

## **NGO PERSPECTIVES, WAYS OF WORKING AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL**

### **Introduction**

Part of the work of our Thematic Network, CUHP, was to understand the context in which NGOs worked with the homeless, and their perspective on definitions of homelessness, and new homeless populations. Therefore the second day of each Workshop included representatives of local NGOs and Municipal Councils and/or Ministries with a particular interest in homelessness. The purposes of these meetings were three-fold:

- To understand the issues facing policy makers and NGOs in different countries in dealing with homelessness.
- To understand their perspectives on homelessness (definitions of homelessness/ housing need), new homeless populations and new ways of working.
- To understand their priorities for future research.

We learned a great deal from the contributions of NGOs and policy makers at these second day meetings. One important outcome was an understanding of the anti-social exclusion agendas that had developed among NGOs in different European countries.

**This paper was presented as Part 2 of a paper on European Housing Policy and the Contribution at the Brussels conference in November 2005 it therefore is presented in five sections labelled from V- IX to follow on from that paper:**

**Section V** relates some of the issues on homelessness to Part 1 of this paper on European Values, the ESM and EU Social Policy (Section 1), Housing Rights in Europe (Section 2), Housing Policy Developments (Section 3), and the Relation between Housing Policy and Homelessness (Section 4).

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<b>Section IX</b>	<b>Research Issues and the NGOs</b>	
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## V: The ESM, NGOs and Homelessness

Section 5 relates some of the issues on homelessness to the issues raised in Part 1 of this paper on European Values, the ESM and EU Social Policy particularly in relation to the issue of housing rights, developments in housing policy, and the relation between housing policy and homelessness.

### 5.1 The ESM as a Political Project

The European Social Model (ESM) has had greater or lesser importance in relation to which country has held the European Presidency. Famously, it was boosted by the *Lisbon European Council* in March 2000 that identified a need for Europe to become "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*". The Portuguese Presidency transformed the position of European Social Policy within the European Commission through:

- A spring European Council each year to discuss interrelationships between economic, employment and social policy,
- Establishment of the Social Policy Committee to make proposals for indicators on social exclusion and to give advice on the future role of social protection systems,
- The possibility these indicators could pave the way for benchmarks for social exclusion and social protection policies and National Action Plans,
- And the Open Method of Co-ordination method being applied to social policy.

As argued in Part I of this paper the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) has been an important development at the European Level, offering a more flexible kind of policy making to replace stalled attempts at creating common legislation.

A similar boost to the ESM was given under the Greek Presidency in 2003 when the sharing of common European values was seen as the key to developing European wide cohesion. '*The Lisbon conclusions highlight the importance of social protection for the European strategy, as a factor contributing to economic growth in Europe and to the prosperity of its citizens. The ESM has thus acquired a central role in the overall Strategy*'.

However, some politicians in Europe are raising the question as to whether the ESM has created barriers to economic growth. Part of this argument has been developed deliberately through an international think-tank, *Policy Network*, with the support of Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder, Giuliano Amato and Göran Persson in Europe and Bill Clinton in USA. The EU Observer reported that Blair's presidency would be used to challenge the ESM in the name of competitiveness,<sup>1</sup> and the Washington Times agreed in their article (July 5<sup>th</sup> 2005). They defined the ESM in opposition to that of the United States: '*What is the ESM? It is clearly defined in Jeremy Rifkin 'American Dream' that the American model is about economic growth, personal wealth and independence whilst ESM is about sustained development, quality of life and interdependence.*' This article reports that whilst Tony Blair is saying that he doesn't want to abandon the model he is also asking the questions: what sort of model is it that doesn't train people for high skill jobs (India is training more), has high unemployment (20 million) and high future welfare costs? Therefore, he would argue, the ESM has to be reformed. More recently, the UK and Sweden have been preparing a study of the ESM.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.euobserver.com](http://www.euobserver.com)

In referring to ESM it is always necessary to remember the differences between European social systems – including particular welfare policies, tax-benefit systems (especially housing benefit systems), transfer systems, and in relation to the present discussion, the availability of social housing and housing rent allowances.

Several writers have identified four predominant systems:

- Nordic / Scandinavian model
- Cooperative / continental model
- Liberal model or Atlantic/Beveridge model
- Mediterranean welfare states or Continental/Family welfare systems.

However, differences in welfare regimes are not the only difference. There are also marked differences in governance regimes from the ‘social partnership’ model of France through to the UK model of centralised government.

Jepson and Serrano Pascual (2005)<sup>2</sup> have argued that the ESM is a political project that enhances legitimacy of the European Union through constructing a common identity, rather than an already existing set of shared values, or similar institutions. In this perspective ESM is: “...based less on common values than on a sharing of problems and intervention solutions (policy paradigms).” This perspective includes the construction of common notions and concepts. They cite the case of the European Employment Strategy to demonstrate that EU institutions can play a crucial role in providing cognitive frames and conceptual paradigms: ‘A certain vocabulary (employability, partnership, activation, gender mainstreaming etc) has spread into the national political discourse’.

Jepson and Serrano Pascual propose the argument that the ESM is a political project as an alternative to three other definitions: 1) the ESM is based on existing values and institutions already shared between member states; 2) the ESM is based on an ideal model incorporating extensive social security, interest organisations/social partnership and more equitable wealth and income distribution; and 3) the ESM as a developing trans-national model maintaining members states commitment to social policy and developing new European levels of Industrial Relations and Charter of Social Rights. For Jepson and Serrano Pascual definitions 1 and 2 relate to the historical legacy of Europe and 3 and 4 (their own) to the future challenges facing Europe.

Of course, some commentators have argued that pan European policy is being established by the European Courts; indeed that under competition law, open competition have been strengthened through court judgements. However it is also the case that the Open Method of Coordination may be having an impact on social exclusion, as well as on employment policies. In our meetings, in Madrid was reference made to the construction of policy on inclusion/exclusion in relation to European Policy. Manuel Porras (Deputy Director General of Social Services, Ministry of Childhood) argued that:

*“You all know about the Lisbon strategy, the Nice objective and I would like to remind you of the Open Method of Co-ordination. As you know, Europe, the Commission and the member countries, have come to an agreement about important strategies in the field of employment, social exclusion or inclusion, pensions. We have been working for two and a half years with this Open Co-ordination Method. That means that all of us set common objectives, we set measures of objectives that are common, and periodically we set action plans according to the common objective and common indicators.*

*In 2001 the strategy was to fight exclusion, that the Commission already calls inclusion, this is not minor, it is speaking in positive terms about the social objective. It is part of the three basic ideas of the Social Europe – employment, social protection*

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<sup>2</sup> M Jepson and A S Pascual (2005) The ESM: An exercise in deconstruction, Journal of European Social Policy 2005 Vol 15 (3); 231-245

*or coverage, and economic sharing. We talk about social security systems and fighting exclusion. When in Europe we speak about inclusion rather than exclusion, that means we are talking about general policies, not only for the marginalized people, the people with problems. No we are talking about policies for the whole population, but the priority, the objective is inclusion. This is an important nuance, because that means the involvement of society at large but we mainly underscore preventive policies. We also want to eradicate poverty and achieve inclusion.*

*In Spain we set a two year plan; the first year was 2001-2, and the second was 2002-3. The first action plan was in June 2001 and this plan triggered off a working method. A summary of the plan in Spain is in two slogans. One, A New Way of Working : that is what we tried to do in the two years (June 2001-3), and it means that all the social bodies, public administrations, the tertiary sector, the experts, entrepreneurs, trade unions, social agents, should focus on inclusion as an objective. That is a new way of working. In Spain we have a long tradition of working according to different groups – the elderly, the disabled – and we had experience of 15-20 years of cross sectional policies for social services, for primary attention, collaborating with NGOs in these fields. But we were not used to focus on that phenomenon, the risk for all European citizens, the risk of being excluded, of exclusion. I am not going to discuss poverty, exclusion, inclusion but in the European Observatory created between 1988 and 1992, one of the feelings of the citizens is that poverty, exclusion, marginalisation, is a threat, not something that happens to others but may happen to all of us. It is to do with the market situation – the situation of employment, unemployment, we are all fragile – we all have this threat upon us. This is our way of working.*

*... 10 major priorities and 264 measures aiming at reducing social exclusion. Four objectives: access to employment and resources is one and prevention is a second.*

*... In Spain national inclusion plans are an important opportunity, a process, to bring together, public general policies, families, NGOs, the labour field, trade unions, entrepreneurs, all together for a common end. Some how I hope this will be the result. We are undergoing serious transformation and this is a shared commitment of all of us.'*

The Open Method of Co-ordination and National Plans may well be a mechanism by which states that previously had Continental/Family systems develop new layers of welfare provision.

## **5.2 NGOs, The State and Homeless Services**

In our workshops the importance of NGOs in the work of social welfare for the homeless became apparent. What is the relation between NGOs and the ESM? What should be the relation? The European Federations of Non-Government Organisations have emphasized the importance of defending the values of the ESM in a globalising world.

*'For most people it is the 'ESM' that distinguishes Europe from other parts of the 'developed countries'. This model is probably better defined as a set of shared values than as a fixed model. Even if the model is developed unevenly in different European countries, and the means of delivery change over time, there is a broad agreement across Europe that these values need to be defended and extended.*

*These values are in danger of being undermined by aspects of economic globalisation unless we work together to defend them. Defending these values should be at the heart of the work of the Convention and these values must be explicitly named in the Constitutional Treaty that will be the outcome of the work of the Convention. These values include:*

- *A society which places human rights including economic and social rights at the centre of its concerns and ensures that no one is excluded from exercising their rights and participating fully in society*
- *A high level of social protection and universal and equal access to key services such as; health care, education and training, housing, that is guaranteed or provided by the state*
- *The recognition of the strength of cultural diversity within and between member states.*
- *A commitment to high quality and stable employment with a strong emphasis on the rights of workers.*<sup>3</sup>

Spain is a country that has a Continental/Family welfare state that, it was emphasised, was in the process of change as the family welfare model became less effective. In Madrid the work of the NGOs was particularly important as they filled a gap that housing services did not see as belonging to them:

*'Besides local government, the role of Non Profit Sector is very significant - half of all services are run by NGOs, Church organisations, .who also get normative grants. Many times local government contract out these services to NGOs.*

*As I mentioned this system was elaborated in a very short time – a crisis management for the problem. Of course problems then appeared. This system cannot manage the problems of the different groups of homeless people – namely the young homeless people, the problem of homeless families – there are not really homes for families, night shelters are for single people, even couples can't live there. The small number of rehabilitation centres are for those who are ready to leave the homeless life. The other problem is that those who are in bad condition – physically or mentally – they can't get enough care because the number of nursing homes, mental health homes are very low. There is also no prevention for those who are at risk of becoming homeless, there are no preventative policies for them.'* (Ministry, Spain)

However, in relation to homelessness services, NGOs were important even in the advanced welfare state of Denmark, and also in France and in the UK. In Copenhagen the speaker from the Ministry of Social Affairs argued for close relations with the NGOs and local government:

*'I just want to give some comments. Thank God we have the close co-operation between government bodies, regional bodies and the institutions. We hear what is going on in the institutions and then we start thinking. We have information about young people in shelters and then we started projects for young people. When we hear about young people smoking hash or taking cocaine and the increasing problem it creates then we act. Right now Parliament is discussing an action plan for young people and drugs; and right now working on an action plan for people from Greenland, to improve their situation. (Ministry of Social Affairs, Denmark)*

At the Paris Workshop it was argued that France had well balanced partnerships. The French State had asked religious organisations to split their services between social tasks and the Christian tasks. For example, the Association des Cities de Secours Catholique undertakes social tasks in twelve centres (nine of which lie in the Ile de Paris region) these offer shelters, work centres, social residences and apartments. Half of this work is funded by public funds and includes work with homeless, mental ill-health, women with children, single men, young people, sick people and their families. Paris also has a Centre d'Action Sociale de la

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org) the website of European Social NGOs. See also the website of the Euroeapan Trade Union Confederation and their work on fundamental rights, European works councils and European social dialogue in industry..

Ville de Paris (CASVP) created in 1995, dependent on the Municipality of Paris, with a Board of Directors and Presided over by the Mayor of Paris; there are fifteen members of the Paris Council and fifteen members of NGOs and other social work institutions. This follows the 'social partnership' method predominant in France.

In the UK the relationship between government and NGOs had become particularly strong but principally through funding mechanisms: first through the establishment of the Rough Sleepers' Unit that funded some agencies to provide centralised services; the second through the new funding stream of 'Supporting People' that requires quarterly returns reporting outputs and under which funding is only renewed through Government approval. Some agencies are concerned about the power these funding streams give to Government over the work of the agencies. *Agencies are finding that the Audit Commission, the government, the Treasury feel that they need to change, there needs to be a step-change again and the government's answer to this is to say 'Well we are going to stop work on the street and we are going to try things that have been tried perhaps elsewhere in the United States, we are looking a bit at Philadelphia and again at New York, but about signposting people off the street'. The government is taking what's called a street management approach where it's the police, the wardens, the cleansing authorities that are looking at where they find people saying "You can't be here, you need to go over there into this hostel, into the day centre". (NGO, single homeless, London)*

(The issue of street management approaches is discussed further in Section 8.)

Another issue that also became apparent in the Workshops was the very different approach of European states in relation to the responsibility of different statutory services for homelessness. In Madrid homelessness was not considered an issue for social workers to deal with (there was almost no social housing), in Copenhagen the housing department did not deal with homeless people, and in Italy it was an issue for NGOs except in the case of women with children or who were pregnant. Only in the UK did local housing departments deal with all homeless issues, although NGOs largely provided shelter and support for the 'single homeless' (see below).

