

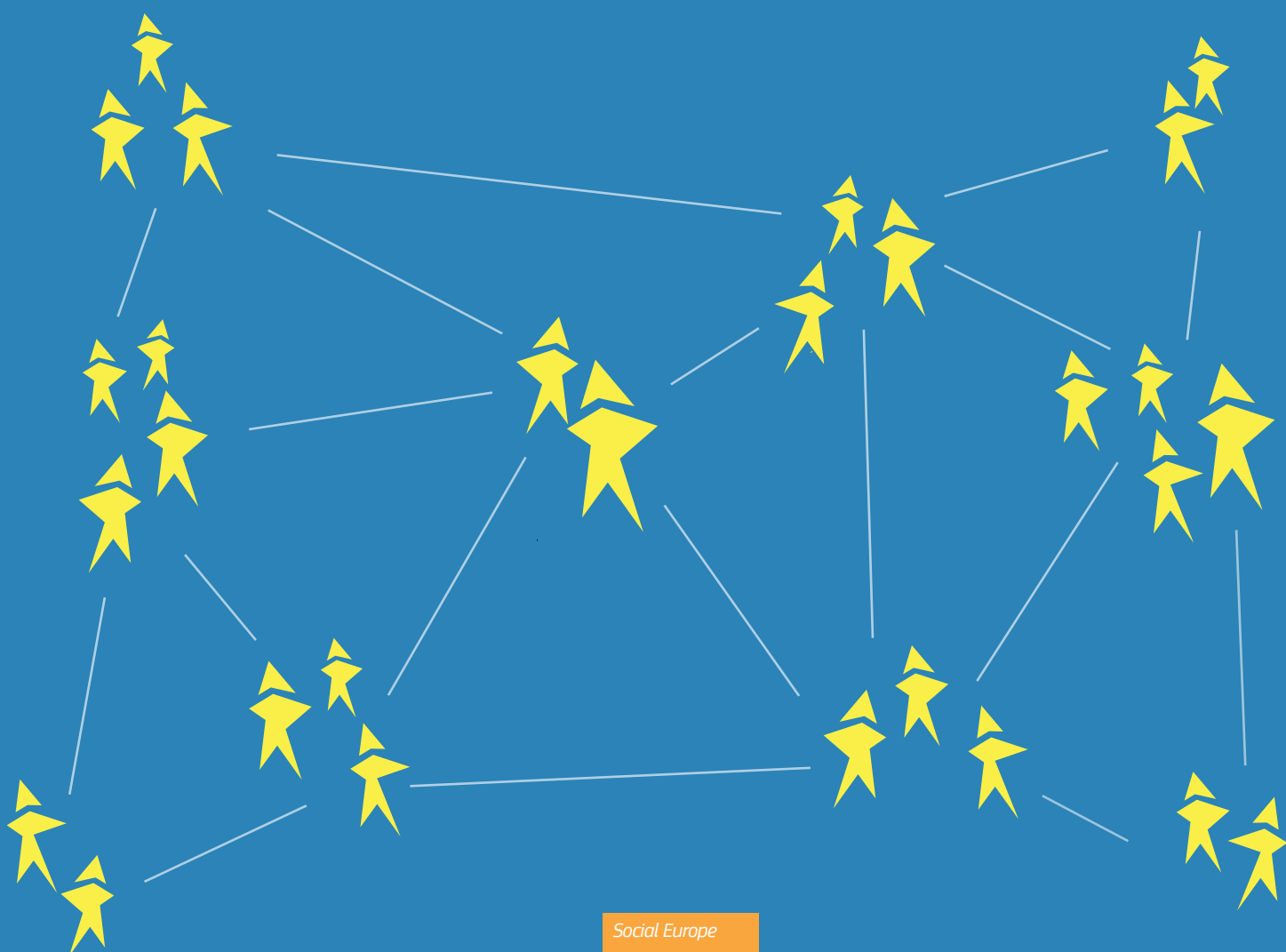


EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

National strategies to fight homelessness and housing exclusion

Poland

Ryszard Szarfenberg



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European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

**ESPN Thematic Report on
National strategies to fight
homelessness and housing
exclusion**

Poland

2019

Ryszard Szarfenberg

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Summary

The definition of homelessness in Poland is based on the legal definitions of a dwelling and of the administrative obligation to have residency status in the population registry. It was introduced in 2000 and amended in 2004 in the Act on social assistance without reference to the ETHOS¹ typology. The definition is very wide and embraces all ETHOS Light categories except homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing).

The main sources of data on homelessness in Poland are one-night censuses of homeless persons staying in emergency accommodation, institutions and inhabitable spaces. The censuses are undertaken by local authorities and coordinated by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej). They have been conducted every two years since 2011. An additional individual socio-demographic module for homeless people was conducted in 2011, 2013 and 2019.

According to the latest census, there were 30,300 homeless people in Poland in February 2019. This was a decline of 6,000 compared with 2015. Between 2011 and 2015, the number of homeless people was increasing. More than half (56%) of homeless people in 2019 lived in homeless hostels and other similar temporary accommodation, 14% lived in overnight shelters and 11% in non-conventional buildings. Those living rough represented 8% of the homeless population. The remaining group were residents in health and penal institutions. The results of the 2019 census also show that the vast majority of homeless people were males (84%). Most of the homeless were in the older age groups.

Despite many efforts undertaken in the last 10 years (in 2008-2009 and 2013-2014), the Polish government did not adopt a separate and specific strategy aimed at reducing homelessness and housing exclusion. Some strategic elements to tackle homelessness are included in the broader anti-poverty programme adopted in 2014 (*Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu*). However, the programme did not follow a rights-based approach and was not implemented according to the initial plan.

There are three main general types of support services for homeless people in Poland: shelters, crisis interventions and sheltered dwellings. All services are subject to minimum standards requirements (introduced gradually by 2018). Hostel and shelter services are provided mainly by non-government organisations (NGOs), and municipalities provide mainly sheltered and social housing. The average amount of public spending on supporting one homeless person is relatively modest: it increased from 4,200 zł in 2010 (1,000 €) to 6,800 zł (1,600 €) in 2016.

Despite some improvements, there are still serious weaknesses in policies to combat homelessness and housing exclusion in Poland. The main instruments that are used are social assistance to the homeless and provision of non-housing shelter. The system lacks prevention, housing-led approaches, comprehensiveness of support and deinstitutionalisation. Supply of municipal housing is limited, which severely restricts the development of housing-led interventions such as social and training dwellings. The major problem is the lack of coordination between different levels of government as well as between services regulated under different Acts and implemented by different ministries. Census methodology and its implementation, as well as administrative data, need to be improved.

The recommended policy changes include shifting the focus from shelter-based to housing-led solutions embedded in a well financed broader deinstitutionalisation strategy. Municipalities should have easier access to increased financial subsidies to develop social and municipal housing. New coordination measures are needed to increase networking between authorities and service providers regulated by different Acts. Finally, the

¹ European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.

organisation of a multi-stakeholder forum could facilitate the preparation of a programme for building evidence-based policy, including improved quality of data and research on homelessness.

1 The nature and extent of homelessness and housing exclusion

1.1 Definition of homelessness in Poland

The official definition of a homeless person in Poland is included in the Act on social assistance (*Ustawa o pomocy społecznej*, 2004).² In article 6 of this Act, comprising definitions for the purposes of the Act, it is stated (in point 8, added in 2000) that a **homeless person** is a person who:

- is not living in a dwelling (*lokal mieszkalny*) as defined in the regulations on protection of tenant's rights and municipal housing (*Ustawa o ochronie praw lokatorów i mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy*, 2001)³ and
- is not registered for permanent residence as defined in the regulations on the population registry (*Ustawa o ewidencji ludności*, 2010)⁴

OR

is registered for permanent residence in a dwelling in which they have no possibility of living (this condition was added in 2004).

For the purposes of the homelessness censuses, generally conducted every two years (2011, 2013, 2017, 2019), there are three examples of what it actually means to say that someone has no possibility of living in a dwelling in which they have a permanent residence according to the population registry:⁵

1. premises that should be vacated in connection with an eviction or court order prohibiting contact with existing roommates, for example as a result of family conflicts;
2. a place where a person cannot live because of a threat to life or health caused by, for example, poor technical conditions of the building; and
3. premises that cannot be inhabited by a person as a result of an objection, or refusal of access, by other persons registered there.

