European Commission

Key Elements in Homelessness Strategies to End Homelessness by 2030: A Discussion Paper

European Platform on Combatting Homelessness

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Introduction

The *Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness,* agreed by the Member States in June 2021, aims to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030, so that: *'no one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation; no one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution; no one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing; evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed; and no one is discriminated against due to their homeless.*'

The Declaration also acknowledges that the drivers of homelessness '*include rising housing costs, insufficient supply of social housing stock or housing assistance, low income and precarious jobs, job loss, ageing and family breakdown, discrimination, long-term health problems and insufficiently prepared release from institutional settings.*'

Across the Member States there is considerable variation in the significance of the drivers listed above in contributing to the extent of homelessness and the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness. In board terms, *the number and characteristics of households experiencing homelessness varies by the strength and inclusivity of social protection, health and housing systems*. Member states with strong welfare safety nets, and resulting low rates of poverty and income inequality, tend to have equally *low* overall rates of households experiencing homelessness, but that these households are more likely to have *complex needs*. On the other hand, countries with weaker welfare safety nets tend to have *higher* rates of homelessness, but with the majority having few if any needs, other than need for income / services to access, secure and retain housing.

Addressing these drivers is a considerable challenge, but as the Declaration notes, there is *'growing evidence about effective interventions to prevent and solve homelessness.'* In terms of the *'diagnostic of challenge'*, the *'Policy Framework'*, the *'Institutional Set-up'* and the systems of '*Evaluation'*, there will also be significant variation across Member States in how homelessness is conceptualised and measured (if at all). Furthermore, the different welfare regimes evident across the European Union vary in how housing, health and social services are funded, delivered, the degree to which they are centralised or devolved and the level of decommodification for service users.

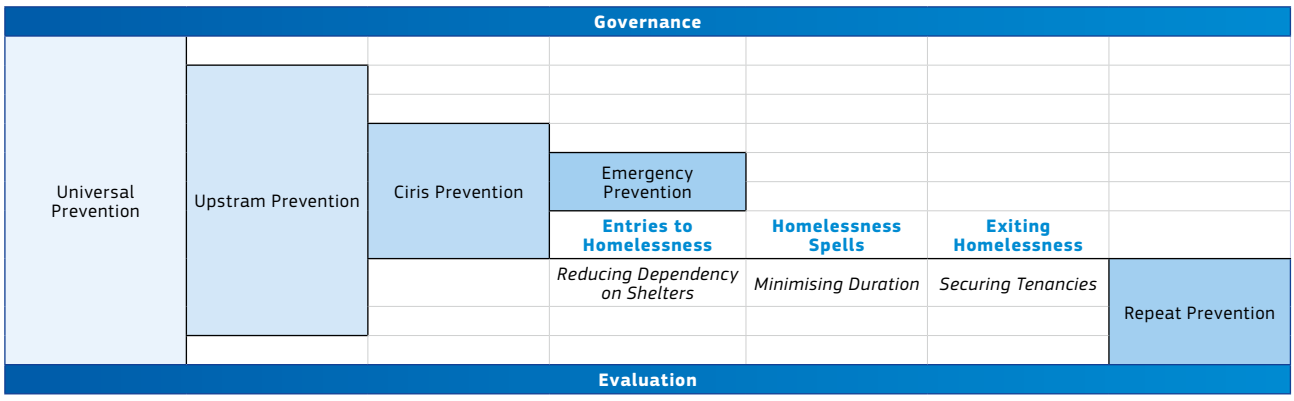
Equally, the administrative make-up of these services will shape the nature of the governance of responses to homelessness, that is *the inter-agency and collaborative approaches required* to ensure that homelessness is ended by 2030. Furthermore, different Member States are in very different places in terms of their current responses to homelessness, with some heavily dependent on emergency and temporary accommodation as a response, but others have adopted housing led-policies and practices and have reduced their dependence on emergency and temporary accommodation.

Reflecting this diversity, this discussion paper *does not* provide a tool-kit or a manual to inform each Member State on that policies and procedures that can contribute to ending homelessness, and given the variety of policies and procedures across the Member States in housing, health and social services, and *does not* provide a detailed overview of national policies, as this is recently covered in the *European Social Policy Network* Transnational and National Reports on *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in* Europe (Baptista and Marlier, 2019).

The aim of this discussion paper is to provide a conceptual framework of the *dynamics of homelessness*, drawing on key lessons from research, and how these lessons can inform, *through mutual learning and collaboration*, the configuration of practices and policies in Member States, while reflecting and respecting their diversity, *in devising integrated strategies to end homelessness*. In doing so, it has recently been argued that this will also require changes in culture and thinking around homelessness; changes respond to those experiencing homelessness and those who work with them; changes to funding regimes, and changes to the way people access housing (Demos Helsinki / Housing First Europe Hub, 2022).

The *Conceptual Framework*, drawing on contemporary evidence-based research, is outlined below. The Framework understands homelessness as a dynamic process and identifies where homelessness can be prevented in the first instance, and for those that enter homelessness, to minimise the duration of that experience by ensuring rapid exits to secure accommodation. The *governance of responses* to homelessness is equally variable across the Member States, as are the means and methods of *evaluating* the different inputs into preventing, responding to, and ending homelessness.

The different stages of prevention, and various emergency accommodation services when people experience homelessness are provided for, to a greater or lesser degree, in all Member States, *but the intensity and focus of these inputs will vary*. Some have more developed prevention services than others. Dependence on temporary and emergency accommodation is also variable, as is the scale and embeddedness of Housing First programmes and Housing Led policies. The next section of the paper provides a brief overview of the over-arching conceptual framework, and then proceeds to identify the key stages in trajectories through and out of homelessness, and the research-evidence based inputs can prevent and rapidly exit households from homelessness. The final two sections identify a number of issues for consideration in relation to governance of the process for ending homelessness, and mechanisms to evaluate and monitor the impact of the inputs to prevent and end homelessness.



Adapted from Fitzpatrick *et al* (2021) and Lee *et al* (2021).

Conceptual Framework

Social science research has clearly demonstrated, using a variety of different robust research methodologies, that the experience of homelessness is a dynamic process and the outcome of the interaction of macro and micro circumstances (Lee et al, 2021). Those who experience homelessness are part of a larger population of disadvantaged households who are at risk of homelessness (Batterham, 2021), and size of this population is driven by rates of poverty and social exclusion (Byrne et al, 2021) and housing accessibility and affordability.