### **5.3 Homeless services and local connection**

Part I of this paper has demonstrated the great variety in housing rights and the availability of social housing between different European states. However, this is not the only consideration. Within each nation state there can be differences of services provision locally. Homelessness is, in each of the countries that held workshops, a responsibility of local services and services are provided for those with a 'local connection'. In Paris it was reported that if a homeless person was from the 20<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement of the Ville de Paris then they received their services in that Arrondissement. Without an address then homeless people have to attend at one of the four 'permanences' (offices) according to age and sex as each catered for a different group of clients: young men, men over 26 years, women, clients with a medical/psycho-social history.

In Madrid services were also local, but many areas within Greater Madrid didn't offer services to homeless people therefore they travelled into the centre: *The administrations are autonomous. The Ministry and different authorities always try to ensure that we reach out but we need to have the right kinds of criteria for standardisation, homogenisation. We have common objectives but that is it, we are autonomous. Each City Hall has its own set of competencies therefore it is, by definition, a complex and time consuming process - not just in our field, but in all fields in general. We know that there will be local groups and local corporations who will want to be more specific than general in their approach. That is legitimate - I know that from a technical point of view it would be easier if we were to standardise*

*and homogenise but from a legal point of view, from a juridical point of view, from a political point of view, we need to always bear in mind that each one of the 17 governments basically organises its own house. (Discussion in the Madrid Workshop)*

The same point was made in Copenhagen, by the representative from the Ministry for Social Affairs

*It is important to realise that Denmark is a localised society; there are 13 regional, 271 local authorities and both types of council are entitled to raise taxes. We provide the framework for action and the local and regional authorities fill in the framework. Our legislation is broad and flexible therefore it does not require amendment – we issue guidelines but local and regional are responsible for the services. At the local level is provided cash assistance, housing and benefits. Regional governments are responsible for reception centres, shelters, boarding houses. But they may leave the running of these to voluntary organisations and this happens in 50% of cases under contract. Only rarely does a local or regional authority fail to meet its obligation.*

However, the speaker from the local Municipality of Copenhagen was concerned because money for different programmes was not ring-fenced:

*I think the Scandinavian system gives some money to municipalities and then municipalities decide to do with the money – it is very dangerous because it can be used for a football hall rather than taking care of the homeless or the social poor. This means that some municipalities do a lot of efforts, but others don't. They might have laws that the municipalities should take responsibility and make provision for the poor, but if the money is out of their control then they haven't any power to say to the municipalities that they are not doing a good job. (Municipality of Copenhagen)*

A representative from the Church Army in Copenhagen pointed out that if people wanted to move to another area where they might possibly get a house there were difficulties because they couldn't move their welfare entitlement. *It is not possible to just move to another area – suburbs or elsewhere in Copenhagen. A person can't get social welfare from other municipalities, unless you renounce your social welfare entitlement in the other place. (Church Army, Copenhagen)*

A member of the CUHP network – a Dutch researcher argued that the problem of establishing a local connection is that homeless people who move around the country could be shut out of the system.

*I have two questions. The first is what is the effect of the decentralisation of the homeless process from the national to the local level? In the Netherlands we are in the process of being decentralised and what we see is that there are a lot of advantages but there might be risks. Advantages of course is that at the local level, the municipal can get a better idea of what local group of homeless and what programme fits, a better match between needs and what is provided. But there are risks also – what we see is that in local areas there is a tendency that local institutions will leave out homeless people who come from other parts of the country out of their institutions. They provide the care for 'their own homeless' and not for people who move around and come from other places and there might be complications then. (Lia van Doorn, NIZW, Netherlands)*

The response in Copenhagen – from both the Municipality and the Ministry - was to explain that it was necessary in Copenhagen to look after local people first rather than people from Greenland (which is Danish) or from other parts of Scandinavia.

A similar issue occurs in the UK. As part of the tests established under homeless legislation to identify homeless people who meet the requirements for support, applicants must prove a local connection. However, because in the UK Homelessness Legislation applies to all local authorities, all local authorities must have a homeless strategy. This was not the case in Spain. In Madrid and Milan it

was argued that the situation for homeless people was very different in other parts of these countries. In Madrid it was reported that services in Barcelona were much less well developed than in Madrid for example (800 beds for 8000 street homeless in 2003) and services in the local areas around Milan varied in relation to local support.

#### 5.4 Conclusions

A member of the network from the Italian team reported on the different ways that homelessness was approached as a policy comparing the UK and other European nations.

*If I understand that the problem working with street homeless persons here (in London) was in some way to try to add them to the accommodation complement, and to add to the programme the idea of social relations and social isolation. You know in many other European countries this kind of the problem was really some way the reverse, because street homeless was and it is still to define it as a problem of poverty and as a problem of extreme poverty or marginalisation. So the problem was to convince social workers, policy makers and so on that accommodation, the housing part of the programme was it important, is important.*

*I don't think that the two stories are converging. ...In the case of southern countries, South Europe countries in general, there the prevailing images of homelessness is as a policy problem. Even today, for instance, housing research is not open to consider homelessness as a problem of its competence and housing departments, housing policies are not open to view homelessness as something of their competence. It is passed completely to social welfare. (Antonio Tosi, Politechno di Milano, Italy)*

The speaker from Women's Aid in London added in response to this statement:

*And I totally in many ways agree with what you are saying but playing devil's advocate here the issue of accessing housing and welfare benefits in this country are definitely co-terminus. I was appalled how it works in the European countries, particularly those that were attending that conference, because women fleeing domestic violence which is what the conference (on Domestic Violence, in Sicily, that included representatives from Croatia etc) was all about, were unable to access housing, benefits or anything else because it just wasn't on the agenda of that particular country.... I also think that in many respects our housing legislation, our welfare legislation is the envy of the European world and I am glad of that fact. But even so ours is not perfect that's what I would say but I do want to highlight the marked differences within, you know, European states. (Women's Aid, London)*

## VI. PERSPECTIVES ON HOUSING NEED AND HOMELESSNES

Part 1 has described current developments in housing markets across Northern and Central Europe that included increasing privatisation of social housing and greater reliance on owner-occupation to house the population with housing allowances to support the most vulnerable – from supply side (social housing) to demand side (private rented) support. In workshops in Copenhagen and London it was apparent that this had huge implications for the populations that could be housed in social housing. In both capital cities there was a crisis for low earning families.

### 6.1 Homeless populations, describing homelessness and legal definitions of homelessness

There was a surprising discussion in Copenhagen as a speaker from the Municipality of Copenhagen reported that their Law distinguished between 2 groups

- *Ordinary people without homes and for these people the Municipality is responsible for finding housing.*
- *For homeless people with heavier social or mental and/or abuse problems, the State pays half the price of the shelters. Copenhagen has half the shelters in Denmark and about 2000 persons go through the system. There are 600 beds and the budget is 19 million euros per year.*

These two groups were described by the Danish as the 'houseless homeless' and the 'homeless homeless' and this classification provoked an extensive discussion. .

*The distinction between the normal homeless and the 'homeless homeless' fits the Danish situation. We have to get the imminent homeless out of homelessness, through an immediate response to the housing issue and then more in-depth policies for the long-term 'homeless homeless'. (Representative, National Council for Socially Marginalized and Excluded in Odense)*

*The policy is that the houseless have their own responsibility to get their own flat, house, if they can – the Municipality does not have responsibility for the houseless; housing is the person's own responsibility. We might provide a hotel room for a short period of time, but not a house. The houseless are not the same as the 'homeless homeless', the rough sleepers; we have a responsibility towards them. For example we had a woman who had 1 million kroner from selling her house and then wanted to be reassigned. (Ministry of Social Affairs)*

A member of the Danish research team from SFI reported that the 'houseless homeless' had become increasingly less able to access social housing as the housing crisis in Copenhagen had increased.

*The distinction between the houseless and the homeless homeless category is not a given. There has been an increasing restriction. There has been an increasing demand to document the social problems of a family; not enough to say that social housing is necessary to prevent homeless homeless. Therefore there is a lack of prevention now – now people have to get closer to the shelter before you are assigned to housing.*

*We seem to have three types of housing problem:*

- *Houseless*
- *Homeless Homeless*
- *Freak housing for the freaks – people you don't have to put in real housing.*

(Tobias Stax, SFI, DK)<sup>4</sup>

But the response from NGOs attending the meeting was that it was important to keep the distinction based on the needs of different homeless populations.

*The 'homeless homeless' have other issues besides homelessness. It is as if workers are scared to check on people who might not have other problems. A lot of people who on the surface do not have other problems, do have other problems and there is a problem if workers are scared to interview them if the problems are not obvious and surfacing...There is now a vicious circle of housing – we are no longer placing people quickly because people have to have the right luggage, the right sack on their back before they get the support they need.*

*(Representative, Salvation Arm, Denmark)*

*One comment today was about housing in Copenhagen. If you have an apartment through the municipality then you have to have certain problems. But from our shelter we have some people going to the apartments and some not. If you look at map you can see that we have some people with severe social problems and they go out to supported housing. But here you have people who can go out to an apartment; they are co-operating with the shelter and the municipal to get an apartment. Then on the top level we have the homeless, or the houseless homeless, who cannot get an apartment, or any house. My point is that this level is moving all the time because of political changes, and how much houses you have. It is always moving depending on how much houses you have and on politics. For our shelter you can see it, a couple of years ago, the level was somewhat higher. A few years ago you could have severe social problems and you could still get an apartment, but because of the housing problems in Copenhagen the level of those who get apartments is lower and will probably go lower still. Not a static thing, a moving thing.*

*(Speaker, Railways Night Shelter)*

However two members of the INED team, France, objected to the distinction between the 'houseless homeless' and the 'homeless homeless' arguing that the distinction was unwarranted.

*I am embarrassed by this position and I don't understand it. It is one thing to classify the housing situations that homeless people find themselves in at a given time, but it is another thing to classify the persons, the people, as if they were stuck in this situation for ever, as if they didn't go from one place to another, from one position of health to another, or from one classification to another, and I think the classification itself is stigmatising and it can worsen the situation. (Maryse Marpsat, INED, Fr)*

*There are some practical problems that may occur. If someone is coming to search for a house to the municipality or to the shelter, what are the criteria that you use to put him into one or the other group? (Nicolas Razafindratsima, INED,FR)*

In Paris the term that is used is 'sans domicile', and that is not precisely homeless, therefore the INED research team used a definition of homelessness, developed by CRNS with NGOs, based on a four-fold classification of housing situations. However another member of the INED team reported that families in housing difficulties usually went through a separate application system to access social housing. In practice, therefore, it was not clear how different the Paris and Copenhagen situations were in relation to different routes, particularly as there has recently been reports on the housing crisis in Paris.

In the UK the terminology is different – as explained at the London Workshop of CUHP. The term 'single homeless people' is one used by all agencies working with

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<sup>4</sup> The final reference was to the building of housing that was below standard for particular 'homeless homeless' people (see below)

those homeless people living in hostels and on the streets without dependent children or other family members. It identifies those homeless people who largely did not, and mostly do not even after the 2002 legislation, have specific rights of re-housing under the homeless legislation because they are not in 'priority need groups'.

*I don't know what the law is in other parts of Europe but in the United Kingdom we use our legislation to ration our housing and to control who gets housing and are homeless. In 1977 when the legislation was introduced the decision was made that there are certain groups of people who are more important than others and the people who are more important are the people who have children, families essentially. As a consequence much of the voluntary sector emerged to fill a gap, to plug the hole, and to help those people who weren't getting support from their local authorities. And Crisis since 1977 has been focused around helping single homeless people. (Crisis NGO, London)*

The speaker from the Greater London Council also emphasised this point:

*Well homelessness as we have already learnt this morning is defined in several ways, and counted in several ways. We have those who are declared as homeless under the legislative framework, this was set out in the Housing Act of 1996 which has been amended in 2002 and homeless people in law In England and Wales if there is not accommodation they have the right to occupy or accommodation that it is not reasonable that they should occupy, so that would include those who are fleeing domestic violence or harassment, it is unreasonable to return to their properties. To be classified as statutory homeless an applicant needs to apply to one of their local authorities in London and it's up to that authority to interpret the law in making this decision, so it's quite subjective. And even if somebody is homeless as you've heard this morning being homeless is not enough to benefit from the services that local authorities can offer, an authority only has a duty to rehouse you if you are seen to be a priority need and in general that is for applicants who have dependent children or who are pregnant and single people who may be considered vulnerable. Vulnerability often relates to an illness – physical or mental illness – and in some categories age and has been broadened recently to incorporate some other categories. ( Greater London Council, London)*

The speaker from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets confirmed this argument. His words are extensively quoted in Marpsat paper on definitions, and can be summarised here. There are five tests: 1) Is the person eligible for assistance (what is their national/immigrant status?); 2) Are they homeless or potentially homeless (do they have to leave their accommodation in 28 days? Or have they already left?); 3) Is the household a priority need household (pregnant women, families with dependent children, 16/17 years of age, ex-institutional care), and are they vulnerable?(do they have specific physical or mental health housing needs?); 4) Are they intentionally homeless?; 5) Are they local?

