

## habitact news

### **HABITACT Peer Review 2016**

It will take place in Barcelona, Spain, in October-November this year. We hope to have a specific date to send you shortly so that you can pencil it in your calendars! Barcelona local council has a comprehensive local policy to reduce homelessness, and they are also testing Housing First. This peer review will be an opportunity to take a closer look at all this. Who knows, there could even be a more political outcome with a Joint Declaration of European Mayors on the same occasion. If you think your Mayor would be interested, please get in touch so that we can start assessing the potential of this idea. [info@habitact.eu](mailto:info@habitact.eu)

### **Next HABITACT meeting as part of FEANTSA annual conference hotspots – Brussels, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016 (save the date!)**

The programme for this large annual European event is now online and conference registrations are open. As in previous years, a networking hotspot will be dedicated to HABITACT and the work/challenges of local authorities. The hotspot will take place from 17h30-19h00 on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June at the conference venue. Local policy-makers from Brussels and Ghent will briefly introduce their approaches to tackling homelessness, followed by wider discussions on emerging challenges for local authorities across Europe, and suggestions of key priorities to concentrate on in the future. As always, core members of HABITACT have access to free conference entries (no registration fee) for two city delegates.

### **Review of online HABITACT policy-bank**

Our online [policy bank](#) will be reviewed over the next few months, so please send us any updates on your policies, services, new policy-makers, etc: [info@habitact.eu](mailto:info@habitact.eu)



## local news

### Germany opens its first major shelter for LGBT refugees

In Berlin it is estimated for there to be around 3,500 LGBT refugees. The newly opened centre will be able to accommodate about 140 people. The reason behind opening this shelter is that some refugees have asked the LGBT consultancy Schwulenberatung Berlin for help, as they were having difficulty residing in regular refugee shelters. As reported, before they moved into the new centre, they were facing physical threat and abuse at regular shelters. The majority of abuse cases are unreported as the LGBT refugees fear that by approaching the police their asylum applications would be rejected. The shelter aims to act as a safe haven for the LGBT refugees. It also aims to offer German language and integration courses to ease their process of integration into the German society and LGBT community. Click [here](#) to read the full article.

### Ministers consider 'prevention duty' for councils in response to the homelessness crisis

In response to the homelessness crisis in England, ministers are considering making changes to the law. Making these amendments would make prevention a legal duty, in turn aiding the growing number of homeless people in various ways. For example, anyone at risk of homelessness would get support and advice, even if they are not seen as a priority under the existing laws. Under the existing laws, citizens who do not qualify for priority help, including single people and people who are members of certain vulnerable groups, are not given any significant aid. The practical help that would be provided would aid the citizens at risk of homelessness to not lose their tenancy, and also it would help them to find new accommodation. Additionally, they would receive advice on finding employment and on ways to deal with their debt. Click [here](#) to read more.

### A census to find the number of homeless people will be launched in Catalonia

Several municipalities in Catalonia will be conducting a census in the upcoming months to calculate the number of homeless people living in their cities. Finding the exact figures will be the first step in developing strategies and policies to tackle homelessness in Catalonia. The first city that will conduct the census is Lleida in April, and Barcelona will follow in May. The last time Barcelona and Lleida held a census was in 2008. Arrels Fundació has offered to share their expertise in conducting a census to the municipalities. In these different cities they aim to use a common methodology, in order to get an overview of the homeless situation in the whole of Catalonia. Click [here](#) to read more in Spanish.

### Success of Housing First in Flanders

There are about 5,500 homeless people in Flanders, out of which 37% have been homeless for more than a year. Given that housing is a basic right, Housing First solutions move away from providing temporary shelter and instead provide a permanent home. This solution is seen as one that provides privacy, security, and also one that gives its users determination to better themselves so that they can keep their home. In this Flemish initiative the tenants were able to choose their own home, neighbourhood and type of housing. They were also told to set their own goals, and the means by which they will achieve them. Once provided with a home, the new renters experienced full stability and after a year had passed, they were still living in their homes. This initiative helped the new renters have stable employment. It also helped in the improvement of their mental health. Since the start of Housing First, homelessness in various Flemish cities has noticeably improved. Click [here](#) to read more about this initiative in Dutch.

