

habitact news

HABITACT News	1
Local News	2
News from Europe	3
Local Trends	4

Housing First Europe reports available online

All information about the Housing First Europe project is now [online](#), including the presentations of the final conference. This project involved many HABITACT partners and has been a great opportunity to test social innovation locally in homeless services. Results of the social experimentation include:

- Support provided to tenants was especially intensive in the transition to self-contained housing (with administration, overcoming isolation, creating social networks);

- For some tenants, the intensity of support diminishes over time, for others the need for support remains constant;

- Housing retention rates were high in four of the five test sites (over 90% of tenants for Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Glasgow, and over 70% for Lisbon)

- The HFE evaluation generally confirms that homeless people with even the most complex needs can be housed in independent, scattered housing, with the adequate support.

European Commission Social Investment Roadmap – reference to Housing First Europe

The European Commission published a [Roadmap](#) in November to highlight past and present actions to contribute to the implementation of the [EU social investment package](#). Housing First Europe is mentioned in the Roadmap, as well as future initiatives which might be of interest to organisations working with homeless people.

HABITACT peer review 2014

The municipality of Athens (founding member of HABITACT) will host the next peer review in the series. The peer review will take place on 10 and 11 April 2014. On the agenda will be themes such as fund-raising and Corporate Social Responsibility, involvement of local politicians in the network, social economy and homelessness, key steps to developing a homeless policy model, and unlocking the potential of EU funding for homelessness services. Registrations will open in January 2014. Maximum 35 participants. More information at info@habitact.eu

HABITACT public website now also in Polish

Thanks to our coordination assistant Jo Foltman, we now have the possibility to reach out to local authorities in Poland, highlighting the essential elements of the HABITACT network (who we are, and our key activities) in Polish on the public area of our website. Incidentally, if you have any comments about the website and suggestions for improvements, please get in touch. info@habitact.eu

Upcoming bi-annual review of the policy bank

In January 2014, we will send an email to all contacts in the online policy bank to see if they would like to update the entry on their local homeless policy. We try to ensure all the information is up-to-date. The entries in any case provide useful examples of local homelessness policy models. If you would like to add an entry on the local policy in your area, contact info@habitact.eu

HABITACT Core Partners

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



local news

The “Homefinder” agency of the Chichester Council confirmed until 2015

Councillors of the Chichester Council decided to continue an internal lettings agency which helped keep more than 80 families off the street last year. The “Homefinder” agency was set up by Chichester District Council at the end of 2011, starting work in April, 2012, in a bid to cope with the impact of the Localism Act and welfare reforms as it was expected the changes would increase homelessness in the district. In 2012/13, “Homefinder” placed 81 households in private rented accommodation and a further 32 to date in 2013/14 – more than double than in any of the four years of the previous private sector housing scheme. The unit cost of preventing homelessness via “Homefinder” during 2012/13 was £595 compared to an average cost of £3,150 for bed and breakfast accommodation for a household for ten weeks. More [here](#) and [here](#).

Supported housing programme launched in Ragusa, Italy

With the financial support of the European Integration Fund (under the action: “social mediation and intercultural dialogue”), a partnership based in the province of Ragusa (Sicily) has launched a supported housing programme to prevent homelessness of third country nationals and their families. The programme will be supported by a wide range of supporting partners, including FioPSD (Italian member of FEANTSA). The aims of the programme include to test and spread housing-led approaches to address the situations of homeless families. Phase one of the programme will focus on research and mapping available housing. Phase two will set up a one-stop shop for addressing all questions related to access to housing and support (through individual plans and intercultural mediation). Phase three will focus on provision of appropriate forms of support. Phase four will launch a social housing agency (“Agenzia Casa”). More [here](#).

Information office at Nyugati Railway Station in Budapest

The Maltese Charity Service has recently opened an information office in the underpass at Nyugati Station that had been under the organisation’s supervision since 2009. The newly opened information centre has the double function of giving guidance to homeless people and allowing local citizens as well as tourists to make a direct contribution or to obtain information about where to deposit material help or to signal presence of rough sleepers in need of assistance. People experiencing homelessness receive information on available services as well as answers to specific queries concerning a wide variety of topics including health, administrative issues or legal advice.

