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habitact news

November 2012 - Barcelona Study Visit

Thank you to Carme Fortea from the city of Barcelona who organised a presentation of the Barcelona approach to homelessness for a group of HABITACT members on 15 November 2012. We will add the presentation to the Members' area of the HABITACT website. While Barcelona city council generally has a chain approach to developing services for homeless people (staircase system), they are looking into the possibility of testing Housing First. The city has an outreach team for meeting people living in public spaces, using methods which can be found in many other EU cities. One aspect which seemed quite different was the use of a tracking system to monitor the work of outreach workers, to help coordinate work in the streets of Barcelona. More information at info@habitact.eu

SAVE-THE-DATE 12-14 June 2013 in Amsterdam

On Wednesday 12 June 2013, FEANTSA and HABITACT are co-organising their annual European seminar in Amsterdam on the theme of tackling homelessness as a social investment, examining key tools to show the value (social, economic, innovative) of homelessness services. This will be a 1-day seminar with 100 participants to exchange information on practical tools. On Thursday 13 and Friday 14 June 2013, also in Amsterdam, will be the final conference of the European social experimentation project *Housing First Europe*. This will be a 1,5-day seminar with 200 participants (key Housing First players in Europe) exchanging practices in relation to Housing First policies.

KEY 2013 DATES

Dublin, 4-5 April
Amsterdam, 12 June
Amsterdam, 13-14 June

Housing First Europe - Next Stop: Glasgow

The Housing First Europe social experimentation partnership is next meeting in Glasgow in March 2013, which will be an opportunity for HABITACT cities to take a closer look at the Housing First test site led by Turning Point Scotland, and also to finalise elements of the *Housing First Europe* project which will end this year with the final conference June 2013.

Bi-annual Review of the Online Policy Bank

We review the contents of the HABITACT policy bank twice a year (January and July). Therefore in January 2013, we will review the entries. So please check the entry for your local authority to see if it is fully up-to-date and feel free to send us any new links or information at info@habitact.eu

HABITACT Peer Review 2013 in Dublin

The next HABITACT peer review in the [series](#) (launched in 2010 by the city of Amsterdam) will be hosted by Dublin city on Thursday 4 and Friday 5 April 2013. The Thursday session will focus on the Dublin model, supported by site visits to see the policy in practice. The Friday will be important for peer discussions on specific aspects of the Dublin model (key challenges, successes, potential transferability to other local contexts). Isabel Baptista from CESIS in Portugal has been appointed independent expert for the peer review, and will draft a discussion paper to be sent to all peer cities in March 2013 in preparation of the peer review. A draft agenda will be sent to all HABITACT members in January 2013. Please note that the peer review will be open to HABITACT members only. Registrations will open end of January 2013.

HABITACT Partner Cities:

Amsterdam (NL), Åhus (DK), Athens (GR), Bærum (NO), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Esch-sur-Alzette (LU), Ghent (BE), Gothenburg (SE), Madrid (ES), Odense (DK), Sandefjord (NO), Venice (IT), Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)

This e-bulletin is available online at www.habitact.eu

local news

Seminar on Homelessness of EU Migrants in Stockholm

An event aiming to draw attention to homelessness took place on 18th October in the Swedish parliament. The seminar "EU migrants and homelessness - a national challenge" was co-organised by the City of Stockholm and the MP Caroline Szyber. The event aimed to highlight links between homelessness among EU migrants and other policy areas; housing and labour market, as well as the role of local authorities in fighting this phenomenon. During the meeting, the Stockholm City Mission's annual [report](#) reviewing Stockholm homelessness policy was presented. ([More here](#))

Madrid City Council Facilitates Use of Public Transportation For Homeless People.

