

HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

An overview of the concept, statistics and policy implication

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I.	Introduction.....	2
II.	The concept of hidden homeless	3
II.1.	Birth and development of the hidden homelessness concept.....	3
II.2.	Examples of interpretation of the hidden homelessness concept.....	5
II.3.	The hidden homelessness concept in the Feantsa homeless definition.....	9
III.	Measuring the scale of hidden homelessness	11
III.1.	Problems related to measurement	11
III.2.	Statistics relevant to hidden homelessness in EU countries	13
III.3.	Hungarian examples.....	15
III.3.1	<i>Surveys of a general kind</i>	15
III.3.2	<i>Targeted surveys</i>	16
IV.	Policy	18
IV.1.	Policy implications of broader homeless approaches	18
IV.2.	Actual examples of broader homeless policy	21
V.	Summary.....	23
VI.	References.....	25

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I. Introduction

By the nineties the number of rough sleepers and those endangered by becoming homeless has grown across Europe. This process had to do with the economic changes of the eighties and nineties, the general pressure on the economies to increase their competitiveness and decrease the expenditures of the central budget. This has led to the market economies becoming more incalculable on the one hand, and the narrowing down of the public welfare system on the other hand. The structural causes resulting in the growing number of homeless had a significant impact on the housing market as well, transforming both the supply and demand side of it.

The factors causing the main part of the housing problem including the growing homelessness are the following:

- Demographic changes: the increasing number of households partly due to the growing number of divorces, the ageing of the society and the fact that people found families at a later age. This means a severe increase in the demand for housing as well.
- Growing unemployment rate due to structural changes in the economy: the number of periods without employment increases due to the growing number of the permanently unemployed and the fact that the labour market is becoming more insecure (i.e. less permanent, secure workplaces), and the decreasing number of full-time jobs.
- Cutting down on social allowances, affecting unemployment and housing benefits in the first place.
- Structural transformation of the supply side of the housing market: narrowing public and social housing sector, privatisation of public housing, drastic limitation of public investments.
- Contraction of the cheap housing stock as a result of modernisation and city development / rehabilitation programmes. The general increase in the quality of the housing stock does not affect the poorest of the society (Hertting et al).

The appearance of homeless was even more drastic in Eastern-Europe than in the West, since this phenomenon did not exist in an explicit form in the socialist system. People without an officially registered shelter and job were treated as criminals thus homelessness and unemployment were phenomenons of hidden nature in the former regime, which suddenly became visible with the change of the regime. Unemployment increased abruptly at the time of the transition due to the economic crisis and structural changes.

At the same time the large state subsidy systems were abolished while prices including public utility prices rocketed. The newly forming social welfare system was insufficient (if not for anything else, due to the missing budgetary funds). All of these led to growing social inequalities and the impoverishment of a significant part of the society, generally increasing the risk of homelessness. The transformation of the institutional system, the closing down of many institutions directly contributed to the appearance of rough sleepers: large groups of people without a home but formerly being put up in worker hostels, social institutions, hospitals etc now found themselves on the streets. (Hertting et al) However, it is important to emphasize that although the proportion of the vulnerable groups has increased significantly, according to some theories the housing sector itself was playing a risk absorbing role, in a way that there were no large-scale evictions started against insolvent households cumulating large debts (public utilities, housing loans) (Struyk).

With the general problem of homelessness growing, its profile has changed as well. While earlier it used to be the elderly men who became homeless, more and more young people, women and families have become affected by the problem since the nineties.

Homeless policy programmes of the nineties concentrated on rough sleepers, achieving significant successes in some Western-European countries; in Great Britain for example the number of people living on the streets decreased by two-thirds by the end of the decade as the result of the programmes. These policies however did not give answers to the other housing hardship problems that have become more severe.

II. The concept of hidden homeless

II.1. Birth and development of the hidden homelessness concept

The concept of hidden homelessness appears in the 1990's, as housing inequalities increased. The concept was primarily focused on by research, public and voluntary homeless organisations, but hidden homelessness, as a concept has still not been clearly defined and not even experts have agreed on its exact meaning. It is used differently, to define various homeless groups simultaneously in each country, or by each research organisation. An attempt follows to summarise and sort out different meanings of this concept.

The birth of the concept was bound to 'visibility', triggered by the realisation that certain homeless groups stay invisible both for homeless care service providers, and for statistical studies or surveys. Homeless care often misses those homeless people that chose to hide away, but also the eligibility criteria of the homeless care systems themselves exclude certain groups from services. As certain homeless groups are not surveyed either through the service provider or on basis of their whereabouts and will not be accessible for the authorities, their problems and the magnitude of these problems cannot be assessed and then resolved. Therefore, these groups will be excluded from various housing or homeless policies. Another major, negative consequence of hidden homelessness is that the homeless population (whether taken in the narrow or in a broader sense) is invariably underestimated. Naturally, groups of the homeless, not covered by services and not included in surveys are different in each country, as homeless care providing systems, as well as the definition of homelessness

vary from country to country; consequently the composition of hidden homeless groups may be very different across countries.