A specific term is used in the UK for those living on the streets which is 'rough sleepers':

*I think the most significant change in terms of policy in the United Kingdom has been a massive investment, a massive focus in the early part of this Labour government on dealing with rough sleeping and as a consequence of the huge investment and massive effort from the voluntary sector and from government we have seen a relative decline in the numbers of people on the street and I stress the relative. Rough sleeping is still a significant problem in this country, there are still thousands of people who experience rough sleeping in the United Kingdom every year, it's gone down, the peak period of the early Nineties but it's still there. On the other hand,*

*overall homelessness is going up, if you look at the broader figures, you look at the numbers of people approaching local authorities requesting assistance every year it's gone up year on year since 1997 and as most people who work in the sector will tell you the people approaching local authority for assistance are only part of the story, there are thousands of others who don't, for whatever reason. ...So homelessness is a growing problem in the United Kingdom. (Speaker, CRISIS, UK NGO)*

The definition of homeless people used in the UK therefore was closely allied to legislation and to specific services (homeless, single homeless, rough sleepers).

The two workshops held in Italy and Spain (in Milan and Madrid) demonstrated the different approaches in Continental/Family Welfare states compared with Northern and Central European societies. In these societies the definition of homelessness was largely restricted to those who were street homeless. In neither society were housing services responsible for homeless people. In Madrid the term 'homeless' was only used for those living in shelters and in the street, and this therefore limited the response to other forms of homelessness. The team from Spain agreed with the distinction between the 'houseless homeless' and the 'homeless homeless' but believed that it had different connotations in different countries; in Spain there was very little social housing.

*The other thing is to do with the definition. You have said, and we agree, you have to distinguish between 'homeless homeless' and regular people who are homeless. It is interesting because maybe we could expand this to include other categories such as Danish homeless homeless, versus Spanish homeless homeless and Italian homeless homeless. Because I think that the mental structure of the homeless people, the citizens, and the mental structure of the service providers are clearly different in these countries. Carmelo Vazquez, Complutense University, Madrid)*

At the meeting in Milan, it argued that in Italy, as already mentioned, the NGOs and researchers were more likely to describe homeless people as 'marginal' or 'vulnerable' people.

*I am responsible for the social service in Bergamo for the reception of homeless. The name of the service is 'New Popular Hotel', it was started fifty years ago like a classical shelter. They were started to solve a specific problem but in time they became part of a web of services designed to solve the problem of marginality. They are in a local web because it is important to solve the question locally. It is a territorial strategy that can help people with social resources in wages and housing and help people to regain control of their social context. ...*

*As well as the local approach to marginality, we have a specific aim to work with people to enhance their personal abilities to gain control over their lives....*

*Regarding the definition of the phenomenon the Association has tried to characterise the phenomenon of homelessness and found the theoretical frame that is used to define the phenomenon can't help – such as mental illness, or alcohol addiction. We have arrived at a definition that we call – Severe Adult Hardship. The term 'Adult Hardship' defines the social/cultural frame. We are trying to get further definition in the micro category and we used severe category to help to define a specific intervention. (Nuovo Albergo Popolare, Bergamo)*

The speaker went on to describe the fact that terminology is important in accessing particular services:

*The three main concepts that help to bring in services, to give assistance to people are:*

*Senza Dimora – means something very specific, and is different*

*Chronic persons – normally gives right to medical assistance*

*Poor people – which is more related to religious intervention'*

These definitions were important in relation to advocacy and legal aid; lawyers working for the homeless in Bergamo needed a legal definition of definition because they were not allowed to give free help to the poor of their area, only the homeless.

Another NGO representative in Milan used the concept of vulnerability to describe the same phenomena:

*We have to start from a concept of 'vulnerability'. This is connected to the problems of precariousness, life style in general (family, work, house). It is difficult to find differences from the young person who comes from the South of Italy, and the immigrant from Romania, for example. They live and work in the same place. This means it is very difficult to find a single and simple definition of the homeless person. (Speaker, Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande, Bologna).*

However this speaker went on to add:

*It is very important that we come out with a name for these phenomena because actually the status of this condition is meant as a part of a more general problem of poverty but it is a true and different thing of which of course the economical and material situation is very important. But if I think of the phenomenon as a condition then I think it is a condition that becomes serious time after time, of losing the ability of relationships with the social context, with our own personal history, and with the ability to keep the skill to work and have a job, and taking care of ourselves.*

*So it is very difficult to fix it as a socio-economical category. It is a true condition of each person, which can become more serious if you add to it a drug condition, an alcohol conditional, or losing a job.*

*Of course I can understand the point of view of the Albergo Popolare (Bergamo) that they have to find a category where they can address the homeless persons because this is the way the welfare system works. But on the practical point of view it is very difficult to divide every single aspect in one single person. This lacks the understanding of the problem in the global vision (holistic view). There is a lack in the way the local welfare system is organised and there is a lack of financial resources, nationally, to address specific problems. More in general, in Europe, there is a lack of organisation that intervenes.*

One of the most important divisions in relation to a legal definition of homelessness was the situation of women facing domestic violence. In Copenhagen the Ministry of Social Affairs did not see a relationship between domestic violence and homelessness (see below).

## **6.2 The Right to Housing**

The differences between welfare regimes showed most strongly in relation to the availability of social housing. As was explained at the Madrid Workshop there was practically no social housing in Spain, and 80% were owner occupiers. One of the NGOs was attempting to bridge a housing gap for the homeless through renting.

*'A main pillar would be the question of housing or accommodation ... Housing is very expensive for people with a stable income so imagine what it is for those without income. Since 1994 we have been supporting with funds and technically the creation of shared flats. Nowadays this is also becoming impossible not only with the economic circumstances of the project, it has become very expensive to rent the rooms or flat, economic resources are always insufficient and there is a scarcity of places to rent so this is getting worse and worse. A useful instrument to favour the autonomy of certain people is becoming something impossible nowadays. The way to solve it is to have a true public answer to the problem.*

.... *In Madrid we only have very cheap pensions where you can rent a room and that is all we have really – hostels or inns – and we discovered a world where you no longer know who is the owner of the hostel, or who is living in the hostel, and that doesn't contribute to stability and improvement of the lives of the people. (Realides Association, Madrid)*

A 'true public answer to the problem' has become increasingly difficult under the European Commission's drive to competition and strengthening the private sector (both Sweden and the Netherlands have been criticised for the size of their remaining social sector). Nevertheless the French NGOs are pursuing the possibility of using their social housing sector to support the homeless. FNARS reported that they were pursuing the right to housing in the courts through a question of whether it can be a 'driot opposable'. FNARS has also been concerned whether the recent emphasis on the 'social mixing' of neighbourhoods should not be used to lessen the 'right to housing'.

The impact of privatisation of social housing through a 'right to buy' policy was reported in the London workshop. First, a social housing sector that was 33% of housing units in 1979 had shrunk to 19% twenty-five years later. The speaker from Greater London Council reported that in 2003/4 30,000 households were accepted as homeless by all the London Boroughs (33 London Boroughs), 14,000 were living in hostels, 180 rough sleepers on any one night; in addition London Boroughs were responsible for 32,000 asylum seekers. Because of the lack of social housing in London 65,000 households accepted as homeless were living in temporary accommodation that year and the average length of time they had to stay before moving to permanent accommodation was 2-3 years. Second, under the Labour Government all the remaining social housing units had to be transferred from the ownership of the local authority to Housing Associations. The speaker from a London borough reported that the right to housing under the homeless legislation still exist in the UK but Local Authorities no longer own social housing, and there are increasingly forced to rent private accommodation to fulfil their responsibilities to homeless households at a high cost.

*So that Tower Hamlets as a council is going to move from being the biggest landlord in the area to a fairly insignificant player in terms of landlords.'*

*... Now we have 3,000 households in temporary accommodation and that will costs us £25 million pounds a year. ' (Speaker, London Borough of Tower Hamlets)*

The speakers from the Greater London Council and from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets emphasised, as in Copenhagen, the extremely difficulty of finding affordable housing in a capital city. The speaker from the Municipality of Copenhagen reported that they were particularly concerned that they maintained a supply of housing in that city:

*We are trying to stop Copenhagen becoming like London where it is too expensive for ordinary people to live in the centre. We have to prioritise, and women and children come first because we don't want them to grow up and become second generation homeless. Then there is not enough housing for the total group of homeless.*

*(Speaker, Municipality of Copenhagen)*

*I want to continue this discussion about the problem of the capital city here in Denmark. Because I see this tendency that the politicians won't help these people who are moving towards homelessness because they have a housing problem. If you don't have a specific homeless problem then you can't get any help and you can't get listed on the acute help for housing here in Copenhagen. That means that you need to have more and bigger problems to get resocialised into housing here in Copenhagen. If this tendency keeps on going then you create homeless homeless people because the people who only have a housing problem will go nuts or maybe a tendency towards*

*alcoholism and this problem will explode and then you have an increasing group that will join the other homeless. I would like you, the scientists, to enlighten this here in Copenhagen and maybe the experiences of other capital cities would show us some more.*

*(NGO, Copenhagen)*

In other words, if left long enough, a housing problem frequently becomes a social work problem. Housing problems were most acute in capital cities and this was also the case in Italy, at the Milan the national homeless co-ordinating organisation, reported a housing crisis in Rome.

*Just to say how complicated is a difficult. Recently I listened to Federico Bonadonna, the chief Co-ordinator of the Municipality of Rome Research and he published a book on this. He told that on the streets of Rome, sleeping in cars, there are a meaningful number of men who have regular and permanent contract of employment, but after a breakdown in the family they are sleeping in the car. This raises many different issues – policy issues, there are not enough houses or homes for those people not a big salary because they have to pay for themselves, and the life of their wife and son, after family breakdown. On the other side there is not sufficient prevention services because after a short period you go straight to the street. There is also the problem of the cultural side - Why don't they find any links to their family or their parents or friends? This is the paradox of autonomy – you have such a big autonomy so that the result is to sleep in the car. Maybe the culture said it is not important to have strong links, it is important to have autonomy, to have money and a car.*

*(FIOpsd, Milan)*

### **6.3 Special housing for homeless people.**

In some Northern countries special forms of housing have been created, at a standard that is lower than the national housing standard; this is true of both Denmark and the Netherlands. At the Copenhagen Workshop the implications of this were discussed.

*In the Municipality of Copenhagen we have 36 houses built in 3 different places; they are built like huts in the mountains. We tried to find persons who wanted to live in a house and then we tagged people to find out how they got on. The result is that 70% continues to stay for 2-3 years. But it is difficult to find land to build those houses. (Municipality of Copenhagen)*

One of the Dutch research team reported that this was occurring in the Netherlands and asked the question of whether this was a way forward for homeless people, or would it create ghettos of homeless people.

*Then there is the question of providing housing for homeless people, what has been called 'Freak houses for freak people', a funny name, alternative housing. In Netherlands we call it sub-standard living because it is below the standard that we agreed upon that you should live in. We could formulate hypothesis that if you provide sub-standard housing for homeless then it might be a way for them to have upward mobility in their housing career, it might be a step in between because there is a huge gap between the housing that we live in that is very expensive, and it is hard to pay the rent, and sub-standard housing might be a step in between to offer homeless a step to go forward. That is one hypothesis that it might lead to better housing but the other hypothesis is that it might create ghettos with inferior housing where homeless still got stuck, where they have no possibilities to move out and it could lead to another trap – they are off the streets but they are still in inferior living.*

*These questions occurred to my mind and it would be interesting from a researcher's point of view to have another look at these issues.*

*(Lia van Doorn, NIZW, Netherlands)*

The representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs made it very clear that he believed that the Copenhagen authorities and the Ministry were no longer responsible for the houseless, but they were for the homeless and this might involve them in building different forms of accommodation.

*We are not responsible for the houseless but we are responsible for the homeless homeless. Are we building ghettos for the homeless homeless – maybe yes, a shelter here, a residential house there. But there is a movement from shelter to a permanent dwelling that is a person's own home with no rules; that person can shut the door and have his own place. Maybe some need help during the day but it is their own home. (Ministry of Social Affairs, Copenhagen)*

#### **6.4 Meeting the demands of multiple systems**

At various workshops the question of fitting homeless people into appropriate social boxes was raised. In many systems funding was based on identifying particular social problems that homeless people had.

*We transformed the strategy and based it on three different consecutive phrases:*

- *1st phase: is the reception when we try to help people to better understand their problem. When people understand their exact situation they can proceed to the next phase.*
- *2nd phase: we put them into a specific service. There are four different dimensions: alcohol addiction, mental illness, drug addiction and generic. These are the classical definition that government recognises and to be identified within one of these groups helps funding their service.*
- *3rd phase: we help people with social integration, we help people to redefine which is the best housing solution for them and which is the best model of social integration for a specific person and helping them to get a wage to support this integration. We have an agreement with Bergamo municipality and regional support and also private support.*

*This dividing in four community sectors is necessary to obtain funding and it provides the division in small groups – for instance if we have a drug addict is in a specific group which is allowed to deal with drug addiction. As for the methods we use, we noted in our work there are some critical points that are very common in people's biographies – the individual ability to plan, relationships and ability to deal with social context, self-image, and dependence on something (drugs etc) or someone. By collecting different auto-biographies we noted that there is not a specific way of interrogating those categories but each person has their own way. In terms of organisation those categories are important. (Nuovo Albergo Popolare, Bergamo)*

This was not just the case in Italy but also in Copenhagen. There was a reported problem with different social systems providing separated services:

*The homeless provide a challenge to the social system in Denmark. There are different social systems for the marginalized. There are social systems for: Abusers, Healthcare, Labour market, Housing Market, System for mentally ill, Handicapped. But the Homeless can overlap these, they don't fit into the small boxes of the system. (NGO, Copenhagen)*

However in Spain it was reported that the health and social work services had not worked with the homeless. Therefore new systems bringing all services together were being created.