The definition of homelessness is based on the formal criteria for distinguishing dwellings from non-dwellings: 1) its function should satisfy housing needs (including artists' studios); and 2) it is not a short-term dwelling, such as boarding schools, dormitories, boarding houses, hotels, rest houses or other buildings used for tourism or leisure purposes (Act on protection of tenants and municipal housing - *Ustawa o ochronie praw lokatorów i mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy*, 2001, art. 2.1, point 5).⁶ Further details about what a dwelling is according to law are in the regulations on the ownership of dwellings (*Ustawa o własności lokali*, 1994) and regulation issued under the Act on

² *Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej* <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20040640593>.

³ *Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o ochronie praw lokatorów, mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy i o zmianie Kodeksu cywilnego* <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010710733>.

⁴ *Ustawa z dnia 24 września 2010 r. o ewidencji ludności* <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20102171427>. It is a current version of the act, primarily with intention to abandon obligatory residence registration, but eventually it was not implemented.

⁵ Sprawozdanie z realizacji działań na rzecz ludzi bezdomnych w województwach w roku 2016 oraz wyniki Ogólnopolskiego badania liczby osób bezdomnych (8/9 luty 2017), Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, listopad 2017, p. 23-24. <https://archiwum.mpips.gov.pl/download/qfx/mpips/pl/defaultopisy/9462/1/1/Sprawozdanie%20z%20realizacji%20dzialan%20na%20rzecz%20ludzi%20bezdomnych%20za%202016.pdf>.

⁶ *Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o ochronie praw lokatorów, mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy i o zmianie Kodeksu cywilnego* <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010710733>.

construction (*Ustawa Prawo budowlane*, 1994).⁷ The latter defines a dwelling (*mieszkanie*) as 'set of residential and auxiliary rooms, having a separate entrance, separated by permanent building compartments, enabling the permanent stay of people and running an independent household' (§ 3 point 9). Permanent stay is also defined as a stay of at least 4 hours within a time span of 24 hours (§ 3 point 9).

The above-mentioned definition is based on residence status in the population registry. It is still obligatory in Poland to have a permanent or temporary residence status. Before 2004, the definition of a homeless person was more restrictive. If a person had a permanent residence status, then not living in a dwelling was not enough to meet the conditions set in the social assistance Act. After 2004 it became less restrictive: people who are not living in a dwelling, but who have a permanent residence status, can now be recognised as homeless. It depends, however, on the interpretation of what it means to have no possibility of living in a dwelling in which a person has a permanent residence status (see above).

The only strategic document referring to the issue of homelessness and housing exclusion is the 'Action Programme against Poverty and Social Exclusion: New Dimension of Active Integration' (*Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Nowy Wymiar Aktywnej Integracji* – the Action Programme) adopted in 2014. The action programme criticises the existing definition in the Act on social assistance as serving only administrative purposes (p. 37). It also highlights the fact that there is a lack of common understanding of the concept of homelessness by stakeholders, which is a barrier to better cooperation between them. Despite this criticism, the action programme does not provide a new definition of homelessness in Poland.

With regards to housing exclusion, the action programme follows the ETHOS approach and refers to '**an unstable and insecure dwelling as well as inadequate housing (...) it is not only physical problems with a dwelling (roof over the head), but also with starting social relationships or with legal and administrative regulations**'.⁸ While the impact of this definition on the content of this document is not clear, it is worth noting that it explicitly refers to the terms 'housing insecurity' or 'housing exclusion' and not only homelessness. However, this document does not provide a new definition of homelessness and it has no specific target indicators relating to reducing homelessness (p. 54).

The Polish official definition of homelessness was not designed in line with the ETHOS typology.⁹ A Polish adaptation of the ETHOS typology was prepared in 2009 by the main NGOs working with the homeless, but it has no official recognition.¹⁰ Table A1 in the Annex indicates which living situations according to ETHOS Light are covered by the Polish definition. The terminology used in reports based on the homelessness censuses needs to be cross-referred to the ETHOS Light typology, which is not straightforward in every case. Such a translation is provided in Table A3 (Annex).

The official definition of homelessness is broad in scope and covers all those living outside a dwelling, even if they have permanent residency status in that dwelling, provided that there is no possibility of them living there. For example, if a person who moved from the countryside to a big city lives in a public space, but at the same time has

⁷ Rozporządzenie Ministra Infrastruktury z 12 kwietnia 2002 r. w sprawie warunków technicznych, jakim powinny odpowiadać budynki i ich usytuowanie <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20020750690>.

⁸ Ibidem p. 22.

⁹ See: *Stanowisko Kamilińskiej Misji Pomocy Społecznej w sprawie określania skali bezdomności i wykluczenia mieszkaniowego w Polsce*, with four concrete proposals for improvement p. 1-2. <http://www.misja.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Stanowisko-KMPS-liczenie-ludzi-bezdomnych.pdf>

¹⁰ See: *Stanowisko wobec Definicji oraz Typologii Bezdomności wypracowane przez Pomorskie Forum na rzecz Wychodzenia z Bezdomności, Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta, Sieć BARKA, Stowarzyszenie MONAR, CARITAS Diecezji Kieleckiej, Stowarzyszenie OTWARTE DRZWI*, 2009.

a permanent residency in a dwelling where they previously lived and has a possibility of living there, they should not be considered as homeless under the official definition.

The current definition, due to the vague reference to inability to live in a dwelling, can be a source of a conflict between shelters delivering accommodation for the homeless and public authorities. The latter question whether people are homeless if, according to the authorities, they have the possibility of living in a dwelling in which they have permanent residency status. It is also an incentive for the shelter providers and the homeless not to disclose that the latter have permanent residency, or to deliberately change their residency status to temporary or none.

1.2. The extent of homelessness and housing exclusion in Poland

The main source of data on homelessness in Poland is biannual one-night censuses of homeless people (*badanie liczby osób bezdomnych*), who stay in emergency accommodation, institutions and inhabitable spaces. The censuses are carried out by local authorities and coordinated by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej).

The last census was conducted on the night of 13-14 February 2019. It followed the ETHOS Light typology, adapted to Polish institutions. Table A2 in the Annex presents recent data on homelessness in Poland, based on the last census results as well as additional administrative data sources.

According to these data, among the 30,330 homeless people in Poland, more than half (56%) lived in hostels and other similar temporary accommodation. Around a third (34%) experienced the most severe forms of homelessness: living rough (8%), living in non-conventional buildings (11%) and living in overnight shelters (14%). The remainder lived in health and penal institutions. The supply of sheltered dwellings is particularly limited. The number of homeless people in sheltered dwellings in 2016 (latest available data) was equivalent to less than 2% of the number of all homeless persons in 2019.

The estimated numbers of homeless people in Poland between 2010 and 2019 are presented in Table 1. This Table summarises available information, including data from homelessness censuses since 2011 and the national census (NSP). In the years 2011, 2013 and 2019 the census included an additional socio-demographic module based on an individual questionnaire among homeless people.

Table 1: Estimated number of homeless people in Poland 2010-2019

	2010	2011	2011 (national census)	2013	2015	2017	2019
Total	n.a.	43,080	25,770	30,710	36,160	33,410	30,330
Men	n.a.	35,320	19,890	24,520	28,920	27,910	25,370
Women	n.a.	5,670	5,880	4,360	5,350	5,500	4,960
Children	n.a.	2,050	1,780	1,540	1,890	1,200	990
In institutions	20,960	33,650	15,980	22,000	25,600	26,900	24,320
Outside institutions	n.a.	9,440	9,970	8,500	10,500	6,500	6,010

Sources: Own compilation based on reports published by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPiPS 2017a, 2015, 2013, 2010) and Statistics Poland (GUS, 2013).

It should be underlined that the figures across this period are not fully comparable. The quality of information collected in 2011, 2013 and 2015 was criticised by NGOs.¹¹ For example, in the first Ministry census in 2011, the number of homeless people was assessed at different points of time in different regions, which might have led to double-counting. There were also calculation errors in the reports. For 2013, the number of homeless people identified by the social assistance services in the whole of 2012 was added to the number of homeless people counted in February 2013 by the census. The information on children was also reviewed by an independent researcher, who concluded that it is not advisable to draw any conclusions based on comparing the selected years (Wygnańska, 2016).

