ISSN 1977-7973

European Commission

Peer Review
in Social Protection
and Social Inclusion

Housing First

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Belgium, 16-17 March 2016

Social Europe

This publication is supported by European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation «EaSI» 2014-2020 ".

The European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation «EaSI» 2014-2020 is a European-level financing instrument managed directly by the European Commission to contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, by providing financial support for the Union's objectives in terms of promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions.

For more information: *http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en.*

Housing First

Volker Busch-Geertsema

Association for Innovative Social Research and Social Planning (GISS)

Synthesis Report

European Commission

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Manuscript completed in May 2016

This publication has been prepared for the European Commission by

Further information on the Peer Reviews is available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en.

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (http://europa.eu).
Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016

ISBN 978-92-79-59124-2
ISSN 1977-7973
doi: 10.2767/300657

Table of contents

Executive Summary

The Peer Review, which took place in Brussels on 16–17 March 2016, discussed the results of Housing First Belgium (HFB), a national scheme to implement and test the Housing First approach. Housing First provides rapid access to permanent housing and intensive, multidimensional support to homeless people with complex needs without requiring them to be "housing ready" or to show sobriety, compliance with medication etc. The only requirements are to follow the normal residential tenancy laws and — in most cases — to accept regular home visits by service providers.

In a bottom-up process, the approach was tested in Belgium between September 2013 and June 2016 in the five largest Belgian cities — Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Charleroi, and Liège — and later extended to three additional medium-sized cities (Hasselt, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, and Namur). With the support of federal bodies and the National Lottery, funding was provided not only for the support teams but also for an evaluation of the schemes in the three Belgian regions involved, monitoring the people served by HFB in comparison with two control groups.

Hosted by the Federal Public Planning Services (PPS) Social Integration, the Peer Review brought together representatives of Wallonia, Flanders, and the Belgian Federal Government with governmental representatives and service providers of ten peer countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, together with two stakeholders: EUROCITIES and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA). A representative from the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion participated.

Key lessons of the Peer Review included:

- Housing First is an effective approach, with evidence-based measures, to ending homelessness for people with complex support needs. Promising experimental programmes following Housing First principles also exist for homeless people with lower support needs. Evaluations of HFB add to the evidence that this approach is effective in diverse European locations, different welfare regimes, and also under complex governance structures. In Belgium there are some encouraging signals that Housing First projects will continue to be funded and that the approach will be extended to the regions.
- While some flexibility will always be needed to adjust the approach to local conditions, it is important to follow the main principles of Housing First and preserve fidelity to the original concept. A "mind shift" is often needed to move away from traditional views of step-wise integration — according to which access to regular housing has to be "earned" first — and to give priority to the choices and preferences of service users. A Housing First Europe Guide and a "hub" (internet knowledge base), published by FEANTSA, will help to implement the approach elsewhere, but training and guidance at national level will also be required.
- Access to affordable, self-contained, and long-term housing is an essential precondition for implementation of Housing First. Political courage and creativity are needed to promote access to housing by: prioritising homeless people for social

housing; extending the public housing stock; and making better use of private rented housing for social purposes, for example through intermediate organisations. HFB provides encouraging examples for that. The great majority of homeless people prefer scattered housing in regular neighbourhoods to congregate housing with on-site support. But the debate about different types of congregate housing needs further differentiation.

- Housing First has proved to be a cost-efficient way of housing homeless people with complex needs. Further research is needed to establish the extent to which it also helps to reduce costs in other areas such as intensive healthcare or the criminal justice system. But it is already evident that it is much more effective than traditional services, and should be scaled up because of the positive improvements it brings to the lives of the most vulnerable homeless people.
- Scaling up Housing First beyond local pilots remains a challenging "next step" in many EU Member States. At European level it could be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds and by providing guidance for implementation. To reduce homelessness effectively Housing First projects need to be integrated into broader housing-led strategies, so as to provide quick access to housing and support as necessary to all homeless people and to improve the prevention of homelessness.

A. Policy context at European level

The place of fighting homelessness on the European agenda

While the primary responsibility for tackling homelessness lies with the EU Member States, a number of policy initiatives have been developed at EU level that support and complement their actions.[1] The EU can support measures by Member States, including providing funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which are available for improving housing outcomes and supporting the integration of homeless people.

The Commission set out guidance for EU Member States in the Social Investment Package (SIP) and the Commission Staff Working Document linked to it — *Confronting Homelessness in the European Union*[2] — on implementing integrated, housing-led, preventative homelessness policies. Specific EU measures on homelessness have been implemented as part of the SIP policy Roadmap. The Europe 2020 Strategy and the Social Open Method of Coordination (Social OMC) contribute to implementing efficient policies on combating poverty and social exclusion in Europe, including homelessness, and foster better monitoring of homelessness policies and the promotion of better governance and good practice. The preliminary outline of the European pillar for social rights initiative stresses the right to housing; and the Urban Agenda initiative sets out a new partnership with cities, designed to improve access to affordable housing through better regulation, funding, and knowledge. The Commission further addresses the multiple root causes of homelessness through various EU policies including EU regional-urban development, justice and human rights, education, energy, consumer protection, credit, health, and other relevant policies.

In the Social Protection Committee (SPC), the EU Member States, together with the European Commission, work towards improving social inclusion and protection in the EU through the Social OMC, a soft policy instrument that allows the EU to discuss important social themes. The SPC continues to examine and report on trends and policies on homelessness and the social aspects of housing across Europe.[3] National social reports submitted by the Member States also cover information on key policy reforms regarding homelessness and housing exclusion.[4] Homelessness has been the subject of many declarations, opinions, reports, and resolutions in the European Parliament and other EU institutions and bodies, such as the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.[5]

1 For an overview see European Commission (2013a).

2 European Commission (2013c).

3 European Union — Social Protection Committee (2015).

4 FEANTSA (2012).

5 See Declaration of the European Parliament on ending street homelessness, April 2008; Declaration of the European Parliament on an EU homelessness strategy, December 2010; Resolution of the European Parliament on an EU homelessness strategy B7-0475/2011; Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on homelessness, CESE 1592/2011; Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on combating homelessness, 2011/C 15/08; European Economic and Social Committee Opinion 2012/C 24/07; Committee of the Regions Opinion 2014/C 271/07; European Parliament Resolution on an EU homelessness strategy, P7_TA(2014)0043.

Thematic links to earlier policy debate and research

Previous research about homelessness at European level

During the first decade of this century several studies on data collection relating to homelessness in the EU, and advancing information systems about the phenomenon, were funded by the European Commission, such as the study on "Measurement of Homelessness at European Level" (2006–2007; Edgar *et al.*, 2007) and the "MPHASIS" project (Mutual Progress on Homelessness through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems, 2007–2009).[6] The interaction of welfare regimes and housing systems, with a particular focus on housing exclusion, was analysed in a "Study on Housing and Exclusion: Welfare Policies, Housing Provision and Labour Markets" (2009–2010; Stephens *et al.*, 2010). "Housing First Europe" (2011–2013; Busch-Geertsema, 2013, 2014) was a social-experimentation project financed by the PROGRESS fund testing the Housing First approach in five different European test sites and facilitating the exchange of information and experiences in five additional peer sites (for further details see below). A "Study on Mobility, Migration and Destitution" was conducted on behalf of the European Commission between 2012 and 2013, analysing the causes of destitution and homelessness among migrant populations (Regioplan, 2013). "Hope in Stations" (2010–2011, Kesselring *et al.*, 2013) and "Work in Stations" (2012–2013) were two projects, funded under the PROGRESS programme, focusing on support for homeless people in European train stations. On behalf of the European Commission a pan-European study on tenancy rights (TENLAW) was finalised in 2015; and a report entitled "Pilot project — Promoting protection of the right to housing — Homelessness prevention in the context of evictions", based on a study conducted in 2014–2015, was published in May 2016.[7] A Social Protection Committee/Indicators Subgroup thematic review on access to housing and housing exclusion took place in November 2015. An EU study examined cost-efficient housing policies in Flanders and the EU; and Eurofound is about to publish the results of its research into the impact of bad-quality housing. New initiatives include joint action with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with a view to building a comprehensive housing database and analysis of social policies for affordable housing and housing exclusion. An EU SILC data module on retrospective homelessness episodes is expected to be tested by 2018.

