

MIGRATION AND HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

THE RECENT WAVE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND CONSEQUENCES FOR SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Complexity of “Migration and Homelessness” in the European Union
- Focus on Recent Wave of Asylum Seekers
 - ▶ Some Numbers
 - ▶ Impact on Services for Homeless People
 - ▶ Future risks
- Conclusions: The need for an inclusive approach to reception and accommodation

COMPLEXITY OF MIGRATION AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EU

- Largest part of internal migrants between EU member states is not destitute or homeless. Tied control of EU borders against “economic migrants” from outside EU.
- Very different groups of destitute migrants (not homogenous either)
 - ▶ People with no papers (have entered country without legal status/stayed on after a legal stay for studies etc./rejected asylum seekers etc.): often trying to hide from authorities, make use of low threshold and anonymous services
 - ▶ Internal EU migrants. Free movement between EU member states. Still large differences in living standards between member states. Particularly disadvantaged and stigmatized groups (Roma) from Bulgaria and Romania, but also from Poland. Often legal right to stay, but restricted (or no) access to subsistence benefit and accommodation, if they are not defined as part of the labor force. Wide spread: “reconnection services” while many don’t want to go back.
 - ▶ Asylum seekers/others fleeing situations of humanitarian crisis outside EU

ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

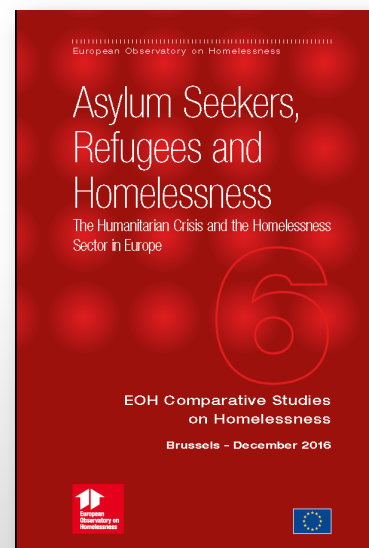
- In 2015 the EU experienced an exceptional influx of asylum seekers , total numbers of asylum applications exceeding 1.3 million persons.
- While numbers of “newcomers” diminished sharply from late 2015 onwards another 1.2 million applications were registered in 2016 (the majority from people who had entered the EU in 2015 already)
- In relation to the EU population (508,3 million) it is still a very tiny proportion (about 0.5 % in the two years)
- Most prominent countries of origin were Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya
- EU member states affected to very different extent: More than 60 % of all applications for asylum were registered in Germany, Sweden and Hungary
- In 2015 Germany (81 million inhabitants) received more than 6 times as many asylum seekers as France (66 million inhabitants) and more than 12 times as many as the UK (64 million inhabitants)

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- In 2015 and 2016 Germany alone registered more than 1.22 million applications for asylum. Struggling with provision of sufficient temporary accommodation: Tents, containers, sport halls etc., but large regional variation
- Pressure diminished by closing of “Balkan route” and agreements with Turkey late 2015; increased border control in several countries
- Increased efforts to send back asylum seekers who have not been granted international protection
- Duty to provide sufficient support for asylum seekers during the process of application, but large variation of practices among EU member states and high variation of rates of positive decisions (granting the right to stay in the country: Denmark 81 %, Germany 57 %, Poland and Hungary 15 %)

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND THE HOMELESSNESS SECTOR IN EUROPE

- European Observatory on Homelessness conducted a basic study in 2016 (based on questionnaires) on consequences of recent wave of asylum seekers on homelessness services in selected EU countries
- 12 of the 28 EU member states covered: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and UK
- High variations: More than 5,000 applicants per million inhabitants in Germany, Finland, Sweden and Hungary and much less than 1,000 per million in Ireland, Poland, Portugal and the UK
- Some countries rather transition countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary) struggling with high numbers and lack of resources, the more affluent countries in North Western Europe main recipient countries.



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- In many European countries strictly separate system of provision (accommodation and means of subsistence) for asylum seekers waiting for a decision.
- In these cases potential consequences for “regular” homelessness services only after asylum decision (granting international protection or rejection). No visible effects on homelessness reported in some countries, e.g. Denmark, Finland and the UK.
- Only for some countries (France, Greece, Italy) a sharp increase of use of homelessness services by asylum seekers was reported in mid 2016
- But from others a risk was reported that in the near future those persons granted international protection would end up in the service sector for homeless people because they could not find permanent housing
- Clear increase of pressure on housing markets in several countries where shortages of affordable housing had been severe before already

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- Especially in Italy and Greece limitation of resources for the asylum seeker systems led to asylum seekers living rough, squatting and using homelessness services
- In France, where specialist asylum seeker accommodation used to be much too limited as well and where emergency accommodation for homeless people has traditionally been open to asylum seekers as well, the pressure on this accommodation was reported as being very high and many thousands of asylum seekers were sleeping rough
- Risks reported for the future:
 - ▶ Increase of levels of homelessness after providing international protection in countries with critical shortages of affordable housing; particularly severe for single people
 - ▶ Discrimination blocking access to private rented housing
 - ▶ Political tensions about supporting measures for refugees exploited by the Far Right

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- 📌 Risks reported for the future:
 - ▶ Two types of potential competition: between migrant and non-migrant homeless people and between migrants with different administrative status
 - ▶ Increase of rejected asylum seekers with no access to services, to social benefits, to the labour market and to regular housing – increased pressure on charities providing basic means (food, clothing, hygiene, health....); also pressure from authorities to exclude irregularly residing migrants from such services
 - ▶ Insufficient integration measures for those granted international protection (language, education, labour market, housing...)

CONCLUSIONS

- 📌 Feantsa has called several times for an inclusive approach to reception and accommodation of asylum seekers. This involves
 - ▶ to reaffirm that everyone has the right to reception and support regardless of their administrative status
 - ▶ to protect associations managing social and community health services
 - ▶ to invest in accommodation facilities and develop housing solutions
 - ▶ to guarantee access to basic services and facilities, regardless of administrative status
- 📌 A fundamental change of European asylum and integration policies is needed,
 - ▶ that respects fundamental rights and is coordinated on a European Scale,
 - ▶ that provides safe and legal routes to protection and
 - ▶ that provides accommodation and support which meet standards of decency and dignity

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

QUESTIONS?



COMMENTS?

KONTAKT

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