The larger this population of disadvantaged households, the greater the number of households that will experience homelessness over time, but not all disadvantaged households will experience homelessness, and this may be determined by the stock of social, financial, and emotional resources available to disadvantaged individuals and families (Hastings, 2021). Although difficult to predict which households will experience homelessness from the larger pool of disadvantaged households, but based on extensive North American research, they *"are more likely to be impacted by sudden, unexpected events, have one or more personal vulnerabilities, lack adequate social support, or be an alumni of an institutional setting"* (Lee et al, p.13).The housing tenure of the larger disadvantaged population is also crucial, with those in publicly rented housing less likely to experience homelessness than those privately renting (O'Donnell, 2021), except in countries where there is strong rent regulation and security of tenure in the private rented sector. Those households who do experience homelessness are, in O'Flaherty's (2003) formulation, those who experience a conjunction of adverse structural (macro) and personal circumstances (micro), that is, being the *"wrong person in the wrong place."*

Despite the heterogeneity of those experiencing homelessness in terms of household type, age and gender, the broad process identified above will apply, but the duration of the homeless spell and the type of services available will vary (see for example Bretherton and Mayock, 2021 in relation to women experiencing homelessness). A crucial exception is in relation to citizenship, where access to homelessness and housing services in many member states is either restricted to national citizens, or those with a residence permit (Hermans et al, 2020; Giansanti et al, 2022).

For those households that do experience homelessness, that experience is a process where households *enter* various forms of homelessness and residential instability, such as using emergency accommodation, or staying insecurely with family and / or friends; where the *duration* of the stay or spell varies considerably, but for the majority the stay is brief, and then *exit* to housing, with the majority not experiencing a further spell, but some will experience a cycle of repeated, often short spells, and others, an experience of prolonged spells.

The paper conceptualises the experience of homelessness as a trajectory through these stages, and the objective of public policy should be to *prevent entries* to homelessness in the first instance, and for those that do experience homelessness, to *minimize the duration* of that experience by *rapidly exiting* households to secure affordable housing, with support if required, thus reducing the likelihood a further experience of homelessness and allowing for the *reduction* of costly emergency accommodation and the alleviation of the individual trauma associated with a spell of homelessness.

The evidence highlights that the single most important public policy response is the provision of an *adequate supply of affordable and secure housing*, either provided directly by municipalities and / or not for profit organisations or with rental subsidies. In the context of a scarcity of secure and affordable housing, or available housing, but a scarcity or parsimoniousness of rental subsidies, or a scarcity of Landlords willing to take rent subsidised tenants, interventions are more likely to centre on *managing and mitigating* the impact of homelessness, rather than *ending it*, and risks polarising debates about prioritisation and deservedness in the allocation of a scarce resource.

The provision of a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing can substantially reduce the number of households who will experience homelessness, and for those that do, will ensure a rapid exit. Given the robust research evidence on the success of housing programmes for specific groups, particularly those with complex needs, experiencing homelessness such as *Housing First*, initially pioneered in North America (Padgett et al, 2016), and later developed to varying degrees in Member States with same positive results (Loubière et al, 2022), or *national level housing-led programmes,* such as in Finland (Y-Foundation, 2017, 2022), the contention *"that most homeless people were too sick to be housed"*, which as O'Flaherty (2019, p.23) notes was taken seriously until recently, is no longer credible.

Prevention

In a recent review of the international evidence on the effectives of interventions to prevent homelessness, Pleace (2019, p.8) notes that while the evidence base is not perfect, *"there is evidence that services that are flexible and which provide support by working to develop the right mix of support for people threatened by homelessness, which are well integrated with homelessness, health, housing and other services, tend to work best."* Thus, prevention is effective when part of an 'integrated homelessness strategy'. Across Europe, a wide range of preventative services are evident (Baptista and Marlier, 2019), from eviction detection mechanisms, conflict mediation support, debt counselling, direct and enhanced financial support to avert the threat of homelessness, legal protections and tenancy sustainment support. However, there is an absence of rigorous evaluations of these various inputs which impedes the transferability of these prevention inputs across the Member States.

As with the evidence base on rapid re-housing from emergency accommodation, effective prevention requires the same resource: *a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing*. In the absence of this resource, prevention options may be constrained and operate to 'gatekeep' households from accessing the services required to obtain affordable and secure housing, and hence only temporarily alleviating their housing instability.

Given the increasing use of the private rented sector and not-for profit organisations in meeting the needs of vulnerable households, with a drift away from municipal providers in some countries, recent research in Australia using the unique Panel Dataset, *Journeys Home*, found 'public housing to be a very strong protective factor reducing risks of homelessness (Johnson et al, 2019, p.1106). Using the same dataset, O'Donnell (2021, p.1722) concurred noting that *"[p]eople who enter social housing are more likely to maintain their tenancy and less likely to experience homelessness or other forms of disadvantage than people living in privately rented housing."*

This was because not only is public housing affordable, but it also provides a level of security of tenure not found in the private rented sector in many countries and is more tolerant of rent arrears that not-for-profit providers, whose primary income source is rent and hence more likely to terminate tenancies if there are rent arrears. However, as noted in the introduction, in countries where there is rent regulation and security of tenure in the private rented sector, the risk of experiencing homelessness from the private rented sector is lessened.

Fitzpatrick *et al* (2021) have developed a sophisticated *five-stage typology of homelessness prevention* that provides a temporal dimension to prevention efforts and the public policies that research evidence demonstrates works.

The first stage is *Universal Prevention* in which the provision of affordable housing and reducing poverty are the most crucial interventions to preventing homelessness. This is entirely consistent with the conceptual framework above and signifies that *Homelessness Strategies in Member States must be integrated into housing and anti-poverty strategies.*

The second stage is *Up-Stream Prevention*, which identifies at risk-groups rather than the population as a whole in universal prevention. It can be difficult to identify those who are at risk of homelessness from the general disadvantaged population, *but those leaving state institutions such as prisons, or out-of-home care are consistently identified as at risk of homelessness*, and a number of evidence-based interventions have successful reduced the experience of homelessness for these at-risk groups.