The European Observatory has published a series of small pieces of research into different aspects of homelessness, based on a questionnaire approach involving a number of national experts in selected EU Member States. The series is called "EOH Comparative Studies on Homelessness" and is available for free online (under www.feantsaresearch.org).

Previous Peer Reviews on homelessness

There have been seven Peer Reviews with a focus on homelessness in previous years:

- 2004: UK — The Rough Sleeping Strategy, England;
- 2005: Denmark — Preventing and Tackling Homelessness;
- 2006: Norway — National Strategy — Pathway to a Permanent Home;

6 http://www.trp.dundee.ac.uk/research/mphasis/.

7 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7892&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

- 2009: Austria — Counting the Homeless — Improving the Basis for Planning Assistance;
- 2010: Finland — The Finnish National Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness;
- 2010: Portugal — Building a Comprehensive and Participative Strategy on Homelessness;
- 2013: Denmark — Sustainable Ways of Preventing Homelessness.

Most relevant in the context of the Belgian Peer Review are the Peer Reviews in Finland (2010)[8] and in Denmark (2013),[9] because both reported on national strategies to reduce homelessness using the Housing First approach.

The Finnish Strategy placed special emphasis on long-term homelessness, and was aimed at the eradication of the phenomenon by 2015. During the first phase of the strategy (2008–2011, the phase covered by the Peer Review) a large amount of new apartments were constructed for the target group, partly by converting traditional shelters into apartment blocks with on-site support using the Housing First approach. In this way Finland became one of the few European countries using congregate housing for Housing First projects. But scattered housing was also used, and increasingly so in the second phase (see Pleace *et al.*, 2015).

The Danish Peer Review placed a specific focus on homelessness among young people. Lessons learned from this review were that: Housing First was more successful at tackling chronic homelessness than the "staircase" approach; evidence-based programmes help leverage political support by showing — through systematic monitoring and evaluation — how they reduce homelessness levels and related costs; the implementation of Housing First requires a sufficient stock of affordable housing and better coordination between policy makers at different levels, with the involvement of service providers; and finally, more attention needs to be given to prevention and holistic responses to youth homelessness.

The Housing First approach and the debate about it at European level

The Housing First approach has been developed in clear contrast to approaches requiring "treatment first" and/or moving homeless people through a series of stages (staircase system) before they are "housing ready". Housing First differs radically from these approaches, which have been criticised for being ineffective in ending homelessness for people with severe and complex needs, and for having unintentional negative effects (Ridgway and Zippel, 1990; Sahlin, 2005; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007).

Housing First, in contrast to more traditional approaches, seeks to move homeless people into permanent housing as quickly as possible, on the basis that housing is a fundamental right for all, and should not have to be "earned" by solving individual problems, changing behaviour etc. Support is provided to those homeless people who need it (so Housing First does not mean housing only): but sobriety and/or motivation to change are not requirements

8 For the synthesis report of this Peer Review see Busch-Geertsema (2011).

9 For the synthesis report of this Peer Review see Fitzpatrick (2014).

for getting access to permanent and self-contained housing, nor can a failure to comply with support services lead to eviction. Compliance with normal residential tenancy laws (and accepting regular home visits) are the only requirements. An essential premise within this approach is that social service interventions can be more effective when provided to people in their own home. Choice, and a feeling of security and stability regarding housing and support, are important elements of this alternative strategy.

The Jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, organised under the Belgian Presidency in 2010, discussed both the Housing First approach as a model for supporting homeless people with complex needs as well as broader strategies following the Housing First philosophy. It recommended the testing of the Housing First service model in European contexts; and "*given the history and specificity of the term 'Housing First'*", the Jury recommended the use of "'*housing-led' as a broader, differentiated concept encompassing approaches that aim to provide housing, with support as required, as the initial step in addressing all forms of homelessness*". Accordingly the Consensus Conference Jury called for a "*shift from using shelters and transitional accommodation as the predominant solution to homelessness towards 'housing led' approaches. This means increasing the capacity for both prevention and the provision of adequate floating support to people in their homes according to their needs.*" (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010: 14, 16).

In 2013 the results were published of a European Experimentation Project testing the Housing First approach in five European cities (Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow, and Lisbon) funded by the European Commission as "Housing First Europe".[10] In four of the five cities — those that were following the Housing First principles more closely than the fifth — housing retention rates at the end of the evaluation period turned out to be very high.

While it has been widely acknowledged that the vast majority of Housing First participants with complex needs show high housing retention rates (in most projects over 80%) there has been some debate about the more mixed results in terms of further social integration. A number of authors have argued that the outcomes of Housing First projects in relation to the dimensions of social inclusion and recovery — such as reduction of addiction, improvement of mental health, integration into employment or something meaningful to do, overcoming social isolation etc. — were "*underwhelming*".[11]

Given the complex needs of most of the users of Housing First services, it might be unrealistic to expect any quick and widespread progress in respect of their further social inclusion.[12] Changes in quality of life might need much more time than that covered by usual evaluations of two or three years maximum, and for some people "relative integration" might be a more realistic goal. As Johnsen and Teixeira (2012: 190) note,

10 See the final report of this project Busch-Geertsema (2013) and an article summarising the results (Busch-Geertsema, 2014). The local evaluation reports which formed the basis of the European report are available at http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/Pdf/Housing_First_Europe_reports_gesamt.pdf.

11 McNaughton and Atherton (2011); see also Pleace (2011) and Johnson *et al.* (2012).

12 Busch-Geertsema (2005); Johnsen and Teixeira (2012).

"*Housing First proponents regard stable housing to be a platform from which the (often long and complex) process of recovery from mental illness, substance misuse and/or social isolation might begin (Tsemberis, 2010b; Henwood et al., 2011), not as a remedy to any or all of these problems per se*".

On the other hand a number of Housing First project evaluations report positive effects on health, well-being, and social integration; not for all participants, but for a majority of them.[13] From the Housing First Europe project it was reported that 70% of Housing First service users in Amsterdam had reduced their drug use, while 89% told interviewers about improvements in their quality of life and 70% about improvements in mental health. In the Housing First project of Turning Point Scotland in Glasgow, drug/alcohol use had stabilised or reduced in most cases. In the *Casas Primeiro* service in Lisbon, around 80% of the participants reported a positive impact on their stress levels, nutrition, sleeping habits, and physical and mental health. Although the evaluation in Denmark showed a more mixed picture, 32% of the service users were assessed by social workers to have reduced their use of alcohol, while 25% reported improved mental health and 28% reported improved physical health.[14] Improvements in physical and mental health for some, but not all, participants were also self-reported from England, Ireland, and Spain; the evaluation in France showed a significant reduction in stays in hospital for Housing First tenants after one year.[15]

Some Housing First projects report improvements in social integration. For example, among participants in the Casa Primeiro Housing First project in Lisbon, almost half stated that they had met people at a restaurant or coffee shop, 71% felt at home in the neighbourhood, and more than half reported a sense of belonging to their community (Ornelas, 2013: 41-43). In the evaluation of nine Housing First projects in England, the proportion of participants being in contact with their family almost doubled after receiving Housing First services; and substantially more participants felt fairly strongly or strongly connected to their neighbourhood after moving into their new homes.[16] However, social contacts and family contacts were the items that had the lowest scores in a list of possible improvements of quality of life in the case of the Discuss Housing First project in Amsterdam (Wewerinke *et al.*, 2013: 22).

