (2015), "The Finnish Homelessness Strategy – An International Review", [https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/153258/YMra\\_3en\\_2015.pdf](https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/153258/YMra_3en_2015.pdf)

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Ministry of the Environment (2016), *Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019*, [http://www.ym.fi/en-US/Housing/Programmes\\_and\\_strategies/Actionplan\\_for\\_preventing\\_homelessness](http://www.ym.fi/en-US/Housing/Programmes_and_strategies/Actionplan_for_preventing_homelessness)

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The Y-Foundation (2017), "A Home of Your Own – Housing First and Ending Homelessness in Finland", Otava Book Printing Ltd, Keuruu. <https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland/a-home-of-your-own-handbook>

gold standard. Despite convincing results from two previous national policy programmes aimed at reducing long-term homelessness (PAAVO I and II in 2008-2015<sup>24</sup>), the Finnish government did not rest on its laurels. The PAAVO programmes provided for the construction of new permanent housing, the development of new service models and the conversion of emergency accommodation into supported housing units with independent apartments and on-site services. The programme, based on Housing First principles, covered 11 cities where there were a particularly high number of homeless people. From 2008 to 2015, Finland observed a 35% drop in the number of individuals experiencing long-term homelessness, making it **the only EU Member State to have witnessed a decrease in the number of homeless people**. Following on from this success, Finnish stakeholders in the fight against homelessness showed excellent ability to **assess the effectiveness** of the policies implemented and to **adapt** to the obstacles encountered which enabled a new plan focused on prevention to be adopted in June 2016.

The new Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland<sup>25</sup> emphasises early intervention when a person is at risk of becoming homeless or has recently become homeless. The aim is to enable homeless services to take a proactive approach and work towards preventing social exclusion. This implies that each time a user accesses the services, they are assisted in holding onto their home. Ten cities and some districts where there is a risk of increased homelessness have signed an agreement with the State and have committed to work programmes on homelessness prevention, coordinated by the ARA (the public agency working under the Ministry of the Environment that is responsible for implementing social housing policy). As the main aim is continuing to reduce homelessness, it is necessary to support prevention and prevent repeat

homelessness. The plan includes allocating 2,500 new housing units for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. It also provides 15 targeted measures to prevent homelessness. The households targeted are those facing financial problems, who are already being supported and facilitated in accessing housing when they do not have the means to stay in their current home. The housing referral services and the open access services are being improved, and transition from institutions (the care system, prison, hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, etc) towards independent housing is being facilitated. The programme also emphasises the importance of user participation. The measures proposed aim to reinvigorate homeless services in order to make them more user-friendly and prevention-focused. Continuity and consistency are therefore vital: this makes sense considering that when the previous strategy's goals were reached, it did not mean it was time to abandon the strategy but rather to renew ambitions and progress in order to fully reach the ultimate goal – the eradication of homelessness.

### *Political engagement that makes a difference*

In Finland, Housing First principles were implemented widely due to a strong **political will** to put an end to homelessness. All levels of government, regardless of political affiliation, have actively supported this process. It is interesting to note that this political will came about in the context of the 2008-2009 recession, notwithstanding the drop in public spending<sup>26</sup>. Just as the planned measurable objectives are not legally binding on the part of all the stakeholders in the process, the implementation of these objectives is dependent on the prevailing political will. It is with this in mind that letters of intent were signed between the Finnish government and the local authorities for the implementation of the national programme under the aegis of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Social Affairs

and Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA), the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY) and the Criminal Sanctions Agency. These letters of intent described the (quantified) measures to be implemented at local level, the preventive actions, the follow-up process – based on regular information exchange between the State and the local authority and on the negotiation sessions that are organised at least once per year – the responsibility for which falls to a steering group led by the ARA and comprising the various signatories<sup>27</sup>.

#### MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: RESPONSIBILITIES DEFINED AND UNDERTAKEN BY EACH STAKEHOLDER INVOLVED

A **convergence** of stakeholders in the fight against homelessness is necessary to invest all efforts **on moving together towards the same objectives**. This convergence must be supported by a clear division of responsibilities: it is vital to entrust operations related to overall steering, coordination and management of resources and even defining obligations at times to a **specific entity** (at national or regional level). All this will empower local authorities so that they have all the tools necessary for implementing strategies. **Local authorities** must be able to coordinate partnerships between all parties for the provision of local services to homeless people.

The roles of coordinator and of catalyst must be fulfilled by the level of governance with the required competencies (financial, regulatory and policy support) and this can be at national or regional level depending on the country. Depending on the institutional structure of each country, national governments delegate, to a greater or lesser degree, the competency for hous-

ing and preventing homelessness to regional or local authorities. Some of these authorities have grasped the opportunity to establish ambitious strategies that are adapted to their own territorial context. Multi-level governance is thus not implemented in the same way in all EU countries. It may be led in an open and motivational way, or

#### GOVERNANCE OF AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY: DIVISION OF COMPETENCIES

Depending on the institutional structure of each country, the competency for housing and the fight against homelessness lies with the national, regional or local authorities. While in centralised countries, a nationally coordinated strategy can make sense (Ireland, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, etc), some countries that are federal or more decentralised do not need national strategies due to the existing competencies at regional level (Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria and Italy) which can sometimes lead to regional inequality. It is however important not to underestimate the impact some national competencies have on the housing issue in all countries including federal ones: the national competency for migration in Germany or with regard to housing allowances in the United Kingdom can significantly influence the strategies established at regional level.

it may be planned and restricted by legislation.

*A method of **open and pragmatic cooperation**: the Italian example*

In **Italy**, despite very decentralised competencies leading to the absence of a specific integrated

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See an example of the letter of intent signed between the Finnish government and the city of Helsinki: Y-Foundation, op. cit., Appendix 2 pp. 112-127.

national strategy, homelessness managed to find a way onto the political agenda. As part of the national strategy to combat poverty, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy prioritised the fight against homelessness and introduced various mechanisms enabling local and regional stakeholders to pioneer a range of positive initiatives:

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 11 June 2016 between the Ministry and fio. PSD (the Italian Federation of Organisations for Homeless People) to support the "Homeless Zero" campaign, which aims to reduce homelessness in Italy.
- The Ministry launched a call for innovative projects aimed at reducing homelessness. The government committed to investing €50 million into sustainable actions to fight homelessness, including Housing First programmes in large- and medium-sized cities. The budget comes from EU funds – the FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the most deprived) and the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund – Social Inclusion Investment Priority).
- In November 2015, the Ministry also ratified and published the Guidelines for tackling homelessness at national level. This document defines homelessness, details the ETHOS typology, notes the quality standards for services, the main public policies and/or good practices adopted thus far in the Italian context, establishes the means of protecting the rights of homeless people and explains the Housing First methods as well as housing-led approaches. These guidelines were developed by different entities at various levels of governance and by the entire sector involved in fighting homelessness, which makes it a useful document for the development and strengthening of quality services. The guidelines were specifically mentioned in the operational programmes mobilising EU funds and in the above-mentioned call for projects.

The Italian example demonstrates that in the case of a highly regionalised state, the fight against homelessness works in a particular way. Despite a tight budget and limited competency, the publication of guidelines enabled the national government to leverage the available policy space. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy encouraged methodology changes at local and regional level by publishing the guidelines and using EU funds to run experiments and support good practices. It is an **open method of coordination** that has proven its worth through the expansion of Italian projects financed by EU funds and the establishment of services networks, including Housing First services<sup>28</sup>.

Another example of multi-level governance, this time written into legislation, can be seen in the United Kingdom. **Wales** is the only region in Europe where local authorities are legally obliged to prevent homelessness, by supporting people at risk of losing their home and finding a solution within 56 days. Users must have access to different housing options and must be able to secure the situation before, or immediately after, losing their home<sup>29</sup>.

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<http://www.fiopdsd.org/en/housing-first-italia/>

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Housing (Wales) Act 2014: <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/legislation/housing-act/?lang=en>. Good practices for preventing homelessness are being implemented in different local authorities across Wales, and this has contributed to a reduction in the number of homeless people in the region between 2012 and 2015 despite a hostile context with regard to the housing market and reforms to social welfare.



## 2. FOUR PITFALLS TO AVOID WHEN IMPLEMENTING AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR REDUCING AND ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS

The pitfalls threatening the effectiveness and the impact of policies for reducing homelessness must be identified and highlighted as it is easy to rush in. While certain strategies previously mentioned have shown themselves to be driving forces for change, others fall into the category of "paper strategies", being inadequately driven by the governance structure, the legal framework, the resources or the system of responsibilities. Some strategies adopt a restrictive approach to homelessness and fail to grasp the complex realities of the issue, which has a direct impact on the provision of prevention, emergency and reintegration services<sup>30</sup>. Others have expired, have fallen from the political agenda or have been revised downwards in terms of resources or scope. These difficulties have been exacerbated given the context of austerity policies that have followed the recession.

We want to create here a list of the most common pitfalls based on the experience of FEANTSA members. This is by no means an exhaustive list and the examples mentioned are certainly not the only ones that took a wrong turn when establishing a strategy.

### LIGHT-TOUCH POLICY: SCALING DOWN GOALS, RESOURCES, CONTINUITY AND STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITY

National governments often go overboard when delegating responsibility for combating homelessness to regional or local authorities. This is a refusal, implicit or otherwise, to take on the coordination

and facilitation role that is ultimately their responsibility as the institutional structure guaranteeing management of public policies on their national territory. While the implementation of a strategy must in effect be rolled out at local level to ensure that it meets the specific needs and characteristics of a given territory and population, local authorities cannot be the only level of governance with responsibility for the strategy. Issues of resources, political will, evaluation and responsibilities must be shared in order to avoid deepening social and territorial inequality.

In the United Kingdom, and particularly in **England**, a significant contrast has been noted between an interventionist approach<sup>31</sup> to homelessness in the 2000s, that showed proven success at the time, and a "light-touch" approach, in place since 2010. In its 2017 report on homelessness, the National Audit Office (NAO) criticised the Department for Communities and Local Government, responsible for homelessness, for having adopted this light-touch approach. It highlighted in particular the fact that the Department requires each local authority to develop a strategy to combat homelessness, while shirking responsibility for evaluating the content or progress of these strategies. Given the reduction in the number of social housing units<sup>32</sup> and the reduction in the number of private landlords agreeing to work with local authorities to house homeless people, the NAO stated that local authorities' ability to address the increase in homelessness is hampered by the limited housing options available for homeless people. The NAO also noted the absence of an interministerial strategy for preventing and combating homelessness in England. Despite the existence of guiding principles for homelessness

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The issue of a broad definition of homelessness is vital in this respect. To find out more, see N. PLEACE (2015), "How to Cause Homelessness", FEANTSA Magazine Homeless in Europe – Summer 2015. [http://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless\\_in\\_europe\\_summer\\_20151781902169973565937.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless_in_europe_summer_20151781902169973565937.pdf)

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In the words of the National Audit Office (2017), *Homelessness Report*. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>

### 32

National Audit Office (2017), *Housing in England – Overview*. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/housing-in-england-overview/>

### 33

77,240 households were in temporary accommodation in March 2017 in England – 120,540 of whom were children, i.e. an increase of 73% of children in temporary accommodation.

### 34

"Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years, driven by several factors. Despite this, government has not evaluated the impact of its reforms on this issue, and there remain gaps in its approach. It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with its light touch approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem. Its recent performance in reducing homelessness therefore cannot be considered value for money". Amyas Morse, Head of the National Audit Office, 13 September 2017.

### 35

On the Portuguese National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People 2009-2015: "The Strategy is a good example of how things could be done, but because of a lack of political will, are not done." A. FERREIRA MARINS & FERREIRA R. (2015), "National Strategy for Homeless People: An Overview and Experience on the Ground", FEANTSA Magazine Homeless in Europe – Summer 2015. [http://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless\\_in\\_europe\\_summer\\_20151781902169973565937.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/download/homeless_in_europe_summer_20151781902169973565937.pdf)

prevention and intervention, specific programmes with local authorities and working jointly with other government departments (Health, Justice, Work and Pensions, Home Office), the NAO believes that with the absence of an interministerial strategy, it is not possible to evaluate the efficiency of resources used by the Department to combat homelessness.

The light-touch approach was also, according to the NAO, characterised by the absence of any evaluation by the UK government on what is causing the increase in all types of homelessness since 2011. Between 2011 and 2017, households living in temporary accommodation increased by 60%<sup>33</sup> (77,240 households in temporary accommodation in March 2017 – of which 120,540 were children, an increase of 73%). 88,410 households applied for homeless assistance in 2016-2017. 105,240 households under threat of homelessness were helped to stay in their homes by local authorities in 2016-2017 (i.e. an increase of 63% compared to 2009-2010). The number of people sleeping rough – 4,134 – increased by 134% from an autumn night in 2010 to an autumn night in 2016. Despite the growing gap between the explosion in house prices and income stagnation, and despite the impoverishment of the most vulnerable people, the UK government has not evaluated the impact of its reforms on these worrying trends. Among other effects, the 2011 reform to housing allowances has, according to the NAO, contributed to the increase in homelessness by making rental housing costs even more unaffordable to those on benefits. According to the same report, "It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with its light touch approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem. Its recent performance in reducing homelessness therefore cannot be considered value for money. [...] The Department's recent performance in reducing homelessness therefore cannot be considered value for money."<sup>34</sup>

Continuity of homeless reduction policies can be jeopardised by various factors such as a change in the political agenda, a lack of monitoring and simultaneous lack of funding. Strategies that disappear from the agenda during or after the specific time period they cover have little chance of yielding any significant change, as was the case in **Sweden** where they had a national programme of action from 2007 to 2009, without any subsequent programme

### PAPER POLICIES: DEVELOPING A STRATEGY AND NOT ACTING ON IT

"Paper policies" have good intentions but the lack of evidence, resources, political engagement, or a legal framework can sabotage implementation. In recent years, Member States have published numerous commitments that do not specify in concrete terms the resources allocated for their implementation. These strategies are "a good example of how things could be done, but because of a lack of political will, are not done"<sup>35</sup>, as was the case in Portugal during their first national strategy.

**Portugal** was the first Mediterranean country to adopt a strategic approach to homelessness. However, the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People 2009-2015 received a lot of criticism. Despite moving in a positive direction and mobilising local stakeholders to reorganise responses to homelessness in a more integrated way across different territories, there were many failures in its implementation. The lack of political backing, institutional steering, transparency in funding allocation as well as weaknesses in horizontal coordination and follow-up/evaluation mechanisms all seriously compromised the strategy's actual impact. However, a new action framework for 2017-2023 that is entering a more favourable political agenda – the President of the



Portuguese Republic had directly favoured renewal of the strategy – has already seen noteworthy advances in its operational methods including strengthening the internal workings of the inter-institutional group (the GIMAE), which is responsible for monitoring strategic implementation<sup>36</sup>.

In **Spain**, the first Comprehensive National Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 was adopted by the Spanish government on 6 November 2015. It came about because of a spike in homelessness in Spain, with numbers rising from 21,900 in 2005 to 36,000 in 2012. According to Spain's National Statistics Institute, the increase in homelessness between 2005 and 2012 was mainly due to mortgage defaults (38%) and to unemployment (35%). The Spanish strategy (ENI-PSH) aims to reduce the homeless population from 23,000 in 2015 (estimate from the government based on data from the Statistics Institute) to 20,000 by 2018 and 18,000 by 2020. The five stated goals relate to prevention, awareness-raising, rehousing, reintegration into society, and improving information on public services. A mid-stream evaluation is planned for 2019 with a final evaluation in 2021. This new strategy was adopted as a result of consensus being reached between the different ministries concerned as well as charitable organisations and the Autonomous Communities. It includes innovative approaches to housing (with measures including Housing First) and is focused on individual and coordinated support for homeless people. However, these potential advances are not seeing the light of day in the absence of any dedicated budget for implementation or additional budgets for prevention activities, social innovation, research or continuous evaluation. Furthermore, the implementation of comprehensive reform requires a vertical system of coordination (between national and regional administrations) and a horizontal system of coordination (between different areas of social intervention) which does not currently exist in Spain with regard to housing<sup>37</sup>.

36

I. BAPTISTA & P. PERISTA (2017), "Implementing the new Portuguese Homelessness Strategy: on the right track?", ESPN Flash Report 2017/76, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18821&langId=en>

37

G. RODRIGUEZ CABRERO & V. MARBAN GALLEGO (2016), "Spain's First Comprehensive National Homelessness Strategy", *European Social Policy Network Flash Report 2016/25*.

38

K. HERMANS (2012), "The Dutch Strategy to Combat Homelessness: From Ambition to Window Dressing?", *European Journal of Homelessness* – Vol. 6 No 2. [http://www.feantsa.org/download/ejh6\\_2\\_policy17177509030184530692.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/download/ejh6_2_policy17177509030184530692.pdf)

39

Ibid.

## DEVELOPING AN AMBITIOUS POLICY AND SABOTAGING THE OUTCOMES IN PRACTICE BY CRIMINALISING HOMELESS PEOPLE

Within the context of austerity, it is worrying to see "the growing gap between the discourse on homelessness and the local policies being implemented that limit homeless people's access to services"<sup>38</sup>. The commitments expressed within the framework of the integrated strategies may be undermined by measures that penalise or criminalise homeless people.

In **the Netherlands**, the strategic approach to combat homelessness, in place between 2006 and 2014, was first set up in the four main cities then extended to 43 municipalities. It focused on three main objectives: fighting homelessness through prevention, creating a user-centred approach in order to improve housing conditions and living conditions for homeless people, and reducing "public nuisance" incidents caused by people living rough. The motivations behind this policy were thus quite unfocused: it was about "reducing public nuisance" caused by homeless people while at the same time eliminating the structural causes of homelessness. The positive results observed after the first phase of the action plan's implementation – particularly with regard to preventive and curative measures – show that the structural approach was dominant. On the other hand, the grey area around the reduction of public nuisance had a significant effect on how local service providers implemented the measures. This led in parallel to local policies that penalised homeless people and restricted their access to services<sup>39</sup>. One of the changes was a tightening of the residency criteria as well as the criteria for being considered "locally based". These criteria were then used to refuse access to accommodation by allowing local authorities to set their own rules in these matters,

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FEANTSA v. The Netherlands (collective complaint 86/2013) and CEC v. The Netherlands (collective complaint 90/2013).

41

See [in French only] <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/fr/communiquede-presse/2018/01/le-defenseur-des-droits-recommande-le-retrait-de-la-circulaire-sui>

42

Criminalisation of mobile EU citizens in precarious situations in England" - England country zoom, Chapter 2 of this report, and see FEANTSA press release (2017), "FEANTSA Welcomes UK High Court Judgement that Deporting EU Rough Sleepers is Unlawful", available at: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/press-release/2017/12/15/press-release-feantsa-welcomes-uk-high-court-judgement-that-deporting-eu-rough-sleepers-is-unlawful?bcParent=27>

43

Benjaminsen & Dyb, op. cit.

44

[http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland\\_Action%20Plan.pdf](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf)

and through this, ignore the right of each and every individual to social assistance. To access a place in emergency accommodation, homeless people have to provide documents proving that they have been resident in the region for a minimum period of 2 or 3 years. These practices have since been challenged in two European Committee of Social Rights decisions, following complaints lodged by FEANTSA in 2012, which cited non-respect of the Revised European Social Charter, particularly with regard to the rights of homeless people without proof of registration with the local authorities, recovering addicts trying to cut ties with their former circles, newly arrived immigrants, Roma populations and other marginalised groups that do not have formal proof of identity<sup>40</sup>.

