

## habitact news

### 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 fundraising and Corporate Social Responsibility, involvement of local politicians in the network, social economy and homelessness, key steps to developing a homeless policy model, unlocking the potential of EU funding for homelessness services.

Participants from local authorities like Amsterdam (NL), Bergamo (IT), Charleroi (BE), Copenhagen (DK), Esch-sur-Alzette (LU), Gothenburg (SE), Offenbach (DE), Odense (DK), and Vienna (AT) will put their heads together to discuss key elements of developing homeless strategies. The Peer review Discussion Paper and Meeting Report will be available [online](#) end of April.

### HABITACT mentioned in EU Committee of the Regions work programme 2014

The EU Committee of the Regions (official EU advisory body of elected local and regional representatives) is a moral supporter of HABITACT, and this year its Economy and Social Policy Commission has referred to HABITACT in its work programme: "Contacts between ECOS and specialist networks of local and regional authorities in fields relevant for the ECOS Commission such as the HABITACT forum (homelessness), the ELISAN network (social action), REVES (social economy) and EQUINET (equality) will be pursued. Information exchanges in areas of common interest will also be continued." We hope this might mean strengthened support for the HABITACT network.

### Question from two Members of European Parliament about HABITACT funding

Belgian MEP Marc Tarabella (S&D) and French MEP Jean Louis Cottigny (S&D) jointly submitted the following question to the European Commission on 16 January 2014: "*Subject: Homelessness and Habitact. Is the Commission thinking of using the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation as the main source of funds for a European strategy to fund research and cross-border exchanges and strengthen its co-operation with key European partners, such as the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (Feantsa) and the European Exchange Forum on Local Homeless Strategies (Habitact)?*".

They received an [answer](#) from the European Commission saying they would integrate answers to this in the follow-up to the European parliament resolution calling for an EU homelessness strategy.

### HABITACT steering group meeting, 25 October 2014 in Bergamo, Italy

« Confronting homelessness in the EU: Seeking out the next generation of best practices » is the title of the next FEANTSA European policy conference take place on 24-25 October 2014 in Bergamo, Italy (see more [here](#)). This conference will organise activity hotspots on day 2, which will provide space for networks like HABITACT to meet and discuss issues of strategic interest. Hence the next HABITACT steering group meeting will take place in Bergamo, and will open to other local authority representatives who decide to attend the FEANTSA conference. Put the date in your diaries!

#### HABITACT Core Partners

Amsterdam (NL), Aarhus (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

### **Housing First Italy network launched in Turin**

The Housing First Italy Network was launched in Turin on February 28th. One hundred representatives of associations, social cooperatives, foundations as well as municipalities active in the fight against homelessness, got together to found the new Housing First Italy network.

This network will use models of social intervention, tested in other parts of the world and in Europe, in order to implement innovative strategies to end homelessness. Over the next two years the network will help Housing First projects get off the ground in various parts of Italy. Coordinated by fio.PSD and involving numerous stakeholders, the network's activities will be led by a steering group which was set up on March 1st.

The launch was accompanied by a training session on the basic principles of Housing First, with Professor José Ornelas from Casas Primeiro in Portugal. More [here](#).

### **Conference on homelessness in the Basque Country**

Last October, the cities of Bilbao, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Vitoria-Gasteiz, with the cooperation of the Basque Government Department for Labour and Social Policy and the three provincial governments of Álava, Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa presented a joint report on the situation of homeless people in the Basque Country, drawn up following a point-in-time count in the three capitals, which will be repeated in October this year.

The results of this count were announced at a Conference on Homelessness in the Basque Country, which also aims to discuss homelessness in general and the best ways to prevent and end it through: exploring homelessness policy in other European countries and especially Scotland, as well as the concept of Housing First; studying the services available in other Spanish cities and analyzing their success rate; reflecting on policy in the health, housing, social services and minimum income sectors and enabling a debate between social workers and other third-sector stakeholders around resources and responding to the needs of the homelessness population. More [here](#).

### **New social housing programme launched by the city of Athens in cooperation with NGOs**

A joint campaign by the City of Athens and four nongovernmental organizations (Klimaka, Doctors of the World, Praxis and Equal Society), aiming to provide support for the growing ranks of the capital's homeless and help with their resettlement, has been launched in the Greek capital. The initiative features an unprecedented cooperation of the Athenian municipality with the local NGOs who have vast experience in tackling homelessness.

As part of the initiative, City Hall plans to announce a social housing programme in the coming weeks similar to schemes already operating in other European coun-

tries, where homeowners offer properties they are not using for homeless people to stay in. The Hatziconstas charity institute has already donated an apartment block on Bouboulinas Street in Exarchia for use by homeless citizens. More [here](#).