Positive effects from Housing First projects are often attributed to what Padgett (2007) and others have referred to as "*ontological security*": housing provides the basis for constancy, daily routines, privacy, and identity construction. As Padgett (ibid: 1934) also notes: "*Having a 'home' may not guarantee recovery in the future, but it does afford a stable platform for re-creating a less stigmatised, normalised life in the present*".

The results were generally less positive in the areas of engagement in paid employment and managing financial problems. The vast majority of Housing First participants in most European projects remained unemployed and poor, having to cope with very restricted resources. There are structural reasons for this: the barriers to employment for formerly

13 For a summary see Pleace and Quilgars (2013).

14 Busch-Geertsema (2012).

15 In the Housing First Europe project all evaluators were asked to report about any differences regarding the gender of service users, but none of them could report any firm results, given the relatively low number of women participating (Busch-Geertsema, 2013: 70). Gender- and age-specific requirements are still an issue for further research and consideration.

16 Bretherton and Pleace (2015: 42 and 44).

long-term homeless people with complex problems are often significant, and subsistence benefit schemes mostly provide only a rather meagre basis for living.

Another issue for debate is the preference by the pioneers of Housing First for scattered housing and their rejection of congregate housing with on-site support as a suitable type of accommodation, with the latter regarded as not providing the same sense of normality as a flat in a regular house with a mix of neighbours. Sam Tsemberis (2010a: 22) recommended that schemes should "*limit leases to 20% of the units in any one building*" and stated: "*In this model, clients don't move into a ready-made unit of a housing programme — they move into their own apartments in the neighbourhood of their choice. Clients are quick to recognise and appreciate the enormous difference between these two approaches, and they become immediately invested in keeping their apartments and turning them into their homes*." In the Housing First project in Copenhagen it was possible to test both options (congregate and scattered housing), and there was a clear preference by most participants for the latter. The European report concluded "*The results from Copenhagen suggest that congregate housing should be reserved for those few persons who do either display a strong wish to live in such an environment or have not succeeded to live in scattered housing with intensive Housing First support*." (Busch-Geertsema, 2013: 8).

In Finland there was a clear reason for building a number of apartments in congregate housing when implementing the National Homelessness Strategy. The old shelters were to be abolished and literally thousands of new flats were needed for rehousing long-term homeless people in a relatively short time. Consequently it was logical to convert the shelters into apartment houses for homeless people. However, the Finnish Peer Review mentioned some of the risks involved if large buildings were to be exclusively used for homeless people: "*disadvantages, including but not limited to: segregation from a normal neighbourhood, stigmatisation of their address, extremely high concentration of households with severe problems, probability of conflicts arising from this concentration, special and costly security regulations, and restrictions on tenant's freedom and autonomy*" (Busch-Geertsema, 2011: 33). There was a risk that what appeared to be solutions at present would become the problems of the near future. Similar risks are theorised in a critical reflection on the approach of the "Common Ground" model in Australia, which also uses congregate housing with on-site support, but with a mix of formerly homeless and non-homeless tenants (Parsell *et al.*, 2014). Clapham (2015: 217), writing about the variety of types of supported housing, also criticises the congregate models with support on site as contrary to a regular home.

However, positive results were also reported from the Finnish experience of congregate housing (Pleace *et al.*, 2015) and a more differentiated debate about the acceptable size of congregate housing for formerly homeless people is needed. Evaluations in Germany show that projects of 12 or 16 housing units exclusively used for permanent housing of formerly homeless people in regular apartments have not displayed any of the negative consequences described above (Busch-Geertsema 2002; Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2016). And there are also alternatives that combine the offer of support, and a place for meetings and common activities nearby (for people feeling lonely and isolated in scattered flats), with the individuality of scattered apartments, such as the core and cluster model (see Clapham, 2015).

Another issue for debate is the risk that, with the growing popularity of the Housing First approach, many existing services may simply use the label and fail to implement the basic principles underlying the approach. This is the case, for example, with projects that use time-limited contracts and transitional housing; provide time-limited services; make preparation in a staircase-like system (or "housing readiness") a condition for access; require abstinence from their participants; or combine housing and support (so that people have to leave when they do not accept the support provided or when the funding of support has run out).[17] It is also the case for approaches that severely restrict choice or provide housing with very limited or no individual support available. To prevent "window dressing" and a drift away from the original model (resulting in a lessening of its effectiveness by diluting or distorting it) several authors have called for fidelity assessments, and the pioneers of Pathways to Housing in New York have even published a "Pathways Housing First Fidelity Scale".[18] This is not an easy debate because it is fairly clear that when transferring a well functioning model from one local or national context to another, adaption to the new context is necessary (Keller *et al.*, 2013; Johnson *et al.*, 2012). Of the five projects tested in the framework of Housing First Europe, none was an exact replica of the Pathways to Housing model in New York. In some ways the European projects could even be said to be more advanced in relation to some critical aspects of the Housing First approach. Thus, a number of European Housing First projects use direct tenancy contracts instead of subcontracts where the main contractor is a service provider. Furthermore, in a number of European projects the weekly visit is not a strict condition as it is in the original model (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). Social housing is more often used than in the US, because in a number of European countries it is less stigmatised and better accessible than elsewhere. Although there is a consensus that the support on offer has to be rather intensive, there are questions about the need to have multidisciplinary teams, if for example psychiatric services are well developed and cooperation is smooth and easy in case of need. So fidelity to the key principles is important, but adjustments are necessary and may not reduce the effectiveness of the model (see also Greenwood *et al.*, 2013; Bretherton and Pleace, 2015: 65 ff).

Some authors emphasise that Housing First is an approach for a small group of chronic homeless people with particularly high support needs and can be integrated into the existing range of services as "part of the menu"; whereas others argue that Housing First requires a change of paradigm that is also relevant to other homeless groups, departing from staircase systems and provision that primarily focuses on emergency measures. As one report states: "*It would be useful to test and evaluate the effectiveness of services following the same principles for people with less severe needs and for strategies implementing the Housing First philosophy in broader 'housing led' strategies, and in strategies promoting de-institutionalisation on a broader level by combining ordinary housing with support.*" (Busch-Geertsema, 2013: 89).

Housing First schemes and other types of supportive housing have also been criticised as part of an agenda of "advanced liberalism" using "responsabilisation" (Hansen Löfstrand and Juhila, 2012) in a paternalistic way to ask for a change of behaviour, and sanctioning "bad behaviour" ultimately by a reduction of choice. In response to such criticism a recent article argues convincingly that "*supportive housing is positioned as a significant intervention to not only house disadvantaged groups, but rather as an optimistic mechanism to directly*

17 For further examples see Pleace (2011): 118.

18 https://pathwaystohousing.org/research/pathways-housing-first-fidelity-scale-individuals-psychiatric-disabilities; see also Stefancic et al (2013).

improve disadvantaged people's lives. (..) When coupled with long-term housing, a weak form of paternalist welfare for people who have experienced chronic homelessness can be justified." (Parsell and Marston, 2016). Recent critical articles on Housing First also question existing parallel attempts to "end chronic homelessness" by Housing First projects and to deteriorate structural conditions for those who do not fit this category of the chronic homeless, but constitute the majority of homeless people (Katz *et al.*, 2016; Baker and Evans, 2016).