At the same time as a result of the large housing construction, modernisation programs the average conditions of the housing stock improved considerably by the eighties-nineties and paralelly with this improvement the focus of researches shifted to the groups which were excluded from this process for some reasons. People in housing hardships were identified along different dimensions, taking account both the physical and legal aspects of their housing situation. Such researches have had effect on the conception of homelessness resulting in a broadening approach, which included groups outside the official homeless definitions Research on the causes leading to homelessness has largely contributed to increased focus on hidden homelessness, as a result of which ideas around homelessness have changed. Homelessness is no longer considered as a state, but a process consisting of various phases of a disadvantaged housing situation. Homeless people progress from one housing situation to the other, and only a part of them will enter visible forms of homelessness, and as a rule a fragment will stay permanently and visibly homeless. Acute homelessness, therefore, is a temporary state in the lives of many, but some will experience it repeatedly, and for some it may become a permanent status. This process that often called the cycle of homelessness also highlights the fact that the hidden homeless groups are at the risk of becoming literally homeless, though this risk varies significantly in the case of different forms of housing hardships.

Efforts to define categories within hidden homelessness are associated with a controversy to interpret the concept of homelessness itself; the concept itself is rooted in problems of defining homelessness, i.e. which group in a problematic housing situation can be considered homeless. In this context hidden homelessness is taken in a broad sense and people, though living in apartments, but their tenure status is for some reason uncertain or their living conditions are intolerable, are included.

International literature addresses the following categories within the hidden homelessness concept:

1. The acute homeless, roofless, that go in hiding and live in forests, caves or other remote, often in makeshift huts or tents.
2. Those homeless that do not have safe and permanent accommodation but are not part of the homeless care system (e.g. people rotating between friends, squatters).
3. Those that live in apartments, but their accommodation is, from some aspect, intolerable: people in sub-standard housing units or in non-housing facilities, those in overcrowded homes, „concealed households” (who unvoluntarily share accommodation on a long-term basis), and those that live in physical or emotional abuse in their home. But also those whose housing situation is uncertain, households in debts, or threatened by eviction.
4. Those “not registered.” Depending on registration criteria, this category may overlap with all others, referring to those in the same situation as registered homeless people, without being registered with homeless care providers; they do not receive services and are not included in housing allocation systems (if there is one, such as in UK) either.

Researchers and organisations apply the hidden homelessness concept in a narrow or in a broader sense, associated with a limited or extended interpretation of

homelessness. In the narrow sense it refers to those homeless groups that are not represented in homeless care systems (categories 1-2), while in a broader sense it includes those living in housing units, but among uncertain or inadequate circumstances. The difference between the broader definition of homelessness and hidden homelessness, then, is that while the former refers to all homeless groups, the hidden homeless concept excludes visible categories of literal homelessness, rough sleepers and people living in homeless institutions. (Fitzpatrick et al.)

II.2. Examples of interpretation of the hidden homelessness concept

This chapter provides some examples for hidden homelessness in its narrow and its broader sense. The examples were taken from various documents, such as policy papers, materials from lobby organisations, as well as scientific studies.¹ It is obvious, that these examples are closely related to problems of the definition and measurement of homelessness.

Narrow sense

1. The document entitled „Policy statement on homelessness” (Dimitz, Paulischin) claims that homelessness in developed countries is very often a consequence of an inadequate housing policy, disregarding the availability of affordable housing for poorer people, or their need for it. The paper applies a broader homelessness definition as recommended by the United Nations; on this basis the following homeless categories are established:

- acute homeless: the same as the roofless
- homeless: people having temporary shelter in social care or homeless institutions
- imminent homeless: those threatened with losing their home, those to be evicted
- potential homeless: those that pay too much rent relative to their income
- hidden homeless: temporarily accommodated with friends or acquaintances
- those in unreasonable housing, e.g. those in damp or overcrowded units

The material points out that hidden homelessness is especially frequent among women and young people, often accompanied by exploitation and violence. The number of those living in hidden homelessness is estimated high in the document, but it deems numeric expression difficult.

2. Similar categorisation is found in the study entitled “Poverty, social segregation and houselessness in Austria” (Mülleder). The paper sees houselessness as a form of poverty and social exclusion. The broader sense of homelessness in this study also includes its imminent or potential forms, as well as intolerable housing conditions, and hidden homelessness similarly means temporary co-habitation with friends or acquaintances.

3. A Canadian local policy paper (Plan...) establishes two major homelessness categories. The first category includes homeless people in the absolute sense, referring to the roofless and those living in homeless shelters. The second category is called

¹¹ The majority of examples given in the study are taken from materials found on the internet.

relative homeless, referring to those (a) living in sub-standard accommodation, or temporarily with friends or relatives, having no permanent homes and the latter group is considered as hidden homeless, or (b) those that face the possibility of homelessness: people who may lose their homes due to poverty, its inferior state or due to a crisis.

