Effectively fighting homelessness in Europe: the role of social innovation and investment

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Europe is a **dynamic**, Europe wide **community** of organisations founded in the **Christian faith** and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of **solidarity**, **equality** and **justice**. As the **leading network of Diaconia in Europe**, we connect organisations, institutions and churches providing **social and health services and education** on a Christian value base in over 30 European countries.

We bring members together to share practices, impact social policy and reflect on Diaconia in Europe today.

Editor: Heather Roy

Design: Jérémie Malengreaux

Eurodiaconia 🔛

Rue Joseph II 166 Tel: +32 (0)2 234 38 60 1000 Bruxelles Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65

Belgium E-mail: office@eurodiaconia.org

www.eurodiaconia.org





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Introduction

Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe-wide community of social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of diaconal service, which are committed to promoting social justice. It represents more than 47 members working in over 32 countries, including churches, not-for-profit welfare organisations and NGOs. Together, they provide services to hundreds of thousands of persons in need across Europe. Eurodiaconia is playing an active role in raising awareness of homelessness and in proposing next steps

at an EU and Member State level. Amongst its national members, some have been working closely with homeless persons for many years.

Since Eurodiaconia's last report on homelessness in 2012, there have been several developments regarding homelessness in Europe, including new initiatives from the European Union. In 2013, the European Commission published a comprehensive working document on homelessness in the EU which highlighted the exacerbation of the situation for people experiencing homelessness and the urgent need to act on this issue1. Furthermore, the changing profile of homeless was stressed, now including a rising number of women, youth and migrants². These developments were accentuated in the past years with the continuation of the financial and economic crisis in Southern Europe that caused high youth unemployment and poverty3, and the refugee crisis which increased the amount of people lacking access to social protection and in desperate need of support and housing4. In addition to the report by the European Commission, there have been renewed efforts of the European Parliament to underline the difficult situation of homeless people in Europe and the urgent need to act on homelessness. In 2014, a resolution was adopted which yet again pushes for the development of a European homelessness strategy that addresses the growing extent of housing issues, cross-border homelessness, quality of services for the homeless, prevention and homeless youth5.

The exacerbation of the situation of homelessness in Europe raises the question of how we can address this issue more effectively, especially with regard to the newly emerged groups such as women, refugees and youth that might require different approaches. Furthermore, the growing number of people in need requires a growing commitment of member states to support efforts in the fight against homelessness, raising the question of renewed investment in, or even modernization of social protection systems so that no one is left behind.

As a membership organization of diaconal social and health care providers, Eurodiaconia has many members providing specialized support for homeless people on the local and national level. They have extensive knowledge of the local landscape and individual needs of the homeless people they work with, and thus are able to judge the situation in their country with regard to homelessness as well the effectiveness of approaches to fighting homelessness. This report will be based on survey answers of Eurodiaconia members in order to investigate in how far the profile of homeless people has changed, what their specific needs are and how these needs can be best addressed, specifically with a view to social innovation in the field of homelessness. Moreover, the situation of social protection systems on the local and national level will be analyzed more specifically to see if the issue of homelessness is addressed sufficiently by local authorities, and where renewed investment and modernization efforts are necessary.

European Commission (2013). Confronting homelessness in the European Union. Brussels: European Commission

² ibid, p. 7

³ Caritas Europa (2014). The European crisis and its human cost: A call for fair alternatives and solutions http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/caritascrisisreport_2014_en.pdf

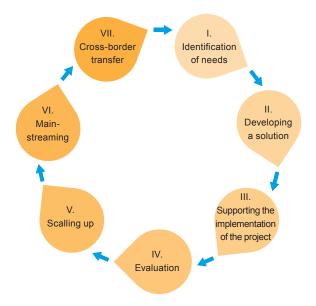
⁴ Feantsa (2015). Asylum Seekers in Europe: Perspectives from the Homeless Sector. Feantsa: Brussels

⁵ European Parliament Press Unit (2014). Parliament calls for an EU-wide strategy for the homeless. European Parliament (2014) http://www.europarl.europa. eu/news/en/news-room/20140110IPR32429/Parliament-calls-for-an-EU-wide-strategy-for-the-homeless

What is social innovation?

Social innovation plays an important role for social service providers as they are constantly faced with a changing landscape and new social challenges which require adapted or new approaches in order to provide the best and most effective service possible. There is a wide variety of diverging definitions of social innovation available, brought forward by different actors and fields of work. The European Commission for example defines social innovation as new ideas that more effectively meet social needs and create new social collaborations⁶. Social Services Europe, a network of organisations representing not-for-profit social and health care providers, provides a more detailed definition of social innovation in the context of social service provision, describing it as "new responses to social needs [which] are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes and address new social challenges"7.

