



# EU SOCIAL REALITY STOCKTAKING 2007

***POVERTY REALITY CHECK:  
HOMELESSNESS ON THE INCREASE IN EUROPE***

FEANTSA is the European Federation of national organisations working with homeless people – the only European umbrella of homeless service providers, and the only European network on homelessness working with DG EMPL of the European Commission in the framework of the EU social protection and social inclusion strategy (see [europa](#) website). FEANTSA would like to respond to the consultation launched by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) on social realities in Europe, and calls on the European Union to support countries and cities in their fight against rising homelessness.

This short paper, based on a wide consultation of homeless service providers from across Europe, highlights some key initiatives and findings at European and national level which reveal the urgency of homelessness. The paper is divided into three sections:

I. Poverty, Homelessness, Housing exclusion: Clarification of concepts

II. EU level initiatives which demonstrate the urgency of the issue

III. National trends in homelessness which confirm that this social reality cannot be ignored

### I. Poverty, Homelessness, Housing exclusion: Clarification of concepts

The BEPA [background report](#) on social realities dedicates section 3.7 to “Poverty and its impact on access to life’s opportunities” (p.27). Reference is made to the ongoing debates on definitions of poverty. It is important in this respect to take account of the current work of the European Commission on definitions of material deprivation in cooperation with the Indicators Sub-Group of the EU Social Protection Committee, looking at a series of items, including items on poor housing and financial stress.

Whereas there is no agreed definition of poverty at EU level, the [EU anti-poverty strategy](#) outlines **key challenges or societal problems** related to poverty and social exclusion which have emerged from the national reporting on social inclusion policies to the European Commission since 2000. These societal problems include homelessness, child poverty, social inclusion of migrants, poverty of older people, social exclusion of people with disabilities, etc. It is crucial therefore to **highlight these different forms of poverty** and social exclusion in the European social reality check.

**Homelessness** has often been referred to as possibly the most extreme form of poverty. Homelessness can be defined narrowly to include only people without a roof over their heads or it can be defined more broadly to include people in temporary living arrangements such as staying with family and friends, in makeshift dwellings or in night shelters and temporary institutional accommodation (UNECE, 2007; FEANTSA Observatory, 2003; INSEE report, 2004; Commission, 2007a). The dividing line between homelessness and housing exclusion naturally varies from country to country.

No definition of homelessness has yet been agreed at European level, however a few international or European definitions have emerged over the past few years, including the recent definition proposed in the European Commission study on the measurement of homelessness at EU level (Commission, 2007a) or FEANTSA’s typology of homelessness *and housing exclusion* (ETHOS – see Annex).

Although there are different approaches to defining homelessness, there is **general consensus** that consideration needs to be given to a continuum of living situations – ranging from living on the streets with no roof, to living in shelters to living with friends – when seeking to understand the nature and scope of homelessness. This approach confirms that homelessness is a process (rather than a static phenomenon) that affects many vulnerable households at different points in their lives.

## II. EU level initiatives which demonstrate the urgency of the issue

This section highlights some *European* reports/studies/events which point to the emergence of homelessness or access to housing as key priorities, namely:

- The “Key challenges” to counter poverty agreed on by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers over the past years;
- A recently published European Commission study (January 2007) provides information on the need for improved monitoring and measurement of homelessness at EU level;
- The key findings of FEANTSA’s 2007 stocktaking of child homelessness in Europe;
- The key messages emerging from the European consultation of people experiencing poverty in 2007;
- The results of the 2007 Eurobarometer on perceptions of poverty;
- The key policy findings of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions on access to housing in Europe.

