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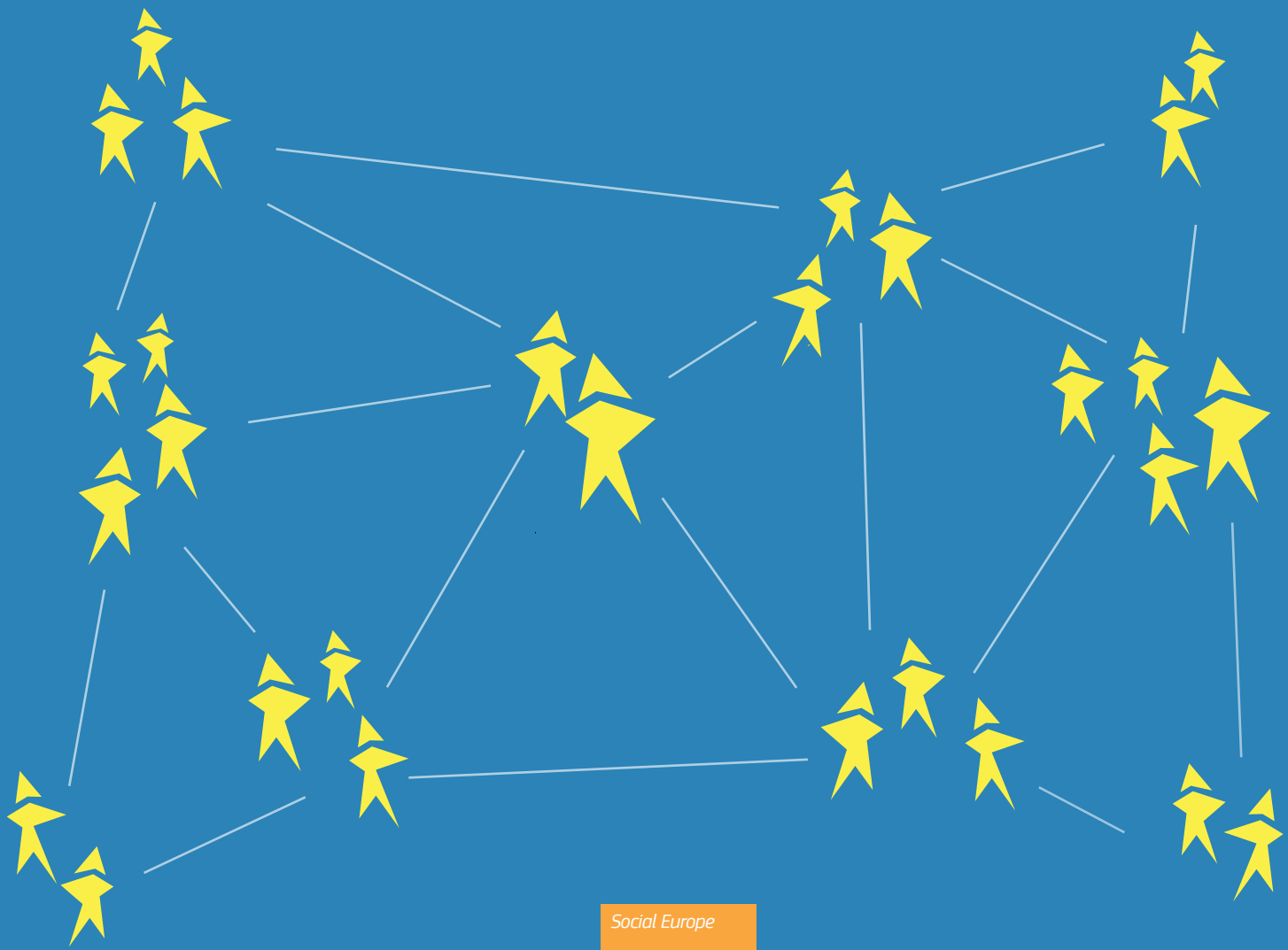
EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

National strategies to fight homelessness and housing exclusion

France

Michel Legros



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European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

ESPN Thematic Report on national strategies to fight homelessness and housing exclusion

France

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Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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The ESPN brings together into a single network the work that used to be carried out by the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, the Network for the Analytical Support on the Socio-Economic Impact of Social Protection Reforms (ASISP) and the MISSOC (Mutual Information Systems on Social Protection) secretariat.

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Contents

Summary

In the late 1990s, at a time when information on homeless people was almost non-existent, statisticians in France took inspiration from a census on homelessness in the United States to carry out the first national survey based on a representative sample in 2001. A second survey in 2012 showed that the number of homeless people, then estimated at 141,000, had risen by 50% in a decade. The general nature of these surveys, the time lag between investigations, and the fragmented responses provided to people living on the streets, led the authorities to build up a plan at district (*département*) level to determine needs and centralise demands and responses. The integrated reception and orientation services (Services Intégrés d'Accueil et d'Orientation – SIAOs) created at the time operate more effectively, even though they still struggle to respond to the appeals addressed to them via an emergency telephone number, 115. Note that France employs statistical tools that do not refer to the ETHOS[1] typology developed by FEANTSA[2], although they are not totally incompatible.

The response of the French state to the growing number of homeless people that began in the early 1980s was to focus on social institutions managed by publicly funded associations. Over the years, the gap has widened between rising demand and the capacity of these establishments to shelter people in difficulty and guide them towards housing solutions. As this gap worsened due to recurrent tensions in the housing market, public authorities reacted by proposing a series of plans, programmes and laws.

