

habitact news

HABITACT year 1: Taking stock

The steering group of HABITACT met in Brussels on 3 June 2010 to review the first year of the network and agree on priorities for the future. The first year of HABITACT has yielded positive results. Some of the outputs include the following:

- We have prepared a 3-year European research/peer exchange project on the relation between local welfare systems and homelessness. The partnership for the project is made up of a consortium of 11 research partners and 20 local authorities.
- The City of Amsterdam hosted a peer review, taking Amsterdam homeless policy as a starting point for European exchanges and transposing the PROGRESS peer review method to the local level.
- We have developed an online policy bank with information about local homeless policies. Currently the bank contains more than 70 entries and is growing steadily.

Priority issues for the next year include homeless migrants, prevention of homelessness, and testing housing first approaches to homelessness.

More information is available in the members area of the HABITACT website www.habitact.eu

European dimension of local homeless strategies

Two HABITACT members (Amsterdam and Esch-sur-Alzette) shared their impressions with 130 participants at the 5th European seminar on local homeless strategies which took place in Brussels on 4 June 2010.

In a session on the "European dimension of local homeless strategies", our colleagues gave an insight into the reasons they use HABITACT as a European tool for cooperation on local homeless policy.

See presentations by Esch-sur-Alzette and Amsterdam cities [here](#).

Patronage of the European Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions (CoR), an EU advisory body representing local and regional authorities in EU debates, has officially granted its patronage to HABITACT to support the development of the network as a European tool for local social policy administrations.



During this European Year 2010 to combat poverty and social exclusion, the CoR has actively supported European initiatives on homelessness and will send clear messages to the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on combating homelessness. The social affairs commission of the CoR will aim to adopt a position on combating homelessness in October 2010, formulating recommendations for action.

Briefing on ERDF funding available

A briefing on the use of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) opportunities is now available in the members area of the HABITACT website. Up to 3% of the ERDF funding for each EU member state can now be used for housing interventions for marginalised communities, namely renovation of shelters and transformation of other buildings into shelters, but also transformation of shelters into supported housing.

Partner cities:

<i>Amsterdam (NL)</i>	<i>Esch-sur-Alzette (LU)</i>
<i>Aarhus (DK)</i>	<i>Ghent (BE)</i>
<i>Athens (GR)</i>	<i>Madrid (ES)</i>
<i>Bærum (NO)</i>	<i>Odense (DK)</i>
<i>Dublin (IE)</i>	<i>Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)</i>

Go to the [website](#) for more info.

This e-bulletin is available online at

www.habitact.eu

local news

Launch of local homeless strategy in Cascais

The establishment and implementation of the Plan for the Integration of People who are Homeless end of March 2010 in the city of Cascais (Portugal) provided a clear reflection on the type of approach needed to address a problem that was already being tackled through different interventions by a wide range of services in the city.

The Plan includes the following objectives:

- The joint working of different agencies on homelessness moving towards the implementation of an integrated approach;
- The adoption of a common understanding/concept of homelessness, contributing to the demystification of pre-existing ideas about the phenomenon of homelessness;
- The formalisation of procedures for coordination between social agencies in the local authority area;
- The consolidation of the local social network in Cascais, by gathering the network members around specific and practical actions;
- Co-responsibility of the social agencies involved in tackling homelessness and developing appropriate action;
- An evaluation of the local approach to tackle homelessness, and the use of the lessons learned in order to develop similar integrated responses in other related social fields

See more [here](#) (in Portuguese)

Frankfurt dental care scheme for homeless people

The City of Frankfurt-Main has inaugurated a scheme designed to provide dental care for homeless people. This is the first of its kind in Germany. Financed by Caritas, the City of Frankfurt and private donors, the project targets the most marginalised people in Frankfurt who cannot afford the cost of dental care.

The Deputy Mayor of Frankfurt, Mrs. Daniela Birkenfeld believes “This project is of paramount importance, especially for people living on the street who have no opportunity to go to the dentist. It is particularly important to have a starting point.”

