The Norwegian Strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness (2005-2007)

November 2006
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Introduction

Aims and Procedures

In the framework of the EU peer review programme on social inclusion 2004-2006, the European Commission has organised a series of peer review meetings on specific policies adopted by European countries in the field of social inclusion. One of these peer review meetings focused on the Norwegian homelessness strategy and took place in Oslo on 7 and 8 September 2006 with the participation of ministry representatives from Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Romania, Spain, Slovenia, and Sweden.

FEANTSA therefore carried out a “shadow” peer review at service provider level through consultation of its members (and consultation of FEANTSA partners involved in the implementation of the Norwegian homeless strategy). The outcome fed into the official EU Peer Review meeting.

Unlike the official peer review which takes place at ministerial level, the shadow peer review of FEANTSA is carried out at stakeholder level by collecting the opinions of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which are generally important actors in implementing any homeless strategy and whose extensive experience of working closely with homeless people can complement discussions and debates within the official peer review.

A questionnaire (see on FEANTSA peer review webpage) was circulated to members with a summary of the Norwegian strategy in order to receive feedback and evaluation of:

> The innovative elements of the Norwegian strategy
> The role of the Norwegian State Housing Bank
> Importance of a Regional framework
> Mutual learning through peer reviews between local authorities

Main Findings

The feedback gathered in this shadow peer review process has created awareness of the innovations and lessons learnt from the Norwegian homeless strategy. This should enable countries to draw relevant information and adapt it to their respective national contexts and needs. The findings highlight certain elements (innovative elements, and challenges) and place them in a European context by looking at equivalent structures existing in other national contexts:

Interesting elements of the Norwegian strategy (examined in section 2)
> The wide target population
> The role of the Norwegian State Housing Bank
> Importance of a Regional framework
> Mutual learning through peer reviews between local authorities

Some challenges of the Norwegian strategy (examined in section 3)
> Reaching the strategy objectives
> Providing adequate housing for all
> Maintaining a well-functioning housing market
> Cooperation with local authorities

Section 4 on transferability of the Norwegian strategy to other national contexts, maps the strategy on the FEANTSA toolkit of 10 approaches to developing homeless strategies, thereby providing a framework for effective policy transfer.

The methods used in the FEANTSA peer review were similar to the EU Peer Review, although involved more countries. This paper uses the feedback of FEANTSA members to provide a brief analysis of both the policy process (methods, implementation, parties involved) and the policy content (target groups, nature of services offered, policy background) from a European perspective.
Overview of the Norwegian strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness

Background of the strategy: housing policy

The Norwegian national strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness was agreed upon by the Norwegian Parliament on the basis of a White Paper on Housing Policy (Report no. 23 (2003-2004) to the Storting - see summary here). The implementation period of the current national homeless strategy is 2005-2007. The primary vision for the Government’s housing policy is to provide adequate and secure housing for all. This will be achieved by means of the following overall goals and strategies:

> Stimulating a well functioning housing market.
> Providing housing for groups that are disadvantaged on the housing market
> Increasing the number of environment-friendly and universally designed dwellings and residential areas (White Paper, 2004)

The Norwegian housing model is based on the goal of home ownership for the majority of the population. 76.7% of Norwegian households were home owners in 2005. Consequently, Norway has a relatively small rental market (23.3% of housing stock) and an even smaller public rental market (around 4% of total housing stock) which means that any social/municipal housing available is really targeted towards the most vulnerable groups in the housing market.

Main objectives of the strategy

In the framework of wider housing policy, the Government’s objective is to provide housing for groups that are disadvantaged on the housing market (as a result of homelessness, discrimination, disability, health problems or a combination of these) as well as to take measures to enable these groups to continue living in their homes. (White Paper, 2004)

The definition of “unsatisfactory housing situations” used in the national registration system on homelessness (Bokart - coordinated by the National State Housing Bank and used by local authorities to register information on disadvantaged groups in the housing market) is the following:

1. No home, either of their own or rented:
   > Living out, in a caravan, boarding house, hospice, hotel or similar - either municipal or private
   > Living temporarily with family or friends
   > Temporarily institutionalised, have nowhere to live two months before or on discharge from a temporary (unsatisfactory) institution-like residential facility (institution for substance misusers, hospital, shelter, prison, etc.)

2. Expirable lease:
   > Households with leases with a duration of 0-12 months where it is not certain that the lease can be renewed

3. Unsuitable housing with one or more of the following features:
   > No bathroom/WC
   > The standard is so bad that living there constitutes a health hazard (e.g. dry rot, wet rot, no insulation)
   > Extremely bad environment (noise, dangerous for children, etc.)
   > Poor accessibility means isolation (e.g. no lift, banisters, etc.)
   > The dwelling has not been adapted for a disabled member of the household
   > The cost of living there is unreasonably high in relation to needs and market.

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The Norwegian strategy builds on previous experiences under the 2001-2004 “Project Homeless” which was a collaborative project between the Government and the seven largest municipalities: Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger, Kristians, Tromsø and Drammen.
4. Great need for assistance and follow-up services:
   > One of the members of the household has special needs not met by the housing (this member should have his/her own place to live)
   > The household is in danger of losing the accommodation if it is not given assistance (rent payments, problems coping with the housing situation, senile dementia patients who should be given an alternative because they may be a danger to their surroundings)
   (Kristensen, 2004)

Category 1 of this definition “No home, either of their own or rented” was used to measure the scope of homelessness in Norway in national surveys in 1996 (6200 persons) and 2003 (5200 persons). The result of the most recent mapping for 2005, using the equivalent of categories 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.1 and 11.1 (and 4 and 6 with some limitations) of ETHOS, resulted in 5500 persons registered as homeless.

Data collected through the Bokart registration system (see more detailed information below), as well as another national survey on homelessness to be carried out end 2007, will allow the Government to monitor progress towards the set objectives of the Norwegian strategy to be met by end of 2007:

2 ETHOS (2006) - European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion - see full typology in Annex I

Main partners in the strategy

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development coordinates the strategy, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and the Police, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, and finally the Ministry of Children and Equality.

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development provides core funding to the Norwegian State Housing Bank which is the main instrument for the implementation of national housing policy, including the homeless strategy. The Housing Bank facilitates implementation of the homeless strategy regionally and locally through its six regional offices, and it cooperates with the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs in administering the financial instruments (for housing and health support) of the strategy.

