

## habitact news

### European seminar on local homeless strategies

On Friday 17 June 2011, FEANTSA, the EU Committee of the Regions and HABITACT will host a 1-day seminar in Brussels on "Governance of homeless service provision at local level: One-size-fits-all or diversity of models across Europe?". The seminar will last from 9h00 to 16h00.

#### Context of the seminar

Through the adoption of relevant legislation (e. g. on public procurement of services), the EU is intervening increasingly in the area of social services, including homeless services. Since a couple of years, these services are facing mounting pressure due to funding cuts in many European regions and municipalities. Therefore new ways of working and new forms of governance are being explored, as local organisations adapt to the new emerging economic, welfare and political context in their country.

#### Seminar objectives

1. To reflect on the different forms of organisation and provision of homeless services across the EU and the impact of European legislation on their work.
2. To give examples of different models used to provide homeless services, with concrete/practical information for local organisations attending the seminar, looking at the advantages/disadvantages of each model, as well as the financing of these different service provision models.

More [here](#).

#### HABITACT Partner Cities:

*Amsterdam (NL), Århus (DK), Athens (GR), Bærum (NO), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Esch-sur-Alzette (LU), Ghent (BE), Gothenburg (SE), Madrid (ES), Odense (DK), Venice (IT), Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)*

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

### Submission of RISKHOPE project application

The [Verwey-Jonker Instituut](#) together with a Dutch research team from [Movisie](#) and [FEANTSA](#), has submitted a project proposal in response to a new [7th Framework](#) call on poverty policies, the title being "SSH.2011.2.1-2. Combating poverty in Europe: a key question of human dignity and social cohesion". This would be a 3-year research project spanning 10 EU countries.

#### Theme

The focus of the project - called RISKHOPE - would be on the risks of homelessness within the wider framework of anti-poverty policies, assessing the role of local services in the area of poverty, housing and homelessness.

#### Partnership

A number of HABITACT cities would be part of the consortium. The consortium would cover 10 EU countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and Portugal) and include 20 local partners (from public authorities and NGOs).

#### Timetable

If the application is successful the project would start in January 2012 and run over three years.

### HABITACT staff changes

HABITACT Policy Officer Liz Gosme will be on maternity leave from mid-April 2011 to mid-October 2011. During her maternity leave, she will be replaced by Katrin Büchler, who so far has worked as HABITACT Policy Assistant.

The HABITACT co-ordination unit and the HABITACT cities wish Liz and her family all the best for the exciting months lying ahead of them!

## local news

### **Edinburgh: 4.600 homeless people despite of 10.000 empty homes**

The Capital of Scotland, very active in the fight against homelessness (see e-bulletin issue 5), has decided to use 10.000 empty homes in order to tackle homelessness. In Edinburgh, 25.000 people are on the waiting list for social housing and 4.600 people were accepted as homeless in 2010, even though there are more than 10.000 empty homes in the city according to data collected by the Bank of Scotland.

This data revealed a weak point of the City Council's work on homelessness – the City Council so far only kept track of homes lying empty for more than six months (900 homes), while the Bank of Scotland figures include homes given a “second home” council tax discount.

On the initiative of Green councillor Alison Johnstone this is now going to change with the appointment of an “empty homes officer” (like in a number of other British cities). Furthermore, a new website [www.reportemptyhomes.com](http://www.reportemptyhomes.com) was set up by homeless charity Shelter Scotland.

According to the charity, making use of empty homes, has several benefits, like boosting the housing supply, efficiently tackling homelessness and generating council tax revenue. Read more [here](#).

### **Lyon: Ecological shelter for homeless people**

Since early February 2011 the homeless charity Notre-Dame des Sans-Abri is running a new kind of homeless shelter – which so far is unique in France.

The ecological “Maison de Rodolphe”, which is built entirely out of wood, has ten places for homeless people and their dogs. The dog can stay in the same room as its owner. Moreover, a veterinary is working in the same house, who also can be consulted by homeless people not living in the shelter.

Nonetheless, the homeless dog owners have to keep to certain rules: they are not allowed to bring alcohol or mind-altering substances into the shelter and they are not allowed to bring their dogs to the canteen. Furthermore they have to participate in resettlement initiatives (e. g. job searches and psychological counselling), assisted by one of the four special educators working in the shelter.

The “Maison de Rodolphe” also has 35 places for families with children – serving the same purpose as the places for the dogs – not to separate people from their loved ones, in order not to entirely take away their support network.

