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habitact news

Annual European seminar on local homeless strategies

130 practitioners attended the 8th European seminar on local homeless strategies co-hosted by FEANTSA and HABITACT, which focused this year on tackling homelessness as a social investment for the future with presentations from experts demonstrating the social, economic and innovative value of homelessness programmes. The presentations will shortly be available on the FEANTSA [website](#).

HABITACT steering group 12 June 2013

The HABITACT steering group meets 2-3 times a year to brainstorm on the development and priorities of the network. The last steering group meeting took place alongside the annual FEANTSA-HABITACT seminar in Amsterdam. HABITACT and non-HABITACT members were present to discuss and evaluate the activities of the network and key priorities for the local authorities. More in the Members' area of the HABITACT website. The next steering group meeting will take place in Berlin (20 September) and/or Prague (8 November).

E-bulletin change

The "focus" section of the HABITACT e-bulletin will now look at a specific local homeless strategy rather than a specific theme. We are going to concentrate on the policies implemented in various European cities present in our online Policy Bank. This time the spotlight is on Dublin whose homelessness services have recently been peer-reviewed by HABITACT (the results of the assessment can be found [here](#)).

HABITACT discussed at European conference

FEANTSA was invited to speak in the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels about cross-border cooperation between cities in the field of poverty and social exclusion, and highlighted the HABITACT network as an example of good cooperation between cities, pooling resources for supporting policy development and action research. See FEANTSA presentation [here](#), and more information about the conference here: [presentations](#), [video summary](#), conference [press release](#).

Review of online HABITACT policy bank

We are conducting our bi-annual review of the [policy bank](#) so local authorities will be contacted individually to ask about any updates to be made. If you would like to include an entry on actions taken by your local authority to reduce homelessness, contact info@habitact.eu. We are considering the possibility of including entries from outside Europe in the policy bank since there is a wealth of information available out there in countries like the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand..Let us know what you think about this! Do you think this would be useful?

2013 HABITACT peer review

HABITACT peer reviews use a local policy as the starting point for European exchanges between local policy-makers. The fourth peer review in the [series](#) was hosted by Dublin city on 4-5 April 2013, with the aim of creating a dynamic process from which both the host and the peers can benefit. Participants from 10 cities peer reviewed the Dublin "Pathway to Home" model looking at key elements of the model and key transferability issues, while comparing the model with other local models in the peer cities with a particular focus on Edinburgh, Espoo, Bucharest, Amsterdam, Odense and Bolzano. The Discussion Paper for the peer review, prepared by Isabel Baptista from CESIS (Portugal) can be found on the HABITACT website, as well as the meeting report. Any candidates for the 2014 peer review? Get in touch!

HABITACT Core Partner Cities:

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

local news

Main stations of Tuscan railway network to host socially useful activities.

An agreement has been signed in June by the CEO of Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (Italian Railways), Mauro Moretti, and the President of Tuscany Region, Enrico Rossi, to redevelop obsolete spaces in the regional railway network in Tuscany. As a result of this joint enterprise the facilities that are no longer suitable for the activities they were originally designed for will be appropriately renovated and repurposed to host cultural or environmental initiatives and activities aimed at social inclusion. The planned developments include also a number of help centres for the homeless people residing in Tuscany. These centres are intended to operate in synergy with local services within existing projects of harm reduction and social inclusion. Seven railway stations will be involved in the first stage of the redevelopment project which might subsequently be expanded to include more obsolete railway facilities throughout Tuscany. [More here.](#)

"Oikeo" housing project receives a Fondation de France Award

The experimental housing project "Oikeo" has received a "Laurier Regional" award as well as a 2000 euro donation awarded by the Fondation de France on May 28, 2013. The motivation for the award was the "innovative and exemplary," nature of the project aimed at "restoring and improving the quality of social relations" in the Bordeaux region.

The project "Oikeo", which received financial support from the Fondation, was launched in early 2011 by the Association for social inclusion of Bordeaux (ARI-Asais) within the national "Un chez soi d'abord" pilot programme, which implements the principles of the "Housing First" strategy. The pilot programme is directed by the Interministerial Delegation for accommodation and access to housing (DIHAL).