Associations create numerous services to provide shelter, to make it easier to access care and food and to help people on the street survive. Long-term housing solutions, such as social housing centres and boarding houses, have been developed along with more social housing. Yet none of this has managed to reduce significantly the number of homeless people, and unacceptable situations persist, such as accommodation in very sub-standard hotels and the use of premises not intended for housing.

To tackle this permanent gap between demand and supply, the Housing First programme was launched in the late 2000s as a potential response. An experimental phase was implemented in conjunction with state services. The government in place since the 2017 elections has picked up this programme again and made it central to its strategy. It proposes in general, and in particular in the 23 areas that include 20% of the French population, to move from a system of sheltering homeless people to a system of directly moving them into housing. This change in direction opens up a new avenue for managing the homelessness phenomenon. Although its implementation still seems modest in 2019, to succeed it will need to overcome tensions in the housing market and get associations and social workers to accept an extensive change in orientation. The decisive political backing, the mostly positive reception of the first implementation phases, and the monitoring in place, imply that this programme could help France to move away from the practices of years gone by. Its success is more likely if the current transition phase receives more active financial support, and if local authorities and the companies building and managing social housing agree to engage in this initiative. EU funds do not play an important role in responses to homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE) – except for the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) programme, which provides important food support for homeless people.

[1] European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.

[2] Fédération Européenne d' Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless).

1 The nature and extent of homelessness and housing exclusion

1.1 Old and fragmented data

Article 1 of Act No 90-449 of 31 May 1990 on the right to housing, adopted following the creation of the minimum-income benefit (*revenu minimum d'insertion*), states that: 'the right to housing constitutes a duty of solidarity for the entire nation. Anyone experiencing particular difficulties due to inadequate resources or living conditions has the right to the community's support to access decent, independent housing and remain in it'. The implementation of this legislation, whose main tool was the development of local action plans for housing disadvantaged people (*plans départementaux d'action pour le logement des personnes défavorisées*), required defining the people concerned and ascertaining their numbers. Until then, the administrative term employed in France was *sans-domicile fixe* – SDF, literally meaning with no fixed address, which also covered tramps, vagrants, sailors and travellers.

In the 1990s, French researchers and statisticians at the National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) took an interest in surveys carried out in the United States by the Urban Institute in 1987 and the Census bureau in 1996. These studies were the starting point for the first national survey based on a representative sample carried out in France on homeless people in 2001, and repeated in 2012 (Marpsat and Yaouancq, 2016). Those questioned were selected from a sample constructed in three stages: i) urban agglomerations; ii) shelter, support and food services; and iii) people frequenting the services. Due to the presence of non-francophone people among the people interviewed, the 2012 survey (SD2012) featured a questionnaire in 14 languages[3].

These two surveys define the population concerned as follows:

> 'A person is considered to be homeless if he or she spent the night preceding the survey in a place not meant for human habitation (a condition referred to as shelterless[4]) including night stops offering shelter (warmth, coffee, etc.) but not equipped for sleeping, or in an accommodation service (hotel or housing paid for by an association, room or dormitory in collective accommodation, premises exceptionally opened during extreme cold weather).' (Yaouancq et al., 2013)

This survey, whose results have been regularly used, does however have some weak points. In addition to its cumbersome implementation, its scope does not cover people in squats or shacks and people who do not have recourse to any aid service.

Two other national sources are regularly used. They describe sub-standard housing situations or an absence of personal housing but give no definition of the people involved. They are the national housing survey by INSEE, and the national census.

- The INSEE national housing survey is carried out every three or six years. The latest edition dates from 2013 and relates to 54,000 dwellings. The survey provides information on hotel rooms used as main places of residence, involuntary residence at the homes of individuals, and people living in very difficult housing conditions (absence of comfort and overcrowding). This survey is particularly interesting because it questions people in housing about whether they have been deprived of housing at any time of their life. In 2013, 5.3 million people said they had experienced an episode without personal accommodation at some point in their lives. Three-quarters had been sheltered by their families or friends, but over 800,000 said they had experienced homelessness (Damon, 2017). A new survey is due to take place in 2019 or 2020, but has not yet been announced (Arnault et al., 2015).

[3] For the protocol for these two surveys, see INSEE website: https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/operation/s1268/processus-statistique.

[4] The French term is *sans-abri.*

- The national census gathers information on particular types of housing, including makeshift shelters, temporary buildings, mobile homes, and places not meant for human habitation (street, cellar, garden, campsite, etc.). These particular types are the object of a specific mobile home and homelessness survey. The reliability of the data collected in this part of the survey could be improved.

Along with these national sources, several other sources, specific surveys or by-products of the administrative management of services, provide information on sheltered people or those requesting shelter.

