

ISSUE 19

JUNE 2014

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

habitact news

HABITACT peer review 2014 – Meeting report available

The 2014 peer review enabled HABITACT to bring together European counterparts to compare and exchange strategies, taking the Athens policy and service model as a starting point. The meeting report of the peer review which took place in Athens on 10-11 April is now available [online](#). It is clear that Athens municipality is under huge pressure to deliver social solidarity to an increasing number of homeless households. The pressure is leading to different forms of innovation, but requires a clear long-term strategy to steer this energy. The re-election of Yiorgos Kaminis in May 2014 as Mayor of Athens is surely an opportunity to gather all stakeholders and devise a clear action plan which can address homelessness effectively. Also see HABITACT in action by viewing this [slideshow](#). If you are interested in hosting the 2015 HABITACT peer review, contact us at info@habitact.eu

HABITACT coordination meets Budapest councillor Gábor Bihary

A meeting was held between HABITACT and a delegation of the Committee of the Regions, including Gabor Bihary, local councillor in Budapest and member of the Committee of the Regions who is rapporteur for the CoR opinion calling for a European homeless strategy. He explained the driving forces behind the opinion 'breach of human rights, EU poverty migration, need for an EU framework to support local/regional authorities). Generally the delegation showed interest and support for the HABITACT network, and the need to consider possible follow-up options on adoption of the recent opinion.

Paper on the impact of HABITACT peer reviews 2010-2014

A paper is in preparation for the European research [conference](#) taking place in Berlin on 9-10 October entitled "Towards Inclusive Employment and Welfare Systems: Challenges for a Social Europe." The paper will be presented at the workshop on "social innovation and urban governance". Liz Gosme and Prof Isobel Anderson will examine the impact of international learning as a driver of innovation in local-level policy-making, with a look at the achievements and challenges from the five HABITACT peer review on local homeless policies. To see the full abstract, contact info@habitact.eu

Online policy bank review to be conducted in July 2014

In July/August, the HABITACT coordination will contact the wider network to check if there are any updates to integrate in the different policy bank entries. In the last review conducted in January, 5 entries were updated. If there are new developments in the homeless policy for your local authority (because there is a new strategy, new stakeholders, new types of services piloted, because you have had to adapt policy linked to welfare reforms, etc), please do send us these updates. It is a useful resource for local policy-makers responsible for confronting homelessness in their local community.

This e-bulletin is available online at www.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), Madrid (ES), Odense (DK), Ostfold (NO), Sandefjord (NO), Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)



local news

A new protocol to identify families at risk of homelessness in Dublin

As the number of families losing their homes in Dublin continues to increase, a new protocol to identify families at risk of losing their homes is to be announced by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and the Department of Social Protection. Currently, when a family at risk of losing their home approaches their local authority, they are told there is little that can be done until they become homeless. Under this system, such families will have a key worker assigned to them immediately to advise them of their rights and work with them to avoid homelessness. It will be part of a wider move to enhance homelessness-preventive measures. A range of services can be found on www.homelessdublin.ie The latest figures from the Dublin Homeless Executive, which oversees services in the city's four local authority areas, indicate that there were 184 adults with children dependents in hotels or hostels, indicating a steady increase since 2012. The cost of accommodation is also spiralling, with the projections of €4.5 million expenditure on emergency hotel and hostel accommodation this year, representing a 10-fold increase from 2012. More [here](#).

Brussels: No to seasonal aid policy for homeless people

Nine day care services from Brussels demand structural funding for sustainable actions against exclusion, isolation and insecurity experienced by homeless people. They call for a better distribution of resources throughout the whole year and remind that help to homeless people should not start at the beginning of the Winter and end with the first days of Spring. The "HIVER 86.400" plan offered a new approach because it provided day services to homeless people in order to provide social support as well as emergency shelter. The main objectives of the project are extension of opening hours, increasing the number of showers, additional drop-in services and outreach work. In Spring, all the activities of stabilisation and support that were implemented during winter, together with the accomplished results are being compromised by the strictly seasonal funding. This year, the day care service centres had nearly 2.800 visits per week, with a total of more than 40.000 visits during the winter opening period of 5 months. A large part of day centre users are women (20%) and families (around 40 families) that require prolonged assistance, as well as, children (up to 160 children per week). More [here](#) (in French)