Social innovation follows different steps to develop new and improved approaches to challenges. Eurodiaconia and existing members have identified seven substantial steps in the process which broadly overlap with the stages identified by other social actors (cf. FEANTSA toolkit8, Social Services Europe toolkit) and are discussed in the Eurodiaconia toolkit on social innovation from 20149. The first



stage is the identification of new or unmet social needs, caused by, for example, new social groups with specific needs, local developments or changing legislation which alters the overall situation for vulnerable people. The second stage consists of the development of responses to these unmet needs. Here, it is especially important to carefully collect and evaluate innovative ideas, either through research or through staff meetings and discussions. Stage three is the process of implementing a pilot project which monitors and tests the innovative project in practice. At stage four, an evaluation of the effectiveness and usefulness in meeting the prior unmet social needs is due. Therefore, both outputs and outcomes shall be carefully investigated. In case of a positive evaluation and impact assessment of the pilot project, in stage five the potential upscaling of the innovative approach is discussed, looking at the specific context in which it was implemented and investigating in how far it can be transferred to different contexts. Stage six in the process is the mainstreaming of the innovative approach which is then widely accepted by public authorities as a key method to better address social challenges, and enjoys growing support and promotion. The last stage is the cross- border transfer of the idea, referring to

European Commission (2016). Social Innovation http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/policy/ social/index en.htm

Social Services Europe (2012). Social Innovation: The Role of Social Service Providers. Brussels: Social Services Europe http://cms.horus.be/files/99931/ Newsletter/SocialServicesEurope_briefing_SocialInnovation.pdf

⁸ Feantsa (2012). Social Innovation to Combat Homelessness: A Guide. http://www.feantsa.org/spip. php?article622

q Eurodiaconia (2014). Toolkit on Social Innovation. Brussels: Eurodiaconia

the successful implementation of the approach in another country. Here, the careful consideration of the different national context and culture is important to make sure that the project will be successful in a different setting.

In the current context of constantly developing crises such as the national debt crisis and the refugee crisis, and changing legislation which have a lasting impact on the well-being of citizens such as austerity measures and closing of borders, social innovation becomes especially important: new vulnerable groups emerge which need specific approaches, for example unemployed youth or refugees and migrants

which have lacking access to social security. Eurodiaconia members as diaconal actors providing social services to the most vulnerable are often at the forefront of addressing new social challenges and supporting different vulnerable groups. Therefore, their assessment of people's needs and effective ways to address those in innovative ways is especially valuable when discussing social innovation. The next chapters will investigate Eurodiaconia members' assessment of the profile and respective needs of homeless people, and their ways of addressing these with innovative approaches.

The changing face of homelessness

This chapter investigates the different profiles of homeless people and how they have changed in the past years. Results from Eurodiaconia members will be compared to reports from the European Commission and a former report of Eurodiaconia in order to be able to track changes and the development of new social challenges which might benefit most from innovative and adapted approaches.

The face of homelessness has been changing in the past years, as was demonstrated in the European Commission report and was well confirmed by most of Eurodiaconia members. Participating members reported that the largest increase has been seen in intra-EU migrants; eight out of ten mentioned this target group as the most represented among the newly emerged homeless groups. Furthermore, the number of young people and refugees has increased substantially in the last years according to the majority of Eurodiaconia's participating members; seven mentioned youth to be on the rise, and five observed a growing

number of refugees suffering from home-lessness. The most recent national survey in Denmark, for example, showed a continued increase of young people among the homeless, having risen from 633 in 2009 to 1.172 in 2015¹⁰. In Germany, the number of female persons suffering from homelessness has increased from 14% in 2005 to 22% in 2015¹¹.

Despite the increase of homelessness for these newly emerged groups, the most represented group among homelessness services of Euro-diaconia members are still men (mentioned by nine out of ten) and people with mental health problems (seven out of ten). Eurodiaconia members from Denmark were the only participants to observe a rather mixed profile of homeless people represented in their services,

¹⁰ Data provided by Eurodiaconia member Kofoeds Skole, Denmark

¹¹ Data provided by Eurodiaconia member Diakonie Dusseldorf, Germany

including different profiles of male, female, young, migrants and people with mental health problems. Three of the Nordic members furthermore stressed the substantial number of people with substance abuse problems among their services. These claims are underlined from members in Denmark who cited that two thirds of people in homelessness are suffering from substance abuse and addiction, with about half of them having a mental illness¹².

The assessment of the profile of people experiencing homelessness in Europe is in line with observations laid down in the Commission paper which also cites middle-aged men with mental-health and addiction problems as the core of people suffering from homelessness in Europe¹³. The report moreover recognizes a rise in homelessness among intra-EU migrants, youth and women, in line with other growing tendencies such as an increase of old-aged people and those leaving institutions of prisons or hospitals¹⁴. As compared with the report on homelessness based on Eurodiaconia member input in 2012, slight differences can be observed. Although members already in 2012 observed a growing number of youth, women and intra-EU migrants, there was no mentioning of refugees, but instead of elderly people, people with a mental illness and people in a difficult economic situation.

Differently than in the Commission report and Eurodiaconia report from 2012, the participating members observed a rising number of refugees, which can be explained by the exponential rise of people fleeing the Middle East since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, posing a new social challenge to service providers. Apart from that, the findings of all reports compared have shown similar trends, especially with regard to social groups whose number has been increasing in the last years. This gives evidence that although negative trends for new homeless groups have already been observed back in 2012/2013, nothing happened that was able to halt or reverse this trend. On the contrary, numbers of homeless people in Europe are still on the rise, as academic data from 2015 has shown¹⁵. Against this background, the investigation of social innovation and investment is specifically important in order to find more effective ways to fight homelessness.

