

habitact news

HABITACT peer review 2015 - meeting report

The 6th HABITACT peer review was held in Odense (Denmark) on 9-10 April 2015. It was hosted by The Odense City Hall with the support of FEANTSA. The Odense policy/service provision model was taken as a starting point for European exchanges on local homeless policy-making between local policy-makers, using a peer review methodology. The aim as every year was to create a dynamic and motivating process from which both the host and the peers could benefit, with the following outputs: To identify, evaluate and disseminate good practice on the Odense model; To look at the implementation of the model on a practical level; To assess whether and how good practice can be effectively transferred to other local authorities; To provide a learning opportunity for cities throughout Europe about the implementation process or policy approaches and programmes in Odense. The meeting report will be available online soon.

Call for updates on local policy

The review of the policy bank is in progress. You have until 31 October to submit any updates for your local policy. The next review will take place in March 2016. You can check the entries for your local authority [here](#).

Call for info on Housing First pilots

Housing First is one of many innovations to solve the problem of homelessness that is extending around Europe. Is your city involved in a Housing First pilot project? HABITACT is gathering information on good practices around innovative Housing First projects. Please tell us about your experience by contacting info@habitact.eu.

HABITACT hotspot at FEANTSA annual policy conference, Paris 2015

The FEANTSA annual policy conference was held in Paris (June 2015) and gave participants the opportunity to collect good practice and better understand the impact of Europe on their daily work.

Organisers had three goals for the two-day meeting, which convened 300 European practitioners on homelessness at Paris City Hall:

- Support policy and practice in the field of homelessness, with a focus on social service/policy innovation, helping practitioners to learn from other EU countries.
- Link local realities to different European policy/legal frameworks, demonstrating where synergies exist already and reflect on potential synergies.
- Provide space for the emergence of new transnational dynamics through organized networking hotspots.

As part of the programme, various “networking hotspots” brought together like-minded people with great intentions to network strategically in meetings and creative spaces. A HABITACT hotspot took place, interesting ideas and discussions were held on local homelessness strategies. Stefano Galliani, Member of FEANTSA board and elected social affairs councillor in the province of Bergamo (Italy) gave a brief presentation of the HABITACT network. Simon Vanackere, deputy head of cabinet of Dominique Versini, social affairs councillor presented the Paris homelessness strategy. Tom Rønning, social policy consultant in the city of Odense discussed the HABITACT peer review process and results. A presentation on the Amsterdam homelessness strategy in a comparative European perspective was given by Nienke Boesveldt, responsible for homelessness programmes. For more information contact us at info@habitact.eu.



local news

Costs of the persecution of rough sleeping in Budapest

Since 2013, rough sleeping can be treated as an offense in Hungary, and can be punished by public work interest, a fine, or, in case of failure of complying with these penalties, or for “repeat offenders”, imprisonment. In December 2013 a separate Government Bureau was set up, examining cases of chronic rough sleeping. A special police squad was organised to patrol the streets of Budapest and request homeless people “occupying public space for living purposes” in the forbidden zones to leave those premises. If someone refused to move when requested, they were driven to the above mentioned Bureau. The [City is For All](#), a grassroots organisation fighting for “an egalitarian and just society”, including housing rights and the rights of homeless people, has [published data](#) about the costs of the criminalisation of rough sleeping since December 2013:

| Type of expenditure | Cost (euro) |
|--|--------------------|
| Setting up of Bureaus in Budapest and major cities | 63.300 |
| Running of Bureaus | 756.667 |
| Running of shelter in Budapest Bureau | 2.000* |
| Operational costs of special police squad | 108.200 |
| Total | 930.167 eur |

**The shelter was first operated by an NGO from their own budget, then, since May 2014, by BMSZKI, the city’s homeless service provider.*