Balkan floods

Due to continuous rainfall that started on 13 May 2014, extreme floods hit Serbia affecting and displacing thousands of people, damaging houses, road and energy infrastructure, and destroying livestock and crops, primarily in the west of the country. Flooding has also caused enormous damage in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has seen casualties as well, and in Croatia. In Serbia, more than 30.000 people have been evacuated from the affected areas and 140 shelters were set up, including 47 in the capital, Belgrade. According to [preliminary assessments](#), a total of 1,800 houses have been destroyed while between 2.500 and 3.000 have been damaged in the floods in Serbia. Most of the ruined houses are in Obrenovac which was hit hard by severe floods after the river Kolubara burst its banks, flooding the town, claiming dozens of lives and forcing its 70,000 inhabitants to evacuate. Serbia, as a country in accession negotiations, is also eligible for the EU Solidarity Fund for disaster relief under the same conditions as EU Member States are. More [here](#) and [here](#).

Cross-sector cooperation to reduce evictions in Upplands-väsby

As part of a wider effort to reduce the number of evictions in Upplands-Väsby, a municipality north of Stockholm, started an innovative project between the municipality, the municipal housing company and one of the major private landlords in 2006, using funding from the Ministry of social affairs. The methods and results of this project were presented at a national homelessness conference held in Västerås in April 2014. The project methods of setting up close cooperation between the landlords and the municipality, using mediation between landlord and tenant in case of disturbance or rent arrears and involving the tenant when discussing possible solutions have shown good results. The number of evictions has dropped, new flexible contracts and rent models have been developed and fewer tenants have been in rent arrears. As access to the housing-market in Sweden is getting more and more competitive, these types of preventive projects working towards protecting the more vulnerable or groups at risk are potentially useful for overall prevention work in the future, which is a key element in the struggle to reduce homelessness. More [here](#) (in Swedish)



news from europe

Calls for proposals under the new EaSI programme (Employment and Social Innovation) – Deadline 30/7/2014

A new social policy innovation call is out. The main features of the call are a focus on social innovation in social services along 3 lines: one-stop shops; personalized approach through high quality case handlers; innovative partnership. Homeless people are specifically mentioned: “an integrated approach improves the responses to complex needs and would better serve the citizens, especially the populations in need of priority services such as the homeless”. The lead applicant must be a public authority or a public body (national, regional or local level) that sets policies and/or plays a role in delivery of social services. More [here](#)

European guide on good practices for Community-led local development

The European Commission has published a [guide](#) on the use of the EU structural and investment funds to promote Community-led local development (CLLD). There is a section on CLLD to promote social inclusion with examples on how to use CLLD to combat homelessness and the Casa Primeiro project in Lisbon as a case study.

Committee of the Regions adopts opinion calling for European homeless strategy

The Economic and social affairs commission (ECOS) of the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) adopted an opinion in April 2014 calling for a European homelessness strategy. This opinion was then adopted by the CoR plenary on 26th June. It will be integrated in the key CoR messages to the new European Commission and European Parliament which will start a new 5-year mandate this Autumn. See the opinion here in all languages: CDR 2234/2014 [FR](#) [DE](#) [EN](#) [IT](#) [NL](#) [DA](#) [EL](#) [ES](#) [PT](#) [FI](#) [SV](#) [CS](#) [ET](#) [HU](#) [LV](#) [LT](#) [MT](#) [PL](#) [SK](#) [SL](#) [BG](#) [RO](#) [HR](#)

Eurostat to publish data on homelessness in Census Hub

A letter received from Commissioner Semeta’s cabinet informs us about the intention of Eurostat to publish data on homelessness in the Eurostat Census Hub (now active). [Here](#) is the country table for « other housing units and homeless ». However, given this is the first population census exercise which formally tries to cover homeless households, the data is to be used with caution. Questions? info@habitact.eu

Public consultation to review the Europe2020 strategy

Take a minute to respond to this European consultation on Europe2020. You can respond as an organization or a citizen. Maybe Europe2020 is very distant to your work, or maybe Europe2020 has been useful to mobilise funding and political will on poverty-related issues like homelessness? This is an opportunity to have your say, and also to push the homelessness agenda at EU level – so feel free to mention the importance of having networks like HABITACT and FEANTSA in order to drive innovation, develop cross-border networks, and generally support service delivery and policy-making at local level. More [here](#)