### **Joint report on social protection and social inclusion (2001-2007)<sup>1</sup>: homelessness as a key European challenge**

Awareness of homelessness and housing exclusion, and the urgent need for action to tackle these phenomena, has improved over the last 5 years through the EU social inclusion strategy. Since the launch of this strategy in 2001, there has been a clear change in the importance attached to homelessness and housing exclusion in the different EU countries as indicated in the evaluation reports produced by the European Commission: from homelessness and housing as urgent policy issues for *some* Member States (1st Joint Inclusion Report [2001](#)), for *most* Member States (2nd Joint Inclusion report [2004](#)), for *all* new Member States (Report on NAPsIncl of new Member States [2005](#)), to homelessness as one of the 7 key priorities for all 25 Member States (1st Joint Report Social Protection & Social Inclusion [2005](#)). The increased importance attached to homelessness under the EU social inclusion strategy is finally confirmed by the EPSCO Council<sup>2</sup> March 2005. In the conclusions of the Council meeting, all EU25 Employment and Social Affairs Ministers agreed that “treatment of the phenomenon of homelessness” was one of the key social inclusion priorities for the future (see [here](#)). Finally, three main key challenges have been highlighted in the recently adopted Joint Report 2007 in relation to “active inclusion”: **homelessness and housing exclusion**, social inclusion of ethnic minorities, and labour market integration of people with disabilities.

### **European Commission study on homelessness measurement at EU level : urgent need for better monitoring**

According to the Study (see [here](#)), homelessness and housing deprivation exist in all European countries yet there are few official statistics on homelessness, and those that do exist are rarely comparable between different countries. The lack of clear data on the extent of homelessness makes an understanding of its nature, causes and the effective action needed to tackle it all the more difficult. The research and evidence presented in this EU study therefore identified current methodologies and practices in different European countries that measure the extent and nature of homelessness. The research was undertaken in the context of the EU social protection and inclusion strategy, and the development of National Reports on social inclusion policies, and the need for commonly agreed and defined indicators to measure trends in homelessness and homeless policy-making.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a report adopted jointly by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on the key challenges for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Europe

<sup>2</sup> The Employment and Social Affairs Ministers of EU25 convened on 3 and 4 March 2005 to discuss, *inter alia*, the future social inclusion priorities for the European Union.

## **Sixth European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty: main concern is to have a roof over their heads**

The 2007 Sixth European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty under the German Presidency strongly highlighted one of the main concerns of people experiencing poverty: the importance of having a roof over their heads. Most delegations underlined that homelessness not only represents one of the most severe forms of deprivation, but it is also one of the main obstacles to full social integration and access to employment (see more [here](#)).

## **2007 Eurobarometer on perceptions of poverty: public perception of own vulnerability to homelessness**

This Eurobarometer examines, *inter alia*, the views of European Union citizens with regard to homelessness, with a focus on three dimensions: why do people become homeless (i.e. what causes the problem), do people feel that they themselves are at risk of becoming homeless (i.e. which groups in society are most vulnerable) and what, if anything, do people do to help the homeless?

On the basis of the provisional version<sup>3</sup> of the survey results, it appears the more economic strain people experience, the more likely they rate their chance of becoming homeless. In fact, six percent of people suffering the most economic strain find it very likely that they could one day become homeless, in addition to 17% who find it fairly likely. In other words, nearly one person in four (23%) suffering the greatest degree of economic strain sees a likelihood of becoming homeless, compared to only three percent of people who suffer no economic strain (Eurobarometer, 2007).

Such figures are indicative of the perceived vulnerability and immediate (and *real*) threat of homelessness that European citizens are faced with when under economic strain, a situation that can affect not only individuals but entire families, including children.

## **Child homelessness in Europe: two emerging trends**

FEANTSA took stock of the situation in 2007 ([EN](#)). The two main trends of child homelessness in Europe concern *children in homeless families* (children in temporary accommodation, children in domestic violence refuges, children in families threatened with eviction, children living in very poor housing conditions) and *unaccompanied homeless adolescents* (chronically homeless children, runaway youths, unaccompanied asylum-seekers, children leaving care institutions). The profile of these children differs according to the factors which caused their homelessness in the first place, and these categories of child homelessness are, in many cases, all interlinked.