Putting aside the methodological issues and selecting more reliable estimates, between 2011 (NSP) and 2015 the number of homeless people increased substantially, by 40%, and then dropped by 16% between 2015 and 2019 (Table 1). The increase in the first period was due to the growing number of homeless men (up by 45%) and – to a smaller extent – children (up by 6%), while the number of homeless women declined by 9%. In the second period the most substantial drop was observed in the number of children (48%); the number of men declined by 12%, and of women by 7%.

The census data also provide information on selected socio-economic characteristics such as sex, age, education level, residence status (in or out of institutions, with additional breakdowns by types), length of homelessness, subjective opinion about the cause of own homelessness, main income sources, disability level (only in 2013) and coverage by health insurance (only in 2013).

The results of the 2019 census show that the vast majority of homeless people were males (84% of all homeless in 2019). Most of the homeless were in the older age groups: 46% were aged 41-60 and 33% were aged over 60. The third most numerous group was younger adults aged 26-40 (16%). Young homeless people aged 18-25 and children aged 0-17 were the smallest groups (3% each).

Almost half of homeless people had received basic vocational education (44%). Around a third had completed only primary school. Fewer homeless people had received secondary education (17%) and had lower secondary school attainment (4%). The smallest groups were those without any education (3%) and with a higher education degree (only 2%).

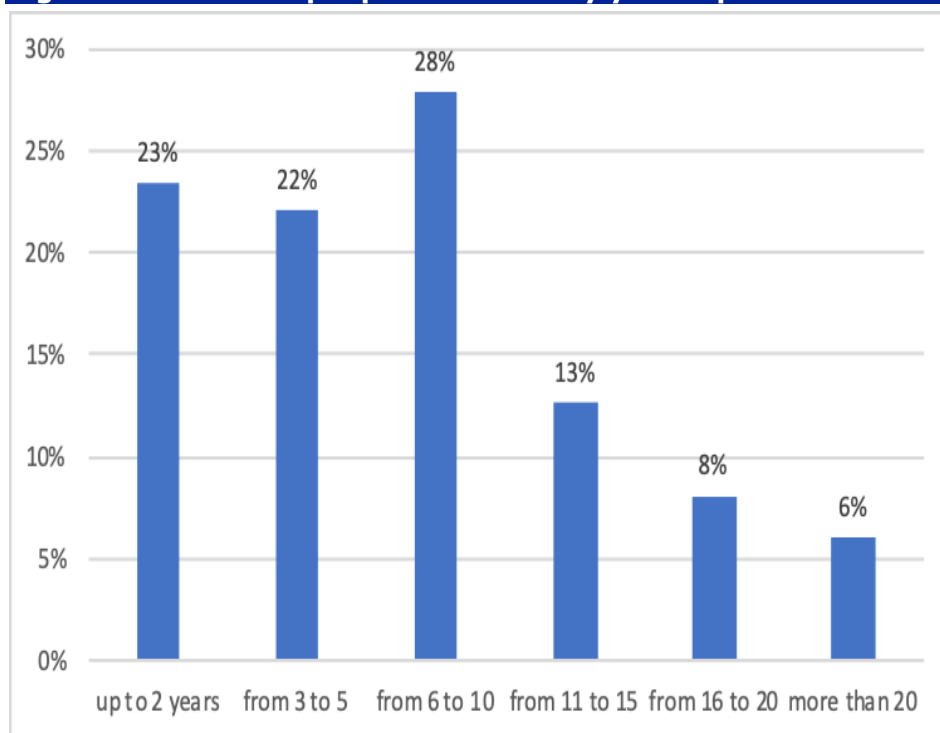
As shown in Figure 1, most of the homeless reported that they had been homeless for less than 10 years; however more than a quarter had been homeless for 11 years or more, of whom 6% for more than 20 years.¹²

There are no data related to the other socio-economic characteristics of homeless people in Poland, such as household structure, migration background (a question about citizenship was asked for the first time in the February 2019 census), ethnicity, legal status of the housing (a question about the legal place of residence was asked for the first time in the February 2019 census).¹³

¹¹ *Stanowisko Kamilińskiej Misji Pomocy Społecznej w sprawie określania skali bezdomności i wykluczenia mieszkaniowego w Polsce*, with four concrete proposals for improvement p. 1-2. <http://www.misja.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Stanowisko-KMPS-liczenie-ludzi-bezdomnych.pdf>.

¹² This refers to those homeless people who responded to the question on the length of homelessness.

¹³ The question on citizenship was added to the questionnaire as question 4; that on legal status was added as question 5. The full questionnaire is available at: https://www.gov.pl/documents/1048151/1060973/Kwestionariusz_dotycz%C4%85cy_osoby_bezdomnej_2019.pdf.

Figure 1: Homeless people in Poland by years spent as homeless (2019)

Source: Own elaboration based on MRPIPS (2019).

1.3. Regional and local distribution of homelessness

The 2019 census data also allowed the location (region and major city) of homeless people to be assessed (MRPIPS, 2019). The distribution of homelessness was not equal between the regions. The largest number of homeless people lived in two regions: mazowieckie with the capital city (4,728 out of 30,330), śląskie (4,255) and pomorskie (3,104). In six regions (podlaskie, świętokrzyskie, lubelskie, lubuskie, opolskie and podkarpackie) the number of homeless people was below 1,000 (between 794 and 933).

Homelessness is concentrated in the cities. The 2015 census data provided information on the number of homeless people living in the 18 largest cities in Poland (Table 2).

Table 2: Homeless people in the 18 major cities in Poland (2015)

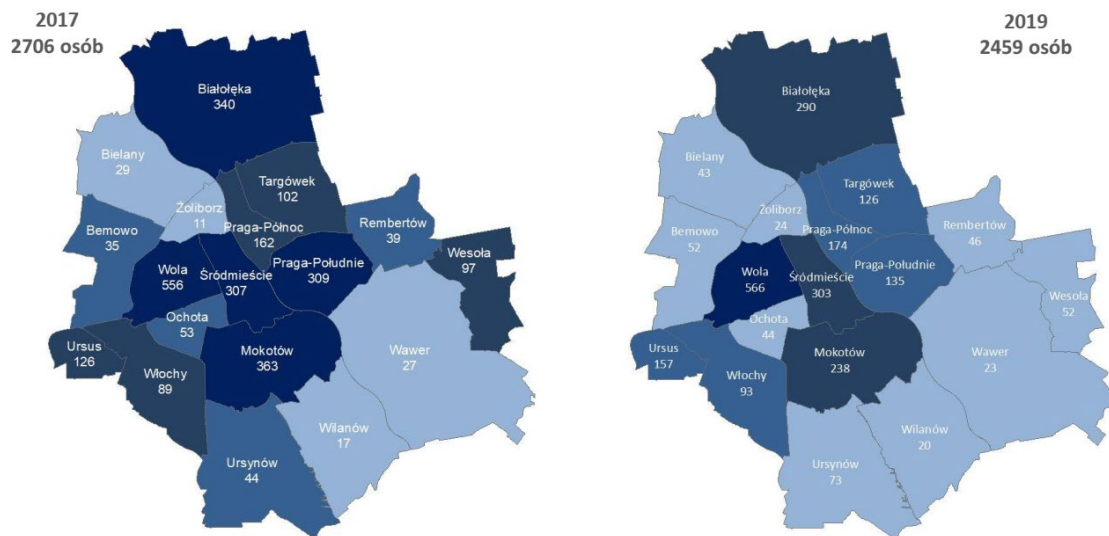
City	Region	Number of homeless people	As % of all homeless people
Warszawa	mazowieckie	2,516	6.96
Bydgoszcz	kujawsko-pomorskie	1,436	3.97
Szczecin	zachodniopomorskie	1,176	3.25
Kraków	małopolskie	1,056	2.92
Toruń	kujawsko-pomorskie	1,008	2.79
Wrocław	dolnośląskie	999	2.76
Łódź	łódzkie	999	2.76
Poznań	wielkopolskie	858	2.37
Gdańsk	pomorskie	778	2.15
Katowice	śląskie	630	1.74
Białystok	podlaskie	324	0.90
Lublin	lubelskie	306	0.85
Kielce	świętokrzyskie	294	0.81
Opole	opolskie	290	0.80
Olsztyn	warmińsko-mazurskie	229	0.63
Gorzów Wlkp.	lubuskie	198	0.55
Zielona Góra	lubuskie	195	0.54
Rzeszów	podkarpackie	145	0.40
Total in large cities		13,437	37.19
Total		36,131	

Source: Own elaboration based on MRPIPS (2015).