### Gothenburg will be holding an event to combat homelessness

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 the city of Gothenburg will be holding its event entitled: "Inspiration day of Gothenburg's efforts to combat homelessness". It will be a day filled with seminars, exhibitions, a forum for networking, discussions, and conversations with a focus on homelessness and housing. The day's objective is to highlight homelessness in the city of Gothenburg, and to provide a platform to inspire those working in the field to continue their efforts to combat homelessness. The city is partnering with Göteborg City mission, Gothenburg Rescue mission, and the newspaper Faktum to hold the event. The municipality of Gothenburg sees that it is their responsibility to supply housing and social services to its homeless citizens. Their efforts to combat homelessness also includes efforts to further integrate the homeless, facilitate their access to the labour market, and to provide them with adequate health care. This event will be part of the City Council's adopted strategy "the Gothenburg urban strategy and plan on homelessness by 2015-2018"; which aims to provide tools to reduce homelessness. See programme [here](#).



## news from europe

### Public consultation launched on the development of a European Social Rights pillar

Check out the "First preliminary outline of a European Pillar of Social Rights" p.18 on Housing. There is a reference to the following: "b. Shelter shall be provided to those that are homeless, and shall be linked up to other social services in order to promote social integration." This Social Pillar is meant to become the reference framework to screen the employment and social performance of participating EU Member States, and to drive the process of reforms at national level. If you want the European Union to firm up this proposed commitment on homelessness in the future, you can take part in the public consultation. No rush though - you have till the end of the year to answer! More [here](#)

### FEANTSA annual European policy conference registrations open!

The Belgian Public Planning Service for Social Integration and FEANTSA have decided to co-organise a European conference this year centred on the European consensus on homelessness reached in 2010, and to reinterpret and re-evaluate this consensus in light of new emerging challenges for Europe: increasing poverty, economic pressure on Eurozone and other countries, waves of refugees arriving from further afield, and more. On 9-10 June 2016, we are bringing together 300+ homelessness practitioners from across Europe and beyond. This is the only European event of its kind, and it will take place this year in the city of Brussels, Belgium. As always, it will showcase various innovative practices to address the causes and symptoms of homelessness, and stimulate political debate on current and future challenges. Set in a difficult political context with the homelessness sector under mounting stress, there is a greater need than ever of European support to channel energy and resources towards lasting solutions. See programme and registrations [here](#).

### United Nations 2015 data collection exercise on homelessness and the right to housing: Country responses

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Leilani Fahra, invited Governments and other relevant actors, such as National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organisations, networks, UN agencies and entities, and others with relevant information to share contributions and inputs for her recent report which focuses on homelessness. All contributions can be found [here](#) - you might want to check what your governments or other institutions are saying about homelessness in your country..! The UN rapporteur's synthesis report was published last week and is available [here](#) in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian.

### OECD Report "Policies to promote access to good-quality affordable housing in OECD countries"

This report is divided into three sections. The first section takes stock of the situation in OECD countries relating to housing access, housing affordability, housing quality, as well as the lack of housing (homelessness rates). The second section looks at different policies which support access to affordable and social housing. The third section puts forward possible future areas of work such as developing linkages between social and housing policy, piloting more social rental agencies as a new form of social housing provision, addressing transitional homelessness through housing policy, and more. See full report [here](#)

### European Commission events on poverty and social exclusion in Spring 2016

The European Commission organised its Annual convention on inclusive growth on 21<sup>st</sup> March in Brussels (see [here](#)). This one-day event kicked off with a discussion on the European Pillar of Social Rights initiative and moved on to debates in workshops about specific issues that need work if the EU is to deliver sustainable, long-term inclusive growth. On 2-3rd June 2016, the European Commission will organise a specific conference in Brussels to launch the transnational FEAD platform (Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived), which will discuss the role of the Fund in providing material and non-material assistance to the most deprived people in the EU, and foster networking between FEAD implementing partners, Managing Authorities and other EU and national level stakeholders.