The phenomenon of children chronically experiencing homelessness is still only an emerging problem which can, and should, be stemmed as soon as possible by improving preventive policies (both systemic and targeted) to reach out to the many children at risk to avoid them entering a cycle of homelessness in adulthood.

The causes of child homelessness appear to be a complex combination of structural, institutional, relational and personal factors. It is clear from the analysis of the FEANTSA paper on child homelessness, that this problem cannot be tackled in isolation from poverty and homelessness experienced by adults, especially as many children experience homelessness as a result of their parents going through such crisis situations.

## **European Foundation: key findings on poor housing conditions and access to housing**

The European Foundation conducted a European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) in 2003. The report on “key findings from a policy perspective” produced in 2007 ([here](#)) reveals a number of pressing problems with regard to housing and local environment.

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<sup>3</sup> The final version will be made available over the coming weeks

People in the EU10 and in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, for example, tend to live in significantly poorer housing conditions compared with those living in the EU15, and below the level of that stipulated by EU policy (Domanski et al, 2005, p. 76). Caution is advised, nevertheless, in making any simple east-west comparison, given that western Europe also has problems with housing deprivation. The European Foundation identifies the groups most at risk within and across countries on the basis of EQLS data:

- young people in Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia, whose transition into independent living is delayed due to housing-related shortages;
- elderly people in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania who, while they own property, lack the means to make essential repairs and improvements;
- rural inhabitants in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Turkey who live in low-standard accommodation;
- people on low incomes in some of the EU15 countries (Greece, Italy and Portugal) in the Baltic states and in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Turkey.

From an EU perspective, the results of the 2007 EQLS report generally endorse housing as an issue, in line with the Lisbon Agenda's social inclusion process. Ideally, in responding to the social inclusion process, Member States should give priority to improving the national housing stock and to a whole range of policies aimed at enhancing **access to housing**.

### III. National trends in homelessness and housing exclusion

This section provides country examples to further highlight emerging trends in homelessness and housing exclusion at national level. The following indicators are used to show that **homelessness is indeed a social reality in Europe** which needs to be acknowledged by EU policy-makers:

- Key governmental decisions related to homelessness;
- Key figures on the extent and perception of homelessness in some EU countries;
- Increasing number of homeless policies recently developed in Europe;
- First-time national stocktaking exercises on the scope of homelessness;
- Revealing housing market trends over the last few years.

#### Key governmental decisions related to homelessness

A number of national governments have taken important decisions over the past few years in the area of homelessness. The examples below illustrate the awareness of some governments on the urgent need to counter increasing homelessness trends by providing all citizens with a home.

##### **United Kingdom**

In July 2007, Prime Minister Gordon Brown outlined future housing plans for Britain. He has emphasised the importance government places on affordable housing in a statement to Parliament (see full article on [10 Downing Street](#)). He indicated plans to meet housing need by building a total of 3 million new homes by 2020. He announced three proposed bills for housing and planning in the 2007-08 parliamentary session.

##### **The Netherlands**

The Dutch Finance Minister took the initiative in 2005 to launch discussions with relevant ministries and local authorities on adopting a homelessness action plan to tackle homelessness in the Netherlands. As a result of this initiative of the Finance Ministry, the Dutch government and the four largest cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) presented a plan in February 2006 entitled "Homelessness Action Plan for 2006-2013". The plan is intended to reach out to the roofless people living in the four cities (now estimated at

over 10,000) and provide them with individual service pathways and sources of income, health care and employment.

### France

Presidential candidate, Nicholas Sarkozy, proposed 4 priorities for tackling poverty. One of these was to establish a justiciable right to housing in France : "I wish to introduce a justiciable right to housing. A person who works should be able to find adequate forms of housing, and not have to sleep in a car or on a campsite." (*L'Abécédaire des propositions de Nicholas Sarkozy*, 2007 - [FR](#)). In January 2007, the former Minister for social cohesion, Jean-Louis Borloo launched a national debate on rethinking public policies in relation to tackling homelessness, building up to a final "Consensus Conference" which will take place in November 2007 to reach a consensus on the best approaches to tackling homelessness ([FR](#)).