4. A research was conducted in Kansas City, USA, in 2000, aimed at looking into the magnitude of its homeless population by way of a point-in-time survey (Collins). The research covered both the visible and the hidden homeless, though the official homeless definition is a narrow one, excluding hidden groups. The hidden homeless group included those persons and families that had doubled up with other families, and those families that had divided up, living separately due to financial problems. A major focus of the study was the 'cycle of homelessness,' that is how people moved between doubled-up and visible forms of homelessness. The magnitude of hidden homelessness was measured through a door-to-door survey; selecting a census tract with low income households, where they tried to visit each housing unit. The survey established that 28pc of the households were doubled up, representing 38pc of the population. The results were projected to other constituencies of the city with a similar demographic structure, thus obtaining an estimated hidden homelessness figure.

A further achievement of the study was that about five times as many visible homeless were registered as in previous years, since more enumerators had been employed, and the study also made it clear that the official homeless definition required extension, to include the hidden homeless. Researchers think that further study is needed to find out what proportion of the hidden homeless group can be redefined as visible homeless, and what to define the risk factors.

"Non registered" approach

5. A campaign document compiled by the Scottish Lothian Anti Poverty Alliance organisation uses the hidden homelessness concept in a more relative sense, not as an actual homeless category, but a phenomenon manifested in each category, and the study focuses on its statistical aspects. For a definition of homelessness it refers to the housing situation categories applied by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure/temporary accommodations, intolerable housing, concealed households. It provides a broader homeless definition, the categories having a „lack of a right or access to their own secure and minimally adequate housing place” as a common characteristic feature. At the same time the authors stress that a person's being considered homeless always depends on „who is doing labelling”. The definition of a homeless person impacts their number, further influenced by hidden homelessness or visibility; a significant percentage of homeless people will not be represented in statistics. (Lothian Anti Poverty Alliance)

6. The Australian Council to Homeless People established the following homeless categories:

- primary homeless: people without conventional accommodation (rough sleepers)
- secondary homeless: people moving between various forms of temporary shelters (friends, emergency accommodation),

- tertiary homeless: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses on a long term basis without basic amenities or security of tenure.

Within these categories those that are not visible because they live with friends or in squats and do not apply for services and not registered, are considered hidden homeless. It, therefore, does not provide an accurate definition for hidden homelessness, and the definition of homelessness itself, though broader than the literally homeless, it is more restricted than the most liberal definition, as it excludes the category of inadequate housing, consequently it is not included in the concept of hidden homelessness either. At the same time the study briefly looks at the previous housing status of people surveyed as literally homeless. The paper established that most of them had lived in private housing, especially in private rental units. The study sees low income people in private rentals as a particularly endangered group, since they are more affected by rent increases or evictions, and a shortage of rental units in big cities impacts their housing situation in an extremely negative way. The study identifies a lack of long term affordable housing as a major structural cause behind homelessness, apart from unemployment and uncertainty of revenues. (Council to Homeless Persons)

Broader interpretations

7. Mission Australia, a homeless organisation addressed the problem of hidden homelessness in one of its policy papers. The material points out, that those that are literally homeless, constitute only a smaller part of the homeless population; for most of them homelessness means a continuous search for stable and secure housing, which, as a rule, takes up a large part of their time, energy and resources. Official homeless statistics, however, do not cover most of these groups, although the 1996 and 2001 censuses both targeted assessing the magnitude of homelessness through elaborating special strategies. The Australian census found 15,000 homeless in 1996, while 90,000 people lived in supported accommodation, but experts said that these figures represented only about 20 percent of the total homeless population. The hidden homeless category includes several forms of habitation, commonly characterised by „the lack of a permanent and safe home environment”. Hidden homelessness is identified with those that live in

- refuges
- cars, caravans, tents or garages
- squats
- unaffordable private rental accommodation
- other forms of temporary accommodation or with friends.

Although there are no exact statistical figures concerning this population, the paper points out the importance of case studies and qualitative data providing considerable information on the hidden homeless, in terms of forms of habitation and personal strategies. (Mission Australia, 2001).

8. The British ‘Crisis’ organisation has been one of the most active campaigners to call public and political attention to the problem of the single homeless. A recent campaign by Crisis was targeted at decreasing hidden homelessness. Rough sleepers are just the „tip of the iceberg”, 95 percent of the homeless are hidden homeless, Crisis says. As a definition for the hidden homeless, a list of various situations has been given; they consider those living in B&Bs, hostels, squats as hidden homeless, as

well as the asylum seekers and those that live in crowded circumstances. The organisation stresses that a large part of the hidden homeless (except the last category) are single homeless, since they are the ones that will receive the fewest housing subsidies and have the least access to social housing. The document views hidden homelessness as a downward spiral; those in the hidden homeless category are socially marginalised people, who cannot improve their situation due to the lack of an appropriate social network, as well as personal means. Rough sleepers and hidden homelessness, at the same time, are closely associated. Many will arrive in the street from hidden homelessness and many street dwellers find a way back to this category. Still, unlike the rough sleepers, little information is available regarding the hidden homeless. But finding a permanent solution for rough sleepers, the issue of hidden homelessness must be first resolved. (Crisis, 2001)

9. A study entitled „Single Homelessness” (Fitzpatrick et al), summarising British research on this area, also focuses on the issue of hidden homelessness. The authors cite Webb, who defines three „visible” homeless categories, within the narrow definition of homelessness:

- those registered with a local housing authority as homeless,
- those in contact with homeless agencies and/or living in homeless hostels,
- rough sleepers in visible or known places.

