# European Pillar of Social Rights Cities delivering social rights

Access to affordable and social housing and support to homeless people





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## Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Key findings	6
3.Cities delivering affordable and social housing	7
3.1 The legal competences of the cities	7
3.2 Affordable and social housing in cities	8
3.3 The profile of people applying for social housing	10
3.4 City measures for affordable and social housing	10
3.5 Obstacles to realising access to social housing or housing assistance	13
3.6 Policy recommendations	14
4. Cities fostering social inclusion of homeless people	15
4.1 The legal competences of the cities	15
4.2 Evidence on homelessness situation in cities	16
4.3 Profile of homeless people in cities and emerging groups	16
4.4 City measures for social inclusion of homeless people	17
4.5 Obstacles to reducing homelessness	20
4.6 Policy recommendations	21
Annex – overview of city competences	22





#### 1.Introduction

Housing and assistance for the homeless is part of principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In particular, the Pillar establishes:

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless to promote their social inclusion.

City authorities are turning these social rights into a reality for people. Cities can ensure access to social housing, shelter and services for vulnerable groups, however dealing with these complex challenges requires the cooperation of many other stakeholders. As our report shows, most cities share competences for social housing and homeless services with other levels of government, while the increasing trends of homelessness and housing prices depends on the national and even global socio-economic context.

In 2019, EUROCITES launched the political campaign 'Inclusive cities for all: social rights in my city' showing the commitment of cities to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) at local level. As clear indicator that affordable housing and homelessness are among the most pressing challenges at local level, principle 19 has received significant attention from cities in their pledges to implement the EPSR - 181 out of 44 cities.

Overall, it is possible to calculate the aggregate level of cities' measures and financial investments on the provision of affordable housing and support for the homeless coming from city pledges:

- ■€2.462 billion of city investments in affordable housing in 2019-2024,
- ■€101 million in programmes to tackle homelessness,
- ■82,727 new affordable housing units in cities in 2019-2024,
- ■3,078 new Housing First² and shelters and temporary housing for the homeless.

<sup>1</sup> Athens, Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, Florence, Ghent, Glasgow, Hamburg, Leipzig, Lille, Ljubljana, Lyon, Nantes, Poznan, Timisoara, Utrecht, Vienna, Zaragoza

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Housing First model is based on rapid access to stable housing for homeless people, without conditions of inclusion or care. Once a person has a stable housing situation, different forms of support can be offered on a voluntary basis. It differs from the 'staircase model' in which homeless people gradually transition from emergency shelter, to shared training dwellings, to permanent regular housing.



This report is the third in a series of surveys to collect evidence from cities on the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. All the research was undertaken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and at a time when affordable and social housing were among the most pressing issues at local level. The pandemic has highlighted the pre-existing challenges that Europe was facing in terms of shortcomings on housing policies while creating further difficulties for vulnerable groups and households that were already facing overburdening housing costs. The issues raised in the report will however remain valid and can provide valuable insights for the policies to be implemented in 2021-2027.

This report, covering 24 cities in 14 EU member states<sup>3</sup>, presents the findings on how cities provide access to social housing and promote social inclusion of homeless people, in line with principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It provides:

- ■an overview of city competences,
- trends at local level,
- common approaches and recent innovative measures,
- obstacles that prevent cities from doing more or doing better.

Policy recommendations are also presented to inspire future policy interventions and stimulate debate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Bialystok, Bilbao, Braga, Brno, Ghent, Gothenburg, Grand Paris Sud, Hengelo, Leipzig, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Lyon, Malmo, Palermo, Porto, Poznan, Riga, Stockholm, Utrecht, Vienna, Warsaw

## City challenges

## ity actions

## 2. Key findings

Access to adequate housing and eradicating homelessness are crucial urban challenges. Falling income, precarious work contracts, increasing costs of rents, decreasing investment in social infrastructure, create pressure on social housing. Likewise, upward trends in urban poverty, unemployment, migration, people with mental health and substance abuse issues are also influencing the overall number of homelessness.

But it is not only vulnerable people that are struggling. Recent trends, such as mass and unregulated tourism, show that lack of affordable housing is increasingly affecting the middle-income class, putting this group at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

#### 1. Social housing

- Unaffordable rents in the private housing market
- Insufficient social housing stock
- Concentration of vulnerable groups in social housing in particular city neighbourhoods
- Increased housing cost-overburden rate
- Renovation of the existing old social housing stock
- Increase of unregulated short-term rental/ touristification of cities

#### 2. Assistance to homeless people

- Lack of affordable and social housing
- Multiple interlinked issues in the homeless population, such as social exclusion, addiction and substance abuse, mental illnesses, indebtedness, language barrier, lack of legal status
- Insufficient stock of emergency and transitional housing
- New emerging profiles of homeless people
- Lack of detailed data about the homeless population

- Prevention of evictions, both from social housing and private rental sector
- Targeted measures for vulnerable groups
- Increasing and maintaining the housing stock
- Subsidies to people for housing needs
- Local strategies on housing
- Integrated services
- Supporting social mix in neighbourhoods

- City strategies and integrated multi-disciplinary approaches
- Support for reintegration into independent living, by combining Housing First programmes and inclusion measures
- Providing access to emergency solutions
- Prevention measures to avoid individuals from falling into homelessness

## 3. Cities delivering affordable and social housing

#### 3.1 The legal competences of the cities

Oities play a big role in social housing policies. Our sample shows that 18 out of 21 cities shared competence for social housing with other levels of government and 3 have full competences.