Prague to promote employment of homeless people

The city of Prague (Czech Republic) is launching a European Social Fund (ESF) project called “Back to Work” which targets homeless people in Prague using a budget of around € 1 million. It will include specialized teams in the streets of the city, advisory services, job training, aiming to find jobs on the open labour market. The project should start in September 2010.

Glasgow shortlisted for best practice award in Scotland

Glasgow City Council was among the contenders for the Partnership Working Award of the 2010 Care Accolade, the self-style “Oscars” of Social care in Scotland.

The Awards, now in their seventh year, are organised by the Scottish Social Services Council in partnership with the Scottish Government to celebrate and promote good practice and workforce development in social services. Winning an Accolade gives organisations, teams or projects recognition of their achievement and allows them to share best practice with other organisations. Shortlisted entries come from the private sector, voluntary sector and local authorities.

On 11 June 2010, the winners were announced and Glasgow city council won the partnership award for its homelessness prevention work carried out with South West, Govan Law Centre and Govan Money Matters Advice Centre. This project was set up in 2005. The South West of Glasgow project's approach set up to stop re-possession and evictions and generally prevent homelessness through the provision of a package of support to the client. The package includes quality legal representation, money and benefits advice and access to specialised support services and dedicated coordination of support services. Over 1500 families and individuals have avoided becoming homeless since the project began.

See more [here](#).

Brussels promotion of social integration through housing

The government of the Brussels region has allocated €2.1 million to 30 organisations working for social integration through housing (AIPL— “associations d’insertion par le logement”). The announcement was made by the secretary of State in Brussels, Mr. Chritos Doukerdis.

There are different types of AIPL, including organizations which support vulnerable tenants and organizations which work with clear target groups (people with disabilities, homeless people, migrants). They work mostly on the rental market, especially in the private sector, providing information, training and support to vulnerable groups.

Two new organizations are now receiving regional funding: Fami-Home and Samenlevingsopbouw. Fami-home develops housing solutions for formerly homeless people, and Samenlevingsopbouw develops integration projects in several neighbourhoods using a community approach.

Mr. Doukerdis made clear his resolve to strengthen the sector financially in a bid to fight against the housing crisis and the difficult conditions facing most vulnerable households in the private rental market.

See more [here](#) (in French)

Danish local authorities exchange experiences on homelessness

Odense and Aarhus (HABITACT members) network with other municipalities in Denmark involved in the implementation of the Danish national homeless strategy. The local political managers meet, the local strategy managers meet, and the local social workers meet. The networks are facilitated by the Danish National Board of Social Services ("Servicestyrelsen").

Polish municipalities involved in project on quality standards

The municipalities of Wroclaw, Warsaw, Gdansk, Gdynia, and many others in Poland are involved in a Polish project to develop quality standards in homeless services. The project is called "District Standard of Getting out of Homelessness" and aims to develop a model for measuring quality in homeless services.

This is a 3-year project (from January 2010 - December 2013) involving a wide range of stakeholders including researchers, representatives of homeless service providers and representatives of the public sector (namely local authority centers for social welfare).

This project has a number of objectives including:

- The creation of a coherent system of social policies aimed at tackling and mitigating the effects of homelessness and the threat of homelessness
- Develop and implement local strategies to tackle homelessness and the creation of local partnerships.

See more information [here](#) (in Polish)

Venice launches e-inclusion project for homeless

Venice municipality (in Italy) held a press conference to launch its Web Info Point. The Info Point is located inside the Day Centre for homeless people in Mestre-Venezia and is designed to enhance autonomy and the social and labour integration of clients. Introductory courses on ICT will be organised, as the next step of project implementation. Homelessness is a transient state, and homeless needs are changeable, therefore all measures aimed at helping this part of population must bear this in mind. Local trends show that the number of homeless people, as monitored by the City of Venice Social Services, has increased by over the last year.

See more about Venice homeless services [here](#).

Norwegian cities cooperate in social housing project

The Norwegian Housing State Bank (East Region) has launched a Social Housing Development Programme with four municipalities: Bærum, Hamar, Lillehammer and Lørenskog. The initiative was launched in 2009 with the objective finding new solutions for people at a disadvantage in the housing market.