“A look at the invisible” – a cinematographic event raises awareness about social exclusion in Seville

A cinematographic event entitled “A look at the invisible” (“Una mirada a lo invisible”) took place in Seville throughout the months of October and November. A selection of movies on the subject of social exclusion and homelessness was shown free of charge in the cinemas supporting the initiative. The series of six movie showings, launched on October 10th, was organised by the Sevillian branch of RAIS Fundación. The coordination of the project was entrusted to people in situation of exclusion, within the framework of a social inclusion project for vulnerable groups financed by the municipality of Seville. More [here](#).

City Council of Copenhagen calls on parliament to help foreign homeless

The City Council of Copenhagen moved this week to put pressure on the government to establish temporary accommodation for foreign homeless who are not entitled to social services. Current laws prevent non-residents from receiving social services or sleeping in homeless shelters, but with winter approaching the council’s Social Affairs Committee is now calling for the social affairs minister, Annette Vilhelmsen (Socialistisk Folkeparti), to allow councils to set up so-called transit rooms for them in order to give them shelter. Mikkel Warming (Enhedslisten), the deputy mayor for social affairs and the chairman of the committee, said council governments should be able to distribute funds directly to homeless charities, instead of the current set-up, which sees funds distributed by the State. “It is vital that we offer these individuals medical and social support”, Warming said. More [here](#).

25 homeless people to receive accommodation in Brussels through the national Housing First Project

The operational phase of the nation-wide Housing First project was launched in 5 Belgian cities last September. In the capital the goal is to provide 25 homeless individuals with complex needs, with a suitable, independent accommodation. This project, in accordance with the Housing First model, offers an immediate exit from the street by permanent housing without any prior rehabilitation or transitional housing. A team of social workers, nurses and mental health professionals will endeavor to accompany the new residents’ move into permanent housing and to answer their needs so that they can maintain the accommodation indefinitely. The project is financed for 2 years and at the conclusion of that period it will be subject to a review. More [here](#).



news from europe

EU Committee of the Regions recommends supporting transnational exchange on homelessness

In October, the Committee of the Regions adopted its opinion on the EU Social Investment Package. The opinion calls on the European Commission to develop a concrete EU framework to support national, regional and local authorities to make progress on tackling homelessness. See opinion [here](#) in all languages.

Final European Social Fund regulation adopted – with two references to homelessness!

The final text of the European Social Fund 2014-2020 regulation is available [here](#). It makes reference to homeless services in the recitals (introductory section), and to homeless people in the Annex on output indicators on participants of ESF projects. This is the first time there is explicit mention of homelessness in an ESF regulation, and should open up many opportunities for organisations working to reduce/prevent homelessness from 2014-2020. Questions? info@habitact.eu

European Annual convention on poverty and social exclusion – 26-27 November 2013

At the 3rd Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and thus representing heads of state, mentioned homeless people and migrants as priority groups for the EU fight against poverty. See full [speech](#) on the FEANTSA website.

European Commission webpage on homelessness

The European Commission department for employment and social affairs has a [webpage](#) dedicated to the issue of homelessness. The general website of the European Commission has a [briefing](#) on employment and social affairs which helps situate homelessness in the wider EU social/employment policy context.

2013 European report on social policy reforms for growth and cohesion

The European Employment and Social Affairs Council approved the conclusions of the Social Protection Committee report on 15th October. It refers to some of the measures taken to tackle homelessness and improve access to housing in Europe (see pp33-34). On the whole, however, this report is a disappointment in terms of homelessness monitoring. See report [here](#)

FEAD – Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived

In November, European Commission, Council and Parliament came to an agreement on the FEAD 2014-2020 (Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived). However, the regulation will only formally be adopted next February 2014. This new European fund should be useful to provide food and material assistance to the most deprived, including homeless people. We hope countries will use it to fund starter packs, supporting the transition from hostels to accommodation. The co-financing rate for FEAD interventions is 85%, and 95% for Troika programme countries.

EU free movement of workers – update

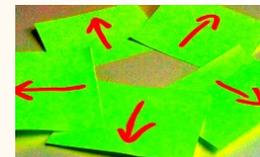
As well as the [fact finding analysis](#) on intra-EU migration published in October, the European Commission has published a communication on Free movement of EU citizens and their families. The Communication gives some clarification of the rights and obligations of EU citizens, and also proposes five actions to make a difference including a guide to clarify the use of the “habitual residence” test, and addressing the needs of local authorities by presenting the results of a study on the impact of free movement in six cities (Barcelona, Dublin, Hamburg, Lille, Prague and Turin). See Communication on [this webpage](#). In addition, European Commissioner for social affairs Laszlo Andor was interviewed on BBCHardTalk on the impact of EU free movement. The [interview](#) provides some good background information on the European Commission’s approach.