Last but not least there is a debate on the costs of the Housing First approach. It must be emphasised that Housing First is not a low-cost service. In the US the implementation of Housing First was greatly facilitated by arguing that chronic homelessness and standard approaches to its treatment imply far higher costs, especially when those of health services and the criminal justice system are taken into account. So Housing First was praised as a service that would save a lot of money. In recent years the evidence base has become more differentiated and has shown that Housing First does not always save money, especially when the homeless people being supported are not those whose needs are highest and who make the greatest use of external services. However, it has also been argued that: "*there are alternative reasons to look at Housing First and one of these is the case for regarding Housing First as a cost effective service model, rather than necessarily being a cost saving model. Some American research has argued that while housing-led approaches to reducing homelessness like Housing First may not, in overall terms, save very much (or any) money, their greater effectiveness in ending homelessness means there is a powerful case for using them. Homelessness is a situation of unique distress and if it is prolonged or repeated, the potential for damage that it can cause an individual is very great. (..) While there are reasons to explore costs and cost savings, the case for Housing First and other homelessness services is always ultimately a moral one, about being a society that does not tolerate, often very vulnerable people, experiencing homelessness.*" (Bretherton and Pleace, 2015: 61).

A recent literature review in the European Journal of Homelessness listed 184 publications about Housing First between 1990 and 2014 (Raitakari and Juhila, 2015). Since then a substantial number of publications have been added, especially with the very positive results of the large Canadian programme becoming widely available (see for example: Goering *et al.*, 2014 and Aubry *et al.*, 2015).

B. Host country policy — Housing First Belgium

Traditionally service provision for homeless people in Belgium — as in many other countries — has been dominated by the staircase system and emergency provision with seasonal extra accommodation in winter shelters. Access to housing has been a serious problem for many homeless people, especially in larger cities with tight housing markets. The social housing sector is relatively small in Belgium and specific barriers to access for homeless people often apply. Many of the most vulnerable homeless people use emergency services over and over again, never succeeding in being rehoused by the traditional system. This led to an initiative by several local services to test the Housing First approach — providing immediate access to regular housing without intermediate steps, but with intensive support for homeless people with addiction and mental health problems.

National support was requested and in September 2013 Housing First Belgium (HFB) was launched in five cities — Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Charleroi, and Liège — employing a "bottom-up" approach. This allowed each team to develop its own methods depending on the team's expertise. Most teams were composed of private and public institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The common features of HFB were that each team: i) targeted similar beneficiaries, i.e. chronic homeless people with specific needs; ii) adopted a multi-level approach; iii) followed the Housing First philosophy; iv) used an evaluation team to collect data on the types and level of social support rehoused people received, their housing retention, and their health.

HFB was supported by the responsible Secretary of State, the Federal Public Service for Social Integration, and the National Lottery (providing the necessary funding). In the first two years an annual subsidy of 860,000 Euros covered the costs of six support teams, three evaluators, and a general coordinator. Funding was extended to 1.4 million Euros for the third year (until June 2016) in order to include three additional medium-sized cities, Hasselt, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, and Namur. No extra funding was provided for the housing component of the programme.

HFB has been monitored for 24 months by three evaluators (one per region) under the supervision of the general coordinator. The team compared the evolution of the experimental group of HFE service recipients (N=144)[19] with two control groups: homeless people with conventional support (N=137) and formerly homeless people (N=100) who have been accommodated via the conventional staircase system without housing support.

The evaluation showed that the group receiving Housing First services had a much greater lifetime-prevalence of homelessness than the two other groups. Obviously the health of the Housing First group was extremely fragile:

- 11% had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, compared with 5% in the other two groups;
- 58% had addiction problems, compared with 37% in the second control group — though fewer than the 66% of the first (homeless) control group;

19 The evaluation also includes tenants' data from another intervention in several cities, so that together 11 implementations have been covered by the experiment in 2016.

- 30% had a dual diagnosis, compared with 20% in the second control group and 30% in the homeless group.

The data showed that the traditional system serves predominantly those with shorter periods of homelessness and with less severe health problems, so chronic homeless people were not well served by the traditional system. Housing retention among the Housing First group after one year was as high as 93%, but the control group of people housed through the traditional system also showed a high housing retention rate of 88%. Only 36% of those who were homeless and served by the traditional system at the start of the test phase had been housed after one year: that is to say, the staircase system risks prolonging the time spent in homelessness. Although the health status of the homeless control group deteriorated, self-reported positive improvements were documented for the Housing First group in self-esteem, empowerment, health, and decreased attendance at hospitals.

The difficulties of getting access to housing with affordable rents boosted the creativity of HFB teams. A variety of measures was tested, including: the "temporary occupation of social housing with an agreement ensuring the move to adequate housing and a conventional rent"; cooperation with private investors who let a renovated building to a social rental agency for HFB use; and the use of "housing detectors" or "housing catchers" who constantly searched for affordable housing and acted as points of contact for landlords willing to house homeless people within the HFB framework.

In one of the HFB projects special emphasis was placed on job placement of HFB service users following a similar philosophy to Housing First in the area of employment (getting people quickly in a regular job and supporting them to keep it).

Responsibilities for tackling homelessness in Belgium are scattered across different levels of government. National government has developed Federal Plans against Poverty (a third Plan was under construction at the time of the Peer Review) and has provided extra funding for specific projects (such as HFB) and emergency situations (such as winter shelters). However, the Belgian regions have strong autonomous powers, are responsible for housing policies, and are also the main bodies — together with the municipalities — when it comes to providing follow-up funding for existing and new Housing First projects once the test phase has ended. In addition to the vertical division of power there is also a relevant horizontal one, between social departments, housing departments, and those responsible for public health and urban development. And finally different stakeholders (NGOs, regional and local state organisations etc.) have to be involved in the decision-making process. In a Cooperation Agreement on Homelessness, the different government levels agreed in May 2014 to coordinate and harmonise their policies to prevent and fight against homelessness and the lack of accommodation. At the time of the Peer Review it was still unclear if the Cooperation Agreement would be a sufficient basis for continuing the support for existing Housing First projects at regional level, funding the start of additional projects, and implementing a broader housing-led strategy to reduce homelessness by improving the prevention of homelessness and access to housing for those who have become homeless already. Statements by regional authorities signalled that willingness exists to subsidise Housing First projects as "part of the menu" alongside more traditional support measures such as night shelters, reception centres, and winter shelters. At federal level a mission was expressed "to develop a reform policy for the coming years to gradually replace the 'management of crisis' as the default operating mode, with durable and stable solutions based on a 'housing led' approach".

C. Policies and experiences in peer countries and stakeholder contributions

Ten peer countries were involved in this Peer Review (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, and Spain). All of these countries have in common the fact that one or more Housing First pilot projects have been tested already on their territories. In Finland and Denmark, national homelessness strategies and large-scale national action programmes have been heavily based on Housing First principles. In France a pilot programme called "Un Chez-Soi d'abord" was implemented in four cities (Lille, Marseille, Paris, and Toulouse) and over 700 homeless people have been involved in a large-scale evaluation, including more than 350 homeless people with severe mental illness and addiction, housed and supported following the Housing First principles of Pathways to Housing in New York. Evaluations in all three countries have shown largely positive results and high retention rates for those supported in Housing First projects.

In the Netherlands about 20 Housing First projects have been implemented at the time of the Peer Review. Italy has been experimenting with the approach in 10 regions and 20 municipalities within the "Housing First Italy" network. In Norway 12 municipalities started a Housing First project in 2014.

In Spain the approach has been tested with government support in a multi-site "Habitat" project by the organisation RAIS in three Spanish cities (Madrid, Barcelona, and Malaga) while the city of Barcelona has commissioned another pilot test. In Austria Housing First has been tested in Vienna and Salzburg, and in Luxembourg two Housing First pilots are under way.

While all representatives of those countries listed above were rather positive about the experiences of the Housing First approach, the Hungarian comments paper was perhaps the most reticent in this respect, stating that the "*conventional and mainly institutional concept*" of services for homeless people in a "*well-functioning system*" (..) "*makes it rather rigid and therefore the innovative idea of Housing First is more difficult to be established in a systemic way*" (Comments paper — Hungary: 5).