The study points out (with reference to Crane and Warnes), that there are hidden groups even within the narrow definition of homelessness, those people that represent the invisible opposite of the above categories (namely those that are not registered, do not receive homeless services, or rough sleepers in places hidden from view). It means that hidden homeless categories do not coincide with homeless groups in the broad sense.

The above examples also demonstrate how many interpretations of the hidden homeless concept are applied, and in how many definitions of homelessness they appear. Some authors define hidden homelessness as a given category within the broader definition of the homeless, as a group of persons or families, temporarily accommodated by friends or other people, as they have no homes of their own (examples 1-4). Other authors do not define actual homeless groups, but refer to non visible homeless people, mainly non-registered homeless, within the homeless population (examples 5-6). Yet another position separates the hidden homeless from the literally homeless as a group without stable and permanent homes, incessantly rotating between uncertain housing options, including people on the verge of losing their homes and those living among poor housing conditions, though some think that the last category cannot be considered as part of the homeless population (examples 7-8). In this sense the concept of the hidden homeless includes all other categories outside the literally homeless, referred to as potential, imminent, unreasonable housing in the first two examples (an intolerable or inadequate housing elsewhere). The examples include the broadest possible interpretation as well, which defines the non visible group within the literally homeless in the broad sense of the homeless as hidden homeless (example 9).

II.3. The hidden homelessness concept in the Feantsa homeless definition

Feantsa, (The European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless) has long been working to resolve issues in defining homelessness, namely, what forms of housing hardships are included in the meaning of homelessness. Triggered by the problem, that different European countries have different homeless definitions, both official and informal, resulting in rather different homeless statistics (if they are generated at all), several attempts have been made, some associated with others, to lay the principles for a homeless definition. Within a consistent homeless definition they wanted to develop a system of categories to ensure a global and comparative method to measure the degree of homelessness, enhancing the creation of an European homeless matrix.

One of the first authors to provide a summary review was Avramov (Avramov), looking at homelessness from the aspect of housing exclusion. She does not use the concept of hidden homelessness, but applies visibility. She surveys a wide range of groups in a disadvantaged housing situation, looks at various forms of exclusion from housing and the relationship between them. She considers those that are „unable to access and maintain a personal dwelling from their own resources” as homeless, but, as she says, there are others as well that are excluded from access to adequate housing. The concept of adequate housing has to be defined so that groups of those excluded from housing can be defined and their size can be measured. The concept of housing exclusion requires a broad interpretation; it does not only include visible homeless groups (rough sleepers, squatters, officially registered homeless), but less visible groups also, such as people living in supported temporary accommodation, or living with friends or relatives, and people in so-called unconventional dwellings, as well as people on the margin of the private rental sector. The number of less visible homeless groups is a lot larger than those visible. At the same time the author does not consider badly housed people as homeless, but includes this category in the forms of housing exclusion, identifying it as the “outer core of housing exclusion”.

Avramov points out that the homeless are the spatially most mobile population, frequently shifting between various forms of housing exclusion, since their average housing option is available for a limited period of time. That is why it is extremely difficult to categorise each housing format, since each individual is characterised by different forms of housing at various times. Homelessness itself is a transitory state in the lives of many people, but in some cases it may turn to be a permanent condition. Though different causes in one’s life may lead to homelessness, the author thinks it is the outcome of both social impoverishment and exclusion from community care. The first process prevents poorer people from obtaining adequate housing, and as a result of the latter, vulnerable individuals will not be able to maintain a personal dwelling.

In Feantsa’s 1999 report (Hertting et al.) definition issues of the homeless concept also surface. The report suggests a classification system (based on Sahlin) to resolve the narrow-broad interpretation dilemma, which can appropriately reflect the multi-dimensional nature of the homeless issue. It views homelessness as a continuum of home-to-homelessness, with rough sleepers at one end, and those with adequate and safe accommodation at the other. The two extremes embrace various housing statuses. The housing forms are described by way of two factors, on one hand on basis of the dwelling’s physical characteristics, and on basis of the degree of housing security on the other. With both factors a certain level needs to be established, below which the individual is considered homeless. Combined evaluation of the two factors will yield

four categories; the first includes those that have adequate homes and the other three designate various disadvantaged housing situations: badly housed people, low security, rough sleepers (see table). The narrow definition of the homeless includes rough sleepers only, while the broad interpretation covers the two other categories. This classification does not indicate social inclusion, the individual's ties to the community. If the security factor is taken in less strict sense, the theoretical base may cover this aspect as well, the authors say.