New European guide on housing in refugee resettlement

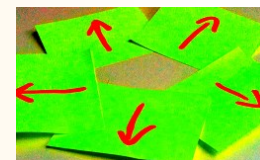
In many European cities and municipalities, housing for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable and low income groups is becoming increasingly difficult to find. In order to inspire creative solutions and new initiatives in housing for refugee resettlement, the SHARE partnership have produced a guide, referred to as: ‘A Place to Live, A Place to Stay’, the SHARE Good Practice Guide for Housing in Refugee Resettlement. SHARE is a part of the European Resettlement Network (www.resettlement.eu), an inclusive network that supports the development of resettlement in Europe. More [here](#)

European social policy innovation conference – Housing First Europe on the programme

The European Commission organised in Brussels a [European conference](#) on social policy innovation. The HABITACT coordination team was present at the conference given that Housing First Europe was presented as an example of European cooperation to drive innovation in the field of homelessness.

FEANTSA Autumn events

There are two upcoming event this autumn. The [European Research conference](#) will take place in Warsaw on 19th September and registrations are open. The [European Policy conference](#) will take place in Bergamo on 24-25 October – registrations will open on 11 July. To see a sneak preview of the programme, contact info@habitact.eu



local trends

Twice as many homeless people in Salzburg

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Salzburg (Austria) has more than doubled in the last ten years from 500 to more than 1000. These are the results of a survey published by “Forum Wohnungslosenhilfe Salzburg” and presented at the second Housing Shortage Day in Salzburg. In October 2013 when the survey took place, there were 1260 homeless people. This is a 16% percent increase from last year, resulting in 170 persons more experiencing homelessness. The increases are primarily due to two major groups: people from Eastern Europe who came to Salzburg in search for better conditions, and non-Austrians who have long been in Austria and have a residence permit, but for different reasons live in the shelters. There is a small increase even in the number of homeless Austrians who are often temporarily homeless. More [here](#).

Derby's homeless population triples in a year

Shocking figures show the number of homeless in Derby (UK) has tripled in the space of a year – with the blame put on funding cuts and the Government's benefits crackdown. The figures show there were 769 individuals or families made homeless, or about to be, in 2013-14, more than three times the figure from 2012-13. This is partly down to the cutting of the council budget which helps them, but experts say benefits changes, like the so-called bedroom tax, and the economic downturn are also to blame. The council says the homelessness issue is nationwide and that the cuts it makes are down to the slashing of its funding from Government. The council's strategic director for adults, health and housing, said there has been a reduction in housing-related support funding for both accommodation based and community support schemes, which has impacted on services for these households. The Department for Communities and Local Government spokesman said Whitehall did not accept the latest homelessness figures from the council as they had not been through a “quality assurance process”. More [here](#).

More than 2000 homeless people in Madrid

More than 2,000 people are homeless in Madrid (Spain) and 35% have some form of disability according to a research performed by the department of Social Psychology of the University of Alcalá, in collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid. The research which involved more than 180 respondents shows that the number of homeless people has not increased significantly during the economic crisis. Of all the homeless people, about 80% are men. In addition, there is a significant increase in the average age of homeless people, from 40 years in the early 2000s to 47 today. Ten percent of respondents are under 30. The duration of homelessness episodes has doubled since 2000 and now amounts to seven years on average. The findings show an increase in homeless immigrants although seven out of ten homeless people are Spanish. Regarding education, the researchers have observed some changes through the years, with a positive trend in the education level of homeless people. The study found that nearly 65% of homeless people have completed secondary education and about 12% have college degrees. Among the respondents, only 3.2% are working, 79.3% are unemployed and 15.4% are retired. All of them are experiencing difficult economic conditions with average incomes of just over 200 euros per month. In addition, 24% of respondents had parents with problems with alcohol or drugs, in 18% of cases one of the parents has left the family home, 22% experienced family violence, 19% had been abused and 29% were raised by people other than their parents. One in three participants had attempted suicide, in 62% of the cases while they were homeless. More [here](#). (in Spanish)

6,600 people homeless in Westphalia

The latest homelessness statistics show that in 2013, 6600 people in Westphalia (Germany) were without their own place to live – 20 percent more than in 2012. The highest number of homeless people was recorded in Bielefeld (869) followed by Munster (733) and Gelsenkirchen (452). The increase in numbers is, according to the Ministry of Social Affairs partly due to a more accurate detection. The profile of homeless people has hardly changed in recent years: Almost three-quarters of homeless people are male, one in ten is under 18 years old and almost 30 percent of the adult homeless population have a migration background. In all of North Rhine-Westphalia, around 19,800 people were housed in homeless shelters and other facilities or stayed with friends in the past year. More [here](#).