



FEANTSA

Poland

FEANTSA Country Fiche¹

<p>Key Statistics</p>	<p>There is no national data-collection strategy for homelessness in Poland. Homelessness was addressed by the 2001 and 2011 Housing and Population Censuses but there were considerable limitations in the methodologies and definitions used. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy collects annual Social Welfare Statistics from all social welfare centres in Poland, including on homeless assistance. The Ministry also holds a register of homeless service providers. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour produced a national study on homelessness in 2010, which was repeated in 2012. NGO service providers collect homeless data in some regions e.g. the Pomeranian Forum in aid of Getting Out of Homelessness (PFWB) carries out very comprehensive biennial surveys of homelessness in the Pomeranian region. A data-collection quality standard has also been developed in Warsaw.</p> <p>Census Data 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people sleeping rough: approx. 9,600 on a given night (ETHOS 1.1, Census 2011 - 15/16.04.2011) ○ Number of people living in group accommodation facilities for longer than 3 months: 14,500 on a given night (ETHOS 2 and 3, Census 2011 – 15/16.04.2011) <p>Total: 24,100</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people living in overnight shelters and homeless hostels: 20,960 (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1) ○ Number of people who were provided with a shelter in 2010: 15,465 (ETHOS 2.1 and 3.1) ○ Number of persons who received financial support because of homelessness in 2010: 42,768 <p>Total: 79,193</p>
<p>Increase/Decrease in Number of Homeless People</p>	<p>According to social welfare statistics, there has been steady growth in the number of homeless people in Poland from 33,785 in 2005 to 42,768 in 2010. This trend was slightly disturbed by the Polish accession to the EU in 2004, which resulted in a wave of emigration and related changes to the domestic labour market. There is some anecdotal evidence from service providers in Poland of the possible intensification of a longer-standing increase in homelessness as a result of the crisis and specifically the return of emigrants whose prospects for employment in other Member States have worsened.</p>
<p>Change in Profile of Homeless People</p>	<p>There is a lack of national-level data on the gender, age or nationality of social welfare clients. Local data and service-provider experience indicates an ageing of the homeless population and a continuing over-representation of men. The 2011 Census results reported a significant number of homeless children and a growing problem of family homelessness, although</p>

¹ Last updated Autumn 2012

	comparison with earlier data is not possible.
<p>National Strategy</p>	<p>National Strategy</p> <p>There is no national integrated homelessness strategy. Between 2008 and 2010, work on such a strategy was undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, upon the request of the Parliamentary Commission for Social Policy and the Family. Key NGO service providers were invited to provide input through a working group. In May 2008, the working group presented a proposal which was discussed at a conference hosted by the Ministry. Unfortunately, cooperation on the strategy broke down and in January 2009 a less ambitious document was presented by the Ministry, focusing on regulation of specific elements of homeless services and lacking strategic objectives to reduce homelessness over the longer term. Eventually, this less ambitious initiative has been shelved with the financial crisis as a justification.</p> <p>At the current time, Polish FEANTSA members are working on proposals for a homelessness strategy entitled “National Programme for Combating Homelessness 2014-2020”. This work is taking place in the framework of an ESF project 'Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services' (see below under 'Quality of Services'). The aim is to submit the proposal in November. 5 key priorities have been developed: needs diagnosis, prevention, intervention, inclusion and quality of services.</p> <p>Article 75 of the National Constitution obliges the public authorities to pursue a policy favouring the fulfilment of the housing needs of the citizens, and in particular, to combat homelessness and support social housing and the citizens' efforts to obtain accommodation. Homelessness is also mentioned in two important strategic Government documents. The first is the Social Welfare Strategy 2007-13, which includes the need to assess homelessness as well as to investment in social housing and sheltered housing stock. The second is the Municipal Strategy for Solving Social Problems which concerns municipal duties to provide shelter, food and clothes to deprived individuals (article 17, section 1 of the Social Welfare Act). The Social Welfare Act provides a legal definition of homelessness (article 6, section 8) and clearly states homelessness as a reason for benefitting from the social welfare services (art. 7, sect. 3). Moreover, the Social Welfare Act dictates the obligations of the different state levels.</p> <p>The following programmes are particularly important in framing homeless policy and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governmental Programme of Financial Support for Creation of Social Housing, Sheltered Housing, Overnight Shelters and Homeless Shelters ○ Programme Supporting Homeless People to Return to Society ○ A European Social Fund project implemented by NGOs in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. This systemic project called 'Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services' includes a stream on the 'Standardisation of the Support for Homeless People', including the introduction of municipal standards on leaving homelessness. <p>Governance</p> <p>According to article 23 of the Social Welfare Act, the minister responsible for the social security issues develops concepts of social welfare; defines the direction of development; commissions research and analyses in the area of social welfare. On the national level, there is no steering group dedicated exclusively to homelessness. However, in some regions of Poland there are local and regional bodies bringing together the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on homelessness. The General Governance structure is as follows: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is obliged to coordinate and organise the cooperation of public administrations and social service providers, including the non-</p>