Crisis Prevention aims to ensure that households that are imminently at risk of having to enter homelessness, often due to the inability to finance increased rent in the private rented sector, have their tenancy protected through financial assistance and / or advocacy and mediation, formally and informally, with the landlord to prevent them entering emergency accommodation. As above, there are a range of evidence-based interventions that have successfully prevented homelessness at this stage.

The fourth stage is *Emergency Prevention* which ensures that the vast majority of those who lose access to housing do not find themselves unsheltered and exposed to the elements through the provision of emergency and temporary accommodation. The type, scale and providers of this emergency and temporary accommodation varies enormously across Member States, and congregate shelters of various hues have a long-established role in meeting this emergency need. However, as detailed below, the research evidence supports the reducing dependence on the provision of such emergency accommodation in favour of secure housing where possible.

Repeat Prevention aims to ensure that those households that have exited homelessness do not experience a further spell of homelessness. Crucial here is the nature of the exit – and in particular, the nature of the security of tenure in housing exits. The majority of households who exit homelessness do not have a further spell, and there is now a substantial evidence base for the types of supports required to ensure housing retention for those with complex needs.

In brief, there is evidence that there are a range of interventions at the different stages in the typology that have the potential to significantly reduce the flow into homelessness, but all effective interventions require *a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing.* For example, in the case of Finland, where we have seen substantial decreases in homelessness, a key reason for this decrease is attributed to various prevention measures such as housing advice, but the *'most important structural element of prevention has been the increase in affordable social housing supply, especially social housing targeted at young people under the age of 30'* (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021, p.48).

Entry to Homelessness Services

Understanding entries to homelessness is often posed as understanding the reasons for homelessness. As set out in the conceptual framework, entries to homelessness are best understood as the interaction of macro and micro factors, or of individual characteristics and socio- economic structures. For most people, particularly in Europe, those who experience homelessness, either do so by *spending a period of time in temporary and emergency accommodation,* usually in shelters and hostels, often congregate in nature, or *living temporarily with family or friends*. In recent years, there has been an increasing use of *'overflow' accommodation*, that is the use of hotel rooms, sometimes at scale, when existing emergency accommodation has been unable to cope with the flows into homelessness (Pleace *et al*, 2021). Not all member states consider those living temporarily with family or friends as experiencing homelessness, but all consider those in temporary and emergency accommodation as homeless (Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Pleace and Hermans, 2020). Thus, the focus of the following section is on the current and future role of temporary and emergency accommodation.

Rough Sleeping

However, in many countries, when people think about homelessness, they think about rough sleepers, although people living / sleeping rough comprise only a very small minority of those experiencing homelessness at a *point-in-time*, and particularly over a *period-of-time*. Although the numbers experiencing rough sleeping are relatively small in each member state in comparison with those staying in emergency shelters, temporary accommodation and those staying temporarily with family and friends; this is the most visible form of homelessness and those who experience this form of homelessness *attract multiple interventions* from a variety of organisations. The *vast majority of these interventions are not-evidenced based*, and by and large do not either resolve or ameliorate the difficulties facing those experiencing rough sleeping.

There is growing body of evidence that demonstrates what does work in ending rough sleeping, and hence a rationale for not supporting or funding interventions in the cities and regions of Europe that are not evidence-based. While individual and collective acts of kindness and compassion in assisting those rough sleeping are well intentioned, they are largely *ineffective*, with research increasingly suggesting that they can be, in fact, *counterproductive. Purposeful assertive street outreach*, with the *provision of suitable accommodation*, is an *effective* means of meeting the needs of entrenched rough sleepers, particularly those with complex needs (Mackie *et al*, 2019; Parsell, 2018).

Emergency and Temporary Accommodation

In a recent review of homelessness services in Europe, Pleace *et al* (2018, p.12) concluded that: *"Low intensity services, offering basic non-housing support and emergency / temporary accommodation, probably form the bulk of homelessness service provision in Europe*", with Housing-led and Housing First services, centred on immediately providing permanent homes for homeless people and the support they need to sustain those homes (housing-led services), are probably the least common form of service, although they are present to some degree in most countries." (See appendix 1 for a typology of homelessness services in Europe). These emergency and temporary accommodation services are provided by a range of agencies, including municipal authorities, private for-profit providers and non-profit providers, which often have a strong presence of religiously inspired organisations but *"vary substantially in terms of size, client group, type of building, levels and nature of support, behavioural expectations, nature and enforcement of rules, level of "professionalization" and seasonal availability"* (Mackie et al, 2017, p.X).

Despite extensive critiques of the limitations of this form of congregate accommodation as a response to residential instability, and the largely negative experience of those who reside in such facilities, this form of congregate accommodation remains the single most significant intervention in the lives of people experiencing homelessness in a majority of Member States, described in a recent report as *"oversubscribed, insecure and unsuitable"* (Serme-Morin and Coupechoux, 2019).'

However, such facilities provide shelter that can prevent or reduce the experience of rough sleeping. Research has noted that paternalistic procedures (Parsell and Clarke, 2019), surveillant techniques (Parsell, 2016) and strict rules (Cloke et al, 2010) within shelters can offer support and a sense of safety and security for some shelter residents (Neale, 1997), and as sites where they can achieve sobriety and abstain from narcotics and other psychopharmacological substances. However, *these positive features can also be provided in secure tenancies with floating support* (Watts and Blenkinsopp, 2021) which also provides a degree of ontological security (Padgett, 2007) and have been successfully delivered in North America and Europe (Padgett et al, 2016).

The Limited Role of Temporary and Emergency Accommodation in Ending Homelessness

In brief, there is no convincing evidence that the provision of emergency accommodation, particularly large congregate shelters, for people experiencing homelessness achieves anything other than a temporary, generally unpleasant, sometimes unsafe, respite from the elements and the provision of basic sustenance for people experiencing homelessness. This is particularly the case for basic shelter services that simply provide a bed and food (Keenan *et al*, 2020) For a small minority, emergency accommodation is an extraordinarily expensive and unsuitable long-term response to their inability to access secure affordable housing. Many are also fearful of using such services resulting in some of the most vulnerable people rejecting entreaties to enter such accommodation (Fahnøe, 2018; McMordie, 2021). Covid-19 added a further layer of critique to the role of shelter-type accommodation in responding to homelessness (Pleace *et al*, 2021).