Berlin, Vienna and Poznan have reported that that they have full competences. Berlin and Vienna are simultaneously a municipality and a region. As a region, Berlin is responsible for subsidising new buildings and for undertaking renovations that are co-founded by the federal government. It also manages a stock of 100,000 rent-controlled social housing units.

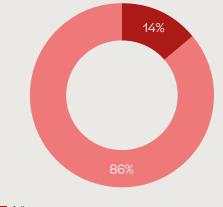
The rest of the housing stock, around 300,000 units, is owned by the municipality through six city-owned social housing companies. Vienna manages its housing stock of approximately 220,000 units through its municipal housing company. 200,000 further housing units are owned by limited profit housing associations.

Some cities mentioned that they share competence with the national authorities. Braga, Ghent, Hengelo and Ljubljana provide housing and financial assistance for social housing organisations and NGOs to work with tenants. Leipzig owns one social housing company that monitors the availability of social housing and develops strategies to resolve shortages. The funding for social housing comes from the region, the federal government and private landlords. Brno provides apartments both for tenants with an urgent housing need and those who need intensive support from social workers.

Three cities share their housing competence with an autonomous region (e.g. Bilbao with the Basque Region). In the Flemish cities, the local social housing associations are autonomous from the municipality. The municipal role is about managing land, funding renovations, and providing financial assistance to tenants and to the housing associations.

Three Swedish cities (Gothenburg, Malmo, Stockholm) reported that Sweden does not operate social housing in the same way as other European countries. Rather, these cities tend to provide housing benefits to tenants, who then rent in the private market. Malmo requires private landlords who build on municipal land to make 10-15% of apartments available to persons with a housing need. Stockholm offers some limited housing with low rent levels as regulated by law. Gothenburg has publicly owned real estate companies that provide affordable housing in all city districts.

Figure 3.1
What legal competence does your city have concerning social housing?



full competence

some competence shared with other levels of government

## Municipal responsibilities on social housing

The competences of cities can vary wildly depending on the national, regional and local legal context. However, there are some common features:



 Providing land usage permissions (Antwerp, Barcelona, Bilbao, Ghent, Gothenburg, Malmo, Stockholm, Vienna).



 Managing social housing directly or through municipal companies (Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Bilbao, Ghent, Gothenburg, Leipzig, Ljubljana, Lisbon, Lyon, Porto, Poznan, Riga, Warsaw, Vienna).



3. Providing housing benefits or subsidies (Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Ghent, Gothenburg, Ljubljana, Malmo, Poznan, Stockholm, Vienna).



 Partnership with other stakeholders such as social housing associations (Braga, Hengelo, Lisbon, Lyon, Vienna).



5. Regulating the approval of new housing projects (Antwerp, Berlin, Bilbao, Ghent, Lyon, Vienna) and renovation projects while focusing on energy performance, accessibility of the buildings and respecting certain standards (Antwerp, Berlin, Bilbao, Ghent, Lyon, Vienna).



 Providing social support measures to prevent forced evictions and ensure social inclusion of the beneficiaries (Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Brno, Gothenburg, Ljubljana, Lyon, Vienna).

## 3.2 Affordable and social housing in cities

This indicative data is mainly from 2018 and are estimates of social housing<sup>4</sup> units available in each city. There are limitations with the data available, such as potential double-counting and no differentiation between different types of social housing, for example rent-controlled in private sector or city-owned.

Cities consider different indicators to measure the affordability of the housing, such as the ratio of housing cost over household income (Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin Braga, Ghent, Leipzig, Poznan, Warsaw), the overall rental prices (Barcelona, Bilbao, Ghent, Poznan, Warsaw), the average household income (Braga, Poznan). Barcelona also looks at housing market prices on rental, disposable family income, number of applications for social housing, eviction cases trends. Lyon has a housing observatory that analyses private housing rents and the selling price of new and existing housing units.

Cities use the following indicators to look at social housing and people in need for social housing:

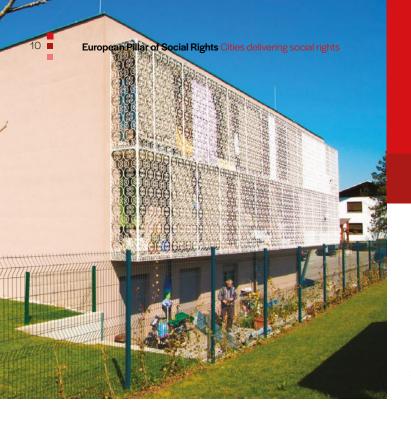
- Antwerp number of units in total number of units renovated, types of new units (variety in larger and smaller units), spread of social housing across different areas of the city.
- Barcelona besides the physical elements and characteristics such as square meters or number of rooms, the municipality keeps a record of renovation needs and actions, demand and economic support from social service interventions and aids, types of tenures (social or affordable rental, right of surface, ownership, social inclusion dwellings.
- Berlin the number and structure of households with certificate for obtaining a social housing and the housing cost burden (net and gross rent to household income).
- Bilbao looks at the household size and the income by household. Established quotas for sectors of population with difficulties in accessing to housing.
- Braga request for financial support for the lease.
- ■Brno household income.
- Ghent vacant social housing units and renovated units.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> There are also likely to be different understandings of what social housing actually means as a common European definition is not available.