### Key figures on homelessness

The profile of the homeless population is constantly changing. Recent trends include an increasing number of women and families (often single parent families). The homeless population seems to be getting younger and older (the typical middle aged homeless man becomes less prevalent amongst people who are homeless). The impact of immigration is clear: increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers are using homelessness services and in some countries there is also an overrepresentation of "legal" immigrants also 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations in the homeless population. The following country examples provide figures on the high or rising numbers of people experiencing homelessness, as well as people's perception of homelessness.

### France

In 2006, a survey was carried out in France on the perception of homelessness in France: "Les français, les sans-abri et la lutte contre l'exclusion" (BVA, 2006). Among the key findings, it emerged that one in every two people in France believes they could become homeless one day (48%). Whereas 4% believe such a situation is "very possible", 44% believe "this could happen". See more [here](#).

### Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, homeless people are defined as those who have no roof over their heads and who have to find temporary shelter with various voluntary organizations, although this definition is not considered totally satisfactory. Their number is not officially monitored and estimates lie in the region of **tens of thousands of people**. The shelters administered by the national Shelter Home Association alone provide space for 2,240 homeless men and women, including mothers with children, every day, while hundreds more are accommodated by other residential facilities and seasonal shelters (dormitories). Information and statistics provided by shelter homes reveal that homeless people most frequently belong in the 36-50 age group, which means that they are able to reintegrate into the labour market. Homeless people also include those who use makeshift shelters (shacks, outhouses, huts or stationary caravans). According to the 2001 Population and Housing Census, 45,000 people live in makeshift shelters in the Czech Republic (NSR, 2006-2008).

### United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, research published by a homelessness charity called Shelter UK in 2006 shows that 1.6 million youngsters are either homeless or living in bad housing, with all the negative impact of such living situations on a child's development, education, and general well-being (Shelter UK, 2006). In Wales, 35,000 children are living in poor housing and over 43,000 children are living in overcrowded conditions judged by the Bedroom Standard (FEANTSA, 2007).

### Sweden

In total around 17,800 persons were reported homeless during Week 17 of 2005 in Sweden. Three-quarters of these persons are men (approximately 13,100) and a quarter are women (approximately 4,500). The majority of the homeless people were born in Sweden (around 12,400). There is, however, an over-representation of people

born outside Sweden (around 4,300) in the group, compared with their proportion in the rest of the population (26 per cent in the mapping compared with 12 per cent in the population). A third of the homeless population (approx 5,000) are parents of children under 18 years of age (NBHW, 2005).

### Hungary

Annual headcounts are carried out in Budapest on 3 February of every year. The last count showed that at least 3,000 persons were sleeping rough in the capital of Hungary on that day in 2005. However some of the districts were not surveyed at all, so this figure is an underestimation. On an average winter night in Budapest, a further 1,800 sleep at homeless shelters, and 2,800 people live in hostels providing temporary accommodation. Budapest therefore has a total of **8,000 homeless people** on an average winter night. See more [here](#)

### Ireland

A Barometer Survey undertaken by Behaviour and Attitudes Marketing Research, based on a nationally representative quota sample of 1,200 adults, was published in February 2007. This revealed that 78% of those interviewed believed that homelessness was a serious issue in Ireland at present. Some 54% rated homelessness as either an extremely serious or very serious issue in this regard (Barometer, 2007).

### Increasing number of homeless policies developed in recent years

As a result of increasing visibility of homelessness in Europe's large and medium-sized cities, public authorities are increasingly allocating funds to develop and implement homeless policies. In recent years, national strategies to tackle this phenomenon have been adopted (Netherlands, Czech Republic, Sweden, Hungary, France, UK, Ireland, Finland, Belgium) and other countries are starting to evaluate the extent of the problem (Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Austria).

