e-bulletin

HABITACT
European exchange forum on local homeless strategies

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habitact news

HABITACT meeting in Bergamo – 25th October 2014 – Some key messages

We had an excellent turnout for the HABITACT meeting with representatives from 10-15 local authorities. We divided the meeting in three parts:

1.We had a discussion about local governance, based on the results of Nienke Boesveldt's research. Much of the discussion focused on the increasing challenges in reconciling local political social agendas and security agendas. It is generally felt that local public social/health/housing services responsible for reducing homelessness in their communities are feeling increasing pressure to keep streets free of homeless people, which in some cases can be reconciled with social policy objectives but if not managed correctly can potentially override social objectives. Austerity measures are felt to have contributed to this increasing pressure. Discussion to be continued.

2.We then had a brief discussion about existing HABITACT tools, namely the peer reviews and European projects like Housing First Europe. We will continue the peer reviews from 2015 onwards. As for European projects, HABITACT members are generally interested in building new projects. For some, Housing First remains a key priority (especially embedding it in public/statutory policy-making). For others, EU migration is a priority. Some are keen to build bilateral partnerships on local governance with HABITACT network members, namely using the European Structural and Investment Funds.

3.We then had a general discussion on key priorities or emerging challenges for local authorities in the network. The priorities included the following: the need to develop reconnection programmes for mobile EU citizens experiencing homelessness; the development of one-stop-shops, and namely addressing the practical barriers of shifting towards a more centralized approach; the need to build bridges with the health sector which is also experimenting Housing First; governance of homelessness was considered important, namely the need to develop effective homeless policies which link up different local services; the use of the EU Structural Funds to build social housing policy models; promoting housing solutions for asylum-seekers and the Roma population; barriers to implementing homeless policies such as lacking an official link to the local authority (lack of address, etc); the right to housing, namely legal frameworks like in Scotland which oblige local authorities to deliver support services to homeless people.

HABITACT peer review 2015— SAVE THE DATE

The next HABITACT peer review will be hosted by our colleagues from the City of Odense in Denmark on 9-10 April 2015. Themes are still to be decided, but generally the focus will be on homelessness in relation to public space and city planning. So please save the date in your diaries! More to come in January 2015.

To the HABITACT network: Call for information about tendering procedures

For local authorities who tender services for homeless people, we are interested in the criteria used in the tender specifications and namely the weighting of quality criteria versus cost criteria. The revised EU public procurement directive is currently being transposed into national law, and article 76 of Directive 2014/24 is about principles of awarding contracts in social services. We are interested in any information (in any language, yes we now have Google Translate!) from your perspective as contracting authorities and any other information you may have about the transposition into national procurement legislation in your country.
Info@habitact.eu

local news

Athens and Thessaloniki in list of 'resilient cities'

In November 2014, Athens and Thessaloniki were named among 35 cities around the world that will join the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative, a 100-million-dollar scheme to create a network of urban centers that will cooperate to build "their own capacities to navigate the shocks and stresses of an increasingly complex 21st century.""We have put all our energy into protecting social cohesion but now we are looking for paths of sustainable growth and social revitalization," said Athens Mayor Giorgos Kaminis, who said the municipality was being rewarded for its plans for "urban regeneration, social innovation and entrepreneurship." More here

Housing First training course in Emilia-Romagna

On 30th October a training course was launched in the region of Emilia Romagna (Italy) to deepen knowledge of the Housing First approach, a model of intervention based on providing housing combined with support for people experiencing homelessness. The course consists of three modules.

- The first consists of two training days (30 October 17 November) aimed at 50 executives and managers of public and private services.
- The second consists of two training days (26 November and 10 December) addressing two distinct groups of 25 social workers in public and private services.
- The third consists of two half-days (5 and 26 February 2015) of joint working between managers and social workers who participated in modules 1 and 2 to share knowledge, methods, expectations and to develop / strengthen innovative methods of social planning.

More here.

City of Odense tracks homeless people in the city to better adapt offer of social outreach services

The city services have piloted the use of a tracking device to monitor the movements of homeless people within the city, to better understand their needs. Many formerly public spaces in the city have been privatised, so that homeless people have to move around more often and this makes it harder to do effective outreach work. Homeless people were invited to take part in the pilot and many responded positively — 20 people took part in the first phase of the project. Every six months, movements of homeless people were tracked over a week. The GPS positioning of individuals was anonymous. The data is now being analysed and will contribute to the city's social planning for the coming years. A TED talk by local policy-maker Tom Rønning provides detailed information about the pilot in English.

