



Key policy recommendations to tackle homelessness

INFO SHEET

This info sheet is prepared by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in the frame of the project 'Mapping trends and policies to tackle homelessness in Europe', financed by the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

The opinions expressed in this info sheet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the funding organisation.

Key figures

Though there is a lack of reliable data on homelessness, estimates suggest that:

- ▶ In the European Union, about **4.1 million people** experience homelessness at least for a certain period within one year.
- ▶ More than **400 thousand people** are sleeping in the streets per night.
- ▶ Homelessness has **increased in 24 out of 27 EU countries** over the last decade.
- ▶ Homelessness is caused by **various and complex factors**.
- ▶ Homeless people in Europe constitute an increasingly **diverse group** in terms of family composition, ethnicity/migrant background and age.

Efforts to reduce homelessness have largely failed as the number of people sleeping rough has been increasing or remained stable in most European countries in the last decade.

Key findings

A lack of financial resources and access barriers to benefits and services are key challenges faced to tackle homelessness in the EU.

Not all European Union countries acknowledge the right to adequate housing as an individual enforceable right. And even if the right is acknowledged, the rights frequently do not generate effective policy outcomes for people who are at risk of homelessness or already homeless.

From a systemic policy perspective, homelessness is characterized by insufficient resources allocated by governments to abandon it and by subjective as well as objective access barriers for people to benefits and service. This results in inadequate coverage and/or non-take up of benefits and services.



Important findings furthermore include that access to adequate housing is also frequently restricted for vulnerable groups, mainly due to limited supply. Absence of reliable funding and sufficient affordable housing supply hinder a more widespread use of ‘housing first’ approaches.

While inadequate minimum income benefits represent a major problem for homeless people, housing allowances lose their preventive function if inadequate compensation for real housing costs is provided.

Despite wide-ranging health services for homeless people across Member States, barriers remain in utilizing these services. Improving access to healthcare will require addressing access barriers in mainstream healthcare services (e.g. eligibility conditions, lack of address).

Key recommendations

- ▶ Guarantee the **right to adequate housing for all** (vulnerable) people in Europe
- ▶ Invest in **adequate housing** options.
- ▶ Secure **access to adequate benefits** for people affected by or at risk of homelessness
- ▶ Ensure **access to homelessness services** such as emergency shelters or accommodation
- ▶ Reduce **access barriers** for people to benefits and services
- ▶ **Integrate** health services within housing solutions.

Significantly more efforts are required at EU Member States levels to ensure that no one is left behind.

As proclaimed by the United Nations in the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, it is the key priority for governments to ensure everyone’s human rights and **make sure that no one is left behind** by 2030.

The project

‘Mapping trends and policies to tackle homelessness in Europe’ was a project implemented January 2020-February 2021 to provide a comparative assessment of national policies within corresponding social and health systems within 10 EU Member States that are crucial for preventing and addressing homelessness.

For further information please see: <https://www.euro.centre.org/projects/detail/3656>