This is the first shelter of its kind in France so far – but it already started to prove very successful. Bertrand Apparu, French State Secretary of Housing, highlights that this pilot project could well lead to other shelters of this kind being opened in other French cities. Read more [here](#) (in French).

### **The Hague Alderman intends to repatriate Polish migrants**

The Hague (Netherlands) Alderman and Social Democrat Marnix Norder claims that his city was overburdened by thousands of Eastern European unemployed and homeless people.

According to Norder, these people should be repatriated and sent back to their countries of origin, without financial help since this would only attract even more foreigners. While according to EU law it is not a problem to repatriate Romanian and Bulgarian citizens, Poland belongs to the Schengen zone and therefore Polish migrants cannot just be sent back home.

According to Norder the migrants could be asked to move back to their countries of origin voluntarily. He also calls on the European Union to tackle the problem. Read more [here](#) (in Dutch).

### **Madrid: Volunteering programme with homeless people**

Since July 2010, the capital of Spain, in cooperation with various local stakeholders fighting against social exclusion, has been running its own Volunteering Programme with the Homeless.

The Programme is part of the city's project “Volunteering for Madrid”, in the framework of which 6.000 people are trained in the European Volunteering School according to their personal interests and strengths. The school, which receives EU-funding, offers specific training and on-line courses for volunteers.

The Municipality's Homelessness Department offers two specialised training courses for its Volunteering Programme with Homeless people. Upon successful completion of the courses, the volunteers can for example do night-shifts or assist homeless people to go to a doctor. 2011 being the European Year for Volunteering, the Madrid initiative is very topical. The European Union funds not only this project, but also initiatives in other European cities (e. g. Belfast, Munich, Lisbon). Read more [here](#) (in Spanish).

### **Homeless people have to pay rents in Mönchweiler**

The Municipality of Mönchweiler (Germany) adopted a new directive according to which people living in emergency housing will have to pay a “user-fee” ranging from €2,60 to €4,00 per square metre a month.

According to the Municipality this is because placing homeless people into emergency housing is a difficult process in Germany – an individual can only be accommodated in emergency housing, if his/her flat is damaged or if he/she loses the flat through eviction.

In cases where a German municipality does not have emergency housing, the individual can be placed into private rented housing – for which rent has to be paid. Now the Municipality wants homeless persons to pay rent for the city's emergency housing. Read more [here](#) (in German).

### Vienna seminar on health and homelessness

On 3 February 2011 the Viennese Platform for Health and Homelessness, which is a forum of homelessness and health workers, organised a seminar on health and homelessness in cooperation with the City of Vienna and BAWO (The National Federation of Austrian Organisations Working with the Homeless).

The seminar looked at a number of different issues and models of health services for homeless people, such as “Housing First and its consequences for social and health services” or the “Mainz Model” (which refers to a mobile medical care unit and orientation services set up in the German city of Mainz).

Different models were compared and analysed particularly with regard to if and how they could be transposed to Vienna. Read the presentations [here](#) (in German).

### Vilnius City has difficulties meeting housing demand

Vilnius City Council officials, above all deputy mayor Stanislovas Šriūbėnas, say that they have difficulties to meet housing demand. Currently there are about 26.000 families waiting for social housing. The City Council lacks financial support from the State, so it cannot purchase or build enough new social housing. Refurbishing old, abandoned apartments also would take too long and there is too little housing like this available.

For this reason, the Archdiocesan Caritas of Vilnius has written a letter to the Lithuanian Government, asking for a change in the inflexible Lithuanian social housing system.

So far, Lithuanian municipalities keep homeless individuals and families on waiting lists for social housing. The lists are long, the supply is small. Once families get places in social housing, the flats are usually in deprived areas, which leads to ghettoisation in some cases.

Caritas urges the State and Lithuanian municipalities to consider other solutions, like cooperating with the private housing market and paying families rental support so they can rent flats from private landlords.

Read more [here](#) (in Lithuanian).

### Ostia: Successful launch of new job-insertion programme for homeless people

The XIII. Municipality of Rome (Italy) has successfully launched a new job-insertion programme for homeless people. Ten people have completed the professional training, during which they received help from a tutor and counselling from a psychologist.

Some of the people in the training scheme have already been offered a permanent position in the enterprises in which they were trained.

Giacomo Vizzani, the president of the XIII. Municipality explains that the project aims to help homeless people re-gain control of their life and to get out of poverty.

The job insertion project is run by the XIII. Municipality of Rome with the help of a variety of Rome-based NGOs (e. g. Associazione Amici di Flavio Cocanari, Cooperativa Roma Solidarietà, Comunità di S.Egidio and the Italian Federation of Organisations Working with the Homeless). Read more [here](#) (in Italian).