Each municipality has defined its own challenges or areas of focus, and implements the programme according to the local context.

Through cooperation with local governments, the Housing Bank aims to contribute to developing comprehensive, targeted and locally based social housing strategies leading to sustainable results.

See more [here](#) (in Norwegian)

Barcelona local network of social housing

Against the background of the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social exclusion, the second deputy mayor of Social Action and Citizenship, Mr. Ricard Goma and representatives of 50 major social organisations have launched a local network of social housing in Barcelona, Spain.

The network will cater for almost 1000 people in 245 flats and is accessed by referral from homeless shelters. It is part of a Barcelona Citizen's Agreement for Inclusion consisting of 420 entities, and aims to coordinate social and housing policies to provide an overview of housing supply, and to promote complementarity and joint action between the public sector and social partners.

Breda sets target to reduce homelessness by 2013

The City of Breda in the Netherlands has set an ambitious homelessness target by 2013 or earlier if possible. The target is to reduce street homelessness by 60% within a three year time span. The aim of the programme, dubbed "Urban Compass", is to provide sustainable and housing solutions for street homeless people.

Similar policies have been launched and implemented in the Dutch cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague, and have now been extended to cities like Breda.

During the implementation stage, the municipality will work hand in hand with the Foundation of Shelters Breda (SMO) and other healthcare facilities to reach the target. In stark contrast to other cities where the motto has been coercion, in Breda the motto will be "no coercion."

news from europe

5th European seminar on local homeless strategies

A European seminar on 4 June 2010 co-hosted with FEANTSA and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) attracted 130 participants, namely representatives from local authorities and other important local partners such as outreach services, prison services, railway stations, and police services. The seminar focused on the theme: "Homelessness in public and private spaces: Mind the policy gap".

It was an opportunity for local level players to network and gather practical information on effective ways to tackle homelessness.

Speaker presentations as well as the seminar report are now available [online](#).

EU migration and impact on homelessness

The Committee of the Regions has published a briefing on the impact of EU internal migration on homelessness. The briefing focuses only on countries where robust data is available (UK, Ireland), but formulates conclusions and recommendations.

The report concludes that, overall, while there have been major economic benefits from the free movement of people and EU enlargement, the negative impact of increased levels of homelessness among EU internal migrants needs to be given further consideration. There are also implications for local and regional authorities. These include the need for additional resources, the adaptation of existing approaches to tackling homelessness, and the revamping of services for the homeless to meet the specific needs of migrants from EU-12 Member States.

See more on the HABITACT website (Members' area, "Documents" section)

Cities and « active inclusion »

The network of local observatories on active inclusion (NLAO) promotes mutual learning and analysis of the links between local, national and European policies on Active Inclusion.

On 8 July they will present the findings on how cities shape their housing and employment services in order to contribute to the social inclusion of those furthest away from the labour market. The discussions will involve representatives of cities, stakeholder organisations and European institutions, focusing on how to best join forces to realise the ambitions of the EU Active Inclusion Strategy and inspire future policy developments at European level.

See more [here](#)

EU poverty target adopted

On 17 June 2010, the European Council (i.e. all 27 Heads of state and government) adopted the new Europe 2020 strategy which sets out priorities for the next decade.

The European Council has confirmed the five EU headline targets which will constitute shared objectives guiding the action of Member States and the Union as regards promoting employment; improving the conditions for innovation, research and development; meeting climate change and energy objectives; improving education levels and promoting social inclusion in particular through the reduction of poverty.

The EU poverty target is defined as the following: "...promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion."

The population is defined as the number of persons who are at risk-of-poverty and exclusion according to three indicators (at-risk-of poverty; material deprivation; jobless household), leaving Member States free to set their national targets on the basis of the most appropriate indicators, taking into account their national circumstances and priorities.

The EU poverty target is the first in the history of the European Union, and should help to keep up the EU political momentum on poverty over the next decade.

