Key Elements in Homelessness Strategies to End Homelessness by 2030

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Mutual Learning Event: Design of National Strategies to Fight Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

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Aim

The aim of this discussion paper is to provide a *conceptual framework* of the *dynamics of homelessness*, drawing on key lessons from research, and how these lessons can inform, through mutual learning and collaboration, the configuration of practices and policies in Member States, while reflecting and respecting their diversity, *in devising integrated strategies to end homelessness*.

The Framework identifies where homelessness can be *prevented* in the first instance, and for those that enter homelessness, *to minimise the duration* of that experience by ensuring *rapid exits* to secure accommodation.

Governance

Universal Prevention

Upstream Prevention

Crisis Prevention

Emergency Prevention

Entries to Homelessness

Homelessness Spells

Exiting Homelessness

Reducing Dependency on Shelters

Minimising Duration

Securing Tenancies

Repeat Prevention

Evaluation

Prevention

- There is evidence that there are a range of interventions at the different stages in the typology that have the potential to significantly reduce the flow into homelessness, but all effective interventions require a *sufficient level of affordable and secure housing.*

- In the absence of a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing, *prevention options may be constrained* and operate to 'gatekeep' households from accessing the services required to obtain affordable and secure housing, and hence only temporarily alleviating their housing instability.

Entry to Homelessness Services

Despite extensive critiques of the limitations of congregate temporary and emergency accommodation as a response to residential instability, this form of congregate accommodation remains the single most significant intervention in the lives of people experiencing homelessness in the majority of Member States.

Managing homelessness through the provision of temporary and emergency accommodation is also extraordinarily expensive, and a minority of shelter users also make extensive use of other expensive emergency health and criminal justice services as they traverse through and 'institutional circuit' of short stays in various services without ever resolving their residential instability.

However, for some Member States, it is likely that emergency accommodation will remain a feature of responses to homelessness in the short-to-medium term.

Such shelters can be also understood as *Emergency Prevention* which ensures that the vast majority of those who lose access to housing do not find themselves *unsheltered*.

While individual and collective acts of kindness and compassion in assisting those rough sleeping are well intentioned, they are largely *ineffective*, with research increasingly suggesting that they can be, in fact, *counterproductive*. Purposeful *assertive street outreach*, with the *provision of suitable accommodation*, is an effective means of meeting the needs of entrenched rough sleepers, particularly those with complex needs

Duration

A homelessness spell is typically either *long-term*, *episodic* or *transitory*. Approximately 80 per cent of shelter users are transitional users, in that they used shelters for very short periods of time or a single episode and did not return to shelters.

Ten per cent were *episodic users* of shelters and the remaining 10 per cent were *long- term users* of shelter services. Although a relatively small percentage of single homeless people, *long- term users occupied half of all bed nights*.

Most households who experience homelessness will *successfully exit* and *will not experience* further spells.

Exits from Homelessness

Secure exits, that is where "households who occupy rented dwellings can make a home and stay there, to the extent that they wish to do so, subject to meeting their obligations as a tenant."

Quasi-secure exits to tenancies, where security of tenure and rent regulation are weak to moderate.

Insecure exits, that is returning to family, staying with friends or families or moving to other institutions such as prison or hospital.

Governance

There is a consensus that *integrated strategic approaches* are effective at successfully preventing homelessness and responding rapidly to exit households when it does occur.

The formulation of national or local strategies should involve all stakeholders and ensure all stakeholders 'buy in'.

A *negotiated process of consensus building* amongst all stakeholders, in particular *those with lived experience*, is crucial to developing and sustaining what can often be difficult and complex journeys of system transformations.

Measuring Homelessness and Evaluating Inputs in Europe

- Many more households experience homelessness over a year than are measured at a *point-in-time*, and their profile is significantly different from those at a point-in-time.

- Understanding the *dynamics of homelessness* is crucial to intelligent policy design. Developing and implementing a robust methodology that captures the number and characteristics of those experiencing different dimensions of homelessness at a *point-in-time*, but also over a *period-of-time*, can provide the data necessary to determine the progress made to end homelessness by 2030, and to inform effective policy decisions.

Thank You (Go raibh maith agat)