Over 37% of all homeless people in 2015 lived in 18 big cities. In mazowieckie and małopolskie the majority (54%) of homeless people lived in two cities, Warszawa and Kraków.

Almost 7% of all homeless people lived in Warszawa. Detailed data for Warszawa are available for 2019. As shown in Figure 2, there was an unequal distribution of homeless people across the districts in Warsaw, with the largest number living in Wola, Śródmieście, Białołęka and Mokotów districts. This distribution is related to the location of shelters for the homeless: for example, in Białołęka district there are over four shelters with 100 places run by one NGO.¹⁴ The homeless in Warsaw were mainly Polish, with only 3% indicating that their citizenship was not Polish.

¹⁴ Short descriptions with number of places at: <http://www.cpb.waw.pl/schroniska-s20.html>.

Figure 2: Number of homeless people by district in Warszawa in 2017 and 2019

Source: *Bezdomność w Warszawie. Raport z badania, marzec 2019.*

https://politykaspoleczna.um.warszawa.pl/sites/politykaspoleczna.um.warszawa.pl/files/artykuly/zalaczniki/raport_badanie_liczby_osob_bezdomnych_0.pdf

2 Relevant strategies and policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion

2.1 Strategic documents on reducing homelessness and housing exclusion

There is no specific government document describing a strategy towards housing exclusion and homelessness.¹⁵ The government's 2014 "Action Programme against Poverty and Social Exclusion. New Dimension of Active Integration" (*Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Nowy Wymiar Aktywnej Integracji* – the Action Programme) addresses housing issues.¹⁶ It was an operational programme within the broader strategy for human capital development (*strategia rozwoju kapitału ludzkiego*) published in 2013, and was aimed at addressing ex-ante conditionality for the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020.

The fifth priority (out of six) directly addressed the prevention of housing insecurity and action against homelessness (*priorytet w zapobieganiu niepewności mieszkaniowej i przeciwdziałanie bezdomności*).¹⁷ It comprised four principal measures, as follows.

1. **Development of housing, including social housing** – this focuses on financial support to municipalities and NGOs for the building of social housing, supported dwellings, night shelters and hostels for the homeless. It also mentions using the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and ESF to develop sheltered, supported and training dwellings, as well as overnight shelters and hostel facilities for the homeless.
2. **Integrated action on preventing loss of dwellings, housing rent indebtedness, evictions and homelessness** – under this measure, legislative changes are proposed aimed at: (i) introducing a definition of supported dwellings, which are at the disposal of social assistance and integration services, to prevent homelessness;¹⁸ (ii) developing regulatory instruments helping local authorities to manage their housing stock to support people in need; (iii) enabling social work with inmates six months before leaving prison. This area also covers the integration of different actors (including owners and managers of different types of housing and social assistance services) within specialised units, in order to enable early detection of the risk of eviction, and to implement indebtedness management and early post-eviction reintegration programmes. In addition it covers homelessness prevention aimed at people leaving institutions or escaping domestic violence.
3. **Diagnosis of housing exclusion** – this comprises: (i) developing research, and research methodologies, on housing exclusion and on the risk of homelessness (including research on people living in social/public housing, and their living and income situation, in order to determine the real demand for housing and social support and the possibility of differentiating rents based on income criteria); (ii)

¹⁵ The first failed attempt to develop a strategy focused on homelessness was made by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy in 2008-09; see <https://archiwum.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/reintegracja-spoeczna/art,4549,prace-nad-krajowa-strategia-wychodzenia-z-bezdomnosc.html>. The second attempt was undertaken under the ESF 2007-2013 project (*Tworzenie i rozwijanie standardów usług pomocy i integracji społecznej*). The project team developed a draft of the National Programme for Resolving the Problem of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (*Krajowy Program Rozwiązywania Problemu Bezdomności i Wykluczenia Mieszkaniowego*): http://www.old.monar.org/content/pliki/gswb/ZO_2014_04_zal_07.pdf.

¹⁶ Available at: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WMP20140000787>.

¹⁷ The same applies to the 16 regional social policy strategies (an obligatory document for every region), which include a part about homelessness in diagnosis, services, SWOT-like analyses and strategic goals e.g. *Strategia Polityki Społecznej Województwa Mazowieckiego na lata 2014–2020*, with two detailed goals on p. 144 <https://www.mazovia.pl/downloadStat/gfx/mazovia/pl/defaultaktualnosci/109/342/1/ddzalatnic.pdf>.

¹⁸ In 2014, in Polish law, there was only a definition of sheltered dwellings for people with disabilities.

developing public statistics related to housing and homelessness (including, among other things, those on homelessness, housing exclusion and people in municipal housing within the housing economy statistics collected by Statistics Poland); and (iii) establishing and developing a national research platform (*krajowa platforma badawcza*) on homelessness and housing exclusion.

4. **Resolving the homelessness problem** – this comprises, among other measures: (i) a proposal to mandate municipalities to include homelessness in their local social policy strategies; (ii) developing and implementing quality standards for services delivered to the homeless that cover registration and accreditation systems (based on the municipal standard for getting out of homelessness [*gminny standard wychodzenia z bezdomności*] developed within an ESF-funded project); (iii) developing and testing supported leases (a new type of lease agreement); (iv) developing outreach (street working) and other types of easily accessible services (e.g. day shelters with other services, health and long-term care) for the homeless; and (v) developing housing solutions (supported and training dwellings, and Housing First) rather than institutions, and putting more emphasis within institutions on reintegration services.

The emphasis on housing-led solutions is visible in the action programme. Housing First services are mentioned, but not as a main or key action, rather as a novel idea worth considering. The programme also refers briefly to improvements in the social rental sector and social housing delivery. Tenancy sustainment and housing assistance measures are included in the part focused on preventing loss of dwellings, housing rent indebtedness, evictions and homelessness.

The action programme also calls for the inclusive development of policies and services, with the participation of homeless people; however, homeless people were not involved in the development of the programme itself.

The action programme was criticised for not following the rights-based approach established in the guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights, adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 27 September 2012, in resolution number 21/11. First, state actions included in the programme were not described as legal obligations towards people living in poverty. Second, development of the programme was conducted without the participation of these people. Third, its implementation was not monitored (Ploszka, 2019, p. 288-292).

2.2 Financing programmes aimed at reducing homelessness and housing exclusion

The supply of municipal housing in Poland is limited. In 2017, over 154,100 households were waiting for municipal housing and 59% of them were waiting for social dwellings (*lokale socjalne*). Nearly 60% of those waiting for social dwellings were entitled to such dwellings based on a court decision on eviction.¹⁹ The supply and demand for municipal housing are not balanced, with demand markedly exceeding supply. Thus far, supply-side interventions have been too weak to solve this problem, which is linked to the limited provision of programmes focusing on housing provision. The adequacy of financing mechanisms can be assessed only in the area of social housing, in respect of social dwellings available to the poorest citizens and owned directly by municipalities.²⁰

¹⁹ *Gospodarka mieszkaniowa w 2017 r.* <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/infrastruktura-komunalna-nieruchomosci/nieruchomosci-budynki-infrastruktura-komunalna/gospodarka-mieszkaniowa-w-2017-roku,7,13.html>.

²⁰ There is another type of social housing (owned by independent municipal housing companies – *Towarzystwa Budownictwa Społecznego*) which provide housing mainly to the middle and lower middle-income class, with higher income tests and regulated rents: lower than those on the market, but well above rents in municipal social housing (Rataj, 2018, p. 143-146), which is not included in this assessment.