See the European Council conclusions [here](#)

Joint Report on social protection and social inclusion

This new political context (with a new EU poverty target) must enable Europe 2020 to support the conclusions of the 2010 Joint Report on social protection & social inclusion. In March 2010, the European Commission and the Council of ministers jointly adopted this annual Joint Report, which reviews the main trends in social protection and social inclusion across the EU. The Report calls upon Member States to develop integrated homelessness strategies, putting forward elements for effective strategies:

- they have to have clear targets ;
- they should be integrated covering all relevant policy fields ;
- they have to be underpinned by proper governance ;
- they have to be steered by proper data collection ;
- they should have a strong housing dimension ;
- they should take account of changing profiles of the homeless population, and more in particular the impact of migration.

Click on the "Supporting Document" which can be found on the European Commission's website [here](#).

HOME04 European project – study visit in Granada

The **PEOPLE programme** (a European mini-programme led by the Junta of Andalusia and co-funded under the Interregional Cooperation programme INTERREG IVC), set up a partnership project on e-inclusion and homelessness called HOME04 between the Andalusia Public Foundation for Social Integration and Assistance, the City of Seville, Andalusia Health Services, the City of Granada, the City of Venice from the Veneto region and the Employment Agency Södermaln of the Stockholm region. FEANTSA is a supporting partner in this partnership.

The project will analyse and develop integrated policies with a local focus promoting the participation of homeless people by developing and using ICT to improve care and promote inclusion. After a launch meeting in February 2010, the partnership had a first study visit in Granada on 19 June 2010, which focused on themes such as women and homelessness, mental health, healthcare, housing and employment.

Contact [Tamara Hodas](#) for more information.

FEANTSA campaign on ending homelessness

In the framework of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, FEANTSA is running a campaign called 'Ending Homelessness'. Throughout Europe, our members are organising campaign activities. The central message of this campaign is that homelessness can and should be ended.

The campaign “Handbook” is aimed at policy makers and others seeking to tackle homelessness in Europe. It sets out the need for ambitious strategies which aim to end homelessness. It details the priorities and essential components that such strategies should contain. More specifically, it presents a set of five goals that strategies to end homelessness must work towards achieving, and gives examples of approaches that have been used to make progress towards them, including approaches adopted by some local authorities in Europe.

See more [here](#).



local trends

Number of homeless people on the rise in Pisa

According to a study by the Caritas Diocese in Pisa (Italy), the number of homeless people has doubled over the past 9 years (from 80 to 150) in a 9-year time span (between 2000 and 2009). These figures were mentioned at a conference held at Pisa Leopolda station on situations of extreme exclusion (“Accogliere, promuovere, mediare nei contesti di marginalità”). The study also revealed that the number of foreign nationals living in precarious conditions has increased by 55% from 2006 to 2009.

These results prompted the Mayor of Pisa, Mr. Marco Filippeschi, to urge people “to work together to reduce behaviours which violate the rules of civil coexistence.”

See more [here](#) (in Italian)

Stuttgart - New peak young homeless people

In Stuttgart, trends indicate that the number of homeless men and women under 25 years is on the rise. A new peak was recorded in 2009 when the survey revealed that 1265 people were homeless. This, according to official figures, represents a rise of 17% compared to last year.

The survey conducted by the National Center for Young Adults (ZBS) also revealed that 264 young people were living on the street. When revealing the findings, Sabine Henninger, coordinator of ZBS, pointed at the lack of qualified staff as a challenge that has to be overcome as soon as possible.

This shortage of staff has rendered their work more and more unmanageable. The organisation is sometimes faced with a situation where only two people have to look after 440 to 500 young homeless people.

The director of Don Bosco House Mr. Gunther Rienlinger was quoted as saying that most young people registered at Don Bosco House or at the John Falk House for inpatient care come from destitute or broken families. Others however do come directly from prisons.

See more [here](#) (in German).

Cardiff – Number of homeless people on the rise

The city of Cardiff has seen the number of homeless rise significantly. While in 2007 there were only 93 registered homeless people, the figure shows the number has risen to 259 in 2008-2009. According to the Chief Housing Officer, Sarah McGill, this unexpected and dramatic increase is attributable to the global financial crisis. Faced with this huge challenge, city officials have vowed to do whatever is within their power to improve the situation.