### Sweden

The Swedish Government adopted a homelessness strategy in February 2007, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders (NGOs, local authorities and other) allocating a budget of 66million euros over two years (2007-2008). The aims of the strategy are the following:

- Everyone is to be guaranteed a roof over their head and continued coordinated help on the basis of individual need;
- The number of women and men admitted to or registered with correctional facilities, treatment units, have supported housing or spend time at homes for care or treatment and do not have housing arranged for when they are discharged is to fall;
- Entry into the regular housing market is to be made easier for women and men who are in training apartments or other types of housing supplied by the social welfare services or other actors;
- The number of evictions is to fall and no children are to be evicted.

See more: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8722/a/76298>

### Ireland

Homelessness has also been identified as an area of priority within the 'Towards 2016' Social Partnership Framework which sets out a series of policy objectives to be achieved over the next decade. These include the **elimination of long-term homelessness by 2010**, improved coordination of service provision via extension of joint-agency approaches at local level to target homelessness and strengthening the involvement of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector in the development of homelessness policy.

Within the last year, all major political parties pledged their support to the MakeRoom campaign, led by a partnership of 4 leading voluntary organisations working to addressing homelessness, including Simon Communities of Ireland. Thus all parties have pledged to end homelessness by 2010.

In this respect the end of homelessness is defined as "ensuring no one will have to sleep rough because of lack of appropriate services, that no one will have to live in emergency accommodation for longer than is an emergency and that no one will become homeless due to a lack of services or inadequate housing provision".

### **Czech Republic**

Since 2005, the Czech Government has ensured a uniform and systematic approach to the provision of social services to the homeless and to support the standardization of social services provided by non governmental organizations in the Czech Republic for the homeless in residential social service facilities (in shelters for people who are homeless) and follow-up fieldwork programmes, and, finally, to expand their options by providing social services that will result in reintegrating homeless people into society and into the labour market (NSR, 2006-2008). See more [here](#)

### **France**

As a result of the political debates following the tent settlements along the "Canal St Martin" in Paris in January 2007, a law introducing the justiciable right to housing was adopted in France (see full text [here](#)). This legislation gives French citizens the possibility to take legal action against a public authority for failing to fulfill its obligation to provide a housing solution. This right is guaranteed by the State for persons residing on French territory (with legal status) and unable to access an independent and decent home through their own means.

### **The Netherlands**

The Dutch government wishes to achieve the situation in which nobody has to sleep rough against their will (Health Ministry, 2007). The government wants to create safe shelters for women in crisis situations who cannot stay in their homes due to domestic violence. Therefore it is aiming to create move-on and permanent housing for people, as well as care facilities, when they leave a shelter. The housing and care facilities should enable those formerly homeless people to participate as fully as possible in society.

The Strategy Plan for Social Relief to combat homelessness in the four biggest cities in the Netherlands adds an impulse to this policy. The Plan gives new instruments to local authorities, service providers and housing associations. These instruments make it possible to develop individual treatment plans for 21.800 people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the four big cities. In each treatment plan there will be personal goals in the fields of housing, income, care, and day activities. **The ultimate goal is to strongly decrease homelessness.**

Homelessness as a result of eviction must become almost non-existent. The number of evictions in 2008 must be reduced to less than 30% of the 2005 figure. To the extent that evictions still take place, alternative and suitable living accommodation at the bottom end of the housing market must be offered. Indicators: number of evictions per year and number of evictions leading to homelessness per year.