In Madrid, users of municipal homeless services received transportation vouchers that were funded by the City of Madrid, in collaboration with Renfe Operator. Vouchers are given to people who have no income in order to help them to return to cities of origins, where they have their families or where they are entitled to social benefits. In some cases vouchers are also provided for people who need to attend court meetings, doctor's appointments or have other administrative duties. Before allocating vouchers, social workers verify if in the city of destination resources to support beneficiaries are available. The value of vouchers issued in 2011 was 15,500 €. 98% of users returned home and only 2% of them used vouchers for other purposes. ([More here](#))

Housing First – a Pilot Project in Vienna

In September 2012, the association Neunerhaus started an [experimental project](#) Housing First in the City of Vienna. 50 housing units will be available for beneficiaries of the project, some of them are already in use and full capacity will be reached within the next 6 months. The project is continually evaluated and the local authorities believe that by the end of 2014 it will be possible to determine if the Housing First approach could replace the staircase model in Vienna. The budget of the project is 350,000 € and the overall homeless policy budget of the city exceeds 45 million €.

Reminder: the concept of Housing First is an alternative to a staircase system which requires homeless people to go through several different stages in order to 'prepare' to live independently. The Housing First scheme moves homeless people immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartments. In this approach, housing is a prerequisite for social inclusion. Rather than requiring the beneficiary to adjust and meet the criteria of the structure, the professionals adapt to the beneficiary's situation.

Poznań: People with Eviction Orders Moved to Containers or Homeless Shelters

In Poznan, people with eviction orders who used to live in properties owned by the municipality will have to move to low-priced accommodation in containers. Those who refuse will be evicted directly to homeless shelters. Likewise, people living in private rented sector (PRS) housing who are currently waiting for social housing have also been threatened with eviction to containers. The municipality informed owners of the houses where people with eviction orders live that they should notify it if they believe that tenants should be moved to containers. People who refuse to move to containers from PRS will lose the right to social housing. To make matters worse, evictions can be carried out regardless of the lack of available space in shelters. ([More here](#))

Large-Scale Shelter and Mounted Police Force for Budapest's Homeless People

The city of Budapest has opened a large-scale homeless shelter in its 13th district. The Mayor said 800 places are available in Budapest since November as part of the "heated street" programme, which offers night-time shelter and daytime facilities during the winter. A mounted police patrol has also been put in place to deal with "anti-social behaviour" in Budapest. Homeless people are considered to be among the targets of this police squad. ([More here](#))

Social Impact Bond Launched to Help Homeless People in London

The Greater London Authority worked with the Communities and Local Government department to develop the homelessness bond, which will run for three years in London. The homelessness bond aims to reduce rough sleeping by helping people into stable accommodation, getting them into employment and managing their health better. Social impact bonds allow private investors and philanthropists to support a project but only pay out if the project is successful. The homelessness bond is an initiative backed by the Department for Communities and Local Government and is the first use of a social impact bond to tackle rough sleeping in UK. British housing minister Mark Prisk said: 'The mayor's pioneering social impact bond for London's rough sleepers, backed by government funding, is already leading the way, giving the capital's homelessness charities the freedom to try new ideas to help the city's most frequent rough sleepers. By paying them by results the government can ensure the best value for money, and we can help find the services that really do transform lives for the better.' ([More here](#))

news from europe

Europeanisation of Homelessness Policy: Watch This (OMC) Space!

This FEANTSA EU position paper explores the use of soft governance mechanisms in EU policy-making, with a specific focus on mechanisms used in EU social policy (i.e. the social Open Method of Coordination or "Social OMC") to coordinate homelessness policy. The paper argues that homelessness policy is "Europeanising" (considered by FEANTSA as a generally positive trend), leading to the formation of a cross-national policy cluster which requires a specific multi-annual framework within a new generation social OMC. See paper [here](#)

Conference on Homelessness and Migration

The FEANTSA Annual [Conference](#), "Existing in Limbo - the conditions of homeless migrants in Europe", took place on the 15th and 16th November 2012 in Barcelona, Spain, opened by the government of Catalonia. The conference was organised in cooperation with fePsh, the Spanish Federation of Organisations Supporting Homeless People and the Obra Social "la Caixa". It brought together about 250 participants from across Europe from very different backgrounds. A European Commission official was present at the meeting to provide an EU perspective on the negative consequences of migration, highlighting the difficulty of working within the national frameworks of 27 Member States on social assistance and support. It was accompanied by visits of local homeless services. Read the [press release](#) about the event.