- Leipzig percentage of vacant apartments for rent to all apartments for rent available, number of finished new built apartments, average rent for one square meter in rented apartments, average percentage of housing costs to income and the number of apartments with contracts for social housing.
- Ljubljana income and property thresholds as an entry barrier, success at the public tender depends on the number of points through 19 categories (disability, young families, health condition, etc.)
- Lyon pressure index of 6 (six demands for one application).
- Poznan annual income of a household, heath condition, age, family and housing situation.
- Vienna income thresholds for social and affordable housing.
- Warsaw indicators like technical condition, installations, indebtedness of households, uninhabited flats and its causes.

For an overall picture, the table below shows the huge unmet demand for social housing, by presenting the scale of social housing available in some European cities and number of people/households in waiting list.

City	Units of social housing	No. on waiting list (in year)	No. living in social housing	City population
Antwerp	23,200 (5%)	23,900	34,000	520,000
Barcelona	77,000 rentals 19,000 for sale	40,900	No data	1,600,000
Berlin	70,000 units in private sector 30,000 in city ownership 300,000 units owned by the 6 municipality housing companies		250,000	3,669,491
Bilbao	4,200	9,400	8,800	370,000
Brno	22,000 city-owned units		None	390,000
Ghent	13,000 units	10,000 (households)	None	260,000
Leipzig	330 with plans for 500 new-builds	640	None	490,000
Ljubljana	4,200	3,338 applications on last public tender, from which only 334 social housing will be provided	11,000	292,988
Lyon	158,000 (24% of total housing stock)	67,100 of which 60% new to social housing		1,260,000
Porto	13,000	1,000	30,000	300,000
Poznan	12,500		None	540,000
Riga	1,596	1,365	2,600	750,000
Vienna	420,000	26,300 persons registered in the first half of 2019	60%	1,900,000



## 3.3 The profile of people applying for social housing

Recent trends from cities show new categories of people in need of social and affordable housing, people from lower middle class with jobs that do not provide sufficient financial resources to access housing on the private market.

It is interesting to note that the main age group applying for social housing are the segment of population that should be active in the labour market. For example, in Vienna 28% are aged between 26 and 40, in Lyon the average age is 42 years old, in Ljubljana the average age is 41 years old, in Ghent 50% of the applicants are under 40, while in Braga 80% are between 20-30 years old.

Likewise, there are high percentages of people in employment that are demanding social housing. For example, in Barcelona 33.15% are employed, with 22% having a permanent job; in Lyon 40% have a regular job and 15% are in precarious jobs.

There is no clear difference in terms of gender. Some of the cities have reported that women are most likely to ask for social housing (e.g. 54% Barcelona, 80% Braga, 58% Ljubljana) especially single mothers, while others show that mostly single and elderly men need housing assistance (e.g. 58% Bilbao).

Cities have identified single parents, couples with 2 or more children, people with precarious jobs, children in public care, people with disabilities and elderly men are the most common groups that ask for housing assistance.

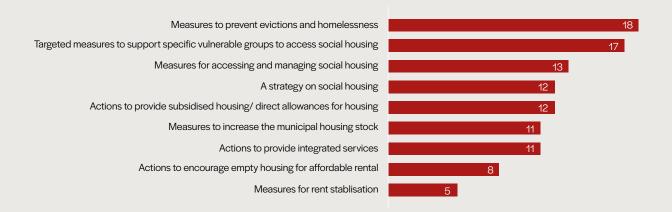
## 3.4 City measures for affordable and social housing

There is a variety of measures to promote access to affordable and social housing implemented by cities. Here are the most significant examples.

- 18 cities are taking measures to prevent evictions and homelessness. For example, Stockholm has a 'programme against homelessness' including strategies to support homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. In addition, the city has a municipal agency providing temporary accommodation for vulnerable groups.
- Many cities cooperate with NGOs to prevent evictions and to build the capacity of beneficiaries to live in their own apartment. For example, Brno has worked with Salvation Army in the 'Homelessness Prevention Project' where the organisation uses municipal housing as a training unit with low rent for people at risk of homelessness. The goal is to train people to live independently and keep their home. The social workers focus on job counselling and training in financial and legal matters, child education, household maintaining. Poznan has a similar 'training room' programme. Ljubljana has an 'antieviction programme' for municipal units and an advisory body for the tenants.
- ■17 cities have implemented targeted measures to support specific vulnerable groups. For example, Bilbao has created a housing support scheme for young people, while Riga has a dedicated programme for individuals with specific needs such as disabilities, at retirement age, raising children with disabilities and families with three or more children. Gothenburg has established an Innovation-Oriented Research Programme for the most vulnerable through a public private partnership.

Figure 3.2

#### City measures to ensure access to social housing or housing assistance



- ■13 cities have initiatives on managing and maintaining the social housing stock to take into consideration user needs. Riga is carrying out major renovations of former dormitory buildings to provide adequate housing for low-income large families. Special attention is given to individuals who need specially equipped service apartments, adapted for people with severe disabilities and for wheelchair users. Ghent has supported social housing organisations by financing renovation. Warsaw is also investing in renovation of its pre-WWII social housing stock with poor amenities such as central heating.
- 12 cities provide subsidies for housing. Leipzig has a municipal initiative for subsidised housing that defines targets and measures for allocation of the money, which is then delivered by the federal government. Ljubljana grants financial support in the form of rent subsidies and emergency aid for those overburdened with debts, while Braga has doubled financial investment in rent support.
- ■12 cities have adopted strategies on housing at local level. Brno has a 'Strategy of Social Housing for 2020-2030' aiming to improve the quality of life of all city inhabitants. Ljubljana is adopting a municipal 'Housing Programme' to ensure and increase the number of non-profit housing units (affordable housing), residential units for most urgent housing needs (social housing) and units for the NGOs taking care of people with special needs. Barcelona's 'Right to Housing Plan 2016-2025'<sup>5</sup> aims at preventing housing emergencies, increasing the affordable housing and redeveloping the housing stock. Poznan city council has passed a resolution regarding the adoption of a 'housing policy for 2017-2027'.