Local authorities are crucial partners (together with the voluntary sector) to fulfil the goals of the strategy. However, there is no homeless legislation imposing a duty on local authorities to implement this national strategy - rather, local authorities plan construction and renovation of housing, and are responsible for ensuring access to housing for disadvantaged groups according to previous legislation on the general provision of social services (§ 3-4 of the Act relating to social services 1991), and are responsible for providing a roof over the heads of those who need it (§ 4-5 of the Act relating to social services 1991). Therefore, the municipal effort in this national homeless strategy is relative to the challenges faced by the local authority (and they can apply for grants to implement local homeless strategies).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General goals</th>
<th>Performance targets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevent people from becoming homeless</td>
<td>&gt; Number of eviction notices to be reduced by 50 per cent and evictions by 30 per cent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; No one shall have to spend time in temporary solutions upon release from prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; No one shall have to spend time in temporary solutions after release from a treatment institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribute to good quality in overnight shelters</td>
<td>&gt; No one shall be offered an overnight shelter that does not meet agreed quality standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help ensure homeless people rapid offers of</td>
<td>&gt; No one shall stay more than three months in temporary housing</td>
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<td>permanent housing</td>
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Interesting elements of the strategy

Wide target population

The target population of the Norwegian homeless strategy is wider than most existing homeless strategies in Europe given that homelessness is tackled in the wider context of housing policy which aims to provide access to adequate housing for all. Norwegian housing policy aims to provide support to “groups at a disadvantage in the housing market” and the disadvantage seems not to be linked to specific people but rather to problems like homelessness, discrimination, disability and mental health (White Paper, 2004). The peer organisations of FEANTSA generally approve of this approach to tackling homelessness as a “phenomenon” linked to structural and institutional factors as well as to personal and relational factors (see typology of Factors of Vulnerability and Risk of Housing Exclusion in Edgar et al., 2005), and which therefore requires structural solutions such as a well-functioning and accessible housing market.

Given this general context, the target population of the Norwegian homeless strategy is defined in terms of its housing status (i.e. position in the housing market): 1. People leaving prison with no home to go to; 2. People threatened with eviction; 3. People in temporary housing and night shelters. Other sub-target groups then receive complementary support in accordance with their health needs, such as people with mental health problems, people with serious substance abuse problems, and young people with behavioural problems.

The wider target population of Norway’s homeless strategy is clearly linked to the “housing-first” approach to homelessness as is the case in countries like Ireland (where the Government is working on the eradication of homelessness as part of its policy on housing and sustainable communities), the UK (where the Government published its strategy “More than a Roof” in 2002) and Finland (where the current Government programme states that the aims of housing policy are to ensure a socially and regionally balanced and stable housing market, to eliminate homelessness and to improve the quality of housing).

In countries like Norway, Ireland, England and Finland, the ministries responsible for housing policy lead in the implementation of homeless strategies. In other countries, the social affairs ministry leads in the implementation of homeless strategies which inevitably has an impact on defining the target population. In Denmark, the target population is linked to the overall strategy “Our common responsibility” which is rather targeted at socially marginalised groups i.e. the homeless, drug misusers, alcohol misusers, prostitutes and the mentally disabled, rather than people “at a disadvantage in the housing market.” The same can be said of the Netherlands, where people experiencing homelessness are defined more in terms of their social care needs rather than according to their housing needs.

Other EU countries which tackle homelessness in the framework of social policy rather than housing policy have tended to focus more on emergency accommodation solutions for the roofless and houseless categories of ETHOS. Target groups are more likely to be defined from a social perspective therefore placing greater emphasis on social (independent living), health (substance abuse, mental health) and employment (labour market integration, education and training) needs rather than their housing needs, as in Portugal, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, France, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Spain (although this can vary regionally within a country).

It is important to note, however, that in most EU countries there is now increasing acknowledgement that housing (and namely supported housing) is an important prerequisite for enabling service users to fully benefit from social, health and employment support, and to break the vicious cycle of repeat homelessness.

3 This is also the approach adopted by the European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion which is a “home”-based definition
The role of the Norwegian State Housing Bank

The housing-first approach of the Norwegian homeless strategy is principally promoted and funded by the Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development (which sets the goals and proposes legislation) and is implemented by the Norwegian State Housing Bank (the main housing policy instrument in Norway). Over the years, the role of the Housing Bank has shifted gradually from being a general mortgage lending institution towards having more explicit welfare functions. Emphasis is therefore increasingly placed on targeting those who have special needs in the housing market and less on supply side measures.

Norway is probably the only country in Europe which has a single body like the Housing Bank responsible for the principle implementation tasks of the national homeless strategy:

> Providing guidance to local authorities on tackling homelessness
> Administering funding for the implementation of homeless strategies (financing housing construction, service provision, housing benefits, etc) through grants, allowances, loans
> Monitoring the effective implementation of the homeless strategy through data collection and research
> Facilitating cooperation between different partners involved in the strategy

In most other European countries, these responsibilities are divided between different national bodies, ministries, and non-governmental organisations.

The Housing Bank provides guidance and advice to local authorities for implementation of the strategy. This includes advice on housing management models, on potential transferability of successful and innovative projects, on effective use of the relatively small rental market available, and on the development of homeless service provision. The National Methodology Centre in Hungary has regional offices which also have a similar role by providing information on funding possibilities, events, vocational training, etc. This guidance role would be covered by the Department for Communities and Local Government in England (see website) which regularly issues guides aimed at supporting local authorities in implementing homeless strategies, such as guides on prevention of homelessness, on service quality improvement, health and homelessness, etc. The Homeless Agency in Ireland also provides local authorities with information on action plans, training and support, but in the Dublin region only.

The Housing Bank is the core institution administering financial means for implementation of the Norwegian homelessness strategy (although the Directorate of Health and Social Affairs administers grants related to health to complement the housing-related initiatives of the strategy). The Housing Bank is an investment bank financing new housing. It has several economic means for financing housing and stimulating activities to reach the goals within the strategy to combat homelessness, both individually oriented (start-up loans, housing allowances to help low-income households secure a home, grants for home purchase) and system-level oriented (housing support/homeless services, establishment of rental dwellings, etc). In Finland, the Housing Bank has a similar funding role to the Housing Bank since it administers all State housing subsidies, except housing allowances. In Luxembourg, the “Fonds du Logement” (Housing Fund) is a semi-public body which could be the basis for an effective homeless strategy. In England, the financial means for implementing homeless strategies are administered by the Housing Corporation (which finances a lot of new development on social housing), the Homelessness Directorate (which funds homeless service provision) and the Department for Work and Pensions (which is responsible for housing allowances).

The Housing Bank monitors homelessness through national surveys (1996, 2003, 2005 and the upcoming 2007 survey), and through the Bokart registration system on the basis of bi-annual returns from front-line municipal officers on housing situations and housing needs, as well as primary and secondary characteristics related to their employment or health needs (Kristensen, 2004). The system is used by local authorities to register information on disadvantaged groups in the housing market - 70 out of 434 local authorities are using the system (so this system is not compulsory, but rather a tool to help local authorities meet existing local

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4 The Directorate of Health and Social Affairs (see http://www.shdir.no/english/aboutus) is also responsible for monitoring homelessness, and allocates grants for mental health work in municipalities, for substance abuse initiatives including those for follow up services and for collaborations with voluntary organizations, and for establishing and strengthening follow up services for the homeless and substance abusers.

5 See more about these grants in the Information brochure (2006) on the Norwegian homeless strategy.
The Housing Bank then also provides guidance on how to analyse the registration figures in combination with general statistics. In other countries, the registration of data on homelessness is carried out by similar national funding agencies (Housing Fund in Finland, Social Appeals Board in Denmark, Public Foundation for the Homeless in Hungary), by ministries responsible for homeless strategies (like the Department of the Environment and Local Government in Ireland, or the Department for Communities and Local Government in England), or by umbrellas of homeless service providers (like Federatie Opvang in the Netherlands, SAW in Flanders-Belgium).

The Housing Bank facilitates cooperation at regional level between all parties concerned through its 6 regional offices. Working cross-sectorally with other public and private agencies is considered crucial to bring about good solutions for disadvantaged groups, and the Housing Bank promotes this through various structures like regional contact forums, regional reference groups and regional networks of cities active in the homeless strategy. This will be examined in detail in the next section.

Regional contact forums were established where primarily the public sector interests at regional government level meet 2-3 times a year. One of the aims of the forums is to ensure effective co-ordination by the government authorities. Participants in the forums include the execution and enforcement authorities (responsible for processing eviction claims), the Norwegian correctional services, health authorities, and the Norwegian association of local government authorities. Regional groups of local authorities (coordinated by the Housing Bank) are also linked to the forums. Such forums aim to prevent duplication of work, to create links between different services (thereby preventing homelessness traps in the transition from one service to another), to reinforce communication between different departments, to mainstream different concerns (homelessness, discrimination, disability, health) in different areas, and last but not least to ensure effective implementation of the national homeless strategy.

Regional contact forums dealing specifically with the implementation of homelessness measures are relatively rare in centralised6 European countries like Norway. Hungary is one of the few countries which seems to have a similar structure through its National Methodology Centre (which is a department in the Public Foundation for the Homeless) which has 7 regional methodology centres providing assistance to local partners and monitoring the implementation of the Hungarian measures to tackle homelessness. In France, the “Départements” (counties) coordinate State action on housing provision for vulnerable groups in the framework of departmental action plans - “Plans départementaux d’action au logement des personnes défavorisées” (PDALPD) - which are developed in cooperation with all relevant state bodies (such as the DDASS - social and health services, DDE - housing services, etc) at departmental level.

Regional reference groups are also in the process of being established by the Housing Bank. These groups are made up of user organisations and voluntary organisations to promote participation in discussions on the implementation of the Strategy. A number of measures within the strategy are pursued by voluntary organisations in co-operation with municipalities, and therefore the aim of these groups is similar to the regional contact umbrella organisations in terms of strengthening links between organisations, using all expertise available on homelessness, and involving homeless service providers in the implementation of the national homeless strategy.

Some decentralised countries have regional fora of homeless service providers, but this will vary from region to region. The region of Flanders (Belgium) has two main regional umbrella organisations (SAW and VOB). Spain has a regional forum in Catalunia (FEANTSA Catalunia) which is made up of voluntary agencies only. In other European countries, such service provider forums are more common at national or local level. National umbrella organisations exist in the Netherlands and France. In countries like Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Greece and Germany, the national forums of organisations working with people experiencing homelessness generally consist of both voluntary (NGOs) and statutory agencies (local authorities). Then forums often exist at local level and work in close cooperation with the city in question, as is the case in Dublin, Lisbon, Madrid, and Turin.

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6 In EU countries with highly autonomous regions like Belgium, Spain, the UK, Germany, Italy and Austria, there is no clear national framework for tackling homelessness - regional governments have overall responsibilities for providing housing and homeless services.
A regional framework in a national homeless strategy is crucial in terms of filling any potential implementation gaps between national and local level partners. Moreover, FEANTSA members have emphasised the need for such a regional focus in order to take account of migration in the homeless population. Many homeless people have rather weak or variable geographical links. Similarly, people with specific problems (e.g. those leaving prison, trying to come off drugs, victims of domestic violence) may need to move away from their traditional area in order to make a new start. In such cases, a regional perspective is essential.

**Mutual learning through peer reviews between local authorities**

Two official peer reviews have been organised by the Ministry of Local and Regional Development in the framework of the Norwegian homeless strategy. The first peer review was organised on the Oslo project “Fewer evictions” with a selection of big cities present. The second peer review focused on the theme of “settlement upon release” in the city of Trondheim based on the city’s experience of the collaboration agreement between the prison and the local authority. Both peer reviews focused on prevention projects which have shown good results. The Government also draws attention to good practices by awarding cities with creative and innovative approaches to tackling homelessness, as is the case with the project developed by the city of Rana, (“We do so little with just a house”), which is perceived as a useful model for phasing out hostels. There are also more informal peer reviews and mutual learning seminars organised in the municipal networks coordinated by the regional offices of the Housing Bank.

It is important to note that these peer reviews, formal or informal, are organised in clear national or regional frameworks, with the presence of state departments. The emphasis is on mutual learning in order to help other cities develop similar projects or services to reduce homelessness. Such initiatives can lead to genuine policy transfer (example: seven eviction prevention projects have now been set up in various parts of Norway) or to strengthened cooperation between cities (example: cooperation on settlement upon release between big and smaller municipalities which often have different needs).

In the Netherlands, the G4 cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht) have signed a structural agreement to monitor and exchange best practices. The monitoring is supported by a research institute. The G4 are working together with the umbrella of homeless service providers (Federatie Opvang) and the national bureau of care allocation (ClO) on a joint system of access to health care and welfare for people who are homeless in the G4, later to expand to the other cities in the Netherlands. So the civil servants of the G4 have both formal and informal contacts on the progress of activities to combat homelessness.

In countries like Italy (FIOpsd), Denmark (SBS§ 94), Luxembourg (“Plateforme pour l’accès au Logement de personnes défavorisées”) and Greece (recently established national homeless network), there are national organisations of homeless service providers which include representatives of services provided by NGOs and by local authorities. Such national networks allow for information exchange in systematic or informal ways. In other countries like Belgium and Portugal, practices are shared informally without any organised framework specifically aimed at the sharing of good practices. It is worth noting that in some countries, mutual learning takes place informally on an ad hoc basis between local authorities in the framework of the preparation of the NAPsIncl.
Some challenges of the Norwegian strategy

Reaching the objectives

The current Government declared in 2005 that the eradication of homelessness was part of the overall national goal of eliminating poverty in Norway. In order to achieve this ambitious goal, the Norwegian Government has gradually shifted towards a preventive approach to tackling homelessness both through systemic prevention solutions such as a well-functioning housing market, and through emergency prevention solutions such as early intervention in eviction processes, institutional and prison release (see Strategy objectives above).

The objectives of the strategy principally cover 1. emergency prevention processes (related to evictions, discharge from prisons or treatment institutions), 2. emergency shelter provision (“no one shall be offered overnight shelter that does not meet agreed quality standards”), and 3. long-term housing (“No one shall stay more than three months in temporary housing”). The aim of the strategy and these objectives is to break the cycle of homelessness (Sveri, 2005a):

Achieving such objectives in such a short period (by end 2007) is undoubtedly a challenge. Nevertheless, the Norwegian government has taken a number of measures, both under the previous “Project Homeless 2001-2004” (which paved the way for effective actions to tackle homelessness) and under the current national homeless strategy, which are aimed at breaking the vicious cycle of homelessness and reaching these objectives. These measures include: amending current legislation and passing new regulations, promoting staff training, promoting sustainable service provision, investing considerable financial resources, and involvement of parties outside the homeless sector.

Under Project Homeless, some legislative changes relating to the Act on public procurement allowed NGO service providers to buy and own apartments in cooperative housing to rent to households with different needs (whereas municipalities already had this possibility). The intention was to allow a tem-

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Source: The Norwegian State Housing Bank
porary derogation from competitive public procurement rules to enable NGOs - already responsible for day and night shelters, and treatment institutions for psychiatric illness and drug abuse - to provide their service users with effective follow-up solutions for long-term housing. The Government has stated that it will prolong this derogation from the Act on public procurement to make it easier for municipalities to collaborate with non-governmental organisations in building, facilitating and running houses for homeless people (Hansen, 2006).

The Government promoted sustainable service provision during the initial phase of “Project Homeless” by placing pressure on local authorities to integrate homeless services in ordinary service structures (Dyb, 2005). Moreover, the Government is continuing in this sustainable approach by phasing out hostels and offering long-term housing instead by laying the foundations for service models that prevent service users from staying in temporary services for long periods (Information brochure, 2006). Staff stability has been raised as an important issue by FEANTSA service providers as a means of guaranteeing sustainable service provision. Continuity of support, from the street right through to permanent housing, is crucial in order to favour more rapid and sustainable reintegration for the people concerned.

The previous Norwegian national strategy “Project Homeless” invested in staff training and raising competence levels by establishing a new, college-level educational programme combining housing and social services. The programme is open to health and social sector employees of participating municipalities as well as members of non-governmental organisations and the Norwegian State Housing Bank. Shorter training programmes were also developed to heighten housing-related expertise among employees associated with the project. In addition, course modules that combine housing and social service topics are being prepared for use in existing academic programmes. Such measures also contribute indirectly to changing and improving public perception of homelessness.

In terms of financial resources, the intention is to use the resources allocated in housing and services in general. The grant schemes referred to above can be used for several purposes, but are generally used for groups at a disadvantage (including people experiencing homelessness). It is difficult to isolate the budget allocated to people experiencing homelessness, but the budget for 2006 includes the following: 71M euros for setting homes, renovating, and rental dwellings; 8,2M euros for competence grants (capacity-building), 300M euros for mental health work, 16M euros for substance abuse initiatives, 6M euros for follow-up housing services, and finally 230M euros for resource intensive users.

Cooperation with other sectors than the homeless sector is crucial for breaking the vicious cycle and pulling people out of homelessness. The homeless sector and local authorities alone cannot achieve the objectives set in the Norwegian strategy. It is crucial to get all parties involved in order to provide a wide range of housing, health and employment solutions which will bring people out of homeless service provision, and into long-term housing; and prevent people from entering the vicious cycle in the first place. Moreover, lack of coordination between different departments and services can contribute indirectly to sustaining repeat homelessness.

The regional contact forums of state bodies coordinated by the Housing Bank (see above) are an excellent framework for regular cooperation between different state sectors. Moreover, new collaboration agreements have been established between local authorities, execution and enforcement agencies, and landlords (Oslo, Skien and Porsgrunn). The Norwegian umbrella of local authorities - KS - has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Justice and Police on housing after prison release, which has led to the establishment of local collaboration agreements between local authorities and prison authorities (Trondheim).

There are many barriers to finding permanent solutions for people experiencing homelessness, but the Norwegian Government is taking action to make the strategy objectives as achievable as possible. Smaller countries like Norway (and European countries or regions like Ireland, Scotland, Finland) are increasingly setting more ambitious goals in their homeless strategies.
Providing “adequate” housing for all

The White paper on housing policy (2004) refers to its vision that all members of society shall have adequate and secure housing. The Norwegian Government guidelines and existing statutory definitions correspond to a great extent to the seven core dimensions of housing adequacy used by the UN Housing Rights Programme:

- Legal security of tenure
- Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure
- Affordability
- Habitability (minimum space, no health hazards, overcrowding, etc)
- Accessibility (for people with disabilities and other special needs)
- Location
- Cultural adequacy

(See Annex III for more details on these 7 dimensions)

The White Paper on housing policy states that adequate housing is determined by specific characteristics of the dwelling and the area of residence that should satisfy a person’s fundamental needs in relation to health and life, personal hygiene, and includes secure financial and legal components. The literature on the Norwegian strategy also refers to permanent forms of housing. An important element in “Project Homeless” (2001-2004) was to provide funding for establishing dwellings for people experiencing homelessness rather than temporary solutions or institutions. The difference between the statutory definitions for housing and institutions provides a benchmark: in institutions the right to privacy is limited, and the institution provides full-time care and support to the inhabitants (Dyb, 2005).

However, there seem to be no legally defined housing adequacy standards in Norway (much like the rest of the EU, and within the EU social protection and inclusion strategy) to measure the extent of inadequate/sub-standard housing in Norway, and to measure the implementation of the Government vision of adequate housing for all.

Maintaining a well-functioning housing market

The latest survey on homelessness shows an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness who have no additional health and support needs, which indicates a link with housing market developments (Hansen, 2006). Indeed, one of the primary aims of Norwegian housing policy is to have a well-functioning housing market in order to meet the housing needs of all Norwegian citizens. However, there are two main challenges to achieving this: 1. housing market deregulation and 2. the small public rental market in Norway (4% of total housing stock).

The Norwegian housing market was highly regulated until the first half of 1980s when the market was deregulated and housing subsidies were increasingly directed towards people at a disadvantage in the housing market. Due to the high level of home ownership in Norway, the private rental market is limited and often insecure (Dyb, 2005). Most of the housing has been constructed for home ownership rather than for rent purposes. The main form of rental housing built were the extra flats in the basements of detached houses of private (non-professional) homeowners, which represent a big share of the private rental market today in Norway. This may explain why a high share of rental housing units are not used in the rental market (Langsether and Medby, 2004). Reduction in supply of rental dwellings can only contribute to rent increase. Moreover, the Government acknowledges in its White Paper on housing policy that rental housing is expensive partly because much new construction is taking place rather than purchase of used housing stock.

Although the Housing Bank is currently taking part in an EU project focusing on housing adequacy standards.
The functions of the Housing Bank are seen as supplementary to the market and providing corrective measures through loans for first-time home buyers and disadvantaged groups (with more fixed-rate interest), subsidies for social housing, and housing allowances. Moreover, the Housing Bank has to work closely with municipalities, private firms (responsible for building and management of the housing stock) and private credit institutions. A well-functioning (deregulated) housing market in Norway is very much dependent on cooperation between these different parties.

Corrective measures to compensate for increasing rent costs include more social forms of rental housing owned by municipalities. However, the public rental market accounts for only 4% of the total Norwegian housing stock, compared to 25% in Sweden, 35% in the Netherlands, 6.5% in Slovenia, 2.8% in Austria, 3% in Estonia, 1.6% in Spain, 6% in Germany, 2.6% in Romania, and 27% in Denmark (Norris and Shiels, 2004). The Government White Paper refers to the importance of municipalities having a wide range of social rental housing, and the Housing Bank provides advisory services on this. Given the size of the municipal housing stock, only a limited group of people at a disadvantage on the housing market can be supported by the public rental sector. So social housing in Norway is genuinely more targeted at groups at a disadvantage. However, a study carried out in 2005 has revealed that local authorities are having difficulties in achieving the objective of reducing stays in temporary shelters of more than three months, sometimes due to lack of more long term social housing provisions. Such a situation can lead to a lack of follow-up housing services, potential saturation of temporary shelters, lack of spaces in emergency shelters, and consequently increasing rooflessness. In other countries with insufficient social housing facilities, there are complications for bringing people out of temporary services into long-term housing. In some countries with small social rental markets (like Spain and Belgium), solutions are found in the private market (even for people with support needs) through social rental agencies which act as mediators between landlords and tenants.

Cooperation with local authorities

Local authorities are key players for reducing homelessness in Norway and for achieving the targets set by the Norwegian government. However, there are a number of elements which make cooperation between national and local level partners a challenge.

First and foremost, this homeless strategy is not legally binding for local authorities. Local authority responsibilities in the strategy are based on previous legislation relating to social services (including housing services), and not on homeless legislation. Therefore there is no statutory duty to develop local homeless strategies in order to implement this strategy. Rather, local efforts are relative to the housing-related challenges faced by the local authority. The fact that the Norwegian political system is based on a tradition of independent local governance can also be problematic for the implementation of the strategy. Moreover, the strategy is a national-level effort to ensure access to adequate housing for all, with guidelines, recommendations and objectives coming from central government to local authorities with different needs and priorities. If perceived as a top-down approach (rather than a national framework to support local authorities), this will inevitably require more efforts from central government to motivate local authorities to become partners in the implementation of the strategy. Lastly, local authorities may still lack expertise in this area and are in the process of developing this expertise, carrying out research and collecting data on homelessness in order to better understand the phenomenon in the wider context of the housing market, and finding potential solutions to the problem.

Nevertheless, national government seems aware of its challenge to enable local authorities to deal with this issue as constructively as possible, and various instruments are being used to strengthen cooperation between national and local level partners to fill potential implementation gaps.
Firstly, a wide range of financial instruments are provided by the Housing Bank and by the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs. Secondly, there is a strong regional component to the Norwegian strategy through the regional offices of the Housing Bank which have set up structures to facilitate the work of local authorities and guide them where necessary. The national network of local authorities is a useful tool for communication with Norwegian local authorities. A cooperation agreement was established between the Government and this national network concerning initiatives to prevent and combat homelessness. In this agreement, this network undertakes to inform and motivate the members with regard to the strategy. Moreover, other agreements have been established between the network and individual ministries such as the cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Justice and Police on housing on prison discharge - this has contributed to facilitating local partnerships between local authorities and correctional services. Lastly, a Government award has been established within the strategy for good practices as a means of rewarding local authorities with creative approaches to tackling homelessness. Such an initiative can serve to motivate local authorities to participate actively in the national homeless strategy in order to strengthen their links with central government.

Cooperation between central and local government in national homeless strategies of other countries is mainly based on soft measures as is the case in Norway. The only EU country which has a statutory duty on local authorities to develop homeless strategies is the UK, however some local authorities have better quality local strategies than others.

Local authorities in England can also be declared “Beacon authorities” in the fight against homelessness if their strategy is considered a good practice by central government (like the award system in Norway) - a system which motivates local authorities for increasing their visibility and greater freedom to administer their funds. In Ireland, the national homeless strategy is founded on legislation (Housing Act 1988) which does not impose a statutory duty on local authorities to house people who are homeless, but gives authorities a clear responsibility to consider all housing needs and respond to them. In Denmark and the Netherlands, there have been legislative amendments and new emerging governance structures which give clearer responsibilities to local authorities in the area of homelessness.

In a number of countries with no national framework for combating homelessness and therefore no coordinated approach to tackling homelessness, there are still national coordination efforts between homeless service providers and local authorities. In countries like Italy, Sweden and Greece, local authorities have found it useful to join national thematic networks on homelessness and housing exclusion in order to share information and develop their expertise and understanding of homelessness. Other cities are looking at transnational cooperation networks (thematic like FEANTSA, or city-based like Eurocities) to learn more about the actions of cities in other EU countries.
Transferability

In many countries of the EU, governments are consulting homeless service providers and taking initiatives to treat the phenomenon of homelessness (declared a priority action by the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in March 2005 - see Council press release).

FEANTSA Peer organisations therefore currently have opportunities to make specific proposals to their national governments to develop or revise their homeless strategies, and are naturally looking into the possibility of transferring useful elements of policies/practices/lessons exchanged at EU level into their national, regional or local homeless strategies.

The peer organisations felt that the Norwegian strategy can be transferred to other national contexts, but such transfers always require thorough analysis, expertise and changes in order to reflect local needs and possibilities.

This section will map the Norwegian strategy on the FEANTSA toolkit of 10 approaches to developing homeless strategies (evidence-based, comprehensive, multi-dimensional, rights-based, participatory, statutory, sustainable, needs-based, pragmatic, bottom-up - see Annex II for full toolkit) in order to:

* Clarify which approaches have been adopted in the Norwegian context
* Better understand how the combination and interaction between these approaches have made the Norwegian strategy a success
* Provide a clear framework for effective policy transfer to other countries.

Evidence-based approach

- Monitoring and documentation ✔
- Research and analysis ✔
- Regular revision of policies ✔

A good understanding of the problem of homelessness is the key to developing effective policies to tackle homelessness. This can be developed through monitoring and documentation of trends in homelessness and numbers of homeless people, consequent development of appropriate indicators, and should ideally be complemented by regular research and analysis on the causes and consequences of homelessness.

A sound understanding of homelessness will also allow for better revision of policies where necessary.

The Housing Bank has been monitoring the phenomenon of homelessness through surveys in 1996, 2003 and 2005, and has set up a registration system (Bokart) to collect data on people at a disadvantage in the housing market. So progress towards the objectives of the homeless strategy could be measured. On the basis of this data collected, policies are developed. All prevention strategies are based on figures related to causes of homelessness: there are figures on the number of eviction notices and eviction orders, and the 2005 survey on homelessness showed that 10% of people experiencing homelessness were in correctional services, 8% had been released from prison within the last 6 months, 15% of people who are homeless stay in institutions, and 16% had been discharged from an institution with the last 6 months. Various pieces of research have been carried out on social services, on the needs of local authorities, and local policies have been evaluated through the peer reviews and other fora, in order to better understand the needs of local authorities to tackle the problem. The national “Project Homeless” 2001-2004 originally had more of a “social support” focus, and has been revised (based on evidence and information gathered) to better cater for the housing needs of people experiencing homelessness.

Comprehensive approach

- Emergency relief ✔
- Integration ✔
- Prevention ✔

A comprehensive approach to combating homelessness would include policies on emergency relief for homeless people, resettlement of homeless people, and prevention of homelessness. Most countries in the EU have measures for at least one of these, but very few have policies covering all three areas in a comprehensive way. However, some countries are intending to move towards such a comprehensive approach.

The Norwegian strategy contains services which aim to provide emergency relief, although the aim is to break the cycle of repeat homelessness and get people out of emergency homeless services.
The strategy aims to provide follow-up services for better integration and long-term solutions. The emphasis is on providing permanent housing solutions to all Norwegian citizens, including people experiencing homelessness. Central government has taken preventive measures - both emergency prevention (reducing evictions, reducing homelessness on discharge from prison or institution) and systemic prevention (aiming for a well-functioning housing market). Indeed, the main focus is on prevention, and this requires a change in culture and perception of homelessness as a structural problem rather than linked only to personal/relational problems of certain individuals.

**Multi-dimensional approach**

- Integrate housing, health, employment, education & training, etc. ✓
- Interagency working ✓
- Interdepartmental working ✓

The routes in and out of homelessness can be very diverse and often related to housing, (mental) health, employment, education, discrimination, and often a combination of these areas. It is therefore crucial for countries to work on all fronts. Interagency working is also part of an effective multi-dimensional approach. It is clear that the 'homeless sector' cannot address all these problems by itself. Interdepartmental working between relevant housing, employment and health ministries is also crucial for developing effective strategies to tackle homelessness, and to avoid negative repercussions of policies developed in different fields.

The Norwegian homeless strategy is couched in general housing policy, so that this can be perceived as a housing-first approach which aims to provide people with a home so they can benefit fully from health and social support (when needed). Housing is being mainstreamed into other policy areas like health and social affairs through staff training on the issue. At the same time, the strategy is helping to raise awareness on the fact that housing should often come with additional support for people with multiple needs. In terms of interagency working, there have been a number of cooperation agreements at national level, and at local level, involving correctional services, enforcement authorities and local authorities. Interdepartmental working at national level is ensured by regular meetings between the 5 ministries involved in the strategy: The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development coordinates the strategy, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and the Police, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, and finally the Ministry of Children and Equality.

**Rights-based approach**

- Focus on enforceable right to housing ✓

The right to privacy, to personal dignity, to lifelong education, to maternity care, to social protection, to health care, to vote, and all other similar socio-economic, civil and political rights are all devoid of meaning for people who have lost their homes. The access to decent, stable housing is frequently also the indispensable precondition for the exercise of most of the other fundamental rights.

The Norwegian strategy is based on the premise that everyone should have access to adequate and secure housing, and everyone has a right to housing assistance under the Act on social services (see above). Norway has no statutory rights for homeless people and no legislation to secure the right to housing (this was proposed and rejected by Parliament in January 2004). However, the Government believes the right to housing is adequately safeguarded by several international treaties such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights which includes the right to adequate housing. However, such international treaties refer to the right to housing as a social and economic right (rather than civil and political) which generally means this right is not enforceable by individuals.

**Participatory approach**

- Involvement of all stakeholders including NGOs and public authorities ✓
- Make all stakeholders responsible for implementing policy ✓
- Participation of people experiencing homelessness ✓

A participatory approach is crucial for any homeless strategy to work. This entails participation of all stakeholders in policy development, policy implementation (where appropriate), and policy evaluation; including people experiencing homelessness at organizational level (in the services) or at policymaking level.

The strategy objectives to be reached by end 2007 require many efforts from all people working in the area of homelessness, housing, health and employment. The involvement of NGO service providers which work with different target populations (people released from prison, people who are

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8 See list of organisations involved in the Information brochure of the strategy (2006)
roofless, people with substance abuse problems, etc), and public authorities (national, regional and local) from a wide range of sectors. Moreover, service providers have been consulted on how to improve the quality of services provided (Hansen, 2006), and local authorities have been consulted to better understand their needs. Participation of these different partners is all coordinated by one central body, the Norwegian State Housing Bank, which uses its regional offices to facilitate cooperation and promote effective implementation of the strategy. The expertise of people experiencing homelessness themselves has also been welcome through organisations like Aktibo (which represents economically disadvantaged people) and organisations of formerly homeless people who can share their knowledge of how to break the vicious cycle of homelessness. However, such user participation is still to be strengthened in the coming years.

**Statutory approach**

- Legal framework at national level ✔
- Statutory aims and objectives ✗
- Regional framework ✔

A homeless strategy supported by a clear legal framework at national level or regional level allows for consistency and accountability in implementation of homeless policies. Statutory aims and objectives can also complement such homeless strategy and place pressure to achieve concrete results.

Rather than introducing new legal obligations on the local authorities, central government has highlighted the responsibilities of local authorities in the provision of housing services under existing legislation on social services (White Paper, 2004). Therefore, there is a legal framework although there is no specific mention in legislation of the Norwegian homeless strategy 2005-2007 and its objectives. The implementation of the strategy is therefore promoted through soft measures (rather than hard law) including cooperation agreements between national-level partners (for example between the national association of local authorities and the Ministry of Justice and Police) and local-level partners (such as local prisons/institutions and local authorities). Moreover, there is a clear regional framework to facilitate cooperation between local authorities and other relevant partners in the strategy. The general soft law approach adopted in the Norwegian homeless strategy seems to be a deliberate choice of central government in order to allow space for bottom-up dynamics in the strategy.

**Sustainable approach**

- Adequate funding ✔
- Political commitment ✔
- Public support ✔
- Sustainable service structures ✔

Adequate funding and political commitment are crucial for any long-term strategy to tackle and end homelessness. Such financial and political support should ideally be backed by support from the general public, namely through information and awareness campaigns.

The budget of the strategy is difficult to determine given that it is financed through general resources allocated for housing and social/care services. There are various grant schemes catering for different needs, and administered by both the Housing Bank and the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs. In order to reach the objectives set by the strategy, the Norwegian government is obliged to invest a considerable amount of money into the strategy.

The political commitment behind the strategy is evident from the decision to fix clear objectives for reducing homelessness, and from the acknowledgement the phenomenon has to be tackled on a structural level (improving the housing market) and not only on a personal level.

The notion of eradicating homelessness (an objective declared by the current Government) requires general collective responsibility in this strategy, so that professionals (public authorities, service providers, etc) as well as non-professionals (private landlords) all understand the need for all Norwegian citizens to have access to adequate housing. “Project Homeless” has contributed to increasing awareness on this, and there have been initiatives to integrate these concerns in staff training and general educational programmes.

Moreover, the sustainable approach of the Norwegian government is confirmed by intention to provide homes and not just temporary solutions. The Government has placed pressure for homeless services to be integrated into the ordinary service structure of local authorities. Health-related grants (Sveri, 2005) have been awarded for up to 3 years on the condition that the measures/services continue beyond this period.
Needs-based approach

- Needs of individual are start of policy development (✔)

The needs-based approach is a principle. It is different to the more common “structures-based” approach where policy is developed on the basis of structures in place which are not necessarily best equipped to address changing needs.

The Norwegian strategy has used the needs-based approach in parts of the strategy. The whole 2005-2007 strategy is couched in housing policy rather than social policy (like “Project Homeless”) based on the evidence that people experiencing homelessness had important housing needs. The Housing Bank has taken various initiatives to understand the needs of local authorities and voluntary organisations (service provider needs), and has monitored the needs of people at a disadvantage in the housing market through local authority returns in the Bokart registration (and the previous manual version of the system). National surveys on the profile of people experiencing homelessness have also given an indication of their needs, as well as more focused surveys on specific issues such as the study of the Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies on the transitions between psychiatry, substance abuse treatments, living on the streets, hostels and housing - the recommendations of the study are based on user experience.

Pragmatic approach

- Realistic and achievable objectives (✔)
- Clear and realistic time schedule (✔)

This approach consists of realistic and achievable objectives, as well as a clear and realistic time schedule. Realistic and achievable objectives are generally more present in countries which have undertaken the necessary research to fully understand the nature and scope of homelessness, the needs of homeless people, the evolution of the housing market, labour market and all other related areas.

The Norwegian strategy has three objectives (within the general objective of eradicating homelessness) and 5 specific performance targets to be achieved by the end of 2007. These are at the very basis of the whole strategy and concern the three main service provision approaches: emergency (no one shall be offered overnight shelter that does not meet agreed quality standards), integration (no one shall stay more than three months in temporary housing) and prevention (number of eviction notices to be reduced by 50% and evictions by 30%; no one shall have to spend time in temporary solutions upon release from prison; no one shall have to spend time in temporary solutions after release from a treatment institution).

Bottom-up approach

- Importance of local authorities (✔)
- Service delivery close to the homeless (✔)

Policy responses to homelessness are increasingly developed through a bottom-up approach, namely by local authorities (rather than by national authorities).

Some would consider the Norwegian strategy as adopting a top-down rather than bottom-up to tackling homelessness given that the strategy is coordinated nationally with national objective-setting. Local authorities are considered as key players in this strategy but there is no statutory duty to participate in this strategy. Rather, local authorities participate according to their local needs and challenges (133 out of 435 Norwegian local authorities have joined the networks of cities taking part in the strategy). National objectives have been fixed, but it is left up to local authorities to design their action plan, to choose the nature of the services provided and to choose which organisations to establish cooperation agreements with. The Government provides a national and regional framework for facilitating the work of local authorities, for setting up structures which serve to promote mutual learning at different levels on successful local homeless projects, and which allow for continuity and equal provision of services across the country. This approach undoubtedly favours a bottom-up approach allowing for local solutions in accordance with the varying nature of homelessness across the country.
Conclusions

Policy Content: an integrated housing-first approach

The Norwegian strategy seen through the lens of the FEANTSA toolkit of approaches to developing homeless strategies effectively represents a combination of all ten approaches outlined in the toolkit. Any policy transfer of the Norwegian strategy should therefore take into consideration the interaction between these 10 approaches which have contributed to effective homeless policy-making in Norway. It should be noted that policy transfer of only a selection of these approaches will lead to a different outcome in another national context.

Moreover, it is crucial to consider the Norwegian homeless strategy - and its combination of 10 approaches to tackling homelessness - in a general housing policy context. The Norwegian government is effectively mainstreaming homelessness (as well as discrimination and disability) concerns in general housing policy.

The objectives to be reached are mainly housing-based as they relate to housing situations (leaving prison, leaving institutions, preventing evictions, temporary stay in shelters, etc). The services provided are also mainly housing-based, but are complemented by adequate health support and counselling services where needed in order to ensure that people keep their new homes. The approach of tackling homelessness as a housing issue rather than as a social or poverty issue means that the target population carries less stigma, since people experiencing homelessness are considered as people at a disadvantage in the housing market rather than socially excluded people.

Policy Process: OMC method transferred at national level

The Norwegian strategy is principally based on soft measures, very much like the EU process on social protection and social inclusion which is based on an Open Method of Coordination (OMC). In this EU process, the Commission provides a framework for national authorities to develop social inclusion action plans (including measures to combat homelessness). In the Norwegian strategy, central government provides a framework (both national and regional) to enable local authorities to develop local action plans to help people at a disadvantage in the housing market.

The definition of OMC used by the European Council of Lisbon is the following:

> fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long terms;
> establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice;
> translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;
> periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes.

This method has been adapted to the EU social protection and inclusion process, and appears to be used to a great extent in the Norwegian homeless strategy. Guidelines and objectives have been fixed at national level, with a specific timetable for achieving the goals by 2007: preventing people from becoming homeless, contributing to improve the quality of overnight shelters, helping to ensure that homeless people receive offers of permanent housing without undue delay.
Quantitative targets have been set to reduce the number of evictions, to reduce stays in temporary housing on release from prison or an institution, and reducing stay in temporary housing. The objectives of the strategy are being translated into local action plans to provide housing for people at a disadvantage in the housing market (133 local authorities are now participating in the Norwegian strategy). Periodic monitoring and evaluation have been organised through peer reviews, regional contact forums, and regional reference groups with the participation of all partners of the strategy. The impact and participation of all parties concerned is visible, however the overall impact of the Norwegian approach to tackling homelessness on reaching the strategy objectives will be clearer from the figures on homelessness available end 2007.

In the EU strategy, guidelines and objectives have been fixed. There are indicators to measure progress, but these are quite poor in the area of housing and homelessness. Objectives on homelessness are not always translated into national action plans (although there is legislation on social services in most EU countries). The monitoring and mutual learning are quite effective and take place at different levels between national authorities, local authorities, service providers, and people experiencing homelessness themselves. Yet, the EU strategy has had less impact on national homeless policy-making than the Norwegian strategy on homelessness, most probably for the following reasons.

Firstly, the Norwegian strategy is a non-binding strategy which does to a great extent have a statutory framework through previous legislation on social services to motivate local authorities to participate. (Although, most EU countries have such legislation on social services which should be better used by the European Commission to motivate national authorities to develop national homeless strategies).

Secondly, the Norwegian strategy focuses specifically on the phenomenon of homelessness looking at a wide target population as a means of breaking the vicious cycle of repeat homelessness. The EU strategy however, focuses on homelessness together with many other social problems related to poverty and social exclusion such as child poverty, discrimination, and ageing populations. National authorities therefore develop different policies according to their national priorities, and therefore mutual learning on homelessness can only take place between some of the countries involved in the strategy. Thirdly, the Norwegian government work directly with local authorities who face and see the problem of homelessness on a day-to-day basis. The European Commission however works with national authorities who do not always understand this social emergency from their level and the need for immediate action. Finally, the Norwegian government promotes participation of local authorities in the implementation of the homeless strategy through a wide range of financial incentives. The European Commission invests a considerable amount of money in promoting transnational exchanges, however this is minimal compared to the overall budget for the Norwegian strategy.

According to the Norwegian Government (White Paper, 2004), having a satisfactory place to live, is a prerequisite for integration and participation in society: “Housing, employment and health are the three central pillars of the welfare society.” Adequate housing provides the basis for a decent standard of living and will often be decisive in the person’s health and their ability to take part in working life. The ESSPROS (European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics) definition of the risks or needs that may give rise to social protection includes housing as one of the 8 risks alongside sickness/health care, disability, old age, survivors, family/children, unemployment, and social exclusion. It is up to the European Commission and national authorities involved in the social protection and inclusion strategy to create partnerships with housing ministries in order to make housing an integral part of the EU social protection and inclusion strategy in accordance with the clear EU objective of providing access to decent housing and tackling homelessness (European Commission, 2006).
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Annex I

**ETHOS-2006.**

European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTUAL CATEGORY</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL CATEGORY</th>
<th>GENERIC DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>roofless</strong></td>
<td>People Living Rough</td>
<td>1.1 Rough Sleeping (no access to 24-hour accommodation) / No abode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People staying in a night shelter</td>
<td>2.1 Overnight shelter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>houseless</strong></td>
<td>People in accommodation for the homeless</td>
<td>3.1 Homeless hostel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in Women’s Shelter</td>
<td>4.1 Women’s shelter accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in accommodation for immigrants</td>
<td>5.1 Temporary accommodation / reception centres (asylum)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People due to be released from institutions</td>
<td>6.1 Penal institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People receiving support (due to homelessness)</td>
<td>7.1 Residential care for homeless people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living in insecure accommodation</td>
<td>8.1 Temporarily with family/friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living under threat of eviction</td>
<td>9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living under threat of violence</td>
<td>10.1 Police recorded incidents of domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in unfit housing</td>
<td>12.1 Unfit for habitation (under national legislation; occupied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living in extreme overcrowding</td>
<td>13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding</td>
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</table>

### Ten approaches to tackling homelessness
*(FEANTSA Shadow Implementation Report)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Evidence-based approach</td>
<td>Monitoring and documentation, Research and analysis, Regular revision of policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Comprehensive approach</td>
<td>Emergency relief, Integration, Prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Multi-dimensional approach</td>
<td>Integrate housing, health, employment, education &amp; training, etc., Interagency working, Interdepartmental working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Right-based approach</td>
<td>Focus on enforceable right to housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Participatory approach</td>
<td>Involvement of all stakeholders including NGOs and public authorities, Make all stakeholders responsible for implementing policy, Participation of people experiencing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Statutory approach</td>
<td>Legal framework at national level/ regional level, Statutory aims and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sustainable approach</td>
<td>Adequate funding, Political commitment, Public support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Needs-based approach</td>
<td>Needs of individual are start of policy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pragmatic approach</td>
<td>Realistic and achievable objectives, Clear and realistic time schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bottom-up approach</td>
<td>Importance of local authorities, Service delivery close to the homeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The right to adequate housing is enshrined in Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11(1) of the ICESCR. The General Comment No. 4 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (see Annex II) identifies seven components of adequate housing and serves as the basis for the conceptualisation of housing adequacy presented below. In order to collect data on the overall level of housing adequacy, therefore, it would be possible to include information on some or all of the following subcomponents:

**a. Legal security of tenure**

Legal security of tenure describes an agreement, governed by a legal framework or legislative regime protecting individuals or groups regarding use of land or residential property generally to such an extent that those with security of tenure are protected against arbitrary forced eviction or expropriation of property. Secure tenure is essential to developing sustainable cities, human dignity and urban development, and is an essential element of housing rights, as it is fundamentally related to the long-term security of one’s home. The security derives from the fact that the right of access to and use of the land or property is underwritten by a known set of rules and that the right is justiciable. An individual or group, such as a family, can be said to have secure tenure when they are protected from involuntary removal from their land or residence, except in exceptional circumstances, and then only by means of a known and agreed legal procedure. Forms of secure tenure include leasehold, freehold, conditional freehold, collective tenure, and communal tenure as well as legislative protections applicable to all dwellers.

**b. Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure**

Adequate housing must meet the requirements necessary for human health and well being, and must accommodate basic community needs. According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in order for housing to be adequate it must provide for safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services. Basic infrastructure which ensure housing adequacy commonly includes water supply systems, sanitation systems and garbage collection, electricity supply systems, road construction, rainwater drainage systems and street lighting.
c. Affordability
The requirement that housing be affordable signifies that personal or household financial costs associated with housing should be at such a level that the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs are not threatened or compromised. As such, housing should not be so expensive that it leaves little room in one’s budget for utilities, food, clothing, transportation, health care and other basic needs. Low-income or subsidised housing must be made available to persons in need of assistance, and such housing must also comply with the other provisions stipulated here in order for that housing to be deemed adequate. The average cost of housing per month should, in most cases, consume no more than approximately one-third of total monthly income, although there may be exceptions in certain cases.

d. Habitability
Adequate housing must provide adequate space and protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards and disease. As such, housing must be constructed with materials that offer protection from the elements and provide for the comfort of occupants. Housing must also be in keeping with the protection of human health, and cannot contain hazardous or dangerous materials which cause illness or which may cause sickness or chronic disease over time, i.e. ‘sick buildings.’ Housing must also provide adequate space for occupants, and should not be overcrowded, thereby promoting both the comfort and health of occupants.

e. Accessibility
Adequate housing must be accessible, or readily attainable, to those entitled to it. For example, disadvantaged groups must be accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources. Disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, children, the physically disabled, the terminally ill, HIV-positive individuals, persons with persistent medical problems, the mentally ill, victims of natural disasters, persons living in disaster-prone areas and other vulnerable groups should be ensured some degree of priority consideration with respect to their housing rights. Both housing law and policy should take fully into account the special housing needs of such groups.

f. Location
According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adequate housing must be in a location which allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centres and other social facilities. This is true both in large cities and in rural areas where the temporal and financial costs of getting to and from the place of work can place excessive demands upon the budgets of poor households. Similarly, housing should not be built on polluted sites or in immediate proximity to pollution sources that threaten the right to health of the inhabitants. As such, housing should not be built on or near environmental hazards, including garbage dumps and other such hazardous sites.

g. Cultural adequacy
Because of the importance which housing plays within the lives of individuals as well as communities, housing must also be culturally adequate. As such, the way housing is constructed, the building materials used and the policies supporting these must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing.
In 2006 FEANTSA conducted a shadow peer review in Norway

Norway in brief: EEA member (European Economic Area), but not member of the European Union
4.5 million inhabitants
19 counties
434 municipalities
Biggest municipality: Olso (capital of Norway) with 541,822 inhabitants as of April 2006
Current government: appointed on 17 October 2005,
the current government is a majority government representing the Labour party,
the socialist left party and the centre party.

The work of FEANTSA is supported financially by the European Commission.
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