"On the Way Home? FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe" went out.

The [report](#) analyses policy progress in tackling homelessness over recent years. It is based on the input of national experts from 21 countries who are members of FEANTSA's Administrative Council.

2nd Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion

Launched as a flagship initiative in the framework of the Europe2020 strategy, the 2nd Annual Convention was opened on Wednesday 5 December in Brussels by the high representatives of the European Council, Commission and Parliament underlining the importance finally given to the social consequences of the crisis. Commissioner Andor used the opportunity of the event to give an outline of the EU Social Investment Package (SIP) to be presented in the first quarter of 2013. The SIP will include recommendations and action points around 5 pillars: Smart spending and social budgeting ; Active inclusion policies; Investment in children and youth; Evidence-based social policies; Streamlining social investment in EU governance. The SIP should be published early 2013.

European Parliament hearing on Social Services

On 9 October 2012 Social Services Europe and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats hosted an event at the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament and key experts discussed how social services contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as laid out in the Europe2020 strategy. More: www.socialserviceseurope.eu

Europe Calls for Action to Tackle Social Consequences of the Crisis

The European Council Conclusions of 18-19 October 2012 refer to the following: "EU Member States should step up efforts to tackle the social consequences of the crisis and to fight poverty and social exclusion in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy". See full document [here](#)

OECD Meeting on Support and Housing

On 8-9 November 2012, the OECD Social Policy Ministerial hosted a meeting on support and housing as a first expert consultation on Integrated Services and Housing for people with very high needs. The purpose of the consultation was to provide a forum for experts, working in the area of integrating social services and housing for vulnerable populations across the OECD, to share cross-national experiences. FEANTSA representatives were present at the meeting. More [here](#)

Joint Hearing on Health Inequalities, Mental Health and Homelessness

On the 13th November Mental Health Europe and FEANTSA held a European Parliament [hearing](#) on inclusive citizenship from the point of view of homeless people with mental health problems. Read the joint [press release](#) about the event. The PowerPoint [presentations](#) from the event are now available as well.

European Commission Calls to Tackle Social Exclusion of Youth

In December 2012, the European Commission [published](#) its EU Youth Employment Package with suggestions for tackling increasing youth unemployment in Europe. It includes a [Proposal](#) for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee which stresses the necessity of responding to the needs of disadvantage young people with diverse needs, and the [Staff working document](#) on Moving Youth into Employment directly mentions projects targeting homeless young people in a section on good practices on Youth Guarantee scheme. More [here](#).

local trends

Number of Homeless People in Bilbao Remains Stable

On the night of 17th October 2012, a census of the homeless population was conducted in the city of Bilbao. The study was commissioned by the Bilbao City Council and data were collected by more than 600 volunteers, mostly students from the University of Deusto. During the counting, 238 homeless persons (staying in temporary accommodation and rough sleepers) were reported. The number of homeless people in Bilbao seems to be stable, according to the estimations from 2010, there were between 230 and 250 homeless people in the capital of the Basque country. ([More here](#))

The Czech Republic; the Biggest Number of Homeless People Noted in the Moravia-Silesia Region

A [report](#) from a census of the homeless population in the Czech Republic was recently published. The study was carried out by the Czech Statistical Office in collaboration with the Association of shelters and other organizations working with homeless people in the Czech Republic and the Association of Social Care Providers of the Czech Republic. According to the research, the biggest number of homeless people was noted in the Moravia-Silesia Region (2574), Prague (1254) and the South Moravia (1156). The lowest numbers were noted in the Karlovy Vary (256) and the Liberec Region (262). The census enumerated 11,496 homeless people in total.