In December 2017, two circulars issued by the **French Government** introduced a mechanism allowing mobile teams to enter emergency accommodation to verify the administrative status of migrants, and to proceed with deportation procedures if lack of legal residency is proven. Social services providers in France unanimously condemned the government initiative and have referred the matter to the *Défenseur des Droits* [France's rights' protection body], for contravening the values and mission of the homeless assistance services, and for not respecting the principle of unconditional reception of people into emergency accommodation centres, which is a fundamental principle of public policy. This led to condemnation from the *Défenseur des Droits* and a demand that the circulars in question be retracted<sup>41</sup>. In the **United Kingdom**, a guide published by the Home Office in February 2017 considered sleeping rough to be an abuse of the right of residence and thus adequate basis for deportation. This misinterpretation of European law, criminalising people who are already hugely vulnerable, has since been revised following proceedings being brought at national and European level<sup>42</sup>.

As is clear, integrated strategies to combat homelessness can be undermined by local, regional or national policies penalising all or some categories of homeless people.

## POLICY SILOS: THE RISK OF HAVING A HOMELESS STRATEGY SEPARATE FROM AN EFFICIENT POLICY ON DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL

Whether or not the goals set at national level as part of a strategy for combating homelessness are reached is determined by the complex interplay of responsibilities, resources, organisation and practices at local level, and this also includes the structural context of affordable housing that is available<sup>43</sup>. **All relevant branches of public policy** must be included in an integrated approach: the housing sector, health, migration, education, employment, social inclusion, town and country planning, justice, etc. It is particularly complex to establish a strategy, no matter how integrated it is, in contexts where the private rental market is more and more burdensome and increasingly volatile, and where affordable public housing either does not exist or is being hollowed out.

In **Ireland**, despite the ambitious, concrete and measurable design of the national strategy to fight homelessness<sup>44</sup> coupled with a strategy for building affordable housing, the results have not materialised. This is partly due to the property market situation in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, when construction, particularly of social housing, was almost entirely halted. At the same time, emergency management of the homelessness crisis, which affects families with children in particular, spurred political decision-makers to take short-term initiatives such as the creation of family hubs. These are former hotels that have been transformed into temporary accommodation for

homeless families, and have caused controversy within Ireland's voluntary sector. While improvements in accommodation for homeless families is always welcome, there has been criticism of the absence of long-term solutions and of a targeted strategy to get families out of homelessness in the long term. Without these, the short-term interventions alone risk normalising what are very high numbers of homeless families.

In **England**, the end of private rental contracts has become the primary cause of statutory homelessness<sup>45</sup>. The number of households registering as homeless following the end of an assured shorthold tenancy has tripled since 2010-2011. The proportion of these households (out of the total number of households registered as homeless by local authorities) has increased from 11% in 2009-2010 to 32% in 2016-2017. In London, this proportion has risen from 10% to 39% in the same period. In England, the end of a private short-term contract represents 74% of the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation since 2009-2010. Formerly, the main causes of homelessness were different: family breakdown, impoverished parents who could or would no longer house their children, etc. According to the 2017 report from the National Audit Office, housing affordability is an increasing factor contributing to homelessness in England. Since 2010, the cost of private rental accommodation has increased three times faster than income, and eight times faster in London where private rents increased by 24% and average incomes by 3%. The number of homeless people is higher in places where private rental costs increased the most since 2012-2013. In parallel to this, the reduction in housing allowances and the social welfare reforms have strongly impacted households' capacity to pay their rent. The erosion of policies that provide a housing security net can undoubtedly lead to increased homelessness.

**45**  
National Audit Office  
(2017), Homelessness  
Report.

In **France**, some recent decisions cast doubt on the political will of the French government to implement an integrated policy to fight housing exclusion: the reduction in housing assistance, which has led to social housing bodies facing penury and thus a predictable inability to renovate or build housing, calls to mind the measures taken in England in 2011, which were singled out in the NAO's 2017 report as being one of the causes of increased homelessness.

# III. WHAT SHOULD EUROPE DO?

**P**oliticians at national, regional and local level should therefore take every opportunity to develop, in partnership with users, stakeholders in the field and other partners, strategies that will bring about, in a tangible manner, the right to housing for all. But what role can Europe play in the process?

The European Union does not have exclusive or specific competency with regard to housing, and the aim of organisations fighting housing exclusion is certainly not to challenge the principle of subsidiarity. However, several EU-led policies, such as those related to social inclusion, cohesion, energy, migration, financial regulation, competition, health and human rights already affect – to a greater or lesser extent – the issue of housing exclusion in our countries. The European Union has a role to play in terms of coordination, follow-up and support of Member States in bringing about the right to housing for all. To address growing needs, this role must be strengthened, and this requires courage and commitment at decision-making level. In this regard, the political context is favourable so all that is left to do is seize the opportunity.

## THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Adoption by the EU and Member States of the **UN's Sustainable Development Programme** is a results-based commitment to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Objective 1.1, the complete eradication of extreme poverty in the world and Objective 11.1 which ensures access for all to housing and adequate, safe basic services, access to affordable prices, and commits to cleaning up slums, all of which requires rapid progress on the issue of homelessness in Europe.

To this end, the **European Social Rights Pillar**<sup>46</sup>, announced on 17 November 2017 by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council, provides a renewed framework to bring in the EU's social dimension. The aim of the Pillar is to demonstrate that the EU intends to defend the rights of its citizens in a rapidly changing world. It commits the EU and Member States to comply with twenty rights and principles in the areas of equality of opportunity and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and social inclusion. It addresses the **right to housing and assistance for homeless people in its 19th priority**. Member States and the EU institutions must fulfil their role to ensure that:

- Access to high-quality social housing or housing assistance shall be provided for those in need.
- Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote social inclusion.

It is now time to move beyond articles in EU documents towards a basis on which to proceed for true progress in the fight against homelessness in Europe.

In the eyes of EU citizens, the social dimension of the European project has lost credibility over the last few years. In the context of a global recession, macroeconomic imperatives have been prioritised over social imperatives. This has been very clearly demonstrated to citizens in the area of housing with banks being bailed out at the same time as families were being evicted. EU institutions are now endeavouring to correct this imbalance and to strengthen the social dimension of the European Union. The macroeconomic and fiscal governance mechanisms that were put in place after the financial crash have been gradually "socialised" and greater emphasis has been put on social cohesion. The **European Semester** is the annual cycle of the EU for coordinating economic and social policies. It aims to ensure that Member States avoid and correct excessive deficits and macroeconomic imbalances, develop structural reforms and make progress towards fulfilling the Europe 2020 objectives. In 2017, the issues of housing exclusion and homelessness were seriously dealt with in the analysis of several countries' social situation. The **Annual Growth Survey**, which lays down priorities for the year ahead, covered the issue of homelessness for the first time in 2018. This may be a starting point from which the European Union will rigorously track the issues of housing exclusion and homelessness within Member States and make recommendations on measures that need to be taken if necessary<sup>47</sup>.

The European Union is currently in the process of preparing its next long-term budget (the **multiannual financial framework 2021-2027**). During his State of the Union Address on 13 September 2017, President Juncker highlighted the need for the European Union to have a budget that will allow it to fulfil its ambitions and rise up to

46

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en)

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FEANTSA press release (2017), "Annual Growth Survey 2018 Calls on Member States to Tackle Homelessness", <http://www.feantsa.org/en/press-release/2017/11/22/press-release-annual-growth-survey-2018-calls-on-member-states-to-tackle-homelessness?bcParent=27>

future challenges. The concrete meaning of this call is being furiously debated. The European Commission is due to publish its proposal for the post-2020 multiannual financial framework in the first half of 2018. The regulations governing this new framework and its financial instruments will determine the role played by the EU funds in the fight against homelessness and housing exclusion in the post-2020 period. Whether or not EU institutions and Member States are willing to prioritise the social agenda and the fight against housing exclusion within the EU budget will become clear in 2019.

The political developments mentioned above reflect the European Union's efforts to address citizens' scepticism regarding the EU's ability to improve their quality of life and deal with urgent social issues. Housing is to the forefront of citizens' concerns, with an ever-greater number of households facing housing difficulties. The stakes are high for the coherence of the European project, in a context where Brexit has been made possible and where Euroscepticism and extremism are gaining ground. The time has come for Europe's political decision-makers to work with national governments, regions, municipalities and stakeholders on the ground to put an end to housing exclusion in Europe.

**We are calling on the EU institutions to work with Member States, regions, municipalities and stakeholders on the ground to:**

#### SET A GOAL OF ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE BY 2030

Eradicating homelessness is not a fantasy, but requires a strategy that is adapted locally. An incentive at European level with a hard and ambitious deadline, in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Programme,

would enable Member States to proceed more quickly along this pathway. Alarm bells have been ringing for several years; urgent social issues must be recognised and actively dealt with. The process of preparing the European Union's post-2020 strategy and the next multiannual financial framework is an opportunity not to be disregarded if the EU is to make a real commitment to the fight against homelessness and housing exclusion. The current goal in the fight against poverty was jeopardised by the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis, but the Union cannot abandon the political commitments made in this area. This objective did not take into account the reality of extreme poverty which is seen throughout Europe, in particular the reality of homelessness and housing exclusion. Nothing gives us reason to think that the increase in homelessness will be stemmed by the economic recovery, fragile and unequal as it is, that we are witnessing in Europe today. Without targeted intervention, the most vulnerable people in our society will be ever more abandoned. The European Commission should thus amend its aim of combating poverty, in order to ensure the credibility of the European Union with regard to fundamental rights, social fairness and improved living conditions for citizens and in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. **This could be put into effect by committing to nobody being forced to rough sleep by 2030.**

#### SUPPORT HOMELESS PEOPLE ACROSS ALL THE IMPORTANT SECTORS

The responses to homelessness should be integrated into the development and implementation of certain EU sectoral policies, such as policies on youth, gender equality, migration, health, disability, mobility, cohesion and urban development, as well as integration of Roma populations.

48

See FEANTSA (2017), *EU Migration & Asylum Policy Roadmap* <http://www.feantsa.org/download/migration-roadmap3753851664873765813.pdf>

49

See PICUM (2014), *Housing and Homelessness of Undocumented Migrants in Europe: Developing Strategies and Good Practices to Ensure Access to Housing and Shelter*, available at: [http://picum.org/Documents/Public/2014/Annual\\_Conference\\_2013\\_report\\_HOUSING\\_EN.pdf](http://picum.org/Documents/Public/2014/Annual_Conference_2013_report_HOUSING_EN.pdf)

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See FEANTSA (2017), *EU Youth Strategy Roadmap* <http://www.feantsa.org/en/feantsa-position/2017/04/24/feantsa-position-how-to-implement-the-european-parliament-resolution-on-the-european-platform-against-poverty-and-social-exclusion?bcParent=27>

Against this backdrop, FEANTSA has already developed roadmaps for the EU institutions, setting out its demands with regard to:

- **Migration and asylum policies**<sup>48</sup>: the European Union should consider homelessness amongst migrants the result of structural factors, including inadequate reception facilities or an inability to deal with undocumented migrants. It should invest in housing and accommodation solutions to promote the integration of migrants<sup>49</sup>. It should guarantee access to basic services (such as food, healthcare and accommodation) regardless of administrative status and allocate the necessary resources to the services who work with these people. It should ensure safe and legal routes to destination countries via resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, humanitarian visas and private sponsorship programmes. It must not weaken the asylum seeker protection standards as proposed in the reform of the asylum package. Europe must organise dignified and humane reception for all, regardless of their situation.

- **Policies aimed at young people**<sup>50</sup>: the European Union must reserve part of the Youth Guarantee Fund for the support of homeless young people and monitor the extent to which this initiative is addressing homelessness among young people. It must complement the Youth Guarantee with a "follow-up Guarantee" to ensure quality support for young people transitioning from child protection services into an independent life. It must guarantee that structural reforms in Member States do not push young people into homelessness, for example by using the European Semester to discourage "stay at home" policies that have been unwisely established by some governments. It must take measures to guarantee a place for vulnerable young people in the

EU's efforts to promote quality training and apprenticeships.

**Initiatives like this are required in all relevant policy sectors in order to prevent homelessness and housing exclusion, and to help homeless people to find homes as quickly as possible.**

#### MONITOR PROGRESS IN HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL

At European level, a robust mechanism must be put in place to fully grasp and monitor the extent of homelessness and housing exclusion. In addition, policies must be established to address these issues in partnership with the relevant institutions, including Eurostat.

One of the aims of this report is to contribute to the improvement of how homelessness and housing exclusion is monitored at European level. The EU is making some progress on the issue. In 2018, Member States will for the first time be testing a module on "housing difficulties" within the EU-SILC framework, the main source of European statistics on income and living conditions. This is the first partial data collection on the experience of homelessness and housing exclusion from the section of the European population in housing.

However, the European Union has never systematically monitored homelessness and housing exclusion in Member States. Homeless people are rendered completely invisible within EU social statistics. The current European plan for monitoring the progress of the Sustainable Development Objectives utterly neglects the issues of homelessness and housing exclusion. To fill these gaps, within the framework of the European Semester, the Commission should continue its recent efforts to systematise use of the



EU-SILC tool and national data sources. The Social Scoreboard recently set up by the Commission to monitor the progress of the European Social Rights Pillar does not include any indicator for monitoring housing exclusion or homelessness. This situation must be rectified. **How can Europe claim to be monitoring the social conditions of Member States without knowing if citizens have a decent place to live?**

## DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The EU has the competencies for taking measures to ensure that the fundamental rights, social rights and the rights of all European citizens are respected. In this regard, the European Social Rights Pillar must become a basis on which to proceed for true progress in the fight against homelessness in Europe. If the three provisions included in priority 19 are actually implemented in a collaborative manner by Member States and EU institutions, then the aim of providing decent and affordable housing for all in the European Union might be fulfilled.

There are many international legal instruments protecting the right to housing: Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 11 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 31 on the right to housing in the Revised European Social Charter, Article 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Since May 2013, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR) enables victims of economic, social and cultural rights violations to take legal proceedings at international level when they cannot access justice in their country (their country must have ratified the treaty)<sup>51</sup>. The OP-ICESCR is a major instrument in advocating for the right to housing.

Member States and EU institutions are bound to respect the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 34, which relates to social assistance and housing assistance. According to paragraph 3, "in order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices". The Charter applies to EU Institutions and its Member States, only when Member States are applying European law. The European Court of Justice may nullify legislation adopted by the Institutions that contravenes it; the European Union must therefore act and legislate in accordance with the Charter.

**Homelessness is a clear violation of human rights, which despite everything is chronic and significantly worsening in Europe.** EU institutions should use the international and European standards and legal instruments to initiate a human rights-based approach to homelessness. They should play a full role in ensuring and supporting the fulfilment of these rights, including those affecting people who are facing homelessness and housing exclusion. The legal chapter of this report details implementation of the right to housing in 2017 in Europe.

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Currently, 21 countries are signatories of the OP-ICESCR: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Gabon, Italy, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Montenegro, Niger, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain and Uruguay. See the legal chapter of this report for more information.

## INVEST EU FUNDS INTO ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS

European instruments such as the Structural Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investment are important tools to aid Member States come up with adapted and sustainable solutions. The current multiannual financial framework provides a range of instruments to support actions in the fight against housing exclusion, including the European Social Fund (at least 20% of the ESF in each Member State must be spent on promoting social inclusion, the fight against poverty and discrimination), the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived.

Nevertheless, challenges must be overcome regarding the regulation, programming and implementation – of these funds. Despite the existence of good practices<sup>52</sup>, the funds have had a limited impact on the issues of housing exclusion and very rarely do they reach the most vulnerable people.

The EU's post-2020 multiannual financial framework must integrate the following five principles in order to urgently address housing exclusion in Europe<sup>53</sup>:

- **Adopt a fundamental rights-based approach** of dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity as covered in the EU treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Social Rights Pillar. Homelessness is a violation of human rights, and most Member States do not respect the right to housing as laid out in Principle 19 of the Pillar. A credible EU budget should actively rectify this situation.
- **Prioritise social inclusion and the most vulnerable people living in extreme poverty**, including homeless people. The European Commissioner for Employment and Social

### 52

See FEANTSA (2017), "FEANTSA ending homelessness awards: A Handbook on Using the European Social Fund to Fight Homelessness" <http://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2017/10/12/feantsa-ending-homelessness-awards-a-handbook-on-using-the-european-social-fund-to-fight-homelessness>

### 53

See FEANTSA (2018), "Post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework – FEANTSA Calls on the EU to Stand Up for Homeless People", <http://www.feantsa.org/en/feantsa-position/2018/01/05/feantsa-position-post-2020-multiannual-financial-framework-feantsa-calls-on-the-eu-to-stand-up-for-homeless-people?bcParent=27>

### 54

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/thyssen/announcements/closing-speech-high-level-conference-opening-era-social-innovation-calouste-gulbenkian-foundation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/thyssen/announcements/closing-speech-high-level-conference-opening-era-social-innovation-calouste-gulbenkian-foundation_en)

Affairs wants 'not a cent less for social'<sup>54</sup>. In the context of competition for policy priorities, it remains to be seen whether this will come about. Regarding housing exclusion and homelessness, the funds will continue to leave behind those living in the most precarious conditions, unless resources are specifically reserved to assist them. To have a real impact on the most vulnerable people, the new multiannual financial framework must include a specific instrument, or designate specific resources aimed at the most vulnerable people such as homeless people. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived was the first step in this direction. However, it concentrates mainly on material assistance. Any future instrument should go further and support the eradication of all types of homelessness, in order to bring about real change in the lives of those concerned.

- **Use EU funds as instruments to end homelessness** through improving policies and services. Good initiatives financed by the EU must demonstrate a transition towards managing the eradication of homelessness. This attests to the need to invest in prevention, and in solutions enabling direct access to decent and affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion. By supporting this transition, the EU funds would add true value. This requires the development of support and guidance measures to encourage the use of EU financing as leverage in this transition. To ensure that the funds from the future multiannual financial framework to combat homelessness are spent efficiently, technical assistance measures should be taken, including training and support in finance.
- **Enable organisations working with homeless people to access EU funds more easily so that they can implement solutions and** remove

existing barriers. The administrative complexity and financial insecurity that NGOs in the sector face when using these funds are a serious barrier to progress. Advances in simplifying the process must be made alongside measures preventing any "creaming effects" that negatively impact the most vulnerable people. The new multiannual financial framework should guarantee adequate flexibility to enable complex social interventions. It should include measures protecting beneficiaries, particularly homeless people, from excessive financial risks. Finally, it should make it possible for Member States to use a multi-fund approach by combining, for example, ESF and ERDF for socially supported housing. Thus far, this possibility has proven highly complex and needs to be made more accessible going forward.

**- Ensure the EU's Investment Plan benefits all citizens, including the most vulnerable.** When focusing on the combination of financial instruments, measures to stimulate investment in housing solutions for homeless people (as social infrastructure) should be included. Thus far, only 4% of EU funds for Strategic Investment were allocated to social infrastructure. Europe could be much more efficient than it has been so far with regard to investing in solutions to the homelessness and housing exclusion problems.