Managing homelessness through the provision of emergency accommodation is also extraordinarily expensive (Culhane, 2008; Culhane and An, 2021; O'Sullivan and Mustafiri, 2020), and a minority of shelter users also make extensive use of other expensive emergency health and criminal justice services as they traverse through and 'institutional circuit' (Hopper *et al*, 1997) of short stays in various services without ever resolving their residential instability.

Reducing Dependency on Emergency Accommodation

Recent research has indicated that expenditure on homelessness services is increasing across the EU as a whole, as a consequence of rising numbers of households experiencing homelessness and that the response is still *skewed towards emergency provision with housing-ready assumptions* (Pleace *et al*, 2021). In part, this research identified this increase in expenditure on shelter-based services as a *legacy issue*, in that services were largely designed as *reactive responses* to homelessness, centred around the provision of emergency accommodation.

In a number of countries, a not insignificant portion of expenditure is on *over-flow expenditure*, that is expenditure on hotel rooms and other temporary accommodation not designed to meet the needs of households experiencing homelessness, when existing purpose-built emergency accommodation services have reached their accommodation limits. Thus, a degree of path-dependency is evident, whereby initial investment in emergency accommodation services, can result in generating the provision of further shelter beds when the numbers experiencing homelessness periodically increase, *as this becomes the default response*, and in some cases the use of hotel rooms, when shelters are fully utilised.

This path-dependence is a key reason why robust research-evidence is required. For Fitzpatrick et al (2020, p.117): *"[g]ood evidence can assist in a constructive change management process that empowers people and institutions to move in a different, more effective direction without engaging in a blame culture. It is critical to enable, as well as challenge, both statutory and third-sector organisations to move away from their 'institutional stake' in existing in effective approaches."*

However, for some Member States, it is likely that emergency accommodation will remain a feature of responses to homelessness in the short-to-medium term, largely to due to difficulties in accessing secure affordable housing, due to general housing shortages or the absence of targeting social housing for those at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. In these cases, it is imperative that those in emergency accommodation are linked in with various employment, social and health services to mitigate the experience of emergency accommodation use and to facilitate rapid exits to secure housing. As noted in the discussion of prevention, shelters can be also understood as *Emergency Prevention* which ensures that the vast majority of those who lose access to housing do not find themselves unsheltered. For example, in the case of Ireland, while the number of adults accommodated in emergency accommodation increased by nearly 200% between 2014 and early 2022, the numbers unsheltered remained low and static over the same period due to the substantial increase in the provision of emergency accommodation.

Much of the current expenditure on homelessness services in Europe is on *passive services* – e.g., emergency accommodation / day services / street-based subsistence services, etc., that manage and mitigate the experience of homelessness. To end homelessness by 2030, a key target should be to shift expenditure to *active services* – e.g. prevention services / provision of social housing / Housing First, etc., that effectively prevent homelessness in the first instance, ensuring that the use of emergency accommodation is rare and brief, with the provision of secure affordable tenancies (housing Led) the default response to the residential insecurity experienced by the majority of people using emergency accommodation, with more intensive support and accommodation services for the minority who experience entrenched homelessness.

From Passive to Active Services

Making this *shift from passive to active services* is a significant component of achieving the 2030 target, and the reorientation of assumptions underpinning funding models is potentially an important policy lever to bring about the required changes in policy and practice to deliver active practices at scale. De-implementation, that is ending homelessness interventions that are *"detrimental, non-cost effective, or ineffective methods, that lack sufficient scientific basis, some of which are tradition based"* currently lacks a rigorous evidence base, but Denvall *et al* (2022, p.2) highlight examples from other policy domains that have useful lessons for scaling down emergency accommodation. They conclude that the *"available evidence indicates that the scientific evidence, together with organized demands from users and favourable financial effects, can constitute driving mechanisms for phasing out programs"* (2022, p.8).

By providing households with long-term housing, the Finns were able to close their emergency shelter bed system (Pleace et al, 2016), with currently only one shelter with 52 beds operating in comparison with over 2 000 shelter beds in 1985 (Y-Foundation, 2017). Some were provided with new purpose-built accommodation and others provided with long-term accommodation in individual units with support in *converted hostels and shelters* (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021). The evidence from other domains, such as institutional provision for those with mental health issues or intellectual disabilities, demonstrates that it is possible to successfully close large scale congregate facilities, by providing more effective housing and support led solutions. In the case of Scotland, following widespread consultation, the two key tasks identified in ending homelessness were 'to *scale down* hotel rooms and night shelter provision and to *scale up* rapid rehousing and Housing First.' However, in doing so, they stressed the need to communicate this objective clearly to ensure that when scaling down shelters, to *"actively discourage any new group from establishing a night shelter in any part of Scotland"* (Everyone Home Collective, 2020, p.9).

Of particular interest is the new Danish policy of changing the funding regime for temporary and emergency accommodation. Central government in Denmark has, until now, reimbursed municipalities 50% of the cost of maintaining people in temporary and emergency accommodation without a time limit. However, with the new reforms, this reimbursement will be given for up to 90 days only, after which the full costs for shelter stays will be carried by municipalities. Instead, the central government reimbursement will be transferred to be available for various forms of *support in housing* following a stay in temporary and emergency accommodation. Further with the political agreement follow, that rent levels in just over 4 000 units of existing and new public housing will be reduced to facilitate moving those in temporary and emergency accommodation into housing.

Financial incentives and disincentives to maintaining people in emergency accommodation is under-explored in the European context. The Danish data suggest that for the majority (70%) of emergency shelter users, the most dominant barrier to exiting the shelter is the provision of an appropriate housing solution with the necessary support. Hence, the proposed shift to increasing the affordability of public housing *and* targeting units for those in emergency accommodation, allied to dedicated funding to provide support in housing and increasing the costs to municipalities of maintaining people in shelters after 90 days is worth watching closely and, if successful in reducing shelter use, may be an important policy tool for other member states to consider deploying.

Duration

A homelessness spell is typically either *long-term*, *episodic* or *transitory*. First developed by Kuhn and Culhane (1998) utilising longitudinal shelter data, cluster analyses of time series data on shelter admissions in New York and Philadelphia, showed a pattern whereby approximately 80% of shelter users were transitional users, in that they used shelters for very short periods of time or a single episode and did not return to shelters. A further 10% were episodic users of shelters and the remaining 10% were termed chronic or long- term users of shelter services. Although a relatively small percentage of *single homeless people*, these chronic or long- term users occupied half of all bed nights.