*The obvious need is to establish relationships with the health service for example. But this is not so obvious because social workers didn't have a role to play in the field of homelessness. The social problem of homelessness was dealt with by other organisations, religious and other organisations. But now we have to link the question of the homeless with health problems, with housing problems. This was not done before. England is a very good place in point. We have to be present in our work with the homeless because this is the worst situation that some people have come to after having housing problems, work problems, money problems. So we have to link all these sectors together – the housing sector, the hospital or health sector, has to be linked to the homeless question. (Discussion in Madrid)*

#### **6.4 Conclusions**

Antonio Tosi reflected on whether the distinction between houseless homeless and homeless homeless was not different in relation to whether there was an extensive welfare state or not.

*This part is connected to my second point which was raised this morning about an increase in type of homelessness which is more global and more multi-problem, or the increase of multi-problems among homeless people. ... In many cases it exists but it is also exaggerated; it is important to recognise that a problem is a multi-problem but many homeless people have more than one problem – is it just two or three – but calling it multi-problem suggests a huge range of problems which requires exceptional efforts to address the question. But fortunately this is not the case, many homeless persons may have a problem of housing or a problem of work, in two or three problems that in many cases may be associated. This is a research problem, to look at it empirically. Maybe in Denmark things are different, according to what has been referred; if you have a relatively good coverage of basic needs it is possible that persons who escape the safety net are multi-problem persons but in most countries that don't have such good protection in general, things are not like that.*

*(Antonio Tosi, Politecnico di Milano, Milan)*

## VII. NEW HOMELESS POPULATIONS

There was considerable agreement on the problem on the emergence of new homeless populations: young people, women, and immigrants. But there was also agreement that some of the underlying issues that had emerged with these populations also were ones that should be considered in relation to other homeless populations.

### 7.1 Family policy and homelessness/ or protection from homelessness –youth exclusion, people without social networks

The rise of youth homelessness was raised in each of the workshops by different NGOs. At the Paris Workshop it was raised by FNARS as a major research question on the proportionate responsibility of the family, schools and public policies for the rise of youth exclusion. In London NGOs from London and Birmingham reported the development of separate services for homeless youth that provided accommodation, advice, training, family mediation, and resettlement support.

In Madrid and Milan agencies were particularly concerned about the rise of youth homelessness and the relation of this to the particular problems posed by the disappearance of the family welfare system in Spain and Italy. The rise of individualism posed particular problems for Continental/Family or Mediterranean welfare regimes.

*We need special services for young people. The appearance for the first time in Spain and other countries of children on the street, or very, very young homeless; this wasn't the usual thing in our country at least, but unfortunately this is becoming more common. (Manuel Munoz, Complutense University)*

The speaker from Madrid City Government reported a lack of proper services for young people and for families.

*As I mentioned this system (homeless services) was elaborated in a very short time – a crisis management for the problem. Of course problems then appeared. This system cannot manage the problems of the different groups of homeless people – namely the young homeless people, the problem of homeless families – there are not really homes for families, night shelters are for single people, even couples can't live there. There is a small number of rehabilitation centres are for those who are ready to leave the homeless life. The other problem is that those who are in bad condition – physically or mentally – they can't get enough care because the number of nursing homes, mental health homes are very low. There is also no prevention for those who are at risk of becoming homeless, there are no preventative policies for them.*

*(Speaker, Madrid City Government)*

The same issue of the decline of family welfare was raised in Milan:

*There is also the problem of the cultural side - Why don't they find any links to their family or their parents or friends? This is the paradox of autonomy – you have such a big autonomy so that the result is to sleep in the car. Maybe the culture said it is not important to have strong links, it is important to have autonomy, to have money and a car. (Speaker, FIOpsi, Milan)*

*The Italian welfare system is very weak from this point of view. It still works like 20 or 30 years ago when the Italian family was much stronger than it is now and the destruction of the family has not been recognised by the Italian welfare system. (NGO, Milan)*

*Second I would like to keep a light on the direct consequences this individualistic society seems to have on the lack of sense of belonging. There is a denial of paternity with regard to the social system - a concept that Robert Castel*

defines as 'disaffiliation'. For us this is the basis of the homeless people present in our streets.

*(Associazione San Marcellino, Genoa)*

However, in the most extensive welfare system in Denmark, NGOs also reported a growing number of shelter residents that were younger than normal.

*Over the past few years it has become notable that a growing number of residents fall into two categories*

- *One, young people, over 18 years, alcohol users, who after their eighteenth birthday have no social safety net readily available to them.*
- *Two, worn out, middle aged narcotic users, many of whom are terminal patients and who need long term care probably for the rest of their lives. Similar legislation but nowhere else to go; traditional nursing homes cannot manage these people – either their needs or social behaviour.*

*((Shelter Mændenes Hjem)*

In Copenhagen a discussion occurred between those running 'traditional' shelters in the countryside and those running shelters in Copenhagen. It was apparent that the country shelters in Denmark, like those in the UK, were equally aware of the lack of, and need of, social networks, but also could provide separate accommodation for young homeless people. Store Dannesbo In Fyn could provide young people with separate buildings and different experiences. In Copenhagen shelters were now working with younger homeless people with drug issues, and immigrant populations in the same shelters as older homeless people.

*Store Dannesbo in Fyn it is placed in the countryside – and this has led to a social connection between the people staying there and the institution, and you can feel that you can use the institution as a basis for the future, it is a solid basis for your further life, whereas the Shelter Mændenes Hjem is located in the Centre of Copenhagen and having multiple target groups, including ethnic groups with post-traumatic stress system, and having users of illegal substances, and a lot of different people, there is not the solidarity or community feeling in the institution, which makes people less equipped when they face re-integration.*

*( National Council for Socially Marginalized and Excluded)*

In the UK, organisations working with the single homeless (usually meaning older single homeless) had also become aware of the issues of isolation in relation to older single homeless people.

*'There's a lot more awareness of and a lot more recognition of the fact that family breakdown and breakdown of social networks are a major contributory cause to homelessness. The focus in the past has been on housing supply but if you look at the reasons that people give for becoming homeless, a significant number or the majority are people who are who are from a background where you know the family's there's been a breakdown in their family or in some kind of close relationship.*

*(Speaker, CRISIS, London)*

At the London Workshop three NGOs that specialise in working with young homeless people spoke about their work. Two of the organisations were founded in the 1970s to provide accommodation for young homeless people aged 16-25 years: Centrepoin is a national organisation that provides 500 bed-spaces in hostels across London, and St Basils Project provides 300 bed-spaces in Birmingham. Both provide other services including prevention services, services in schools and advice services. A speaker also represented the Foyer Federation, which is a federation of 120 foyers providing 6,000 bedspaces with training across the UK for young people. All three were concerned with the rise of youth homelessness in the UK over the past 25 years.

*Centrepoint's core ethos is that we believe in giving young people on a downward spiral in their lives a chance to turn their lives around and build a more fulfilling future and we do that by helping young people to create social structures in their lives with an emphasis on helping them to address their health, their learning and jobs needs, their drug and alcohol dependency needs and their social skills needs.*  
( Centrepoint, London)

All three organisations were not only providing accommodation but also offering prevention services, developing homeless strategies with local authorities.

## **7.2 Homelessness among immigrant populations**

At the first Workshop in Paris it was reported that issues of homelessness and the country origins of immigrant populations were similar between France and Italy. Immigrants to both countries came from Eastern Europe, Africa, China and Middle East, although in Italy immigration from Latin America, especially Columbia, was also important.

The Spanish research team reported that few immigrants were street homeless but they thought it was possible to distinguish two groups of homeless people among immigrants: first, those who use shelters for a few days until they find their own network; and second, those who stay in shelters and have similar problems to the Spanish homeless people who stay in shelters i.e. problems in infancy, with drugs or mental health. However, the view of Madrid City Hall was that there was a growing street population of immigrants.

*Outside of the network we have some 500 persons sleeping on the streets everyday. For the most part it is men: 82% are men and 18% are women. Of these 29% are mentally ill, the average age is 42, which is of course important. 50% have been on the street for over five years now. These people who are currently sleeping on the street include 30% foreigners.*

*... Immigrants therefore represent 30% of the homeless in Madrid, of which one third come from Eastern Europe and the rest are Latin American. What is especially worrying is that 23% of foreigners who are on the street have been on the street for over five years.*

*(Chief of Services – Madrid City Hall)*

A researcher from the UK team reported that among young people in the foyers it was found that many asylum seekers/refugees had good adaptation skills with less problems than many UK nationals who were homeless. Speakers from NGOs in Copenhagen argued that this was true if they adapted – if they did not adapt then they lost their social network.

*We can say that over the last ten years we have gone from this kind of group – the old alcoholics, drinking for many years, and living in the hostel for many years – they are not at our place any more. Instead, the group changed into those with drug problems that have been abusing drugs for a long period, they had been in and out of many shelters, or living in the streets, or living with each other in apartments. There was a change in the early 90s that you could have drug users living in the shelters, before then it was very rare to see that in the shelters.*

*The next change in the group was in 1995 when immigrants and refugees coming in the shelter. These were Immigrant and Refugees who had social problems, not just not being integrated into Danish society. At the same time you had a drug scene in some areas.... In 1995 there was a change in the drug users group and they began to include new cultures and issues. We were able to help some of those people who were without housing. Immigrants were part of our target group and we went from housing 5-7% immigrants, to housing 30-50% immigrants in our residents. We have most immigrants and refugees with severe and heavy social problems – other*

*shelters in Copenhagen have immigrants living there without those heavy social problems, they may just not have work. But those living at our place are those with immigrants with mental problems and drug abuse. ...*

*Immigrants in refuges are the same because when their drug abuse gets too high, their back-up social network disappears and you have the same problems as the Danes. There has been a myth that there is more acceptance in those cultures but when the abuse gets too high then the social network disappears.  
(Church Army Copenhagen.)*

In Copenhagen, however, there was a difficulty for any undocumented person to enter a shelter because all had to give their register number. Therefore in Copenhagen, alongside shelters, had arisen what they called a 'Night Café'. People could sleep on chairs at night, without showing any papers, and there was a nursing clinic and a centre for distribution of free syringes. It was run by the Church Army.

Antonio Tosi, of the Italian Team, believed that there was too much distinction between the current immigrant population (from other countries) and the Italian homeless:

*Even NGOs have some resistance to accepting the new type of targets because the two types of clients are different, the demands they put on services are different, most immigrants don't need the support which is necessary for many Italian persons for re-integration. They (immigrants) just need selective information for their specific needs. ...*

*In many cases immigrant homeless are not considered homeless, and classified under specific categories that have nothing to do with 'no abode'. One of the problems in Italy is there are two different lines of policy and two different definitions for two kinds of population, who are not two kinds of population but among whom there is a strong overlap. (Antonio Tosi, Politecnico di Milano, Milan)*

There was also a difference between the NGOs between those working with the immigrant population living on the street and those working across populations: *I say that after ten years we realised that there was a problem of immigrant homelessness but, nevertheless, the response to this problem was the same offered to local homeless, without any kind of problematisation. (NGO, Genova)*

*To give an example - we have a big problem about the legal status of a number of immigrants. Many of the immigrants are illegal and they go to the service for the homeless but they just have a legal problem. When you solve the legal problem then the most of them that is enough – they are able to have work, a wage, a house, and so on. They are inside the homeless context but it is not the right answer for them. (FIOpsi)*

*... I agree with what Mr Tosi said, because we have been fighting for years for the essential concept based on individuals, but we would like to see a more general global system. As Mr Tosi says it is two different approaches. (Lawyers working for the homeless with a homeless organisation, Bologna)*

This speaker went on to add:

*The problem is strongly connected with the actual law that we have in Italy on Immigration, the law is directly responsible for illegal immigration. Illegal immigration means that men and women are invisible and not reached by the institutional services that we have. Another part of the people that we see on the streets are people who come from normal life style but people who may have experienced the loss of their job, or a family problem, or both together, and this drove them on the road and they then encountered an alcohol or drug problem. In these cases the situation of homeless people is strictly connected with the homeless policies we have in Italy. (Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande, Bologna)*

In London a speaker from the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (a body of all housing NGOs) reported on the work they had been doing in relation to

'refugees and asylum seekers' (the term used in the UK to distinguish from other types of immigration). He also thought that as a group they did not:

*'We are talking about a group of very vulnerable people. But also talking about a group which perhaps don't display the same sorts of needs profiles that we have established about single homeless people. You know the levels of mental health problems, the levels of drug abuse or alcohol use aren't usually exhibited within the refugee population that comes to this country. I am not saying that there aren't those people within the refugee population that do have these difficulties when they come. (HACT, London)*

The UK speaker and a psychologist from the Netherlands reported two different approaches in working with immigrant homeless populations. A researcher from Holland reported at the Madrid Workshop that it could be important to include people from their home country in the mobile team.

*I am a psychologist from the Netherlands, I work at a mental health institution in Rotterdam, one of the biggest cities. Over there we have many immigrants and my question is about the immigrant question that we heard about before. Previously I heard that trust is a very important aspect in reaching the homeless people, and we found that immigrant homeless don't trust us because we have a different culture and we can't get them to trust us. What works really well is when we use people from their home country in our mobile teams and they respond very well to that. So that is an idea that could be beneficial to people here.*

*(Dutch researcher, Madrid session)*

The speaker from HACT, UK, reported a different approach. HACT had not just involved immigrants in the services that are provided (as in Rotterdam) but also funded immigrant organisations to give housing advice and deal with housing issues among migrants.