FEANTSA provided (in its comment paper: 1) a useful classification of EU member states "*according to the level of progress towards Housing First as public policy intervention:*

- *As important public policy intervention (FI, DK)*
- *As large national experiments which are promoted and funded by the government and would normally be brought to scale and turned into public policy in due time (top-down)(BE, FR, LU, IT)*
- *As scattered local experiments, which are captured in/contribute to a common dynamic and mobilise serious political/government support (ES, IE)*
- *As local experiments, which exist independently from each other and which have not yet created a common dynamic or mobilised serious political support. (HU, SE, UK, AT)*

- *As isolate projects, which are often led by individuals on their own initiative in spite of little public support/interest available. (PL, DE, HU, CZ, SI, SK).“*

But FEANTSA, as well as EUROCITIES and the majority of the participant country representatives, emphasised that the staircase approach aimed at making people “*housing ready*” before they (re-)enter regular housing was still predominant in most countries, and that the number of places in Housing First projects was usually very small compared with the large number of beds available through traditional provision for homeless people.

Among the challenges pointed out in the comments papers for the Peer Review, finding suitable and affordable housing was the key obstacle most frequently mentioned. Therefore participants were also particularly interested in methods to overcome this obstacle. Other challenges referred to by many commentators included: social isolation, loneliness, and the lack of something meaningful to do for formerly homeless people after rehousing; and unstable and time-limited funding for an approach that was based on the principle of providing individual support for as long as it was needed. In several countries it was pointed out that existing Housing First projects risked remaining marginal pilots without a chance of scaling up the approach at national level. Existing resistance by various stakeholders against the approach was mentioned several times as well as the need for a fundamental “mind shift” among those working with homeless people with complex support needs. Improvements in knowledge and training were seen as necessary, for example in Spain and in the Netherlands.

National comment papers also offered insights into the variety of ways in which the approach could be implemented in different local contexts. For some of the examples mentioned, questions of fidelity could be raised. Is it a feasible strategy to convert one floor of an existing shelter into “Housing First apartments”? Can we still speak of a Housing First approach when service users have to share an apartment and may not stay there when their support needs have diminished? Is it legitimate to start a Housing First project when financing is only secured for two or three years maximum? What is an acceptable waiting time for housing in a Housing First project?

The following elements of the Belgian Housing First practice were pointed out as being of potential learning value by the participants:

- The evaluation with two comparison groups
- The bottom-up process with agreed Housing First standards
- Creativity in getting access to housing (housing detectors, use of vacant housing etc.)
- Attempts to promote integration into paid employment
- Governance issues for scaling-up at national level
- Ways of overcoming cultural resistance and convincing policy makers
- Role of public health

D. Main issues discussed during the meeting

The Peer Review meeting gathered a large number of participants: in addition to country representatives, stakeholders, and representatives of the European Commission, a substantial number of participants of the host country took part, representing different levels of government as well as state organisations, service providers, and NGOs involved in the implementation of HFB. Presentations were given not only about the HFB programme and first evaluation results but also on the Belgian policy context and some specific elements of HFB.

A number of key themes were discussed at the Peer Review meeting and may be summarised as follows:

The bottom-up approach

There were some questions as to how a bottom-up approach could be consolidated while at the same time keeping fidelity to the main principles of the Housing First approach. Some speakers mentioned a high variety of projects included in HFB and wondered what type of Housing First will continue to receive funding. A need for qualifications and training of personnel was mentioned in this context for other countries as well.

Fidelity to the Housing First concept

On the one hand, there was a consensus that enough flexibility is needed to adjust the Housing First concept to national, regional, and local conditions. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) with a multi-disciplinary team including psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses is less often used than in the US pioneer model in Europe, where Intensive Case Management (ICM) is a more common type of service provision. Peer experts are less frequent in European Housing First projects. Compared with the US, social rented housing plays a more prominent role in Europe. In some European countries Housing First is also used for people with less complex needs etc.

On the other hand, there is a tendency for "window dressing" of services that call themselves "Housing First", but lack important ingredients of the original approach (such as the harm reduction approach, the availability of individual support for as long as it is needed, or the provision of long-term self-contained housing). The participants at the Peer Review meeting therefore also agreed that fidelity to the key principles of Housing First is important. The eight key principles listed in the upcoming Housing First Guide of FEANTSA[20] are very similar to those mentioned in the American Housing First manual by Sam Tsemberis (2010a).[21] One important principle in the latter (scattered-site housing and independent apartments)

20 The "European" principles proposed in the FEANTSA Guide are: "(1) Housing is a human right, (2) Choice and control for service users, (3) Separation of housing and treatment, (4) Recovery orientation, (5) Harm reduction, (6) Active engagement without coercion, (7) Person-centred planning, and (8) Flexible support that is available for as long as required". See FEANTSA, comments paper: 3.

21"(1) Housing as a basic human right, (2) Respect, warmth and compassion for all clients, (3) A commitment to working with clients for as long as they need, (4) Scattered-site housing and independent apartments, (5) Separation of housing and services, (6) Consumer choice and self-determination, (7) A recovery orientation, and (8) Harm reduction". See Tsemberis, 2010a: 18.

is not included in the FEANTSA guide: nevertheless in most European Housing First projects scattered-site housing is the preferred and predominant option.

Scattered-site versus congregate housing

A number of country participants emphasised that the majority of homeless people preferred scattered-site housing. There is evidence available from several countries that this is the preferred option. When congregate housing is offered in Housing First projects it is often not based on homeless people's preferences but is a result of structural barriers in the housing market and the need for a compromise to ensure quick access to permanent housing.

However, it was also acknowledged that a minority of people may prefer congregate housing with support on site because they have difficulties to "control the door" against unwanted former peer group members or are afraid of social isolation if they cannot get familiar with anybody in their neighbourhood. Several speakers agreed that there are large differences between different types of congregate housing. Housing several homeless people in a relatively small number of self-contained apartments in one building in a mixed neighbourhood might be entirely different from a large building with more than 50 or even 100 apartments exclusively reserved for this target group.

Access to housing

Access to housing was a much debated theme during the Peer Review meeting. The FEANTSA representative deplored the fact that a lack of housing is sometimes used as an argument against scaling up Housing First, so delaying the process considerably. But there were regions with shrinking populations and a lot of vacant housing, and it was often due to a lack of courage and political will that homeless people did not get priority access to existing social housing. Others argued that prioritisation of homeless people could not solve the problem of an overall lack of social housing, and that there was an urgent need to increase the stock of affordable housing — all the more so as the large inflow of asylum-seekers after the recent humanitarian crisis, equally searching for housing, has added to the demand.

As contributions from several countries made clear, most private landlords (and many providers of social housing as well) were only prepared to let to homeless people if potential financial risks were covered and if they have a contract ensuring that they could intervene if trouble arose during the tenancy. Intermediate agencies such as social rental agencies, but also the "housing catchers", were responses to these requirements. Examples from HFB included an agency that had managed to persuade a private investor to let an entire freshly renovated building to them, which was then sublet individually to HFB services users. In other HFB projects the housing catchers were working intensively to find any suitable housing, trying to counter negative stereotypes of homeless people as potentially "risky tenants" and offering to act as contact points for any problems that might arise. A large number of individual contacts had been needed in order to achieve a small number of successes, but nevertheless progress had been possible.

Statistics relating to HFB showed that it was obviously easier to find private rented housing for those who went through the traditional system, and that HFB service users had been

housed in public housing to a greater extent: but they also showed that rents in public housing were considerably lower, and long-term contracts much more common, than in private rented housing or with social rental agencies. In some countries high rents and low tenant security in the private rented sector have made it almost impossible to use it for Housing First projects. In others the large amount of vacant housing was mentioned as an important potential source for such projects.