Brussels takes action to ensure decent housing for homeless people

As part of the fight against homelessness, directly related to the problem of access to housing, the Brussels Region presented a system of "rolling tenure" that should be organised in the coming months. This is a fairly simple principle that allows NGOs to take rental housing and, in the context of a precarious occupancy agreement, to rent it to someone in a precarious situation. During a transitional period that revolves around 18 months, the NGO guarantees rent to the landlords, but also socially supports the tenants. The goal is that the tenant proves that she or he is able to support personally the lease. This system, unique in Belgium, has the merit to respond to a triple challenge. It provides the tenant with a certain first sustainability within the same housing. It then provides social support and adapted to the needs of each tenant, support that is often missing, but that reassures many landlords. Finally, it helps encourage new owners to make their property available. The private housing stock holds much potential for developing affordable housing solutions which NGOs yet have to exploit. More [here](#) (in French).

Free wi-fi charity project helps homeless people in Prague

People in Prague can connect to the Internet or recharge their phone or tablet in the street within the "live wi-fi network" project that employs a homeless man who should gradually be followed by other people in a difficult life situation. The participating homeless people will have to be standing in a pre-determined part of Prague for eight hours a day. The organising NGO hopes that its project will return order and regular working habits to its employees' lives. The sociologist Libor Prudky, who has been participating in work on a concept of dealing with homelessness on Prague as well as national levels, said “every initiative that aims to help homeless people is good”, but he added that he is sceptical about this particular project. He told that in working with the homeless, it is necessary to go more deeply and to help them seek ways out of their situation. More [here](#).

Welsh homeless laws setting example for the rest of the UK

The findings are from state-of-the nation report [The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2015](#), an independent study commissioned and funded by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree foundation analysing the impact of economic and policy developments on homelessness in Wales. The report says that the Housing (Wales) has ushered in major changes by placing a much stronger legal emphasis on prevention and relief for anyone at risk of or facing homelessness. In England in particular, councils have much weaker legal duties, meaning people are often turned away from help at a time when homelessness could be prevented. The Welsh Government is the first UK administration to take such an approach, and experiences there will yield valuable lessons for the wider UK. However, the report warns that welfare reforms and cuts introduced by the UK Government risk undermining any progress achieved. If passed, this would leave Wales with the most insecure tenancies in the UK. More [here](#).

Barcelona fines banks 60.000€ for empty homes

Barcelona city council has acted on its promise to fine banks with empty houses on their books, charging several banks 60.000€ in total due to 12 homes having been empty for more than two years. “Public authorities have an obligation to use all possible resources to confront the housing emergency”, Barcelona’s mayor, Ada Colau, said. Colau, a former housing activist who leads the leftist coalition [Barcelona en Comú](#), said the fines were aimed at forcing banks to make use of empty properties. Those fined have a month to find tenants or face an additional charge of 10.000€. If no action is taken after two months they could face another fine of up to 15.000€. More [here](#) (in Spanish).



news from europe

FEANTSA 2015 Policy Conference

The [FEANTSA Policy Conference 2015](#): "Homelessness, a Local Phenomenon with a European Dimension – Key Steps to Connect Communities to Europe", took place in Paris, France from 18th-20th June 2015. The conference was preceded by a number of service visits and meetings, including a Housing Rights Watch one-day [conference on strategic litigation](#). Read the Policy Conference [press release](#) and see the [photos](#). All speakers' [presentations are now online](#) and the Twitter proceedings can be found under [#feantsa2015](#). At its meeting following the FEANTSA 2015 Policy Conference on 20th June, the FEANTSA General Assembly adopted the Paris Declaration, which is currently available in Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Polish and Spanish on the [conference webpage](#).

The EU is faced with an unprecedented wave of asylum seekers, and a series of actions are being taken

On 23 September, the European Commission adopted 40 infringement decisions against several Member States for failing to fully implement legislation making up the Common European Asylum System. The pieces of legislation concerned focus on fairer, quicker and better quality asylum decisions (the Asylum Procedures Directive); ensuring that there are humane physical reception conditions (**such as housing**) for asylum seekers across the EU (the Reception Conditions Directive); and clarifying the grounds for granting international protection (the Qualification Directive). More [here](#).