Combating homelessness is mainly financed from local government budgets. In 2010 financing totalled 111.2 million zł (26.5 million €) and in 2016 it doubled to 214.9 million zł (51.2 million €), which was 80% and 96% respectively of total public spending on homelessness. Funds from other sources (regions, the central programme of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, and EU funds) represented 20% of total funding in 2010 and this share fell substantially to 4% in 2016 (Table 3). Assuming that the average number of homeless people (in and outside institutions) was stable at 33,000, public spending on combating homelessness, per homeless person, increased from 4,200 zł in 2010 (1,000 €) to 6,800 zł (1,600 €) in 2016.

Table 3: Public spending on homelessness (in million zł)

	Total	Local governments	NGOs	Public units	Cash benefits to the homeless
2010	138.42	111.25	69.28	17.85	50.51
2012	166.78	136.96	84.48	24.19	58.11
2014	222.45	194.41	99.46	28.69	83.04
2016	224.60	214.91	81.96	40.50	94.22

Source: Own elaboration based on reports published by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPiPS 2017a, 2015, 2013, 2010).

There are two leading central government programmes providing additional financing for the construction and renovation of social housing and facilities for homeless people, but also for other projects related to prevention, activation and innovation in the area of direct action against homelessness. The first programme is the co-payment fund (*fundusz dopłat*), which is managed by the public Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and which mainly finances the building of new social dwellings. Spending by the co-payment fund increased from 45.5 million zł (10.8 million €) in 2010 to 181.8 million zł (43.3 million €) in 2016. Within this funding, the amount in 2010 used for facilities for homeless persons such as shelters was 2.1 million zł (0.5 million €), which was 4.7% of total expenditure on homelessness. In 2016 it was 1.1 million zł (0.3 million €), which was an even smaller percentage (0.6%).²¹ The second programme, called 'Beating homelessness: programme of support to homeless people' (*Pokonać bezdomność: program pomocy osobom bezdomnym*) is implemented by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPiPS, 2018b). Between 2010 and 2017 the financing for social projects and renovation of facilities within this programme increased from 5 million zł (around 1.2 million €) to 6.2 million zł (around 1.5 million €).

EU funding indicated in the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy reports on combating homelessness is a very small part of total funding. It was 2 million zł (0.5 million €) in 2010 and 3 million zł (0.7 million €) in 2014. In both years it was less than 2% of all funds spent for that purpose. This was, however, only part of the EU funds that were transferred to regions. There were also central projects financed from the ESF in the programming period 2007-2013. The main outcome of these projects was the development of the municipal standard for getting out of homelessness (*Gminny Standard Wychodzenia z Bezdomności*).²² The standard was developed by a broad public-

²¹ Data from Sprawozdanie z realizacji działań na rzecz ludzi bezdomnych w województwach w roku 2016 oraz wyniki Ogólnopolskiego badania liczby osób bezdomnych (8/9 luty 2017) and Sprawozdanie z realizacji działań na rzecz ludzi bezdomnych w województwach w roku 2010.

²² Model GSWB: <http://www.pfwb.com.pl/projekty/qminny-standard-wychodzenia-z-bezdomnosci/dyskusje-nad-modelem-gswb>.

NGO partnership, and some of its recommendations (on standards for facilities for homeless people) were introduced in the social assistance law in 2018.²³

Overall, the financing of policies to tackle homelessness in Poland is very modest and there has been a gradually reduced participation by central government. The responsibility for financing policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion is mainly born by local government. The unmet financing need is increasing. This is confirmed by the requests for funding made by the main NGOs, which provide services to the homeless. Such requests are made particularly in relation to the adjustment needs generated by new minimum standards imposed on shelters and hostels. In 2018, the Polish federation of the main NGO providers of services for the homeless (Ogólnopolska Federacja na rzecz Rozwiązywania Problemu Bezdomności) requested that the Ministry substantially increase the amount allocated to the 'Beating homelessness' programme to 15 million zł (3.6 million €), to cover additional costs generated by adjustments to the newly established minimum standards.²⁴

2.3 Monitoring the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing homelessness and housing exclusion

The EU indicators on housing were used only incidentally in the diagnosis part of the action programme. These included: population at risk of poverty according to tenure status (owner-occupied, social renting) and children living in housing deprivation. The programme's targets for housing and homelessness included only two indicators based on Polish sources: number of dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants, and share of evictions without entitlement to a social dwelling in the number of all evictions (p. 54).

Arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the "Action Programme against Poverty and Social Exclusion. New Dimension of Active Integration" were described in chapter IV (two pages long). It referred to the institutions responsible: the national research platform at central level, and the Social Integration Observatories (Obserwatoria Integracji Społecznej – OIS) at regional level. However, the national platform was never established, and the OIS, which were financed under the ESF 2007-2013 project 'Coordination for active integration' (*Koordinacja na rzecz aktywnej integracji*), were discontinued after the end of the project.²⁵ Therefore, the monitoring mechanism envisaged in the action programme does not exist.

The current government (formed by the previous opposition after the general elections in 2015) did not monitor the implementation of the action programme. In April 2019, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy initiated an update of the programme due to new ESF 2021-2027 conditionality, but this is in the early stage of development and there are no publicly available drafts for consultation.

²³ Setting minimum standards as an obligation for the social ministry was introduced under the act on social assistance in 2016 (art. 48a, point 14). The first government-published guidelines were published in 2017 (MRPiPS, 2017b). Minimum standards were finally established by ministerial regulation in 2018 (*Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 27 kwietnia 2018 r. w sprawie minimalnych standardów noclegowni, schronisk dla osób bezdomnych, schronisk dla osób bezdomnych z usługami opiekuńczymi i ogrzewalni*): <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180000896>.

²⁴ Prośba do Ministerstwa Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej o zwiększenie środków na program 'Pokonać bezdomność' w roku 2019 i kolejnych: http://www.bezdomnosc.pl/images/dokumenty/stanowiska/2018.10.03_MRPiPS_Program_bezdomnosc.pdf.

²⁵ Some regions decided to continue the OIS e.g. wielkopolskie, but these were exceptions.

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

3.1 Support services for homeless people in Poland

Support services for the homeless are regulated by the Act on social assistance. These include three groups of services: 'providing shelter' (art. 48a), 'crisis intervention' (art. 47) and providing dwellings with services (art. 53). The types of services under each group include the following.

- **Providing shelter:**
 - 24-hour shelters (*schroniska dla bezdomnych*) – emergency/temporary accommodation (up to six months)
 - Without care services
 - With care services (for homeless persons with severe disability up to four months)
 - night shelters (*noclegownie*) – emergency accommodation
 - warming-up shelters (*ogrzewalnie*) – emergency accommodation in winter time.
- **Providing crisis intervention:**
 - homes for mothers with minors and pregnant women (*domy dla matek z nieletnimi dziećmi i dla kobiet w ciąży*) – emergency/temporary accommodation (up to six months)
 - crisis intervention centres (*centra interwencji kryzysowej*) – emergency/temporary accommodation (up to three months).
- **Providing dwellings with services:**
 - sheltered dwellings (*mieszkania chronione*)
 - sheltered training dwellings (*mieszkania chronione treningowe*)
 - sheltered supported dwellings (*mieszkania chronione wspomagane*).

Sheltered dwellings are not intended for the homeless *per se*, but for people with disabilities and young people leaving institutions after reaching adulthood. They are considered as preventive services. In homelessness practice, the sheltered dwellings are perceived as training facilities for people with chances of getting standard social housing (they are on waiting lists). It is the transitional stage between shelters (81 people per unit on average in 2017) and standard housing within the framework of the 'staircase' model. In 2017 there were on average 4 people per unit in sheltered dwellings.²⁶ Their inhabitants are not considered as tenants – they have no tenancy protection. Their right to live in sheltered dwelling is granted by an administrative decision of social assistance authorities or NGOs, and not by a lease concluded with the municipality. Some NGOs run shelters for the homeless by concluding leases with private landlords and sub-letting the properties to selected users of their shelter.²⁷

General, specific and sheltered dwellings services are all now subject to minimum standards. The standards were defined, respectively, in the regulations adopted in 2018,²⁸ 2005²⁹ and 2018 (replacing the 2012 act).³⁰

²⁶ The minimum standard should be improved gradually from a maximum of 12 persons per dwelling in 2019, 10 in 2020-21 and 7 from 2022 (*Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 26 kwietnia 2018 r. w sprawie mieszkań chronionych*).