Broadly similar findings have been replicated in studies of shelter usage in Dublin (Waldron et al, 2019; Parker, 2021, Bairéad and Norris, 2022) and Copenhagen (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015), albeit with some significant differences in the extent of homelessness and the characteristics of those in each cluster in different welfare regimes.

In relation to *families*, Culhane et al (2007) found broadly similar patterns were evident, with the majority of families, as with singles, experiencing transitional forms of emergency accommodation usage, but a significantly higher number of families experiencing extensive stays in emergency accommodation. However, unlike the single adults experiencing chronic forms of homelessness, the families did not require high levels of support to exit, nor did they exhibit significant disabilities (see also Parker, 2021 in relation to Dublin). Although some have suggested expanding the 3-group typology (McAllister et al, 2011; Bairéad and Norris, 2022), the more parsimonious typology developed by Culhane *et al* is more adept for policy purposes.

As outlined in the conceptual framework, *homelessness is a dynamic process.* As described above, a small number of households get 'stuck' in emergency accommodation and a small number experience repeated episodes of homelessness, but most households who experience homelessness *will successfully exit* and *will not* experience further episodes. In the case of Dublin, it was observed that 'a quarter of EA residents are effectively "stuck' in EA which they were forced to use as their long term, stable home" (Bairéad and Norris, 2022, p.8). Although it was not possible to determine from existing data the degree to which those spending increasing periods of time in emergency accommodation was because they had complex needs, but on balance the authors concluded that it was a lack of affordable housing that was contributing to the increasing duration of stay, rather than any personal disabilities.

For those households experiencing *long-term* and *episodic* forms of homelessness, *immediate access to housing without preconditions,* except tenancy rules that apply to everyone, like paying rent etc., *with* high levels of psycho-social support in-housing are *effective* in ensuring housing stability. For those households experiencing *transitional* forms of homelessness, *rapid-rehousing* through the provision of rent subsidies, or preferably, affordable secure housing tenancies are *highly effective* in ensuring housing stability. A crucial observation from this research, is that *"[a]lmost everyone who will be homeless two years from today is housed now, and almost everybody who is homeless today will be housed two years from now"* (O'Flaherty, 2010, p.143).

Exits and Re-Entries from Homelessness

Early quantitative work on understanding the likelihood of *re-entering emergency accommodation* after *successfully exiting* noted the importance of whether the exit was a dependent (to transitional accommodation or staying with family and friends) or independent (to private accommodation with supports) one, and how these types of exits interacted with personal characteristics such as age, employment to increase the risk of a return (Dworsky and Piliavin, 2000). Qualitive work on exits among young people in Ireland highlighted that the availability of family and / or professional support impacted on their exit routes (Mayock et al, 2011).

Cobb-Clark et al (2016, p.67) argue individual risk factors commonly associated with entering homelessness *"are completely unrelated to the length of time people are likely to remain without adequate housing"*, with both O'Flaherty (2012) and Johnson et al (2019) concurring that whatever interaction of personal and structural factors that led to their entry into homelessness, by and large does not predict their likelihood of exiting homelessness. More recently, O'Donnell (2021, p.1722) has argued for the *"relative importance of tenure and support over personal characteristics"* in exiting homelessness.

We can conceptualise exits in the following ways:

(1) *secure exits*, that is exiting to *social housing tenancies* provided by municipal authorities and to a lesser degree, not-for-profit housing bodies. Those exiting emergency accommodation to this form of housing are *unlikely* to return to emergency accommodation due to high levels of secure occupancy – that is where *"households who occupy rented dwellings can make a home and stay there, to the extent that they wish to do so, subject to meeting their obligations as a tenant"* (Hulse and Milligan, 2014, p.643). As noted above, exits to the private rented sector can equally be secure where similar levels of secure occupancy occur, but this is only the case in a small number of countries.

(2) *quasi-secure exits* to tenancies provided in the private rented sector, *where security of tenure is weak to moderate* depending on the Member State and when the tenancy commenced, and the market rents are subsidised in part *via* various mechanisms by the State by either subsidising the Landlord or the Tenant.

(3) *insecure exits*, that is returning to family, staying with friends or families or moving to other institutions such as prison or hospital. These exits are inherently unstable with a *high likelihood* that those who exit *via* this route will *return to emergency accommodation* when their time in prison or hospital ends, or when a sharing arrangement with family or friends breaks down.

Some households will require supports to maintain their tenancy, but for the majority, no additional supports other than financial are necessarily required. For those with complex needs, Housing First has demonstrated a high level of housing retention compared with treatment as usual as evidenced by Randomised Controlled Trials in, for example, Canada and France (Aubry *et al*, 2021).

The relative mixture of the availability of social housing tenancies and levels of rent support and security of tenure in the private rented sector varies considerably by *housing regime* in Europe. Dewilde (2022) for example identifies six housing regimes in Europe – North-West European Dual, North-West European-unitary, Southern Europe, Baltic, Central and East European and South-East European. Noting that between 2005 and 2017 *"social housing provision tended to decline in many countries while some countries relaxed (private) rental market regulation"* (2022, p.395), despite the benefits of providing more social housing and regulation of the private rented sector by increasing access to *"decent and affordable housing"*. The regulation of the private rented sector is complex, and the degree to which rents are regulated and the type of regulation vary considerably (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021), as does tenancy protection (Kholodilin and Kohl, 2021) across Member States, but a recent international review argues that the starting point should be *"a clear sense of policy vision for a good private rented sector"* (Gibb et al, 2022, p. 53).

To ensure successful prevention and minimising the duration of homelessness in emergency accommodation or staying with family and friends, the research evidence points to the provision of social housing at scale, with targeted access for people experiencing homelessness and a clear vision of what the private rental market is expected to deliver are core to policies that can ensure the homelessness is ended in 2030.

Governance

Baptista and Marlier (2019) identified sixteen out of the 28 EU (then) Member States having adopted national (10), including Denmark, Ireland and Portugal, or regional / local level policies (6) aiming at the delivery of integrated strategic responses to homelessness. Denmark, Ireland and Portugal were also comparatively early adopters of Homelessness Strategies commencing in Ireland in 2000 and in Denmark and Portugal in 2009. Adopting integrated strategic responses can contribute to more effective evidence-based responses to those experiencing homelessness.