- ■11 cities have programmes to increase the stock of affordable and social housing. For example, Barcelona is working on legal reform to unlock public-private investment in housing and ensure mixed neighbourhoods. Berlin has increased the funding for new construction from 200 flats in 2014 to 3,500 flats in 2018 and plans for an expansion of 5,000 flats per year from 2021. The city has also transferred land owned by Berlin to the municipal housing companies to enable new developments.
- •11 cities are providing integrated services. Berlin, Brno, Palermo, Stockholm and Utrecht have implemented integrated approaches through Housing First programmes. Cities also highlighted cooperation with NGOs to provide services closer to users' needs.

Many cities have mentioned the importance of **social mix in neighbourhoods.** Utrecht has several initiatives to ensure mixed social housing (student population with disadvantaged people). Antwerp has a commitment of 9% social housing spread in different neighbourhoods. Lyon Metropole has an intermunicipal agreement on the allocation of social housing across the urban area.

Other initiatives include **rent stabilisation** (Berlin, Leipzig, Riga, Stockholm, Vienna) and measures to encourage the rent of **empty housing** – for example in Ghent through high taxation of housing units that stay empty for more than one year.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Barcelona 'Right to Housing Plan 2016-2025' https://bit.ly/36xlhlr

#### Illustrative practices of city measures for affordable and social housing

#### Vienna - SMART Housing

The programme seeks to make optimal use of available space. SMART apartments are based on innovative and intelligent solutions through compact floor plans (not too small, but not too big) to avoid unnecessary rental costs for unused living space. For the apartments there are economic and comfortable facilities (for example, a shower instead of a bathtub).

The SMART apartments have other benefits through development options, storage, and community space. The open space design of the entire facility is planned to consider the wide variety of potential uses – playground for children, shared activities etc.

This is also an instrument for social mix on a small-scale level. SMART Housing units are targeted at young families, couples, single parents, elderly people and single adults.

#### Palermo - PON METRO programme

The programme has led to the creation of an 'Social Agency for Housing' that identifies housing solutions and pathways for socio-economic integration. The actions are developed within the methodological approach of Housing First, through the integration of different administrative procedures. It provides integrated support to people in vulnerable situations to overcome the causes of housing poverty, helping them with employment, education, social inclusion and health care. The groups targeted are young people, adults, the elderly, families and children at risk of housing poverty.

The programme is a result of a synergy between European Social Fund and ERDF.

### Barcelona – Legal reform for innovative creation of affordable housing

In 2018, the city adopted two amendments to the General Metropolitan Plan (PGM):

- Allocation of 30% of new residential construction to social housing. This measure makes it possible to get private developers to share responsibility for generating affordable housing and provides for preferential acquisition of new affordable housing by the municipality.
- Measures to stop housing speculation by giving the municipality pre-emptive rights to buy certain properties and land sites at affordable prices.

The initiative also stops transactions in the black market and protects blocks from being acquired by vulture funds (investment fund that seeks out and buys securities in distressed investments - near bankruptcy). Also, it will provide real-time information on the property transactions in the city. It will be applied for six years, with a possible further six-year extension.

#### Bilbao - Solidary Youngster Programme

The programme targets postgraduate students from the three universities located in Bilbao. Students benefit from shared social housing with subsidised rent from the city. In exchange they play an active role in developing local initiatives and projects for improving the quality of housing, combating deprivation and social exclusion in the neighbourhood. The programme is currently running the 9<sup>th</sup> edition and has 20 social houses associated with the initiative.

#### Berlin - Rent controlled social housing

The city has adopted a set of measures for housing construction and modernisation subsidies, combined with rules for reduced rents and lease to households with low income. The main measures are:

- Resumption of public funding for the new construction of rental.
- Increased funding for new construction under specific conditions such as interest-free loans, limited repayment requirements and special rental conditions for 30 years starting rent currently €6.50/m².
- Support of housing cooperatives promotion of stock purchases by cooperatives, encouraging the acquisition of cooperative shares by households with limited incomes.
- Promotion of modernisation measures with combined rental caps.

#### Porto - Oporto Social Emergency Fund

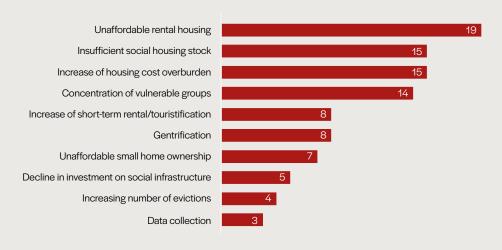
The city has created a fund to support to people and families facing serious financial difficulties. The financial support provided is based on household monthly income. Over the last 5 years, around 2,000 families have been supported.