Table 1.

	Security		
Quality		High	Low
	High	I. adequate home	II. low security
	Low	III. badly housed people	IV. rough sleepers

Source: Hertting et al.

The concept of hidden homelessness, then, is not included in this classification, but the study points out that certain homeless groups become the centre of attention, while others are neglected through the different homeless definitions and mainstream debates in each country. It is these neglected groups that are often referred to as the hidden homeless.

In a later Feantsa report (Edgar et al), surveying homeless statistics concerning 15 EU member states, hidden homelessness is defined as variants other than literally homeless. Hidden homeless are those people with insecure housing and whose housing is unfit for habitation. The report focuses on creating a system of categories, which reflects these housing situations, and yields categories that can be measured in practice. Operational, thus measurable sub-categories were set up to five conceptual Feantsa categories (rooflessness, houselessness, insecure and inadequate housing, insecure housing, inadequate housing) through defining the concept of the home. Home was defined in three domains², such as physical, social and legal characteristics. Each homeless situation is described by a lack of one or more of these characteristics. Methodologically the five conceptual categories were further refined with the characteristics of a home, or the lack of these characteristics, which resulted in 15 practical categories. One additional category was created to represent asylum seekers or refugees. The resulting classification, consisting of categories mutually excluding one another, is demonstrated in the following table:

2 “The physical domain refers to a space of which the person or household has sole occupancy. ... The social domain refers to the right to personal privacy ... to the ability to exercise some control over those (social) relations. Reference to legal definition of a tenancy ... suggests that for a legal tenancy contract to exist there must be an agreement between two parties (the landlord and tenants) which specifies the property to be let, a period of tenancy and a right to of exclusive possession” (Edgar et al, p4)

Table 2.

Conceptual Category		Operational Category
Roofless	1	Living in public space (no abode)
	2	Stay in a night shelter
Houseless	3	Stay in service center or refugee
	4	Live in temporary accommodation
	5	Living in institutions
	6	Living in designated supported accommodation
Insecure and inadequate housing	7	Squatting in buildings
	8	Living in low budget hostels
Insecure housing	9	Have legal notice to quit/evict
	10	Living temporarily with family or friends
	11	Living under threat of violence
	12	Living in dwelling without a normal legal tenancy
Inadequate housing	13	Living in temporary structure or shanty house
	14	Living in mobile home / caravan
	15	Living in dwelling which is declared unfit for habitation under legislation
	16	Living in a dwelling which is severely overcrowded

Source (Edgar et al.)

At the same time the report underlies that measurability depends on the statistical data collection methods of each country, as well as different definition of standards (e.g. what is considered overcrowded or unfit housing).

III. Measuring the scale of hidden homelessness

III.1. Problems related to measurement

Measuring homelessness is of major importance in the assessment of the capacity of the service providing system, as well as in policy development and monitoring. As we have said before, the hidden nature of homelessness makes such measurement difficult regardless of whether we use the homeless categories in the narrower or broader sense. The lack of a category system providing standard definitions for the stages of homelessness was another problem, severely limiting the possibility of an international comparison. The definition of homelessness varies considerably in each country, therefore their statistical data cover different groups. Another difficulty is that in a number of countries there is no regular statistical data collection concerning the homeless groups.

The category system set up by Feantsa (see Table 2) - aimed to make homelessness measurable – seems to be suitable to serve as a guidance for each country to create their own category system. This system should probably be adjusted to the characteristics of each country, but it may make the measurement of groups affected

by the various forms of housing exclusion (including the hidden homeless groups) and the international comparability of related statistics possible.

Sources of data suitable to measure homelessness in the broader sense, including the hidden homeless are usually the following:

- rough sleeper counting
- service providers
- population and household census
- housing survey
- housing assistance applicants and recipients
- other institutional data sources and special surveys

The above listed sources cannot provide a full range of data about the number of those concerned. It is rather uncertain what proportion of the real population is reached when counting rough sleepers – this depends largely on the number of surveyers and the thoroughness of the counting, namely the size of the area it covers.

Homeless care institutions reach only part of the homeless, too. Where the institutional system of homeless care is more developed, namely where more institutions provide an adequate service, the number of beneficiaries is higher as well. It is reflected in the statistics showing a higher level of (measured) homelessness in countries with more advanced service system. Moreover, changes in the service system are reflected in the statistics, too; there may be an increase or decrease shown in the number of homeless without a real change in the size or composition of the actual population. This phenomenon is called the service-statistics paradox (Hertting et al).

Although the censuses aim to cover the entire population, certain groups are not fully taken into account, e.g. part of those who live in unconventional dwellings, especially if these are located in less densely populated areas. Squatters and those living in their own or rented cottages and other non-residential buildings are typically not included. At the same time the censuses register only a few characteristics regarding the dwelling. The questionnaires provide data on the basic physical qualities of the dwellings, showing for example the size of the substandard housing stock. Based on the number of households and persons, the number of overcrowded dwellings can be calculated as well, while there are no adequate data on the titles of occupancy, therefore the identification of insecure housing situations is not possible (Avramov).