Female Homelessness in Brussels

A report "Female homelessness in Brussels: an evolution in need of clarification" was recently published. The study refers to the census of the Brussels homeless population, carried out on 8 November 2010. This census counted 1,944 homeless people, compared with 1,724 on the same date in 2008. Of the 329 people who were noted in the street, 36 were women, which represent 11% of the numbers. As regards emergency shelter services, 35% of the population were female. Out of the 769

people who were counted in shelters, 201 were women. Nevertheless, authors of the study on female homelessness in Brussels emphasize that the data presented above provide us with an initial picture of the situation of homeless women, with no guarantee of representativeness or exhaustiveness.

According to the data collected by La Strada in 2010, 88% of women with housing problems received accommodation in housing structures, 66% of whom were received in shelters, whereas 70% of their male counterparts benefited from accommodation, 57% of whom were received in shelters. This leads to the hypothesis that the low number of women in the street is due to the organisation of the institutional network, which favours the accommodation of women in housing structures, mainly in shelters for long-term periods. Furthermore, the study underlines a difference in behaviour between men and women with respect to a lack of housing: women turn to their informal network more rapidly. Finally, as the evaluations were based essentially on a visual census in the field or on the functioning of shelter structures, it is also possible that women develop invisibility strategies whereby they make use of emergency shelter structures only as a last resort, thus making it more difficult to identify them. (See full report [here](#))

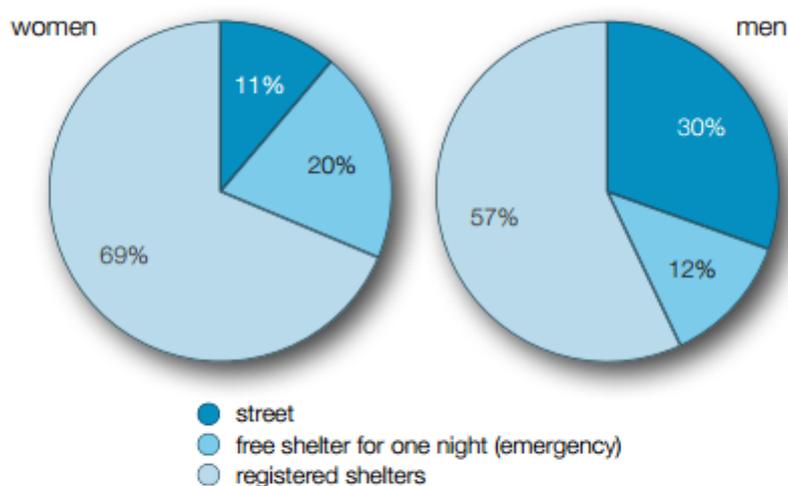


Figure 3. Use of housing resources by the female and male homeless population, broken down according to type of housing, as a %. Source: 2010 report on the number of homeless people in Brussels – La Strada.

Focus: Food and Homelessness

The [right to food](#) is a human right — it protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition (see [article 25](#) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and [article 11](#) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Within the social exclusion framework, food poverty has been referred to as the inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to the unaffordability of food and to poor access to food. Homeless people tend to be more vulnerable to poor diet and inadequate nutrition. Due to their living conditions, they are faced with constraints preventing them from affording and accessing healthy and nutritious diets on a regular basis. Difficulties in accessing a healthy and balanced diet may be linked among others to inadequacy of income, lack of choice, lack of storage and cooking facilities ([FEANTSA 2010](#)). This e-bulletin focus highlights some of the existing relationships between food and homelessness through practical local examples as a way of stimulating debate.

Free food distribution sparking controversy

There is a clear need for food distribution for deprived people, especially with the social consequences of the current economic crisis. However, there are [discussions](#) on whether it should be a part of a long-term strategy or just an emergency measure; e.g. the debates around the [Tafel](#) initiative in Germany on the socio-ecological consequences of charitable food assistance; the [call](#) on citizens in Gdańsk not to give out food to homeless people; or a [research](#) on soup runs in London commissioned by the Westminster City Council, which discusses arguments for and against soup runs and their impact on a new model of service provision for rough sleepers. The model in question is referred to as Building Based Services, and aims to provide services for rough sleepers from inside buildings, rather than on the streets in order to 'reduce incentives for people to appear on the streets in order to access services'.