"Housing First. What's second?": Integration into employment and further social integration

While there was a consensus among participants at the meeting that initiatives to overcome social isolation and to find something meaningful to do are very important second steps after rehousing homeless people with complex needs, the extent to which regular paid employment could play a role was more controversial. Some participants emphasised that social activation programmes with cooking workshops and other occupational activities were useful measures to reduce boredom and loneliness, and could facilitate first steps to getting more skills and training for people far from the labour market. Others argued that service users want to improve their financial situation and do "real work". It is obvious that what is feasible will depend to a large extent on the severity of support needs and the health condition and educational level of individual service users, as well as on existing barriers in the labour market. But it is also obvious that creativity and successful schemes in this area are badly needed, given the mixed outcomes of Housing First projects in this respect.

Prevention

Many countries nowadays see preventative investments as the best way to reduce homelessness. In addition to providing efficient primary prevention measures to reduce the risk of homelessness among the general population (for example, through welfare and housing policy measures), it was also crucial to put in place secondary prevention measures for people at higher, direct risk of homelessness (such as housing advice, settling debts, assumption of rent arrears, and other similar measures). Housing First principles and similar services could also play a role in preventing homelessness among tenants with complex support needs.

Cost savings and cost efficiency

Comparing the costs of Housing First projects with the costs of homelessness arising in other sectors (criminal justice, health, emergency measures) is often a difficult exercise, and Housing First does not produce potential savings in all circumstances. However, in Denmark and France such cost comparisons have indicated a financial argument in favour of Housing First. So far, most cost comparisons have been undertaken outside the EU (in the US, Canada, and Australia), so it would be helpful to have some robust cost studies in the EU as well. But it has to be taken in account that providing support for as long as it is needed may result in high costs per person for a proportion of service users, and there are indications from overseas that — especially for those with less severe needs and a less service-intensive past — Housing First might not create any savings at all.

In some countries (including the Netherlands and France) it is possible to argue that a reduction in hospital stays justifies transferring money from the healthcare budget to finance Housing First projects (using the evidence available that hospital stays have diminished for Housing First service users). However, in a number of countries the savings and the investment needs arise at different levels of government, so it is much more difficult to use the savings in one area for increasing investment in another. This also applies to prevention measures: it may be useful to organise prevention services with direct link to the provision of temporary and emergency accommodation, so that the financial effects of prevention (leading to decreased need for such accommodation) can be felt and used directly.

It was emphasised several times during the meeting that it would be much wiser to argue for the cost-efficiency of the Housing First approach than for potential savings: that is, with the same amount of money much better results can be achieved than under the traditional system. Participants also pointed out that the financial argument should never be the exclusive argument in favour of Housing First.

Scaling up Housing First and housing-led strategies

The need to move on from isolated and time-limited pilot projects towards establishing the Housing First approach as an effective method to end homelessness for homeless people with complex needs was emphasised several times during the meeting. In Belgium — as elsewhere in Europe — it was still a challenge to convince regional and local authorities of the effectiveness of the approach, and of the need to think differently about measures required for the most vulnerable homeless people. The positive impact of HFB has to be demonstrated and the approach promoted as an evidence-based measure in Belgium as well as in other EU countries. In order to "scale up" the approach coordination is needed at national level but also at regional and local level between different departments (housing, health, social affairs).

Scaling up the Housing First approach should not be misunderstood as solving homelessness in general, as Housing First is primarily targeted at a specific group with complex support needs. A considerable proportion of homeless people (which may well vary from country to country) have less severe needs and could directly profit from broader housing-led policies aimed at providing quick access to housing for all homeless people (with floating support where needed) and improved prevention systems. However very similar principles to those followed for Housing First projects may also be applied for people with less severe support needs.

Several speakers welcomed the upcoming European manual and a Housing First Europe Hub (information base on the internet) announced by FEANTSA.

E. Conclusions and lessons learned

The Belgian Peer Review has brought together almost all EU countries where the Housing First approach has been tested and implemented on a significant scale. We may already speak about a European Housing First movement. It therefore allowed fruitful discussions without the need to explain why Housing First makes sense and without a lengthy debate over the basic approach. However, the need for further explanation of the principles of Housing First, and how to implement the approach in different local contexts, still remains and it is therefore particularly helpful that a European Housing First manual and a "Housing First Europe Hub" has been prepared and made available by FEANTSA.

The Belgian pilot was useful for testing the conditions for implementing Housing First in different localities in Belgium. The majority of Peer Review participants considered that national pilots were still necessary: but with more guidance at EU level, the time spans for testing the approach before scaling it up might be shortened. One of the results of HFB has been that Housing First works even under very complicated conditions with different levels of government and complex governance issues. And at the time of the Peer Review there were encouraging signals that existing projects were to be continued and that the approach would be implemented in other Belgian cities as well.

The Housing First approach cannot be implemented without quick access to regular self-contained housing. Housing-led strategies are needed in order to reduce homelessness on a broader scale (not only for homeless people with complex needs). Meanwhile a lot of energy, creativity, and political courage will be required to improve access to existing housing for homeless people by: giving them priority in the allocation of social housing; making best use of the private rented sector; bringing vacant housing into use; renovating bad-quality buildings; activating social investment; and so on. Social rental agencies and other intermediate organisations will play an important role in this process.

Scattered-site housing in a regular neighbourhood is a preferred option for the majority of homeless people, but congregate housing and "project based Housing First" may have a role for a minority who wish to live like that or who have failed several times in scattered housing with adequate support. The merits of the two different ways of organising housing for implementing Housing First need more differentiation, by reference to their size and their specific settings. Obviously a house in a regular neighbourhood with 16 to 20 self-contained apartments reserved exclusively for formerly homeless people may be much less stigmatised and less at risk of exclusionary tendencies than buildings with more than 100 units, concierges, large communal facilities, and a high degree of supervision and control of the users.

Obviously there is also a need for further analysis of the right type of services for specific groups. Young people were mentioned fairly frequently at the Peer Review meeting. The specific needs of homeless women should also be discussed.

In order to "scale up" the Housing First approach beyond isolated small projects while still keeping it cost effective, a good system of needs assessment and of financing adequate services is required, in order to ensure that those who need it get adequate support for as long as required, but not for longer and not at a higher intensity than needed.

In the discussions it was repeatedly emphasised that support is also needed for measures designed to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. For people with more complex needs, very similar services to those used in Housing First (ACT, ICM) are required and could be very effective.

Housing First is not a low-cost service. It is focused on homeless people with complex needs and severe health problems. Many calculations show that it may create considerable savings in the health sector. It is therefore important to include health services in financing Housing First if possible. But this may not be possible in all jurisdictions, and responsibility for investments to implement Housing First often resides at a different level to the one where the savings may be realised. In any case it is important to emphasise the cost effectiveness of the approach rather than promising large savings.

Housing First implies a "mind shift". There exists a need for manuals and training for those who want to implement the approach and want an alternative to traditional thinking. It remains a challenge to eradicate the idea that people have to "earn" access to housing by getting "housing ready" first, reaching abstinence, undergoing therapy, showing compliance with medication etc. As stated in many comment papers and reinforced during the meeting, it should be kept in mind that the staircase approach is still dominant in most EU member states

Housing First service users often feel the need to cut ties with friends formerly made while they were homeless; if they don't, they risk losing "control over their door" and being unable to sustain their tenancy. The need to have something meaningful to do and to overcome social isolation and boredom has been evident in various Housing First evaluations. Placing those people with the ability to work in paid employment and helping them to keep a job (individual job placement/coaching) is of importance, but it also has to be acknowledged that this is not a feasible strategy for all Housing First service users. Obviously more innovation is required in this field.