²⁷ An example of training dwellings programme conducted by an NGO in Warsaw is available at: <http://www.misia.com.pl/mieszkania-chronione/>.

²⁸ For a short overview see (Wilczek, 2018). Legal source: *Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 27 kwietnia 2018 r. w sprawie minimalnych standardów noclegowni, schronisk dla osób*

The distinction between providing shelter for the homeless and providing shelter for people in crisis is not clear, which is related to the ambiguous official definition of homelessness (see Section 1).

3.2 Service providers

NGOs are the main shelter providers in Poland. In 2010 the NGO share was 80%, in 2012 and 2014 it was 78%, and in 2016 it was 67%. The declining share of NGOs was due to the rising importance of services provided by the municipalities. This indicates a trend towards re-municipalisation of homelessness services.

The number of places and users in 2017, broken down by types of facilities and by sector, is presented in Table 4.

According to these data, in 2017, the main temporary shelter services for homeless people and for mothers with minors were provided by NGOs (non-public sector), both with respect to the number of places and users. Night shelters were less (but still) dominated by the NGO sector. Warming-up shelter services were more balanced in terms of providers, and the crisis intervention centres and sheltered dwellings were dominated by public sector units.

Table 4: Places for, and users of, the main services for the homeless by sector in Poland (2017)

	Public		Non-public		Non-public share	
	Places	Users	Places	Users	Places	Users
24-hour shelters	1,422	3,149	8,014	12,369	85%	80%
Night shelters	1,371	3,495	2,027	6,304	60%	64%
Warming-up shelters	683	3,607	659	3,163	49%	47%
Homes for mothers with minors	135	238	359	642	73%	73%
Crisis intervention centres	1,190	47,847	323	7,448	21%	13%
Sheltered dwellings	2,463	2,367	400	427	14%	15%

Source: Own elaboration based on data from MPRIPS (2018a).

The organisation of services is divided between several institutions. Coordination and financing are the responsibility of municipalities. NGOs, and to a lesser extent municipalities, deliver services. Municipalities are also responsible for granting cash benefits in cases of poverty and homelessness. Registration of facilities and the supervision (control) function is carried out by territorial units of central government (*województwo*). Central government is responsible for amending the social assistance legislation and for providing additional financing for housing construction and renovation (through the co-payment fund) as well as additional financing of services for the homeless (MRPiPS, 2018b).

bezdolnych, schronisk dla osób bezdomnych z usługami opiekuńczymi i ogrzewalni
<http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180000896>.

²⁹ Rozporządzenie Ministra Polityki Społecznej z dnia 8 marca 2005 r. w sprawie domów dla matek z małoletnimi dziećmi i kobiet w ciąży
<http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20050430418>.

³⁰ Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 26 kwietnia 2018 r. w sprawie mieszkań chronionych
<http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180000822>.

3.3 The effectiveness of services aimed at preventing and reducing housing exclusion and homelessness

In general, there are no specific services aimed at preventing eviction in general or 'eviction to nowhere' (*eksmisja na bruk* – eviction without alternative housing being arranged by the municipality). There are also no specific services aimed at preventing homelessness. Rehousing of those evicted is regulated by law, which includes provisions protecting the rights of landlords (public and private), the rights of evicted tenants and the rights of family violence victims (eviction of perpetrators). Effective implementation of court rulings concerning evictions is the responsibility of bailiffs (when tenants are not moving out voluntarily) and of municipalities. The latter should, according to the law, find social or other replacement dwellings. Some municipalities have adopted special social assistance programmes intended to help people at risk of eviction. There is no systematic evidence on the effectiveness of these programmes, beyond simple municipal reports about their implementation and the services delivered.³¹

The issue of evictions to nowhere is well recognised in Poland. Regulations that allowed evictions to nowhere came into force in 1994. They were criticised by many experts and NGOs. This issue is continuously raised in Poland and there are reports of social action to block such forced evictions.³² As a result of such protests and expert opinions, in 2001 the regulations were changed to protect specific categories, such as pregnant women, minors, and people with disabilities and their live-in carers, from eviction to nowhere (Różycka, 2013).³³ However, the risk of homelessness following eviction to nowhere is still substantial.

According to available assessments made by experts as well as the Supreme Audit Office, on average 40-50% of the need for municipal social housing is met (for 2013 see NIK, 2014; and for one of Polish big cities, Poznań, in 2012-2017 see Suszyńska and Muczyński, 2018). People eligible for municipal social housing include not only those at risk of homelessness, but also applicants who meet income and other criteria. There is no strong evidence on the effectiveness of municipal housing policies in the area of homelessness or housing exclusion in Poland. The waiting time for social dwellings varies significantly between municipalities. We do not know the factors influencing waiting times for homeless people versus non-homeless ones in different locations. Detailed regulations concerning access to municipal housing are left at the discretion of municipalities.

Housing-led solutions are promoted by NGOs and experts in Poland (e.g. Wilczek ed., 2017). Despite such recommendations, the available data indicate a scarcity of such solutions. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of municipal dwellings granted to homeless persons increased by 42% (from 770 to 1,091 units). However, if the base year is changed to 2009, there was no improvement (1,110 dwellings were granted in 2009). The number of social dwellings granted to the homeless in 2016 was equivalent to only 3% of the number of homeless people in 2017. The share of social dwellings in all dwellings granted to the homeless fell from 62% in 2010 to 56% in 2016.³⁴ There are no data on the subsequent housing trajectories of these people, such as how many of them stayed in dwellings and how many returned to homelessness.

Effective programmes for homeless people need to be comprehensive, and they therefore need to be well managed in order to ensure coordination among many different services and providers. One of the tools supporting such comprehensive programmes is the individual programmes for getting out of homelessness (*indywidualne programy wychodzenia z bezdomności*). The number of signed individual programmes is rather low

³¹ An example of such a report, for the city of Jaworzno, is available at: <https://mops.jaworzno.pl/pobierz/BEZDOMNOSC2017.pdf>.

³² An example of the blocking of the eviction of a person with a disability to temporary premises, in Warsaw, is available at: <https://lokatorzy.info.pl/blokada-eksmisji-na-ul-dyminskiej>.

³³ Topic also analysed recently in Borysiak (2018).

³⁴ Own elaboration based on data from MPiPS (2017a) and MPiPS (2010).

in relation to the number of adults in 24-hour shelters, despite the fact that people using such shelters seem to be more willing to cooperate in social work interventions. In 2016 14,738 adults lived in all-day shelters, and the share of those who signed individual programmes was 25%.

Government reports provide information about the number of homeless people who are identified as 'becoming independent'. That number has not increased over time (see Table 5). The number of people who became independent relative to those who signed an individual programme ranged from 46% to 65% over the period 2009-2016. However, it is not indicated if those who became independent were covered by the individual programmes.

Table 5: Personalisation and the effects of such services in Poland, 2009-2016

	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Homeless people who signed an individual programme	5,411	5,238	3,464	3,155	3,635
Homeless people who became independent	2 515	2,622	2,710	2,636	2,382

Source: Own elaboration based on reports published by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPiPS 2017a, 2015, 2013, 2010).

In general, the availability of evidence-based assessments of the effectiveness of policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion in Poland is low, particularly in comparison with the international progress in this area.³⁵ The most reliable Polish summary of micro and macro barriers to getting out of homelessness was prepared within the ESF EQUAL project conducted in the pomorskie region in 2004-2008 (Dębska-Cenian and Olech eds, 2008, p. 45, 47).

There are many limitations on the development of policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion in Poland. The quality of data on this issue is low, particularly on the characteristics of homeless people. Increasing the reliability of the information requires, among other things, improving the individual questionnaire in the census on the socio-demographic characteristics of homeless people, and individual data collection.³⁶ The quality of administrative data should also be improved (Wygnańska, 2012). Furthermore, data from both sources should be made available to interested researchers. Evidence-based research using these data on the determinants of long-term exits from homelessness would support the development of more effective policies.