### London Mayor puts in place No Second Night Out scheme

London Mayor Boris Johnson, who is committed to ending rough sleeping by 2012, has put in place a “No Second Night Out” scheme aiming to rescue all rough sleepers from the streets already on their first night out.

The scheme will be tested for a first period of six months from April 2011 onwards. A 24/7-outreach team will search for rough sleepers in doorways, parks and under bridges. Upon finding a rough sleeper, the social workers will try to help and convince the homeless people to consider other options (e. g. sleeping in a shelter or returning to their home towns if this is safe enough). There are about 500 rough sleepers in London, more than 20% of whom are migrants from Eastern Europe.

Mr. Johnson says it was scandalous that people had to sleep rough in 21<sup>st</sup> Century London and that he would do everything in his power to help those people.

The ambitious No Second Night Out scheme is funded with £700.000 from the Department for Communities and Local Governments.

Read more [here](#).

## news from europe

### European Observatory on Homelessness 20-year-book

In February 2011 FEANTSA published a 20-year-book of the European Observatory on Homelessness. The “Festschrift” is dedicated to former Observatory coordinators Bill Edgar and Joe Doherty.

It contains eleven articles on current homelessness issues in Europe including on how to define and measure homelessness in Europe, on the “right to housing”, immigration and homelessness, women and homelessness and youth homelessness.

The article “Defining and Measuring Homelessness in Europe” by Volker Busch-Geertsema underlines the importance of developing common definitions and a common framework for the measurement of homelessness. In order to develop effective and comprehensive homeless strategies, a full understanding of homelessness is important, and municipal services are considered to play a crucial role in collecting homeless numbers.

If you wish to order the year-book, please contact [odette.peinado@feantsa.org](mailto:odette.peinado@feantsa.org).

### The future of EU Cohesion Policy

EU Cohesion Policy (or regional development policy), aims to boost economic development in Europe but at the same time aims to reduce social and territorial disparities across EU member states.

In order to support economic development whilst keeping the social check balanced, the EU has various tools at its disposal, especially financial ones like the Structural Funds (i. e. the European Regional Development Fund ERDF, and the European Social Fund ESF). Currently, there are many projects across Europe which are funded by the ESF and increasingly by the ERDF.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Forum on 31 January-1 February 2011 in Brussels, the future of Cohesion policy and the Structural funds in the framework of the European Commission's new Europe2020 strategy was discussed in detail, including the link between Cohesion Policy and the Europe2020 target to reduce poverty by 20 million people by 2020.

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless has suggested ways of creating better synergies between EU Social and Cohesion policy, highlighting the important role of European networks like FEANTSA and HABITACT to foster social innovation and build expertise.

Read more [here](#).

### Consensus Conference Jury highlights importance of involving local policy-makers in EU homelessness strategy

On 8 February 2011, the recommendations of the Jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness were published and presented at a press conference. The recommendations respond to the six core questions addressed at the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness:

1. *What does homelessness mean?*
2. *“Ending homelessness”: a realistic objective?*
3. *Are “housing-led” policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?*
4. *How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?*
5. *To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?*
6. *What should be the elements of an EU homelessness strategy?*

The Jury highlights the need for an ambitious EU homelessness strategy to support local/regional/national authorities in their fight against homelessness. Integrated homeless strategies should focus on prevention of homelessness, promotion of quality services for homeless people, access to affordable housing and support to maintain tenancy.

The Jury recommendations state that “An EU homelessness strategy requires an appropriate governance structure permitting the incorporation of all relevant stakeholders. The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion opens possibilities for developing new partnerships between European institutions, Member States, and all European, national, regional and local stakeholders (European Commission, 2010). In this context, the jury calls for all relevant stakeholders to be involved in an EU homelessness strategy. This includes national/regional and local policy makers, researchers, NGO homeless service providers, people experiencing homelessness and neighbouring sectors such as housing, employment and health”.

Read more [here](#).

### FEANTSA adopts statement on free movement in the EU

The right to free movement in the EU is one of the fundamental rights of EU citizens. Numerous people make use of this right every day and many people have permanently established a new life abroad, thus contributing to the wealth and growth of the host society. However, there is a small but significant proportion of EU citizens for whom moving to another Member State has become a poverty trap. They are destitute and homeless, and face difficulties in accessing the right support. Their vulnerable situation is closely linked to EU policies and legislation in the area of free movement of citizens as well as on internal migration law and its interpretation at national level.