### **Poland**

In Poland, considerable funds are now being invested in building social forms of housing following the adoption of a New Act in 2007: "Act on financial support creation of social housing, protected housing, nightshelters and hostels for homeless". This Law is a first and was prepared jointly by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (responsible for Nightshelters and Hostels) and the Ministry of Housing (responsible for Social and Protected Housing). Every year in April and October, the National Economic Bank prepares a Call for Funding for Local Governments and NGOs. In October of this year, for the first time, there will be funds allocated for the creation or renovation of social and protected housing, nightshelters and dwellings for people who are homeless (FEANTSA Poland).

### **First-time national stocktaking exercises on the scope of homelessness**

To better understand the extent and nature of the problem, many countries have started carrying out important national-level research on homelessness, and are in the process of developing homelessness evaluation systems to better monitor homelessness trends (numbers and profiles) and homeless policies. A number of homelessness stocktaking exercises have taken place over the last few years *as a first* in various countries (Portugal, Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Luxembourg) to provide a good evidence base for developing adequate policies to tackle this emerging phenomenon.

#### **Luxembourg**

For the first time, a national study on homelessness was carried out in Luxembourg on the initiative of the Ministry of Family and Integration. The report focuses on two main objectives, first establishing the number and the profile of people temporarily housed by the state or living in any kind of shelters and secondly acquiring all the necessary knowledge to fight against this very severe form of social exclusion. It represents the first national level study of its kind.

The study was conducted in February 2006 and the survey found 715 persons suffering from homelessness in Luxembourg. They experience different situations ranging from sleeping rough, to using day and night shelters or sleeping in the houses of relatives and friends. Their situation can easily switch from one case to another.

The study reveals a young homeless population (half being aged between 18 and 34) in which men outnumber women by 54% against 46%. The causes that led to housing exclusion are usually financial (job and income loss, impossibility to pay off loans) or personal and relational (separation, divorce, domestic violence). Homelessness also triggers loss of social networks. Among people experiencing homelessness, 58% stated they could rely on someone else, compared to 90% of the rest of the population. See full report [here](#)

#### **Portugal**

The first national survey on homelessness was carried out in 2005 in Portugal. In order to reach the targets included in the Portuguese National Action Plan on social inclusion (NAP/incl) 2003 -2005, the Institute for Social Security (ISS) launched the first of several initiatives to obtain a "national diagnosis of the situation of homeless people and of the institutional support available until December 2004" (NAP/incl objective). This led to a national survey conducted by the ISS on the night of the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005 aimed at identifying and characterising all the people who were sleeping rough in inland Portugal, during a fixed period of time.

A national homelessness working group was consequently set up in 2007 to continue discussions on measurement and monitoring of homelessness in Portugal. The group members are from both public and private organisations such as the High Commissioner for Health, High Commissioner for Immigration, Commission for equality, Institute for Drugs and Alcohol Abuse, Direcção Geral Saúde (Health), Direcção Geral (Social Security), National Institute for Housing, homeless service providers, Confederation of private solidarity organizations, the Police, the Employment Institute, the National Association of Municipalities and prominent researchers working on homelessness.

#### **Austria**

Until now, the responsibilities for tackling homelessness have always been at regional level. However, in June 2007, the Austrian Minister for social affairs announced that there would be an Austrian-wide (national) survey on homelessness – a systematic headcount will take place during the second half of 2007 in cooperation with the national umbrella of homeless service providers, BAWO (member of FEANTSA). The aims of this survey are to provide figures and data on homelessness, to give an insight into the effectiveness of the regional systems of prevention, alleviation and rehabilitation, and to evaluate the regional policies against homelessness in Austria. This national survey could be a first step in the development of *national* frameworks for tackling homelessness, namely for standards, resources and measures for a national fight against homelessness (FEANTSA, Austria).

## Denmark

During the first months of 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated an investigation on the exact number of homeless people in Denmark as a means of developing solid and evidence-based homeless policies. As a result of this first stocktaking of homelessness in Denmark, a report on the number of homeless people in Denmark was published on 14 August, 2007 (*Homelessness in Denmark. National Survey* (In Danish: Hjemløshed i Danmark. National kortlægning).