Housing surveys examining the population living in dwellings may provide more detailed information regarding the condition of dwellings, the number and composition of households, the titles of the tenants' occupancy. Based on these, the number of various forms of substandard dwellings, concealed households and overcrowded dwellings can be estimated. Furthermore, housing surveys make it possible to measure the affordability of housing costs, the level of housing contentment, housing mobility and intentions.

Based on these surveys, certain (though not all) forms of housing exclusion and the groups concerned can be identified. However, general surveys include only a small number of people in marginal situations, and the proportion of those non-responding within this group may be high, too (e.x of those who have no legal title).

Housing needs may be revealed from the data of housing application systems, where such system exists at all. Again, it reflects a portion of the actual needs only, since the

eligibility criteria exclude certain groups at the beginning. In addition, there are many who do not apply at all, thinking they would not get a dwelling anyhow. Another question is whether the statistics register all the applications submitted, or only those processed.

Different institutions may provide data on the dimension of groups in insecure situation. Courts for example know the number of cases where housing related debts led to lawsuits and those where an eviction was prescribed. Public utility companies have the information about the sum of overdue fees and the number of households concerned.

Special surveys usually target groups of smaller size - compared to the total population -while their absolute number can be significant. General surveys provide uncertain information about the real size of such groups, and only little relevant information is provided about their problems.

At the same time, when the categories of a database are compiled from several sources, there is a danger of double counting. Double counting can be partly filtered out when the data of the census and other surveys are being processed (depending on the method of data collection and processing). At the same time when we look at the data of the service system or the evictions, overlaps may occur with other categories. When several different data sources are used, overlaps are often impossible to avoid; in these cases minimum and maximum estimations are made.

Further problem is to define the basis for comparison in each category. It does not only refer to the fact that the standards set in different countries vary, but whether all forms housing hardship (e.g. the lack of central heating) should be regarded as a form of homelessness, even if we use this term in its broadest sense. Concerning this problem, the CS-LO research³ (examining the chances of vulnerable groups to access to housing) recommends two levels of housing qualities to be defined, adequate and minimal housing. Adequate housing means that a dwelling is physically accessible, structurally safe, safe from a sanitation and health point of view, with secure tenure, and not overcrowded. Minimal housing means that a dwelling is structurally safe, meets the hygienic and health requirements, the tenants have secure title of tenure, but it represents the lowest standard of housing, that is below the level recognised by the society as adequate quality dwelling. According to the material, housing policy should aim for reaching the adequate housing level, but those living in dwellings below the level of minimal housing should be regarded as homeless (CS-LO). This definition does not deal with the issue of differences of categories among the various countries either, while the meaning of adequate or minimal housing is different in each country depending on local conditions and the level of development in the given country.

III.2. Statistics relevant to hidden homelessness in EU countries

Showing the conditions of the early 1990s, the following estimation was made to assess the homeless problem in a broader sense in EU 15 countries (Hertting – based on Avramov):

³ Group of Specialists on Access to Housing operated by the Council of Europe between 2000-2002.

- Literally homeless were 2 million people receiving homeless care, another 3 million were houseless, who lived with friends or in short-term/ temporary accommodations.
- 1,5 million people were threatened with eviction in a year, while 400 thousand were actually evicted
- 15 million people lived in substandard dwellings, another 2,5 million in unconventional dwellings.

According to the estimation the rate of literally homelessness was highest in the three largest countries, Germany, France and UK (more than 4 persons per 1000 inhabitants), while in the other countries the rate is below 2 persons per 1000 inhabitants. Though it was emphasized by the experts (Hertting, Avramov) that these figures are rough estimations and their comparativity are considerably limited. Taking the total population of the EU 15 countries in 1993, which amounted to 369,5 million, the average rate of literally homeless was 5 persons, while that of living in substandard housing was 40 persons per 1000 inhabitants.

There are no similar aggregated figures available of the newly joined countries. Measuring literally homelessness the indicator could be produced only for two of the countries for the same period: Hungary had a 2-5, while Poland 9-10 homeless per 1000 inhabitants (year 1994). The rate of substandard housing in the beginning of nineties was substantially high in Hungary and Poland between 20-30% in the total housing stock, while in Central European other countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia) it was around 10-15%.

Regarding housing problems in a broader sense more comparable data exist, which indicates that that housing problems are a lot worse in Central and Eastern Europe than in the Western countries (though significant improvement happened in some countries since the beginning of the nineties). The „Quality of Life” survey⁴ (2003) provides the following comparative data about housing conditions in 28 European countries (EU 15, 10 new member states and 3 candidate countries) (Ostrowska):

Size of dwellings: while in the EU 15 countries the average is almost 2 rooms per head, it is hardly above 1 room in the Central and Eastern European countries, with well under this in the lowest income group (0,75 room/head).