### Utrecht – Performance agreement for social housing for people with mental disabilities

The city signs a performance agreement every year with the social housing organisations to provide houses for homeless and people living in shelter with mental issues.

## 3.5 Obstacles to realising access to social housing or housing assistance





The main challenge reported is the lack of affordable rental housing units in the private market (19 cities). The driving factors of rising rents are: population growth in cities, privatisation of social housing stock, unregulated short-term rental for tourism. As a result, mid-income and low-income people cannot afford to pay for housing. The non-affordability of housing in the main private market puts greater pressure on social housing because more and more households are unable to afford private rents. In Utrecht, for example, the waiting list for social housing has increased and it now takes 10 years before having access to social housing.

Insufficient social housing stock is another important challenge (15 cities). Decreasing investment in social infrastructure, together with the increased demand for affordable housing and the increasing number of evictions have created a high gap between the demand and the supply of social housing.

The municipal capacity to provide social and affordable housing is constrained by the limited regional, national and European funding opportunities as well as limited investments from the private sector.

The increasing housing cost overburden (15 cities): housing cost is becoming a burden also for middle and lower class, hitting the active segment of the population which is in some forms of employment.

The concentration of vulnerable groups in particular neighbourhoods (14 cities): for example, Brno mentioned the stigma attached to social housing and concentration of poverty in specific deprived areas. To avoid ghettos, the national government in Czech Republic provides social housing grants directly to people to reduce the concentration of social housing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Many cities have mentioned the **renovation of the existing housing stock**: expensive cost of the renovation can become unsustainable for the housing organisations. Social housing generates very little income for housing corporations, and it does not cover the costs of building maintenance, renovation and adaptation to people's changing needs. In Antwerp and Leipzig, maintaining the quality of social housing can be a challenge. In Gothenburg and Leipzig, it is not easy to adapt social housing to large families and to single people.

The increase of unregulated short-term rental and touristification and gentrification of cities are among the pressing issues at local level. Among other challenges identified are the decline in investment on social infrastructure, increasing number of evictions, the data collection in cities and the lack of available land.

#### 3.6 Policy recommendations

#### 1. Increase the affordability of housing in cities.

A strong focus on affordability of housing market is needed. The European Commission and member states should address the negative impact of unregulated short-term rental platforms such as touristification of city centres, unfair competition, distortion of local housing market. Access to data from short -term rental platforms should be guaranteed to local authorities to enforce local taxation and regulation and ensure sustainable tourism. Furthermore, EU state aid rules for services of general economic interest (SGEI) should allow cities to define the specific target groups for which investment in social and affordable housing is justified.

#### 2. Improve investment in social housing stock in cities.

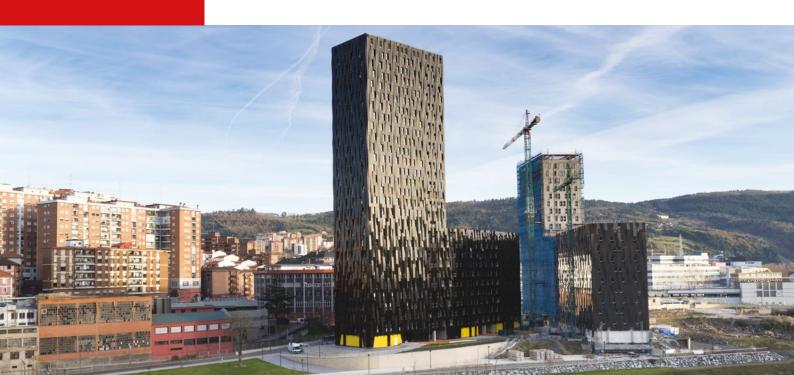
It is important to boost investment in social infrastructure in cities. The EU should facilitate cities' access to EU financial programmes, funds and instruments such as ESIF, InvestEU and Recovery Fund with awareness raising and capacity building programmes.

#### 3. Ensure a fair transition by supporting energy efficiency in the existing housing stock.

City authorities manage an extensive stock of social housing and in many cases, they assist with improving the energy efficiency of privately-owned buildings. The renovation of the housing stock can mitigate energy poverty. However, the cost of renovation can limit the potential of adapting the existing stock. The EU could ensure that the Renovation Wave supports the cities in renovating public housing, by providing grants, technical assistance and project development support. It is also important to ensure the cost of renovation does not have a negative impact on low income households.

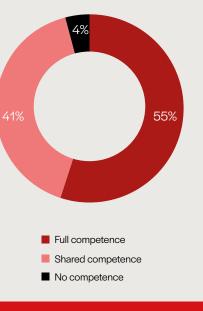
#### 4. Better assessment of local trends and needs on social and affordable housing in cities.

The adequate responses on the affordability of housing needs a proper assessment of local level trends, gaps and needs for investment in cities. The macro-level figures and data from national level are not sufficient to reveal the complex problems of housing. The EU should ensure the diversity of local housing markets is better reflected in the European Semester. For example, redefining the Housing Price Index indicator in the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure of the European Semester and revising the definition of housing cost overburden could better capture the challenge of access to decent and affordable housing at local level.