¹² Data provided by Eurodiaconia member Kofoeds Skole, Denmark

¹³ European Commission (2013). Confronting homelessness in the European Union, p.7

¹⁴ Ibid, p.7

¹⁵ The Foundation Abbé Pierre/ Feantsa (2015). An Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe, p. 56

Causes and needs of people experiencing homelessness

According to the report from the European Commission, the main causes of homelessness arise from structural, institutional, relationship-based and personal factors:

- The structural factors include rent and mortgage errors, evictions, change of status related to immigration and citizenship status as well as lacking affordable housing possibilities.
- For the institutional factors, the Commission report lists among others shortage
 of mainstream services and loss of home
 after discharge of institutions like prisons or
 hospitals.
- The relationship status can trigger homelessness when people leave home because of divorce, death of family members or because of domestic violence.
- Personal factors for homelessness include disability, long-term illness, addiction problems, gambling, and a difficult life situation because of low educational attainment.

*European Commission, 2013, Confronting Homelessness in the European Union, p. 10

Eurodiaconia members observed structural factors to be the main cause of homelessness; seven out of ten mentioned poverty and lacking income as a main reason for homelessness. with five stressing unemployment and four the lack of affordable housing. Regarding institutional factors, only Eurodiaconia's Danish participants stressed related causes such as lacking support for people leaving prisons as well as lacking cooperation between municipal departments to be important reasons for people to fall into homelessness. Relationship-based factors were mainly observed by members in Germany and the Czech Republic, who mentioned domestic violence, divorce, and the death of a family member as causes for homelessness. Personal factors were rated the second-most important factor of vulnerability according to a majority of Eurodiaconia members. Notably, mental health and addiction problems were mentioned repeatedly by the participating organisations.

Most of these causes were already observed by Eurodiaconia members back in 2012, where a majority of surveyed members declared structural and personal factors to be the main reasons for people experiencing homelessness, specifically stressing lack of affordable housing, unemployment, drug addiction and mental illness. Vulnerability factors such as migration status, relationship breakdown, prison release and domestic violence were stressed as well by single members. Thus, in four years, the local level situation in EU member states according to Eurodiaconia members has not changed significantly: The same factors which were criticised back then are still mentioned as major problems today. This reiterates the growing need for innovative approaches to finally balk the spread of homelessness, and most importantly the growing need for social investment addressing structural problems that keep on causing homelessness throughout Europe.

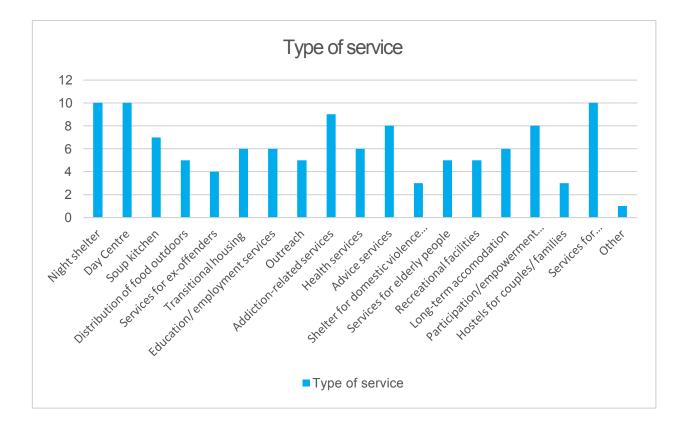
As for the needs of homeless people, a majority of the participants stressed the need for affordable housing (eight out of ten). In this context, access to housing for specific groups such as EU-migrants and people with mental health problems were also mentioned. Services related to health problems were rated the second-most important need in fact, stressing the urgency to ensure the general health of homeless people as well as improved accommodation options for people with health problems. Another point which was mentioned by three out of ten members was inclusive policies by public authorities and a general inclusion into community structures. Homeless people need to have access to consultation services when encountering problems with public authorities, and they need the possibility to build good relationships with the community that helps their inclusion back into society. Other key needs raised were basic ones such as food, shelter and care, as well as the possibility to receive an income and employment.

The needs observed by Eurodiaconia members for this report correspond with the generally identified causes for homelessness: the most important ones of lacking access to housing

and mental health problems establish the need of providing more housing and health support. Next to basic needs and those in reaction to the causes, inclusion into the community was mentioned, thereby drawing attention to the social needs of people in homelessness as well. Moreover, Eurodiaconia members further reiterated that specific groups of homeless people carry particular needs which require special services that are in some cases still lacking.