Bad quality dwellings: the percentage of dwellings without an indoor toilet is about 1% in the EU 15 countries, reaching 10% in the new member states, and slightly above 20% in the 3 candidate countries. The proportion of dwellings with damp and leaks is about 10% in the EU 15 countries, between 20-25% in the new member states and 30% in the 3 candidate countries.

Affordability of housing maintenance: the affordability of heating costs was chosen as the indicator of this. In the EU 15 countries less than 10% of the households said that they cannot afford paying for the heating of the dwelling, it was more than 20% in the new member states and almost 50% in the candidate countries.

⁴ The representative survey was carried out by the European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions, in 2003, on sample size around 26,000. The total number of respondents was around 21,000.

III.3. Hungarian examples

This chapter presents some examples of the surveys taken in Hungary, in order to present how, through what questions and analyses forms of hidden homelessness and housing exclusion can be demonstrated. The studies presented include general surveys (census, housing survey) and targeted ones. The latter were taken to assess the magnitude of specific, actual problems concerning tenants with arrears in public housing, roma ghettos, and the issue of a district in a big city on the way to segregation.

III.3.1 Surveys of a general kind

Hungarian Census

The Hungarian census questionnaire includes a relatively broad range of questions concerning both homes and households. On basis of these questions the age of the apartment can be established, they reveal the type of building, its size, number of rooms and its comfort level, as well as the existence of public utilities. The questionnaire also ascertains if the housing unit surveyed can be considered as a conventional dwelling or it was originally built for a different purpose. In terms of the households in the unit it establishes their number, the households' legal status in the housing unit, and the family relationship between those living together. On the other hand, though, the processing method applied for census data ensures estimated figures only, due to, for example, overlapping between certain categories.

There was an attempt to estimate the size of homeless groups based on census data from 2001. (See relevant study in the Appendix I, Gyóri). A summary of this experiment is as follows.

To measure various degrees of housing hardship, the study established a category system, in which the most extreme form of exclusion is being roofless; the next categories are increasingly broader, including less severe forms of housing hardship. The broader categories always include the previous, smaller categories (thus the smaller categories are the subgroups of the broader ones)! The system, therefore, consists of the following categories: roofless, literal homeless, people without flat, people without home. Based on the figures cited above, and having tried to eliminate overlapping, the following conservative estimates were made for each category (the estimate does not include the roofless (rough sleepers), as they were not involved in the census):

- the number of the literal homeless is at least *25,000*: this figure partly contains those in homeless shelters, in institutions and other, „non-family member” co-habitants,
- the group of people without flat consists of at least *1.6 million people, 500,000 households*: apart from the effective homeless, this category includes those that do not have homes of their own, but have their own families and households,
- the group of people without home: at least *3 million people, 1 million household*: this broadest category includes the houseless and those that have a home of their own, but its physical state and/or its being too crowded renders it unsuited to meet basic needs.

Hungarian housing survey

Hungary's Central Statistics Office (KSH) has conducted two independent national surveys so far, one in 1999 and the second in 2003, which are largely comparable, and as such, suited to measure tendencies. The survey basically focused on obtaining information in three areas:

- satisfaction with housing, plans to mobility,
- quality of the housing stock, survey of related development,
- assessment of tendencies of the housing market and of mobility.

During the period between the two surveys the quality and occupancy indicators of units continuously improved, resulting in 7.7 percent of crowded units (which representing 290,000 housing units, home to a total of 1.3 million people) and 14 percent of substandard units (530,000 units in absolute terms) in the total inhabited housing stock. However in subjective terms, almost one third of the households was dissatisfied with their housing situation, mainly because of the bad physical condition of their dwelling, but the high maintenance costs and the small size of the unit also played significant role.

The survey also enabled the researches to make affordability analyses. Affordability problem related to housing maintenance especially hit the lower income groups, totally more than one third of the households had to spend more than a quarter of their income to cover housing expenditures, in 2003. Regarding the access to housing, the small rental sector (6,5% in the total housing stock) offers housing option only for few people. Because of the very high rent level in the private rental sector, which amounts to more than four times of the public sector rent, generally this segment is occupied by higher income groups.

The survey provides important conclusions for housing market tendencies as well. As a consequence of the one-sided tenure structure, the majority of households are forced into housing purchase as sole option of acquiring own housing. That is why affordability of privately owned units, the financing structure behind purchasing property (availability of loans) and the efficiency of related subsidies are of primary importance. The affordability indexes of acquiring housing worsened considerably between the surveys, it increased from 3,7 to 6,1 in terms of house price to yearly households income ratio. The housing purchases were still financed from the households' own resources, loans had rather marginal role. Regarding low income groups, their access to housing loans and to related subsidies (interest rate and downpayment subsidies) were very limited, which contributed to their unfavourable position on the housing market. (Farkas et al.) On the basis of the housing survey further affordability analyses were made related to access to housing loans and risk analysis concerning arrears with housing expenditures (See Appendix II.).