## Figure 4.1 What legal competence does your city have concerning homelessness?



## 4. Cities fostering social inclusion of homeless people

## 4.1 The legal competences of the cities

Cities are key actors in the prevention and reduction of homelessness in Europe. 21 of the 22 cities surveyed on homelessness reported having at least some competences regarding services for social inclusion of homeless people. Most cities have some competence concerning homelessness, shared with other levels of government (Antwerp, Berlin, Bialystok, Gothenburg, Hengelo, Leipzig, Ljubljana, Riga, Stockholm). Under half of the cities that contributed to this report have the full responsibility to provide support for the integration of homeless people. Only one EUROCITIES member has no competence (Grand Paris Sud) but provides inclusion measures that benefit homeless people.

#### Municipal responsibilities on social inclusion

Oities' main responsibilities to support homeless people consist of providing shelter and temporary accommodation, as well as ensuring that basic needs are met, such as food. This work is often coordinated with local NGOs. More and more cities go further and work towards providing long-term housing solutions for homeless people. Some cities such as Ljubljana, Malmo and Warsaw also provide financial support.

Most municipalities also have responsibilities in terms of social inclusion, especially ensuring that beneficiaries access the support they are entitled to. Therefore, social and legal advice is often provided alongside more traditional forms of support and care.

Finally, many cities have responsibilities in terms of outreach and prevention of homelessness, including mediation with landlords.



## 4.2 Evidence on homelessness situation in cities

Monitoring the level of homelessness in cities is challenging. Indeed, homelessness can take many forms, from sleeping rough to temporarily living with family or friends due to a lack of housing. Cities have therefore developed different innovative practices to measure the different forms of homelessness. In Antwerp, a self-sufficiency matrix was developed to identify and map the profile of homeless people. Bialystok brings together different databases to get a better understanding of the profiles of homeless people in the city. This gives the city information on the numbers of homeless beneficiaries of welfare benefits, homeless people coming from other Polish municipalities, users of local shelters etc.

Despite different methodologies for data collection, aggregating information from cities enables us to identify common trends. All over Europe, cities witness increases in the number of homeless people, together with emerging groups in or at risk of homelessness. Local specificities can also be singled out, thus calling for support measures sensitive to these local trends.

## <sup>6</sup> Proposed by FEANTSA and adopted in 2010 by the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) provides an overview of the diverse situation part of the homelessness and housing exclusion phenomenon. https://bit.ly/2WDgUcc

## 4.3 Profile of homeless people in cities and emerging groups

It is possible to identify the main groups of people most at risk of experiencing homelessness:



People with mental illnesses and/or suffering from addiction are overly represented among homelessness people. Some cities, such as Porto and Warsaw, link this trend to insufficient health support and inadequate facilities, long waiting lists to access healthcare (in particular psychological support), denial and refusal from people in need to accept support. This target group also present a high risk of relapse, leading them to becoming homeless again.



Families are increasingly present among the homeless population. Cities mention an increasing number of single mothers with a large number of children, many of whom are victims of domestic violence. This trend is likely to be underestimated as women are known to frequently resort to less visible forms of homelessness such as staying with family or friends.



■ Men aged between 40-60 is the most frequent profile of homeless people, but in cities such as Antwerp, Brno, Ghent, Lyon and Vienna, there is an increase in the number of young homeless people. In many cases, these people were protected under state guardianship until they turned 18 but are then left without housing solution.

## 4.4 City measures for social inclusion of homeless people

Other more specific trends have been reported. Malmo, for example, experienced an increase in newly arrived migrants ending up homeless. In Palermo, migrants mainly come from outside of the EU, while for Utrecht these are often returning families who lived abroad. Vienna also identified a higher number of homeless EU mobile citizens. In Brno, single fathers seeking asylum have greater difficulties finding a house because support to single parents is often targeted to women. This variation in profiles highlights the importance of flexible measures implemented at city level to adapt to each local situation.

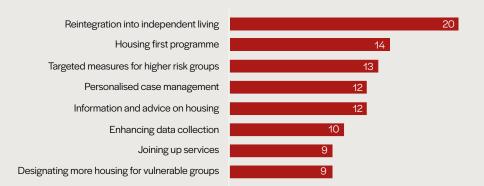
Overall, cities highlight the **increasing complexity of situations**. Homeless people tend to have interlinked issues (mental health problems, addictions, weak social networks, lack of income, language barrier etc.). This complexity requires multiple forms of support demanding more resources. The difficulty of addressing these situations can be reinforced by a lack of coordination between different care providers. Fragmented approaches are often the obstacle to successful support to these target groups resulting in people being homelessness for a long time. An analysis conducted in Warsaw showed that most rough sleepers have been on the street for more than 5 years (59%) with 32% being in that situation for more than 10 year. Only 23% of the people identified in this analysis had spent less than 2 years in the streets.

A variety of measures exist in cities to support people in homelessness, foster their social inclusion but also prevent individuals from becoming homeless.

The main measures highlighted by cities are:

- ■11 cities (Antwerp, Berlin, Brno, Gothenburg, Hengelo, Lisbon, Lyon, Porto, Stockholm, Utrecht, Vienna) have a city strategy dedicated to preventing homelessness based on integrated multidisciplinary approaches to address the complex situations of homelessness. These strategies are often implemented in partnership with NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. In Utrecht, the 'Stadsteam Herstel' is a multidisciplinary team of social workers with different expertise (on homelessness, psychiatry, addiction, mental disabilities, etc.) to support individuals and families. Ghent created a specific task force for women: the municipality, NGOs, social housing providers and volunteer organisations coordinate their work to ensure women's right to housing.
- Providing access to emergency solutions such as shelters and day centres is mentioned by most cities as part of their responsibilities. These are transitional solutions with low requirements and flexible standards, that address basic needs such as access to food, hygiene and basic health services. In Berlin, Gothenburg and Palermo, this work is conducted through the support of the Fund for the European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) that provides non-financial assistance to the most deprived. Grand Paris Sud also adapted their services to ensure that traveler communities have access to basic sanitation necessities.