Service provision of Eurodiaconia members

Eurodiaconia members provide a wide range of services to homeless people throughout Europe, ranging from standard services such as day centres and night shelters to specialised support for people with particular needs such as ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence or women, refugees and youth. The following table gives an overview of different kind of services Eurodiaconia members provide in the field of homelessness:



The results show that a majority of members focuses on night shelters, day centres and specialised support for particular groups such as women, refugees and youth. These services mainly include offers for women and youth so far, but several members stressed the urgent need of developing projects for refugees and Kirkens Koshaer from intra-EU migrants. Denmark mentioned the inadequate availability of services for EU-migrants as a problem that has been raised several times in front of the municipalities and responsible ministries, but which has not received a reaction so far. Slezska Diakonie from the Czech Republic stated that there is a problem with service provision for refugees as offers are not ready yet due to issues with receiving them in Czech society. Diakonie Dusseldorf from Germany stressed the need for more special proposals for migrants and refugees coming from other towns.

Concerning the specialised services particular social groups, members specifically focus on the target group of EU migrants. A majority offers advice services, some such as the Salvation Army in Sweden furthermore provides information about the host countries' society and their rights. Women also receive special attention within homelessness services of most organisations. The services offered for them include exclusive night shelters for women, flats for mothers with their children, as well as individual and group support. Young people and refugees receive less attention so far, but also enjoy specialized services at member services in for example Germany, Denmark and Sweden where transitional housing, outreach and advice services are offered.

Identification of unmet needs and challenges in addressing homelessness

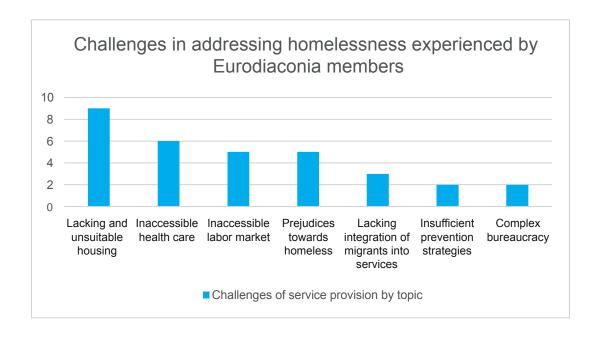
Despite active engagement in the field of homelessness, several challenges hinder service providers from being able to address all needs of homeless people. These challenges can be of different natures, ranging from lacking resources to legal and bureaucratic hurdles. All Eurodiaconia members confirmed that they lack resources to address all needs of people experiencing homelessness. Thereby, many needs of homeless people remain unmet; in most cases, access to appropriate housing. Nine of ten participants of the survey mentioned finding affordable housing as a main challenge, specifically long-term options in urban areas or suitable housing for target groups with special needs, such as mothers with children and elderly people.

Another key challenge mentioned is access to health care, not only for foreigners who are not part of the health care system, but also for people experiencing poverty in general as they are not reached by available services or cannot access services which are not free of charge. Furthermore, there are challenges posed by country-specific legislation; members from the Czech Republic reported that legislation prevents them from reacting to the inadequate health care provision of homeless by themselves due to the need to register as a health-care provider and with an insurance beforehand, and the legislation related to psychiatric health care was criticised as it is not possible to hospitalise mentally ill people if they refuse hospitalisation.

Five of ten participants stressed challenges related to finding employment for homeless people. These include struggles to access the job market for specific groups, for example EU migrants in Norway, or finding employment for people with a difficult history such as a prison stay. Another key issue mentioned are the prejudices and attitudes of the community and public authorities towards homeless people. Society sometimes shows a low willingness to accept people experiencing poverty, and public authorities often show poor understanding of the needs and problems faced by the homeless.

Three out of ten participants furthermore mentioned specific challenges for refugees

and migrants, for example the need for translators and the problem of accessing health care services without documents. Other challenges mentioned were the lack of effective prevention strategies, specifically with a view to alcohol and drug addiction prevention, and complicated bureaucratic procedures that slow down the processing of files. In order to address the social challenges and needs arising, Eurodiaconia members have developed innovative approaches. Different projects of a variety of members will be presented in the next section, focusing on special target groups and taking into consideration the specific challenges they are facing.



Examples of innovative approaches of Eurodiaconia members

Many Eurodiaconia members apply innovative concepts in order to maximise effectiveness and to find new ways to better provide services for specific target groups. Below, a selected number of innovative projects run by Eurodiaconia members in Sweden, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Germany and Norway will be presented, introducing their rationale and activities which address formerly unmet needs or social challenges.

Diakonie Düsseldorf, Germany-**Specialised support for homeless** women

Diakonie Düsseldorf runs specialized support offers for young people, specifically for young girls and women. Düsseldorf as a metropole with a substantive commuter belt attracts a varying number of homeless young people each year, many of who suffer from a drug addiction and finance their drugs with prostitution, with little or no social attachments and lacking contacts to traditional child and youth services.

Diakonie P Düsseldorf

Diakonie Düsseldorf addresses this specific target group by offering a safe place to sleep, with a broad offer of counselling and existential services which aim to address all individual needs while establishing a contact to governmental youth services. These services include a sleep-in point with general offers for eating, sleeping, washing clothes, taking a shower and talking to professional youth workers, as well as services specialised for the target group of young women in prostitution and drug addiction, such as providing clean injecting equipment and medical treatment. All women are invited to keep their anonymity, if wishing to do so.