**In conclusion, it is of the utmost urgency that Europe focus its energy on uniting to consider the other Europe; the one where people are experiencing homelessness or housing exclusion, whose numbers have been growing for years and who have diversified to the point where they represent the entire population. The establishment of integrated strategies for reducing and eradicating homelessness by local authorities, regions**

**and Member States, encouraged and closely monitored by the European Union's Institutions, is a social imperative. Efficient integrated strategies have demonstrated the feasibility of our ambition. The lessons to be learned and the pitfalls to be avoided when establishing such strategies have been shared. As a result, innovative actions that provide decent and affordable housing and support for the most vulnerable have flourished throughout Europe. Political will is now key: Europe and its Member States must pull together to finally ensure the right to housing for all.**



# CHAPTER 2

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# EUROPEAN INDEX OF HOUSING EXCLUSION

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*The entirety of the EUSILC 2016 analysis is available on FEANTSA website, in the "Trends and statistics" section*



# HOUSING COSTS SOAR AS INCOMES DIMINISH



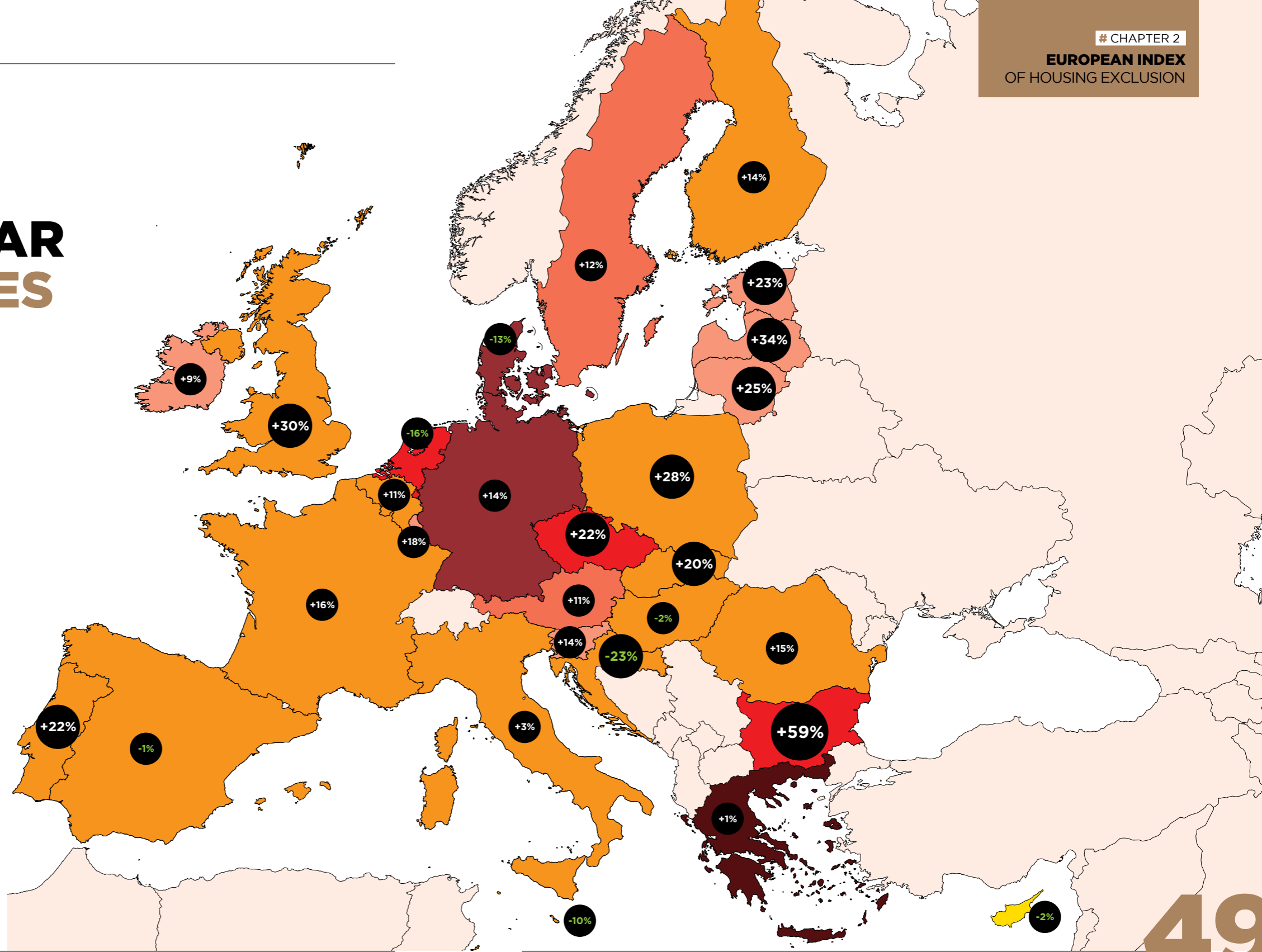
% change in total housing costs for all households in PPP between 2010 and 2016

\*UK: between 2012 and 2016



Average weight of housing cost in the disposable income of poor households in 2016

- 10-25% of disposable income
- 25-35%
- 35-40%
- 40-45%
- 45-50%
- 50-60%
- More than 70%



# I. 2016 STATISTICS ON HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE

1

Most recent data. Extracted in December 2017.

2

According to the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion drawn up by FEANTSA in 2007, the four forms of exclusion associated with housing are the following: **rooflessness** (sleeping rough, emergency accommodation); **houselessness** (shelters for the homeless/women/immigrants, people coming out of institutions, people in long-term supported accommodation); **living in insecure housing** (temporary accommodation, i.e. staying with friends/families, without a tenancy agreement, illegally occupying housing, persons threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence); **living in inadequate housing** (persons living in unfit housing, temporary/conventional facilities, severely overcrowded conditions).

Overall in 2016, EU households saw the quality of their accommodation improve, despite prices continuing to soar. However, the worsening housing situation for poor households and the associated increase in inequality continued in an alarming fashion. The proportion of households that are poor, i.e. those with an income less than 60% of the standardised median income after social transfers, has gradually risen over the past six years from 16.5% of the total EU population to 17.3% in 2016. Eurostat/EU-SILC data analysis for 2016<sup>1</sup> includes the various aspects of housing exclusion in each EU country and compares the housing situation for poor households with that of the rest of the population. People excluded from the housing market<sup>2</sup> are consequently excluded from this analysis, with data solely concerning households with housing.

*The full EU-SILC 2016 analysis by topic can be viewed on the FEANTSA website under the heading "Trends and statistics".*

# 1. COST OF HOUSING AND INSECURITY IN EUROPE: HOUSING COSTS CONTINUE TO SOAR, WHILE HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS SHRINK

2016 marked the biggest annual hike in house prices since 2009, proving that the upward trend in house prices has recovered following the 2008 financial crisis.

In the United Kingdom, the price-to-income ratio returned to 2008 levels while in Belgium and Austria it continued to increase between 2008 and 2016. For the majority of EU Member States, the ratio has not fallen back to the long-term average.

TABLE 1

CHANGE IN THE HOUSE PRICE-TO-INCOME RATIO (STANDARDISED) BETWEEN 2000 AND 2016

INDICATOR	Standardised price-to-income ratio																
UNIT	RATIO																
YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Austria	97	96	95	93	88	87	87	88	86	90	98	101	105	111	113	118	125
Belgium	91	91	96	102	109	118	124	128	128	127	131	135	137	137	136	138	139
Denmark	105	105	104	104	110	125	149	152	143	122	118	113	108	110	114	116	118
Finland	96	90	92	93	96	102	105	105	101	98	103	101	101	100	100	98	98
France	80	82	86	95	106	120	129	132	130	121	125	131	130	127	124	121	120
Germany	95	91	89	87	84	84	81	78	77	79	77	78	79	80	81	84	87
Greece	94	102	108	104	99	108	112	112	108	102	106	111	107	104	96	96	94
Ireland	120	119	121	131	139	141	156	158	139	122	110	94	79	80	93	101	105
Italy	85	88	93	99	106	112	115	118	119	118	116	117	111	106	101	99	
The Netherlands	118	121	126	130	135	141	141	143	143	138	136	130	121	113	112	114	118
Portugal	114	115	111	111	106	104	103	99	89	90	88	87	83	82	85	84	86
Spain	84	87	98	111	126	139	153	165	157	144	145	133	117	107	105	107	110
Sweden	88	88	90	94	101	107	114	121	116	116	121	119	116	120	127	141	150
United Kingdom	83	87	98	112	121	125	130	137	126	112	118	115	111	111	118	118	126
Euro zone	95	95	99	102	106	111	114	115	114	111	111	111	109	107	106	106	108

3

The house price-to-income ratio makes it possible to understand which countries saw house prices increase faster than household income, according to the indexation to a reference value equal to 100 as the long-term average: if the ratio of a country exceeds 100, it means that it is above its long-term standards and there may be pressure on the housing market. This indicator does not reflect intra-national disparities regarding price nor income disparities within EU Member States.

Source : OCDE, House prices database.

**TABLE 2**

**HOUSING COSTS FOR POOR HOUSEHOLDS\* ACCORDING TO TENURE STATUS**  
(IN € PER MONTH, IN PURCHASING POWER PARITY)

Between 2010 and 2016, the cost of housing for poor households increased in three quarters of EU countries. This rise was particularly pronounced for poor tenants (24 countries out of 28 report housing cost increases) and, to a lesser extent, homeowners (16 countries concerned).

The increase is higher than 20% in almost half of all countries and reaches very high levels in

Bulgaria (+54%), the United Kingdom (45%) and Portugal (+40%). Only six countries report a drop in housing costs for poor households, including the Netherlands, which is one of the most expensive countries for poor households as far as housing is concerned.

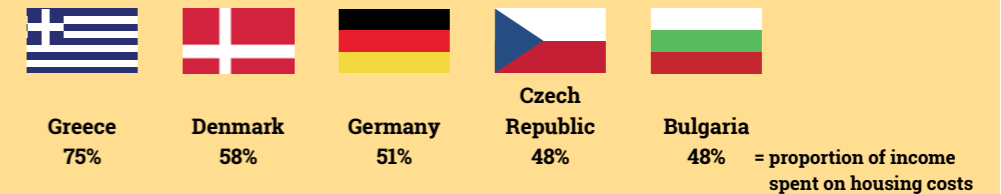
COUNTRY	TOTAL		HOMEOWNERS		RENTERS	
	2016	Change 2010-2016 in %	2016	Change 2010-2016 in %	2016	Change 2010-2016 in %
Bulgaria*	172.6	54.4	170.2	53.1	227.1	80.7
United Kingdom*	542.6	45.3	333.0	37.7	729.4	41.0
Portugal	229.6	39.6	185.3	33.8	349.1	43.0
Czech Republic	389.2	36.0	318.3	22.0	480.0	46.7
Poland	272.0	31.9	265.4	31.5	343.8	15.8
Romania	122.0	31.5	120.0	30.3	185.0	21.8
Slovakia	287.2	29.5	285.9	30.9	295.1	24.2
Germany	591.3	28.5	555.5	17.0	606.4	33.6
Estonia	177.8	27.6	157.8	19.5	358.8	67.3
Latvia	144.1	24.7	140.4	19.6	160.9	48.3
Slovenia	299.3	22.2	241.8	7.1	467.3	36.4
France	505.8	21.5	284.5	14.0	636.0	25.8
Belgium	531.6	20.1	382.1	3.1	613.9	22.4
Sweden	483.9	19.4	377.5	-0.4	539.6	27.7
Lithuania	152.9	16.2	149.4	15.0	211.9	22.8
Greece	484.6	13.5	401.6	-4.2	741.8	65.0
Austria	518.8	13.1	311.5	-2.0	636.4	16.3
Denmark	607.2	13.0	484.1	-8.8	665.0	22.6
Luxembourg*	615.4	12.7	373.4	14.1	843.4	20.9
Finland	385.1	11.6	264.0	9.9	475.7	8.6
European Union	405.7	10.0	310.4	0.9	528.9	11.9
Ireland	388.1	6.5	263.2	-11.4	505.4	12.6
Italy	308.5	5.9	213.6	-1.5	504.5	12.4
The Netherlands*	583.3	-1.3	479.3	-28.3	636.5	18.0
Cyprus	232.8	-1.4	162.5	-3.2	431.5	-21.1
Hungary*	208.9	-3.5	184.5	-13.7	381.4	55.4
Spain	325.5	-4.2	239.1	-7.2	520.3	-5.2
Malta	151.9	-13.5	132.2	-21.4	198.7	-2.0
Croatia	193.2	-29.8	187.2	-25.9	323.5	-60.6

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*United Kingdom: Data break 2012. \*Hungary: unreliable data - the gap between homeowners and renters is higher. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016.

**4**  
Having average incomes lower than 60% of the national median income.

**5**  
Purchasing power parity (PPP) enables the cost, in monetary units, of the same quantity of goods and services in different countries, to be compared. Conversion, via PPP, of expenditure expressed in national currencies into a common artificial currency, the purchasing power standard (PPS), smooths out the differences in price levels between countries that are due to fluctuations in exchange rates.

**The five countries where poor households spend the largest proportion of their disposable income on housing (see Table 3):**



**TABLE 3**

**AVERAGE PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS' DISPOSABLE INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS\* IN 2016**  
(IN % AND IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)

Between 2010 and 2016, 19 countries saw inequality worsen with regard to housing costs, including seven to a significant degree (Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary). In some countries, the rise in inequality is explained by an increase in the proportion of poor households' income spent on housing costs (while this proportion declined

for the population as a whole), i.e. Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. In other countries, the budget increase affects all households, and among poorer households in even larger proportions, i.e. Portugal, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Luxembourg and Finland.

**6**

The following are taken into consideration here: initial rental costs, loan or mortgage repayment, rent or loan repayment for parking spaces, garage space, etc, living expenses and services (e.g. caretaker) and utilities. The total housing cost and the disposable income set out here are after deductions for housing allowance have been made ensuring the data is more reliable (for this indicator, the data are different depending on how public assistance is used in reducing housing costs, e.g. in Germany, if housing allowance is taken as an integral part of income, the proportion of disposable income spent on housing costs for poor households exceeds 50%. However, if we consider housing allowances as a reduction in housing expenditure, the proportion falls to 40.2%).

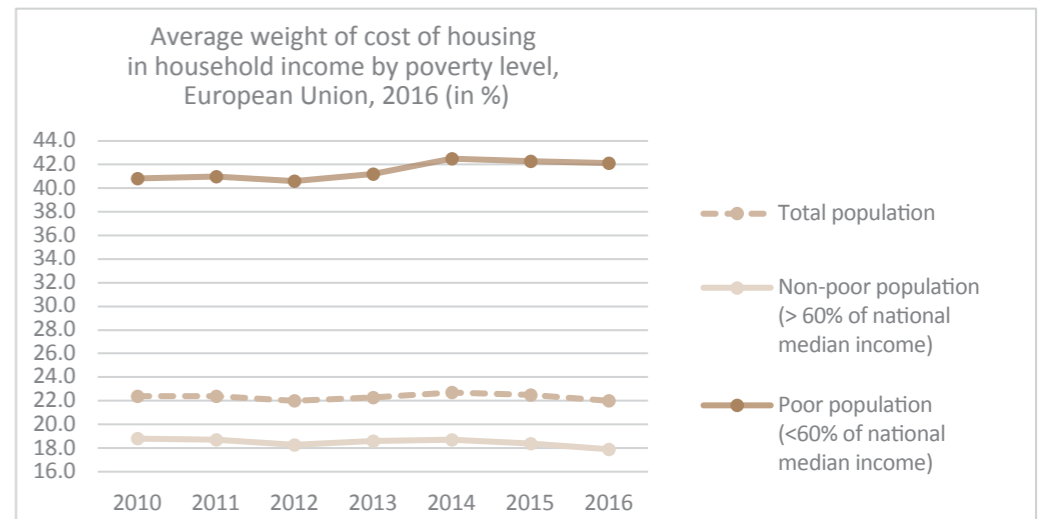


TABLE 3

AVERAGE PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS' DISPOSABLE INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS\* IN 2016  
(IN % AND IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)

COUNTRY	INEQUALITY - POOR/NON-POOR  Change in the gap between poor and the non-poor between 2010-2016 (in points)	AVERAGE PROPORTION SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS BY POOR HOUSEHOLDS		AVERAGE PROPORTION SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS BY THE TOTAL POPULATION	
		2016 (%)	Change 2010-2016 (in %)	2016 (%)	Change 2010-2016 (in %)
Denmark	23.8	58.2	0.2	26.7	-19.6
The Netherlands*	23.1	47.8	3.2	24.7	-13.6
Portugal	21.5	35.1	37.6	17.7	23.8
Romania	14.4	39.2	0.0	23.6	-7.1
Bulgaria*	14.2	48.4	65.2	28.9	58.8
Germany	13.3	51.3	8.7	27.4	-0.4
Hungary*	12.2	36.3	-6.7	21.3	-15.5
United Kingdom*	9.4	47.4	30.9	24.5	23.7
Estonia	8.9	29.1	-14.4	15.0	-14.8
Italy	8.7	36.8	6.3	17.6	3.0
European Union	8.0	42.1	3.2	22.0	-1.8
Czech Republic	7.7	48.0	5.7	23.0	0.4
Slovenia	6.8	32.7	7.6	16.0	3.9
Poland	6.7	35.9	-1.4	20.3	-6.5
Slovakia	6.6	38.5	6.1	20.3	1.5
Croatia	5.9	35.7	-23.2	18.2	-28.1
Luxembourg*	5.0	34.4	15.8	15.8	15.2
Belgium	4.7	38.5	-2.3	19.5	-4.9
Finland	3.3	36.8	7.3	18.1	2.8
Latvia	1.6	31.9	-12.8	17.5	-12.9
Greece	-0.2	74.8	42.7	41.9	44.5
Spain	-0.5	37.7	1.9	18.5	4.5
France	-0.7	36.2	0.0	18.0	1.1
Sweden	-1.6	44.1	-0.5	22.2	5.2
Austria	-4.0	40.3	-2.7	18.4	-1.1
Cyprus	-6.5	20.0	6.4	12.8	11.3
Ireland	-6.9	31.3	-5.4	16.4	1.2
Malta	-9.9	13.3	-36.1	7.6	-29.0
Lithuania	-11.7	32.0	-23.1	17.2	-15.3

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*United Kingdom: Data break 2012. \*Hungary: Unreliable data, particularly for poor households. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016

On average, one EU household in ten spent more than 40% of its disposable income on housing in 2016, against four poor households out of ten. Six countries were "overburdened by housing": Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Romania and the United Kingdom. In Greece, no-one was spared the long-term effects of the financial crisis which continues to have a detrimental effect on the housing situation: all Greek households still face a situation disastrous to their financial stability and well-being. More than 40% of the population and almost all poor households (91.9%) were overburdened by housing costs in 2016, i.e. an increase of 380% between 2010 and 2016 for non-poor households. Other countries where the situation has worsened over the past six years for all households include Bulgaria (+250% of households overburdened by housing costs between 2010 and 2016), Luxembourg (+100%), Portugal (+80%), the United Kingdom (+70%<sup>7</sup>), Slovenia and Sweden (+30%).

7

Because of a data break, figures for the United Kingdom could only to be calculated from 2012 to 2016.