- Outreach work is also relevant to ensure that those most in need will benefit from the support. In Grand Paris Sud, part of the outreach work focuses on 'the invisibles', young people who are neither in employment, education nor in training (NEETs). This group was identified as highly at risk of homelessness and often need support in diverse areas, from health to integration in the labour market.
- Almost all cities (20) implement actions to reintegrate homeless people into independent living. This can take the form of housing support, including information about available housing solutions, or access to programme of transitional housing or social housing. A shift from homelessness management to a Housing First approach is mentioned by the great majority of cities. Each solution is tailored to the individual needs. For example, 12 of the responding cities provide individual case management with assessment and personalised housing plans. In Ghent, transit housing units are available for groups at risk of homelessness including refugees. Thanks to the diverse forms of assistance provided in this programme, a success rate of 100% has been reached. Ljubljana funds a maternity home dedicated to women with young children forced to leave their home. They can settle in this new home for one year and benefit from the support of an expert team to help them move forward in their lives. Women who have been part of this programme also have priority access to municipal non-for-profit residential units afterwards.
- To complement housing provision, cities implement inclusion measures in a wide range of areas. Focus is often put on social skills and access to employment but also includes healthcare or language training. Braga is in the process of creating a house of skills to support homeless people in the development of soft skills and empower them for professional reintegration. Malmo also focuses on providing work training for the most vulnerable. Hengelo developed a programme for young people who have insufficient stability at their parent's home. This support encourages them to finish school, fostering long-term inclusion and improving their chances of accessing stable housing. In Riga, each homeless person has a tailored social rehabilitation plan. Social workers provide support on communication and social skills, employment, and addictions. Grand Paris Sud supports members of the traveller community ("gens du voyage") to learn French to facilitate their inclusion and access to other services.
- ■Measures to prevent individuals from falling into homelessness in the first place are also implemented. Several cities provide financial support such as coverage of rent arrears in Leipzig. Brno's project 'Prevention of housing loss' focuses on tenants of municipal flats with debt. The main goal is to lower the debt and stabilise their housing situation. Antwerp, Ghent, Leipzig, Ljubljana and Palermo provide mediation for cases of eviction orders. In Ghent, this method is accepted in 68% of cases and the share is increasing. In Leipzig, the mediation procedure leads to a positive arrangement in 70% of cases. Lyon implements a pilot project on alternatives to eviction in two deprived neighbourhoods. This pilot aims at developing collective responses to prevent evictions for the cases that cannot be solved through the existing measures. Bilbao's housing municipal service is also in charge of 30 dwellings for rehousing those for whom advice and other forms of support could not prevent eviction. Brno has identified groups more at risk of hidden forms of homelessness and are hard to reach for support. A dedicated group of field social workers is responsible for reaching out to these people, especially women. As a result, gender has also been made a priority criteria for accessing housing with support to further prevent homelessness.



#### Illustrative practices of city measures on homelessness

#### **ROOF** project

9 cities (Braga, Ghent, Glasgow, Liège, Odense, Poznan, Thessaloniki, Timisoara, Toulouse) joined their expertise in the ROOF project. This URBACT project focuses on ending homelessness though innovative housing solutions. Their first objective will be to gather accurate data about homelessness in their own city. By working together, they hope to foster the comparability of their data, while adapting to national standards. The cities involved will then use this information to develop adequate Housing First programmes with the aim of ending structural homelessness.

#### Brno - Rapid re-housing programme

The project was designed for families with children dependent on social benefits and with uncertain or substandard housing. It placed 50 homeless families (mainly with Roma background) in debt-free housing, with the aim of removing financial pressures while working towards their financial independence. The project also provided the families with flexible support from social workers to help with management of money and other necessary services. The overall aim is to find rapid and innovative ways to effectively end homelessness by using all the available accommodation such as private hostels and other social services facilities.

#### **Lisbon - Homeless Planning and Intervention Centre**

The Lisbon Homeless Planning and Intervention Centre is a network of 28 partners coordinated by the city council to operationalise the implementation of the municipal homeless plan 2019-2021. The cooperation with the third sector ensures better effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation and monitoring of the action plan. To complement these integrated approaches, cities also take measures targeting specific needs.

### Ljubljana – Outreach project for street homeless people in the city centre

Ljubljana developed an outreach project for people in the streets of the city centre with nowhere else to go during the day. A first phase of the project allowed the needs to be identified and to plan the appropriate services. Many of these people have multiple and complex social issues and do not have access to or do not use mainstream programmes. Intensive street work was conducted to encourage them to access support.

The project also aimed at preventing new individuals from falling into this situation, especially youngsters. Around 100 people were reached with a good success rate. This programme became an essential part of the outreach to homeless people with the most severe and complex needs. The project also led to a reduction in antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

### Lyon – Changing the mindset towards a Housing First approach

Lyon, in partnership with the local universities, is developing a training course for social workers and local politicians on the principles of Housing First. A masters degree on Housing First will also be created. These tools will enable the city to change the mindset on homelessness and facilitate the implementation of the city's Housing First programme.