### **Cumbria County receives funds to fight homelessness among teenagers**

£500,000 of funding will be spent on tackling the issue of youth homelessness in Cumbria, by providing new temporary accommodation, supported housing and further development of existing structures. So far this year Cumbria County Council has put eight teens in to bed and breakfasts due to a shortage of places and it is believed that providing emergency accommodation could cost up to £21,000 this year alone. A report set to go before the committee on Thursday said: "Cumbria is working to develop alternative provision to bed and breakfast accommodation for young homeless people including funding provided to the development of the Whitehaven Foyer and the potential development of a Foyer in Barrow." The Foyer will provide support for youngsters along with a two bedroom apartment. The proposals are set to ensure that teenagers outside the care home bracket do receive support needed, and councillors have been urged to support the action. More [here](#).

### **Housing conditions of EU migrants in the City of Prague: some challenges highlighted**

Six cities, including Prague, who promote a "welcome culture" have been selected as case studies for the DG Justice study on intra-EU mobility. In some of these cities, between 2004 and 2011, the presence of EU mobile citizens has become significant and has implied a range of economic and social impacts, as well as new challenges for the governance and policy system of these cities.

Although the migrants' housing conditions are not deemed to be problematic in the City of Prague, the situation changes for smaller villages and cities in the surrounding region where housing conditions appear worse, the report states.

Since migrants often represent the most disadvantaged categories, local measures in this field have mainly focused on supporting low-income families through the provision of subsidies, housing allowances and social housing accommodation. Nevertheless, foreign nationals' access to social housing seems to be characterized by some obstacles, as the social housing stock has progressively decreased since the early 1990s. More [here](#).



## news from europe

### European Fund for aid to the most deprived (FEAD) adopted

This new seven-year fund (endorsed by European Parliament and Council, and formally [published](#) in March) will provide opportunities to help transitions out of homelessness. Interventions eligible for funding under the FEAD include food assistance, material assistance and social inclusion. FEANTSA has published a [toolkit](#) on setting up starter pack schemes, in an attempt to channel distribution of material assistance in a way which is complementary to existing housing-led strategies to reduce homelessness. All countries but Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK, have opted to use the FEAD for food and/or material assistance.

### European Court of Justice judgement on Dutch social housing

The judgement of the Court of Justice of 27 February 2014 marks an important step in the “Dutch case” on social housing (cases E 2/2005 and N 642/2009). A decade ago, the European Commission challenged the scope of intervention of social landlords in the Netherlands and defined social housing as a service of general interest *for the most vulnerable*. The practical consequence of the application of this decision is that the economic model of social housing in the Netherlands has been somewhat destabilised. This decision has also led commercial housing operators to systematically contest the regimes of social housing in other countries, such as in Luxembourg, Belgium, Sweden and lately in France. The judgement of the Court of Justice in February means that social housing organisations can now act against the decision of the European Commission and more generally call into question the European Commission’s power in defining services of general interest. Some of you will recall that, late last year, some HABITACT partners signed a [resolution](#) on social housing in Europe.

### EU structural and investment funds 2014-2020

National governments are currently negotiating with the European Commission on the priorities of the 2014-2020 European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund. Governments are also in negotiations with regional authorities on their priorities. Some governments are pushing social priorities like social inclusion, active inclusion, programmes for marginalized communities, community-led local development, development of social and health services - all of which could provide funding opportunities in the future to address homelessness.

### European Commission publishes study on the impact of free movement of EU citizens at local level

The results of the study were presented at a conference on 11 February in Brussels, and cover the following cities: Barcelona, Dublin, Hamburg, Lille, Prague and Turin. The study provides information on both the positive and negative impact of EU free movement, including references to social challenges such as homelessness. We hope this will open more opportunities for Europe to support local authority networks like HABITACT to exchange information on building integrated homelessness strategies which can address some of the negative consequences of EU free movement. See full study in English [here](#).

### Eurostat to publish census data on homelessness

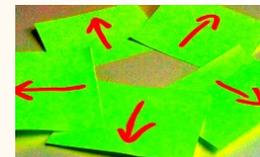
Eurostat intends to publish data on homelessness in the Eurostat Census Hub (to be opened on 30 June 2014). The Census Hub and the linked publication of explanatory metadata are expected to provide information on the numbers of primary and secondary homeless in the EU. However, given this is the first population census exercise which formally tries to cover homeless households, the data is to be used with caution. Information on data collection and estimation methods will also be published in the explanatory metadata.