New project for employment in Warsaw

A new project has been initiated in order to provide the homeless people from Warsaw with skills necessary to (re)enter the labour market. "The ferry" (PROM in Polish) project is run by MONAR-MARKOT and implemented in the partnership with Warsaw City Council and the Centre for Social Welfare Białoleka, within the Human Capital Operational Programme of the European Social Fund. The project provides assistance to MONAR-MARKOT homeless service's clients and to other people at risk of social exclusion willing to acquire or develop skills in order to re-enter the labour market. PROM acts also as a bridge between employers and the participants of the project: the operators elicit job offers

from potential employers, and thus provide professional training compatible with the offers received, in full respect of individual career aspirations of the project's clients. Moreover, thanks to ESF support, an "Information and Mobilisation Centre" has been created. It will function also after the completion of the project, providing access to the Internet and use of computers and telephones, and thus facilitating employment search and job retention. [More here](#)

Oslo forbids rough sleeping

A majority of the Oslo City Council has recently voted a ban prohibiting rough sleeping and camping in parks and other green areas of the city. The ban is a tightening of a previous regulation that forbade camping in parks. With the enforcement of the ban, it will be also not allowed to sleep on the sidewalks and "spaces in urban areas." As a consequence of this regulation the municipal guards have already issued several fines. The Church City Mission and the Fire Department warn that the ban is potentially dangerous as those who want to avoid fines may decide to stay in abandoned, precarious buildings. To contrast the negative impact of the ban, a project called "Rom for Rom" ("Room for Roma") has been launched by the local Church City Mission. The project is designed to offer help to the homeless population, particularly the Roma residing in Oslo, targeted by the new regulation. The project focuses on finding a suitable accommodation for the homeless individuals and families and acting as an intermediary between the beneficiaries of the project and potential employers situated in the city as well as in the greater Oslo area. [More here](#)

"Bistrot" day centre project presented in Luxembourg

Luxembourg City's Alderman for Social Affairs has recently presented a project, developed by Caritas Accueil et Solidarite, for a new, low-threshold day centre. The "Bistrot" project is built upon the same principle that guides other CAS social initiatives: providing help tailored to target specific needs of different groups of people who are homeless. The centre is designed to complement the recently launched "ReBuilding" and "SALD" projects and its goal is to provide a safe space for those who due to substance misuse issues cannot comply with the sobriety policy implemented in the vast majority of day centres in Luxembourg, where any kind of substance use, including alcohol and tobacco, is not permitted. Pursuing the aim of harm reduction, the "Bistrot" won't forbid alcohol or tobacco consumption on the premises, however only non alcoholic beverages will be served at the counter. The launch of the project is planned for the beginning of 2014.

news from europe

Social Services Europe: Response to the Social Investment Package

The Social Investment Package (SIP) "Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion" launched by the EU Commission in February 2013 represents an important paradigm shift in European social policy. It promotes a life-cycle approach to social investment, recognising the vital role that social welfare provision plays at key points in the lives of individuals through helping them to confront life's risks and cope with key transition points. As a network of social service providers, Social Services Europe welcomes the fact that the package calls on Member States to regard social policy as a social investment that yields important economic and social returns over time. However, it believes that there is a contradiction between the EU's simultaneous promotion of social investment and austerity as appropriate policy responses in a period of economic crisis, as well as its promotion of conditionality in relation to access to benefits and services. Social Services Europe is also concerned that the overall orientation of the SIP appears to be towards employment rather than social rights or wellbeing. However, in general, Social Services Europe welcomes this agenda and offers to 'partner' with the European Commission over the coming years in order to ensure that the initiatives in the SIP are fully and effectively implemented by Member States. More [here](#).

FEANTSA publishes analysis of the 2013 National Reform Programmes

This paper briefly examines the measures to reduce homelessness outlined in the 2013 NRPs. It starts with a short reflection on the links between social and economic policy from a homelessness perspective, followed by a closer look at the integration of the Social Investment Package policy guidelines recommendations on homelessness in the NRPs. The review shows that eleven countries have reported targeted social investments to address homelessness (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and the UK). Other measures taken to reorganize social services and ensure access to affordable housing should also have an impact on homelessness reduction. See paper [here](#).

EU Benefits Adviser

The EU Benefits Adviser [website](#), a tool developed by NGOs and aiming to improve EU migrant access to benefits and advise social work professionals working with migrants on these issues, is now live. The website includes a questionnaire which can be used by individuals and their representatives to determine an individual's eligibility for welfare benefits.

Launch of EU Minimum Income Network

Bringing together various experts, professionals, academics and organisations active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, the [European Minimum Income Network](#) (EMIN) will encourage the progressive implementation of adequate and accessible minimum income schemes in EU Member States. The EMIN is a two-year project funded by the European Commission. The network is led by EAPN and includes AGE Platform Europe; FEANTSA; the Belgian Public Administration Planning Service Social Integration, Anti-Poverty Policy and Social Economy Social Integration; ANSA; ETUI; OSE and the SIRG as key partners.

Committee of the Regions publishes survey results evaluating the EU's social strategy

The Committee of the regions launched a survey of local and regional authorities to assess key emerging challenges at local level in relation to poverty and social exclusion, but also to assess the impact of the key actions of the EU's Platform against poverty and social exclusion. The EU's platform against poverty was considered useful to boost visibility of issues like homelessness, but much remains to be done to solve the problem. The survey includes examples of programmes to tackle homelessness in the Czech Republic (Plzen and Pardubice), UK (Scotland), Spain (Extremadura), Portugal (Faro), Poland (Lodzkie Region) and Romania (Buzau). We will inform these local/regional authorities about the HABITACT network. See full survey results [here](#) in all languages.