Given its responsibility in this field, FEANTSA calls on the EU to guarantee access to emergency accommodation and emergency support to EU citizens who find themselves destitute in another Member State than the Member State of which they hold nationality. This support should be provided until a sustainable solution that ensures dignity of the person and his/her family has been found.

Read more [here](#)

### SUITE project policy recommendations

The SUITE “Social and Urban Inclusion Through Housing” project, a network of nine European cities (coordinated by Santiago de Compostela City Council) promoting social cohesion through various local social mix and sustainable housing projects, is now coming to an end. SUITE has been financed by URBACT, an ERDF-funded European exchange programme.

On 16 March 2011, at the project's final conference, a number of local housing action plans as well as policy recommendations for sustainable housing directed to different policy implementation levels were presented.

According to SUITE's thematic experts, Darinka Czischke and Heidrun Feigelfeld, cities and regions should view homelessness policies as an integrated part of housing policies – housing being more than just housing.

Read more about the SUITE project [here](#).

# local trends

## Tampere: Homelessness decreases by almost a third

Each year, the Finnish Housing Finance and Development Centre “ARA” conducts a homelessness count in several Finnish cities. “ARA” counts how many long-term homeless people are living in Tampere, but also establishes a point-in-time statistics every November.

On 15 November 2010 there were 417 single homeless people in Tampere – which is 32% less than in November 2009 (614 single homeless people).

251 of Tampere’s homeless people are “hidden homeless” – they live with family or friends.

Also family homelessness has significantly decreased. In November 2010, there were 95 homeless women compared to 157 in 2009.

The city of Tampere, which since 2008 is part of the PAAVO-group (= a group of ten Finnish cities who agreed on fighting long-term homelessness) has also successfully reduced the number of long-term homeless (= homeless people suffering from psychosocial or physical problems) from 214 in 2008 to 124 in 2010. Read more [here](#) (in Finnish).

	2009	2010
	214	124
<b>Single homeless people</b>	614	417
– hidden homeless people	313	251
– rough sleepers	43	9
– homeless men	457	322
– homeless women	157	95
– homeless <25 year, living alone	112	91
– homeless families	42	26
– soon-to-be-released prisoners	19	8
– immigrants	19	23

## Budapest – Sharp increase in rough sleepers predicted

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 Budapest City Council voted the budget for 2011. Due to the financial crisis, the Council will have to cut funding for different sectors, and most probably also for social issues (like homelessness).

So far, the City of Budapest has been cooperating with a couple of NGOs in the fight against homelessness, especially by providing emergency relief during winter and by subsidising shelter places (about 5000 in Budapest).

If the Municipality will proceed with the planned funding cuts, Budapest-based NGOs are likely to receive 70% less funding than in previous years and BMSZKI, Budapest’s homelessness department has to expect cuts of about 20%.

Tizek, the Hungarian umbrella organisation of homeless service providers, urges Budapest Council not to cut the funding for homeless services. Tizek thinks that it is cynical to ban rough sleeping (like the Budapest Mayor, István Tarlós, did in November/December 2010) while cutting funding for homeless accommodation services. According to Tizek, cutting funds for homeless accommodation will result in a sharp increase in rough sleepers.

In early February, Tarlós has invited two NGO-representatives to act as his advisors. The negotiations are ongoing. Read more [here](#) (in Hungarian).

## Homelessness numbers in Rome and Naples

The Catholic Congregation Sant’Egidio (from Rome/Italy) conducted a homelessness count in the Italian Capital in early 2011.

According to the results of this count, there are currently 6.000 homeless people in Rome. 2.700 of them are staying in temporary accommodation or shelters run by the city or by religious organisations. However, 1.000 people live in makeshift homes and 2.300 people are sleeping rough. Read more [here](#).

Furthermore, the Congregation Sant’Egidio estimates that there are currently 1500 homeless people in Naples. Sant’Egidio interviewed about 500 of Naples’ homeless people.

Out of those 500, 90% are men and 10% are women. Only 13% are Italian, 77% are foreigners (mostly from Eastern Europe, North Africa and Senegal). 60% of them are between 19 and 35 years old. Interestingly, homeless migrants are usually younger, while Italian homeless are older. Most homeless people in Naples sleep rough in abandoned buildings.

Public shelters in Naples have long waiting-lists. According to the director of one of the shelters, Luigi Del Prato, different, more developed structures would be needed in order to facilitate resettlement of homeless people. “It does not make sense to throw a person out of the shelter after three months, as a response to the long waiting list. This does not help them get their life back on track.”