There are also limitations that reduce the effectiveness of existing policies. The most important one is an insufficient supply of municipal housing, the main function of which is to provide housing for people at risk of housing exclusion. Access to municipal social housing was evaluated in 2014 by the Supreme Audit Office (NIK 2014). One of the general conclusions was that the number of people waiting for social housing was double the number of existing dwellings.³⁷ Research conducted in one of the big Polish cities (Poznań) confirmed the same result for the years 2012-2016: the number of concluded leases for municipal housing was equivalent to 40-50% of the number of applications that met all the required criteria (Suszyńska and Muczyński, 2018). The main two barriers to increasing the supply of municipal social housing are funding, and inadequate legal solutions for reducing the provision of services to those who actually do not need them.

³⁵ Evidence tools at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/tools>.

³⁶ There is an interest in improving the homelessness census methodology: *Stanowisko Kamilińskiej Misji Pomocy Społecznej w sprawie określania skali bezdomności i wykluczenia mieszkaniowego w Polsce*, 2013 <http://www.misja.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Stanowisko-KMPS-liczenie-ludzi-bezdomnych.pdf>; *DreamBIG! Kwestionariusz do badania socjodemograficznego MRPiPS 2019*: <http://www.czynajpierw mieszkanie.pl/dreambig-kwestionariusz-do-badania-socjodemograficznego-mrpips-2019>.

³⁷ *NIK o lokalach socjalnych*: <https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/nik-o-lokalach-socjalnych-2014.html>.

With regards to funding, removing the barrier requires an increased level of funding from the co-payment fund. It should be noted that the amounts of financial support from this fund have recently increased.³⁸ The second barrier creates disincentives for municipalities to develop their housing stock, and even incentivises them to sell it to tenants with huge rebates (a well known practice in the past). Recent changes in the law protecting tenants have improved the situation. Municipalities have been granted more discretion over rent policy. They are now legally able to monitor tenants' income and increase the rent for those whose income goes above an income threshold. Another amendment has changed social dwelling status to a new type of social lease, which can also reduce the institutional barriers to provide social housing.³⁹

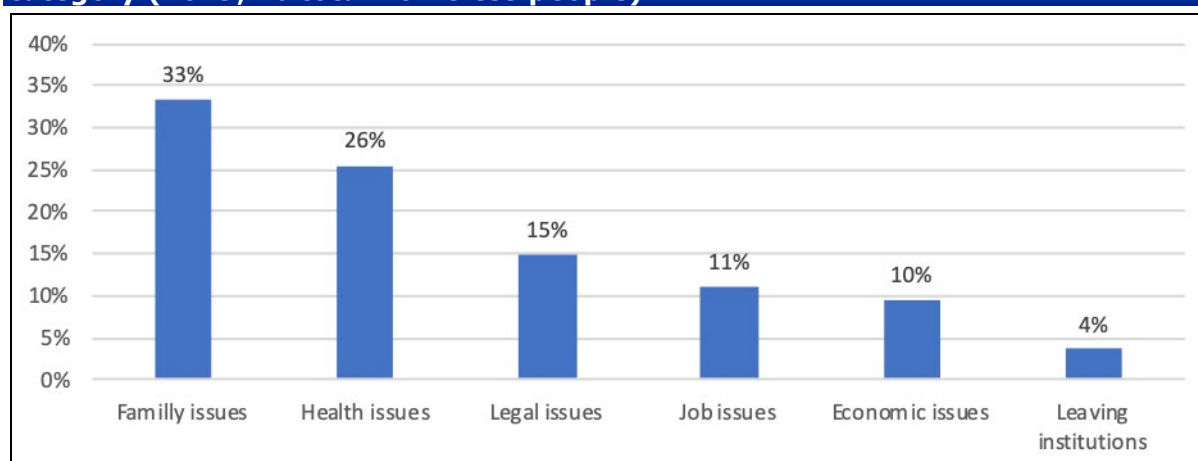
Another limitation on the effectiveness of homelessness policies is the fragmentation of social services designed to reduce the risk of homelessness, which is related to specific causes as well as the availability and quality of such services.

There are six broad groups of causes of homelessness, identified in the homeless census questionnaire, which include:

1. family-related causes: family conflict, dissolution of a relationship, leaving or death of a caregiver in childhood, domestic violence;
2. health-related causes: addiction, illness/mental health issues other than addiction, bad health conditions, disability;
3. job-related causes: unemployment, lack of a job, failure to look for a job outside the place of residence; emigration or departure to other country for permanent stay or return from the other country after emigration;
4. economic causes: indebtedness;
5. legal causes: eviction, losing permanent residence in a dwelling; and
6. institutional causes: leaving prison or institutional foster care.

Figure 3 presents the shares of homeless people according to the reported cause of homelessness.

Figure 3: Subjectively reported causes of homelessness in Poland by broad category (2019, % total homeless people)



Source: Own elaboration based on 2019 census data.

³⁸ For a short description of the changes, see the BGK webpage: <https://www.bgk.pl/fundusze-i-programy/programy/wsparcie-budownictwa-mieszkaniewego-z-funduszu-doplac>.

³⁹ Ustawa z dnia 22 marca 2018 r. o zmianie ustawy o finansowym wsparciu tworzenia lokali socjalnych, mieszkań chronionych, noclegowni i domów dla bezdomnych, ustawy o ochronie praw lokatorów, mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy i o zmianie Kodeksu cywilnego oraz niektórych innych ustaw: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180000756>.

Around a third of the homeless indicated that their situation was related to family causes. For a quarter of homeless people, the main causes of homelessness were health-related. Job- and economic-related causes were indicated in a fifth of responses. Legal issues and leaving institutions together were indicated in 19%. This means that around two thirds of homeless people indicated causes that could be prevented by improving the effectiveness of public services.

Unlike family-related reported causes, it seems that the risk of homelessness related to other reported causes might be reduced by relevant public services. These include in particular:

- interventions reducing alcohol addiction (health issues);
- interventions reducing joblessness (economic issues);
- interventions reducing indebtedness (economic issues); and
- interventions enabling people to regain permanent residence status in a standard dwelling, in a sheltered supported dwelling or in a long-term care institution, depending on the needs of a homeless person (e.g. older people, people with severe disabilities).

The chances of permanent exit from homelessness are reduced by: lack of access to a stable dwelling (as in Housing First services); low availability of municipal housing, sheltered dwellings and places in long-term care institutions; non-existent, difficult-to-access or ineffective interventions for reducing addiction (e.g. waiting lists for addiction therapies); joblessness (e.g. ineffective job-search help); and indebtedness (e.g. difficulty in accessing personal bankruptcy⁴⁰).

3.4 Innovations in the provision of services for homeless people

Several innovations in the area of policies for tackling homelessness have recently been introduced or advocated in Poland.

The first important legal innovation was the introduction in 2018 of legal minimum standards for overnight and 24-hour shelters.⁴¹ The idea of standardisation in this area had been discussed for a long time and was finally fully developed with NGO participation within an ESF-funded project focusing on assistance and integration services and their quality standards (*Tworzenie i rozwijanie standardów usług pomocy i integracji społecznej*). This is also an example of an innovative way of changing the institutional framework of services for the homeless through multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The second important innovation is the emergence of a broader movement for developing housing-led services for the homeless. The most advanced part of this innovation is sheltered training dwellings, which are regulated by law. The sheltered training dwellings are also subject to minimum standards. The dwellings were developed within the framework of ESF-funded programmes at regional level, in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Another innovation is the establishment of the Social Lettings Agency (Społeczna Agencja – SLA).⁴² This is an idea based on good practice in Belgium (but also implemented in

⁴⁰ This is regulated by the Act on insolvency (*Ustawa Prawo upadłościowe*) in title V (*Postępowanie upadłościowe wobec osób fizycznych nieprowadzących działalności gospodarczej*): <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20030600535>.

⁴¹ The introduction of minimum standards was also suggested by the independent Supreme Audit Office. See: *Działania administracji publicznej na rzecz bezdomnych*, (NIK, 2013): <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,6740,vp,8559.pdf>.