## Revealing housing market/services trends

Homelessness is linked to personal factors such as family breakdown and social isolation, but there is also a correlation between homelessness and structural factors (housing markets, unemployment, economic developments), or institutional factors (services, benefit allocation systems, organisational structure of healthcare institutions or prisons) (FEANTSA Observatory, 2005). The housing market trends in Europe are having an impact on the extent of homelessness, and include trends such as saturation of housing/homeless support services, a shrinking social housing sector, an increase in houseprices, and changing household structures leading to new emerging housing needs.

## Italy

The national umbrella of homeless service providers in Italy, FIOpsd, have great concerns resulting from their observation of homelessness through their databases and daily experiences. FIOpsd draws attention to new homelessness trends in Italy, including the increasing number of homeless people or people using services for homeless (e.g. Canteen, clothes etc.) within the country and the consequent saturation of services. Some services in metropolitan areas registered even a 150% increase of people applying for services between 2001 and 2005. This saturation of services has inevitably led to a rise in numbers of people forced to find other living arrangements (living in makeshift dwellings, sleeping rough, sleeping with family or friends) (FEANTSA, Italy).

## Sweden

In June 2007, the Swedish Network against Social Exclusion (SNASE) published an open letter expressing their concern about the developing trends in the Swedish field of housing which they believe will lead to an increase of homelessness in the future.

"SNASE are worried about the developments in Sweden. They see houseprices rising and that 17.000 people suffer from homelessness according to the national count in 2005. Another 17.000 households have housing without full legal rights. They have Social Services as landlords. Many more have insecure housing, living with friends or in temporary accomodations.

SNASE believes the situation will be worse in the future because the goverment have allowed local authorities to sell community-owned social houses to their tenants. This seems to be happening on a large scale - only in Stockholm, over 100.000 social housing units were sold.

SNASE thinks this will increase the segregation between wealthy and poor people and can make it harder for young people, families with low income or sickness, refugees, single-parents etc to find suitable housing."

## Spain

Housing vulnerability and instability in Spain are often due to the high percentage of household income used to cover housing costs and increasing interest rates. In Spain, the two main problematic housing market trends from a homelessness perspective have been a lack of rental housing and increasing houseprices, while public policies fail to find adequate solutions to these problems. According to the "Indice fotocasa.es inmobiliario del primer trimestre del 2007", the average houseprice in Spain in March this year was 2.938 euros/m<sup>2</sup>, in other words a 7.3% increase since March 2006.

There is also a distinct lack of supported forms of housing (offering lower rents than market rates) for low-income households or households at a disadvantage in the housing market. This supported housing sector has been decreasing constantly : this sector represented 41.9% of the housing stock in 1995, 41.2% in 1996, 33.5% in 1997, and only 10.2% of the housing stock in 2006. The supported housing stock is clearly insufficient to compensate for the increasing housing market prices and increasing interest rates.

Family structures are changing, and households are developing new housing needs. Reports from the Office of National Statistics in Spain, based on data collected from the Population and Housing Census between 1991 and 2001, are telling in this respect:

- The most notable change has been the increase in single households (1.6 million in 1991 to 2.9 million in 2001);
- The number of families in living in houses in multiple occupation has increased fivefold between 1991 and 2001, mainly due to high immigration and an increase in domestic services;
- Children are leaving home later and later.

(FEANTSA, Spain)

### Belgium

In Belgium, increasing pressure on the social services available and the access to social housing remain very problematic. Homeless service providers perceive an increasing pressure on the system of support and care. New forms of care, such as the day centers and protected housing do not preclude shortages in the capacity for urgent and immediate shelter, nor does it mean that the transition from shelter to independent living is sufficiently smooth. For example, the access for homeless people to *social housing* remains very problematic.