### European Parliament debate on an EU homelessness strategy

On Thursday 16 January 2014, there was a debate in European Parliament on an EU homelessness strategy. It was a 2-hour debate and contributed to raising awareness of the need for the EU to support local actions to tackle and prevent homelessness. It resulted in the adoption of a [resolution](#) calling for an EU homelessness strategy. European Commissioner Andor is now preparing a follow-up proposal in response to European Parliament requests.

### From PROGRESS to EaSI - Programme for Employment and Social Innovation 2014-2020

The EaSI programme has been launched by the European Union to support employment, social policy and labour mobility across the EU. With a total budget of 920 million euros over 2014-2020, EaSI funding will be used to test ideas for reform out on the ground, evaluate them and then upscale the best ones across Member States. We hope EaSI will continue to provide opportunities to drive innovation in the field of homelessness, and will monitor closely the future calls for proposals. More information [here](#).



## local trends

### Homelessness growing in Helsinki suburbs - immigrants hit hard

A housing market survey by the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) has found an increase in the numbers of homeless people in the Helsinki suburbs of Espoo and Vantaa over the past year. The phenomenon has hit immigrant families particularly hard. The ARA survey has found that in the capital the homeless numbers remained unchanged compared to the previous year, however the problem persists in suburban districts such as Espoo and Vantaa, where the number of destitute persons increased last year.

Helsinki still has the highest number of homeless people per capita, with long-term homelessness more prevalent in the capital area. In November 2013 almost 1,800 long-term homeless could be found on the streets of the city, representing nearly 70 percent of the entire population of long-term homeless in the country.

The ARA report found that homelessness is hitting Finland's migrant community increasingly hard, with the number of destitute migrants reaching 2000 in 2013. More [here](#)

### Growing youth homelessness in Dresden

Increasing numbers of young Dresden residents slip more and more frequently into homelessness. Last year, nearly 560 homeless people have sought help from the Dresden City Mission and a third of them were less than 30 years old, according to the consultant Michael Schulz. The numbers of homeless youth are difficult to assess due to the phenomenon being underreported. Also, youth homelessness is often hidden and therefore not easy to address.

The only certainty is that the number of Dresden residents who are homeless or on the verge of losing their homes, is increasing steadily. While in 2010 there were 992 homeless people, last year the number grew to 1172. More [here](#).

### Homelessness numbers double in La Louvière

The Public Centre for Social Action (CPAS) of La Louvière (Belgium) has identified a 100 per cent increase in the number of homeless in 2013 in the municipality. There are currently 196 homeless people in the city who require emergency accommodation. The long-term solutions are also scarce as demand for social housing far exceeds the supply and the private housing market does not offer affordable housing. The authorities are concerned because poverty is growing, social accommodation is saturated, and funds are not sufficient to deal with the emergency.

The threshold of 200 homeless people (whose number nearly doubled in 2013) will soon be reached in La Louvière, says the president of CPAS, Colette Burgeon. More [here](#).

### New Norwegian report on homelessness published, spotlight on homelessness figures and causes in the municipality of Sandnes

The Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research has recently published a new survey: "Homelessness in Norway 2012". Almost identical surveys have been conducted four times previously, in 2008, 2005, 2003 and 1996.

The information on which the report is based comes from a survey of officials in public and private organizations and agencies at the local and national level who have contact with, knowledge of or are assumed to have knowledge of homeless people. The report gathers quantitative and qualitative data, and attempts to provide answers on underlying causes of homelessness in Norwegian municipalities. One of the case studies conducted for the report highlights homelessness in the fast-growing municipality of Sandnes.

In 2012, Sandnes had the highest proportion of homeless people in the country, 3,60 homeless persons per 1,000 inhabitants. In total there were 244 homeless people in the municipality in 2012. Sandnes also had the highest proportion of homeless people in the previous survey in 2008, when it was 2.93 per 1,000 residents (186 people).

There may be several reasons why Sandnes is the municipality with the highest proportion of homeless people. One explanation may be, the report affirms, that Sandnes is a municipality whose rapid growth puts its housing market under substantial pressure.

Residents who seek social housing do it because they are unable to pay the high prices on the private market. This situation in turn creates large demand for the council housing, a demand that cannot be easily satisfied, even though every year an average of 526 units are built with a record number of 962 new homes built in 2012.

In a few decades, Sandnes went from a medium-sized municipality to being one of the major cities, due principally to migration.

This rapid expansion of the city and the issues associated with it (infrastructure lagging behind population growth and social problems that ensue) may also help to explain the very high proportion of the homeless people in the community, the report says.

A summary of the report [here](#) (in English), case studies [here](#) (in Norwegian).