TABLE 4

PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS OVERBURDENED  
BY HOUSING COSTS  
(I.E. SPENDING MORE THAN 40% OF THEIR INCOME  
ON HOUSING IN 2016)

COUNTRY	Proportion of total population overburdened by housing costs in 2016 (%)	Proportion of poor households overburdened by housing costs in 2016 (%)
Greece	40.5	91.9
Bulgaria*	20.7	55.3
Germany	15.8	50.3
Denmark	15	74.1
Romania	14.4	38.8
United Kingdom	12.3	42.4
European Union	11.1	39
The Netherlands*	10.7	42.9
Spain	10.2	36.4
Czech Republic	9.5	45.4
Belgium	9.5	37.6
Luxembourg*	9.5	37.2
Slovakia (2015)*	9.1	34.5
Italy	9.6	35.8
Hungary	8.8	32.9
Sweden	8.5	38.7
Lithuania	7.8	29.6
Poland	7.7	29.6
Portugal	7.5	29.1
Austria	7.2	38.8
Latvia	7	25.2
Croatia	6.4	29.4
Slovenia	5.7	28.3
France	5.2	22.3
Estonia	4.9	19.3
Ireland	4.6	18.7
Finland	4.4	19.5
Cyprus	3.1	12.6
Malta	1.4	5.9

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*Slovakia: data for 2016 not available - data are from 2015. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016



Across the EU, an average of 3.5% of the population were in mortgage or rent arrears in 2016 with this figure rising to 8.7% among poor households. Six countries were particularly affected by this problem with overall arrears rates hovering around the 5% mark (France, Spain, Hungary and Finland), and reaching as much as 8.6% in Cyprus and 15.3% in Greece. In Greece, a quarter of poor households were in mortgage or rent arrears in 2016 (+60% between 2010 and 2016). This situation deteriorated for poor households in most EU countries between 2010 and 2016, especially in Luxembourg (+90%) and Cyprus (+85%). In France (16%), Spain (14%), Finland (12%), Belgium (12%) and Austria (11%), the rate of debt among poor households is particularly alarming.

Inequalities with regard to debt has risen in six years, with poor households more exposed and non-poor households less exposed to debt, especially in Belgium, Romania, Sweden, Croatia and the United Kingdom. Of particular note is Belgium where arrears rates were slightly less than the EU average as a whole (3.2% against 3.5% in EU countries), but which reach far higher proportions among poor households (nearly 12%, i.e. 3.7 times more than the total population, representing the biggest gap of any EU country).

**TABLE 5**  
**MORTGAGE OR RENT ARREARS IN 2016**

COUNTRY	In the total population (in %)	In poor households (in %)
Greece	15.3	24.9
Cyprus	8.6	13.4
France	5.2	16.4
Spain	5.2	13.6
Hungary	5.1	8.8
Finland	4.9	12.3
Italy	4.2	9.9
Austria	3.6	10.7
Portugal	3.6	8.1
<b>European Union</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>8.7</b>
Slovakia	3.5	7.6
United Kingdom	3.4	7.2
Belgium	3.2	11.9
The Netherlands*	3.2	7.9
Slovenia	3.1	7.4
Luxembourg*	2.7	8.3
Latvia	2.7	5.4
Malta	2.5	7.6
Czech Republic	2.4	8.2
Sweden	2.3	8.3
Bulgaria*	2.1	3.3
Denmark	2	5.7
Estonia	1.8	2
Germany	1.6	4.1
Lithuania	1.4	1.8
Ireland	1.4	1.7
Croatia	1.3	2.6
Poland	1.3	2.4
Romania	0.9	2.8

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016.

## 2. HOUSING QUALITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE: UNFIT HOUSING IN EUROPE

In 2016, almost 17% of all EU households and 30% of poor households were living in overcrowded conditions. More than a quarter of poor households were living in overcrowded conditions in 13 EU countries. While overcrowding and severe housing deprivation were problems which plagued a massive proportion of the population in Eastern and Central European countries (particularly Romania where almost half of all poor households experienced severe housing depriva-

tion), households in the rest of Europe were not spared, with the number of poor households living in overcrowded conditions in the Netherlands tripling in the space of six years. In some countries like Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden, the proportion of poor households experiencing severe housing deprivation was between 3 and 7%, but this proportion has increased sharply over the last six years – by more than 250% in the Netherlands and 300% in Ireland.

**TABLE 6**  
**OVERCROWDING RATES\* IN 2016, AND THE CHANGE SINCE 2010 (IN %)**

COUNTRY	PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS		PROPORTION OF POOR HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS	
	2016	Change between 2010-2016	2016	Change between 2010-2016
The Netherlands*	4.0	100.0	14.6	224.4
Sweden	14.4	29.7	41.3	37.7
Austria	15.2	26.7	37.5	25.8
Italy	27.8	14.4	39.2	2.9
United Kingdom*	8.0	14.3	14.4	5.1
Greece	28.7	12.5	42.2	21.6
Denmark	8.2	12.3	23.6	18.0
Finland	6.6	8.2	20.5	17.1
Spain	5.4	8.0	12.7	38.0
Germany	7.2	1.4	18.9	-2.1
Luxembourg*	8.1	3.8	26	4.4
Slovakia	40.6	1.2	56.2	-3.8
<b>European Union</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>-5.1</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>-0.3</b>
Ireland	3.2	-5.9	6	-22.1
Croatia	41.1	-5.9	45.9	-1.1
Romania	48.4	-6.9	60.6	-2.1
Bulgaria*	42.5	-10.3	51.1	-4.3
Belgium	3.7	-11.9	13.0	-5.1
Poland	40.7	-14.3	59.2	-9.8
Hungary*	40.4	-14.4	54.7	-21.5
France	7.7	-16.3	23.1	-9.8
Czech Republic	17.9	-20.4	39.5	-10.4
Latvia	43.2	-22.4	45.9	-30.9
Malta	2.9	-27.5	7.5	13.6
Portugal	10.3	-29.5	19.9	-10.8
Cyprus	2.4	-31.4	5.7	-24.0
Lithuania	23.7	-47.9	31.0	-40.2
Slovenia	12.6	-63.9	20.4	-55.9
Estonia*	13.4	-66.2	16.7	-69.0

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*United Kingdom: Data break 2012. \*Estonia: Data break 2014. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016. \*Hungary: unreliable data

### 8

According to the Eurostat definition, a person is considered to live in overcrowded conditions if they do not have at their disposal a number of rooms corresponding to: one bedroom for the household, one bedroom per couple, one bedroom for each single person aged 18 or more, one bedroom per pair of single people of the same gender aged between 12 and 17, one bedroom for each single person aged between 12 and 17 not included in the previous category and one bedroom per pair of children under 12 years of age

TABLE 7

SEVERE HOUSING DEPRIVATION RATE<sup>9</sup> IN 2016 (IN %)

COUNTRY	PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION WHO EXPERIENCED SEVERE HOUSING DEPRIVATION		PROPORTION OF POOR HOUSEHOLDS WHO EXPERIENCED SEVERE HOUSING DEPRIVATION	
	2016	Change between 2010-2016	2016	Change between 2010-2016
Romania	19.8	-21.7	42.7	-15.6
Hungary	16.9	-4.5	32.7	-22.7
Latvia	14.6	-33.3	24.2	-38.6
Bulgaria*	11.6	-21.1	29.2	-16.1
Poland	9.4	-29.3	19.7	-29.6
Lithuania	8.6	-36.3	19.1	-14.7
Italy	7.6	8.6	14.3	-5.3
Croatia	7.1	-42.3	12.8	-34.4
Greece	6.3	-17.1	11.9	-15.0
Portugal	4.9	-12.5	11.3	6.6
European Union	4.8	-15.8	11.9	-11.2
Slovenia	4.5	-70.8	9.6	-62.2
Slovakia	4.4	15.8	16.3	52.3
Austria	4.2	5.0	10.3	-6.4
Estonia	3.3	-71.1	4.6	-78.0
Czech Republic	3.0	-33.3	9.9	-22.7
France	2.7	-10.0	9.8	0.0
Sweden	2.7	68.8	6.8	51.1
United Kingdom*	2.2	10.0	4.0	-4.8
Luxembourg*	2.1	-8.7	7.7	-9.4
Germany	1.9	-9.5	6.0	-4.8
Belgium	1.9	0.0	6.5	10.2
Spain	1.7	-5.6	4.6	39.4
Denmark	1.7	30.8	4.2	0.0
Malta	1.4	0.0	4.3	152.9
The Netherlands*	1.4	180.0	4.3	258.3
Cyprus	1.3	-18.8	3.7	-15.9
Ireland	1	100.0	3.1	342.9
Finland	0.7	-22.2	3.2	45.5

Source: Eurostat, 2017. \*United Kingdom: Data break 2012. \*Bulgaria and Estonia: Data break 2014. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016

Difficulty in maintaining adequate household temperature is a significant difficulty in numerous EU countries, and most especially in Eastern and Southern European countries. Unsurprisingly, poor households are always more heavily impacted: almost a quarter of poor EU households

were unable to maintain an adequate household temperature in 2016. In five EU countries (Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece and Bulgaria), more than a third of poor households were victims of this form of fuel poverty. These difficulties worsened for poor households in 12 EU countries between 2010 and 2016.

9

According to the Eurostat definition, "severe housing deprivation" concerns the population living in conditions considered overcrowded and which also has one of the indicators of housing deprivation. Housing deprivation is an indicator of dignity calculated on the basis of households living in damp accommodation (a leaking roof, damp), no bath or shower, no indoor toilet or little natural light.

Among the countries experiencing serious levels of fuel poverty, some saw this problem worsen severely over the past six years, e.g. Greece where the number of households experiencing fuel poverty almost doubled in six years, Italy (+39%)

and Spain (+35%). Other countries that have not experienced this problem so severely but have nonetheless seen fuel poverty rise significantly over the past few years include Denmark, Sweden and Luxembourg.

TABLE 8

## FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING ADEQUATE HOUSEHOLD TEMPERATURES IN 2016 (IN %)

COUNTRY	IN THE TOTAL POPULATION		IN POOR HOUSEHOLDS	
	2016	Change between 2010-2016	2016	Change between 2010-2016
Bulgaria*	39.2	-41.1	61.9	-25.7
Lithuania	29.3	16.3	29.8	-12.6
Greece	29.1	89.0	52.5	36.7
Cyprus	24.3	-11.0	49	22.2
Portugal	22.5	-25.2	42.7	-14.1
Italy	16.1	38.8	32.4	15.7
Romania	13.8	-31.3	25.6	-4.8
Latvia	10.6	-44.5	22.7	-32.6
Spain	10.1	34.7	23.2	48.7
Croatia	9.3	12.0	21.7	14.8
Hungary	9.2	-14.0	22.7	-2.2
European Union	8.7	-7.4	21.1	0.0
Poland	7.1	-52.0	16.7	-45.6
Malta	6.8	-52.4	13.6	-45.8
United Kingdom*	6.1	-24.7	14.2	-26.0
Ireland	5.8	-14.7	14.6	-8.8
Slovakia	5.1	15.9	17	9.0
France	5	-12.3	14	-8.5
Slovenia	4.8	2.1	14.2	8.4
Belgium	4.8	-14.3	16.2	0.0
Czech Republic	3.8	-26.9	13	16.1
Germany	3.7	-26.0	12.4	-21.0
Denmark	2.7	42.1	7.9	61.2
Estonia	2.7	-12.9	6.1	-32.2
Austria	2.7	-28.9	8.7	-3.3
Sweden	2.6	52.9	4.6	7.0
The Netherlands*	2.6	13.0	7.9	-17.7
Luxembourg*	1.7	240.0	4	135.3
Finland	1.7	21.4	3.8	8.6

Source: Eurostat, 2017. \* United Kingdom: Data break 2012. \*Data break 2014. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016.

### 3. SOCIAL FACTORS WORSENING HOUSING DIFFICULTIES

#### YOUNG EUROPEANS ARE INCREASINGLY BEING SQUEEZED OUT OF THE HOUSING MARKET

In the economic context of fiscal austerity, unemployment and increased poverty, young people in vulnerable situations have been particularly affected by housing exclusion. **A worrying and increasing proportion of young people in Europe are being excluded from the housing market or are in unfit housing.** In addition to being particularly affected by unfit housing, young people are spending astronomical amounts on housing. The under 30s have been particularly affected by the budget cuts and austerity policies of the last few years. So-called stay-at-home policies have proliferated in some EU countries (the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands), on the grounds that the social welfare systems are too generous to young people and that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child's transition to independence<sup>10</sup>.

An increase in housing costs has been observed among young people as a whole across the EU between 2010 and 2016 (+10%), in particular in

Bulgaria (+360%), Luxembourg (+120%), Portugal (100%), Austria (+70%), Slovenia (+60%), Greece (+40%) and Germany (+20%).

**Among EU citizens aged between 18 and 24 living below the poverty line, 43% were overburdened by housing costs in Europe in 2016, four times the population as a whole.** The countries where this level is more than 50% are Austria (50%), the United Kingdom (50%), Bulgaria (52%), the Czech Republic (54%), Sweden (54%), Germany (57%), the Netherlands (70%), Denmark (87%) and Greece where 90% of young people in poverty are overburdened by housing costs.

The proportion of young people aged between 16 and 24 living in overcrowded conditions increased in ten EU countries between 2010 and 2016, in particular the Netherlands (+100% of young people overall, +180% for poor young people), Austria (+40%), Greece (+30%), Belgium (+25% of young people overall, +70% for poor young people) and Spain (+20%).

Young people are two to three times more likely than the population as a whole to experience housing deprivation in Cyprus, the Netherlands, Denmark, France and Finland.

10

See FEANTSA/  
Foundation Abbé  
Pierre (2017), *Locked  
Out - Housing Solutions  
for Young People  
Transitioning to  
Independence*. <http://www.feantsa.org/fr/report/2017/09/25/feantsa-fondation-abbé-pierre-paper>

TABLE 9

**HOUSING COST OVERBURDEN RATE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 18 AND 24  
AND THE GAP BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE IN 2016  
(IN %).**

COUNTRY	INEQUALITY - YOUNG PEOPLE/TOTAL POPULATION (RATIO)		YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 18-24		TOTAL POPULATION	
	Gap between young people and the total population (ratio)	Gap between poor young people and the total population	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Finland	2.8	8.7	12.3	38.2	4.4	19.5
Denmark	2.6	5.8	38.6	87.2	15.0	74.1
France	2.2	7.7	11.5	39.8	5.2	22.3
Sweden	2.2	6.4	18.4	54.3	8.5	38.7
The Netherlands*	1.9	6.6	19.9	70.2	10.7	42.9
Austria	1.8	7.0	12.6	50.6	7.2	38.8
Estonia	1.7	7.3	8.5	35.6	4.9	19.3
United Kingdom	1.5	4.1	19.0	50.2	12.3	42.4
Ireland	1.5	5.4	7	24.7	4.6	18.7
European Union	1.3	3.9	14.2	43.4	11.1	39.0
Portugal	1.3	4.5	9.5	33.4	7.5	29.1
Luxembourg*	1.2	3.5	11.4	32.7	9.4	37.0
Greece	1.2	2.2	46.9	90.3	40.5	91.9
Lithuania	1.2	3.4	9.0	26.7	7.8	29.6
Czech Republic	1.1	5.7	10.6	53.7	9.5	45.4
Hungary	1.1	3.0	9.7	26.7	8.8	32.9
Germany	1.1	3.6	17.1	57.2	15.8	50.3
Poland	1.0	3.3	7.9	25.3	7.7	29.6
Bulgaria*	1.0	2.5	21.2	52.5	20.7	55.3
Romania	1.0	2.4	14.7	34.0	14.4	38.8
Belgium	1.0	3.7	9.2	35.5	9.5	37.6
Cyprus	1.0	5.0	3.0	15.4	3.1	12.6
Spain	1.0	2.8	9.8	28.7	10.2	36.4
Italy	0.9	3.3	9.3	31.9	9.6	35.8
Slovenia	0.9	4.8	5.3	27.5	5.7	28.3
Croatia	0.8	3.8	5.4	24.2	6.4	29.4
Slovakia (2015)*	0.8	3.6	7.1	32.4	9.1	34.5
Latvia	0.7	3.6	5.1	25.5	7.0	25.2
Malta	0.6	5.1	0.9	7.2	1.4	5.9

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*Slovakia: Data not available for 2016. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016.

TABLE 10

**SEVERE HOUSING DEPRIVATION RATE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 16 AND 24 AND THE GAP BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE IN 2016 (IN %).**

COUNTRY	Gap between young people and the total population (ratio)	Young people aged between 16-24	Total population (%)
Cyprus	3.0	3.9	1.3
The Netherlands*	2.9	4.0	1.4
Finland	2.7	1.9	0.7
Denmark	2.5	4.2	1.7
France	2.2	5.9	2.7
Belgium	1.9	3.7	1.9
Sweden	1.9	5.2	2.7
Portugal	1.9	9.4	4.9
Slovenia	1.9	8.5	4.5
Ireland	1.8	1.8	1
Greece	1.8	11.1	6.3
Spain	1.7	2.9	1.7
Slovakia	1.7	7.4	4.4
Italy	1.6	12.4	7.6
Lithuania	1.6	13.9	8.6
Estonia	1.6	5.3	3.3
European Union	1.6	7.6	4.8
Germany	1.6	3.0	1.9
Bulgaria*	1.6	18.2	11.6
Romania	1.5	30.6	19.8
Latvia	1.5	22.3	14.6
Czech Republic	1.5	4.5	3.0
Austria	1.5	6.1	4.2
Malta	1.4	2.0	1.4
Luxembourg*	1.4	3.1	2.1
Hungary	1.4	23.3	16.9
United Kingdom	1.4	3.0	2.2
Poland	1.4	12.8	9.4
Croatia	1.3	9.4	7.1

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016.

### IN ALL EU COUNTRIES, NON-EU CITIZENS ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO HOUSING EXCLUSION THAN EU CITIZENS

**Nationality has a strong impact on housing conditions.** In all EU countries **without exception**, foreign nationals (from outside the European Union) are more overburdened by housing costs and experience more overcrowding than nationals, especially in Belgium, Ireland, Austria,

Sweden, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, France and Greece.

EU nationals who are not nationals of the host country also face these housing difficulties, particularly in the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria and France.

TABLE 11

**HOUSING COST OVERBURDEN RATE BY NATIONALITY, AND GAP BETWEEN NON-EU CITIZENS AND EU CITIZENS LIVING IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY IN 2016 (POPULATION AGED OVER 18)**

COUNTRY	Gap between non-EU citizens and nationals of the country concerned (ratio)	Non-EU citizens (%)	Non-nationals of the country concerned but EU citizens (%)	Nationals of the country concerned (%)
Poland	7.1	55.7	/	7.9
Cyprus	5.9	9.5	10.5	1.6
Ireland	5.6	21.3	9.8	3.8
Spain	5.6	38.9	32.0	7.0
Slovenia	5.3	26.8	17.2	5.1
Malta	5.0	5.5	8.9	1.1
Portugal	4.3	29.0	10.6	6.8
Luxembourg*	4.2	22.9	13.4	5.5
Belgium	3.9	33.4	17.0	8.5
Italy	3.6	28	30.9	7.7
The Netherlands*	3.4	39.9	21.3	11.6
Austria	3.4	18.4	21.5	5.4
Lithuania	3.1	24.5	/	7.9
United Kingdom	2.6	28.9	23.1	11.0
Sweden	2.6	21.4	22.4	8.2
European Union	2.6	27.6	22.4	10.6
Czech Republic	2.4	22.6	19.4	9.5
Greece	2.2	79.9	64.1	36.0
France	2.1	11.6	11.8	5.4

Source: Eurostat 2017. \*Hungary, Romania, Slovakia: non-existent or unreliable data. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016



TABLE 11

HOUSING COST OVERBURDEN RATE BY NATIONALITY, AND GAP BETWEEN NON-EU CITIZENS  
AND EU CITIZENS LIVING IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY IN 2016 (POPULATION AGED OVER 18)

COUNTRY	Gap between non-EU citizens and nationals of the country concerned (ratio)	Non-EU citizens (%)	Non-nationals of the country concerned but EU citizens (%)	Nationals of the country concerned (%)
Denmark	2.1	36.0	17.9	16.8
Latvia	1.7	11.2	18.3	6.5
Finland	1.5	7.1	10.6	4.8
Bulgaria*	1.5	29.8	/	20.4
Estonia	1.4	6.8	17.7	4.7
Germany	1.1	18.9	19.0	16.9
Croatia	1.1	7.2	5.2	6.8
Hungary*	/	/	4.9	8.6
Romania*	/	/	/	14.2
Slovakia*	/	/	4.3	7.7

Source : Eurostat 2017. \* Hongrie, Roumanie, Slovaquie : données inexistantes ou peu fiables. \* Pays-Bas, Luxembourg, Bulgarie : Rupture de données 2016.