This Peer Review on Housing First Belgium (HFB) related to several EU policy tools: the Social Investment Package (SIP), the use of Structural Funds, and the new EU pillar for social rights initiative were mentioned most often during the review.

The SIP puts special emphasis on investing in people to build a strong Europe and considers preventing and tackling homelessness as important priorities in this context. The Staff Working Document "Confronting Homelessness in the European Union", published within the context of the SIP, is critical of the traditional "staircase" model, as it "threatens to prolong long-term homelessness". It suggests using housing-led strategies and Housing First, which it says "not only deliver more positive outcomes for homeless people but can also be cost-effective in comparison with more traditional staircase approaches". The policy roadmap to implement the SIP flags up the need to study and disseminate information and good practice about effective policies at EU level, to help Member States reduce homelessness and housing exclusion.

Finally there was considerable emphasis at the Peer Review on the important role of EU Structural and Investment Funds in supporting initiatives such as Housing First to support marginalised groups of the population. These include: the European Social Fund (ESF), of which 20% is earmarked for fighting poverty and social exclusion; the European Regional

Development Fund (ERDF), which might be used to enlarge countries' housing stock; the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD); and the new urban initiative. These all support innovative ways to tackle homelessness, and could be used to "scale up" Housing First. However, there were also reports about barriers experienced at national level to using these funds for this purpose.

References

Aubry, T., Nelson, G., and Tsemberis, S. (2015) Housing First for People with Severe Mental Illness Who Are Homeless: A Review of the Research and Findings from the At Home/Chez Soi Demonstration Project, *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 60(11), 2015, pp. 467-474

Baker, T. and Evans, J. (2016) 'Housing First' and the Changing Terrains of Homeless Governance, *Geography Compass*, 10/1 (2016), pp. 25–41

Benjaminsen, L. (2013) *Rehousing Homeless Citizens with Assertive Community Treatment. Experiences from an ACT-programme in Copenhagen*. Final Report for Housing First Europe project (Copenhagen: SFI The Danish National Centre of Social Research) http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/PDF%20HFE/Copenhagen_HFE_Local_Evaluation.pdf

Benjaminsen, L. (2013) Policy Review Up-date: Results from the Housing First based Danish Homelessness Strategy, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 7(2), pp. 109-131 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/lb_review.pdf

Bernad, R., Yuncal, R., and Panadero, S. (forthcoming 2016) Introducing the Housing First Model in Spain: First Results of the HABITAT Program, *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol. 10.1

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) Housing First in England: An Evaluation of Nine Services (York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York) https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2015/Housing%20First%20England%20Report%20February%202015.pdf

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2002) Rehousing homeless people. The case of Soziale Wohnraumhilfe Hannover. A basic analytical evaluation and a follow-up-study of tenants and ex-tenants. Working paper for the EUROHOME-IMPACT project, Bremen (GISS)

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2005) Does Re-Housing Lead to Reintegration? Follow-Up Studies of Re-Housed Homeless People, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 18(2), pp. 205-226

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2011) *The Finnish National Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness. Synthesis Report — Finland* (Brussels: European Commission) http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8181&langId=en

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2013) *Housing First Europe. Final Report* (Bremen, GISS) http://www.giss-ev.de//files/giss/upload/Pdf/FinalReportHousingFirstEurope.pdf

Busch-Geertsema, V. (2014) Housing First Europe — Results of a European Social Experimentation Project, *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol. 8.1, pp. 13-28 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/article-01_8.1.pdf

Busch-Geertsema, V., Filipovic-Hrast, M., Benjaminsen, L., and Pleace, N. (2014) *Extent and Profile of Homelessness in European Member States: A Statistical Update* (EOH Comparative

Studies on Homelessness, No. 4) Brussels http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/feantsa-studies_04-web2.pdf

Busch-Geertsema, V. and Sahlin, I. (2007) The Role of Hostels and Temporary Accommodation, *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol. 1, pp. 67-93 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/ejh_vol1_article3.pdf

Busch-Geertsema, V., Steffen, A., and Ruhstrat, E.-U. (f2016) *Dauerhafte Versorgung von Wohnungslosen mit Neubauwohnungen im Niedrigenergiestandard* (Permanent Provision for Homeless People with New Housing at Low Energy Standard), Bremen:GISS, http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/Pdf/Endbericht%20Neue%20Wohnung%20Hamburg-Altona.pdf

Clapham, D. (2015) *Accommodating Difference: Evaluating Supported Housing for Vulnerable People* (Bristol: Policy Press)

Coumans, A.M., M. Cruyff, M., Van der Heijden, P. G. M., Wolf, J., and Schmeets, H. (2015) Estimating Homelessness in the Netherlands Using a Capture-Recapture Approach, *Social Indicators Research*, DOI 10.1007/s11205-015-1171-7

Edgar, B., Harrison, M., Watson, P., and Busch-Geertsema, V. (2007) *Measurement of Homelessness at European Union Level* (Brussels : European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG) http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2007/study_homelessness_en.pdf

Estecahandy, P. (2015) *The French experimentation* « Un chez soi d'abord ». *From social experiment to public policy*. Presentation at Habitat Spain, International Conference: New experimentations on evidence based Housing First, October 2015

European Commission (2013a) *Staff working document: Confronting Homelessness in the European Union* http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9770&langId=en

European Commission (2013b) *Staff working document: Social investment through the European Social Fund* SWD (2013) 42 final Brussels (20.2.2013)

European Commission (2013c) *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion — including implementing the ESF 2014-2020*, COM(2013) 83 http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9761&langId=en

European Commission (2015) Policy Roadmap for the implementation of the Social Investment Package http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14345&langId=en

European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (2010) Policy Recommendations of the Jury (Brussels: European Commission), p. 14 http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6489&langId=en

European Union — Social Protection Committee (2015) *Review of recent social policy reform — Report of the Social Protection Committee (2015)* (Brussels, European Commission) http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14927&langId=en

FEANTSA (2012) *On the Way Home?* FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe (Brussels: FEANTSA) http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article854

Fehér, B. and Balogi, A. (2013) *Evaluation of Housing First Europe Test Sites: Budapest — Pilisi Forest Project. Draft Final Report* (Budapest) http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/PDF%20HFE/Budapest_HFE_Local_Evaluation.pdf

Fitzpatrick, S. (2014) *Sustainable ways of preventing homelessness*. Synthesis Report for Peer Review in Denmark (Brussels: European Commission) http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11326&langId=en

Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, E., and Aubry, T. (2014) *National Final Report. Cross-Site At Home/Chez Soi Project* (Calgary: Mental Health Commission of Canada) http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/system/files/private/document/mhcc_at_home_report_national_cross-site_eng_2.pdf

Greenwood, R.M. (2015) *Evaluation of Dublin Housing First Demonstration Project. Summary of Findings* (Limerick: University of Limerick) http://www.homelessdublin.ie/sites/default/files/publications/HFirst_Evaluation2015.pdf

Greenwood, R.M., Stefancic, A., Tsemberis, S., and Busch-Geertsema, V. (2013) Implementations of Housing First in Europe: Successes and Challenges in Maintaining Model Fidelity, *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 16(4), pp. 290-312

Hansen Löfstrand, C. and Juhila, K. (2012) The Discourse of Consumer Choice in the Pathways Housing First Model, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 6(2), pp. 47-68

Henwood, B., Stanhope, V., and Padgett, D. (2011) The Role of Housing: A Comparison of Front-Line Provider Views in Housing First and Traditional Programs, *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 38, pp. 77-84

Johnsen, S. with Fitzpatrick, S. (2013) *Glasgow Housing First. Draft Final Report for the Housing First Europe Project* (Glasgow: Heriot Watt University/Turning Point Scotland), http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/PDF%20HFE/Glasgow_HFE_Local_Evaluation.pdf

Johnsen, S. (2013) *Turning Point Scotland's Housing First Project Evaluation. Final Report* (Glasgow: Heriot Watt University/Turning Point Scotland)

Johnsen, S. and Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, Elevators and Cycles of Change: 'Housing First' and Other Housing Models for People with Complex Support Needs* (London: Crisis)

Johnsen, S. and Teixeira, L. (2012): "Doing it Already?": Stakeholder Perceptions of Housing First in the UK, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 12:2, pp. 183-203

Johnson, G. (2012) Housing First 'Down Under': Revolution, Realignment or Rhetoric?, *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol. 6.2, pp. 183-189 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/ejh6_2_resp_housingfirst3.pdf

Johnson, G., Parkinson, S., and Parsell, C. (2012) *Policy shift or program drift? Implementing Housing First in Australia*. AHURI Final Report No. 184 http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download.asp?ContentID=ahuri_30655_fr&redirect=true

Katz, A.S., Zerger, S., and Hwang, S.W. (2016) Housing First the conversation: discourse, policy and the limits of the possible, *Critical Public Health*, DOI:10.1080/09581596.2016.1167838

Kesselring, A., Bohonnek, A., and Smoliner, S. (2013) *HOPE in stations: HOmeless People in European train stations*. Final evaluation report (Paris: ANSA) http://www.garesolidaire.net/attachments/Rapporto_finale_Hope_in_stations_EN.pdf

Keller, C., Goering, P., Hume, C., Macnaughton, E., O'Campo, P., Sarang, A., and Tsemberis, S. (2013) Initial Implementation of Housing First in Five Canadian Cities: How Do you Make the Shoe Fit, When One Size Does Not Fit All? , *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 16(4), pp. 275-289

Lux, M. (2014) Milestones in the Development and Implementation of a Governmental Strategy on Homelessness in the Czech Republic, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 8(2), pp. 95-118 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/policy-review-1-3.pdf

Macnaughton, E., Stefancic, A., Nelson, G., Caplan, R., Townley, G., Aubry, T., and Tsemberis, S. (2015) Implementing Housing First Across Sites and Over Time: Later Fidelity and Implementation Evaluation of a Pan-Canadian Multi-site Housing First Program for Homeless People with Mental Illness, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 55(3-4), pp. 279-291

Neunerhaus (2015) *neunerhaus Housing First Pilot Project. Report* (Vienna: neunerhaus) http://www.neunerhaus.at/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Neue_Website/Neunerhaueser/Housing_First/20150925_HousingFirst_Report_english.pdf

Ornelas, J. (2013) *Casas Primeiro, Lisboa. Final Report for Housing First Europe Project* (Lisbon) http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/PDF%20HFE/Lisbon_HFE_Local_Evaluation.pdf

Padgett, D. K. (2007) There's no place like (a) home: Ontological security among persons with serious mental illness in the United States, *Social Science & Medicine*, 64 (2007), pp. 1925-1936

Padgett, D.; Henwood, B., and Tsemberis, S. (2015) *Housing First. Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Parsell, C., Fitzpatrick, S., and Busch-Geertsema, V. (2014) Common Ground in Australia: An Object Lesson in Evidence Hierarchies and Policy Transfer, *Housing Studies*, 29 (1), pp. 69–87

Parsell, C. and Marston, G. (2016) Supportive Housing: Justifiable Paternalism?, *Housing, Theory and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/14036096.2015.1135188

Pleace, N. (2011) The Ambiguities, Limits and Risks of Housing First from a European Perspective, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 5(2), pp. 113-127 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/think-piece-1-3.pdf

Pleace, N., Culhane, D., Granfelt, R., and Knutagard, M. (2015) *The Finnish Homelessness Strategy: An International Review*. Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013a) *Camden Housing First: A Housing First experiment in London* (York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York) https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/Camden%20Housing%20First%20Final%20Report%20NM2.pdf

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013b) The Case for Housing First in the European Union: A Critical Evaluation of Concerns about Effectiveness, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 7(2), pp. 21-41 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/np_and_jb.pdf

Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2013) *Improving Health and Social Integration through Housing First: A Review* (Brussels: DIHAL/FEANTSA) http://feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/improving_health_and_social_integration_through_housing_first_a_review.pdf

Polvere, L., MacLeod, T., Macnaughton, E., Caplan, R., Piat, M., Nelson, G., Gaetz, S., and Goering, P. (2014) *Canadian Housing First Toolkit* (French and English) (Calgary and Toronto: Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Homeless Hub) http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca/

Raitakari, S. and Juhila, K. (2015) Housing First Literature: Different Orientations and Political-Practical Arguments, *European Journal of Homelessness*, Vol. 9.1, pp. 145-189

Regioplan (2013) *Study on Mobility, Migration and Destitution* (Brussels: European Commission) http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-on-mobility-migration-and-destitution-in-the-european-union-pbKE0214805/

Ridgway, P. and Zipple, A. M. (1990) The paradigm shift in residential services: from the linear continuum to supported housing approaches. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, 13, pp. 11-31

Sahlin, I. (2005) The Staircase of Transition: Survival through Failure, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 18(2), pp. 115-135

Sahlin, I. (2015) Searching for a Homeless Strategy in Sweden, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 9(2), pp. 161-186 http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/sahlinejh2-2015article7.pdf

Stefancic, A., Tsemberis, S., Messeri, P., Drake, R., and Goering, P. (2013) The Pathways Housing First fidelity scale for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 16(4), pp. 240-261

Stephens, M., Elsinga, M., Fitzpatrick, S., van Steen, G., and Chzhen, Y. (2010) *Study on Housing Exclusion: Welfare Policies, Housing Provision and Labour Markets* (Brussels: European Commission) https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/4727289/housing_exclusion_1_.pdf

The Foundation Abbé Pierre — FEANTSA (2015) *An Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe* (Brussels/Paris)

Tsemberis, S. (2010a) *Housing First: The Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction* (Minnesota, MN: Hazelden Press)

Tsemberis, S. (2010b) Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Promoting Recovery and Reducing Costs, Gould Ellen, I. and O'Flaherty, B. (Eds.) *How to House the Homeless*, pp. 37-56 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation)

Wewerinke, D., al Shamma, S., and Wolf, J. (2013) *Report of the Evaluation of Discus Housing First*, The Netherlands (Nijmegen: Netherlands Centre for Social Care Research) http://www.giss-ev.de/files/giss/upload/PDF%20HFE/Amsterdam_HFE_Local_Evaluation.pdf

European Commission

Housing First

2016 — 32 pp. — 17.6×25 cm

ISBN 978-92-79-59124-2
ISSN 1977-7973
doi: 10.2767/300657

This publication is available in electronic format in English, French, German and Dutch.

KE-BF-16-006-EN-N

Peer Review in Belgium: Housing First

Host country: **Belgium**

Peer countries: **Austria - Denmark - Finland - France - Hungary - Italy - Luxembourg - Netherlands - Norway - Spain**

Stakeholders: **Eurocities, FEANTSA**

Belgium introduced the 'Housing First' (HF) model in eight cities to support homeless people with special needs: homeless people move into permanent housing as quickly as possible, and receive intensive social support in their homes whenever needed. The setting of HF within Belgium's governmental structure encouraged cities to take a strong 'bottom-up' approach, and to network and share experiences with other cities. Independent evaluations have shown that the HF group had improved housing retention and health in comparison to other groups of homeless people. Tenants also reported a growth in self-esteem, and an improvement in social inclusion.

This synthesis report summarises the key issues discussed and the lessons learned during the Peer Review held in Belgium on 16 and March 2016.

Publications Office