## local trends

### Latest data on homelessness in Czech regions

The Czech government has carried out a survey of homelessness across the fourteen regions of the country (227 municipalities) – the results of the survey will feed into the preparation of the Czech homelessness strategy: “Concept of prevention and solutions to homelessness in the Czech Republic in 2020”. The data was collected in February-March 2015 from social workers working in the field of homelessness and housing exclusion, working in both municipalities and NGOs. The final report includes the following data estimates broken down by region: people at risk of eviction; homeless people; the characteristics of homeless people; the reasons for homelessness; tools currently available to tackle and prevent homelessness. Risk of eviction is especially high in the Moravia, Ustecky and Prague regions (see Table 1). The number of homeless was highest in Moravia-Silesia, Central Bohemia, and the region of Prague (see Table 2). The most common causes of homelessness are over-indebtedness, alcohol abuse, and unemployment. More information [here](#) in Czech.

**Table 1: Threat of eviction**

Area	The number of people at risk of losing their housing	The number of people at risk of losing their housing for 1,000 inhabitants
Hlavní město Praha	10 604	8,5
Středočeský kraj	7 431	5,8
Jihočeský kraj	7 436	12,5
Plzeňský kraj	4 501	7,8
Karlovarský kraj	8 250	32,5
Ústecký kraj	14 141	23,6
Liberecký kraj	9 441	21,5
Královéhradecký kraj	2 021	3,7
Pardubický kraj	5 360	10,8
Kraj Vysočina	4 102	8,4
Jihomoravský kraj	5 869	5,0
Olomoucký kraj	8 203	14,8
Zlínský kraj	3 268	5,6
Moravskoslezský kraj	27 937	23,2
Česká republika	118 564	11,8

**Table 2: Number of homeless**

Area	The number of people without housing				The number of people without housing for every 1,000 inhabitants
	In total	Number of women	Under 18 years	Over 65 years	
Hlavní město Praha	9 531	2 385	281	2 469	7,7
Středočeský kraj	7 922	1 983	1 834	418	6,2
Jihočeský kraj	3 296	819	600	418	5,2
Plzeňský kraj	4 977	1 602	648	1 057	8,7
Karlovarský kraj	2 101	235	52	45	8,3
Ústecký kraj	3 825	896	443	182	6,4
Liberecký kraj	4 467	672	208	360	10,2
Královéhradecký kraj	1 556	453	285	101	2,8
Pardubický kraj	2 123	301	263	134	4,3
Kraj Vysočina	2 584	667	278	160	5,3
Jihomoravský kraj	5 570	1 579	613	565	4,8
Olomoucký kraj	3 639	959	753	236	5,7
Zlínský kraj	3 056	517	329	368	5,2
Moravskoslezský kraj	13 838	3 111	1 571	537	11,5
Česká republika	68 485	16 179	8 158	7 050	6,7

### New data on homelessness in the Basque country

Analysis of recent data shows that in the Basque Country one in three homeless people has been experiencing homelessness for more than three years. The data also estimates that about 10.8% have experienced homelessness for more than 10 years, while 12.1% have been without a home for 5 to 10 years. When identifying where they have been residing it was found that 1,500 people have resided in shelters, 300 people have lived on the street, and about 27% have lived with their relatives. Furthermore, when comparing the data of two studies from 2012 and 2014, it was found that there is a clear increase in the amount of women suffering from severe housing exclusion. The increase over those two years was by about 22.2%. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the number of men of about 6.5% over those two years. Furthermore, concerning youth homelessness there was a decrease of about 11%. The decrease in youth homelessness also includes youth from minority groups. Another area that has been analysed is homelessness among Spanish and non-Spanish nationals. It was found that among non-Spanish nationals there was an overall decrease in homelessness, but among Spanish nationals there was an overall increase of about 17%. More [here](#) in Spanish.