TABLE 12

OVERCROWDING RATE BY NATIONALITY, AND GAP BETWEEN NON-EU CITIZENS AND  
EU CITIZENS LIVING IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY IN 2016 (POPULATION AGED OVER 18)

COUNTRY	Gap between non-EU citizens and nationals of the country concerned (ratio)	Non-EU citizens (%)	Non-nationals of the country concerned but EU citizens (%)	Nationals of the country concerned (%)
Belgium	7.2	15.8	8.2	2.2
Ireland	6.4	13.5	4.9	2.1
Luxembourg*	5.9	20	10.2	3.4
Austria	5.9	51.0	24.5	8.6
France	5.4	30.1	11.9	5.6
Germany	4.5	26.8	15.7	5.9
Malta	4.4	10.5	1.0	2.4
Sweden	4.3	48.4	19.1	11.3
Portugal	4.2	35.8	15.8	8.5
Spain	4.2	16.7	5.4	4.0
United Kingdom	3.7	19.6	19.2	5.3
Slovenia	3.6	38.6	26.5	10.6
The Netherlands*	2.9	10.2	5.1	3.5
Czech Republic	2.7	40.7	23.8	15.1
Finland	2.6	17.3	8.9	6.6
Cyprus	2.6	4.7	3.7	1.8
Denmark	2.5	19.1	13.6	7.6
Italy	2.3	53.0	42.1	22.8
European Union	2.3	32.7	18.0	14.2
Greece	2.2	56.6	30.7	25.3
Croatia	1.6	60.6	21.6	38.3
Estonia	1.5	15.6	5.2	10.7
Bulgaria*	1.5	55.2	/	37.9
Poland	1.2	46.3	/	37.2
Lithuania	1.1	23.2	/	21.3
Latvia	1.1	41.2	28.8	39.2
Hungary*	/	/	28.3	35.7
Romania*	/	/	/	43.1
Slovakia*	/	/	51.5	37.8

Source : Eurostat 2017. \*Hungary, Romania, Slovakia: Non-existent or unreliable data. \*The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Bulgaria: Data break 2016

# II. CLOSE-UPS ON HOUSING EXCLUSION IN FIVE EU COUNTRIES

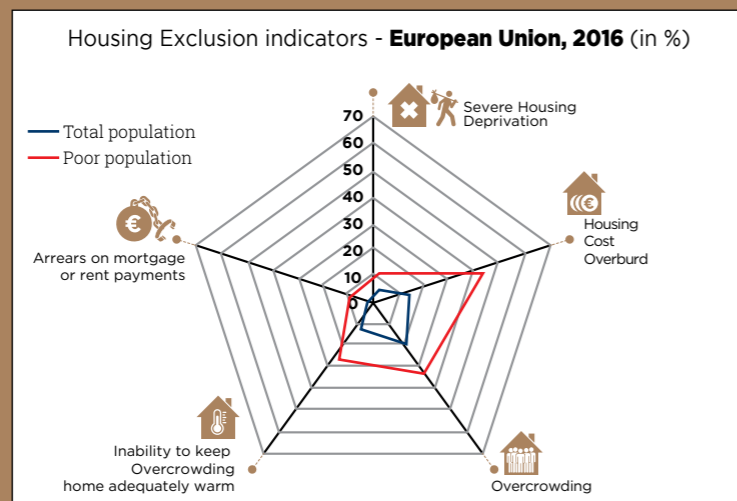
The following profiles of five EU countries complements in part the fourteen close-ups published in the previous edition of this report<sup>11</sup>. This enables housing exclusion to be approached in a more localised and contextualised manner, by bringing together Eurostat EU-SILC data and external data, collected with the help of FEANTSA members.

The 5 countries presented are:

- # Austria
- # United Kingdom / England
- # Italy
- # Sweden
- # Czech Republic

11

See FEANTSA et Foundation Abbé Pierre, *An Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe, 2017*, Chapter 2 Part II. <http://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2017/03/21/the-second-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe-2017?bcParent=27>



## AUSTRIA

### Recent data on homelessness

According to the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, in 2016, 15,090 people were registered as homeless in Austria, i.e. 3,690 more people than in 2008 (11,400 people listed as homeless), an increase of 32%. These data do not include all the services concerned and do not cover people living on the streets who were not registered as homeless with the public authorities. Around 70% of homeless people in Austria live in Vienna. 20.3% live in other major cities: Graz, Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt. The National Social Report Austria 2015 (*FSW Leistungsbericht 2015*) highlighted the growing number of people using homeless services: from 8,180 in 2010 to 10,020 in 2015. This is due in part to the growing number of people in need of these services, but also to an expansion of the services themselves.

### Housing market situation in Austria

Austria has developed a complex housing intervention system, in particular as regards social housing, with the aim of ensuring the provision of housing adapted to the beneficiary's needs. This system is often mentioned by international comparisons as an example of good practice. The quality of housing has indeed greatly improved over the years. Nevertheless, indicators such as rising housing costs, overcrowding and the use of homeless services indicate that housing is becoming a real challenge, especially for low-income households.

In Austria in 2016<sup>12</sup>, 55% of the population were homeowners (25.2% with a mortgage, 29.8% without a mortgage) and 45% were renters (29.7% at market price, 15.3% at a lower price or free). People with low or unstable incomes depend on the affordable rental market for decent housing. The retention of a substantial proportion of rental

Total population as of 1 January 2016:  
8,690,076 people

GDP/resident in 2016  
(purchasing power parity): 37,200

Number of homeless people known: 15,090  
people registered as homeless in 2016

Percentage of poor households: 14.1%

housing is therefore important. In general, housing is becoming less affordable and available, especially for low-income households, with rents and prices rising rapidly in the private sector. Rents increased by 22% overall in Austria from 2008 to 2014, and by 28% in the private sector<sup>13</sup>.

Tenancy laws in limited-profit housing<sup>14</sup> and local authority sectors underpins affordable housing in Austria. Tenancy laws limit rents and regulate the length of tenancies within the private rental sector. But the most protective rules have been weakened by continued deregulation since 1994. For example, despite strict regulations on short-term leases, the number of these contracts has increased since laws were relaxed. In 2013, 67% of new rental contracts in Austria were short-term<sup>15</sup>. The limited-profit housing sector is accessible to a large part of the population since income ceilings are rather high. Social housing in Austria is not a sector intended to house only low-income households. To maintain this model, it is important to expand the social housing sector. Accessibility for poor people and homeless people differs from region to region, and housing stock is usually insufficient. A recent study published by the federation of associations working with homeless people in Austria, BAWO, details the strategies and actions needed to improve the housing conditions of low-income households<sup>16</sup>.

12

Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

13

AK – Moshhammer, Bernhard/Tockner, Lukas (2016): *Mietensteigerungen in Wien und Österreich* [Rent increases in Vienna and Austria], 9

14

Rental housing in Austria is made up of the private market, owned by private owners, and the "public housing" system owned by municipalities/non-profit municipal entities (*Gemeindewohnungen*) or non-profit housing associations (*gemeinnützige Bauvereinigungen*).

15

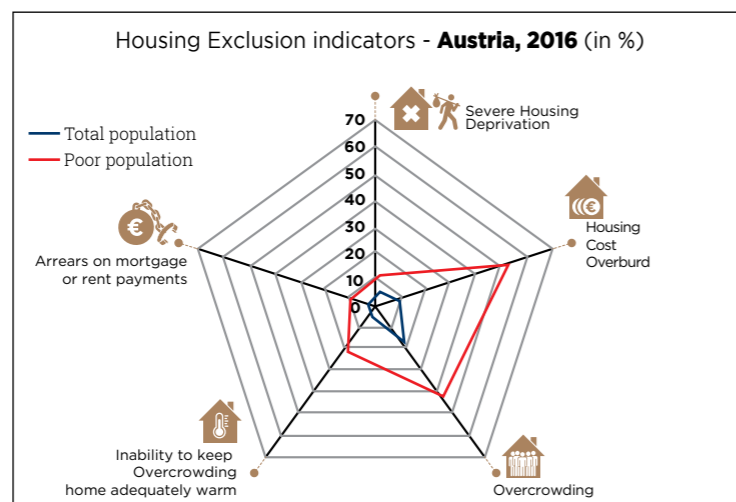
AK – Moshhammer, Bernhard/Tockner, Lukas (2016): *Mietensteigerungen in Wien und Österreich* [Rent increases in Vienna and Austria], 12

16

BAWO (2018): *Housing for all. Affordable. Permanent. Inclusive.* [www.bawo.at](http://www.bawo.at)

● Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2010 and 2016

General population				
Indicator	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Housing cost overburden rate	7.2%	38.8%	- 4%	+ 6%
Total cost of housing (PPP)	520.7	518.8	+ 11%	+ 13%
Mortgage/rent arrears	3.6%	10.7%	- 8%	- 14%
Overcrowding	15.2%	37.5%	+ 27%	+ 26%
Severe housing deprivation	4.2%	10.3%	+ 5%	- 6%
Inability to maintain adequate home temperature	2.7%	8.7%	- 29%	- 3%
Young people				
Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24)	12.6%	50.6%	+ 73%	+ 24%
Overcrowding (aged 16-24)	25.4%	50.6%	+ 43%	+ 7%
Non-EU citizens				
	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29
Housing cost overburden rate	18.4%	17.8%	+ 74%	+ 56%
Overcrowding	51%	66.2%	+ 22%	+ 41%



FOCUS ON...

Two best practices targeting the housing sector in Austria

Changing nature of homeless services in Vienna

Vienna's homeless services had always applied the traditional staircase model until the Housing First debate was launched in autumn 2011, which saw a large number of key players get involved. The implementation of Housing First in Vienna can be seen as a process of deinstitutionalisation. Vienna has begun to increase the number of Housing First services and reform traditional homelessness services by bringing the principles of Housing First into mainstream acceptance. Services such as transitional accommodation and accommodation centres have been progressively reduced in favour of outreach services in apartments. It is important to note that this debate has also helped to integrate Housing First principles into existing services, such as immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements, user choice and participation, individualised and flexible supports. At present, outreach services are funded for 926 people (total number of homeless services: 6,236).

However, the city is facing an affordable housing shortage, despite the large stock of social housing. The main barrier in increasing the number of Housing First places is to identify affordable housing. To meet these new needs, the limited-profit housing sector is very important and needs to expand its role. Existing socially innovative collaborations, such as the one between Housing First services and various outreach teams, need to be improved while removing barriers to access for low-income people. It is also important to reinforce the perception of homelessness as a housing problem, and to improve cooperation between homeless services and the social and private housing sector in Vienna.

Cooperation and combination of housing and social policies in Vorarlberg

The Vorarlberg region developed a housing-oriented policy in 2006, launching a programme to reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets or in homeless shelters ("Soziales Netzwerk Wohnen"). Focusing on barriers to accessing private and social housing, the programme provides direct access to social housing and outreach support for homeless people with high support needs. There are many parallels with the Housing First approach, including permanent contracts, separation of housing and support, user choice and importance of standardisation. Re-housing is considered a prerequisite for the reintegration of people who have been homeless.

The programme was launched in September 2006. By December 2017, 135 people with high support needs had been rehoused. In most cases, there was success: housing retention rates were high, with 86% of participants holding on to their homes, 10% leaving and only 4% being evicted. In addition to the positive effect on the participants, the programme also had an impact on the institutional structure with the capacity of homeless shelters being reduced by about one third, and cooperation between the regional government, municipalities, social housing organisations and homelessness services being significantly improved. The issues that still need to be addressed to expand the programme are the limited number of housing units available and insufficient numbers of staff for individual support.

## ITALY

17

The survey was conducted between 21 November and 21 December 2014. It targets those who requested basic assistance (food, shower, shelter) in one of the 768 service providers in the 158 cities concerned. According to the ETHOS typology, the Italian survey identifies homeless people as people living on the streets, in emergency shelters and night shelters, in transitional and temporary accommodation, in women's shelters.

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The report, on poverty and social exclusion in Italy, is based on a needs survey compiled by social workers and volunteers from the homelessness sector. This survey was conducted in 1,801 Caritas services, in more than 180 Dioceses (over 80% of the national territory). Caritas Italiana, *Futuro Anteriore*, 2017. <http://bit.ly/2zxxGfS>

19

Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

20

In Italy, there are three types of social housing: subsidised housing (*Edilizia sovvenzionata*) for low-income people; assisted housing (*Edilizia agevolata*) for the middle classes; and subsidised housing (*Edilizia convenzionata*) facilitating affordable rental prices. To find out more about social housing in Italy, see RIZZICA C. (2017), "New social and affordable housing in Italy: between public and private initiatives", *Housing Solutions Platform*, available at: <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/publication/new-social-and-affordable-housing-italy-between-public-and-private-initiatives> and Housing Europe (2017), *The State of Housing in the EU 2017*, available at: <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource/1000/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2017>.

### Recent data on homelessness

Official statistics by the ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics)<sup>17</sup> showed that in 2014, 50,724 homeless people lived in the 158 Italian cities surveyed. In 2011, 47,648 people were homeless, an increase of 3,076 people, or 6% between 2011 and 2014. 86% of the homeless population were male. 58% were foreign nationals. Four out of ten homeless people had been homeless for four years or more. The majority of homeless people were living in Northern Italy (56%). Some 23.7% were living in the centre of the country, and only 20.3% in the south and the Italian islands. Milan had the largest number of homeless people (12,004 people), followed by Rome (7,709 people) and Palermo (2,887 people). The estimated number of young people aged between 18 and 34 was 13,012, or 25.7% of the total homeless population.

Chronic homelessness is on the rise. The proportion of homeless people sleeping rough for between two and four years has increased from 11% in 2011 to 20% in 2014, and the proportion of people living on the street for more than four years has increased by 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2014. The number of homeless people with mental health problems or drug or alcohol abuse problems and who were not able to respond to the census survey increased by 60%, from 4,429 in 2011 to 7,130 in 2014 (representing 14% of the homeless population).

According to the 2017 Caritas report<sup>18</sup>, of the 205,090 people who received assistance from one of the 1,801 Caritas support services where the study was conducted, 26,078 were homeless. They were mostly men (74%), migrants (67%) and single (45%).

**Total population as of 1 January 2016:**  
60,665,551 people

**GDP/resident in 2016**  
(purchasing power parity): 28,200

**Number of homeless people known:**  
50,724 in 1 month in 2014

**Percentage of poor households:** 20.6%

### Housing market situation in Italy

In 2016<sup>19</sup>, 72.3% of Italy's population were homeowners (15.9% with a mortgage, 56.3% without a mortgage) and 27.7% were renters (16.8% at market price, 11% at reduced-rent prices or free).

In 2008, the adoption of reform legislation defining social rental housing made it possible to diversify the supply of affordable housing<sup>20</sup>. Social rented housing accounts for about 4% of the national housing stock. This system is based on partnerships between public and private stakeholders for rentals for a minimum of eight years and affordable property sales. Private investors (builders, investors, banking foundations) can benefit from public co-financing through housing benefits, urban renewal programs and social rental housing assistance (individual rental assistance). The beneficiaries of social housing are mainly low-income people and families who cannot access either rent-free contracts or the private market. Priority is given to people experiencing housing exclusion, families with children and people living in forced cohabitation. Recently, the Italian Government created an integrated real estate fund (*FIA*) dedicated to investment in social housing, but this fund is little used at present.

In terms of housing quality, according to available data (Eurostat 2016), 27.8% of the population were living in overcrowded conditions in 2016.

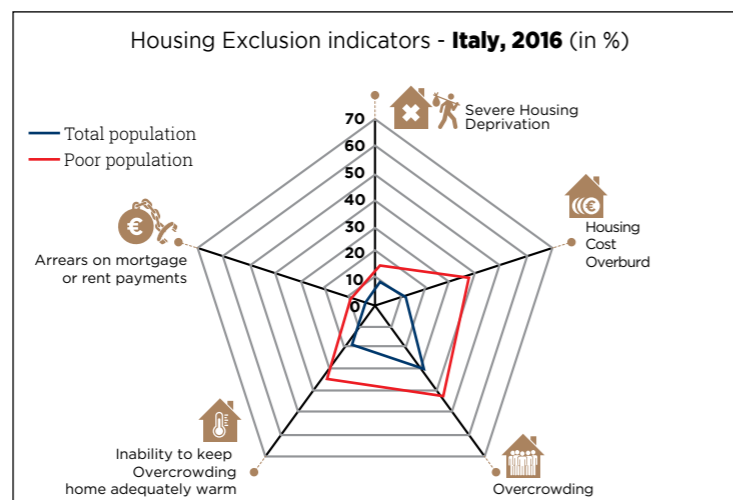
Overcrowding varies depending on age: only 10% of the elderly were affected (as they are more likely to be owners), compared to 42% of minors (and their families) and 30% of 18-64 year olds. In Italy, 9.6% of households experienced severe housing deprivation – almost twice the EU average (5%). This indicator differs according to tenure status: 6.5% of homeowners (with a mortgage) versus 14.8% of tenants in the private market experienced severe housing deprivation. The proportion of people living in damp housing has declined in recent years (from 25% in 2014 to 21% in 2016). In 2015, ISTAT developed a poor housing quality index, defined by the ratio of people living in overcrowded accommodation and also having one of three problems: A) Structural problems in housing (ceilings, installations, etc.); B) No bath/shower with running water; C) Absence of natural light. According to the latest Equitable and Sustainable Well-being report (2017), one in ten people were living in overcrowded accommodation with one of the three problems mentioned above. This index is more severe in the south of the country (11.8%) than in the north (8.4%).

As part of the national strategy to fight poverty, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has introduced various mechanisms for local and regional stakeholders, including a call for innovative projects to end homelessness targeting Housing First projects and introducing a basic income. This strategy is partly financed by EU funds (European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived and European Regional Development Fund).



● Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2010 and 2016

General population				
Indicator	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Housing cost overburden rate	9.6%	35.8%	+ 18%	+ 15%
Total cost of housing (PPP)	341.9	308.1	+ 3%	+ 6%
Mortgage/rent arrears	4.2%	9.8%	- 7%	- 12%
Overcrowding	27.8%	39.2%	+ 14%	+ 3%
Severe housing deprivation	7.6%	14.3%	+ 9%	- 5%
Inability to maintain adequate home temperature	16.1%	32.8%	+ 39%	+ 17%
Young people				
Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24)	8.5%	30.3%	+ 5%	+ 11%
Overcrowding (aged 16-24)	46.6%	57%	+ 11%	+ 2%
Non-EU citizens				
	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29
Housing cost overburden rate	27.3%	20%	+ 7%	- 24%
Overcrowding	53%	61.3%	+ 10%	+ 8%



FOCUS ON...