*We have been investing into the black and minority ethnic housing sector since the 1980s, and in fact many of the black and minority ethnic led housing associations in this country were first funded in their development by HACT. In the early Nineties we identified that we needed to separate out the issues from refugees from the wider BME (Black and Minority Ethnic groups) population because whilst there was some similarity, particularly around the experience of harassment and discrimination, there were some significant differences. So by today we have actually invested about one and a half million pounds into refugee community organisations and our focus really has been on them, on the organisations where people actually mostly go to when they seek help and seek assistance. So a lot of our work in the early Nineties was actually building capacity within that part of the sector. There were lots of very small fledgling organisations that were struggling quite frankly. But research that we did looking at the impact of our investment in the Nineties you know it showed quite clearly that refugee community organisations remained the first port of call for housing and related service for many refugees. (HACT, LondonT)*

However, although this approach had an important impact, other problems developed as the UK government introduced new legislation for asylum seekers/refugees in 1999. The impact of this legislation was designed to be two-fold: first, to reduce the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the UK and second, to disperse asylum seekers and refugees from London and the South-East where there was a housing shortage to areas in the Midlands and the North of England where there was no housing shortage but also poor quality housing, no jobs and a lack of social networks.

*So what happened, and what's been happening now for the last five years, is that around half of all people seeking asylum have been dispersed to the North, to the Midlands, to Scotland and to Wales. ... We have a situation where in the North there*

*are many places that had very bad housing markets, an over supply of housing and under demand, dilapidated housing, they had very poor labour market, much of the old industry in the north no longer there, as manufacturing based in the UK has bottomed out quite considerably in the past few past sort of ten years. So in this sort of environment where there's a lot a good supply of housing, no matter what the quality of that housing is. But there, where there is a very poor labour market and people and communities experiencing quite high levels of poverty and deprivation, that's where they've then placed asylum seekers. Now it seems ludicrous to me and ludicrous to many people that that was even considered, that it would work...*

Moreover, the dispersal of this population then produced a housing crisis in the private rented sector in the 'cheaper' areas, as government grants for refugee housing driving up rents and also making it more difficult for students and single homeless people to move into rented accommodation.

*The aim of the government was also to have sort of third/third/third split between the private rented sector, the local authorities and the housing associations providing accommodation for asylum seekers That never materialised, - in fact the vast majority of it's in the private rented sector and that's distorted the local markets as well, because as many as people here from the UK will know, one of the realities of single homelessness in this country is very much that accessing social housing is incredibly difficult, accessing private rented housing is probably the only option, the same as for students and other single groups of single people. So actually by placing asylum seekers into the available private sector housing has actually displaced the market in those areas for other groups of single people...'*

*(HACT, London)*

As well as external migration some countries did not have service provision for internal migrants that became homeless. One Italian NGO reported that their organisation had been established originally in Bergamo in order to work with immigrants from Southern Italy who had come North to work and found themselves homeless. The speaker from the Municipality of Copenhagen reported that her concern was that whilst there were specific funds to take care of migrants from other countries, there were none to take care of internal migration.

*But we find that it is possible for us to take care of ethnic groups within the system, but the problem with those coming from Greenland is that in a sense that they are Danish citizens. We can take care of other ethnic groups; first 2 years have job training and housing. Can't give the same to those from Greenland because they are supposed to be Danish. So they can't have the same.*

*(Municipality of Copenhagen)*

### **7.3 Homelessness among Women**

The issue of homelessness among women was seen as contradictory. On the one hand they were less likely to be seen on the streets and were more likely to have extensive welfare protection. On the other hand they were likely to be homeless in different ways and used services that were specifically available for them. In Italy, as in other European societies, women were less likely to be street homeless and needed dedicated services.

*First I would mention the problem of the female homeless population. The difficulties of getting in touch and working with them. The difficulties of understanding the best possible intervention with them proved that it seems not to work if we simply translating the intervention for men.*

*(Associazione San Marcellino, Genoa)*

*The problem with working with the female population on the streets; about 10-15% of the population. The resources the welfare system brings to this are different than for men. Women are seen first of all as mothers, the girls and women we met in the street usually have 6,5,7 children. So usually the method we have used for men, is not good for women because it doesn't given any results, because usually the welfare system takes care differently of the women situation. The welfare system enters our project for women, whereas usually it leaves the men alone, there are no resources for men. But for women, anytime they say they have children somewhere, or they are married, or when they are alone and on the street, it is more simple to find places. We have a night shelter for six places for women but the time we stay in contact with these women is very short because they get pregnant. Every time they get pregnant they get two or three years of assistance from the social system, so they disappear for three to four years, and then we see them again. So using the night shelter and the same methods for women is not so useful.*

*(Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande, Bologna)*

This issue is one that is probably specific to societies providing undifferentiated 'shelter' systems. In the UK, where there are shelters that separate young homeless people from older homeless people, half of the bedspaces are taken by young women, particularly in those hostels that have a training element. It may be that as homeless services develop in Continental/Family welfare regimes that greater differentiation will occur as it did in the UK 25 years ago, and more young women will be found in those shelters and will be offered training and support. This would be a positive outcome in relation to their long-term inclusion as compared to welfare systems based on child-birth.

In Madrid the issue of domestic violence was raised by the speaker from the Ministry of Childhood who reported a problem of family de-structuring that brought new risks to people. There were new plans in relation to prevention of homelessness and for local government agencies to take a greater role.

*'The male/female question is a priority in all employment plans and we have more information and more knowledge about resources. Men speak out, they know about their possibilities and what they should get. There is still domestic abuse and this is very alarming situation, socially speaking. With respect to the family we have new legislation underway with respect to large families. We have regional and national plans for large families and we have the challenge of new family types. This is a new culture, clashing with the old culture of family.'*

*( Deputy Director General of social services, Ministry of Childhood)*

One of the most important discussions in Copenhagen was actually around the issue of whether domestic violence could be classified as a homeless situation. Neither the spokesman of the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Municipality of Copenhagen would classify women experiencing domestic violence as homeless. The following exchange took place.

*You mentioned battered women and in our system we don't define them in homeless. We won't accept them as homeless and right now we are discussing taking the husband, the violent husband, out of the flat rather than taking the woman out of the flat. The Minister for Justice has put forward a proposal and we think it will be before the Parliament in the summer. (Spokesman, Ministry of Social Affairs)*

*We have the same problem in France. (Martine Quaglia, INED, FR)*

*I wonder what will happen to the husband that has been kicked out. (Lia van Doorn, NIZW,NL)*

*The husband will be taken care of by the police and he might be taken to a shelter. (Spokesman, Ministry of Social Affairs)*

*So then he will be counted and he will be homeless so you will increase the level of homelessness. The woman is battered and not homeless. He is violent, that is a social problem and he is at that shelter. (Tobias Stax, SFI, DK)*

*Remember that they can come back and kill the woman, and that does happen in England so it is more difficult than just removing the mant. (Joan Smith, CHCR, UK)*

There was also a concern that there were no shelters for homeless women with a drug problem who also had children. Indeed in Copenhagen women with a drug problem did not have any special facilities.

In London the discussion was quite different. Homelessness legislation in the UK has always identified women with children as a priority need group and the definition of homeless situations includes situations of violence (domestic and racial). A speaker on the housing services of Women's Aid in England reported that they were a network of 270 refuges providing helplines, outreach services and advice centres. At the end of 2002 there were 16,738 women and 22,350 children accommodated in English refuges.

*What I point to put domestic violence into now is the context of the need for housing. Domestic violence is fortunately at last recognised as a major cause of homelessness and relationship breakdown is one of the major causes of homelessness and repeat homelessness (in the UK, JS). And recent government statistics show that 20% – which is almost twenty eight thousand households – are homeless because of relationship breakdown and of that figure 70% are due to domestic violence. So between domestic violence and homelessness there is a considerable link.*

*The widening of the definition of homelessness to include any applicant who is suffering violence or threats of violence from another person should enable and I say should enable more vulnerable people to gain access to housing.*

*And the 2002 Act's amendment of the definition of local connection prevents local authorities now from referring applicants to another local authority in which they've previously suffered violence and would be therefore would be liable to experience further domestic violence. So that is certainly a positive change. That should not happen anymore.*

*(Speaker, Women's Aid, England)*

In her speech to the London Workshop, the speaker from Women's Aid, was most concerned that a lack of social housing, and an overall inadequate supply of housing was preventing women from leaving violent relationships. What does the right to housing mean? Or homeless legislation mean? – if there is no social housing, or if housing authorities do not recognise the specific needs of threatened women.

*Now approximately a third of those women accommodated in refuges will present to the local authority for help with their housing needs and what we are concerned with is the lack of suitable affordable housing is a major factor both preventing women from leaving a violent relationship because of their housing situation and it's also a very strong factor in forcing women who may come into a refuge and stay for quite a time realise they've got to stay there for a longer, longer, longer time and therefore they are forced back into a violent relationship.*

*So what is the causing this problem? The time it takes to get rehoused from a refuge in England has increased significantly and some women have to stay for up to two years, I know this is in shared accommodation, refuges, lots of women, lots of children, not a good scene at all...*

*Waiting longer for the housing institutionalises abused women and also their children, it also produces a bottleneck in refuges and it means that women are not able to leave violent relationships and come into a place of safety to have the support they need in*

*their lives, therefore it also means that women are more likely to return to violent relationships. (Speaker, Women's Aid)*

The speaker from Women's Aid, England raised two particular issues that emergency accommodation provision had to take into account: first, women's refuges can rarely provide specific services for women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, or for disabled women, with mental health problems or substance abuse problems; second, refuges have to use their own resources to support refugee women not entitled to welfare benefits who are fleeing domestic violence. To deal with the second problem the Home Office in England has now provided a grant that covers some of the costs.

#### **7.4 New Populations: the Homeless Working Poor**

At several workshops the team from INED, France, raised the question of the working poor who become homeless. As well as looking at individual personal reasons for homelessness, they argued, it is also important to look at structural reasons and this was discussed in several workshops.

*The new type of clients are not just drug abusers, alcoholics; in the total number of shelters there are few taking care of drug abusers, others are taking care of battered women, but the biggest part of people living in these shelters are not considered as having psychiatric problems, or having drug problems. So I am very surprised by what you said this morning that maybe the policies are very different from what they are in France. But I know that social workers are saying that they have a new kind of client and that client is the working poor. Don't you have this problem here? Don't you have a labour problem in Denmark. (Martine Quaglia, Fr)*

In Madrid the question was raised by a speaker from the Madrid City Government:

*We are contemplating another project for those persons, for whatever reason, a divorce or they have been fired, who suddenly find themselves on the street with no shelter. Perhaps they had a normal life until that point. Here, of course, reinsertion is going to be much easier and we should provide services for them. We are also going to see if we can provide housing for couples. Therefore it is not just temporary shelters, Sami – Shelters, that are required. We have men and women who are together but have to sleep separately because men and women have separate sleeping quarters in these shelters. (Chief of Services, Madrid).*

In Milan it was a question for debate. There was a report of the working poor sleeping in cars in Rome but some street workers did not think this had occurred in their towns.

*Recently I listened to Federico Bonadonna, the chief Co-ordinator of the Municipality of Rome Research and he published a book on this. He told that on the streets of Rome, sleeping in cars, there are a meaningful number of men who have regular and permanent contract of employment, but after a breakdown in the family they are sleeping in the car. This raises many different issues – policy issues, there are not enough houses or homes for those people not a big salary because they have to pay for themselves, and the life of their wife and son, after family breakdown. On the other side there is not sufficient prevention services because after a short period you go straight to the street. There is also the problem of the cultural side - Why don't they find any links to their family or their parents or friends? This is the paradox of autonomy – you have such a big autonomy so that the result is to sleep in the car. Maybe the culture said it is not important to have strong links, it is important to have autonomy, to have money and a car. (Speaker, FIOpsi, Milan)*

*Is this directly in relation to loss of job? I have experience experience of people coming from temporary job experience but there is not a direct relation between loss of the job and homeless.*

*(Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande, Bologna)*

### **7.5 Conclusions**

Carmelo Vazquez (SP) summarised the challenge facing NGOs in relation to the new homeless populations at the third meeting in Copenhagen

*We are moving from an old to a new context; we are dealing now with homogeneous populations but moving to heterogeneous populations; from passive to active interventions. We are moving from the old target, just to provide a roof to people, to multiple interventions. We are moving from unilateral to multilateral interventions, with different agencies public and private (who are also intervening now), and different levels of government. From single targets to multiple targets, maybe not in the same person as Antonio said, but in different persons. From one culture to multiple ethnicities. From interventions based on organisations, to interventions based on problems. From top down to bottom up, so we try to listen to the voice of homeless. The concept has shifted from criminals, to victims, to clients and in the future perhaps to citizens.*

*The question is are we prepared to handle this?. This is related not just to research but to the knowledge. How do you handle this? According to your experience do you have some channels to know more? To exchange ideas and to learn about how to handle and cope with this different context?*

But the speaker from the Municipality of Copenhagen raised the question of what happens if the resources for homeless people do not expand to meet the problem of new homeless populations?

*The sum of money that we can use for homeless is constant; we have a certain amount of money but this sum is spent over time. But the target groups to which this money is applied changes. 10 years ago you couldn't enter a shelter if you were a drug user – today they have become into focus so we are directing a lot of efforts at drug users but at the same time we are neglecting other problems and you pointed to the immigrants are the most visibly neglected...It is not only revolving door clients but revolving door type of problems that you are dealing with.*

*(Municipality of Copenhagen).*

## VIII. CHANGING SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS

During the workshops there were debates between NGOs and Officers of the Municipality, and between NGOs, on the shape of new services for the homeless. Are 'emergency' services appropriate? Changes in the type of services and the provision of new services.