Scottish local authorities meet to take stock of homelessness practice

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group, jointly convened by COSLA (the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and the Scottish Government, hosted its annual event on 10 December 2014 where the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options Hubs of Scotland report on progress in tackling homelessness in their areas. They also use the occasion to share information and network, as well as learning about practice. Scotland's 32 local authorities work together in 'hubs' (6 or 7 in each) who work with each other, do joint training, peer reviews of practice, etc. This year the following themes were on the programme: employability and homelessness, European good practices, women's health improvement, health and social care integration. In the European practices workshop, they were given information about the HABITACT network and some of the prevention strategies adopted by other European cities. For more : info@habitact.eu

Paris city « housing pact » : 24 proposals published

In June 2014, the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and Paris housing councilor Ian Brossat, signed a pact entitled « Housing for all » with key stakeholders aiming to create 10.000 new housing units per year, accessible to all Parisians. Key stakeholders include the city, the French State, the Ile-de-France region, investors, building companies, social housing providers, and institutional landlords like transport companies, hospitals, and others which have important real estate portfolios. Since then, the stakeholders have worked on developing key actions to implement the pact, and on 18 December 2014 they published 24 concrete proposals which will be the basis for a 2015 action plan. The proposals include the need to convert empty office space into housing (providing various incentives); identifying private rental housing which can provide affordable alternatives to low-income households; rethinking the distribution of housing in the city and reviewing the local urban plans (PLU) to allow for use of all relevant spaces in the city. More here in French.

Haarlem city council adopts motion on homelessness

A motion was adopted by Haarlem councillors (in the Netherlands) on 27 November on access to basic shelter for all in the city. The collective complaint lodged (and won) by FEANTSA vs The Netherlands, highlighting the unfair criteria of local connection in order to access shelter (declared to be in breach of the European Social Charter and its Article 31 on the right to housing), has influenced this motion. More here.

news from europe

New Junker Investment Plan for Europe
On 25th November 2014, the new European Commission unveiled an investment plan to relaunch Europe's economy. While the plan lacks a clear social investment policy agenda, a joint task force (consisting of representatives from the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and national government representatives) was set up to make recommendations for key investment areas. The final report of the taskforce highlights the need to invest in « social infrastructures », and namely in social housing. More here about the investment plan.

Fourth Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion
The annual event of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP) took place in Brussels on 20-21 November 2014 and gathered over 700 participants, from policy makers to local, regional and national public authorities and representatives of the civil society. The Convention aims to discuss the progress and way forward to fight poverty and social exclusion. This year the focus was on social innovation. One of the workshops focused on strengthening housing security through preventing evictions, with a presentation of the study commissioned by the European Commission on « homelessness prevention in the context of evictions». More here.

Update on the European Structural and Investment Funds
All countries have now adopted their "partnership agreements" with the European Commission, highlighting their key investment priorities for 2014-2020. Country fiches are available here where you can find information about the national investment priorities and the number of "operational programmes" (OP) which will be adopted in the coming weeks. The number of OPs per country varies tremendously — for instance France is planning 40 OPs, Spain plans 22 OPs, and Lithuania is planning one single OP combining all ESIF funds. FEANTSA adopted a statement early November which contains some key information and links to progress on mainstreaming homelessness in the ESIF. If you would like to receive regular updates about the ESIF, contact liz.gosme@feantsa.org

Research on EU migration: "Open Borders – Closed Societies?"
Andrea Zierler from Vienna, Austria has published her Master thesis on the topic of EU free movement. The focus is on "Challenges of Social Inclusion in Times of Free Movement: A Sociological Analysis of Views and Experiences from Local Homeless Services across Europe". A number of people in the HABITACT network were consulted in the framework of the research. This report contains relevant information on the reasons for mobility, structural barriers and individual problems, as well as some existing good practices to tackle this "new kind of homelessness in Europe". More here.
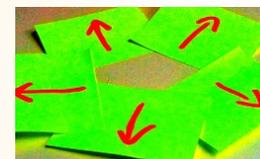
European Court of Justice decision on social welfare benefits for foreign EU citizens
The Court of Justice of the EU (ECJ) delivered a pivotal judgment on 11 November in the Dano case, concerning access to social welfare benefits for EU citizens who move to another Member State. Mrs Dano, a Romanian citizen, claimed the right to receive German job seekers benefits - a case which was referred all the way up to the ECJ. Essentially, the Dano case concerns the interpretation of existing rules around EU free movement and the extent to which EU migrants have a right to equal treatment with nationals of the host member state with regards to access to benefits. The type of benefit Mrs Dano was applying for is a "special non-contributory benefit" (SNCB) under the EU regulation on social security coordination. Several EU countries have such SNCBs e.g. social assistance/income support schemes, with no contribution requirements or means testing. In addition, the EU citizens Directive provides that EU citizens are entitled to equal treatment regarding benefits on the territory of another Member State, except during their first three months of entry, if they are job-seekers or if they are seeking student grants before five years residence. But the ECJ ruled that SNCBs falled outside the scope of this directive. It is likely the UK and other national governments willuse this precedent to defend their restrictions on EU migrants' access to non-contributory benefits.
More here.