- The Directorate for Research, Analysis, Evaluation and Statistics (DREES) at the Ministry of Solidarity and Health carries out a survey every four years of all establishments and services working with adults and families in social difficulty. The survey covers housing and social reinsertion centres (CHRS), emergency housing centres (CHU), and establishments for asylum-seekers and refugees. The survey has existed since 1983 and the last wave covered 2016 (Pliquet, 2019).
- Data from the SIAOs. These are mainly based on numbers of telephone calls to the 115 emergency number in each *département*, which is starting to constitute an interesting information database. Nevertheless, the reliability of these data on a national scale still needs to be improved. For example, in January 2016 the figures relating to 45 *départements* indicate that 100,000 requests for emergency shelter were made by 22,300 people. Almost half of these requests resulted in people being welcomed into a shelter, in 83% of cases for a one-night stay[5].
- The administrative data collected at the time of claims made under the Enforceable Right to Housing Act (DALO) are new and interesting. In 2017, for example, 100,176 claims were made, with 33% concerning people with either no housing or sheltered in an involuntary manner, and 20% living in hostels or transitional housing.
- The SAMU[6] Social (emergency social service) in Paris produces numerous studies on people living on the street through a special Observatory. These include a study on the prevalence of psychiatric disorders and addiction among homeless people (Laporte et al., 2009). The 'ENFAMS' study (Observatory of SAMU Social de Paris, 2014) was devoted to homeless families, and more recently the study of homeless teenagers growing up in hotel rooms was produced with support from the Human Rights Defender (Macchi and Oppenchaim, 2019).

Given that INSEE data are old or fragmented, some local actors, associations and public authorities have taken steps to count homeless people during the *nuits de solidarité*. In Paris, for the second year in a row, on the night from Thursday 7 to Friday 8 February 2019, over 2,000 social and voluntary workers, divided between 360 groups, went through the streets of the capital to count people sleeping rough. 3,622 homeless people were listed, which was a 10% increase compared with 2018, and despite the creation of 2,500 additional places within Paris. Similar censuses took place in Grenoble and Metz and another is planned in Rennes.

These new initiatives supplement other information provided by associations: for example, the statistic of 500 to 600 street deaths per year reported by the non-governmental organisation Les Morts de la Rue[7] or the annual statistics on the numbers of people received by staff at the Secours Catholique charity[8].

[5] www.federationsolidarite.org.

[6] Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence.

[7] www.mortsdelarue.org.

[8] www.secours-catholique.org.

1.2 French data and the ETHOS typology

Although data obtained from French surveys can be used to construct a presentation of the homeless and shelterless population compatible with the 'light' version of ETHOS (ETHOS Light), the ETHOS typology itself is not integrated into French research. From the start, the ETHOS typology was subject to interrogation in France, relating to its potential for double counting, and on a deeper level to the gap between French concepts developed by the authorities, in particular the notion of *sans-domicile*, which was for a long time perceived as meaning no fixed address, and the notion of 'homeless' that runs through the ETHOS typology. We could put forward the hypothesis that the notion of 'homeless' is too general to account for the nomenclature used in France, which makes a greater distinction between shelterless people (category 1 of ETHOS Light), homeless people (categories 2 to 5 and 9 to 11), people in institutions (6, 7 and 8), and people living in very difficult housing conditions (absence of comfort and extreme overcrowding), which comes under category 12 of ETHOS Light. Lastly, people in institutions do not come under the homeless category. The notion sometimes used of a 'home', often translated as *chez-soi* (place of one's own) in French, is not considered as a statistical definition.

INSEE publications and the government plan of 2018 (Prime Minister, 2018) do not mention the ETHOS typology. This absence is particularly noticeable in the latest two public reports that constitute the most current and best-documented summaries of the state of sub-standard housing in France. The report by the Observatoire National de la Pauvreté et de l'Exclusion Sociale (ONPES, 2017) is limited to a footnote that states: 'English speakers use the word "homelessness", a notion based on the observation of deprivations whose components have been systematically analysed in Europe under the impetus of FEANTSA and its ETHOS typology'. Even more symptomatic of the neglect of ETHOS in France, a recent report by the Fondation Abbé-Pierre (2019a) does not contain a single mention of the ETHOS typology, although it does partially feature the different categories used to describe sub-standard housing; whereas its latest review of sub-standard housing in Europe (Fondation Abbé-Pierre, 2019b) features no less than 22 references to ETHOS. Table A1 (in the Annex) shows the matches between the French denominations and ETHOS categories.

1.3 Shelterless, homeless: current situation and evolution

The part of the 2012 INSEE survey (SD2012) on towns of over 20,000 inhabitants mentions 112,300 homeless people, including 82,200 adults and 30,100 children. Among the homeless adults, about 8,000 were without shelter. They were accompanied by 700 children (see Table A2 in the Annex). For the whole of the population surveyed, the share of shelterless people was 10%. This reached 14% in the Paris region, compared with only 8% for other urban agglomerations.

30% of homeless people were sheltered in housing provided by an association; one-third lived in a shelter centre on a daily basis; 12% were housed in emergency shelters that had to be vacated in the morning with no guarantee of a place for the following night; and 16% were housed in a hotel room, rising to 30% in the Paris region.

50% of homeless adults were aged 30-49, compared with 33% of the general population. 38% of homeless adults were women. In 62% of cases, the homeless were alone with no children. Homeless people born abroad were more likely to be accompanied by children.

43% of francophone homeless people claimed to have never spent at least three months living in independent accommodation. 56% of adults were born outside France. Close to 60% of this group came from an African country, and one-third from eastern Europe, mainly Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. 80% got by with less than 900 euros a month, and 30% did not even reach the threshold of 300 euros. More than three-quarters said they were inactive (37%) or unemployed (39%) and a little less than one-quarter were in employment that was often part time.

For 30%, financial difficulties led to their arrival on the street, and for 35% the reason was family difficulties (separation, death of partner, violence at home), while one-quarter of homeless people born in France had previously been placed in a foster family or child hostel.

In the absence of any more recent survey, trends in the homeless population are derived from a comparison between the 2002 and 2012 INSEE surveys. This comparison shows an overall progression in the number of homeless people, with a 47% rise. The highest increase (+207%) concerns non-francophone adults. From one survey to the next, the homeless population became older, with three times more people aged over 60 in 2012 compared with 2002. They made up 10% of the homeless in 2012. The number of women increased by twice as much as that of men, with a 4 percentage-point rise in 10 years. The proportion of couples with children tripled for francophone homeless people born outside France.

Between the two surveys, the number of homeless people with a higher education diploma also went up: in 2012, 14% of homeless people had pursued higher education, and 1 in 10 had a diploma representing two or more years of studies following secondary school (Yaouancq et al., 2013; Mordier, 2016)

2 Relevant strategies and policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion

The response of the French state to the increased number of homeless people that began in the early 1980s was to focus on social institutions managed by publicly funded associations. Over the years, the gap has widened between rising demand and the capacity of these establishments to shelter people in difficulty and guide them towards housing solutions. As this gap worsened due to recurrent tensions in the housing market, public authorities reacted by proposing a series of plans, programmes and laws. Each year with the approach of winter, new plans emerge, the management of shelters being improvised depending on the temperature.

Poverty-reduction plans usually included a housing component. In 2017, the new government chose to introduce a separate anti-poverty plan and a new housing strategy for the homeless. In both cases, the strategic shifts are significant.

2.1 2018: new strategy to tackle poverty

A programme to tackle poverty was announced in October 2018 by the French President and the government (Ministry of Solidarity and Health, 2018). While recognising that social policies had succeeded in containing the increase in poverty in the crisis years, the 2018-2022 programme is aimed at drawing lessons from these policies, which have struggled to stem the causes of poverty and make it possible to move forward to better situations. The strategy announced, following the fairly standard pattern of the last two presidential periods, puts the focus on getting people out of poverty through improving access to work. What is new, however, is the strong accent on social investment, putting the combat against child and young people's poverty at the centre of the project.

This paradigm shift is reflected in measures that make a priority of promoting equal chances from early childhood: development of childcare systems, improved education quality and care for very young children, and parenting support. The programme insists on the everyday guarantee of children's basic rights, including sheltering children living on the street and ensuring access to food for children from poor families. Action against early school-leaving and leaving school with no diploma should take the form of obligatory training up to age 18. This strategy integrates simplified access to social rights and the evolution of minimum welfare provision towards a universal minimum income grouping benefits that have been separate since the 1960s. Lastly, funding should be considerably increased for guidance and support measures for insertion through employment. The announced cost of this plan is 8.5 billion euros up to 2022.

This plan was mostly positively received by local political representatives and associations, some of which nevertheless regretted the lack of emphasis on child health and in particular the absence of housing and shelter aspects. Unlike the previous five-year plan, this programme does not include a section on housing. However, several measures concerning the sector have been announced: humanisation of shelters; development of mixed social street patrols aimed at getting children and families off the street; the creation of 7,500 additional accommodation places for families; and reabsorption of 570 slums sheltering 15,000 people, mostly from eastern Europe. The poverty action plan also includes measures to tackle energy precariousness and promote housing for young people.

2.2 Housing First: announcement, implementation and evaluation

Announced by the government on 11 September 2017 and published in October 2018 (Prime Minister, 2018), the 'Five-year plan to implement housing first and combat homelessness' is not just another general plan to tackle sub-standard housing or lack of housing, but rather a plan that closely targets people without shelter, more than those with no housing or in sub-standard housing. The plan constitutes a genuine paradigm shift in which the priority of pubic action moves from shelters and temporary accommodation towards direct access to housing. This political change has three sources, as follows.

- The first stems from the observation of a growing gap between the rising numbers of shelterless and homeless people and the saturation of emergency accommodation, despite a regular increase in state funding. From 2012 to 2018, the state budget for emergency shelters went from 1.3 to 2 billion euros (Démoulin, 2019).
- Since a report published in 2009 on the health of homeless people (Girard et al., 2009), the Housing First concept has gradually taken hold in France, initially on four sites, then extended to a dozen locations. Along with regular promotion by associations, local authorities and state services, the evaluations disseminated have shown the real cost benefits of this kind of strategy.
- During the previous five-year government term, increasing numbers of asylum-seekers and the impacts of the financial crisis contributed to the congestion of reception facilities for people living on the street. Following his election in 2017, the French President reaffirmed in relation to asylum-seekers, and then the homeless, his 'commitment to providing a roof to all of those without shelter today'[9].

The core component of this plan, which includes five priorities broken down into 16 work areas, resides in the affirmation that the priority should be to direct homeless or disadvantaged people towards regular housing. The scope of this programme is people living on the street or in hostels, slums and squats; asylum-seekers; female victims of violence; and young adults leaving institutions. In addition to the announcement of this key principle, the programme defines the tools and methods capable of ensuring the success of this transformation. The measures can be grouped into four areas, as follows.

- The first relates to housing supply. If no housing is available, then Housing First is nothing more than a slogan. The social housing stock should feature sufficient residences available at accessible rents to people on low incomes. To achieve this, the programme has set the target of financing 40,000 new 'PLAI'-type dwellings (the cheapest category of social housing) per year. It evokes the possibility of an at least experimental return to rent capping. In addition to social housing, the plan intends to mobilise private stock by developing the possibility for associations to sub-let housing to people on low incomes, thus securing the relationship with owners (40,000 places planned over five years via rental intermediation).

[9] Televised New Year wishes by the President of the Republic, 31 December 2017.

- The strategy does not abolish emergency shelters, but reduces their role to an immediate, unconditional response in distress situations. This involves transforming part of social establishments into ordinary housing and, for people in major difficulty, proposing the development of long-term housing solutions in boarding houses and social dwellings (10,000 places over five years). After five years, the emergency shelters stock should be reduced by 20,000 places.
- The success of the programme depends on a reorganisation of the paths followed by homeless people towards direct access to housing. This presumes better knowledge of the people concerned. The plan anticipates an improvement of the social watch, the mobilisation of data produced by the SIAOs, and a greater use of statistics concerning people living in slums and squats. The programme engages a significant reform in directing homeless people towards regular housing. It includes a review of housing application procedures, a revised procedures for allocating housing and preventing housing interruptions in the case of eviction or departure from social institutions,.
- Support for homeless people, which is a crucial component of Housing First, involves a deep-seated change in the practices of shelters and social workers, turning them into genuine regional platforms capable of offering support services. These services need to take into account the existence of peer assistants and involve people in their support by setting up reciprocal commitment contracts. This mobilisation of actors will primarily involve voluntary local authorities and territories, to define local management and foster coherence between professional insertion and access to housing.

The plan is run by the inter-ministerial delegation for accommodation and access to housing (DIHAL). Following a call for expression of interest, 23 areas were selected covering 20% of the mainland population. Most major cities are involved, with the exception of Paris and Marseille. Agreements between the state and the selected areas were launched in September 2017 but were not signed until the end of 2018. It is too early to announce the results, although the government reports 70,000 housing take-ups. However, during the first months of 2019, several areas have taken up this programme by organising their own steering committees (including Amiens, Montpellier, Toulouse and Grenoble) and signing agreements with local operators. Rental through intermediary parties has increased significantly, the allocation of social housing after leaving a shelter has gone up, and over 1,300 new places have been opened in boarding houses.

A significant monitoring initiative has been set up by the Ministry for Territorial Development, which is responsible for both general rehousing programmes and more specifically for following the Housing First programme.

Follow-up of the programme is the responsibility of the prefects of the regions and *départements*. Each year, national targets are set and split by region. In 2019, the number of social dwellings allocated to families in shelters should amount to 17,000, or 3.7% of the volume of allocations. The upturn in rentals through intermediaries and boarding houses should lead to the creation of 8,850 new places. Targets have also been established for the production of housing at affordable rents. 17 indicators have been chosen to be monitored during monthly exchanges by videoconference.

Previous experiments have shown the advantages and importance of accompanying the Housing First programme with a monitoring and evaluation apparatus, which is the guarantee of an adaptable steering system and in particular a tool to demonstrate the measure's reliability and pertinence. The monitoring and evaluation plan presented in 2018 and being finalised is split into four areas:

- effectiveness of the measure;
- quality and respect for the rights of the beneficiaries;
- pertinence of the measure; and
- performance and efficiency of the measure.

Each of these areas is associated with assessment indicators (17 in total) and monitoring indicators (29 in total).

These evaluations are also compatible and consistent with internal and external evaluation programmes in all institutions and with social and socio-medical services involved since the adoption of Act 2002-2, a law reorganising the functioning of publicly funded social and socio-medical services and institutions.

These Housing First-specific indicators complement annual monitoring of the goals of reducing the number of homeless people. These indicators focus on the number of housing units available for homeless persons by region; the number of housing units allocated to families in institutions; the number of family pensions and the number of refugees benefiting from these dwellings.

2.3 Limits of the strategy

The weaknesses in the implementation of the government's new plan are indicated in the recent report by the Fondation Abbé Pierre (2019b), the conclusions of the working group on emergency accommodation (Démoulin, 2019), debates on the Finance Act for 2019, reports of the Court of Auditors, and many reports of associations. These weaknesses somewhat attenuate the generally positive view of this plan.

Although the Housing First programme has attracted significant attention from elected representatives, associations and social housing providers, many also highlight the multiple projects and measures over the last 30 years that have only disappeared a few years later to be replaced by other policies, without any progress being made on the issue of sub-standard housing and homelessness. The Conseil d'Etat (State Council) identified in 2009: 'the well-established French tradition of tackling the housing crisis by drawing up legislation rather than building houses' (Conseil d'Etat, 2009). The success of this programme requires overcoming three limitations regarding the actors involved, the measure's overall management, and funding.

Concerning the actors, while local authorities seem to be favourable to this new strategy, disagreements exist, including in the experimental areas, between the different levels – municipalities, municipal groupings and *départements*. And these disagreements can hinder cooperation in setting up the programmes. Homelessness is often seen by local politicians as a sensitive issue during municipal election periods: the next ones are due to take place in 2020 and many electoral campaigns are already underway. Both social and private housing providers are key to the success of this programme. But since the 2018 Finance Act, successive budget cuts amount to an annual 1.5 billion euros. The results of cutting investment are already evident, with a reduction from 128,000 new social dwellings in 2016 to scarcely 100,000 in 2018. In terms of housing production, the objective of 40,000 PLAIs per year remains very modest, since in 2018 it was around 35,000. In addition, increasing the number of PLAIs may be irrelevant if their rental level is not accessible to the very low income bracket that includes homeless people.

Alongside local authorities and social housing providers, the housing sector is affected by a reform in the financing modes of CHRSs. This reform reduces the income of these establishments and does not give then any incentive to make voluntary changes to their

operating methods. On a deeper level, the programme's success depends on changing the perception of social workers, for whom the 'capacity to live in housing' has been an important criterion in their vision of homeless people up to now. It is important to move away from the idea of a lack of capacity to live (autonomously) in housing, which hinders accommodation applications by homeless people, social workers and shelter facilities. Considerable training is required for both social workers and housing management staff to avoid acting in contradiction with the principles of Housing First.

The general management of the measure firstly requires improved knowledge of the people concerned by this policy. INSEE's initial surveys dating from 2001 and 2012 are now too old, and the date for the next national survey is still very uncertain. Data collected from SIAOs are not robust or complete, and are thus not disseminated. The plan recommends carrying out more flash surveys such as those done during the *nuits de la solidarité*. Apart from the fact that some cities refuse to take part in those, the surveys carried out so far in winter are only useful for raising the awareness of public authorities and associations, and are difficult to aggregate at national level.

While the plan justifiably focuses on homeless people, greater tensions in the housing market cannot be ignored. The fact that 600,000 to 700,000 people reside involuntarily in the houses of families or third parties risks leading to a situation in which new social housing is taken up by these people, who are keen to move out and dispose of greater levels of personal income than homeless people[10]. This risk can only be reduced by an extensive reform of the way that social housing is allocated. The reform would need to be based on an application rating system to avoid disadvantaging people in the most difficult situations. This procedure should be generalised by late 2021, almost at the end of the five-year presidential period.

Overall, the programme appears fairly moderate in terms of its mobilisation of actors, since although fast implementation was announced, the programme will only really be deployed in the second half of 2019. All in all, funding is limited. Support credit of 15 million euros over two years will need to be shared between 23 territories. As an illustration, the Housing First item in the 2019 Finance Act only amounted to 4 million euros. More generally, the current effort appears to underestimate what is needed: presently evaluated at 150 million euros, this is only a drop in the ocean compared with the 2 billion euros spent on shelters and the 40 billion euros represented by the total housing bill.

Concern over insufficient funds is all the greater given that the Court of Auditors and the debates preparing for the adoption of finance laws have regularly pointed to the underfunding of this sector over the last few years. In 2014, for example, the funding of state programmes on housing had to be topped up by over 150 million euros, or over 10% of initial credits, and 2015 was marked by a top-up of over 220 million euros (17% of the initial budget). For 2016, 239 million euros were added to the initial figure, following two advance decrees (respectively 84 and 100 million euros) and additional credits established in an adjustment finance bill at the end of the year (55 million euros). The rapporteur on the 2019 Finance Act in the Senate indicated that 'a more sincere budget would allow for more effective credit appropriations, improve the capacity to anticipate and forecast, and save time for those who are currently obliged to spend the entire year "juggling" the available credit' (Dallier, 2016).

The 2018 *Europe en France*[11] database lists 12,095 projects and programmes that benefited from EU Structural Funds. An examination of these projects, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF), shows that almost 30% concern contributions to highly disadvantaged people. Improved housing, mainly involving tackling bad thermal insulation and the rehabilitation of whole neighbourhoods, concerns almost 6% of projects financed by these Funds. However, very few projects are directly connected with tackling homelessness. In 2017, the Senate estimated the overall amount of food aid at 1.5 billion euros. One-third of this amount

[10] This population concerned by poor housing does not fall under the category of homeless persons in France.

[11] www.europe-en-France.gouv.fr.

represented the value of voluntary work by associations, another third came from companies and individuals, and the last third grouped public funding including EU aid. European Union financing from the FEAD amounted to 72.7 million euros in 2018. In total, the 2014-2020 FEAD programme for France will amount to 499 million euros. Almost 2,000 associations, bringing together about 9,000 organisations, are authorised to divide and distribute this aid at regional and local levels.

Overall, EU funds do not play an important role in responses to HHE. This is not the case with the FEAD programme, which provides important food support for homeless people (Brunet et al., 2016).

3 Analysis of the current patterns of service provision and challenges in implementing France's responses to homelessness and housing exclusion

The organisation of services for shelterless and homeless people is particularly complex in France. This is due to a build-up over time in programmes of measures, and the multiple actors and institutions that provide these services. On a deeper level, this complexity has its roots in a long-established division between post-war social policies and legislation on social welfare dating from the early 20th century.

The increase in homeless people has led associations to create numerous services to provide shelter, to make it easier to have access to care and food and to help people on the street survive. One illustration is the extension of the municipal social emergency services known as the SAMU Social (see below). Long-term housing solutions such as social housing centres and boarding houses have been developed along with more moves into social housing. Yet none of this has managed to reduce significantly the number of homeless people, and unacceptable situations persist, such as accommodation in very sub-standard hotels and the use of premises not intended for housing.

The real innovation of recent years lies in the introduction of the Housing First strategy. The challenge to its success lies in the capacity or otherwise of public authorities and associations to transform a model deeply anchored in French social history. The shift from a multiplicity of services aimed at helping homeless people to the development of access and housing services will require funding, training, and above all a change in behaviour and working methods.

3.1 Shelter first: wide range of services

The SIAOs were created in 2009 as platforms in each *département* that bring together, under a contract with the state, different accommodation and insertion services. They are a one-stop shop for accommodation and insertion requests, which they centralise and orientate towards different services. SIAOs coordinate and put in touch people working in social watch, shelters, and housing access. They regulate accommodation supply and demand. SIAOs manage the 115 hotline, receiving all calls from people requesting shelter and reporting social distress situations. The 115 number is open 24/7 every day of the year.

Following the creation of the Paris SAMU Social emergency service in 1993, along the lines of the SAMU medical emergency services, similar services have been created in most French cities, mostly by the Red Cross or other non-government organisations. Along with managing the 115 number in some *départements,* and social watch and observation action, the main activity of these services is to organise social street patrols by mobile teams of three or four people who may be volunteers or trained employees, managed by a team leader. These patrols can be organised during the evening or daytime, winter or summer, and are intensified in emergency situations (e.g. intense cold weather campaigns). Social street patrols provide not just moral support, but distribute hot and cold drinks, food and sometimes clothes, blankets, sleeping bags and toiletries, etc. The SAMU Social teams

inform people about shelter solutions available, which they can choose whether or not to accept.

The *département* prefects can certify municipal social action centres and some associations to become domiciliary centres, so that people living on the street can have their post sent to them and claim certain rights and benefits (e.g. obtaining a national identity card).

Regarding access to care, homeless people can be received at health access points (*permanences d'accès aux soins de santé* – PASS) to receive information, prevention orientation and treatment. PASSs provide access to care in the broadest sense: consultation with a general practitioner or specialist, dental care, nursing treatment, technical facilities, and delivery of medication. As a result, all patients can be accompanied and access standard care, and also benefit from continuous treatment in line with their needs. Almost 430 PASSs currently exist, mostly located and managed in large public hospitals, and more are planned.

Mobile psychiatric teams (*equipes mobiles psychiatrie-précarité* - EMPP) operate outside hospitals, close to where disadvantaged people live. They can support these people in their care pathways and also train and advise social actors to help them deal with psychological disorders. Over 100 EMPPs exist, distributed around France and comprising over 200 professionals, mostly nurses, psychiatrists and psychologists, as well as to a lesser extent social workers. Most often, psychiatrists coordinate the teams, whose operation is formally defined in hospital medical plans.

In addition to these services there are: healthcare stayover centres (LHSS); medicalised shelter beds (LAM) for people suffering from serious diseases who cannot stay on the street or in regular shelters; and therapeutic coordination apartments, which are part of the *un chez-soi d'abord* (a home of one's own first) programme aimed at homeless people suffering from mental disorders.

The financial expense of any healthcare is covered by universal health protection (PMI), which allows people to benefit from the health insurance regime and from aid to pay for a complementary health insurance plan. Lastly, several associations, such as Médecins du Monde, offer medical services to people living on the street, in squats or slums.

Food distribution is an important service provided by a very large number of non-government organisations for people living rough. Since it was set up in France in 1983, food aid has expanded significantly. Based on data provided by the leading four national associations, about 4.77 million people benefited from food aid in 2015. In financial terms this aid represents an amount estimated by the Court of Auditors in 2009 at over 1 billion euros a year (Brunet et al., 2016). Distribution takes the form of access to food banks (13%), meals and snacks given out in the street or at day centres (7%) and hand-outs of food parcels and packed meals (80%).

In terms of accommodation, no less than 11 types of different social organisations offer shelter to homeless people.

CHRSs number 847 and offer 45,000 places for single people and families, in rooms or scattered accommodation. They pilot socio-educative action as part of a project for insertion and personal and social independence. Admission is for a set, renewable period in line with a personal assessment made every six months. Beneficiaries must make a financial contribution to the cost of their accommodation. CHRS personnel are mainly made up of social workers. The average cost of a CHRS place is about 15,000 euros a year. A little more than one-third of CHRSs feature an emergency shelter service.

In addition to emergency places open in CHRSs and in emergency shelter centres, the winter action plans set up every year involve state services making use of empty buildings or buildings awaiting redevelopment (barracks, schools, old-people's homes, etc.), town halls and various other premises, to provide basic accommodation in rooms or dormitories Stays are subject to no specific conditions. In line with the DALO Act, stays must be granted where no alternative long-term solution can be found. In numerous centres, however, shelter only lasts for one night, and the sheltered individuals must leave the premises in

the morning without the certainty of finding a place the next night. In addition, sanitary conditions and food are often sub-standard (Médecins du Monde, 2016).

These emergency places are supplemented by the constant use of low-grade hotels, most often with no kitchen or specific area for meals. Families often crowd into a single room for stays that can last years. The three-year plan to reduce hotel stays has at best led to a halt in the rising trend observed over several years.

In the housing sector, several types of situation exist: social residences and halfway houses combine furnished accommodation with private areas and common areas for limited stays ranging from one month to two years. Residents can use these places while waiting for long-term housing and can benefit from minimum social support. Boarding houses are offered to very socially excluded people, with no duration limit. These are small premises comprising 20 to 25 accommodation units.

The practice of sub-letting involves securing the relationship between owners and tenants either through a temporary sub-lease, or a lease that can be changed into a regular lease that gives the beneficiary full tenant rights to ordinary, personal accommodation. Lastly, rental intermediary management refers to an association renting private apartments and then renting them out to households with financial and social difficulties, thus ensuring social support. This option is developing significantly.

All of these services put the accent on support for homeless people, but it is important to also consider the barriers that homeless people come up against on a daily basis. The Fondation Abbé-Pierre lists on its website[12] all of the physical devices, barriers, spikes and other objects used to dissuade people on the street or in the subway from sitting down and resting.

3.2 Congestion of shelters resulting from dual factors

The saturation of shelter facilities is the result of dual factors that have been exacerbated over time.

The first is the insufficient development of prevention. At the initial point, this concerns exits from institutions, which are badly prepared and insufficiently anticipated. Such institutions include psychiatric institutions, as well as childhood institutions and services where young people aged 18-21 leave without a personal residence to go to. Any eviction, whether individual or collective in the case of eradication of slums, should be followed by a rehousing proposal. This is far from being the case. On a deeper level, due to lack of resources and access to accommodation, a large number of people are involuntarily obliged to share housing with family or relations. When relationships deteriorate, these people often find themselves homeless. In addition, violence within the family can lead women and children to leave their partners and seek social shelter.

The second factor is that, at a later stage, it can be difficult to leave sheltered housing due to a shortage of rental property at affordable prices. 'In the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, a third of sheltered people could in principle apply for social housing but are confronted by inadequate supply' (Dailler, 2016). Rent levels are not the only reason why access to accommodation is blocked. While homeless people and people on the street are more likely to be single men (50% of sheltered people), who mostly require one- or two-room housing, this type of accommodation only represents 27% of the social housing stock.

Legislation that does not allow non-nationals awaiting regularisation to access work and accommodation in the social housing sector, and bars access to ordinary housing, also results in blocking families for months or even years in CHRSs or sub-standard hotels. In Paris, 50% of hotel stays involve people with partial entitlements. These blockages are exacerbated by low incomes, particularly for those aged 18-25 who cannot claim minimum

[12] soyonshumains.fr.

welfare, and insufficient knowledge of measures such as rental intermediation or when such rental intermediation is out of line with market rental prices.

3.3 Weaknesses/gaps and priorities for improvement

The main weaknesses/gaps in France's responses to HHE are as follows.

- Despite a humanising programme pursued over the last few years, the quality of emergency accommodation is still too low, in particular during winter action plans. Here quality means both logistical reception conditions and the human attention given to people who turn to this type of shelter.
- Difficulty in understanding and using policies and services that successive legislation and layering of measures have made too complex.
- The system is centred on sheltering and emergency accommodation during winter.
- Social services struggle to change from an institutional approach to providing support in an open environment.

The priorities for action relate to both the current accommodation situation and the means for development in the Housing First strategy, as follows.

- Stop using hotel rooms to accommodate families with children.
- Extend the ranked allocation of social housing.
- Make access to rental housing possible for non-national families whose administrative applications are pending.
- Stop evictions from slums without a rehousing procedure.
- And above all, put a greater, more intense collective effort into giving credibility to the Housing First strategy, both in terms of its portrayal and the tools to make it work.

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Annex

Table A1: ETHOS Light categories defined as homeless in France

Operational category		Living situation		Definition	Defined as homeless in France
1	People living rough	1	Public space/ external space	Living on the streets or in public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters	Yes (shelterless)
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation	Yes (homeless)
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3 4 5 6	Homeless hostels Temporary accommodation Transitional supported accommodation Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	Where the period of stay is time- limited and no long-term housing is provided	Yes (homeless) Yes (homeless) Yes (homeless) Yes (homeless)
4	People living in institutions	7 8	Healthcare institutions Penal institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing No housing available prior to release	No (user or resident) No (user or resident)
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9 10 11	Mobile homes Non-conventional buildings Temporary structures	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	No (sub-standard housing) No (sub-standard housing) Yes (homeless)
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	No (sub-standard housing)

Table A2: Latest available data on the number of homeless people in France

	Operational category	Living situations		Most recent numbers	Period covered	Source
1	People living rough	1	Public space/ external space	8,700 3,622	February 2012 Night of 7 to 8 February 2019	INSEE-INED: mainland France survey of people using housing or meal distribution services, towns greater than 20,000 habitants (https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1281324#titre-bloc-1). Second 'solidarity night' – night-tim count of people sleeping on the stre of Paris (https://www.dailymotion.com/vide 74lmaf).
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	9,000	February 2012	INSEE-INED: mainland France representative sample survey of people using housing or meal distribution services, towns greater than 20,000 habitants (ibid).
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3 4 5 6	Homeless hostels Temporary accommodation Transitional supported accommodation Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	25,000 132,000	Housing survey 2013 Quadrennial survey by DREES, Dec. 2015	Reported in Fondation Abbé-Pierre (2019b). Pliquet (2019).
4	People living in institutions	7 8	Healthcare institutions Penal institution	No data No data		Surveys concerning these sectors of the population do not integrate the aspect of absence of domicile.
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9 10 11	Mobile homes Non-conventional buildings Temporary structures	91,000	Census INSEE 2014	Reported in Fondation Abbé-Pierre (2019b).
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	436,900	INSEE 2013	Reported in ONPES (2017) p 144-146.