### 8.1 The development of emergency services on the street– What is appropriate?

In Madrid the speaker from the City Council explained that the it had become necessary to develop 85 measures to care for the homeless but also to decide which of these measures were emergency measures that had to be implemented immediately in order to provide for the 1600 homeless people not in touch with existing NGOs. The plan included a one-stop shop, other services in areas of more than 100,000 inhabitants, multi-professional teams and the establishment of norms and standards for all accommodation. However it also included a street management programme designed to prevent begging in the street (see below). As reported above, Health Services and Social Work had not been involved previously in working with the homeless in Spain.

However the issue of emergency services working on the streets created intense discussion in Madrid. Spanish NGOs and an NGO worker from France argued that the 'emergency model' of work was not a useful one.

*But the emergency service is not the model to work for with the homeless because they don't have so many emergencies. They do have different needs – they need to be accompanied for a long time – they have to trust us so they will access services. They don't have so many emergencies. They do have some due to aggressions, police matters, lack of attentions with respect by the universal health care service etc. Emergency services are absolutely necessary but the possibility of mobility, taking people from one place to another, we need vans. Sometimes we have to take a taxi and take someone to a hospital; sometime the taxi driver is not willing to take us. Two people he doesn't know. We shouldn't substitute one model for another. From what I have heard from other countries it is a model that is working; i.e. the professional accompanying of people in the street for as long as they. The strategy of outreaching, the strategy of possibilities based on trust. Let us not do away with this model and use an emergency model that has more to do with solving that circumstantial (immediate?) problem, and not with solving the problem at large. (NGO, Madrid)*

Moreover the emergency services of Madrid, it was reported, are there for all the population not just for the homeless. There was also a danger that emergency services could be used repressively as well as in relation to integration.

*There are two possibilities to do something in this topic. One is the repressive alternative and the other is integration, somehow incorporating social objectives. We have brief, minor, experiences in Madrid. We held a training course for local police, these are the outreach teams if you like. That was very interesting; the need for police to have social objectives when they are working in the street is very important. I really trust the situation, I like the horizontal level, I don't like the top to bottom political approach especially in the case of immigrants. (NGO, Madrid)*

This view was also supported by a speaker from RAIS, Madrid, returning to the issue of preventing beggars in the street. This raised the issue of the human rights of the homeless which is discussed further below.

*Another question. The criminalisation of poverty, and those philosophies linked to 'zero tolerance' policies, turning beggars into criminals. We have to be very careful here. We do have emergency services but we also need the presence of social workers out on the street; we should not only control the crimes but to also do something else more active.*

*( RAIS, Madrid)*

A speaker from the French research team in Madrid raised the question of the ethics of imposing social work upon homeless people who don't want it.

*About the mobile teams in Paris. There were between 15-20 mobile teams of different NGOs. One of the many questions they have, it is an ethical question, is what do we do for those people who don't want social workers to intervene? These people have decided that they are on the street for a while and they don't want people because they can take care of themselves by themselves. What do we do with those who refuse us? Do we have to force them into following us, or do we have to accept that they have the right to walk away from what we offer from a while. There are some police working on mobile teams as well, but they are within the network, they know the people very well, and they have the same questions, ethical questions. (Martine Qualgio, INED, Fr)*

The French team were accompanied by a Spanish speaker who works with NGOs in Paris, who believed that emergency work hampered long-term social work with clients.

Let me share an experience that we have in Paris. Emergency work actually endangers social work. We need to be very careful. If you respond immediately to emergency needs as RAIS pointed out, they are not necessarily emergencies. The person is sleeping on the streets, but he has been doing that for 15 years, so what is all the urgency about. *Shelters open, there are improvements, but the problem is What happens tomorrow? Being on the street makes it very difficult to go on and do something else. I am not saying this because there are politicians here but there is the issue of resettlement, social workers need to be very careful that things are not that wonderful, people must make an extra effort in order to leave. It is a societal issue. Those who face the greatest difficulties have problems, insecurity tomorrow is a problem that affects everyone. ... We are being asked to do things quickly when they cannot be done quickly. The concept of time is absolutely essential. You need a long time. If you work with young people, building the right person is much easier than fixing a person who is broken, someone who has been years on the street, it will take you as long as ensuring that a young man, or a young woman, completes his or her studies.*

In France, the speaker from Secours Catholique, like speakers in Madrid said that the *problem of winter shelters* was what happens after the winter? Maryse Marpsat reported on two kinds of shelters in France, long stay shelters and shelters where people came every day (called Night Shelters in the UK). She believed that the latter should only be used for a very short time.

*In France the situation where people have to go to a night shelter where they cannot stay during the day, where we sometimes still have dormitories, and some have violence – this should be an emergency, it should last for a few days, but for some it lasts for years – for some it worsens their mental conditions if they have those to begin with and leads to depression if they were alright before. I do not say that their social links were very numerous but the kind of life in these shelters where you have to arrive early if you want a bed makes it very difficult to keep links, because you have no moments when you can see what is left of your family, and you can't receive them so it worsens the situation of people. (Maryse Marpsat, INED, Fr)*

Having raised issues about the use of emergency services the important question was what happened once homeless people were contacted? How could mainstream services be mobilised to support the homeless person who required considerable support? This was a particular problem in Spain in Italy as already reported, where neither Health nor Social Work services saw it as their role to work is the homeless. This led the speaker from the Madrid City Government to say that they needed a 'key referencing person' to accompany homeless people through the system, and this was endorsed by NGOs at the Madrid meeting. But even in Denmark accessing statutory services was considered a problem.

*The last challenge is those people with multi-problems now and difficult to handle them because the systems, as the speaker from the Municipality of Copenhagen stated earlier, have been built up to deal with each problem. There is a system for those who are mentally ill, for alcohol and for drug problems. So what is happening is that people with all these problems are being thrown from one system to another system and back again and that is one of the problems in social work. (Copenhagen discussion)*

A speaker from the Hungarian team said that this raised the question of whether there should be special services for the homeless, e.g. health services for the homeless, or whether they should be integrated into the normal services.

*My question is that the separate systems for homeless and the social care system. That is what is going on in Hungary too and some people see it is a negative tendency – that you double your social, health, institutional system and you make separate services for homeless people that will make their separation from the normal world stronger. So how do you see this tendency, is it good because there are more proper services for the homeless people or is there a bad side? (Eszter Somogyi (HU), Copenhagen Workshop)*

A particular issue is the relationship between mental health services and emergency services. In Paris it was reported that the problem of connecting these services was acute.

*'Some of them can go to psychiatric hospitals but we find more and more in emergency or long stay shelters. The government is trying to develop 'maisons relais', a kind of small place where these people can be accommodated and stay once their state of health is stabilized. In Denmark there is the same question' (FNARS)*  
*'The main problem is to connect the social network and the medical network. To make this connection it is necessary to have some kind of work agreements between the two networks and to have at the same time a continuity of care from the medical part that is difficult for mentally ill homeless people. It is also necessary to keep some kind of housing in the duration' (Association des cites du Securs catholique)*

However in Copenhagen a researcher from NIZW, Netherlands reported that in Holland it had been necessary to create a law that mental health services should follow homeless people into the shelters to give them services. In the Netherlands:

*"...a lot of homeless people with psychiatric problems fill out the system because people with long term problems have been pushed away from psychiatric hospitals and then they end up in shelters for homeless people. But the government makes a law that obliges mental health institutions to support these people in the shelters, to follow (medically) people in the shelters. The shelter is funded by local authorities and the medical aspect is paid for by national social insurance' (Lia van Doorn, NIZW, Netherlands)*

In Paris a similar development was reported:

*'From the 2nd January 2003 there is a new law in France that rules all medical and social institutions that makes a new responsibility for associations and gives a choice of what is offered to people...(CARITAS)*

*'Of course this is a good step but it is different from what still happens. Medical teams in charge of homeless people have a medical point of view' (Councillor, City of Paris)*

The most extensive example of co-ordinated street services for homeless people occurs in London and this was described in the London Workshop by a speaker from one of the agencies that operates the Rough Sleepers' Strategy. He described how before co-ordination took place many agencies were being funded under the Rough Sleepers' Initiative, all of whom had their own outreach teams, 'some people could be woken up 8 or 9 times a night'. With the development of the Rough Sleepers' Unit, by a Government initiative there was the establishment of specific London-wide Contact and Assessment Teams, and Tenancy Sustainment Teams. The purpose of the RSU was to reduce the number of rough sleepers in London by two-thirds but, as he reports, politicians find it hard to understand the 'flow' of homeless people on to the street. His final message in the quote following is that their work is being hampered by a lack of social housing for rough sleepers.

*We started out in the early Eighties funded by London local government to provide a Central London outreach team and so our roots are very much street-based, even though a lot of the things that we are looking at now are much more about community support, helping sustaining people in the community, once they've moved through hostels and into their own homes. We have got about three hundred and fifty staff, we have a turnover as a charity of about fourteen million pounds, so it's quite a large organisation and we provide hostel spaces, we have got community support, we have a resettlement team, we provide all sorts of support through the meaningful occupation team.*

*...But we did have a situation where lots of different agencies were working, sometimes in the same area. So if you were sleeping rough on some of the Central London streets that were very visible you might be woken up eight, nine, ten times a night by a different outreach worker saying "Can we come and help you?" or "Here's a cup of soup", it was ridiculous, it was a waste of money, mostly charitable money, it was certainly a waste of time and it was achieving almost nothing, so that had to stop.*

*.... Then the Rough Sleepers' Unit drew up a programme where we had to share a common language, and that was the first time all these different charities that had been doing their own thing in their own way came together... and a common strategy which we all had to buy into or we were out with no money. So it was very compelling. It was also very good to see in the strategy all the things that we wanted to see as well...*

*And the basic idea was that instead of all this confusion we would have two basic systems, a system for people on the street, recognising that they were itinerant and would move backwards and forwards and couldn't be focused necessarily on a locality, so that was going to be focused on need, people on the street what were their needs, where would they go as a result of their need? And in order to do that we had to assess them, so we had contact and assessment teams which then very quickly became known as CATs. Then once people had got into permanent accommodation they moved into the other system – Tenancy Sustainment Teams – where they would have for the first time not just six months support in their new flat but unlimited support in terms of time, it would go on as long as it was needed and the support would be there wherever they moved in theory. That of course didn't happen in practice but it was a target...*

*... Of course in policy circles very often in government what people are looking at are headline figures and they want to see a reduction, the Prime Minister's target was a*

*two-thirds reduction in three years... What we do know is that over the last twelve months in Central London, in the Borough of Westminster only we have had 1,700 individuals that we have seen who are sleeping rough, of those we have helped over twelve hundred, so that's a hundred a month. But the figure on any one night is about 180. Now that obviously causes a problem if the politicians are thinking we have got one hundred and eighty rough sleepers and we as practitioners are turning round and saying "Actually you've got one thousand seven hundred" and we know that for every fifteen people we help off the street fourteen people replace them. So it does present us with a huge problem - this flow through is massive.*

*On the plus side we started out twelve months ago with a new programme in Westminster based on the concept of rapid intervention. Now the idea of rapid intervention is very good if someone is in crisis but of course if someone is a chronic homeless person sleeping on the streets it's a rather different situation and maybe it takes a different approach, so we have had to balance the political needs to do something differently and show rapid intervention with also pragmatic approach with people who are very entrenched....*

*We have also had a problem about the lack of hostel space and a lack of move on. We know that in our hostels and other hostels that over forty percent of the residents are ready to be moved into independent accommodation, forty percent. So we have got a situation, as we have with some of our hospitals and certainly some of our psychiatric units, where we have the beds 'silted up' and we have got people who need those beds, who need that support but can't get in because we are not moving a whole cohort of people out from the hostels into other accommodation. That's perhaps where there is a significant failure at the moment in policy, where we haven't got new developments and new building that had been going on under the Conservative government; those developments have really dried up under the Labour government. (Speaker, Thames Reach Bondway)*

The discussion of intensive co-ordination of homeless street services also raised the question of **street management policies**. UK NGOs were concerned about the introduction of these policies.

*Agencies are finding that the Audit Commission, the government, the Treasury feel that they need to change, there needs to be a step-change again and the government's answer to this is to say 'Well we are going to stop work on the street and we are going to try things that have been tried perhaps elsewhere in the United States, we are looking a bit at Philadelphia and again at New York, but about signposting people off the street'. The government is taking what's called a street management approach where it's the police, the wardens, the cleansing authorities that are looking at where they find people saying "You can't be here, you need to go over there into this hostel, into the day centre". Now that presents all sorts of problems because we know that there are a whole cohort of people who aren't going to move, who won't move, and this comes into conflict with the new agenda of enforcement which is trying to look at whether legislation can force people off the street. That of course is very political and something that we strongly object to. (Speaker, Thames Reach Bondway, London)*

This repressive use of the police was one that was, as London NGOs recognised, a policy decision. Previously the Charing Cross Police Station had a dedicated team that had worked with NGOs without necessarily moving people on. One of the Dutch researchers also reported that police involvement in the Netherlands could be helpful.