Opening of Eurostat online Census Hub
The online census hub contains data collected during the 2011 population and housing census. It includes data on housing arrangements, namely households in conventional dwellings, in collective living quarters, other housing units and homeless. However since this was a first attempt to encourage offices of national statistics to include homeless households in the European census, there are various data gaps, especially concerning countries using population registers for the census, and underestimations of homelessness. So that this Eurostat homeless data is to be interpreted with caution. FEANTSA's European observatory on homelessness has published a review of statistics in several countries. See Eurostat press release here

local trends

Dublin — Results of 2014 rough sleeping count

On 21st November 2014, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive released its official figures from the winter (November 2014) count on rough sleeping, which identified 168 persons to be sleeping rough across the Dublin region on the 11th November 2014.

-The figure of 168 is compared with the winter (November 2013) count, which identified 139 persons to be sleeping rough. There is an increase of 29 persons or 20%. There was a 60% increase between winter 2012 and winter 2013 figures.

-On the night of the count, 1,526 unique adult individuals were accommodated in homeless service emergency accommodation across the Dublin region

-70% of the known persons who are rough sleeping, regularly access emergency accommodation

-Arrangements are in place to provide a further 152 emergency beds for homeless persons by end 2014 (to include provision for Cold Weather Initiative). This is to continue the effort to respond to the significant step-up in demand for homeless services across the Dublin region. More here.

Brno carries out third street count

The city of Brno in the Czech Republic has been actively tackling homelessness, and carries out street counts every 4 years to better understand numbers and profiles of homeless people in the city. After 2006 and 2010, the last street count was carried out in March 2014 aiming to

1) Identify and update information on the phenomenon of homelessness in the city of Brno (mainly quantitative, but also partly qualitative).

2) Contribute to the overall expertise on this phenomenon, especially in the field of social work.

The ETHOS typology was used as a starting point for developing the street count methdology.

The main results of the count are available in the table below. In total, 1950 people were counted, 1398 men and 552 women. 515 people were found sleeping rough, 689 people in « commerical hostels », 33 people

in night shelters, 482 people in temporary support centres and 231 people in « other institutions ». More here in Czech.

North-Rhein Westphalia — threat of homelessness on the increase

A study on homelessness prevention in the German region of North-Rhein Westphalia shows that the imminent loss of housing is a problem for a growing number of citizens in the region. According to the study, which was commissioned by the NRW Ministry of Social Affairs, the number of households at risk of homelessness from 2007 to 2012 increased by ten percent. In 2012, a total of 53,000 households were at risk of homelessness, as Dr Volker Busch-Geertsema and Dr. Ulf Ekke-Ruhstrat (the two authors of the study) explained - and at least 90,000 to 100,000 people. The highest increase was in medium-sized cities with 25,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The problem is greatest in the cities along the Rhine and Ruhr, led by Gelsenkirchen and Dortmund.

The majority is aged between 25 and 60 years old. The immediate reason for the impending loss of housing in almost 90 percent of the cases is **rent arrears**. Relatively worry is also the high proportion of people under 25 years who are threatened with homelessness, mainly due to conflicts with their families. The study also formulates policy recommendations to intervene as early as possible to prevent homelessness, including the need for more coordinated action between key players (local authorities, job centres, welfare organisations and housing organisations) and the need for better knowledge of households threatened homelessness—in half the cases, this information is only available when an eviction notice is issued by local courts. More here in German.

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	Věk	Lůžková sociální zařízení	Noční krizová centra	Komerční ubytovny	Jiné instituce	Lidé venku (Terénní sčítání)	CELKEM
Muži	18 – 25 let	27	1	29	7	11	75
	26 – 60 let	219	27	385	149	326	1.106
	61 a více	28	5	60	28	52	173
	nezjištěno	0	0	0	0	44	44
	Σ:	274	33	474	184	433	1.398
Ženy	18 – 25 let	29	0	23	0	5	57
	26 – 60 let	169	0	156	33	68	426
	61 a více	10	0	36	14	4	64
	nezjištěno	0	0	0	0	5	5
	Σ:	208	0	215	47	82	552
CELKEM		482	33	689	231	515	1.950