URBACT III programme launched

Shortly after being approved in December 2014, the [URBACT III programme](#) launched the 1st call for the creation of 20 action-planning networks. The aim: support European cities with the design of sustainable and integrated urban strategies and action plans. In the framework of this call, 99 network proposals were submitted, involving more than 400 cities across Europe. This is a clear sign that the demand is strong at local level: cities are looking for opportunities to share experiences, find solutions and build up capacities to address the complex challenges they face today. A second call will be launched this autumn. The Habitact coordination team will follow this programme closely. More [here](#).

European seminar on how to prevent evictions, 16th October, Brussels

On 16th October, the DG Employment of the European Commission, Social Affairs and Inclusion will be hosting a European seminar on Housing in the European Union – data and best practices to prevent evictions in Brussels. The seminar will cover various aspects of housing, economy and social inclusion. It will also examine policies to protect the right to housing and to ensure rapid re-housing with intensive social support for evicted and homeless people with complex needs.

Driving Action to End Homelessness; the Role of National and Regional Strategies and Grassroots Campaigns

The European End Street Homelessness Campaign is a pan European movement of cities, working together to permanently house Europe's most vulnerable people and end chronic street homelessness by 2020. The campaign will support cities across Europe in a growing movement that aims to use innovative, housing-led approaches that actively contribute to ending homelessness in European cities. It is inspired by the successful 100,000 Homes Campaign in the United States, but is being adapted to work in a

European context. It is being jointly developed by the [Building and Social Housing Foundation](#) (BSHF) and [FEANTSA](#). Organisations from several cities (London, Copenhagen, Brno, Barcelona and Madrid) met in London in September as a first step in this campaign. The next step is a meeting in Helsinki in October, following an international peer exchange looking at the success of the homelessness strategy and Housing First approach used by the Y-Foundation ([Winner of the UN Habitat Award in 2014](#)). Cities and NGOs are encouraged to consider joining this campaign. More information can be found in [FAQ document](#), in an [article](#) published by FEANTSA and by contacting: office@feantsa.org or bshf@bshf.org.

OECD Focus on Homelessness and Housing

In its July report, Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery, the OECD focuses on "Homelessness, The Homeless and Integrated Social Services", observing that "Models that provide housing first and then integrate health and social care support are effective treatments for chronic homelessness", "nearly one third of OECD countries have committed to integrating social services for the homeless in an official national strategy", and "cooperation between sectors is important". More [here](#).

Housing First Guide Filming

FEANTSA went to Newcastle, Glasgow, Paris, Madrid and Utrecht this month and last month to film Housing First services. The film crew will travel to Helsinki at the end of August as well. The video will be available on the Housing First Guide Europe website as part of the online Guide, together with six different written chapters of the Guide and other materials. It is hoped that there will be a final English version of the Guide by the end of 2015. The Housing First Guide Europe will provide high quality resources on the nature, key principles, operational experience and limits of Housing First.

Defining the EU Urban Agenda, expert meeting on inclusive cities. Brussels, 16th September 2015

The expert-meeting on inclusive cities within the framework of the EU Urban Agenda took place the 16th September in Brussels. Several representatives from member states, city councils and experts from the social sector attended the meeting. Specific discussions aimed to gather an input from experts on the possible Priority Themes of the EU Urban Agenda. Local economy, housing and Homelessness, urban Poverty and social inclusion and asylum seekers were highlighted as key issues to be included in the EU urban agenda. Good practices, problems and solutions were discussed for each theme.