⁴² First developed in the applied research project *Społeczna Agencja Najmu jako nowy instrument polityki mieszkaniowej*, financed by the social innovation programme (*narodowe centrum badań i rozwoju*): <http://habitat.pl/spoleczna-agencja-najmu-jako-instrument-polityki-mieszkaniowej-w-polsce>.

other countries).⁴³ The SLA is an intermediary between private landlords and people who have no access to social housing (they are for example on waiting lists) but who, at the same time, are able to pay a substantial part of the rent in the private sector. The SLA offers a stable long-term lease for private landlords (with additional services such as repairs and renovations), and then sub-lets rented dwellings to people at risk of housing exclusion, including the homeless. The participants are also supported by SLA social workers.

Another promising housing-led innovation is an advanced advocacy programme for a Housing First pilot in Poland.⁴⁴ Advocacy for housing-led services is supported by the Polish Ombudsperson (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich*) and its commission of experts in this area (*Komisja Ekspertów ds. Przeciwdziałania Bezdomności*) (Wilczek ed., 2017).

It is also worth mentioning an attempt to introduce a Bill of Rights for homeless people in Poland, promoted by the European campaign group Housing Rights Watch⁴⁵ and also supported by the Polish Ombudsperson.

3.5 Main weaknesses and priorities for improvement of homelessness and housing exclusion policies in Poland

There are four main weaknesses in policies for tackling homelessness and housing exclusion in Poland that are identified in this report:

- the focus of funding and regulations on non-housing shelter solutions and social assistance, which undermines prevention, housing-led approaches, comprehensiveness of support, and deinstitutionalisation;
- the low supply of municipal housing, which severely restricts the development of housing-led interventions such as social dwellings, sheltered training dwellings and Housing First services;
- poor coordination between different levels of government (central, regional and local); and between services regulated by different legislation and implemented by different ministries and departments, public and NGO-based providers, which limits the effectiveness of services; and
- the poor quality of homelessness census methodology and administrative data, which is a barrier to the development of an evidence-based approach.

The main priorities for improvement include the following.⁴⁶

- Changing the emphasis of financing and regulation from a shelter-based to a housing-led solution, starting from a well financed and monitored broader deinstitutionalisation strategy focusing on homeless people (among other groups).
- Increasing financial subsidies to social and municipal housing and making it easier for municipalities to obtain them.
- Monitoring the effects of the changes in social housing law adopted in 2018.

⁴³ Recommended in FEANTSA (2012).

⁴⁴ *Najpierw Mieszkanie*: <http://www.czynajpierwmieszkanie.pl>.

⁴⁵ European campaign for the recognition of the rights of homeless people: <https://www.housingrightswatch.org/billofrights>. *RPO ma nadzieję, że Karta Praw Osób Bezdomnych przyczyni się do systemowego rozwiązania problemu*: <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-ma-nadzieje-ze-karta-praw-osob-bezdomnych-przyczyni-sie-do-systemowego-rozwiazania-problemu>.

⁴⁶ More detailed recommendations can be found in Dębski (2014) and also in a statement made by the Polish Ombudsperson (*Wystąpienie do Minister Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej w sprawie osób bezdomnych*) in 2016.

- Devising and implementing coordination measures to increase cooperation between the different stakeholders, including public authorities and social service providers, that are interested in preventing homelessness and helping people to get out of it.
- Organising a multi-stakeholder forum to prepare a programme for developing an evidence-based approach to improve the quality of policies to reduce homelessness and housing exclusion, including an improvement of the homelessness censuses and the quality of administrative data.

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Annex

Table A1: ETHOS Light categories defined as homeless in Poland

Operational category		Living situation		Definition	Defined as homeless in Poland	
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 (a person meets the condition of not living in a dwelling, but if the person has permanent residence status, they should have no possibility of living in that dwelling)	
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation	Yes, as above	
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homelessness hostels	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided	Yes, as above	
		4	Temporary accommodation		Yes, as above	
		5	Transitional supported accommodation		Yes, as above	
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	Yes, as above	
		7	Healthcare institutions		Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing	Yes, as above
		8	Penal institutions		No housing available prior to release	Yes, as above
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	Yes, as above	
		10	Non-conventional buildings		Yes, as above	
		11	Temporary structures		Yes, as above	
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	Does not meet the condition of not living in a dwelling	

Source: Own elaboration.

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

Operational category		Living situation		Most recent number	Period covered	Source
1	People living rough	1	Public space/ external space	2,551	Night of 13-14 February 2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych-edycja-2019
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	4,299	Night of 13-14 February 2019	Ibid.
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homelessness hostels	13,396	Night of 13-14 February 2019	Ibid For transitional supported accommodation (<i>mieszkania chronione</i>) <i>Sprawozdanie z realizacji działań na rzecz ludzi bezdomnych w województwach w roku 2016 oraz wyniki Ogólnopolskiego badania liczby osób bezdomnych (8/9 luty 2017), p. 7.</i> ⁴⁷
		4	Temporary accommodation	2,843		
		5	Transitional supported accommodation	394 (administrative data 2016)		
		6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	723 (in women's shelters)		
4	People living in institutions	7	Healthcare institutions	1,533	Night of 13-14 February 2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych-edycja-2019
		8	Penal institutions	1,529		
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	na	Night of 13-14 February 2019	https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych-edycja-2019
		10	Non-conventional buildings	3,456		
		11	Temporary structures	na		
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	na		

Source: Own elaboration based on the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPIPS. 2018a)

⁴⁷ Link to the document:

<https://archiwum.mpips.gov.pl/download/gfx/mpips/pl/defaultopisy/9462/1/1/Sprawozdanie%20z%20realizacji%20dzialan%20na%20rzecz%20ludzi%20bezdomnych%20za%202016.pdf>.

Table A3: Translation of the terminology used in the Polish homelessness census to the ETHOS Light typology

Operational category		Living situation		Definition	Polish terminology
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	Inhabitable places (<i>miejsca niemieszkalne</i>): streets, staircases, bus and train stations, rubbish dump houses, basements)
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation	In Polish ' <i>noclegownia</i> ' as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> warming-up shelters (<i>ogrzewalnia</i>) open from 1 October to 30 April special facilities for people after abuse of alcohol (<i>izba wytrzeźwień, pogotowie socjalne</i>)
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3	Homelessness hostels	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided	Shelter for homeless people (<i>schronisko dla bezdomnych</i>)
		4	Temporary accommodation		Facilities with the possibility of staying up to 3-4 months – crisis intervention centres (<i>ośrodki interwencji kryzysowej</i>), and other types of institutions with exception of healthcare, penal ones and those for women (with children or pregnant).
		5	Transitional supported accommodation		Sheltered dwellings (<i>mieszkania chronione</i>)
6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	6	Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	Mainly homes for mothers with minors and pregnant women (<i>domy dla matek z małoletnimi dziećmi i kobiet w ciąży</i>), and special centres for support of victims of family violence (<i>specjalne ośrodki wsparcia dla ofiar przemocy w rodzinie</i>). In Polish law there is no distinction between shelters for homeless men and for homeless women (without children); but in practice there is also small number of shelters for women without children or not pregnant.	
					4
		8	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release	

5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9	Mobile homes	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence	Not clear if it is considered in the homeless census separately, in Polish it may be a caravan (<i>przyczepa kempingowa</i>)	
		10	Non-conventional buildings			In Poland these are mainly little buildings on collectively owned garden plots (popular in socialist Poland) regulated by special law (<i>altana działkowa, domki na działkach</i>), but also empty buildings abandoned and ruined (<i>pustostany</i>).
		11	Temporary structures			It is difficult to find an equivalent in Polish reports. The Romanian Roma encampments (<i>koczowisko</i>) in Wrocław may be the right case. ⁴⁸
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	Not included in the census reports in Poland.	

Source: own elaboration

⁴⁸ Rząd nie widzi sposobu na romskie koczowiska. Znajdą go Wrocław, Poznań i Gdańsk? <https://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/polityka-i-spoleczenstwo/rzad-nie-widzi-sposobu-na-romskie-koczowiska-znajda-go-wroclaw-poznan-i-gdansk,92735.html>. It was mentioned as a result of independent public control of protection of rights of Roma minority: NIK o ochronie praw mniejszości romskiej, https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/nik-o-ochronie-praw-mniejszosci-romskiej.html#przypis_1.