The facility is continuously equipped with an experienced professional who approaches the women with different instruments and methods of street work and case management, offering the possibility of pursuing a first analysis of the psychosocial situation as well future steps and reintegration into the state-based youth support system. Furthermore, the young women are supported in efforts to escape drug addiction, find permanent housing and deal with public institutions such as administrative bodies, doctors, police and courts.

Kirkens Koshaer- Town for the homeless



Kirkens Koshaer established a project called 'Skurbyen' which can be translated as repelled town. This 'town' is a residential area in Aarborg which offers a community for homeless people where they can stay and live in a home environment. The city follows a similar scheme as the housing first approach because it offers housing options without typical preconditions. It has a high tolerance threshold in terms of noise, alcohol consumption and other atypical behavior.



The main target group are homeless people who suffered from alcohol and drug abuse and were usually denied access to other service offers such as group homes or shelters due to their special behavior including sound intensity, lacking hygiene and alcohol consumption. This was especially problematic during winter where temperatures were so low that sleeping outside could have posed a serious threat to their lives. Kirkens Koshaer reacted to the lacking availability of safe housing for this target group by adjusting to their specific situation.

The residential area is accompanied by three social caretakers who help the residents with daily tasks while ensuring that they have freedom and flexibility in their choices. They provide among others support with basics such as washing, cooking and medications.

City Missions Norway – Room for poor visitors



City Missions The Norway run a project called 'Rom for fattige tilreisende' which means 'Room for poor visitors'. In reaction to the increased number intra-EU migrants in Norway, the City Missions increased the focus on this particular target group, offering

basic services such as handing out food and clothes as well as pursuing counselling and outreach work.

Furthermore, they support this target group with services tailored for their specific needs: The City Missions provide information on their entitlements and rights in the country and support them with finding employment by offering courses, for example in languages such as Norwegian and English, as well as support in writing a CVs and understanding tax systems. They also provide special courses for Roma women in knitting and sewing, and offer them to sell their products to local shops and markets in order to help them to get into stable work. Thereby, the City Missions react to the main cause and need of homelessness they have identified for this target group which is employment and the satisfaction of basic needs.

In addition to social service provision, the project moreover pursues socio-political and advocacy work in order to facilitate inclusive communities and prevent discrimination and stigmatization.

Kofoeds Skole, Denmark - Holistic approach to youth homelessness



Kofoeds Skole is an independent humanitarian organisation which applies the pedagogical model of help through self-help. It supports people suffering from unemployment, isolation and homelessness by providing education, counselling, and possibilities for housing and guidance. The main school in Copenhagen runs fifteen workshops in fields such as carpentry, electronics, media, IT, car- and bicycle repairing, transportation, laundry, kitchen, gardening, sewing, cleaning, production, clothing and furniture depot work. Furthermore, it gives the "students" the opportunity to run most of the school's maintenance while contracts with local businesses are taken up where the students can apply the learned skills, with some workshops even producing own goods that can be sold to other school's inhabitants or external suppliers. The school has its own currency with which the work of the students is awarded.

Within this context. Kofoeds Skole in Denmark provides specialized services for young people in homelessness, a target group which has been growing rapidly in the last years in Denmark. Young people rarely seek help in traditional services and often suffer from complex social problems and experiences, including lacking education and work experience as well as psychosocial problems, which is why targeted outreach and service programs are especially important in order to help this target group. Kofoeds Skole addresses these specific needs by pursuing outreach work in the streets and offering a holistic range of services such as emergency shelters, youth hostels, basic services as well as counselling regarding employment, housing, education, health, economy and social relations. In most cases, the young people are supported by a case manager or social worker.

One example of a permanent housing place is Kofoeds School Youth Housing. There, young people between 18 and 30 years can take part in a unique combination of social and pedagogical training as well as economic and educational guidance and support. In cooperation with a contact teacher and a social worker, a development plan is established which helps the inhabitants to organise an active everyday life according to the person's specific abilities and needs, and to arrange a plan for transition from community living to a better life. Furthermore, specialised support for people with mental health problems, addiction and abuse or debt issues is offered.

Eurodiaconia members in Sweden -Through the eyes of a stranger

Eurodiaconia members in Sweden run several innovative projects for single target groups with a focus on their specific needs, specifically for intra-EU migrants. This target group has been on the rise in Sweden in recent years, with

many living on the streets and having no one to turn to. They often face language barriers when seeking support and have little no knowledge about the rules and rights in Sweden. By



joint efforts of the Gothenburg municipality, Bräcke Diakonie, Salvation Army and Swedish City Missions, this gap was filled by providing comprehensive support in form of a night shelter, day centre and counselling service.



The day centre run by the Salvation Army in Sweden for example offers specialised support by providing food, coffee, community information, consultation services as well as financial help

and clothing. Some of these services, such as financial help and food, match the needs which the target group itself expressed to have. Other special activities such as information sessions about Swedish society and rights in the country are provided in different languages and match the particular needs of this specific target group, such as lacking information due to language barriers, and lacking knowledge of the foreign society and legal landscape.