Read more [here](#) (in Italian).

Homelessness in Naples 2010/2011	
<b>total:</b>	500
– male	495
– female	5
– migrants	424
– Italian	75
– aged 19-35	330
– aged 35-64	170

## focus: transport companies

In recent years, transport companies (municipal transport companies, national railways and aviation companies) have become increasingly active in the fight against homelessness.

Bus stops, underground stations, train platforms and airports constitute a specific kind of *public space* (i. e. space accessible for all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level). Often they are referred to as *semi-public spaces* – often meant to be open for all, but one might need a ticket to access them.

Nevertheless, especially during cold winter nights, many rough sleepers seek shelter in public transport.

Depending on the transport company (and often also on the municipality or region they are operating in) the perception of rough sleepers varies and depends on the image the transport company wishes to give to the general public.

This focus illustrates different approaches transport companies can take towards rough sleepers. HABITACT has chosen this subject, since it is especially topical in winter and because an interesting project called Hope in Stations (see e-bulletin Issue 5), which aims to strengthen cooperation between train stations and municipalities in tackling homelessness, just started its second phase at the turn of 2010/11.

### Railway stations

The first evangelical *station mission* (*Bahnhofsmision* in German) was founded by minister Johannes Burckhardt in Berlin in 1894. Nowadays there are more than 100 such missions in German railway stations. They provide help to everyone in need, including homeless people, and at times when help is difficult to get elsewhere. The station missionaries (sometimes even trained social workers) offer emergency support, for example, they carry bags for elderly people, help disabled or blind people to find their way around the station or offer first aid to injured people. Homeless people can sometimes sleep in the station mission until they are oriented towards more permanent services. The station missions work closely with the German Ministry for Families, Elderly, Women and Children, with various NGOs and with local authorities. Read more about the *Bahnhofsmision* [here](#) (in German).

Similar concepts exist in other European countries, like Austria, Switzerland, France and Italy. A "[Hope in Stations](#)" [report](#) written by the French researcher Julien Damon also provides an overview of policies in 6 railway stations.

Recently, more and more research on the social role of stations in the fight against social disparities is being carried out. In Italy the *Osservatorio Nazionale sul Disagio e la Solidarietà nelle Stazioni* (the National Observatory on Social Exclusion and Solidarity in Railway Stations) coordinates and monitors the work of the Help Centres in train stations across Italy. Read more [here](#) (in Italian).

### Airport outreach

Like Tom Hanks in the movie *The Terminal* (based on the real story of Iranian Mehran Karimi Nasseri who lived about twenty years in Paris Charles-de-Gaulle airport), also many homeless people can be found in airports.

For instance, homeless people have been seen sleeping in the Spanish airports of Madrid Barajas and Barcelona El Prat.

Alone at London Heathrow Airport there are hundreds of rough sleepers every year. As a response to this in 2008, Heathrow launched the Heathrow Rough Sleepers Pilot Programme, inspired by a similar programme set up at [Chicago O'Hare airport](#) (USA) earlier.

The programme is implemented by Heathrow Travel Care, a team of social workers, which provides help to the rough sleepers, especially newly arriving migrants. Heathrow Travel Care works closely with Broadway homeless charity, the London Metropolitan Police, the London Borough of Hillingdon and the Foreign Office and Border Agency. Jointly these stakeholders help Heathrow rough sleepers to reconnect with family, to bring them back into the social system or to return to their countries of origin. Similar outreach programmes also run at other European airports like Schiphol (Amsterdam) and Charles-de-Gaulle (Paris). Read more [here](#).

### Municipal transport

Especially in winter, many rough sleepers seek shelter in trams, buses and especially in metro stations.

For this reason, Parisian local transport RATP is very active in the fight against social exclusion. In 1990 it founded the *Recueil Social*, who do outreach work in Paris public transport and direct homeless people towards the services they need. Read more [here](#) (in French).

In recent years, winters have become harder and colder from Rome to Belfast, from Lisbon to Helsinki.

Even though public transport companies in many major European cities try to "clean up" their image by chasing homeless people and beggars away from their facilities, some local transport companies try to help homeless people by keeping metro stations open all night long during especially cold months of the year. To name but a few examples: Berlin keeps some metro stations open when temperatures drop under -2C, Rome kept its metros open until 28 February 2011.

An good practice found across the Atlantic in the US state of California is a free ride-system for homeless people set up by Santa Clara City Council . Read more about this [here](#).



For any reactions/comments/contributions to the e-bulletin, please contact us at [info@habitact.eu](mailto:info@habitact.eu)