*The involvement of the police in the Netherlands is not all bad. They participate in the outreach teams as well and they know many homeless people, and*

*they can lead them to the social services and to the NGOs. So there is a good part as well, not only zero tolerance. (Lia van Doorn, NIZW, Netherlands).*

## **8.2 Changes in Shelter Provision and ways of working**

Several NGOs in many workshops reported changes in Shelter Provision. First as CARITAS reported:

*'Homeless people don't want to be housed in big shelters anymore. (Caritas)'*  
This was endorsed by the Church Army in Copenhagen who reported they had broken down their large shelter into smaller institutions:

*We have several institutions that have changed from large institutions to smaller in psychiatric and also now in shelter work.'*

Not only were shelters becoming smaller but across all the workshops, NGOs reported that there was a concern (new for Madrid and Northern Italy) with action-planning with the homeless person and also the re-establishment of their social networks.

*We have to think about two different ways of working – not just specialised programmes for the homeless but also through programmes that are broader in scope. We need to think about mixed and permeable models, than allow for an inflow and outflow ... We should formulate personalised itineraries for the inclusion of those people and also deal differently with more chronic cases.*

*The second aspect is the community work, we say that today we live in a very individualistic society (but) .... We forget to work with accompanying networks, support networks, which are lacking the social fabric sometimes to really re-integrate a person'*

*(Discussion in Madrid workshop)*

*To finish I will say that in the last few years we have seen the widening of the tendency of defining the homeless people in Genoa in Italy starting from its psycho-social aspects. This has not been followed by the traditional welfare system which is, therefore, not able to provide answers to the problem if not in essential terms, with first level dormitories, canteens and a few other tools. On the contrary this social and psychological attitude towards the problem has produced in the Association action for the construction, first of all, for relational and effectiveness and then for the construction of personal identities through the working, housing and associational tools.*

*(Speaker, Associazione San Marcellino, Genoa)*

*The important part here is to focus on the professional level. You need to be able to work with the homeless, as Hanna was saying. You need to pull out their (the homeless person's) resources, and you have to be professional. You have to understand the social work done with the homeless, you have to avoid clientisation and you must draw forth the competence of the homeless themselves.*

*(Discussion in Copenhagen)*

NGOs also reported that they were managing their facilities differently; particularly in Copenhagen it was reported that homeless people were part of the management of the agencies.

*What of User influence? Denmark has a political consensus on consulting users on policies. Therefore the Ministry of Social Affairs has supported the association of formerly and currently homeless people. There are local committees in 13 regions and a national organisation. They have a magazine and access to broadcasting. (Speaker, Ministry of Social Affairs, Copenhagen)*

*It is interesting to look at who is defining the problems? It is very important that the homeless themselves have got a voice in this forum, and take more care about*

*what they are defining about their problems of their life situation. (Speaker, National Association of Shelters, Copenhagen)*

*There have also been changes in social methods, a new approach; a Manager has to work on changes with the service users, involving them as citizens on new terms. As a manager you cannot decide how it (the service) is run anymore, you have to do in conjunction with the people living there, the people who are coming there and with the employees. It is very complicated actually. (Church Army, Copenhagen).*

A French NGO speaker put it differently in Paris where Secours Catholique describe this as 'une logique participative' that not only embraced homeless people but also the volunteers that worked with them.

### **8.3 Services and the use of volunteer workers**

The most extensive discussion on the use of volunteers took place in Paris and Madrid. In both workshops Catholic organisations in particular reported the extensive use of volunteers in their work with the homeless. In Paris a particular issue was raised as to whether it was appropriate to use unemployed people as volunteers. Secours Catholique reported that they could find volunteers because of a pool of retired people and unemployed but, *'it is more difficult to find volunteers who can manage and take responsibilities'*, whilst Dutch researchers reported that it was increasingly difficult to find volunteers in Holland. The speaker from Medecins du Monde – Mission de sans domicile fixe reported:

*'In relation to volunteers we take those who are working or retired but not those who are unemployed because their own problems are too big already'.*

But Secours Catholiques did take unemployed people as volunteers:

*'We take them as volunteers but give them special jobs'*

In Madrid the Chief of Staff of the City Government was in favour of encouraging people to become volunteers to work with the homeless but under careful co-ordination. A new development had occurred in Madrid based on co-operation between the RAIS Foundation (professional workers) and SOLIDARIOS (volunteer workers) where volunteers who worked four days a week from 9pm to 1am, across seven different itineraries in the city centre in Madrid were accompanied by professionals once a week on Mondays

*We want to motivate the process of change and do the social accompaniment of the homeless throughout the changes. Volunteers did not do this before but with social workers they can cover the entire thing so social volunteering was limited before in what they did'. But much of this voluntary work only takes place between January and May when the University students are available.*

At the Milan Workshop NGOs were also heavily supported through volunteers.

*San Marcellino is a registered voluntary association with about 20 regular staff and 450 volunteer workers – all professionally qualified and well motivated. Lots of these volunteers come from these better off areas and this is good from a cultural point of view. (Speaker, Associazione San Marcellino, Genoa),*

In Copenhagen it was argued that volunteers differed according to the influence of the Church in different areas.

*The difference between NGOs and Organisations is not in their ideas base but whether or not they use volunteers in their daily social work. You (to the speaker) come from the Church Army and have thousands of people involved in your activity and it is a question of how many professionals compared with volunteers in the work. Everybody is paid by a government agency – everyone gets their resources from a government agency. So it is not a question of where the money comes from but then you argue that there might be a value idea, the value based social work, might be a*

*regional difference. Copenhagen is very secular – we don't believe in God here - compared with Jutland where they supposedly believe in God, the more Christian differences. So there are regional differences across the countries whether you believe in God.*

The speaker from the Church Army in Copenhagen also reported that there were new professional standards that all agencies had to meet.

*You have to have the development of skills – employees have to have a background to meet the new challenges, and you have to develop the support for that, but also you can say there is a Professionalism of shelter work in the last year; the education level is much higher than 10 years ago but also professionalism has come because of the money from the municipal government. Because over the last years, and this is something that researchers are also happy for you, you have to document the work, live up to standards at the shelters, and deliver statistics for the work over the past five years.*

In the London Workshop none of the NGOs were based on volunteer labour except for exceptional events such as the Christmas Shelter run by CRISIS for 10 days each Christmas and New Year for the past 30 years. CRISIS, like many other UK agencies, had begun as a volunteer organisation but faced with the crisis of homelessness that developed in the 1980s had developed into a professionally staffed organisation using volunteers for specific actions only.

#### **8.4 Advice Services for all homeless populations**

One of the important questions raised in many workshops, including that of Madrid by a Dutch researcher, was what to do about the 'nearly homeless'. How could homelessness be prevented? In London the organisation SHELTER that was established in the 1960s reported how an NGO could provide a nation-wide advice service.

*Shelter opened its first housing aid centre in 1970 and today Shelter is the UK's largest provider of independent housing advice, we help over a hundred thousand homeless or about to be homeless people every year. We do that through a variety of measures, we have over fifty Housing Aid centres which provide information, advice and advocacy services to people who are homeless or who have housing problems. In some of our housing aid centres we now have actually direct access facilitators who are based there who are able to take up challenges and support people where there it is necessary to provide support to people facing eviction.*

*We also have a legal advice service which is based in London which all our advisors can access and that provides specialist legal advice and is also very instrumental in taking up test cases and challenging pieces of housing law. That remains one of the main work that Shelter does.*

*We also over the last years have developed Shelterline which is a twenty four hour free twenty four telephone helpline service which provides both immediate advice and signposting referral advice to people anywhere in the country.*

#### **8.5 Organisations of the Homeless**

In different workshops NGOs run by homeless people were in attendance. In Paris CARITAS reported that '*...In various associations of self-support people there are homeless people who try to make the society move*' whilst at the London Workshop, Groundswell reported on their organisation of the homeless.

At the Milan Workshop the detailed way of working of such an organisation was reported by the one paid organiser of an association founded in 1993. They ran

workshops, mobile street services that goes out with homeless people, and lawyers who work with the homeless.

*The name of this Association can be translated as Friend of the Main Square in Bologna. It was founded in Italy in 1993 directly by a group of homeless people. This is the main feature that is specific to this association – it is made directly and founded by homeless people. Most of the people who are homeless and who are part of the Association take part in the Managing Board take decisions and the every day part of what goes on in the Association. So we can say that the social approach to the problem of social exclusion is based on self-help policies and all empowerment projects made by the Association....*

*The core social job are is the needs of the homeless people: for the material needs of the homeless people, the essential needs – having a house, to eat, to have protection; the need for assistance – this is the advocacy work; and the relational needs. We can definier the Association as a peer group that is based on the protagonism and the skills of the people who are considered borderline, and whom it is not easy to conduct back to public assistance, people who become chronic in their pathology (mental illness, alcohol, and addiction problems).*

*To reach our goals we work in co-operation with a network and a syndicate that all work in the field of social exclusion. We think that our Association has to work in a very strong network. We also work with the local Administration taking care of the services'. , Grande, the work of Paolo Klun and the other funders of the Association.*

*Half of all the income of this association comes from the self-financing activities of two enterprises: a bicycle repair shop and the repair and refurbishment of used clothes.*

*(NGO, Bologna)*

*In Paris, however, it had been reported that it was difficult to involve people while they were rough-sleeping: 'The people who are rough sleepers are not the same as the people who are in this self-support associations. The rough sleepers are very different from one another and there are those that are very isolated and the development of solidarity is very difficult'*

*(Medecins du Monde – Mission sans domicile fixe).*

### **8.6 Working to influence the wider community.**

Influencing the wider community to be sympathetic towards the homeless and the issue of homelessness was discussed in all of the workshops, but particularly in the Paris, Madrid and Milan Workshops. It was put most starkly first in Paris where CARITAS reported:

*'A crisis of living together – people don't want to live near the homeless'*  
and by SECOURS Catholique

*'Homeless people are not 'extras' to society but they participate in the construction of society and should have access to rights like every citizen, access to choice like any human being' (Secours Catholique)*

*How can we change the society in which we want to insert homeless people? What are the insights that homelessness gives to society about itself? Is society sufficiently attractive to homeless people? (Compagnons de la Nuit)*

*In Madrid the organisation Solidaros reported:*

*We work in the street at night in Madrid ....*

*The three public bodies are here and the municipality has underscored the problem of social awareness, the problem of making society aware of the situation. They have a different image of the homeless. So what is to be done? I haven't heard of any specific*

*measures. Are they at the municipal level, the regional level, other ministries? Some concrete measures, some specific measures are needed. We all agree it is very important but what is to be done? (Discussion, Madrid Workshop)*

In Milan the speaker from Associazione San Marcellino, Genoa, reported that they were undertaking a project of 'cultural contamination' in order to bring the knowledge of homelessness to the 'better part of town'.

*The Associazione San Marcellino is situated in the heart of Genoa and has continued the good work of "la Messa del Povero" (the Poor Mass) that was a religious organisation, in caring for those in need in the post-war years and the 60s, of those arriving from the South of Italy who came in search of employment and moved into the Old Town District because of low housing costs..... Most of the intervention is in the Old Town Centre but also now in the better off areas in the Town in the direction of 'cultural contamination' to make awareness amongst people who wouldn't otherwise come in contact with the poorest social class of society.*

They had also sought private financing (as does CRISIS UK) in order to be 'independent of the vagaries of public funding' and this also helped raise awareness. Many agencies saw the use of volunteers as a way of also engaging the wider public in an understanding of homelessness.

The speaker from CRISIS, UK, at the London Workshop, reported on two major projects that organisation had developed that had their aim of integrating homeless people and local people in London.

*Skylight is a project based in the East End, its objective is to do two things, to help re-skill homeless people and to help re-integrate, and the way that we do that is by offering a wide range of activities ranging from Tai Chi right through to bicycle repair and basic numeracy and literacy. What we hope to do is to offer homeless people an opportunity to find an interest, hobby, a skill that they would like to develop, to relearn, to remember, to learn anew and to start engaging people in that way. The other thing that we are really keen on doing in Skylight is to offer an environment in which homeless people can meet people who are not homeless, so the activity centre is open to all people and we encourage members of the public to join with relative ..varying degrees of success, Tai Chi apparently is very popular with the City people and we have got a good balance, others less so – bicycle repair apparently is not. ...*

*The other big project which in some ways is the best expression of our thinking is The Urban Village. It's in its early stages as in it still hasn't started yet, it's kind of where it a point where we are trying to secure the physical space to develop the project, but essentially what we want to do is to create a small community in which homeless people and non-homeless people are able to live side by side and which the actual accommodation is affordable of the highest quality and where there are services and support available for people who are who do need it, ranging from medical healthcare right through to training and employment and so on. The project was an idea that we nicked from the United States, it's a project called Common Ground in New York*

*(CRISIS, London)*

### **8.7 Conclusions: The Human Rights of homeless people**

One of the interesting discussions that occurred in Madrid and was touched upon in other workshops but not explored was the issue of the human rights of homeless people. This was raised directly by the Spanish research team.