In an international review of the Irish homelessness strategy, Baptista *et al* (2022) identified a number of governance issues that were critical to successful strategies to end homelessness. These included: that governance structures must be *stable and consistent*, that strategy needs to be *sustained*, as well as *comprehensive and integrated*, and that housing-led and housing first services are less effective outside an integrated strategy. Similar issues were identified in a comparative analysis of policy making in relation to homelessness in Europe, Canada and the United States, (O'Sullivan *et al*, 2021; Nelson *et al*, 2021), which identified the importance of *leadership, stability and continuity* within relevant homelessness governance structures for evidence-based policymaking.

In the case of Europe – Finland, France and Ireland being the examples analysed – the continuity or lack of continuity of key personnel enabling, or restricted, a persistent policy drive within relevant governance structures, *with responsibility for housing and homelessness* is identified as one of the key components for the success of the Finnish policy approach to homelessness and contributed to a deteriorating situation in Ireland, despite an ambitious strategy. In a further comparative analysis of Denmark, Finland and Ireland (Allen et al, 2020, p.171) it was argued that in devising homelessness strategies that *"there is a need to establish a deep and robust consensus at the start of the process so that it can survive the personnel changes and external economic/political shocks that will inevitably come along over the years needed to deliver transformative change."*

This was certainly the view in the revised Danish strategy published in late 2021. In preparing the most recent *Danish Homelessness Strategy*, which aims to provide more affordable housing for those experiencing homelessness and at risk, and supporting the full implementation of Housing First, *collaboration* was identified as key, by providing *"co-ownership among the stakeholders."* It was also noted that by *"establishing a national partnership of central stakeholders will ensure a systemic monitoring of the progress of the transition, and a continued co-ownership of the common goal"* (Egholm and Sabaj-Kjaer, 2022). In the case of Finland, the member state with the most successful record of reducing homelessness, and aiming to end homelessness by 2027, their national strategies were described as *"a showcase of wide partnership and collaboration between several state authorities, ministries, cities, and NGOs both on local and national levels."* (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021, p.46).

The Portuguese *National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People 2009-2015* (ENIPSA 2009-2015) according to Baptista and Coelho (2021, p.65) was a significant shift in how homelessness was conceptualised and responded to at a number of different levels: *"(i) it represented an important shift in the traditional (minimal) role of the Portuguese state in policy orientation in this field; (ii) it illustrated the impact of EU policy orientations on national policy-making processes, namely by explicitly acknowledging the role of several tools developed through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the field of social inclusion; and (iii) it steered a change in the provision of homelessness services at the local level, namely with regard to enhanced and more effective governance structures and to more innovative approaches to tackling homelessness."* Although a number of internal and external shocks, particularly the impact of the Global Financial Crisis and austerity measures blunted the impact of the Strategy, importantly, various measures were increasingly embedded in the policy and governance process, such as the importance of housing-led approaches, the necessity of integrated strategies and the creation of Local Homelessness Units. Thus, when a more favourable political and financial climate emerged, a revised strategy (ENIPSSA 2017-2023) could build on the older strategy, and strengthen housing-based policy responses.

In terms of the governance of responses to homelessness, there appears to be a consensus that integrated strategic approaches are effective at successfully preventing homelessness and responding rapidly to exit households when it does occur. In contexts where the number of households entering homelessness are rising, having an integrated strategic governance approach can ensure that responses are at a minimum, *managed in a co-ordinated manner,* rather than in an ad-hoc manner, and the *negative impacts mitigated*. The formulation of national or local strategies should involve all stakeholders and ensure all stakeholders 'buy in'. A negotiated process of consensus building amongst all stakeholders, in particular those with lived experience (Green, 2021), is crucial to developing and sustaining what can often be difficult and complex journeys of system transformations.

Measuring Homelessness and Evaluating Inputs in Europe

The Lisbon Declaration stresses '*the importance of reliable data collection on homelessness, including youth homelessness, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, allowing common understanding, systematic comparison and monitoring at EU level'*. The number of households experiencing homelessness across Europe varies considerably depending on the *definition* and the *timeframe* used (see appendix 2 for an overview). The definitional issues are largely resolved at the conceptual level, with the development of the *European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion* (ETHOS) (see appendix 3), and for research purposes (ETHOS light), although the application of the typology in national, regional or city level estimates of the extent of homelessness varies considerably (Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Benjaminsen *et al*, 2020; Drilling *et al*, 2020).

Point-prevalence or point-in-time surveys are widely used to estimate the extent and characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in a number of countries, either as part of the national census, or specific surveys of those experiencing varieties of homelessness experiences in the Nordic countries (Benjaminsen *et al*, 2020) and the US (Henry *et al*, 2021) to name but a few. Point-in-time surveys are helpful for monitoring *trends* and *identifying service needs*, but *minimize the scale of homelessness*, and period-prevalence surveys are required to more accurately estimate the number of people who experience homelessness over a time-period (Shinn and Khadduri (2020).

Many more households experience homelessness over a year than are measured at a *point-in-time*, and their profile is *significantly different* from those at a point-in-time. Therefore, it is critical that programmes to prevent, minimise duration and rapidly rehouse are based not only on the profile of those experiencing homelessness at a point in time, as such information provides a distorted understanding of the experience of homelessness. Understanding the dynamics of homelessness is crucial to designing policies that can end homelessness.

The ESPN Report on *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe* noted 'the wide discrepancy of the evidence available on implementation and monitoring outcomes', with 'Denmark, Finland, France and Ireland having the 'strongest evidence-based mechanisms enabling assessment of the implementation of existing strategies' (Baptista and Marlier, 2019, pp.63-64).