In addition to material needs, the day center addresses people's psychological and social needs by providing a safe place to meet social workers as well as those being in a similar situation, and by providing newspapers and bibles in the EU-migrants local languages such as Romanian. This enables them to keep a connection to their home country while building links to the local community at the same time.

The Church of Sweden runs similar projects in different Swedish cities with a specific focus on self-empowerment and social inclusion. The intra-EU migrants, mostly Roma, are supported by receiving information on the legal situation, health care and language.

Stadsmissioner

Salvation Army, Czech Republic -Bringing together old and young



Salvation The Army in the Czech Republic operates a "house under the slope" for homeless with men addiction problems and at the same time serves as a prevention program for

children and youth to warn about the dangers of substance abuse. Thereby, it reacts to the remaining need of support for a target group that is often considered to be the most spread among homeless people, respectively people suffering from an addiction, while also reacting to the new social challenges of young people falling into homelessness by bringing these two groups together.

The House under the Slope serves the particular needs of homeless people having suffered from an addiction with offering support in finding a path to permanent abstinence and integration back into society; they provide individual and group support as well as occupational therapy and recreational activities. In the individual support, the participants have the chance to develop a plan for the future with support from the house staff. The group meetings offer an opportunity to share experiences and feelings with people in a similar position while being supervised by trained stuff and psychotherapeutic support. The occupational therapy aims at maintaining, renewing or obtaining working habits; therefore, the inhabitants take part in farm work such as harvesting or animal care. The recreational activities involve leisure activities offered by the organisation, including events outside of the facility.

The prevention program for children and youth consists of a visit to the House under the Slope where the participants can, besides visiting the farm and petting the animals, learn about the services offered in the house and about the risks of alcohol and addiction while listening to a life story of one of the inhabitants. Thereby, the young people can see the harmful effects of alcohol in one's life by themselves while the inhabitant with a history of addiction can share his story and is lead to playing an active part in society again.



Social innovation in the homelessness sector: An assessment

Next to the examples mentioned above, Eurodiaconia members have knowledge and experience with a range of further innovative approaches in the homelessness sector. The most prominent one is the housing first approach. Housing First refers to a specific model for homeless people with high support needs. It aims to provide access to permanent housing without any preconditions¹⁶. The effectiveness of this approach is generally evaluated positively by the participating Eurodiaconia members, although they also mention several challenges and preconditions for the successful implementation of the program.

Housing first

- Diakonie Düsseldorf for example stressed that Housing First is principally a useful approach, but that the implementation is hindered by resentments of politicians and society and the lacking availability of suitable housing options, especially in urban settings such as Düsseldorf.
- Eurodiaconia's Danish members stressed the effectiveness of Housing First, stating that they observed positive results in different Danish municipalities. However, they also mentioned that it is difficult to upscale the approach due to difficult preconditions such as lacking housing and lacking investment in individual services due to a difficult economic situation of the municipalities.
- Members from the Czech Republic stated that it is a good approach under certain circumstances, but stressed that it is not

generally applicable and that there are more effective ways to provide gradual support than Housing First. One member mentioned that it might not work with people who have been homeless for more than five years as they may face particular problems in being integrated back into society. Another member drew attention to challenges related to the willingness of homeless people to live in a regulated environment again, and to the ability of people to live independently which is not always given due to health conditions. In order to effectively implement Housing First, it would be necessary to provide specialized support for those people which is not always available due to restricted financial means.

- In Sweden, Eurodiaconia members stressed the value of Housing First as an effective approach to help people out of homelessness.
- Eurodiaconia's Norwegian member stated that they are informed about the Housing First approach and deem it valid to be applicable in the local context, nevertheless stressing the lacking experience with this method.

Other innovative approaches

Several members also know about innovative approaches offering specialized support to newly emerged groups such as women, youth, refugees and migrants. Especially for refugees and migrants, a wide range of adapted approaches which is tailored to their specific needs are available. Diakonie Düsseldorf for example offers special consultations which make use of pictograms to explain situations, or hire translators who are either consulted directly, or who are asked to create flyers with

¹⁶ Feantsa (2016). Housing First Guide. See http://www. feantsa.org/spip.php?article3906&lang=en

information in different languages. The services are assessed in close cooperation with the service users to ensure effectiveness. The Church of Sweden offers caravan housing for refugees and migrants which helps this target group to be better included into society. Tailored services for other target groups include special housing options for women; Diakonie Düsseldorf for example offers a flat for four women and their children until they find an own apartment, and the City Missions Norway offers a special night shelter for women.

Social innovation with regard to social service provision for homeless people is generally evaluated positively by Eurodiaconia members. Diakonie Düsseldorf stated that innovation is necessary as the social situation constantly changes due to changing laws or changing groups. The Church of Sweden highlighted the successes of adapted projects, stressing that they significantly helped refugees and migrants to be better included into society. The Salvation Army in Sweden confirmed this opinion by stating that the adapted service provision for refugees and migrants matches the needs they claimed to have by themselves. Other members valued innovative approaches for their ability to be more specialized and react to specific needs and individual complex situations, which are often overlooked by general service offers. However, it was also mentioned that lacking data, statistics and time to measure the effectiveness of projects makes a final evaluation difficult in most cases. Furthermore, a better cooperation between municipalities, the local community and social service providers on how to improve services was stressed to be important.