New profiles of homeless people in Italy

Conducted between 2014 and 2016, the fio.PSD survey (2017) revealed two trends:

- The emergence of new profiles of homeless people;
- An increase in the number of traditional users of emergency accommodation.

Young people (aged 18-25), asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, families and low-skilled jobseekers are becoming more and more numerous as new users of homeless services. Low-skilled jobseekers face "episodic homelessness" correlated with low income and frequent loss of unstable jobs. Irregular and precarious jobs, the loss of affordable housing or an official residence result in exclusion and marginalisation.

Female victims of domestic violence and abuse, migrants and Italian nationals are also more likely to use referral, counselling and psychological support services for homeless people. At the same time, services are changing: there was an increase in beds for newcomers; help centres for asylum seekers; emergency stations for hygiene and food;

support measures to promote social inclusion (vocational guidance, legal aid, counselling); targeted housing projects (Housing First, housing co-ops, pilot projects for the implementation of the right to housing).

Homelessness among young people is a major issue in Italy. According to the ISTAT survey, in 2014, there were 13,012 young people among 50,724 homeless people (25%). According to the new Caritas report, almost 30% of homeless people were aged between 18 and 34 (7,484 out of 26,078 homeless people passed through one of Caritas's 1,801 help centres in 2017). 12% were Italian, 88% foreign nationals. Italian homeless young people were mainly male (60%), with a low level of education, a complex social background (family-related) and unemployed. On the other hand, many were young unemployed migrants with an intermediate level of education and residence permit, unemployed and with children in 30% of cases.

Increased numbers of the working poor, unaccompanied minors and families of foreign nationals in the homeless population are new challenges facing the homeless sector.

## CZECH REPUBLIC

## ● Recent data on homelessness

11,496 people used homelessness services in the Czech Republic on 26 March 2011<sup>21</sup>. This included those who used emergency shelter services (including reception centres for asylum seekers) and night shelters on the night the census was carried out. According to experts and professionals in the homeless services sector, and according to the official estimates of the Ministry of Labour, actual figures are much higher. Indeed, in 2016, the Ministry of Labour and Social Services carried out an assessment of the survey on homelessness conducted by "municipalities with extended competence". The administrative districts of these local authorities estimated that about 119,000 people were at risk of losing their homes in the Czech Republic. The number of homeless people was estimated at 68,500. A total of 187,500 people were estimated to be victims of housing exclusion in the Czech Republic<sup>22</sup>.

## ● Housing market situation in the Czech Republic

In 2016<sup>23</sup>, 78.2% of the Czech Republic's population were homeowners (19.4% with a mortgage, 58.8% without a mortgage) and 21.8% were renters (16% at market price, 5.8% at reduced-rent prices or free).

The Czech real estate market showed signs of overheating, especially in Prague, due to a glaring lack of new housing (the number of building permits was halved between 2008 and 2015), an increase in demand accompanying strong economic growth, low interest rates leading to an increase in long-term mortgages only and more housing being purchased as investment properties.

In 2016, the average price of a new apartment in the capital was 75,600 Czech koruna (€2,980) per square metre, compared with 92,600 koruna

**Total population as of 1 January 2016:**  
**10,553,843 people**

**GDP/resident in 2016**  
**(purchasing power parity): 25,600**

**Number of homeless people known:**  
**estimated at 68,500 in 2016**

**Percentage of poor households: 9.7%**

(€3,650) in 2017, an annual increase of 22%<sup>24</sup> - the highest in Europe, according to the Czech Central Bank. The Czech Republic has the least affordable home ownership in Europe: households have to save for almost 11 years to buy a new home<sup>25</sup>. The Czech Central Bank has taken steps to alleviate the mortgage market, as risks of excessive household debt are real in the event of an economic slowdown or an increase in interest rates. According to a government report, 18,000 apartments in Prague were short-term Airbnb rentals, and more than 50% were owned by firms offering hundreds of rentals of this type<sup>26</sup>.

The "Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2020" strategy channels a misinterpretation of Housing First, opting for a staircase approach and ignoring housing solutions - on the grounds that they would be detailed in the law on social housing. Ambitious legislation on social housing had been developed in 2016 by the previous government, prioritising the construction of affordable housing and access to housing for young people and families with children. It was not adopted, and the change of the majority government in 2017 made its future uncertain. Political directives have been developed, and a consensus exists on the transformative potential of investing in social housing for homeless people; but in reality,

21

2011 Population Census, Czech Statistical Office, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/home>

22

In 2015, an online questionnaire was conducted by municipalities with extended competence (MEC); 227 MEC were asked to participate, 97.4% returned a completed questionnaire. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA, 2016)

23

Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

24

Deloitte Develop Index, September 2017, <https://www2.deloitte.com/cz/en/pages/press/articles/cze-tz-volnych-novych-bytu-v-praze-pribylo-ceny-ale-dale-stoupaji.html>

25

Deloitte Property Index, 6th edition, July 2017, <https://www2.deloitte.com/ae/en/pages/real-estate/articles/ae-deloitte-property-index-2017.html>

26

<https://financialobserver.eu/recent-news/prague-residential-property-market-up-22-biggest-rise-in-europe/>

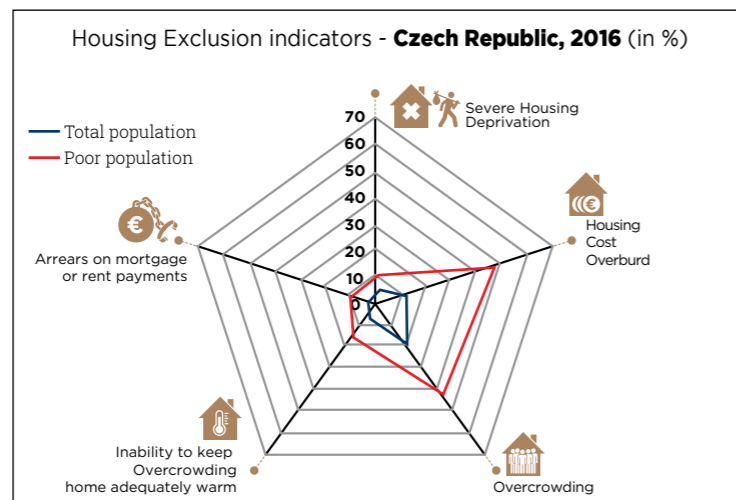
the number of affordable housing units for these people is largely insufficient.

Despite the existence, since 2003, of central government funding for the development of affordable rental housing for people in need, their use by local authorities has been limited. In addition, during the 2014-2020 funding period, although structural EU funds were heavily geared towards social housing, they have only rarely been used so far: neither the homelessness strategy nor

the social housing plan were integrated into the operational programmes, not merely because the programmes were drafted before the strategies, but also because the concept was not supported by all ministries. On the other hand, where experts have been consulted in drafting the operational programmes, the themes of social inclusion and homelessness have been integrated, e.g. the operational programme for the Prague region.

## ● Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2010 and 2016

General population				
Indicator	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Housing cost overburden rate	9.5%	45.4%	- 2%	- 8%
Total cost of housing (PPP)	404	389.2	+ 22%	+ 36%
Mortgage/rent arrears	2.4%	8.2%	- 31%	- 51%
Overcrowding	17.9%	39.5%	- 20%	- 10%
Severe housing deprivation	3%	9.9%	- 33%	- 23%
Inability to maintain adequate home temperature	3.8%	13%	- 27%	+ 16%
Young people				
Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24)	10.6%	53.7%	+ 16%	+ 11%
Overcrowding (aged 16-24)	28.4%	48.9%	- 24%	- 16%
Non-EU citizens				
	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29
Housing cost overburden rate	22.6%	13.2%	- 25%	- 62%
Overcrowding	40.7%	54.1%	+ 10%	+ 21%



**FOCUS ON...**

**Targeted affordable housing solutions for families in the Czech Republic**

The European Social Fund (ESF) is an important tool for promoting solidarity, social inclusion and for tackling poverty in Europe. The ESF can make a substantial contribution to the fight against homelessness, as can other instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). The responsibility for setting up and funding homeless services, however, lies with national, regional and local authorities.

In 2017, a Housing First project for families in the city of Brno, South Moravia, in the Czech Republic, received the EU-funded FEANTSA award for inspiring projects to eradicate homelessness. This project is an experiment which aims to demonstrate that homelessness among families - including Roma families - can be eradicated through a Housing First approach. The objective of the project is to design an action plan to enable these families to integrate into permanent housing. Brno local authority is working closely with social services targeting Roma people, IQ Roma Servis, the University of Ostrava and other local authorities. Some 50 local authority dwellings were allocated to the project by Brno local authority and five city districts. The project started with a census of homeless families in Brno: 421 families were reported homeless or facing housing exclusion. Local authority rental housing and intensive support were ran-

domly allocated to 50 of these families, and 100 families were surveyed as a control group. An assessment measures the impact of housing and support on family life, the well-being of children and the family, health, school attendance and cost-effectiveness. As of January 2018, 38 families had been living in the housing which had been allocated to them for a year, and 37 of them were able to renew their leases. Only one family had to go back to temporary accommodation. The long-term objectives of this project are to prove that homelessness among families can be eliminated in Brno by 2020, and to support the national government in moving 6,000 families living in temporary accommodation in the Czech Republic permanently out of homelessness. The project is also helping to transform the discourse on Roma families, which is essential to prevent discrimination on the housing market. This is an alternative to frequently resorting to hotel rooms where living conditions are deplorable and there are too many obstacles to moving out of homelessness. If this initiative shows positive results, which seems to be the case so far, other bodies will adopt the Housing First approach. The total budget for the project was €372,000, financed by the European Social Fund. This is an inspiring example of how EU funds can be used to foster policies to eradicate homelessness.

## ENGLAND

## ● Recent data on homelessness

In England, homelessness in all its forms has increased in recent years. Statistics from the Department for Communities and Local Governments (DCLG) show that in autumn 2016, the total number of people living on the streets in England was estimated at 4,134, an increase of 16% since autumn 2015, and 134% since autumn 2010. The number of households in temporary accommodation had also risen, from 48,330 in March 2011 to 78,170 in March 2017 (+ 62%). From 2000 to 2009, a lasting reduction in the number of people qualifying as statutory homeless<sup>27</sup> was observed. This trend has since been reversed. The DCLG statistics office announced the 2010/11 financial year to be the first year marked by an increase in the number of persons recognised as homeless (+ 10%) since 2003/04. Since then, the numbers of statutory homeless people have steadily increased each year, except in 2013/14 (-3%). In the 2016/17 financial year, 59,110 people were designated as homeless, an increase of 9% compared to 2014/15. In 2016/17, 105,240 households were threatened by homelessness and given support by local authorities so they could stay in their homes, a 63% increase since 2009/10.

According to these same statistics, homelessness among vulnerable groups in England has increased by 75% since 2010. The number of homeless households that include one person classified as vulnerable due to mental health issues increased from 3,200 in 2010 to 5,740 in 2017. Over the last seven years, the number of families with dependent children in temporary accommodation has increased from 22,950 to 40,130 (+75%), and the number of homeless households including one person with a physical disability has increased from 2,480 to 4,370 (+76%).

**Total population as of 1 January 2016:**  
55,268,000 people

**GDP/resident in 2016 (purchasing power parity)**  
**(United Kingdom): 31,300**

**Number of homeless people known:**  
**78,170 households in temporary**  
**accommodation in March 2017**

**Percentage of poor households**  
**(United Kingdom): 15.9%**

● Housing market situation  
in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom in 2016<sup>28</sup>, 63.4% of the population were homeowners (35.5% with a mortgage, 27.9% without a mortgage) and 36.6% were renters (18% at market price, 18.6% at reduced-rent prices or free).

In London, between 2010 and 2016, private rents increased by 24%, eight times the increase in average incomes over the same period; in England, the increase in private rents is three times that of average incomes (except in the North and East Midlands, where the opposite is observed)<sup>29</sup>. Rents for social housing have also grown faster than incomes since 2001<sup>30</sup>. The notion of "affordable" housing is broad: it implies a rent amount up to 80% of local market prices. It was defined in 2011 by the UK Government, authorising social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) to set rent prices according to this definition; in 2014-15, new "affordable" housing tenants in London paid on average 60% more than new tenants in traditional social housing<sup>31</sup>. It is important to keep in mind that regional disparities in housing markets in England are becoming increasingly significant, particularly when comparing the situation in London and some areas of the south-east with the north-east and north-west of the country.

27

The "statutory" homeless are those to whom local authorities have a "statutory duty" to provide housing assistance because they are considered to be eligible, involuntarily homeless and fall into one of the groups characterised as having "priority needs". To find out more: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions#statutory-homelessness>

28

Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

29

National Audit Office (2017), *Homelessness in England*, <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>

30

National Audit Office (2016), *Housing in England: Overview*, <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/housing-in-england-overview/>

31

Ibid.

32

DCLG Housing Statistics, Table 104, Live Tables on Housing Stock, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

33

DCLG Social Housing Sales Live Tables, Table 671, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

34

Joseph Roundtree Foundation (2014), *The impact of welfare reform on social landlords and tenants*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/impact-welfare-reform-social-landlords-and-tenants>

35

National Audit Office (2017), *Op. Cit.*

36

This form of lease is the standard rental contract in England leading to a rental insecurity which is unique in Europe. In addition, recent changes in legislation have allowed local authorities to offload their obligation to house homeless households in the private rental sector, exposing these households to significant rental insecurity.

37

Ibid.

38

"Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years, driven by several factors. Despite this, government has not evaluated the impact of its reforms on this issue, and there remain gaps in its approach. It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with its light touch approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem. Its recent performance in reducing homelessness therefore cannot be considered value for money". Amyas Morse, Head of the National Audit Office, 13 September 2017

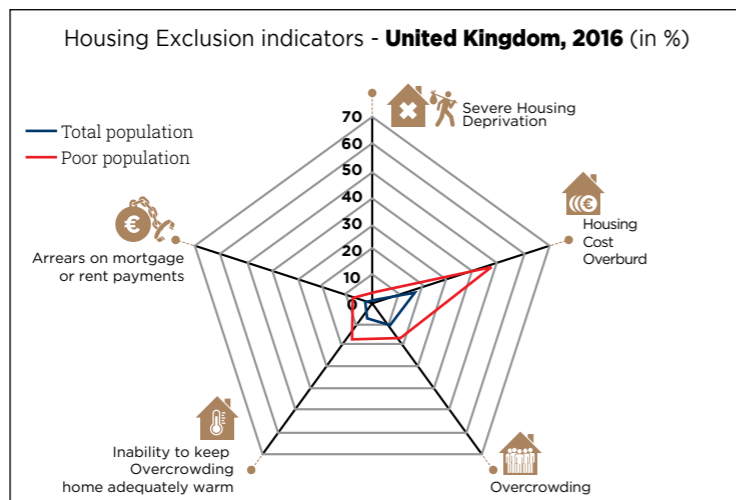
The chronic lack of affordable housing in England is the result of various factors. Housing construction has not kept pace with the increase in demand since the 1980s, especially in London; the construction of public housing has fallen, and that of private housing has been impacted by various economic recessions. Recent years have seen a sharp rise in private rental housing (+ 80% between 2003 and 2014), an increase in social rental housing belonging to housing associations (+ 42%), a stagnation of owner-occupied housing (+0.3%) and a reduction in social rented housing owned by local authorities (-32%)<sup>32</sup>. This is largely due to the liberalisation policy of the public rental market via the "Right to buy", initiated in the 1980s: from 1980 to 2013 in England, 1.87 million public housing units were sold to their tenants<sup>33</sup>. The successive reforms of the social system (bedroom tax, social security, Universal Credit, which replaces several allowances with a single payment per month, ceilings for housing subsidies, etc.<sup>34</sup>) have led to an increase in the pressure of housing costs on the budget of the most vulnerable households. Lease expiries in the private sector have become the number one cause of statutory homelessness in England<sup>35</sup>. The proportion of households accepted as homeless by local authorities as a result of the end of an insecure rental lease (assured shorthold tenancy)<sup>36</sup> increased from 11% in 2009/10 to 32% in 2016/17. In London, this proportion also increased over the same period from 10% to 39%. In England, the end of such a lease is the reason for the 74% increase in households eligible for temporary housing since 2009/10. Prior to this increase, homelessness was driven by other causes, including personal factors such as a family breakdown or parents who were unable or unwilling to house their children in their own home<sup>37</sup>. The end of the private lease is therefore the main cause of the increase in homelessness since 2010.

In England, the government's total spending on housing is estimated at around £28 billion for 2015-16, the most expensive component being housing benefits: that same year, 4.1 million beneficiaries were counted, the equivalent of around £20.9 billion. The National Audit Office, in its 2017 report on homelessness, criticised the Department for Communities and Local Government (which deals with the issue of homelessness) for its "light touch" approach in this area: "It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with its light touch approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem. Its recent performance in reducing homelessness cannot therefore be considered value for money. [...]"<sup>38</sup>.



● Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2012 and 2016

General population				
Indicator	2016		Change 2012-2016	
	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Housing cost overburden rate	12.3%	42.4%	+ 68%	+ 63%
Total cost of housing (PPP)	588.5	542.6	+ 27%	+ 45%
Mortgage/rent arrears	3.4%	7.2%	0%	0%
Overcrowding	8%	14.4%	+ 14%	+ 5%
Severe housing deprivation	2.2%	4%	+ 10%	- 5%
Inability to maintain adequate home temperature	6.1%	14.2%	- 25%	- 26%
Young people				
Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24)	19%	50.2%	+ 52%	+ 32%
Overcrowding (aged 16-24)	13.7%	22.9%	- 2%	- 14%
Non-EU citizens				
	2016		Change 2012-2016	
	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29
Housing cost overburden rate	28.9%	32.6%	+ 50%	+ 10%
Overcrowding	19.6%	20%	+ 31%	+ 30%



FOCUS ON...

**Criminalisation of mobile EU citizens in precarious situations in England**

In November 2016, the UK adopted the [new European Economic Area 2016 regulations](#) which entered into force on 1 February 2017. They redrafted the 2006 regulations and transposed to national level the rules of Directive 2004/38/EC on the rights of EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. At the same time as this entry into force, the UK Home Office published a Guide providing instructions on the administrative deportation of EU citizens and their family members. According to this first version of the Guide - it was amended in December 2017 - sleeping rough was considered an abuse of the right of residence, which led to the possibility of expelling EU nationals or members of their homeless family. These expulsions could be carried out even if the persons concerned had been in the United Kingdom for less than three months. Deported persons were also subject to entry restrictions for 12 months after their deportation or voluntary departure. FEANTSA lodged a complaint with the European Commission against the United Kingdom claiming that the Home Office did not comply with EU law.

The adoption of this legislation formalised a practice of deportation [that goes back several years](#). This allowed the authorities to substantially increase the number of people deported. [Government statistics](#) show that in the first

three months of 2017, the number of forced deportations of EU citizens increased by 26% compared to the same period the previous year. Between September 2016 and September 2017, more than [5,000 EU citizens](#) were returned to their country of origin.

Among the homeless people detained and facing deportation, claims on behalf of three EU citizens were brought by the Public Interest Law Unit and North East London Migrant Action (NELMA). On 14 December 2017, the United Kingdom Supreme Court ordered the government to stop deporting homeless EU citizens, after ruling that its controversial policy referring to sleeping rough as an abuse of treaty rights, was illegal. This decision held that it was contrary to EU law for the Home Office to define sleeping rough as an abuse of the right to freedom of movement. It also claimed that the policy in question was discriminatory and amounted to a systematic illegal verification of the residence rights of EU nationals. This decision is in line with [Commissioner Jourová's recent statements](#), which had ensured that homelessness did not affect the right of an EU citizen to live in another Member State. Following the Supreme Court decision, the Home Office published a revised version of the Guide, in which any reference to homelessness as an abuse of treaty rights was deleted.