#### Poznan – Social lease premises with support

Poznan developed a programme of providing accommodation with dedicated support for independent living. Big dwellings from the municipal housing stock were renovated and turned into separate rooms with common areas such as kitchen, bathrooms and a day room to be used for training and other therapeutic support. Support includes individual plans for social and economic rehabilitation, personal skills development, independent living, housing maintenance and budget management.

### Vienna – Programme for assistance to homeless people

Vienna developed an assistance programme for homeless people based on the following principles:

- Low threshold services, including outreach services, day centres, counselling and health services.
- High quality emergency accommodation paired with professional social support.
- Housing First with a flexible and needs-oriented focus.
- Institutional alternatives to give long-term, secure housing and support when living in an independent apartment is not an option.

Vienna provided support to 11,730 people in 2018, with an overall re-integration rate of 45.7%

#### 4.5 Obstacles to reducing homelessness

The lack of affordable housing is currently the biggest obstacle for cities in dealing and preventing homelessness (21 cities). All cities reported difficulties to find housing at an affordable price in their city. As explained by several respondents, this is due both to the struggle to access social housing units and to afford private rental on the traditional housing market. Homelessness is closely linked to the challenges in housing mentioned in the first part. For several cities (Ghent, Gothenburg, Lisbon, Warsaw, Utrecht), this results in housing cost overburden for households. Some respondents also signalled increasing number of evictions (Lisbon, Lyon).

This phenomenon is reinforced by an **insufficient stock of emergency and transitional housing** mentioned by most respondents (11 cities). This increases waiting times for accessing the most efficient forms of support and during this period, the situation of the people in need is likely to worsen. The rise in the number of homeless people reported by Berlin, Ghent, Lyon, Malmo and Vienna also add to the challenge of having individual approaches to case management and tailored support.

Moreover, cities mentioned the challenges and multiple issues related to the homeless population. Several cities (Antwerp, Hengelo, Ljubljana, Lisbon) mention the difficulty in providing housing to people with the **most complex needs**. Antwerp, Bialystok and Porto in particular cited the challenge of providing adequate support for people with mental illnesses and addictions. In Lisbon, this issue is exacerbated by a highly mobile homeless population making it difficult to keep track of those who need assistance.

City experts and social workers also highlight the absence of proper understanding of homelessness. For example, there is a lack of adequate detailed data about the homeless population and trends making it difficult to design effective and sustainable solutions.

Figure 4.3

Challenges to promoting the social inclusion of homeless persons





#### 4.6 Policy recommendations

### 1. Set up an EU framework to support local and national strategies to fight homelessness

Cities, member states and the EU could work together to set up an EU framework to fight homelessness. A reflection on how to ensure sufficient resources are available to local authorities should be included in the EU framework.

### 2. Promote integrated approaches to support homeless people

It is vital to promote integrated approaches combining housing support with other types of support. The Housing First approach, which gives homeless people access to stable housing without pre-conditions should be coupled with multi-dimensional support in social and health care as well as active inclusion for access to work and training.

#### 3. Reinforce preventive support

A strong focus on preventive approaches is essential in the fight against homelessness. Preventative measures should be focused also on groups and life situations presenting the most risk of becoming homelessness such as migrants, people leaving institutions, indebted households etc.

### 4. Support capacity building of cities on data collection and monitoring of homelessness

It is important to build capacity of cities to collect comparable data on homelessness based on common methodologies. Precise, regular data collection at local level allows for better targeted measures and support. Through localised monitoring, policy makers can gain a more accurate understanding of the specific trends and the groups of people most affected by homelessness.

## Annex Overview of city competences

What legal competence does your city have on					
No	City	Social housing	Providing services for social inclusion of homeless people		
1	Antwerp		•		
2	Barcelona		NA		
3	Berlin	•	•		
4	Bialystok	NA	•		
5	Bilbao		•		
6	Braga		•		
7	Brno		•		
8	Ghent		•		
9	Gothenburg		•		
10	Grand Paris Sud	NA	•		
11	Hengelo		•		
12	Leipzig		•		
13	Lisbon	NA	•		
14	Ljubljana		•		
15	Lyon		•		
16	Malmo		•		
17	Palermo		•		
18	Porto		•		
19	Poznan	•	•		
20	Riga		•		
21	Stockholm		•		
22	Utrecht		•		
23	Vienna	•	•		
24	Warsaw	•	•		

Shared competence

No competence

■ Full competence



#### **Pictures:**

Cover, Zumarraga square renovation. Etxebizitzak - Viviendas Municipales de Bilbao

- p. 2 big, Housing rehabilitation in Otxarkoaga. Etxebizitzak Viviendas Municipales de Bilbao
- p. 2 small, Nick Fewings Unsplash
- p. 4 FSW Vienna Social Fund
- p. 10 The City of Ljubljana Housing Public Fund' residential building on Pipanova pot with rental units for those at most risk of homelessness was built in 2012 (photo: The City of Ljubljana Public Housing Fund archive)
- p.15 Jeroen Adriansens
- p.16 Adam Thomas Unsplash
- p. 18 Bruno Van herck
- p. 21 Bruno Van herck
- p. 23 SWM\_Johannes Wiedl

p.15,18,21, These pictures are part of an exhibition of the service of outreaching work (Dienst Outreachend Werken) from the city of Ghent. More info: outreachendwerken@stad.gent



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