However, the good news is that Cardiff is leading in temporary housing schemes. The city is renowned for its ambitious scheme to reduce the cost of housing homeless people by ruling out temporary accommodation in the form of Bed and Breakfast in August 2006. So far, there has been a 30% decrease in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation and the city authority has pledged to do more.

See more [here](#).

Homeless people, employment and the economic crisis in Hungary (Results of the annual February 3rd research)

As every February since 1997, homeless people in 19 cities and towns were surveyed in 2010. The survey reaches those who are sleeping in homeless services willing to cooperate in the research, or those sleeping rough who are in touch with an outreach service. 8019 people answered the questions (as compared to 7121 in 2009). In 2010 the focus was on employment, just like in 2009 so this allowed for comparison of the data of the two years of the global economic crisis, and its effects on the lives of people living on the margins of society.

The main findings are:

1. Every seventh respondent (14%) claims to have lost their previous housing, because they had been unable to pay the rent or the bills. In 2009 the ratio was 19%.
2. In 2010 there were less homeless people with a steady income than in 2009. In four towns the rate of decline was more than 10%. In Pécs, it was 16% (from 72% in 2009 to 56% in 2010).
3. This decline was most significant in regards to income related to employment. In all 19 towns, the rate of homeless people with a salary decreased.

4. The change is most dramatic among rough sleepers: while in 2009 39% of them had a (somewhat) regular salary, in 2010 the rate fell to 16%.

5. The smallest decrease (less than 10%) of those with a salary was found in Miskolc, the second largest town, where the number of those on welfare declined just as well. This could be the result of a comprehensive local public employment scheme.

6. The decrease of people with salaries was most significant in those towns where the rate had reached 40% earlier. While in January 2009 in half of the 14 towns involved in the survey we found that more than 30% of homeless people had some kind of a salary (either from a regular, or some kind of an odd job), in 2010 none of the towns reached this rate. In certain towns, the rate of those with employment was less than 15%.

7. On 3 February 2010, a homeless person spent 1040 HUF (€3.7 on average). One year earlier this was 1564 HUF (€ 5.6).

To find out more, please contact Zoltán Gurály zoltan.guraly@gmail.com

focus: housing first

The housing first model was developed in the United States in the 1990s and has demonstrated high degrees of success in both housing and supporting those who are chronically street homeless with multiple and complex needs. It is founded on the principle of housing being a basic human right and provides permanent accommodation for people straight from the street. The model has no preconditions of addressing wider social care and support needs.

Since this model is increasingly being tested in European cities, we decided to make housing first the focus of this e-bulletin issue, to highlight some of the ways this approach is being applied in Europe. This section looks at projects in Portugal, Finland, Ireland, France and The Netherlands. We are also aware of similar projects in Hungary, Sweden, the UK, Belgium, Austria and Denmark. For more info, contact info@habitact.eu

Testing housing first in Lisbon

A housing first project is being implemented in Lisbon (Portugal) since September 2009 involving 50 homeless people with mental illness who are placed in houses for rent with permanent technical social support.

The aim of the project is to support mentally ill homeless people in the process of searching, selecting, getting and maintaining stable and community integrated housing. The participants in this project contribute 30% of their monthly income to pay the rent. The monitoring of the residents is

done by a team (with one doctor assigned for every ten participants), with no less than six house visits per month, per participant. Support to the residents is guaranteed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. See more [here](#)

Helsinki housing first plans for 2010-2012

Although shelter accommodation is essentially supposed to be temporary, for many homeless people it has become a long-term placement. Under the Helsinki homelessness programme, the use of shelter accommodation to house long-term homeless people will be phased out and replaced with housing units that promote independent, supported and supervised living.

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute in Finland develops housing services on the basis of a housing first model. As such, Helsinki Deaconess Institute provides intensive service housing and intensive supported housing for substance users who have repeatedly lost their homes because of their living habits and challenging behaviour. Along with the Finnish government's action plan designed to combat homelessness, the Helsinki Deaconess Institute is building 300 new apartments for homeless people with heavy support needs in 2010-12.