Social protection systems and the need for social investment

Social protection systems are meant to protect vulnerable people from falling into poverty, yet are they rarely able to reach that aim to its fullest due to a different number of flaws and gaps in legislation. Eurodiaconia members as social service providers working with the most vulnerable have broad knowledge about the social protection systems of their respective countries, and more importantly, the reasons why they are not able to effectively support people in poverty. According to Eurodiaconia members, most social protection systems are not able to effectively address homelessness (eight of ten). The weaknesses of these systems vary from country to country, ranging from long bureaucratic procedures to lacking coordination and lacking provision of resources.

Germany

In Germany, Eurodiaconia members identified several problems with regard to the working and structures of social protection systems. First of all, it was stressed that homeless people often need help immediately which is not provided timely enough by public authorities. One example is the new law that everyone has the right to get a medical insurance, whose implementation is lengthy and complicated. Another example is the lack of access to suitable and permanent housing options for specific homeless groups, such as young people, drug addicts and elderly people, especially those with care needs. As stated by Diakonie Düsseldorf, in Düsseldorf there are substantially more people with a claim to get into social housing than there are social housing options. Furthermore, the labour market support was criticised as people suffering from homelessness often have no qualifications and need special help to access the job market.

In order to more effectively address homelessness in Germany, more investment in especially housing options, employment and training initiatives as well as health care options shall be pursued. In general, more helping resources to support homeless people shall be made available. It was also stressed that a national strategy on homelessness and poverty is needed, as there are substantial differences in access to social protection in different areas. A call for social companies who help people to find a job was mentioned in this context as well.

Sweden

Eurodiaconia's Swedish members declared the social protection system to be ineffective in addressing homelessness in Sweden. They specifically highlighted the lacking access to social protection systems for EU migrants, mostly for Sinti and Roma from Eastern European countries. The Church of Sweden explained that EU migrants are not protected by Swedish legislation and are not included in the social welfare system at all; they are often victims of evictions by the police when they place their caravans on private or community-owned property, without being offered help to find alternative places or housing. They are not fully included in the health care system and nor are their children who furthermore face problems in accessing education. These problems are especially significant in the first three months of their stay. The Salvation Army in Sweden stressed the lacking access to housing and employment for EU migrants specifically and the reliance on civil society to provide social services, especially with view to this target group.

In order to improve the social protection system in Sweden, Eurodiaconia members most importantly called for investment in social housing options, employment initiatives, access to health care and anti-eviction measures. Furthermore, investments into income support and educational possibilities for children of EU migrants were stressed. In order to ensure the well-being of the most vulnerable among the homeless, the Church of Sweden moreover called on the government to fully include different international conventions it has signed. most importantly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Swedish City Missions emphasised the need for less bureaucracy, more focus on prevention programs and better cooperation in order to enable faster procedures and service provision.

Denmark

The Danish members that participated in the survey agreed as well that the national social protection systems do not effectively address homelessness in Denmark. They criticised the amount and quality of social supplies which are unable to get people off the streets in the longterm. Kirkens Korshaer stressed that lowered social supplies are a reason for people to not be able to stay in their homes, making formerly homeless people return to the streets. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of social protection for EU migrants was highlighted. Kofoeds Skole explained that although there is an extensive service system, it fails to address the growing number of homeless people because it does not make use of effective measures such as Housing First sufficiently, but rather prioritises costs over quality. Another problem is the delivery of services: The social system often presupposes that delivery is not a problem and thereby fails to reach the most excluded groups.

In order to make the social system more effective, Eurodiaconia members call for a holistic investment strategy that includes investment into housing, employment options, health care, rehabilitation services, income support and anti-eviction measures alike. People suffering from homelessness have complex support needs that must be addressed full-scale from all relevant angles, including stable relations to social services and workers as well as early prevention and intervention strategies which are underpinned by political commitment and financing.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic has a generous social protection system which covers a wide range of areas and thereby is able to address a great variety of needs of homeless people, for example through low-threshold centres and training flats. The social protection system is also considered to be easily accessible, although the situation for migrants is not always clear. However, Eurodiaconia members from the Czech Republic recognise general flaws in legislation which are counter-productive to the effective fight against homeless, for example with view to consumer rights, insolvency files and criminal records. Slezska Diakonie specifically stresses problems with insolvency and bankruptcy mechanisms which easily drag people into poverty, caused by high interest loans and complicated procedures. Furthermore, the social protection system is considered to be too generous in comparison to real life wages, as this decreases the motivation for people to escape the reliance on the system.