In the case of *Denmark,* there are two primary sources of data to monitor trends in homelessness: *a biennial national point in-time survey* over a week which commenced in 2007 and conducted by VIVE – The Danish Centre for Social Science Research, and *national statistics on shelter use* which commenced in 1999 and published by Statistics Denmark (Benjaminsen, 2022). The biennial survey provides data on those staying with friends and family, in addition to various forms of shelter use and rough sleeping. It does so by collecting data *via* a two-page questionnaire from not only homelessness services, but also a wide-range of other welfare services. Data from this survey shows the numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness steadily increased between 2009 and 2017, from just over 5 000 to just over 6 500, before dropping slightly in 2019 with the most recent survey conducted in February 2022. In contrast, the continuous shelter data shows that the number of shelter users remained relatively static of the same time ranging between 6 000 and 7 000. Drawing on both the point-in-time survey and the flow shelter data, highlights that in Denmark 2.5 to 3 times as many people use shelters over a year than do at a point-in-time, and that *monitoring shelter use only, provides only an important, but incomplete mechanism to monitor trends in homelessness*.

In the case of Ireland, the PASS (Pathway Accommodation & Support System) provides 'real-time' information in terms of homeless presentation and bed occupancy. Established in Dublin in 2011, PASS was rolled out nationally in 2013 and provides a source of data on the number of adult individuals with accompanying child dependents in emergency accommodation funded by Local Authority's. The publication of these *point-in-time reports* commenced in April 2014 on a trial basis, and from June 2014, with some modifications, has been produced on a continuous monthly basis since then. In addition, from 2014 onwards, at the end of each quarter, Local Authorities produce *Performance Reports* providing data on a range of indicators, including the number of new and repeat adult presentations to homelessness services per quarter; the number of adults in emergency accommodation for more than six months, the number of adult individuals exiting homeless services, and the number of rough sleepers. *Quarterly Financial Reports* are also published outlining expenditure on prevention

services, tenancy support services, emergency accommodation, long-term emergency accommodation and day services.

The production of the Monthly Reports and Quarterly Performance and Financial Reports followed on from the publication in 2013 of a national *Homelessness Policy Statement*. A number of indicators were identified to measure progress in ending homelessness in Ireland, which was the overarching ambition of the Policy Statement, and the purpose of these indicators was to 'give a clearer picture of homelessness in Ireland: the rate of entry, duration and exits, together with the type and nature of accommodation' (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013, p.4).

The monthly point-in-time measurement of homelessness, which is comparatively relatively narrowly defined as those in temporary and emergency accommodation, showed between 6-7 000 adults (or between 1.6 and 1.7 per 1 000 population over 18) were in emergency accommodation at a point-in-time between 2018 and 2021, but just over 22 000 adults (or 5.8 per 1 000 population over 18) entered emergency accommodation for the first time over the same period.

Understanding the dynamics of homelessness is crucial to intelligent policy design, and devising a robust methodology that allows for a broadly harmonized measurement of homelessness in each Member State using ETHOS Light that can capture the number and characteristics of those experiencing *different dimensions of homelessness* at a *point-in-time*, but also over a *period-of-time,* can provide the data necessary to determine the progress made to end homelessness by 2030, and to inform the policy making process. Where it exists, administrative data on those experiencing homelessness has considerable potential to understand the dynamics of homelessness (Culhane, 2016), and are particularly promising when linked with other administrative data sets to inform policy and practice, albeit such developments have some limitations as well (Thomas and Tweed, 2021).

In terms of evaluating specific inputs to prevent homelessness or to reduce emergency accommodation duration, 'quantitative evaluations that would meet the usual 'gold standard' evidence thresholds for systematic reviews are rare in the homelessness field outside of the US' (Culhane et al, 2020, p.118). The only exceptions are some health-related research and Housing First. In the case of Housing First, programme fidelity has been comprehensively researched in a number of member states (Aubry et al, 2018), with a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of the Un Chez-soi d'abord' Housing First programme in France (Loubière et al, 2022). In a recent review of research on the effectiveness of interventions for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, the authors noted that although there is now a growing evidence base, nearly 90% of research studies were conducted in the United States (Singh and White, 2022).

There is a need to develop further a robust evidence base for the various interventions to prevent and respond to homelessness across the Member States, and as Pleace (2016, p.28) has argued that although '[g]ood quality American, Australian and Canadian research adds to our understanding.....There is a need for caution in relying on externally generated evidence and ideas to guide European research…"

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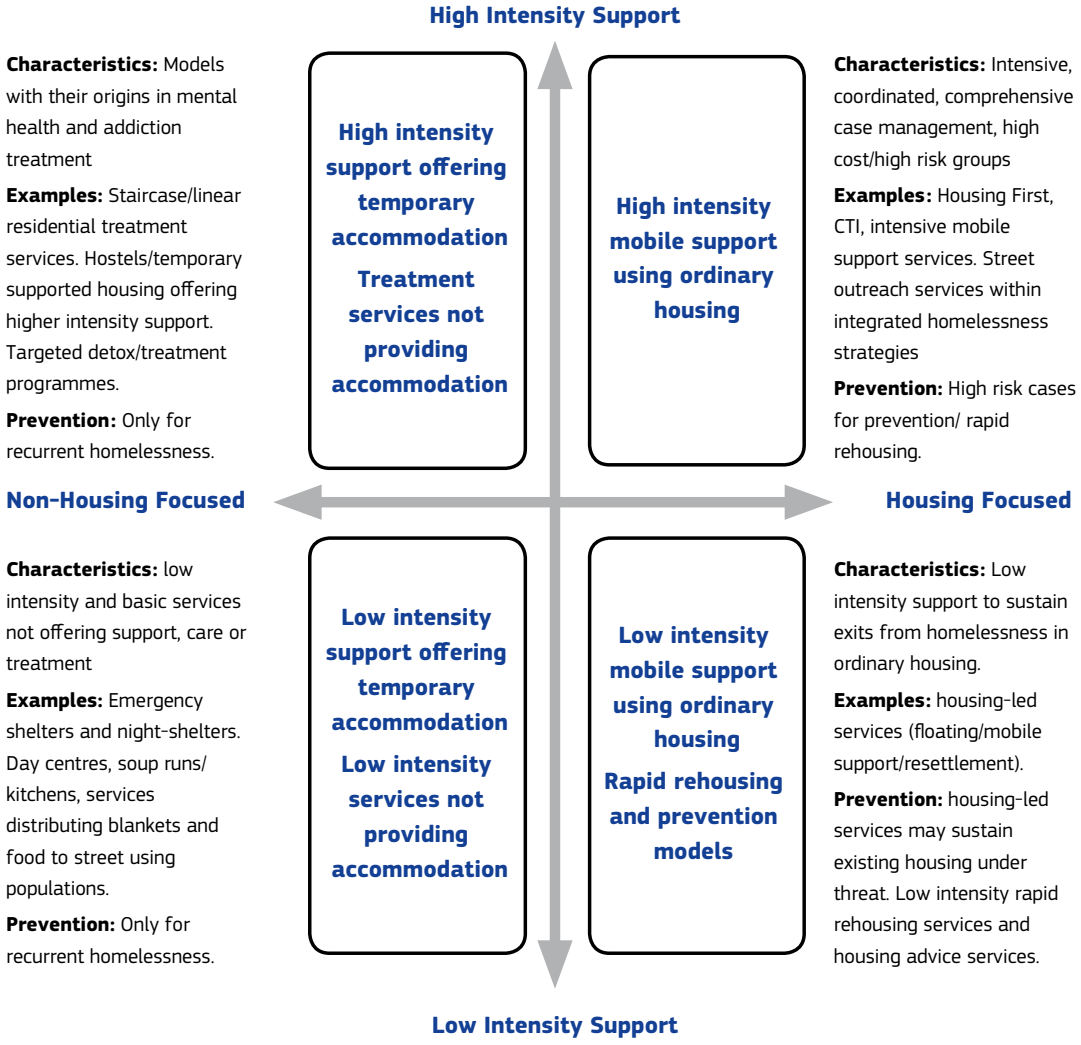
Appendix 1