# SWEDEN

## Recent data on homelessness

National data on homelessness are collected every six years, during one week in April, by the National Council for Health and Social Protection. The definition of homelessness on which the survey is based is broad and detailed, covering most of the operational categories of the ETHOS typology, including persons living with family or friends, persons leaving institutions and people privately subletting for less than three months<sup>39</sup>.

In 2017, 33,000 homeless people were counted during the survey week. Data collection does not take into account mobile EU citizens, undocumented people and unaccompanied minors. In 2011, the same survey counted 34,000 homeless people. This apparent drop must be treated with circumspection: 18% of local authorities did not respond to the 2017 survey. On the other hand, it can be observed that the profiles of homeless people have changed in recent years as more and more parents with minor children find themselves in a critical homeless situation, and while the majority of homeless are men, the proportion of women is increasing. In Malmö, families with children accounted for 10% of the homeless population in 2009; in 2016, this rate was 34%<sup>40</sup>.

## Housing market situation in Sweden

In the 2017 Country Specific Recommendation for Sweden (CSR), the Council of the European Union issued a warning about the lack of affordable housing: "Sweden has experienced rapid and persistent house price growth since the mid-1990s. [...] Key drivers include generous tax treatment of home ownership and mortgage debt, accommodative credit conditions coupled with relatively low mortgage amortisation rates, and an ongoing supply shortage. This shortage is related to structural inefficiencies in the housing market.

Total population as of 1 January 2016:  
9,851,017 people

GDP/resident in 2016  
(purchasing power parity): 36,000

Number of homeless people known:  
33,000 in 1 week in 2017

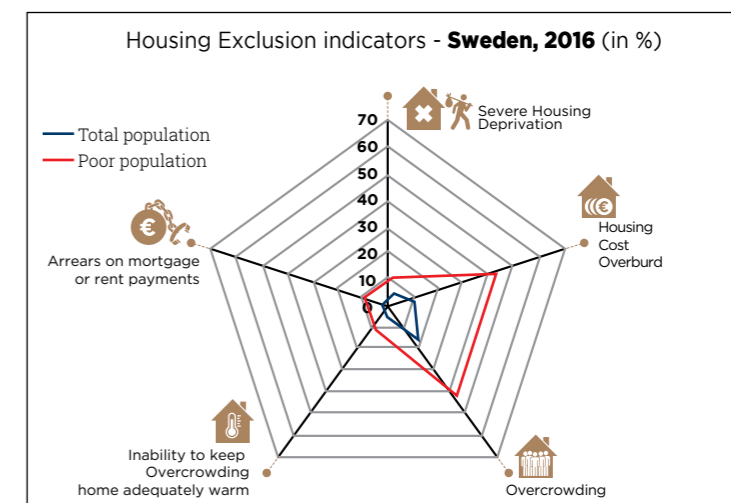
Percentage of poor households: 16.2%

Housing construction has continued to increase but remains insufficient to address the sharply rising housing demand. The authorities have put forward a 22-point plan in respect of the housing market tackling certain factors which underlie the housing shortage. It includes increasing land available for development, reducing construction costs and shortening planning permission times. This shortage is linked to structural inefficiencies in the housing market, including limited competition in the construction sector. There are also barriers to efficient usage of the existing housing stock. [...] The shortage of available and affordable can also hamper labour mobility, as well as the successful integration of migrants in this market, and can contribute to intergenerational inequality<sup>41</sup>. Construction costs in Sweden are the highest in Europe. Low-income households and people in insecure jobs are particularly affected by the lack of affordable housing. The already high levels of household debt have increased further: an increase of 7.1% in 2016, close to 86% of GDP, and representing about 180% of disposable income.

In 2016<sup>42</sup>, 65.2% of the Swedish population were homeowners (54.8% with a mortgage, 29.8% without a mortgage) and 34.8% were renters (34% at market price, 0.8% at a lower price or free).

## Key statistics to housing exclusion and changes between 2010 and 2016

General population				
Indicator	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
Housing cost overburden rate	8.5%	38.7%	+ 31%	- 2%
Total cost of housing (PPP)	527.3	483.9	+ 12%	+ 19%
Mortgage/rent arrears	2.3%	8.3%	0%	+ 22%
Overcrowding	14.4%	41.3%	+ 30%	+ 38%
Severe housing deprivation	2.7%	6.8%	+ 69%	+ 51%
Inability to maintain adequate home temperature	2.6%	4.6%	+ 53%	+ 7%
Young people				
Housing cost overburden rate (aged 18-24)	18.4%	54.3%	+ 8%	- 2%
Overcrowding (aged 16-24)	30.4%	57.2%	+ 5%	+ 11%
Non-EU citizens				
	2016		Change 2010-2016	
	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29	Aged 18+	Aged 16-29
Housing cost overburden rate	21.4%	25.6%	+ 39%	+ 90%
Overcrowding	48.4%	59.2%	+ 66%	+ 52%



39 See FEANTSA's country profile for Sweden for more information. <http://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-sweden?hcParent=27>

40 European Observatory on Homelessness (2017), Family Homelessness in Europe, EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness, No. 7. [http://www.feantsa-research.org/download/feantsa-studies\\_07\\_web33861275400\\_64828685.pdf](http://www.feantsa-research.org/download/feantsa-studies_07_web33861275400_64828685.pdf)

41 2017 European Semester, Country Specific Recommendation / Council Recommendation - Sweden. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations_fr)

42 Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016.

## FOCUS ON...

**The rise in homelessness among children and families in Sweden**

In May 2017, a report entitled *Save the Children Sweden – A place to call home: Families with children in the shadow of the housing crisis* – sounded the alarm about how a growing number of families with children in Sweden are facing housing exclusion. The report discusses the causes and consequences of this shift in profile among people facing housing exclusion and homelessness.

Despite the Swedish government acknowledging the fact that every child has the right to adequate living conditions, the number of children living in emergency shelters has increased by more than 60% in the last six years. During one week in April 2017, at least 1,480 households with children were temporarily housed in homeless shelters, camps or other inappropriate facilities according to the standards established by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). In total, during the same month, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare estimates that there were between 10,500 and 15,000 homeless children in Sweden. The majority of these children were in long-term temporary accommodation and some lived as tenants with at least one parent. About 10,000 other children had a parent who was homeless, but did not live with that parent. More and more children and mothers who are victims of domestic violence are excluded from the housing market after spending time in women's refuges or homeless shelters. Homelessness is also on the rise among newly arrived families, where parents are still settling in or have temporary jobs. These may include families who initially stayed with relatives or friends, or families who had a short-term lease when housed by the local authority. It is also important to remember that homeless statistics among families in Sweden are limited to families known to social services or charities. Many homeless families are not entitled to any help and are therefore not always known to the authorities.

Homeless families who receive help from social services are often placed in different types of temporary accommodation such as hotels, apartments rented by social services, hostels, flatshares or camps. There are also those, known to social services, who live temporarily with friends or relatives. Some local authorities apply principles of conditionality to accommodation; it is not unusual for families with young children to be evicted from emergency shelters if social services consider that these households have not been sufficiently active in their search for housing. Appeals can be lodged, but they are often rejected by social services. If claims are instigated, the process can take months during which the families concerned have no home. When their financial situation allows, most families rent a room or apartment on the ever-expanding black market. This increases the risk of having to move often, not having a permanent address, and not being able to benefit from social security benefits or housing allowances. It also reinforces the vulnerability of these families who may end up in temporary, overcrowded and inadequate housing.

The report by Save The Children Sweden highlights the risk of eroding the trust of children who are homeless or facing housing exclusion in an adult world and in social institutions, which could have dramatic consequences for their future. The report shows that the groups of children who are at highest risk of growing up in poverty and homeless are children of single mothers and children of parents born in non-EU countries. Inadequate or unsanitary housing has an impact on the physical health, well-being and development of children: lack of privacy, excessive stimulation and interaction, risk of family conflict, uncertainty, lack of continuity and routine at school, which causes many physical and mental disorders, anxiety, sleep disorders, concentration problems, and the symptoms of stress and trauma.



# CHAPTER 3

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# HOUSING RIGHTS IN EUROPE

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This year saw a widening gap between the housing rights guaranteed by international and European legal texts and the reality as experienced at national and local level. Breaches of housing rights vary in type and intensity: from the harsh reality of people sleeping rough to difficulties accessing affordable housing. Situations such as discrimination based on administrative status are also common. As has been said in other parts of this report, a wider section of the population than before are being affected by the problem of access to housing due to the financial crisis. This chapter will look at the right to housing in Europe in 2017. While international and European instruments are trying to develop housing rights, Member States continue to disregard them. International and European institutions must be tougher with those States that do not respect their obligations. This chapter also presents several recent developments relating to the implementation of the right to housing for undocumented migrants and the criminalisation of homeless people in Europe. Lastly, we look at the vital role of strategic litigation against austerity measures in holding Member States and EU institutions accountable for the failure to enforce social rights.

# 1. LEGAL TOOLS FOR PROTECTING HOUSING RIGHTS



## THE UN'S SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON ADEQUATE HOUSING, AN INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

1 UN International Standards: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/InternationalStandards.aspx>

2 Report on homelessness and adequate housing: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/54](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/54)

3 The Shift: from housing as a commodity to housing as home and a human right: <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/news/shift-housing-commodity-housing-home-and-human-right>

4 Report on financialization of housing: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/51](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/51)

5 Report on the right to housing for persons with disabilities: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/72/128](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/72/128)

6 Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. Mission to Portugal: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/51/Add.2](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/51/Add.2)

The Special Rapporteur has been a constant reminder to States of their international obligations<sup>1</sup> in relation to the right to housing. Concerned by the gap between current standards regarding the right to housing and the reality, the Special Rapporteur focuses on concrete obligations that can be implemented, including measuring progress, and that are useful for those advocating for housing rights on the ground.

In her 2015 report on homelessness and adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, she called for States to commit to **eradicating homelessness by 2030**, in line with the **Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>2</sup>.

In November 2016, The Special Rapporteur launched a worldwide campaign called **Make the Shift**<sup>3</sup>. "The Shift" calls for us to see housing as a human right and a social good, rather than a commodity. It calls for an end to the financialization of housing and condemns forced evictions and displacement without alternative housing. In 2017 she focused on the **financialization of housing**<sup>4</sup>, exploring its detrimental impact on human rights and on the right to housing. She called for governments to ensure markets serve housing needs rather than financial priorities.

The Special Rapporteur calls for special attention to be paid to the most **vulnerable populations**, e.g. in her report on the right to housing of persons with disabilities<sup>5</sup>. Persons with disabilities are commonly homeless and subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment. They may endure isolation, stigmatisation and discrimination in all aspects of housing, including access, design, policy development and implementation. Her report concludes with recommendations to States, including the prioritisation and recognition in domestic law for people with disabilities' right to housing to be respected as far as resources allow.

In committing to the **Sustainable Development Goals**, governments worldwide undertook to ensure **access to adequate, secure and affordable housing for all by 2030**. To meet this ambitious pledge, governments will have to design **housing strategies based on human rights**. The Special Rapporteur's next report will focus precisely on human rights-based housing strategies and she will provide guidance on how to design and implement them in an effective way. Considering the scale and depth of homelessness and inadequate housing, it is no longer reasonable for governments to treat these realities as simple policy failures.

Her reports are useful for civil society organisations advocating for housing rights, setting out clear obligations for States: where they are failing and how can they do better. Apart from her reports, she also makes visits which could potentially have an impact in advancing housing rights in Europe, e.g. her recent mission to Portugal, which she has visited as part of her mandate.<sup>6</sup>

The Special Rapporteur welcomed **Canada's decision to recognise the right to housing** in a new national housing strategy<sup>7</sup>. This strategy is ambitious in scope, with significant resources committed to it over a ten-year period, providing a broad range of programmes. It recognises the continuum of housing disadvantage while focusing on particularly vulnerable groups, and aims to address issues including homelessness, housing affordability, inadequate housing, and the insufficient supply of social housing stock.

7

Canada National Housing Strategy: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/pdfs/Canada-National-Housing-Strategy.pdf>

8

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

9

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=F%2fC.12%2fNL.D%2fCO%2f6&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=F%2fC.12%2fNL.D%2fCO%2f6&Lang=en)

10

M.B.D. and others v. Spain, 20 June 2017: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=F/C.12/61/D/5/2015&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=F/C.12/61/D/5/2015&Lang=en)

11

Civil society monitoring group created: <http://observers.ohchr.org/en/monitoring-group-escr-committee-decision-against-spain-created>

12

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

## THE ROLE OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

All States party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>8</sup> are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how these rights are being implemented. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the relevant State. This year, for example, in the Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Netherlands<sup>9</sup> the UN Committee urged this country to **investigate the root causes of homelessness** and recommended that they **take all necessary measures including securing affordable social housing** in particular for marginalised and disadvantaged people, and allocate appropriate funds to local authorities. **The participation of civil society** in this process is particularly relevant. **A similar report by Dutch NGOs** played a substantial role in the final content of these findings.

The Committee has a significant role via **the system of individual complaints** that introduced the **Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. In a

recent decision, **M.B.D. and others v. Spain**<sup>10</sup>, M.B. and N.B. and their children were evicted from the home they had rented in Madrid, on 3 October 2013, after their lease contract expired. Spain was going through a severe economic crisis with high levels of unemployment at that time, which ended up affecting the family. They were evicted without being offered adequate alternative accommodation. The Committee ruled that Spain had violated the right to housing. It recognises the onus on the State to protect the right to adequate housing, and this applies equally to tenants. The Committee urged Spain to take all necessary measures to help the family obtain adequate housing as well as paying compensation. Spain was also asked to implement a comprehensive plan to guarantee the right to adequate housing for people with low incomes. **A civil society monitoring group**<sup>11</sup> has been created to make sure the Spanish State complies with international obligations and responds to the Committee. The objective of this monitoring group is informative, to disseminate the content of the decision, but also to condemn any violation of human rights, and to urge the authorities to pay heed to the recommendations put forward by the United Nations.



## COUNCIL OF EUROPE THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PROPORTIONALITY ASSESSMENT IN EVICTIONS

Although not explicitly included in the **European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**<sup>12</sup>, the right to housing is enshrined in numerous existing articles relating to the fight against homelessness and housing exclusion: the right to life, the prohibition

of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to respect for private and family life, to mention but a few.

The European Court of Human Rights has created the most advanced corpus of case law that defines the right to housing. The ECHR has established, for instance, that any person at risk of losing one's home should be able to have the proportionality and **reasonableness** of the measure determined by an independent tribunal in light of the relevant principles under of the European Convention of Human Rights (Art. 8).

In the **Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria**<sup>13</sup> and **Winterstein and Others v. France**<sup>14</sup> the ECHR ruled that particular attention had to be paid to the consequences of evicting members of the Roma community from their homes and the risk of homelessness, having regard to how long the parties, their families, and the communities they had formed had been living there.

In March 2017 the **Bagdonavicius and Others v. Russia**<sup>15</sup> case ended. The Court stressed the need for rehousing in the case of forced evictions of the Roma and Traveller community. The Court found that the applicants had suffered a violation of their right to respect for private life, family life, and a home (Article 8) as the applicants had not benefited from **an examination of proportionality of the interference** and that the authorities had failed to conduct genuine consultations with the applicants about possible rehousing options, based on their needs and prior to their forced eviction.

A **"Keeping People in Their Homes Bill"**<sup>16</sup> was introduced in the Irish parliament on 23 February 2017. This bill would, if passed, allow Irish judges or county registrars to carry out a **proportionality assessment** in home repossession and eviction cases. Most of the content is based on ECHR and EU case law. The idea is to make repossessions without proper alternative accommodation for vulnerable people impossible on the basis of this proportionality analysis.

13

Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria (App. no 25446/06) [24.04.2012] <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-110449>

14

Winterstein and Others v. France (App. no 27013/07) [17.10.2013]: <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-126910>

15

Bagdonavicius and Others v. Russia (App no 19841/06) [06/03/2017] <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-167089>

16

Keeping People in Their Homes Bill: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=34600&&CatID=59&StartDate=01%20January%202017&OrderAscending=0>

17

The European Social Charter: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter/charter-texts>

18

Collective Complaint Mechanism: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter/collective-complaints-procedure>

19

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland (No. 110/2014) <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-110-2014-dmerits-en>

20

Press conference 23 October 2017, Dublin: <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/news/collective-complaint-ireland-has-failed-provide-adequate-housing-conditions-local-authority>

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE REVISED SOCIAL CHARTER

**The European Social Charter**<sup>17</sup> complements the European Convention on Human Rights in respect of economic and social rights. It was adopted in 1961 and revised in 1996. The Revised European Social Charter's provisions relate to housing, health, education, employment, legal and social protection, etc. Article 31 is devoted to the right to housing. Being an "à la carte" system, many countries have chosen not to ratify **Article 31**.

The 1995 Additional Protocol established the **Collective Complaint Mechanism**<sup>18</sup> which has proven valuable for advancing and clarifying housing rights as well as creating a significant corpus of jurisprudence on the obligations of States in relation to the Charter. It has certainly influenced the right to housing at national level by amending the legislation which had been the basis for the convictions. One of the most recent decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights was the **International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland**<sup>19</sup> which became public on 23 October 2017. The decision found that Ireland had failed to take sufficient and timely measures to ensure the right to adequate housing for many families living in local authority housing across the country. The Committee found Ireland to be in violation of **Article 16** of the Revised Social Charter, which protects the **right of the family to social, legal and economic protection**, including the provision of family housing. The NGOs behind the complaint held a joint press conference on 23 October 2017<sup>20</sup>.

However powerful the content of a collective complaint, for it to have an impact in changing policy, it needs to go hand in hand with political activism to convince the government to take steps to change the situation. Activists must follow closely how the government reacts and continue to put pressure on so that adequate resources and policies are put in place.

## 21

Chart of signatures and ratifications of Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/158/signatures?p\\_auth=ibHIZcO0](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/158/signatures?p_auth=ibHIZcO0)

## 22

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT&from=EN>

## 23

The European Pillar of Social Rights [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en)

## 24

Ane Aranguiz, PhD Researcher (FWO), University of Antwerp, Faculty of Law. September 2017. *What future for Housing Rights? The Potential of the European Pillar of Social Rights*. <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/content/what-future-housing-rights-potential-european-pillar-social-rights>

## 25

Opinion of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the European Union initiative to establish a European Pillar of Social Rights, December 2016. <https://rm.coe.int/16806dd0bc>

The number of countries that have ratified the Protocol<sup>21</sup> remains low so NGOs are campaigning for more widespread ratification. **In Spain**, for example, in a joint letter sent in December 2017 to the Deputy Prime Minister several Spanish NGOs (such as Caritas Española, ATD Cuarto Mundo, la Plataforma del Tercer Sector and EAPN Spain) called for full ratification of the European Social Charter and the Optional Protocol.



## THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: RIGHT TO SOCIAL AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE

The European Union has not yet ratified the European Convention on Human Rights or the Revised Social Charter. However, the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**<sup>22</sup> (CFREU) is part of EU legal rules and many articles of the EU Charter echo similar ones in the Council of Europe treaties. The preamble to the Charter includes a reminder that the rights included are not new but "*result, in particular, from (...) the Social Charters adopted by the Community and by the Council of Europe and the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Communities and of the European Court of Human Rights*".