In order to ensure the effective fight against homelessness, a holistic investment into housing, employment, health care, rehabilitation and anti-eviction measures is necessary. Especially in the housing sector, more investment is needed as to counter the business

made with low-quality rooming houses which go against the prevention of homelessness. In addition to investments, the motivation system in the Czech Republic needs to change in order to make it more appealing for people to work than to live on social security. Therefore, wages need to be adapted so that the difference between salaries and social benefits is increasing. Slezska Diakonie furthermore stressed the need for policies for non-bank loans and access of these loans to low-income persons as to prevent them from falling into a debt trap, together with evolving financial literacy at school level already.

Norway

The City Missions in Norway state that the social security system in Norway is generally able to address homelessness effectively. However, not all groups of homeless people have access to the social security system, such as migrants. Therefore, a more flexible and adjustable system is needed in order to address all groups of homeless people. The areas where most social investment would be necessary are in the housing and health care sector, including rehabilitation services, and regarding income support and anti-eviction measures. The housing sector is evaluated to be expensive in Norway, and in addition does not provide enough shelters and adjustable housing for certain groups.

Recommendations for policy makers

The recent chapters have shown that social innovation and investment are important tools to more effectively address homelessness in Europe. In order to better support social innovation and investment on the systemic level, several key recommendations can be drawn from Eurodiaconia members' experience as outlined above:

- Invest into social housing. The most urgent issue Eurodiaconia members identified at the local level is the lack of affordable housing options. On the one hand, the lack of social housing pushes people into homelessness when they are unable to pay their bills anymore, and on the other hand it is hard to find transitional or permanent housing options for people already in homelessness.
- **Pursue** integrated investment strategy into social services which _ address homelessness. People suffering from homelessness have a broad set of needs and problems which need to be addressed in a holistic way, as stressed by several Eurodiaconia members who participated in the survey. Investment is necessary in a range of fields, depending on the situation and existing service offers on the local level, including into employment, health care and anti-eviction measures.
- Support the development of approaches that take into account the complex and multi-faceted situation of homeless people. - Homeless people often suffer from an interconnected and complex range of problems that need to be addressed in order to effectively re-integrate them into society. That is why innovative and adapted services are especially relevant in this context as they, unlike general approaches, react to the diversifying needs of homeless people.

- Foster a better understanding and accessibility of rights for intra-EU migrants, especially for vulnerable groups. - Several members mentioned the increasing number of homeless EU migrants among their services, and their unclear status of rights, foremost with view to access to social protection systems and social services. In order to be able to help this target group out of homelessness, a better access to information which facilitates understanding of their rights is necessary.
- Provide more support to NGOs who run social services in order to fill the gaps of social protection systems. – A majority of members mentioned that the respective social protection systems in their countries are not able to address homelessness sufficiently, and some furthermore stressed the lacking means to fill these gaps by themselves. That is why an increased support to (non-state) social service providers is necessary in order to ensure that all homeless people are taken care of.
- Ensure the inclusion of social innovation and investment in any strategies on homelessness at local, national or European level. - Social innovation and investment as key means to improve the situation of homelessness in Europe need to be stressed in any comprehensive strategies on different levels.

Conclusions

Homelessness is a complex issue that has been increasing over recent years in Europe, raising the question of how it can be addressed more effectively and where flaws in the social systems lie that fail to address it sufficiently. This report investigated the role and potential of social innovation and investment in addressing homelessness, based on survey results from Eurodiaconia members who are social and health care providers on the local level. The report has shown that innovative approaches are important means to more effectively address homelessness in Europe. Members confirmed that the number of specific groups of homeless people such as young people, women and migrants has increased among their service users, and that their specific needs require special approaches in order to address those best. Innovative examples of Eurodiaconia member projects have shown how this can be done in an effective manner. Furthermore, Eurodiaconia members were asked about an assessment of popular innovative approaches such as Housing First. The housing first approach was evaluated to be a valuable mean by most Eurodiaconia members in addressing homelessness in the long-term. However, also obstacles to successfully implementing the approach were voiced, such as lacking housing options in general and lacking resources.

Social protection systems in the member states of the participating Eurodiaconia members were widely criticised, stating that they are hardly able to address homelessness effectively. The most urgent issue to be addressed is social housing. Housing options are often not available and/ or affordable for vulnerable people, and for social service providers who offer shelters and curated living. Therefore, investment into social housing is urgently necessary. Other areas where more support for homeless people is needed are employment and training initiatives, health care options and anti-eviction measures, according to a majority of Eurodiaconia members.

In summary, homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted issue which needs specialised approaches and sufficient resources to be addressed effectively. Therefore, support for innovative methods and renewed investment into social services and housing are key in the fight against increasing numbers of homeless people in Europe.

List of respondents

Aufbaugilde- Germany Church of Sweden- Sweden Diakonie Düsseldorf- Germany Kirkens Koshaer- Denmark Kofoeds Skole- Denmark Salvation Army- Czech Republic Salvation Army- Sweden Slezska Diakonie- Czech Republic Swedish City Missions- Sweden The Church City Missions in Norway- Norway

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Eurodiaconia 🔛

Rue Joseph II 166 1000 Bruxelles Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 234 38 60 Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65 E-mail: office@eurodiaconia.org



@eurodiaconia



Eurodiaconia



Eurodiaconia Brussels



eurodiaconia.org

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