Figure 3.2 A Proposed Typology of European Homelessness Services



Source: Pleace, N., Baptista, I., Benjaminsen, L. and V. Busch-Geertsema (2018) *Homelessness Services in Europe Comparative Studies on Homelessness No. 8* (Brussels: European Observatory on Homelessness).

Appendix 2: ETHOS Light

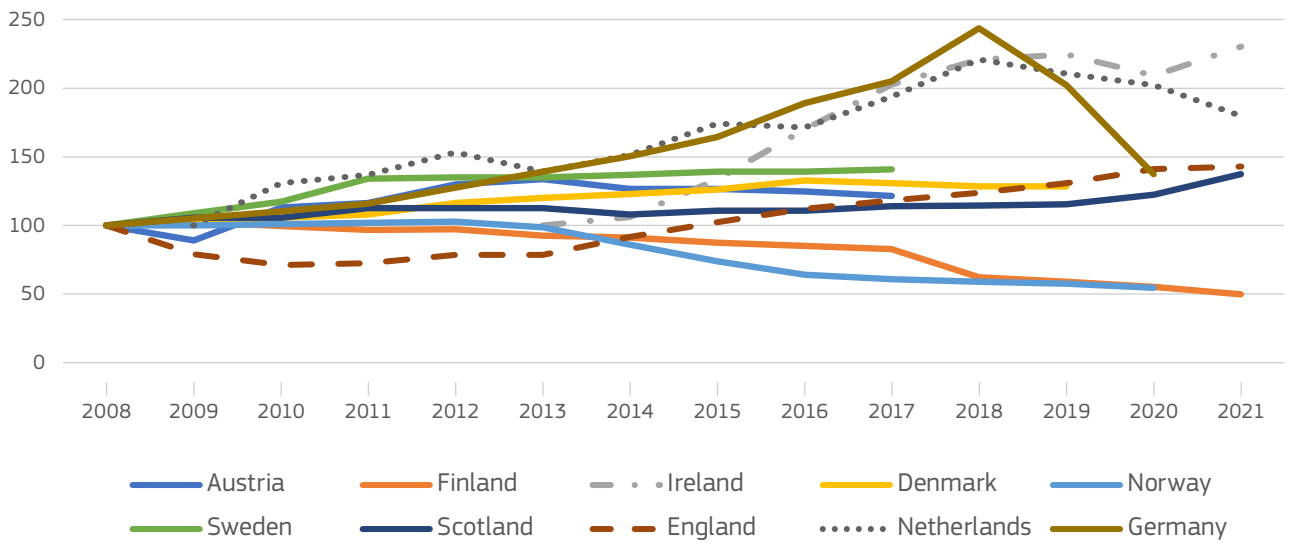
Operational category		Living situation		Definition
1	People living rough	**1**	Public space/external space	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
2	People in emergency accommodation	**2**	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	**3** **4** **5** **6**	Homeless hostels Temporary accommodation Transitional supported accommodation Women's shelter/refuge	Where the period of stay is less than one year.
4	People living in institutions	**7** **8**	Health care institutions Penal institutions	Stay longer than is needed because of lack of housing/ no housing available on release
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	**9** **10** **11**	Mobile homes Non-conventional buildings Temporary structures	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	**12**	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

Based on Edgar *et al* (2007).

Appendix 3: Index of Homelessness in Selected European Countries

Figure 1 shows *trends* in the number of households experiencing homelessness based on *point-in-time data* for several countries. Given the diverse definitions used in measuring homelessness across these countries, and diverse data sources (see Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Develtere, 2022; OECD, 2019), the data is presented as an index designed to identify trends rather than absolute numbers. It shows three clusters: countries that have seen substantial increases in the last decade (Ireland, England, Germany – until 2018, and the Netherlands); countries that have seen more modest increases or relative stability (Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Scotland) and countries that have achieved significant reductions (Norway and Finland).

Index of Homelessness at a Point-in-time in Selected Countries, 2008-2021



Timeframes are critically important when measuring homelessness as the numbers who experience homelessness, and their characteristics, will differ significantly depending on the timeframe used. Homelessness, as discussed above, is a dynamic process and capturing the experience of homelessness at a point-in-time does not reveal the fluidity of the experience of homelessness, and that most households who experience a spell in an emergency shelter, for example, will exit to housing and stay housed (Lee et al., 2021).

In the all the countries in the figure above, the numbers experiencing homelessness at a *point-in-time* ranges from 0.07 and 0.33% of the total population (OECD, 2021). However, two recent surveys of respectively twelve and eight European Countries found a lifetime prevalence of respectively 4% (Eurostat, 2018, p.29) and nearly 5%, albeit with significant variations by country, with a 5-year prevalence of just under 2% (Taylor et al., 2019). In the Eurostat research, 75% who had an experience of homelessness, it was in the form of staying with friends and relatives temporarily, with only one in 20 who had an experience of homelessness sleeping rough.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
Directorate D – Jobs, Skills and Social Policies
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