The shelters and refuges continue to clog up. The Centres for General Welfarework have been given the possibility to develop and adapt their package of services to respond to emerging housing needs, but there is a lack of central coordination to ensure that the services of various regions are compatible.

Social services stress the need for new or more developed methodologies and for a differentiation of the services on offer in order to 'solve' the problems of homelessness. In addition, they point to the need to tackle structural social problems, such as the shortage of affordable housing, the lack of employment opportunities, the problem of income and of social security. This makes it important to inform policy-makers and to offer suggestions for tackling these social problems on a political level. Given the complexity of homelessness there is a need for better coordination and cooperation amongst the different departments of the general welfarework and other associated sectors (Van Menxel et al, 2004).

### Austria

In Austria, there are figures on people at a disadvantage in the housing market and threatened with homelessness (people in substandard housing, people leaving prisons, asylum-seekers in reception centres, people released from psychiatric institutions, etc) including data on **evictions**. In 2004, 6.821 eviction notices were enforced all over Austria. In 2005, 6.824 eviction orders were enforced. In 2006, 7,183 eviction notices were enforced all over Austria. The number of evictions are on the increase in Austria, as well as in many other countries. However, the City of Vienna works to prevent evictions as an important strategy to prevent homelessness on a structural/housing market level. In 2006 in Vienna there were 9.300 eviction orders, and only 3.600 were actually enforced (in 2005, 3.500 out of 9.000 eviction notices in Vienna were enforced) (FEANTSA, Austria).

## Conclusions

This paper attempts to highlight *some* (not all) key findings at European and national level which reveal the current political consensus on the urgent need to tackle the root causes of homelessness. In contradiction with all declarations on European values and the importance of the European social model, **homelessness is a European social reality in Europe**, and national governments are increasingly aware of the need to tackle the problem before it spirals out of control.

Homelessness requires both structural/institutional solutions and appropriate personal needs-based solutions. It is clear that a good social protection systems alone cannot solve or prevent homelessness. In all countries, even the countries with more robust social protection systems, there are people experiencing homelessness (and not homeless by choice). It is also difficult to argue that countries with good social protection systems have less people experiencing homeless. The key element in addressing rising homelessness in Europe is the presence of a distinct policy on homelessness - homelessness needs to be recognised as a distinct problem that needs distinct policy answers.

FEANTSA calls on the European Commission to make homelessness a key priority of EU anti-poverty strategies in the next EU social policy agenda 2010-2015 to work towards ensuring no one in Europe will have to sleep rough because of lack of appropriate services.

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## Annex ETHOS - European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

	Operational Category	Living Situation	Generic Definition
v Conceptual Category v	ROOFLESS	1 People Living Rough	1.1 Public space or external space Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2 People in emergency accommodation	2.1 Night shelter People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESS	3 People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 Homeless hostel 3.2 Temporary Accommodation 3.3 Transitional supported accommodation Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		4 People in Women's Shelter	4.1 Women's shelter accommodation Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5 People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 Temporary accommodation / reception centres 5.2 Migrant workers accommodation Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
	INSECURE	6 People due to be released from institutions	6.1 Penal institutions 6.2 Medical institutions <sup>9</sup> 6.3 Children's institutions / homes No housing available prior to release Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing No housing identified (e.g by 16th birthday)
		7 People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 Residential care for older homeless people 7.2 Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
	INADEQUATE	8 People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 Temporarily with family/friends Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing
			8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy Illegal occupation of a dwelling
			8.3 Illegal occupation of land Occupation of land with no legal rights
	9 People living under threat of eviction	9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented) Where orders for eviction are operative	
		9.2 Re-possession orders (owned) Where mortgagee has legal order to re-possess	
	10 People living under threat of violence	10.1 Police recorded incidents Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence	
11 People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1 Mobile homes Not intended as place of usual residence		
	11.2 Non-conventional building Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty		
	11.3 Temporary structure Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin		
12 People living in unfit housing	12.1 Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations		
13 People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms		