

The analysis of homelessness in Hungary

„Short paper” for CUHP

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1 Introduction: housing policy and homelessness in the post-socialist countries

To understand homelessness in the Central and East European countries, it is necessary to briefly discuss the basics of the “socialist housing model” (Hegedus-Tosics, 1996). The new housing system of the Central and East European countries, introduced after the take over of the socialist-communist parties at the end of the 1940s, was part of the system of planned economy. The income of people was strictly controlled and the costs of housing, education, health care were not included in their salaries, as these goods were considered as state services, provided free to the citizens. There was also direct control introduced on the consumption side: one family could only have - rent or own- one flat (plus one week-end house) to avoid the “over-consumption” of housing and in order to eliminate the private rental sector. The party-state had also established almost total control over the supply side of housing: the new construction of state-owned housing was centrally planned and private forms of housing construction were controlled with rationalisation of building material supply and of housing loans. Up to the end of the 1980s, there were virtually no problems in the Central and East European countries with paying rents, mortgages, utility fees, as these were fixed at a nominal level and even low-income people could afford them (as full employment ensured a minimum income for everyone).

During the decades of socialism there was virtually full employment in Central and Eastern Europe: everyone could get a job, even if this was very low paid (unemployment was “within the gates of factories” which means that many more people were employed than necessary for efficient production). From the 1970s on, the output of new state-financed construction of housing was increased - especially with the introduction of the pre-fabricated housing construction method. As a result, the housing situation in these countries improved and more and more people have had access to some form of housing. Those who did not, had to live with their parents, sub-let a room in a flat from someone, or live in the workers hostels of their employer. “Unemployment” and “homelessness” were not commonly used words and in practice these were considered as criminal activities: people without jobs

and/or living on the street were collected by the police and sent to prison or health care institutions.

This briefly described socialist type of economy and housing changed dramatically from the very end of the 1980s. With the collapse of the socialist economy many people suddenly lost their jobs and also the workers hostels were closed down. At the same time in the housing sector market mechanisms were introduced: with the withdrawal of state subsidies (due to the huge financial problems of the national economies) housing prices and utility fees began to grow towards the market level, and the rental stock has been privatised. Central and local governments are no longer obliged to provide housing, as evidenced by the abolishment of waiting lists¹ which are no longer compulsory. Changes also affect the general social protection system, which is replaced by targeted social subsidy and provision systems (based on needs).

As a result, a substantial portion of society suddenly faced payment difficulties and got into arrears. In the first half of the 1990s these people were still protected directly by the political unacceptableness of eviction and indirectly by the inefficiency of the foreclosure procedures. Housing was at the beginning of the transition more a kind of "shock absorber", instead of being the forerunner of the introduction of market society ("agency of change"). The political rationale for that was the idea that at least the security of living somewhere should be maintained, if the security of employment, stable income, etc. disappeared. (Struyk, 1996).

However, from the second half of the 1990s in many ex-socialist countries housing policy became more and more market-orientated, without the introduction of comprehensive systems to protect the poor. In many of the Central and East European countries the responsibility for housing was transferred to the local governments, without giving them appropriate financial means from the central budget to enable them to set up a social safety net. In these countries (e.g. Hungary) the protection of families in arrears is gradually diminishing as local governments and privatised utility companies - in need of revenues - start to collect their rents and fees more efficiently and start also foreclosure and eviction procedures against families in arrears. All these factors led to a huge increase of homeless people, as there are none or only very weak and limited social and political mechanisms developed to protect people, who are being evicted or foreclosed, from becoming homeless.

As an illustration to the points mentioned above, some figures can be listed from Hungary. Until the end of the 1980s many of the potential homeless people were housed in workers hostels, which were run by big state owned companies and charged very little rent for their workers, who shared the rooms among themselves. These hostels were shut down as the socialist enterprises went bankrupt, as part of the collapse of the socialist economy. In Budapest the number of workers hostel places has decreased from 60,000 to only 6,000 in the last few years. There has also been a drastic reduction of beds in hospitals which were playing role in housing homeless people.

¹ Waiting lists were the principal means by which the municipal governments and councils allocated municipal apartments, or - if they existed - social apartments. On the lists were persons in need of dwelling, theoretically in the order of importance. Waiting lists are still in use in some countries (e.g. Bulgaria).

Additionally, the share of public rental units decreased from 33% of the stock to 5%, i.e. from 1.3 million to only 200 thousand in Hungary. This means that the number of vacated public rental units has become insignificant. There are 2, 000 young people per year leaving the system of state orphanage at the age of 18, with practically no place to go to.

To sum up: two distinctive stages can be separated, regarding homelessness in post-socialist cities. In the first stage homelessness becomes visible and the number of homeless people grows dramatically. By this time the official pressure to have a registered address ceases, and no street dwellers end up locked in prison. Parallel to the official changes, the economic breakdown, the closure of workers hostels, the surging utility prices and the appearance of the 'real estate mafia' all contribute to the growing number of homeless people. On top of all these factors, economic migration can push job seekers to the cities, adding to the population without permanent residence and at the risk of finding itself on the street.

This is the time to recognize the need for homelessness policies. Due to the weak economic performance of Hungary, there is hardly any talk of state involvement, and large social subsidies. Because of the lack of money, a social policy is not an affordable solution. Establishing shelters still presents a cheaper option.

During the second stage, from the middle of the 1990s in Hungary, the system of shelters has been established, which, although insufficient, can provide some sort of accommodation. The number of homeless was discussed for years and at the end of decade the opinions about the estimated number seemed to stabilize around 20-30 000 street dwellers on country level, but as a matter of fact nobody knew / knows their real number. In Hungary in 2002 there were about 8000 beds, half of them in Budapest. At this stage discussions have begun about the direction the providing system should be developed into: to increase the quantity of beds and / or to improve the quality of institutions. Should the homeless providing system be more developed at all or the homeless policies cooperating with other sectors should try to reintegrate the homeless into society?

There is a danger that a third stage of homelessness could come, when masses of whole families are either threatened by eviction or find themselves on the street. In this case the number of homeless could grow again dramatically. This is the case, when a country's economy has more or less been transformed to a market economy, its utility companies and banks are privatised, but surging prices are not compensated, and only the most needy are targeted in the social security regulations. It is believed, that this third wave of homeless "explosions" would cost the state much more than a careful social safety net policy trying to keep as many of these families as possible in the normal housing market. Fortunately it has not happened yet, there are only few thousand evictions a year in the whole country.

2 Definitions and methods in the research of the homeless population

2.1 Official definition

The legal definition of who shall be considered as a homeless is determined in the Social Law (1993. III. 4 par). The Social Law gives two separate definitions on homelessness:

Social Law 1993. III. 4. article. 2. par

Homeless (roofless) is the person who has no officially registered residency or this is a shelter for homeless people.

Social Law 1993. III. 4. article. 3. par

Homeless is the person who spends the night in the street or in a place that is not appropriate for human dwelling.

The definitions cover the group of street dwellers, but it is far from satisfactory. The official definition of homelessness does not deal with the following group of people who can be / are at risk of becoming literally homeless:

1. people with temporary accommodation (orphans, convicts, squatters, low income sub-tenants for a terminated period of time);
2. people living in their own flat or rental flats, but under the threat of eviction because of arrear or other reason;
3. people living in their own apartments or rental flats, which are either of substandard quality or overcrowded.

Another important feature of the Hungarian regulations is the declaration that children (younger than 18 years old) cannot live in the street and cannot sleep in shelters. If the parents are not able to look after their children than the children are taken to state custody. Contrary to this the Law on Child Protection (1997) states that children cannot be taken away from their families only because of financial reasons. In order to help such families 'temporary family shelters' were set up but only with a very limited capacity. This is problematic, as the number of families becoming homeless seems to have increased in last years.

2.2 Academic definitions

The most common approach examines homelessness according to the housing situation of a given person. It makes distinctions between the 'effective homeless' and the 'people at risk of homelessness' (or potentially homeless) based on a Canadian experts' terminology (Gyori, 1990). The 'effective homeless' do not have had appropriate, stable and safe dwelling possibility (those who spend their nights on public spaces and those who have to "work for it" day by day to have a place to spend the night, in other words those who do not know in advance where they spend the current and following nights), whereas the 'people at risk of homelessness' have a place, but it can be lost any time and then they are likely to spend their nights on

the street (e.g. sub-tenants, those who live in substandard flats, or who spend a long time in different institutions) (Oross, 1991, Gyuris, 1992).

To gain a more accurate description sub-categories were defined (Bényei - Gurály - Gyori - Mezei, 1999):

'1 "roofless" are those, who spend their nights in a public place, under the open sky, or in an obscure place not suitable for habitation

2. "effective homeless" those, who are "roofless", or who do not have a stable, permanent dwelling, and have to "work for it" day by day to have a place to spend the night - it can be either a flat, providing accommodation as a favour, or some other place, not a flat, but a suitable dwelling (one of the homeless care institutions - shelter, short - term residential institutions for homeless etc)

3. "flatless" those, who are "effective homeless", or who have a stable dwelling which is not a flat but is suitable to live in (hostels for factory workers, jails, inhabitations, etc.), or who have a permanent place to spend their nights in, but they are not in the disposal of the uninterrupted use of the flat (they are not owners or tenants but lodgers, sub-tenants, night-lodgers, grown up family members, having been accommodation as a favour or just having been given shelter to)

4. "homeless" (or "being periled by becoming homeless") collectively those, who are "flatless", or who live in a flat, but it is not suitable for creating a real home and raising up a family (either because the flat is overcrowded or because of the physical conditions of the flat/building)²

The categorization above examines the housing situation according to the dimensions of occupational status, the stability of occupation, and the degree that the housing is appropriate to be a home. The latter one examine the dwelling not only in a physical sense (whether it can meet the physical, hygienic, health needs) but also whether it can assure a personal autonomy. This approach sees other factors as the reason for homelessness. The reasons are clustered into two main groups, the personal and the social-economic reasons (Breitner-Gurály-Gyori, 2002):

1. The main personal, family reasons for homelessness:

The majority of homeless people

- came from unstable family, the divorce or death of one or both parents are very common in the families
- experienced alcoholism or /and brutality in their family
- left family when they were very young

² See: "Survey on Homelessness in Hungary, 1990" by Péter Gyori, in Társadalmi riport, 1990, Budapest. According to our intent these definitions fit the content elements of the usage of these notions as used after the change of the regime in Hungary. We presume that they can also indicate that the presently used term "effective homeless" now has a narrower sense than the term "homeless" used to have before 1948, as, at that time, it also implied the "flatless" as well. On the other hand, it also has a narrower sense than the category of "homeless", used by the international terminology. This difference in meaning and usage can perhaps be easier understood if we consider that by the word "home" we mean a secure, safe dwelling of full rights, fit for undisturbed private life, furnished in a way that meets and is fit for the general standards.'

- came from poor families and have low education (similarly to the majority of poor people)
- they are not able to protect their interests against employers, authorities, police etc

As a consequence these people

- lack positive behavioral model
- have assurance or/and self-assurance problems
- have self-destructing behavioral models
- experience general insecurity throughout their life.

2. The main social-economic reasons for homelessness:

- The features of the transition period reminded on the period of primitive accumulation in the developed countries and had significant social effects such as poverty, low wages, insecurity of jobs. On the other hand there are few people with such high income which would make them be able to help.
- For economic reasons the state is not in the position to develop a stable social security system, and it seems that even the intention is missing.
- As a result of the economic crisis with a peak in 1993, mass unemployment emerged and it resulted in sudden impoverishment.
- As a result of the structural change in the economy, education and qualification requirements of labor market changed. There were no need for (heavy) industrial skills any more and the importance of maturity examination increased on the labour market.
- The social network was not effective in handling the newly emerged problems, unemployment, indebtedness of households and their consequences on people's personal life.

This explanation sees homelessness as a last phase of a process. A process through someone gets displaced from the communities (family, colleagues, friends, etc) and from the majority of the society. This last phase was antedated many other ones as losing home, lodges, breaking up with family, losing job, alcohol problems etc. These previous phases very often lead back to the childhood of the person. It is crucial how the society reacts to such vulnerable people's situation, whether the society has an exclusive or an inclusive attitude. According to the researchers of this concept the Hungarian society is not very tolerant to behaviour models, lifestyles that differ from the average.

This perception also emphasizes the role of the community. The "rooflessness" is a phenomenon that mainly exists in urban settings. More traditional communities even if they are very poor have a more supportive attitude towards, which generally does not let its members become "roofless". A very expressive example is the case of Roma communities that are usually very poor but have a strong supportive attitude. Many Roma people and families are homeless in the sense that they do not have independent, own housing but there are very few "roofless" Roma people. Some researchers say that the number of romas is increasing among the literally homeless. They also state that mainly those are at risk who came from state orphanage.

Other approaches examine homelessness in a more complex context. These approaches describe homelessness as a result of the existence of a variety of different factors at the same time. In the following, we present two approaches that

are related to researches described in the next chapter 'Classification of the methods analyzing effective homeless').

One of the approaches interpret homelessness as a constellation of several deficiencies such as the lack of housing, job, money, health (physical, psychical, mental) and personal relations (Albert – Dávid, 2001). This approach is based on the concepts of social and supporting networks and other related concepts. Thus it emphasizes the crucial importance of the personal supporting network. Persons who are affected by unfavourable social-economic circumstances can be endangered by homelessness if their supporting network is deteriorated. However the connections among the different deficiencies cannot be determined, there is no clear cause and effect relation between the deficiencies. According to Albert and Dávid, the lack of relations cause other deficiencies but partly it is a consequence of other deficiencies: the mechanism has a spiral-like pattern where the deficiencies interact with each other and strengthen the effect of the whole process.

The other approach examine homelessness from the perspective of needs (Budapesti Szociális Forrásközpont, 1997). According to this definition a person can be regarded as a homeless if he is not able to meet his basic needs. Two basic needs are defined: 'the health and autonomy', whereas housing problems are regarded only as a part of these needs. This concept implies that homeless people have lost not only their housing opportunity but other important factors in their lives that are strongly connected to human dignity.

2.3 Classification of the methods analysing the 'effective homeless'

This section summarizes the different methods of analysis of the 'effective homeless' population. These researches use point-in-time data collection methods, such as using of service files and/or making interviews with services providers and/or homeless people. Some researchers work with 'complex approach' that means using simultaneously two or more methods. Researching homelessness there is no special survey of general population but some of them focus on the endangered vulnerable groups (e.g. families, persons in arrears).

In the last years six important analysis-methods were elaborated in Hungary:

- (i) yearly survey of homeless people in Budapest from 1999 on,
- (ii) survey on homelessness in 2001-2002,
- (iii) the analysis of the health care system for homeless people, 2001
- (iv) complex pilot program for supporting that the homeless people be employed, 2001
- (v) the analysis of the homeless providing institutions in 1997,
- (vi) the empirical research of homelessness in 1997.

2.3.1 Yearly survey of homeless people in Budapest from 1999

From 1999 on, every 3rd of February between 5 pm and 12 pm the homeless population in Budapest is surveyed (Bényei-Gurály-Mezey-Gyori, 1999, 2000, 2002). Almost all service providers in the capital participated in the research:

- the social workers make interviews with their clients in all night and temporary shelters,
- the stations of the 'mobile tea-services' which distribute tea, foods and warm clothes for homeless in different points of Budapest, the people are asked to fill out the questionnaire during the time of waiting³,
- the social workers visit those public spaces where they know that homeless live (street social workers and staff of the 'crisis car').

The fifteen questions in the questionnaire aimed

- to start a regular, comparative data collection, repeating every year,
- to make a point-in-time research during a short period, that helps to eliminate overlapping of the interviews,
- to follow the changes of age structure and habits of homeless people for developing homeless providing system.

2.3.2 Homelessness in 2001-2002

The Ministry of Social and Family Affairs ordered the research of homeless providing services and groups of homeless people (Gyuris, 2002). The researchers interviewed 150 homeless under 30 years, collected and analysed data of 122 night and temporary shelters and 51 day-shelters. A questionnaire was sent to all night and temporary shelters - two third of the questionnaires were completed and sent back (all cities above 50 000 inhabitants have sent back answers). Examining the habits of using the shelters 408 homeless people were asked in 9 settlements.

The main aims of the research were the following:

- analysing the current situation of the providing system and confront it with the legislations,
- researching the demands for and comparing the supply in the providing system,
- analysing the circumstances of young homeless under 30 years (reasons of homelessness, living conditions, habits, effectiveness of services),
- effectiveness of services in reintegration of homeless people.

Most important results of the research

- the number of shelters slowly increased in the last years, but the quality of their operation did not change. Only 10% of the institutions fully satisfy the quality requirements set by the legislation, 20% of the total number of beds is threatened by closing down. The shelters are crowded and the number and skilled level of workers are lower than regulated.
- Every seventh homeless can get a bed in a shelter on national average; the situation is worse in big cities where the number of homeless to beds ratio changes between 13 and 33.
- The services for women and young homeless are imperfect.

³ They could not asked all people who waited for foods, it did not cover the whole population.

- Only two third of the concerned local governments operates day-shelters and only one third of them has enough street social workers, as required by regulation.
- The majority of the young homeless has left their homes because of conflicts in their family (physical, mental abuse). The lack of access to any housing solution leads to homelessness.
- Half of the people in temporary shelters are homeless people, who are unable to work, who should live in shelters giving permanent accommodation or sanitary institutions. The other half of them has work and incomes, which means that if they were given relevant housing allowance they could rent rooms or flats on the housing market.
- The institutions can hardly reintegrate their clients. Those who became homeless get few help and the main direction of their mobility is towards (in) shelters and not out of the homeless life.
- The probability of the reintegration is very low, based on data only about one seventieth of the homeless could get access to the lowest segment of the housing market.

2.3.3 The analysis of the health care system for homeless people, 2001

The report of the ombudsman declared in 2000 that the right for social security and health of the homeless was infringed because of the lack of elderly homes and rehabilitation homes for the homeless. The national institute of methodology of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs (Hajléktalanokért Alapítvány Módszertani Osztálya) was asked to analyse the demand and supply of those two types of institutions (Maróthy, 2001). They used four different questionnaires that were filled out by representatives of the selected institutions. The sample represented every county and the capital selecting at least two institutions from each of them. The selection method was not random but the ministry selected the institutions. The research examined four different institutions:

- the service of 'family doctors' (general practitioners) and specialists for the homeless (n=12, 22 questionnaires were sent),
- different 'nursing institutions' (sickrooms, special nursing departments of institutions, etc.; n=49; 61 questionnaires were sent),
- elderly homes for the homeless people (n=8, 11 questionnaires were sent),
- rehabilitation homes for homeless (n=2; 7 questionnaires were sent, but two of them did not worked that time).

On the base of the research several recommendations were made concerning the restructuring and the capacity increase of the health providing system of homeless people.

2.3.4 Complex pilot program for supporting that the homeless people be employed, 2001

Sixteen homeless providing institutions of four regions and centers of working affairs in concerned counties who are responsible for services of unemployed people participated in the pilot program. The 1200 applicants who wanted to participate in the program were asked to fill a datasheet (education, profession, working career, working experiences, thoughts on his place on the labour market, health, social status), motivation tests (social connections, motivations, safety needs) and they

were personally interviewed as well (needs and tasks of satisfying of needs). Eventually 317 homeless people were selected to participate in the program, and all of them were interviewed in the framework of research by National Institution of Family and Social Policy (Ladányi - Gyuris, 2002).

The aim of the pilot program was to support the employment of homeless people into the labour market and their reintegration into the society by the establishment of cooperation among the state, non-profit and economic sectors. To reach this strategic aim the selection methods of homeless people and the methods of their preparation for work and for restructuring their lifestyle were elaborated during the model program. The instruments that help the homeless people to come out to and stay permanently in the labour market also had to be developed in the framework of the program.

2.3.5 The analysis of the homeless providing institutions in 1997

47 homeless care institutions were examined, among them 29 were located in Budapest, the other 16 in the agglomeration of Budapest and two in medium sized town near to Budapest.

The aim of the survey was to examine how the homeless care institutions complete their basic task. The basic task of such institutions was defined as to serve homeless people in meeting their basic needs (such as hygienic needs, autonomy to spend leisure time, sleeping facilities etc) thus compensate them for the circumstances of being homeless that often hurts human dignity. The institutions to complete their task have to meet concrete requirements (physical equipments and qualified staff) that are defined in the concerning regulation (decree of Ministry of Social Welfare in 1994 (2/1994 (I.30.)).

The survey was conducted by a questionnaire filled out by the institutions. The survey examined:

- status and mobility of homeless people in institutions
- the type of institutions, physical conditions of the buildings, location of the institutions in the settlements, the size of rooms
- the management's attitude toward financing the institution
- the quality of human resources (whether there are enough employees, qualified experts)
- financing of the institutions (techniques and desires)
- the degree to which the institutions meet the legal requirements

2.3.6 Empirical research of homelessness in 1997

The sample consisted of 2180 people who were interviewed during the Mobile Prevention of Hungarian Maltese Charity Service that was taken on a bus transformed to this special purpose (Albert - Dávid, 2001). Using the bus made possible to reach those people who were not available to the official health institutions. The examination was conducted through the year, since 1997 February. The examination was conducted in 12 different places mostly during the winter time and spring, as homeless people use during this period not only shelters but heated day-time shelters and public areas as well. The homeless people filled a questionnaire during the time of examination.

One of the aim of the survey was to include people from the whole homeless population. With the described method also those homeless people were included in the survey who usually do not use homeless provisions. It was important because the previous surveys showed that the results differed accordingly to the surveys' place.

The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions structured in 5 blocks:

1. the place and date of recording
2. basic demographic, education, qualification data, family status
3. sleeping, dietary, hygienic habits, subsistence strategies and monthly income (the source and grade of income)
4. the length of homelessness, present and past occupational status
5. relation network concerning other homeless people.

Homeless definition: the research intended to deal with the effective/literally homeless people. The work-definition was based on the questioned people's self-definition: whether they regarded themselves as a homeless.

The main purpose of the research was to examine the role of the lack of housing, job and money (poverty) in becoming homelessness, and the connection between these factors and the lack of interpersonal relations of homeless people. The main hypothesis was that the lack of strong personal relations has a major role in becoming homeless, and those homeless people who still have relations are in better situation and have more chance to get out from homelessness.

There was no opportunity to ask questions that would have made possible a traditional network analysis but the research succeeded to use such question about the homeless people relations that enabled the researchers to compose a database to estimate the number of homeless people in Budapest through a snowball sample analysis.

Dávid and Snijders (Dávid – Snijders, 2000) tried to estimate the number of homeless people in Budapest using two different statistical methods, namely 'snowball' and 'capture-recapture' methods.

Another problem was that there were no control sample of the non-homeless population so it was difficult to prove the differences between homeless people and the other disadvantaged groups such as poor or unemployment people. Therefore during the analysis the researchers tried to use the results of other related researches to fill the gap.

2.3.7 Other surveys concerning homelessness

Besides the above mentioned four basic surveys some other research activities were elaborated in the course of the 1990s.

Research on persons frozen to death in 2001

A group of researchers has analysed the questions of the 'irrational death' (suicide, death because of the cold, poisoning, traffic accidents) for the last few years in Hungary. They examined the reasons and the circumstances of the deaths because of the cold in 2001 as well, using three different methods: analysis of the statistical data on those who froze to death, content analysis of the articles about those deaths

in the newspapers and elaboration of the case studies based on in depth-interviews with people who had connections with the persons who froze to death (Bácskai, 2001).

- Analysis of the statistical data on those who froze to death: the Hungarian Central Statistical Office collects data on the basic demographics features of the dead people and the circumstances of their deaths based on the official documents.
- Content analysis of the articles in the newspapers: the analysed articles were published in the winters of 1998 and 1999.
- Case studies based on in depth-interviews: ten different case studies were elaborated based on approximately 50 in depth-interviews with those people who had known the persons frozen to death.

Local homeless survey in Nyíregyháza in 1999

The phenomenon of homelessness can be found in almost all of the cities in Hungary, but - naturally - the numbers are smaller there than in the capital. The local social politicians, researchers regularly analyse the local characteristics of homelessness and the operation of the service providing system, sometimes using survey techniques as well. One of the biggest cities in Hungary is Nyíregyháza, where such empirical research was carried out in 1999 (Pattyán - Szoboszlai, 1999). They analysed the answers of 105 homeless people, asking them about the reasons of their homelessness, the period of it, their position in the labour market, their income and social benefits, their last home, etc.. The researchers estimated the number of the 'effective homeless people' to be around 300-400, the number of those who have spent their nights on the streets at one 'point in time' around 200-230 and those who are at risk of becoming homeless ('potential homeless people') around 5-6 times higher than the number of the 'effective homeless people', similar, but smaller researches were done other cities as well in 1990s.

Questionnaire of 'mobile tea-services' from 1997

The stations of the 'mobile tea-services' the homeless were asked to fill out a short questionnaire from 1997. First year it had covered only three questions (age, where did you sleep previous night, if not in shelter, why did you not sleep in shelter), next year it was increased another question (where are you sleeping tonight). In 1999 the questionnaire and method were unified with the above mentioned yearly survey of homelessness (asking name, date of birth, the highest education level, how long have you been homeless, when did you live in any flat as well). The number of cases were 851, 807, 353 (in 1997 / 1998 / 1999).

Similar survey was carried out regarding the rough sleepers in Ózd in 1999. The homeless people were asked about their gender, age, income, personal connections, living conditions (where they sleep). The number of cases was about 100 persons.

Analysis of night shelters in 1996

The 'Isola' is a night shelter with 80 beds in Budapest that keeps open between October and April. György Mezei (Mezei, 1996) analysed the registration data (name and date of birth at the entrance) between 1993 and 1996. Mezei researched the registration data of four night shelters in 1995 in Budapest as well.

Communal kitchens in 1995

The special department of Ministry of Welfare (Peremhelyzetu Csoportok Módszertani Osztálya) surveyed the use of communal kitchens in Hungary asking to fill a questionnaire in 1995 (Köles, 1995). The researchers collected data from 31 institutions (8 in the capital and 23 in 14 different counties).

The health condition of homeless people in Budapest in 1994

The research compared two sets of data: one about 342 homeless people who were asked in 14 shelters and other places, another about 911 people who represented the adult inhabitants (18 years old or more) of Budapest, who had a registered permanent residence (Molnár – László, 1994; László, 1994). They analysed the health conditions, the drinking habits of both groups and tried to understand the homeless populations' motivations to change their situation, etc.. (In the same year another research was conducted by the Intel Comp Foundation and SzocioMed Ltd., analysing the data of 1440 homeless people.)

'Walking-sample selection' method and sample of service users in 1992-93

457 homeless people were interviewed in main railway stations, and Deák square and some communal kitchens in Budapest. The size of the other sample was 723 people, who used the ISOLA night shelter of the Twist Oliver foundation with 80 beds (Mezey-Sarlós, 1995).

Empirical research in 93 shelters in different Hungarian cities between January 1992 and May 1993 (Oross – Kocsis B., 1994).

The empirical research carried out in 11 shelters in Hungary, the number of sample was 545 homeless people (Gyuris – Molnár - Szántó, 1992).

Pomáz – Budaörs comparative health study in 1992

Zsolt Szuhay Dr. compared his data of the medical examination of 200 people from Budaörs homeless shelter (n=117) and the patients of the Working Therapy Institute in Pomáz (n=83).

Empirical survey in the shelter in Budaörs, 1992

Jolán Oross analysed the data of 160 homeless people in the Budaörs night shelter, which was the biggest shelter in Hungary in that time (Oross, 1992).

3 Latest developments in terms of legislation, policy and aid systems

3.1 Legislation

The proposed changes of the Social Law

- define the street social work as an independent, special form of basic services (in the current regulation it is a part of the day-shelter service), so that this can be organized more widely (independently or in the framework of other social services). The tasks of it will be the same as in the current regulation.
- make a distinction between the night and the temporary shelters. The night shelter should provide night rest for those who are able to look after themselves and comply with regulations of communal living, and allows of

night housing in crisis situation. The temporary shelter provides housing for those who are able to look after themselves with the help of permanent use of shelter and social work.

- introduce the regulation that those settlements that have more than 10 000 inhabitants have to operate street social service, night shelter and day-shelter service.

3.2 Policy level

Miklós Vecsey, the vice president of Hungarian Maltese Charity Service was nominated the Commissioner of Homelessness on 15th of November, 2002. His main tasks are the following:

- to co-ordinate the cooperation between the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs and the service providers in the winter crisis period. To help the solution of unexpected problems in winter time.
- To develop reform proposals to regulate and finance the homeless providing services, working together with experts and representatives of homeless population.
- To help the strengthening of social solidarity giving comprehensive information for people.

The new mentality of the ministry can be demonstrated by the following facts:

- the normative grant for homeless providing services increased from 828 million to 1108 million HUF (34%) in 2003,
- 590 million HUF will be spent on developing of services for homeless in 2003.
- The minister declared that the all infrastructure of the ministry - health and social institutes, the former hospital of the ambulance, garage of the ministry, etc. - can be used in order to decrease the dangers threatening the life of homeless people.

The experts of the capital municipality trying to develop a new approach concerning the homeless care institution system (Gurály, Gyori, Mezei, Pelle, 2002). This new approach already includes the more complex concept of homelessness: homeless people needs not only a place to sleep, but also security, social relations, partnerships, intimacy, autonomy to form their own daily routine etc. The current institution system is not able to provide services that fit into the structure of many homeless people's every day life. Therefore these existing institutions have unused capacity quite generally. The new attempts try to transform the institution system in such a way that takes into account more the real needs of homeless people.

4 Some preliminary data on magnitude of homeless population and homeless providing services

1. Table Some estimations on the number of homeless in Hungary

	Estimated numbers of homelessness in Budapest	Estimated numbers of homelessness in Hungary	Definition	Method	Source
1980		30 thousand	'effective homeless'	Estimation based on Census data 1980	In: Fovárosi Önkormányzat, 1999
1987		30-60 thousand	Homeless(=hobos) in broader sense	No information	Utasi, 1987
1990		10-15 thousand	'effective homeless'	No information	Iványi, 1998
1990		3-400 thousand	People at risk of becoming 'effective homeless'	No information	Iványi, 1998
1999	8-10 thousand		homeless	Statistical estimation	Dávid, Snijders, 2000
1999	7-8 thousand / 3,2-3,5 thousand		Potential need for services in winter / potential need for shelter point in time	No information	Fovárosi Önkormányzat, 1999
2001	7-10 thousand	Double of data in Budapest	homeless	No information	Fovárosi Önkormányzat, 2001
2002		25-30 thousand	homeless	No information	Press conference of the Commissioner Of Homelessness, 2002

Note: Some experts emphasize the high relevancy of the real (measured) need for services in opposite with the estimated number of homeless (Fovárosi Önkormányzat, 1999)

2. Table Long- and short term residential social institutions in Hungary, 2001

	Number of sites	Beds	Number of residents	Residents per ten thousand inhabitants	Occupancy rate, %
Home for homeless people	147	6777	6323*	6,2	93,3

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Hungary, 2001,

* Number of residents 6320 in 2000, 6500 in 1999, 3578 in 1993.

3. Table Number of residents in long- and short term residential social institutions by maintainer in Hungary, 2001

	Local government	Church	Private enterprise	Foundation	Association	Other	Total
In home for homeless people	3384	268	-	1138	1489	44	6323

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Hungary, 2001,

4. Table Basic and day-time supplies, Support for homeless persons in Budapest, 2001

	1980	1990	1995	1999	2000	2001
Communal kitchens	-	-	13	12	10	12
Daily average turnover, per persons	-	-	2220	2150	1986	2234

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Budapest, 2001

5. Table Institutions providing lasting and temporary accomodation by type of institutions in Budapest, 2001

	Total		Of which: of local government	
	Accomodation in operation	Persons under care	Accomodation in operation	Persons under care
Lasting accomodations				
Shelters for homeless people	200	207	-	-
Providing temporary accomodations				
Shelters for homeless people	2761	2536	1337	1074

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Budapest, 2001

6. Table Some capacity data on homeless providing services in November 2002

	Hungary	
	Number of buildings	Number of beds / capacity / workers
Night shelters		7550
Temporary shelters		
Rehabilitation institutions	11	310
Nursing home	4	125
Day-shelters	70	3600
Street social workers	-	50
General practitioners	-	9

Source: Press conference of Miklós Vecsei, the Commissioner Of Homelessness and the vice president of Hungarian Maltese Charity Service in November 2002.

7. Table State sources pending on 'effective homeless' between 2001-2003

	2001	2002	2003 (projected)
State sources pending on 'effective homeless'	1,8 billion HUF (7,35 million EUR)	2,3 billion HUF (9,39 million EUR)	3,2 billion HUF (13,06 million EUR)

Source: Press release of Miklós Vecsei, the Commissioner Of Homelessness and the vice president of Hungarian Maltese Charity Service in November 2002.

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