*'Human rights for homeless people is an important question in Spain. We agree with this for homeless people outside of associations, but what of human rights for people inside*

*shelters? Some shelters are more restrictive than prison’ (Manuel Munoz, Complutense University, Madrid)*

*The criminalisation of poverty, and those philosophies linked to ‘zero tolerance’ policies, turning beggars into criminals. We have to be very careful here. We do have emergency services but we also need the presence of social workers out on the street; we should not only control the crimes but to also do something else more active. (NGO, Madrid)*

*As volunteer organisations we should defend the fact that we are political organisations; we do not belong to a particular party but we have a political dimension..... We are political, we speak about dealing with individuals to make them real citizens whether they have a home or not, they are all citizens’ (NGO, Madrid)*

*These issues had previously been raised in Paris in relation to ethics.*

*‘I would like to defend having a clear agenda with an ethical dimension. We have to have applied ethics in social services and this is urgent in order we can think about things that we don’t pay attention to – autonomy, independence, information, confidentiality, all these ethical matters. (Speaker, CARITAS, Paris)*

*In London the NGOs had become concerned about street management policies whilst in Milan Antonio Tosi ending the meeting by pointing out the unique contribution that organisations of the homeless themselves made in relation to demands for citizenship rights.*

*I have a short comment before closing. If you put together what has been said about the Italian welfare system, the narrow definition of homelessness, and the kind of actors that have been working in this field at the local level, it could be expected that the prevailing attitude is between a social assistance logic and compassion and it is marginal an approach in relation to rights, or citizenship rights, or social rights. I mean individual rights because rights should be individual from this point of view and on this basis and it would be expected that self-organisation is an exceptional event, and Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande (Bologna) is an interesting case from this point of view – it is a self-help organisation, it has a certain amount of self-organisation on the part of homeless persons and I don’t know any other organisation that does this in Italy.*

*(Antonio Tosi, Milan Workshop)*

## IX. Research issues and NGOs

### 9.1 Prioritising Research Questions

At each workshop NGOs were asked to prioritise their own research questions. In Paris FNARS prioritised:

- *youth exclusion,*
- *adaptation of social policies and social work practice,*
- *right to housing,*
- *immigration and homelessness,*
- *mental health issues.*

CARITAS prioritised:

- *the social integration of prisoners, foreigners and failed asylum seekers esp non-French speakers,*
- *course/trajectory of those who escape homelessness, measurement of actual access to rights,*
- *evaluation of services for both political and improvement reasons, mental health.*

For the City of Paris the priority was to understand:

- *'repeat homelessness' ,*
- *outcomes through longitudinal research over 3,5,7,10 years answering the questions 'Who are the service users? How many times did they move in and out? How they use the service? What happens as they move from street or dwellings to etc.*

Other agencies in the Paris workshop asked posed other questions:

- *What is the role of economic factors in homelessness*
- *In a perfect world, supply and demand were equal, would there still be homeless people? (Medecine du Monde)*
- *How can we change the society in which we want to insert homeless people? What are the insights that homelessness gives to society about itself? Is society sufficiently attractive to homeless people? (Compagnons de la Nuit)*
- *'We need knowledge about people who are neither in the general population nor in the homeless population i.e. the hidden homeless' (Mission d'information sur la pauvreté and l'exclusion sociale en Ile de France)*
- *'In public opinion and in the opinion of many politicians there is the idea that the social work (with the homeless JS) is expensive and without results. So, Secours Catholique, wants to show that social reinsertion is a reality. The collection of statistical data is, for example, a way to lobby action and to show that money is not thrown away' (Secours Catholique)*

At the Madrid Workshop some other issues were raised including research into the mechanisms of inclusion, and research in Spanish cities below 150,000 inhabitants where nothing was known, and also research into regional differences in homelessness.

In Milan FIOpsd argued that without research organisations provided old services that did not fit the new needs. But there was a problem in Italy:

*But very few members of the FIOpsd have a good link with research institute, or university, that is ongoing because most of the service providers have poor economic resources and this is a barrier to research. A better understanding is not a priority for most part of the service providers, it is not part of the culture of the service. So often we have very old conceptions about homeless and this means that service providers only deal with basic needs such as providing food and wardrobe. This is a problem because there is no thought about what homeless people need and*

*what we must do to improve the intervention and make lives better for these people. FIOpsd tried to make a research about this critical point, helping the reflection about homelessness, because it is a critical point and to develop a strategy of intervention. To search for a solution to this multi-national phenomena of homelessness; there is a risk that the service intervention is for people to remain chronic.*

Therefore for FIOpsd the research questions were:

- *more information for social workers to understanding homeless,*
- *more qualitative and quantitative data to understand pathways into homelessness,*
- *different categories in order to understand the profile of homeless people:*

The speaker from FIOpsd explained their priorities:

*We can say that they are poor people but not all the poor people became homeless; they are addicted people but not all the addicted people became homeless, they are without social ties, yes that is very important, but why does the breakdown of social ties, the breakdown of the family produce homeless. We can say they are without economic resources, and they are unemployed but, yes, not all the unemployed became homeless. We really need new categories to read these phenomena, the difficulties in the lives of these people. We need these categories to set up different services and to speak in a different way to the policy maker and to say that probably that some kinds of trouble that affect these people, speak to (come from) the different policies, different welfare policies that we have*

Some of these issues were also raised by NGOs at the London Workshop, despite a great deal of research having been done in the UK, whilst others were specific to the situation of the NGO. The speaker from Thames Bondway said that it was important to have:

- *longitudinal research on triggers for success and failure*
- *into different types of interventions for different problems of mental health and substance misuse,*
- *research into the ‘enforcement strategy’ of street management.*

HACT reported research needs in relation to:

- *for specific research on immigration issues and on flows of people across Europe,*
- *the effectiveness of different kinds of support and the experience of this support,*
- *the numbers of immigrants experiencing destitution and the impact of that,*
- *a need for research into the outcome of combining housing and support services.*

These priorities were agreed by some of the other UK NGOs, one of which added: *We need larger scale projects that require government funding, we need data with costings, we also need a more structural understanding of homelessness especially the impact of poverty, and finally longitudinal studies – more than eighteen months. (Speaker, Crisis, London Workshop)*

In several workshops the question of researching prevention was raised, and in the London Workshop Centrepoint reported on an action-research project, Safe in the City, designed to prevent youth homelessness through working with 14-16 year olds. The Foyer Federation was using this research to promote ‘Safe Moves’, their work with school-age young people, and St Basils Projects were also working in schools with their prevention programme. Both reported on their outcomes at the London Workshop.

In Copenhagen prevention was important both for the City of Copenhagen and for the NGOs. The Church Army argued that before people arrived at their service there had been a:

*Long social deroute; not the first time you get homeless do you end at the back of the railway station.*

*How can we grasp the problems before they become so big, so everyone knows them and be preventative? Can we grasp the problems before they are there and even perhaps suggest preventative methods? How can we become more proactive in our research? Do we have methods for that? (The mission among the homeless, Copenhagen workshop)*

The Church Army in Copenhagen were also interested in research on how to prevent the circular nature of homelessness. This was also an issue for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets at the London Workshop – How do we understand and prevent 'repeat homelessness'.

*The very last point I wanted to make is on repeat homelessness. Again it's already been mentioned that people who've been through the homeless system once probably more likely to go through it a second or even a third time. Information that we were recently given by Deputy Prime Minister's office said the average acceptance of local authorities, the people that they were accepting as homeless, the average was fifteen to twenty percent had been through the homeless system before. In Tower Hamlets it's nowhere near fifteen to twenty percent, it's about one and a half percent and I think a lot of the reason for that is because we have developed some initiatives. We have our own independent living team who help the most vulnerable people through the temporary accommodation process, give them the life skills, that ensures they are able to properly maintain their temporary accommodation.*

## **9.2 Research that changes the perspective on homelessness**

NGOs at the London Workshop reported that several pieces of research had changed their thinking about homelessness. Some of the research findings could also be important for other European countries.

*I think there are two reports that were really significant in our thinking. The first was Prevention Better Than Cure, it's a piece of research done for us by a researcher named Geoff Randall and it really changed the way Crisis was thinking in the sense that we were very, and even our even our name says it you know, we were very much about intervening at the point of crisis, at the point in which people were on the street, that's what we were there to do, that's what we were there to try to help with. And what Prevention Better Than Cure did was say that you know there's a much stronger case for intervening earlier on in the cycle and intervening in a different way.*

*The other piece of work that was very important was a report entitled Homelessness And Loneliness and one of the things that was really kind of emerged very strongly out of the research was that homeless people suffer from social isolation in a way that in a very kind of powerful way and in a way that damages and we don't address that essentially, we don't really deal with that side of homelessness. And the focus traditionally has been very much on the material, upon providing housing, providing food and there's been very little around on the social side or the damaging effects of homelessness on people's social networks. CRISIS, UK*

*Thames Reach Bondway's been involved in some research and these can go round later but we did something called Dreams Deferred and it links directly into what Tariq was saying around the work that Crisis are doing and now lots of*

agencies are doing looking at the growing understanding really and acceptance that homelessness is not just about accommodation, that people have all sorts of aspirations and we weren't necessarily working deliberately to try and help people realise some of their aspirations. And *Dreams Deferred* is interesting not only because of its research and its findings but also because what it intends to do is to provide a toolkit for practitioners and coming from the sort of practitioner side of things rather more than the policy side of things this has been very interesting for us at Thames Reach Bondway.

Centrepoint reported the importance of the *Taking Risks* report for their perspective on youth homelessness and their work with the families of young people at risk.

### **9.3 Researching homelessness from the perspective of the homeless person**

In Paris, Milan and London the importance of the perspective of the homeless person, through research undertaken by homeless person or with their close involvement was stressed.

*It starts from the homeless person themselves, development of measurement tools that concern their lives and not to impose preconceptions (Secours Catholique)*

*People in the field have a knowledge of reality and it is impossible to have a real science without the knowledge of the field. This is the way to establish knowledge and to transform reality. (Compagnons of the Night, Paris Workshop)*

*The needs of the Association is to have a better comprehension of the crisis on the road in order to be able to translate it, very fast, into tools for intervention and also to have an impression on the public administration (of Bologna). So the research that we would like to see, to take from outside, and also to carry on ourselves, only makes sense for us if it involves the person who are the object of the investigation. It is always finalised to understand the needs of the people and not to be a theoretical exercise by itself. Also it should sensitise the local territory and the local community and is important in develop empowerment policies. (Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande, Bologna, Milan Workshop)*

Thames Reach Bondway' described the work of their users in a particular research project. This NGO runs a peer education service and they had undertaken focus group interviews and their report back was that there was the need for accommodation plus health services, a need to redress the skills deficit and also the need for 'meaningful occupation' for people who are homeless.

*So it was accommodation, health, daily living skills, meaningful occupation and belonging, a sense of belonging, this came out very loud and clear and one of the problems that we had in the homelessness sector in the UK is that people can over-identify with and over-belong with homelessness, 'I'm an ex-homeless person' and never move away from that and we are trying to move away from some of that stigma and at the same time help people move away from that, find new ways of belonging, belonging to the wider community. And finally, self-esteem, we actually looked in terms of the what people were saying and looking at the indices of need that people were presenting to us what we found was sometimes very low self-image. We needed to find purposeful ways, deliberate ways of addressing all of those things – accommodation, health, daily living skills, meaningful occupation, belonging and self-esteem. (Thames Reach Bondway, London workshop)*

The speaker from Groundswell, himself an ex-homeless person who had been homeless on and off for 30 years described the importance of research undertaken by homeless people – both for the quality of the research but also for the development of skills among homeless people.

*I start from the question ‘Who’s the expert?’ the person who’s learnt the theory or the person who’s actually lived the experience? And that I think that is where peer research sits quite comfortably. Basically it’s people conducting research underneath their experience. ...*

*So in the theory side of it basically it is evidence based, that’s the whole issue of it, it can be done on a questionnaire, it can be tape-recorded, I prefer it to be done on a questionnaire. You’ve got that face to face value. One aspect of peer research can be in the service evaluation, it’s a way of insuring that services meet needs, it can draw on the expertise of people who use the service, I’ve been a service user myself so it allows me to use my expertise in some of the services that I’ve received .. It can empower people who use the services...*

*When you have peer research it gives you good access to so-called hard to reach - because I have no access problems at all....*

*What has happened to me definitely, one of the things that can happen, is that you start to learn to listen to people; that’s a very very good skill, being able to just listen to somebody all the way through.*

*(Groundswell, London workshop)*

The speaker from Groundswell went on to reflect on the skills that homeless people developed as they themselves became researchers.

*It can also give people the abilities to learn how to organise and to manage if you are preparing to go and visit a centre or a foyer or somewhere else, making phone calls, getting times and dates when you can visit and this type of thing. It’s a recognised form of research in social research now, paying incentive, and so it’s money management as well so you are learning budgeting skills as well.*

*(Groundswell, London workshop)*

#### **9.4. Research, homeless interventions, and political strategies**

There was considerable discussion about the relationship between research and political understandings, public opinion and political strategies in the Paris Workshops.

*Research doesn’t influence policies, would be better if researchers were more influential. People believe huge numbers of immigrants but this is not the case (City of Paris Councillor).*

*Researchers must be careful not to write everything they know – stealing, begging – in case it is used against people (Lia van Doorn, Netherlands)*

*Knowledge of reality is important for all the social actors – researchers, social workers, public opinion – because of the preconceptions about homeless people e.g. immigrants have come to take our bread (Compagnons of the Night)*

*People in the field have a knowledge of reality and it is impossible to have a real science without the knowledge of the field. This is the way to establish knowledge and to transform reality. (Compagnons of the Night)*

*Researchers have to construct good research with good categories and good questions. Both have to be scientific in order to understand and to unveil the social process. So the researchers are not answering the questions of politicians and they are not using the categories of politicians. Therefore they do not want to hear these results. (Jean Marie Firdion, INED, Fr).*

This was not the perspective of the Hungarian research team who thought that researchers could influence developments.

*In Hungary researchers can influence. We have been developing an idea about housing vouchers to help family pay their rent, based on US voucher system.*

*Researchers can advise but politicians decide in the end. (van Tossics and Sandor Erdosi, MRI, HU)*

### **9.5. Conclusion**

The important message from the NGOs was the necessity to provide research information that allowed them to work with the new problem of homelessness and not their old understanding. The other important message was the voice of the homeless themselves.