European Commission publishes Annual Growth Survey 2014

The [Annual Growth Survey](#) was published last week, marking the beginning of a new European economic cycle. Tackling the social consequences of the crisis is still high on the agenda, so we hope countries will highlight ambitious measures to prevent homelessness in the 2014 National Reform Programmes.

Danish government hosts EU peer review on its homelessness strategy

In November, the Danish government hosted a peer review with the participation of civil servants from ministries in the following countries: Austria - Bulgaria - Croatia - Finland - France - Ireland - Norway - Romania - Spain - Sweden - United Kingdom. More [here](#). For the list of other EU peer reviews, see [here](#).



local trends

Shelters and streets of Vitoria-Gasteiz are home to more than 300 people

The number of people experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness has been growing incessantly in Gasteiz due to the unrelenting economic crisis. According to a point-in-time survey performed at the end of last year and published in a report during the summer there are 279 clients of homeless services and around 30 rough sleepers in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The research was promoted by the city councils of the three Basque capitals and provincial councils and it compiles the results of several counts in the streets and shelters. The report highlights the insufficient number of beds in residential shelters, where also secondary care is offered. The results of the survey show also that there is a higher percentage of women, of people over 45 years of age and of highly educated people among the homeless population of Gasteiz than among that of the other Basque capitals that participated in the headcount. More [here](#).

50 people each day claim homelessness in Ulster

Almost 5,000 households in Northern Ireland claimed homelessness in just three months. The number was slightly down compared to the previous months, but a local charity representative affirmed that people remained vulnerable to family breakdowns and bank repossessions.

According to the Department for Social Development's latest housing bulletin, there were 4,623 households presented as homeless to the executive, from April to June 2013. This is a decrease of 300 (6%) from the previous quarter. Those citing a family dispute or breakdown in arrangements to share homes contributed the highest number of cases.

However, Shelter NI director, Tony McQuillan affirmed that although the numbers of homeless people fluctuated seasonally, there was a growing number of young people seeking help for mental health and addiction issues, as well as housing problems.

"We are finding their needs are becoming more complex. They are coming to us with multiple causes of homelessness" Mr McQuillan said.

Research Project on "Homeless EU-Migrants" in Salzburg

A survey on the homelessness of people who have migrated in search of work, such as Roma and people begging, has been carried out in Salzburg, Austria. Two rounds of interviews, using native speaker interviewers

from Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary and completed workshops and expert-reviews helped provide information about changes in migration flow. The results of the survey have been published in the report „Solange es mir hier, auf der Straße, besser geht als Zuhause, werde ich herkommen und betteln: Notreisende und Bettel-MigrantInnen in Salzburg" ("As long as life is better for me here, on the street, than it is at home, I will keep coming back to beg": Economic Migrants and Migrants Who Beg in Salzburg).

The qualitative and quantitative surveys were carried out in late February and May 2013. The February survey registered the presence of 120 homeless migrants. Some of the interviewees reported that they were accompanied by their children, a total of 39 minors. The report shows that interviewed migrants come mainly from the least developed regions of the new EU Member States, Romania and Slovakia. These regions are affected by high unemployment and characterized by discrimination against the Roma minority and against members of linguistic minorities.

The Salzburg population of homeless migrants is thus composed mainly of members of the impoverished majority (in the countries of origin) and members of ethnic and/or linguistic minorities. More [here](#).

Sharp increase in the average age of homeless people in Slupsk, Poland

Representatives of healthcare institutions and residential care providers met in Slupsk, Poland to discuss the rapid ageing of the homeless population of the Polish city and the measures to be taken to meet the needs of the elderly. During the meeting the results of a homeless population census have been discussed with particular attention towards the rising age of the local homeless population which increased from 46 years in 2003 to 51 years in 2011. The percentage of homeless people aged 51-60 years and those aged 60 years of age is now 60.5%. In 2003, it was 40.9 %.

This significant increase over the period of nearly ten years calls for the creation of new care institutions where the elderly homeless people experiencing severe health problems associated with age can find targeted help and support, different from that provided in generic emergency accommodation.

At the meeting first steps were made towards a compendium of methods of support and care for elderly homeless people. More [here](#).