Update on Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

The European Parliament adopted amendments to the European Commission's proposal for the [FEAD](#) end of last year. There is very strong support in favour of the FEAD (513 Members of European Parliament voted in favour). They agreed to call for a 3,5 EUR Billion budget (1 EUR Billion more than decided during the February European Council meeting on the EU budget). Finally, the European Parliament agreed on the need for a compulsory FEAD for all countries (although a large minority of MEPs were in favour of a voluntary use of the fund). While the amendments propose to take out explicit references to target groups like homeless people and children, the European Parliament introduces references to homelessness in the recitals (namely the ETHOS typology and the importance of the fund to support Member States efforts to alleviate homelessness), and integrates references to the use of starter packs which can support transitions out of homelessness. More [here](#).

local trends

In Milan 6% more rough sleepers choose shelters over the streets

On the night of 11th March 2013, “RacContami”, a census of the homeless population, was conducted in the city of Milan by 900 volunteers coordinated by Michele Braga (Fondazione Rodolfo Debenedetti). The census was organised with the cooperation of Bocconi University, Milan City Council and Fondazione Rodolfo Debenedetti. The methodology used was that of a point-in-time survey following the S-Night (street and shelters) approach. Also, some 34% of the homeless population responded to detailed assessment questionnaires. The census assessed the number of homeless people in Milan at 2616: 2106 people were found in night shelters and 509 sleeping rough. The vast majority of the homeless people in Milan are male (91% of rough sleepers, 86% of night shelter residents) and of migrant origin (83% of rough sleepers, 77% of night shelter residents). The most represented age bracket (30%) is 44-60 years. The census registered an overall increase of the homeless population with a simultaneous decrease in the percentage of rough sleepers - there has been a 6% raise (in comparison to 2012) in the number of homeless people choosing night shelters over the streets. [More here](#) and [here](#)

Berlin NGOs register a growing presence of Polish homeless migrants

The local NGOs report that the population of Polish migrants who are homeless in Berlin has dramatically risen in the past two years. These rising numbers can be linked, the social workers assert, with the opening of the labour market in 2011 and unrealistic claims, publicised by the media, concerning presumed abundance of employment opportunities in Germany. Although no official statistics have been published the NGOs estimate the number of Polish migrants at 50% of the overall homeless population in the German capital city at the moment. [More here](#)

25% increase in homelessness caused by intimidation in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has said homelessness caused by intimidation has increased by 25%. The figure for the past year stood at around 580 cases, 387 of which were due to paramilitary intimidation. There is a 90% level of segregation across social housing in Northern Ireland, with that figure rising to 94% in Belfast. The figures were given at a briefing for the Social Development Committee on the Shared Community Scheme which is designed to address segregation in housing.

The “Housing first” strategy brings positive results in 17 Danish councils

The evaluation of a government initiative to combat homelessness established four years ago in Denmark

showed that the vast majority of homeless residents who were placed in homes managed to remain there. According to the evaluation, carried out by national welfare research centre (Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd) some 90% of the homeless individuals who took part in the ‘Housing First’ homeless strategy implemented in 17 councils nationwide, managed to remain in their residences thanks to the project. The researchers pointed out that the rise in homeless numbers was far less significant in the councils that took part in the ‘Housing First’ strategy where homeless numbers increased by just 7 percent, compared to the 42 percent spike in the nation’s other councils. The research team indicated the lack of affordable housing as one of the main causes of the increase in overall homeless numbers. [More here](#)

New report on people rough sleeping in London published by Broadway

The London Charity, Broadway, has published a detailed “Street to home” report. This bi-monthly report presents information about people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in London in March - April 2013. The report is based upon the data gathered in the ‘Combined Homelessness and Information Network’ (CHAIN), a database commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by Broadway.

The report shows that during the period March-April 2013 outreach teams recorded 1,405 individuals in total sleeping rough in the capital. This is a 3% decrease on the total figure for the previous year. New rough sleepers account for 45% of all rough sleepers, intermittent rough sleepers account for a third (36%) of all those recorded in the period, and around a fifth (20%) of those recorded during the period were living on the streets. The report provides a detailed breakdown of these figures and compares them with the 2012 survey results. In the selected period outreach teams recorded 638 people in London sleeping rough for the first time. The number of new rough sleepers recorded during this period was 4% lower than the same period last year. There were 277 people recorded who were deemed to be living on the streets. This number is 15% lower than the same period last year, and 4% lower than the immediately preceding period (January - February 2013). The number of people who were seen rough sleeping during the survey period who were not new, and did not have enough contacts to be deemed as living on the streets, was 508. This is 9% higher than the same period last year, and 3% higher than the immediately preceding period. The full report can be found [here](#)