See more [here](#)

Pathways model in Dublin

'Housing first' (or 'housing plus') is being rolled out in Dublin (in the 4 local authority areas – Fingal County Council, Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council) by the Homeless Agency and the Department of Environment as part of *Pathway to Home*, which is a new model of homeless, housing and support provision that has been developed to ensure a more effective way of delivering homeless services in Dublin with better access to long-term housing with supports.

The 'housing first' approach was recommended in the Homeless Agency's *Evaluation Series 2008*: "Overall, there is growing evidence of a trend away from the traditional route of emergency accommodation – transitional housing – long-term housing, towards a housing first approach in which people move directly into affordable housing and are provided with appropriate supports in that housing. A characteristic of the housing first approach is that transitional supports are provided to people in long-term housing rather than in specific transitional housing schemes".

More information on this model can be accessed [here](#).

Amsterdam "Discus" project

Discus is a "Housing first" programme. The motto of the programme is 'housing first, help later'. The target group is homeless people with multiple problems (mental health as well as addiction problems). The Discus project started in Amsterdam in 2004-2005 after an inspiring visit to the Housing First project in New York.

The focus of the Discus project lies on behaviour and abilities rather than on disorders. Bringing into focus ones dreams stimulates finding a personal drive and ambitions to find a place in society and daily activities. Just two simple rules have to be followed: not causing inconvenience or nuisance and paying the rent on time.

Clients are offered a semi-independent contract in their name. When complaints of neighbours start to rise, clients are given 3 months to improve their behaviour. If no improvement has been established, clients are to swap houses or need to return the apartment.

A team of housing counsellors and psychiatric nurses offers 24/7 assistance. They visit clients at least once a week. Additional visits and guidance depend on the client's will.

At the moment 69 people are living in Discus housing. Of this total, 53 are living an 'ordinary' life. 8 people had to return their apartment to the housing cooperation and 8 have swapped apartment.

The first evaluation of this Discus project is to be carried out at the end of 2010, but some project results already indicate greater cost-effectiveness of Discus compared with "intramural" facilities/group housing.

See more [here](#) and in the Amsterdam peer review report on www.habitact.eu

France – Report recommends housing first approach

«Housing first and reviewing the conditions of emergency accommodation and resettlement » was one of the approaches recommended in a [report](#) « La santé des sans chez soi » submitted to the French government in January 2010. This includes recommendations to develop a pilot programme involving 5 housing first test sites, based on the Canadian programme « chez-soi / at home ».

This approach is based on providing immediate access to permanent housing to chronically street homeless persons experiencing mental illness (with multiple and complex support needs) without preconditions of addressing wider social care and support needs.

Both the minister of housing and the minister of health have taken this into consideration, and decided to launch a pilot programme with 4 cities: Marseille, Toulouse, Lille and Paris. These pilots should be launched in 2011 (once the multi-disciplinary teams have been set up) and should last about three years. The programmes will cover around 100 people per pilot site and will involve local networks of organizations working on resettlement and providing psychiatric support.

More information on the social experimentation project will be available [here](#) (in French).

Housing first literature - some useful links

- 2010 (ongoing) - "Homeless people with complex needs: reflections on the challenges presented by 'Housing First' and other innovative housing models" >> [Details](#)
- 2010 (ongoing) - "Rethinking Multiple Exclusion Homelessness: Implications for Workforce Development and Inter-professional Practice" (including research on how inter-professional working might be organized around the housing first principle) >> [Details](#)
- 2009 - "La santé des personnes sans chez soi : Plaidoyer et propositions pour un accompagnement des personnes à un rétablissement social et citoyen" >> [Details](#)
- 2008 - "Housing needs as a means of addressing multiple needs and homelessness" (European Journal of Homelessness, volume II) >> [Details](#)
- 2008 - A critical analysis of applicability and transferability of the concept for the UK >> [Details](#)
- 2008 - "Rearranging the Deck Chairs or Reallocating the Lifeboats?: Homelessness Assistance and Its Alternatives" >> [Details](#)
- 2007- "Housing First in the US" (US evaluation of several projects) >> [Details](#)



For any reactions/comments/contributions to the e-bulletin, please contact us at info@habitact.eu