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**<sup>23</sup>, a recent **EU policy instrument**, gives us hope of a positive change in relation to social rights in Europe. The Pillar is a major initiative by the European Commission and will provide the framework for EU social policy in years to come. After a process that began in 2015, European leaders approved

the European Pillar of Social Rights at the social summit in Gothenburg in November 2017. This non-binding declaration includes twenty major institutional principles including Principle 19 on **housing and assistance for the homeless**:

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

This provision makes use of **Article 34.3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** which recognises the right to social and housing assistance to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources.

Although the Commission's initiative was welcomed, a point of concern was that of **the legal nature of the principles**. The principles and rights enshrined in the Pillar **are not directly enforceable and non-binding**. They need to be translated into concerted action and legislation. In the case of principle 19, Member States are invited to adopt measures to support universal access to accommodation<sup>24</sup>.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe believes that the Pillar is an opportunity. However, he expressed concerns that "*while the standard-setting systems of the European Union and Council of Europe constitute a comprehensive and structured whole, the persisting inconsistencies between them could jeopardise effective enforcement of the rights that they guarantee*".<sup>25</sup> Many European stakeholders believe that the provisions of the European Social Charter should be formally incorporated into the European Pillar of Social Rights as a common benchmark.

Indeed, the proclamation states that: "*nothing in the European Pillar of Social Rights shall be inter-*

*preted as restricting or adversely affecting rights and principles as recognised, in their respective fields of application, by Union law or international law and by international agreements to which the Union or all the Member States are party, including the European Social Charter signed at Turin on 18 October 1961 (...)*"

## FREE MOVEMENT AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom adopted legislation that made sleeping rough a sufficient reason to forcibly deport EU citizens and their family members on the basis that they are "an abuse" of the right to residence.

On 15 June 2017, FEANTSA, the Migrants' Rights Network and Praxis brought a complaint before the European Commission against the UK Government legislation. These advocacy organisations believe that interpreting sleeping rough as a form of abuse of the right to residence contravenes EEA rules. This needs to be condemned at EU level to prevent measures targeting destitute mobile EU citizens being adopted by other EU Member States.

You can read more about this in the **UK Country Close-up in Chapter 2**.



## 2. CHALLENGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING RIGHTS IN EUROPE

### RIGHT TO ACCOMMODATION FOR UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

People on the move, irrespective of whether they are refugees, asylum-seekers, or migrants, are particularly vulnerable to a range of human rights violations, including violations of the right to adequate housing.

It is the EU States' duty to promote and protect the human rights of migrants. Whereas EU states must provide minimum reception conditions for asylum seekers, migrants in transit risk a range of human rights violations and do not receive the same protection.

In many countries, large parts of the homeless population are migrants. In France in particular, shelter and accommodation providers are facing growing pressure from the authorities to participate in deportation procedures. The **unconditional right to accommodation** is being questioned. On 12 December 2017, the French Government announced the introduction of a mechanism whereby mobile teams led by law enforcement have access to emergency accommodation services to check the administrative status of migrants and act. Such decisions go against the values and mission of the homelessness sector and, for this reason, a coalition of NGOs led by FEANTSA addressed a letter to the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos.

The Netherlands adopted the use of the local connection or legal residence to refuse access to accommodation, which has been questioned by different decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights such as the **Collective Complaint FEANTSA v the Netherlands**<sup>26</sup>. Municipalities

indicated in their policies criteria on which eligibility for emergency accommodation is based. In the Collective Complaint, the European Committee of Social Rights ruled that there could be no restrictions on access to emergency social services (no criteria requiring local connection or residence permits).

### CRIMINALISATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

In 2016 different UN documents and reports at national level have given the impression that things are changing in this area. We are referring to the **UN resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council** in March 2016 that contained a call for states "to take all measures necessary to eliminate legislation that criminalizes homelessness" and **The New Urban Agenda**, approved at the UN Habitat III Conference in November 2016, that called for measures to "prevent and eliminate homelessness", to "combat and eliminate its criminalization" and for "the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing."

However, cities, regions and countries across Europe continue to use the criminal and administrative justice systems to minimise the visibility of people experiencing homelessness in public spaces. Governments continue to establish formal and informal measures and enforce policies to limit where homeless people can congregate, often punishing those who try to earn a living in public spaces.

Begging bans are gaining credence amongst policy makers as a convenient way to "solve" the problems associated with homelessness and poverty. Most homeless people do not beg for money,

however, so making it illegal to beg criminalises homelessness and poverty. Criminalising homelessness opens the door for law enforcement agencies, policy makers and others to push poor people out of public spaces and to claim that homelessness has been solved. Begging bans are often the tip of an iceberg: a wide base of antisocial behaviour measures that can be used to punish or fine people in the name of disrupting public order and measures that criminalise the use of public space by people considered "undesirable" by policy makers and business owners.

A **Written Question before the European Parliament**<sup>27</sup> condemns Denmark which has enacted a law against all types of begging, following on from similar laws in Greece and Romania. Although these laws target all kinds of begging, it can constitute indirect discrimination by disproportionately affecting Roma people. The local situation worsened in Norway after a documentary<sup>28</sup> depicted the Roma as organised begging criminals. A human rights platform was set up to promote the rights of the Roma. In Sweden there is growing public debate on a proposal to ban begging. Such laws are spreading, the Commission should therefore react to these discriminations in relation to wealth, not only because this is condemned by European law, but also because it indirectly targets the Roma population, a vulnerable group that EU seek to protect.

Other worrying developments in relation to criminalisation are happening around Europe. In the United Kingdom there is growing debate about the increasing use of **Public Space Protection Orders**<sup>29</sup>. In Nottingham (UK), **anti-begging posters published by a council were banned** by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for "reinforcing negative stereotypes"<sup>30</sup>. In Italy a municipal ordinance punishing begging was withdrawn by the Council of State and the President of the Republic following a **complaint made by Avvocato di Strada**<sup>31</sup>.

**27**  
Written Question before the European Parliament: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=WQ&reference=E-2017-007376&format=XML&language=EN>

**28**  
Documentary "Lykkelandet": <http://forskning.no/innvandring-om-forskning-samfunn-kriminalitet/2017/04/fao-forsker-tigging-ikke-organisert-av-bakmenn-selv-om>

**29**  
Public Protection Orders Campaign by Liberty: <https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/campaigning/public-space-protection-orders-0>

**30**  
Nottingham anti-begging posters banned by advertising authority: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-37488612>

**31**  
Complaint made by Avvocato di Strada: <http://www.avvocatodistrada.it/non-si-multa-chiede-lelemosina-presidente-della-repubblica-accoglie-ricorso-straordinario-avvocato-strada/>

**32**  
The Homeless Bill of Rights: <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/fr/billofrights>

26

Collective Complaint FEANTSA v the Netherlands: <http://housingrightswatch.org/jurisprudence/collective-complaint-feantasa-v-netherlands-862012>



## 3. IS STRATEGIC LITIGATION AGAINST AUSTERITY MEASURES A SOLUTION?

The financial crisis has disproportionately impacted the rights of citizens, especially women, children, and vulnerable and marginalised persons. States have largely failed to address the root causes of the financial crisis, including the de-regulation of the financial sector, rising inequality and other systemic weaknesses. The bank bailouts and widespread imposition of austerity measures that followed the crisis reduced government expenditures on human rights, development and social welfare when and where they were most needed.

**The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** published "*Austerity measures and economic, social and cultural rights*"<sup>33</sup>, which affirms that States should fulfil the following criteria when adopting austerity measures in order to ensure compliance with human rights obligations: "*the existence of a compelling state interest; the necessity, reasonableness, temporariness and proportionality of the austerity measures; the exhaustion of alternative and less restrictive measures; the non-discriminatory nature of the proposed measures; the protection of a minimum core content of the rights; and the genuine participation of affected groups and individuals in decision-making processes*" (page 12).

In Europe, both the **European Court of Human Rights** (ECHR) as well as the **European Committee of Social Rights** (ECSR) had to address austerity measures and other responses to the crisis in their

decisions. The ECHR has handed down numerous judgments where the economic factor can be discerned. It grants wide discretionary powers to States when introducing austerity measures, but the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has drawn on several general principles which are used by the Court when applying and interpreting the Convention as mentioned at UN level: "*public interest*", "*necessity*", "*proportionality*", "*effectiveness*" or "*discriminatory measures*".<sup>34</sup>

Legal mobilisations against austerity policies in Europe have tried to hold Member States and EU institutions accountable for the failure to enforce social rights. Although some progress has been made, legal stakeholders recognise the restrictions the courts face in shaping policy. Experts from academia and the voluntary sector discussed this at a conference held in Brussels in September 2017 entitled "*Austerity on trial. Legal mobilisations and austerity policies in Europe*"<sup>35</sup>. The wider research project explores the cross-border movement in relation to the practice of strategic litigation. The event focused primarily on the fight against poverty against a backdrop of austerity policies.

The case of Spain was a paradigmatic shift with regard to the housing crisis. Many mortgage foreclosure cases have been brought up before the Spanish courts, and judges have used preliminary rulings before the **European Court of Justice** to determine whether national mortgage law was

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in line with EU consumer law. The **European Court of Justice in the Aziz case ruling** on March 2013<sup>36</sup> forced Spanish authorities to change the foreclosure system. The Spanish foreclosure legal system did not allow consumers to oppose abusive clauses within the procedure, and it should, on the contrary, allow judges to analyse abusive clauses and rule according to **EU Directive 13/93 of Unfair Terms in Consumers Contracts**.<sup>37</sup> In the case of residential mortgages, unfair terms are forbidden, and should therefore be eliminated from contracts.

But the legal struggle could not have had the same momentum without the support of a social movement, the PAH (*Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*) which has brought together thousands of victims of evictions/mortgage foreclosures across Spain. The PAH movement fights against mortgage foreclosures, forced evictions and abusive lending practices, and for the right to housing for all. Some of their legal strategies include a mass dissemination of judicial decisions on foreclosures procedures.

Legal mobilisations did not start with the crisis. There has been a wide range of case law in previous periods including case law emerging from the global south that can be used in severely resource-poor contexts. Austerity is a global problem and having a narrow regional focus fails to capture the real impact of the global economic recession. Legal mobilisations have not been able to stop austerity measures, and some questioned whether it was worth squandering so much talent and resources that could be used to sustain the activist political movement.

A critical issue is access to the courts. Often, the more vulnerable people, i.e. homeless people, cannot access the courts. There is a need for

professionals, judges and lawyers to receive more training on international and European obligations and how they can be applied at national and local level.

Furthermore, key players such as the IMF and the ECB have a relative "immunity" which reduces the impact of strategic litigation. The role of the ECB in austerity agreements with States as well as its instructions to national central banks regarding repossessions have a clear impact on housing rights. We need to ensure that all EU institutions, including the ECB, comply with their human rights obligations

# APPENDIX

## RECENT DATA ON HOMELESSNESS IN EU COUNTRIES

These data are neither comparable nor exhaustive. For more information on methodologies, country-specific definitions tracking the number of homeless people and data sources, refer to the first chapter of the 2017 edition of this report: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2017/03/21/the-se->

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MEMBER STATE	OFFICIAL STATISTICS	SOURCE(S)	PERIOD CONCERNED
Germany	An estimated 860,000 homeless people. An estimated increase of 150% between 2014 and 2016, explained by the inclusion of refugees for the first time in the estimates. Excluding refugees, the number of homeless people increased by 25% between 2014 and 2016, from 335,000 to 420,000	BAG W <sup>1</sup>	Year 2016
Austria	15,090 people experiencing homelessness. 3,691 people more than in 2008. Increase of 32% between 2008 and 2016.	Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs <sup>2</sup>	Year 2016
Belgium	Brussels: 3,386 homeless people counted in one night (8 out of 13 categories of the ETHOS typology). Increase of 96% between 2008 and 2016.	La Strada <sup>3</sup>	1 night in November 2016
Denmark	6,635 homeless people (majority of categories of ETHOS typology). Increase of 8% between 2015 and 2017.	The Danish National Centre for Social Research <sup>4</sup>	1 week in 2017
Spain	An average of 16,437 people were admitted to emergency shelters per day. Increase of 20.5% between 2014 and 2016.	Spanish National Institute of Statistics <sup>5</sup>	Year 2016
Finland	6,644 individuals and 325 homeless families, of which 5,455 live with friends or relatives and 425 sleeping rough or in emergency shelters. 18% decrease in long-term homelessness between 2009 and 2016.	The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) <sup>6</sup>	1 night in November 2016
France	20 845 people made calls to the 115 emergency hotline between June 10th and July 10th 2017. +17% in one year (+23% families). <i>The study concerned 41 departments (out of 101 departments of France).</i>	Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité, Barometer of 115 emergency calls <sup>7</sup>	1 month June-July 2017
Greece	Attica province (including Athens): Estimated number of people sleeping rough: 17,000 Estimation of the number of homeless people according to the ETHOS typology: 500,000.	INE Observatory <sup>8</sup>	Year 2015

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Hungary	10,206 people identified as homeless, sleeping rough or in emergency shelters.	Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy (BMSZKI) <sup>9</sup>	1 night in February 2016
Ireland	8,857 people in emergency accommodation managed by the State (including 1,530 families/5,524 adults and 3,333 children). Between November 2014 and November 2017, 145% increase in the number of homeless people, 286% in the number of homeless families and 276% in the number of homeless children.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government <sup>10</sup>	November 2017
Italy	50,724 people requested basic assistance (showing facilities, food, shelter) in one of the 768 service providers in the 158 cities concerned. Increase of 6% between 2011 and 2014.	ISTAT <sup>11</sup>	1 month between November and December 2014
Lithuania	4,569 homeless people (emergency shelters, temporary accommodation). 16.2% increase in the number of people in temporary accommodation between 2015 and 2016.	Statistics Lithuania <sup>12</sup>	1 night in 2016
Luxembourg	2,763 people housed in the accommodation facilities of the 20 adult care services in the Greater Region of Luxembourg. Increase of 107% between 2012 and 2017.	Luxembourg Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region <sup>13</sup>	1 day in March 2017
The Netherlands	60,120 people accommodated by emergency services in 2016. Increase of 11% between 2011 and 2016.	Federatie Opvang <sup>14</sup>	Year 2016
Poland	33,408 homeless people, including 6,508 who were sleeping rough and 26,900 in emergency shelters.	Polish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy <sup>15</sup>	1 night in February 2017
Czech Republic	Estimated number of homeless people: 68,500. Estimated number of people at risk of losing their home: 119,000.	Federatie Opvang <sup>16</sup>	Year 2016
United Kingdom	England: 4,751 people sleeping rough (increase of 169% between 2010 and 2017, of 15% between 2016 and 2017). 78,170 households in temporary accommodation (increase of 62% between 2011 and 2017). Northern Ireland: 18,628 households "registered" as homeless (Reduction of 5% between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016). Scotland: 17,797 requests for assistance for homeless people (2% increase over the same period in 2016) 10,899 households in temporary accommodation (1% increase between 2011 and 2016)	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) <sup>17</sup>	One night in autumn 2017 March 2017
Sweden	Wales: 7,128 households considered to be at risk of homelessness in 56 days. 6,891 recognised as homeless. 33,250 homeless people (majority of categories of the ETHOS typology), including 5,935 homeless people sleeping rough or in emergency shelters.	Department for Communities <sup>18</sup> Scottish Statistics <sup>19</sup> Welsh Government <sup>20</sup> Ministry for Health and Social Affairs <sup>21</sup>	Year 2015-2016 6 months between April and September 2017 30 September 2017 Year 2015-2016 1 week in 2017

# APPENDIX 2

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this report were collected from the sources listed below, in particular from:

- interviews with and information exchange with national and local FEANTSA members
- Official publications by FEANTSA, Foundation Abbé Pierre and the European Observatory on Homelessness
- Eurostat/EU-SILC 2016 Database

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# HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE: THE KEY STATISTICS

219 907 500

100%

**HOUSEHOLDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

A HOUSEHOLD COMPRISES ALL OCCUPANTS OF THE SAME DWELLING.  
THE POPULATION OF EUROPE STOOD AT 510,2 MILLION PEOPLE ON 1 JANUARY 2016.

24 409 732

**HOUSEHOLDS OVERBURDENED BY HOUSING COSTS**

MORE THAN 40% OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS

11.1%

36 944 460

16.8%

**HOUSEHOLDS LIVING  
IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS**

10 945 645

**HOUSEHOLDS FACING SEVERE  
HOUSING DEPRIVATION**

4.8%

**NUMBER UNKNOWN  
HOMELESS**

7 696 762

3.5%

**HOUSEHOLDS IN ARREARS  
ON THEIR RENT  
OR MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS**

19 131 952

**HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY  
IN MAINTAINING ADEQUATE  
TEMPERATURES IN HOUSING**

8.7%

33 865 755

15.4%

**HOUSEHOLDS LIVING  
IN DAMP CONDITIONS**

30 787 050

**HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN HOUSING SITUATED  
IN AN ESPECIALLY POLLUTED AREA**

SMOKE, DUST, UNPLEASANT ODOURS  
OR WATER POLLUTION ON A REGULAR BASIS.

14.2%

%

PERCENTAGE  
OF THE EUROPEAN  
POPULATION

**A HOUSEHOLD**  
CONSTITUTES ALL  
THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE SAME  
DWELLING.  
THE FIGURES  
CANNOT BE SIMPLY  
ADDED TOGETHER  
BECAUSE A SINGLE  
HOUSEHOLD MAY  
BE AFFECTED  
BY SEVERAL  
HOUSING  
DIFFICULTIES.

SOURCE: EUROSTAT,  
2016 DATA

Photo credits: Kamira,  
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The former editions of this report sounded the alarm regarding the current rise in housing exclusion and homelessness in Europe. National and European data on housing exclusion show that whilst housing quality tends to improve around Europe, the continued increase in housing costs is putting more and more pressure on households. The most vulnerable households are those on the front line: housing inequalities have been increasing between 2010 and 2016.

All European energy and efforts need to focus on the **other Europe**, the growing number of people facing homelessness and housing exclusion, the face of which is changing as it includes a larger and larger section of the population. This report is a call to action for local, national and European authorities. It provides a sound basis on which to proceed, introducing policy orientations and pitfalls to be avoided in developing strategies to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. On the one hand, throughout the years, evidence showing the inadequacy and inefficiency of managing homelessness as an emergency has been building up. On the other hand, expertise, skills and experimentation of other approaches have been developing, for instance on prevention and housing first. This creates scope for the exchange of good practices. Integrated strategies, **moving from managing homelessness to progressively ending it**, have been proved to work, notably in **Finland**. An analysis of the implementation of housing rights in Europe in 2017, included in the report, reveals the growing gap between housing rights as guaranteed by European and international treaties and the reality in local and national contexts.

**It's through the mobilisation of a strong legal basis, political will and strategic planning that the objective of ending homelessness and successfully fighting housing exclusion will stop being a fantasy and become a human dignity imperative and proof of the European social project's credibility.**



FEANTSA

Feantsa  
194, Chaussée de Louvain  
1210 Brussels – Belgium  
Tel. : +32 (0)2 538 66 69  
[www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)



Fondation Abbé Pierre  
3-5 rue de Romainville  
75019 Paris – France  
Tel. : +33 (0)1 55 56 37 00  
[www.fondation-abbé-pierre.fr](http://www.fondation-abbé-pierre.fr)