The European Parliament calls for Country Specific Recommendations to fight against extreme forms of poverty

Concerning the rapid increase of extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness, the European Parliament has adopted a report in which it agrees with the Commission that the Member States must tackle homelessness and risk of homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on: prevention, housing-led approaches, the reviewing of regulations and practices in relation to eviction and the availability of genuinely affordable housing offering stability, and an end to the criminalisation of homeless people. More [here](#).



local trends

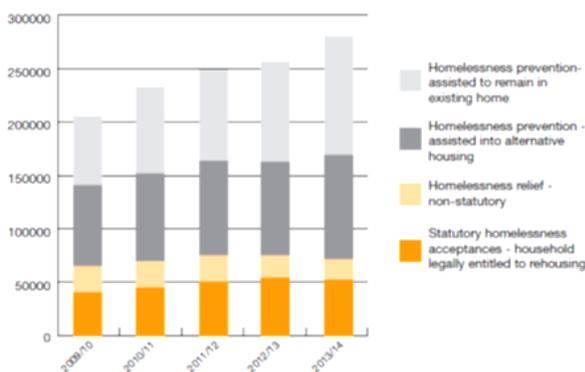
Madrid: 764 people sleeping rough each night on the streets of the capital

In Madrid there are 1.905 homeless, of which 764 are sleeping rough and the rest (1.141) spend the night in the municipal network of NGO centers or shelters, according to the latest count conducted last December by the City Council of the capital. The work has not been limited to a mere count: volunteers conducted interviews with 226 people who slept in the streets and other 227 temporarily housed in community centers. The average homeless profile is a man of 45 years with primary education (although 14% are undergraduates). Most are foreigners. They are unemployed and mainly live on minimum income support. They blame their situation on the lack of work. And six out of ten say they have suffered insults, assaults, robberies or degrading treatment by people who do not live on the street. The number of people sleeping on the street is slightly higher than in previous years: 621 in 2006; 650 in 2008; 553 in 2009; 596 in 2010; 701 in 2012; and 764 in December 2014. More [here](#) (in Spanish).

Homelessness Increases in London 'Due To Welfare Reforms'

Welfare reforms are driving London's poor and vulnerable into deeper poverty and homelessness. The Homelessness Monitor, an annual independent report published by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, says the amount of people sleeping rough rose by 5% in 2014, while the number of people in London facing homelessness increased by 12%. A combination of benefit caps, the bedroom tax and increased use of benefit sanctions have been blamed for creating a perfect storm of poverty. The Homelessness Monitor report also says the bedroom tax has contributed to an 18% rise in social housing repossessions. If tenants in social housing can not afford the rent there, it is highly likely they would not be able to afford a private rental. More [here](#).

Figure 4.8 Overview of local authority action to assist homeless (and potentially homeless) households



All regions in Ireland see rise in child homelessness

The data show that while Dublin has seen its homeless children population increase by 44 per cent in the six months to June, the numbers have gone up by 130 per cent outside Dublin. Every region of the State, bar one, has seen an increase in child homelessness. The total number of children in emergency accommodation across the State in the week of June 22nd-28th was 1,318, in 620 families. This compares with 865 children in 401 families in emergency accommodation in the week of 19th to 25th January and represents a 55 per cent increase in child homelessness the first six months of the year. More [here](#).



International trends

10,047 homeless people in King County (Seattle)

The 35th annual One Night Count of homeless people in King County took place in January 2015. The Coalition organised more than 800 volunteers who fanned out across the county to count the number of men, women and children who were homeless and sleeping outdoors without shelter between 2:00 and 5:00 a.m. They counted people trying to survive in cars and tents, riding late night buses, or curled up in blankets under bridges or in doorways. That same night, staff at agencies that operate shelters and transitional housing programmes recorded select information about the people staying in their programmes. At least 3,772 men, women, and children were without shelter during the three hour street count. This number is an increase of 21% over those found without shelter last year. This number is always assumed to be an undercount, mainly because many people take great care not to be visible. More [here](#).



Homelessness is at its highest point since the Great Depression in New York

A record of 60,000 homeless New Yorkers, including more than 25,000 children, sleep in shelters each night. During the last fiscal year, one in 42 children slept in the homeless shelter system, including one of every 17 African-American children and one of every 34 Latino children. According to the current administration, these unprecedented levels of homelessness stem directly from previous administration policies that eliminated permanent housing resources from homeless children and families, the campaign Homes for Every New Yorker says in its website (homesforeverynewyorker.org). More [here](#).