



ESPN – Flash report

2015/2

Pilot project “Housing First”

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Theme(s):	<i>Social Inclusion</i>
Title:	Pilot project "Housing First"
Category:	<i>Key developments in implementation</i>
Abstract:	The pilot project "housing first" started in October 2014 providing a stable home for 15 long-term homeless persons in a multi-problem situation. First impressions are positive; an evaluation will follow after two years. To make it successful in the long run, the government will have to intensify its efforts for more social housing at the bottom of the housing market.
Description:	<p><u>Policy context</u></p> <p>In recent years, housing costs and housing exclusion have been among the major challenges for Luxembourg's social inclusion policies. Housing cost support is the biggest item on the budget for financial support by the local social offices. The government mentions the issue in several National Social Reports. It appears also in the NRP 2014, and the planned minimum income scheme reform includes separate attention for housing costs. Also civil society stakeholders insist time and again on the housing problems of low income populations.</p> <p>Even though the quality of housing is good on average, 10% of people at risk of poverty live in a situation of severe material deprivation related to housing (STATEC, 2014). Moreover, a too great number of citizens are excluded from the housing market and live in sheltered housing (some 1350 persons), or even on the street (Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région, 2014).</p> <p>In 2012-2013, the Luxembourg government launched a national strategy against homelessness and housing exclusion embracing the lines of the "housing first" principle.</p> <p><u>Housing first principle</u></p> <p>An important step in the strategy has been the signature of a covenant with an NGO (<i>Comité National de Défense Sociale [CNDS]</i>) to start a pilot project based on the "housing first" principle, as it is promoted by FEANTSA. This principle consists of the following elements:</p>

	<p>1. Housing is a <i>basic right</i>: no need to go through several stages of integration for obtaining it.</p> <p>2. <i>Freedom of choice</i>: the client decides how to organise his/her house as well as the type and level of accompaniment.</p> <p>3. <i>No time limit</i>: The accompanying staff is committed to work with the client on his/her own pace.</p> <p>4. <i>Respect</i> of each client: no judgement of behaviour or past.</p> <p>5. <i>Risk reduction</i>: focus is on limiting damage linked to substance (ab)use, both for the client and for society.</p> <p>6. <i>Recovery</i> of client: focus is on client's well-being by creating/ supporting social relations, activities...</p> <p><u>Pilot project</u></p> <p>Crucial motivation for the project is the growing complexity of situations and problems for homeless persons, which makes it particularly difficult to take adequately care of them in the traditional social structures and institutions. Also, "housing first" experiments in different countries show a clear improvement of the costs-benefits ratio compared to more traditional approaches.</p> <p>Originally, the initiators of the project tried to support the target population to rent a house on the open market, but this attempt failed, due to lack of cooperation by house owners. The actual pilot project started in October 2014: 15 housing units were allocated to the pilot in a setting of some 50 units, owned by an NGO. The NGO hired 25 of these units in order to create a mix of different target groups. All 15 units were very quickly occupied and there are some 22 more requests. The accompanying staff consists of 2.5 full-time equivalent, subsidised by government and available in a flexible way from Monday to Friday between 07:00 and 21:00 hours. The staff can be reached by telephone out of these working hours.</p> <p>For the pilot period, the target population is limited to single persons in a multi-problem situation, having a long history of homelessness, being a regular resident, understanding at least one of the country's languages and having an income at least at the level of the minimum income. The rules for participation are limited to a minimum, i.e. to accept the housekeeping rules and a weekly visit of a social worker. Also, the participants have to contribute to the evaluation of the pilot. The accompaniment methodology is tailor-made and on demand, based on principles of empowerment. On top of the actual staff, many services are offered through the professional and institutional networks.</p>
Outlook &	In view of the importance of tackling housing exclusion in

Commentary:	<p>Luxembourg, this project is highly policy relevant. It represents also a step forward in the national strategy against homelessness. The evaluation will have to make clear whether or not the pilot represents a cost-benefit advantage compared to the traditional approaches. It will start in 2015 and be done by the organising NGO. It will consist of facts and figures related to the pilot, but also of individual interviews with each client every six months during two years. The questions will touch on the following issues: housing stability; health condition; social integration; quality of life and wellbeing; financial situation; professional situation; substance dependency; degree of autonomy in daily life.</p> <p>If the project proves to be successful, it will be important that government enables its extension. Also, continuous efforts will be needed to improve the availability and affordability of housing at the bottom of the (social) housing market. In this area there remains a lot of room for improvement.</p>
Further reading:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (2011). <i>Exclusion sociale liée au logement et au sans-abrisme. D'un état des lieux vers une stratégie nationale</i>. Luxembourg: Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. (http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/EtatLieuSansAbrisme.pdf) – Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (2013). <i>Stratégie nationale contre le sans-abrisme et l'exclusion liée au logement 2013-2020</i>. Luxembourg: Gouvernement du GDL. (http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/Solidarite/StrategieNationaleSans-abrismeExclusionLogement2013-2020.pdf) – Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région (2014). <i>Rapport d'activité 2013</i>. Luxembourg: Gouvernement du GDL – <i>Housing First for long-term homeless</i>. Published on Friday, 28 November, 2014 at 15:30 in Luxemburger Wort (newspaper): (http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/luxembourg-city-housing-first-for-long-term-homeless-547887380c88b46a8ce41ea3) – STATEC (2014). <i>Rapport travail et cohésion sociale</i>. Cahier Economique, nr. 117. Luxembourg: STATEC. – See also: http://www.cnds.lu/wunnen/ (under construction) – On housing first in Europe, see also the FEANTSA website: http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?page=liste_priorites&id_mot=11&lang=en
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