Free water distribution can also be an issue, since in many big cities there are few sources of drinking water accessible to the homeless population. In order to facilitate access to drinking water for homeless people in Brussels an NGO « Infirmiers de rue » in collaboration with the City of Brussels developed a [map](#) that shows the precise location of drinking fountains in the city. The maps are displayed in all metro stations in Brussels.

The European Anti-Poverty Network actually [calls](#) on the European institutions to recognise access to water and sanitation as a human right and to promote the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all.

Discussions on free food and water distribution have also been sparked by the European Commission with its proposed revision and renaming of the EU Food Programme to the EU [Programme](#) of « aid to the most deprived », changing the priorities for 2014 to 2012 to not only food distribution measures but also the provision of homelessness starter packs.

Health inequalities and food quality

Homeless people are a disadvantaged group for whom health and food inequalities are a key issue. Different [studies](#) show the relation between homelessness and malnourishment. A study on the nutritional status of the adult urban homeless population in Germany published in 2001 shows that 29 % of the homeless people were malnourished.

In the same year, another research on diets of homeless people was carried out in an emergency night shelter in Paris. The French study showed that homeless people tended to have a low body mass index (BMI) and a large percentage of their total energy intake per day was a result of alcohol consumption. The researchers also discovered that 80 per cent of the non-alcoholic energy consumed by the men was provided by charities. On the other hand, a recent [study](#) by researchers from Harvard and Oxford reveals that 1/3 of America's homeless population is obese due to lack of money for healthy food and their reliance on cheap foods that contain high levels of fat and sugar. Another possible explanation of obesity could be physiological – chronic food shortages cause the body to adapt by storing fat reserves. Other factors may include little physical activity, sleep deprivation and stress. The study highlights the importance of the quality, as well as the quantity, of food that the homeless are consuming. However, in an emergency situation the quality will potentially be compromised as indicated by the recent [decision](#) of the Greek government to approve a new law that will allow supermarkets to sell expired food. The articles must be displayed separately and sold with a discount of 66% of the full price.

Social dimension of food

Food can be a powerful tool to promote the well-being and social inclusion of people who are homeless. Inspiring projects in this field have emerged in some parts of the world. [The Cyrenians Good Food programme](#) is a social enterprise with a mission to bring good food and healthy lifestyles to people who are experiencing disadvantage, isolation, poverty and homelessness. The Good Food Project's services include: A [food redistribution project](#), [cooking classes](#), practical opportunities for [training and work experience](#), accredited courses in food hygiene, food and health; and training in the delivery of practical cooking sessions.

[Crisis Skylight Café](#) is a social enterprise in East London, which provides a route into work for homeless people and ex-offenders. Under the guidance of an experienced manager, trainees receive training, leading to recognised qualifications in food hygiene, customer care, operational services and food preparation skills. In March 2012, the team at the

Crisis Skylight Cafe London has received a [Gold Level award](#) in recognition of their work to provide fresh and healthy food for the local community.

In USA, Streetwise, an organisation working with homeless people in Chicago partnered with Neighbor Capital, a social enterprise that focuses on sustainable solutions to health and job creation, to create Neighbor Carts. [Neighbor Carts](#) are mobile fruit stands that will address two issues facing Chicago: access to healthy foods, and unemployment. Upon completion of the program, Neighbor Cart vendors will have tax ID numbers, their own license, independent bank accounts to track and manage their funds, and they will be empowered to find other business opportunities. It is estimated that each fruit stand will create three jobs. ([More here](#))



For any reactions/comments/contributions to the e-bulletin, please contact us at info@habitact.eu