	<p>governmental organisations, in the field of social security. The Provincial Marshals, through the Regional Social Policy Centre, supervise the subordinate social welfare organisational units, in particular in the area of the financial and administrative matters. The Governor's task is to oversee the execution of the tasks of the municipality, county and province, including the quality of the social welfare agencies and the quality of services, the standards of which are defined by the Minister responsible for the social security. The main shortcoming of the current governance model is that there is lack of cooperation between the ministries responsible for issues which are directly related to homelessness (social policy, housing, health, justice).</p>
<p>Targeted Prevention</p>	<p>Interventions to prevent homelessness are a small part of overall service delivery.</p> <p>New legislation was introduced in 2005 to prevent evictions to the street, a situation which was extremely common in the 1990s. Unless the court grants the tenant the right to accommodation in social housing, the bailiff has to suspend the eviction until the owner, tenant or municipality secures a temporary accommodation solution. If this falls to the municipality and they are not able to provide temporary accommodation within 6 months, or in cases of domestic violence or anti-social behaviour, the tenant can be housed in a night shelter or homeless hostel (as of 2011). FEANTSA members raise concerns that this legislation may actually serve to increase homelessness as municipalities are not resourced to provide temporary accommodation and are therefore obliged to push people into homelessness.</p> <p>Whilst early intervention is generally no well developed overall, some municipalities do implement preventive measures such as eviction prevention based on cooperation between social welfare services and the housing sector, as well as measures targeting debt.</p> <p>The link between institutional release and homelessness is only addressed to a limited extent the Social Welfare Act stipulates social support for people leaving prison that have difficulty adapting, as well as for children leaving care institutions. This includes support in obtaining adequate accommodation, including accommodation in sheltered housing.</p>
<p>Housing-Led Approaches</p>	<p>Homeless services are not generally housing-led in Poland.</p> <p>However, a new Regulation on Sheltered Housing was adopted in March 2012. This defines sheltered housing, the conditions of access as well as the technical standards for the units. A range of support can be provided to people in sheltered housing including social work and specialist counselling. Homeless people are not a specific target group but the regulation defines a range of categories of vulnerable people that need support for daily living. As the regulation is very new, it is difficult to assess how useful this form of provision will be in providing housing solutions for homeless people. There is a risk that, as with social housing, it will be difficult for homeless people to access.</p> <p>Two municipalities in Poland have developed plans to test the Housing First approach, targeting individuals who have not benefited from the traditional homeless support system and offering them immediate access to housing with support from a social worker. These programmes started in summer 2012 and first results should be available in August 2013.</p>

<p>Quality of Homeless Services</p>	<p>There has been rapid expansion of the homeless sector – both in terms of its extent and the range of services provided in recent years.</p> <p>A project is currently underway to develop quality standards for homeless services in the context of municipal 'Strategies for Addressing Social Issues'. It is an ESF-funded project entitled 'Creation and Improvement of Standards of Social Welfare and Integration Services'. The project is led by the Human Resources Development Centre, the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. A wide variety of stakeholders have been involved, including academics and service providers. The project represents a substantial step forward in terms of strategic planning and reflection about effective homeless services. The voluntary quality framework 'Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness' aims to improve the overall system in terms of its capacity to end and prevent homelessness by developing standards for services which can be applied in a statutory framework.</p> <p>The Regulation on funding for overnight shelters and homeless hostels contains a standard for new and refurbished services. As a minimum requirement, rooms in overnight shelters should have at least 5m² per person, up to 15 people per room, and 50 people per institution. Rooms in hostels should have a maximum of 5 people per room and up to 50 per institution. A softer standard has been prepared under the project 'Municipal Standard of Leaving Homelessness' (described above) which is more realistic for older institutions and states that overnight shelters should allow 3m² per person, up to 15 people per room and up to 80 people per institution. Hostels should allow at least 4m² per person, up to 5 persons per room, and 50 per institution. There are currently no countrywide standards for the number of staff for residential homeless services. The proposed standard under the voluntary quality framework described above is one staff member per 25 service users.</p>	
<p>Remarks on Research</p>	<p>No research has been commissioned in the framework of national homelessness policy. Some regional/local research is co-financed by local governments in the framework of local/regional policy making. NGOs and independent academic researchers also conduct various studies on homelessness in Poland. Some of the research fields explored so far include: a socio-demographic portrait of the homeless, the role of low-cost housing in social integration, quantitative evaluation of social and municipal housing conditions in the largest Polish cities, socio-institutional aspects of homelessness, migration and homelessness and others.</p>	
<p>Remarks on Budget Evolution</p>	<p>There is no consolidated budget dedicated to combating homelessness in Poland. Overall, there has been a steady increase in available municipal funding for shelter services in recent years (from €5,042,835 in 2006 to €8,557,511 in 2010).</p> <p>After the introduction, in 2004, of the possibility to deduct 1% of the personal income tax for NGOs operating services of public benefit, there has been a slight increase of the total amount of funds transferred to all organisations by the tax offices (from €85,851,000 in 2010 to €96,212,000 in 2011).</p> <p>A major challenge is the low and falling take-up of funds for new places in shelters and hostels in recent years due to the unattractive conditions of financing which deter NGOs. Grant values vary from 30-50% of the total investment cost.</p>	
<p>Remarks on Key Policy Developments</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Negative</p>
	<p>In 2011, the Ombudsman for Citizens' Rights proposed to undertake work to simplify</p>	<p>While temporary health insurance coverage exists, some homeless people still encounter</p>

	<p>procedures, including the creation of a legal basis and financing the medical care for those not covered by the health insurance, as well as shortening the waiting time of uninsured and homeless people needing to stay in curative care institutions and nursing homes by adjusting the admission procedures to the situation of these people.</p> <p>The subsistence benefit entitlement is dependent on the so-called income criterion specified by the Social Welfare Act. The criterion was raised from 477 PLN to 542 PLN per a single person and from 351 PLN to 456 PLN per person for families. Whilst the increase is a positive development, it should be noted that this hardly covers the ca. 20% inflation that has occurred since the last change in 2006.</p>	<p>difficulties in accessing the health services due to bureaucratic requirements and also due to the reluctance of the healthcare institutions to apply the relevant legislation.</p>
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