III. 3. 2. Targeted surveys

Counting of the roofless

A rough sleepers counting was implemented this year in the framework of a research initiative 1999, in which a survey of homeless people is conducted in Budapest on February 3 each year; the objective of the survey is to provide a census of rough sleepers and people living in homeless institutions (shelters, hostels, day-time

facilities). This year an extensive operation was conducted to achieve a most complete possible census with the aim to reveal the hidden groups of the roofless. The census involved nine cities apart from the capital.

Regarding Budapest, residents and voluntary organisations were involved in the homeless census. The registration of rough sleepers was performed only through personal inspection. The city was divided into 134 districts, of which only 48 districts could be surveyed. Based on the results of rough sleepers' counting and the homeless providing system survey, the following estimates were made: on an average winter night in Budapest

- there are nearly 3,000 rough sleepers
- a further 1,800 sleep at homeless shelters
- 2,800 people live in hostels providing temporary accommodation

Budapest has a total of 8,000 homeless people on an average winter night. (Győri)

Roma colony counting

There was an attempt to count roma colonies throughout the country in 1997. There was a need for this, since the negative consequences of the transition affected the roma population to a greater extent. Their living conditions have deteriorated rapidly together with their housing conditions: a major part of the roma population lives in dwellings of far below average quality, under unhealthier, more crowded circumstances, the proportion of the households in arrears, the lack of legal title for occupancy, the squatters are considerably higher in the roma population than the average. However the literally homelessness among romas is a more rare phenomenon than it could be expected, mainly due to their traditionally strong community links.

The survey consisted of a questionnaire, which was completed by the local municipalities. The survey considered colony as an area inside a settlement where at least four houses had lower level of comfort and quality, with a higher level of crowdedness and unhealthier location than their neighbourhood. The research found 538 colonies in 404 settlements (out of totally 3168 local municipalities of Hungary), where a hundred thousand people lived amounting to about 20% of the roma population. The main problems were the lack of the indoor water supply and surfaced road, almost half (40%) of the colonies lacked such facilities. Some colonies suffered from serious environmental disadvantages. (Ministry of Environment and Regional Development)

Arrears-survey among tenants in a Budapest district

As a result of mass housing privatisation, the public rental sector is a so-called residual sector in Hungary, with high rate of low-income, vulnerable groups and of low-quality, often substandard dwellings. A representative survey was conducted among public tenants in one of the Budapest districts, where the vast majority of the units were located in big housing estates with high housing expenditures. The survey aimed to assess the size of the affordability problem. The research also provided a basis for the transformation of the local housing maintenance and debt management system.

The research proved the vulnerability of public tenants, which was manifested in high inactivity and unemployment rate, the generally low-income level and unfavourable composition of households. In the survey one third of the households admit some kind

of arrears. The problem of arrears mostly concerned the lone-parent families, but also “traditional” families with more than one child, justifying the general tendency that households with children are more at the risk of poverty. The unemployed and persons with pension for disabled also were prone to getting into larger arrears, while those who had low-paid jobs usually accumulated only smaller debts. Most of the people with payment difficulties paid the housing expenditures according to their financial capacity, it was only one fifth of the debtors who absolutely stopped paying. (Erdósi jr. et al.)

Research on the lower segment of the housing market

There is an ongoing research in one of the most run down districts of Budapest (8th district) aiming to reveal the practices of the so-called „house mafia” and the activities in connection with usurious lending; their functional mechanisms, interrelationships and range of penetration. Under the term „house mafia activities” the research regards real estate frauds concerning private- or municipality-owned properties or private rentals with the purpose of acquiring the dwelling. Real estate fraud and usurious lending is partly interconnected: indebted households may become targets of real estate frauds (though not only due to their debts from usurious loans).

A part of the research is a questionnaire survey in the so called Magdolna quarter, which is one of the district’s and at the same time Budapest’s most severely segregating parts. The survey is related to the research hypothesis that one of the main targets of real estate frauds is the lowest segment of the housing sector and the vulnerable groups (due to their income situation, health condition, old age, addictions or other), which two factors are often joined, since the most vulnerable live in the worst dwellings. The aim of the questionnaire survey is to get a more detailed picture about how the lower segment of the housing sector works, what kind of a structure it actually has, what social-economic characteristics its households have. One of the main objectives of the survey is to map these households’ route of mobility in the housing market; what strategies and problems characterise them regarding the acquiring and maintenance of housing and what kinds of irregular household structures are formed as a result. Another important aspect of the research is to reveal the types of insecure housing, its reasons and dimensions.

IV. Policy

IV.1. Policy implications of broader homeless approaches

The hidden homelessness concept, the broad definition of homelessness reveals the relationship between the literally homeless and other groups of houseless people or those with housing hardships. It has helped to understand how people that are unable to obtain adequate and secure housing using their own resources, move in between various housing situations, what strategies they use to get a housing unit and what options they can chose from. Viewing literally homelessness in a broader context it has been revealed that it is not only personal causes that may lead to homelessness, but structural causes are also largely responsible for the emergence and reproduction of homelessness. Unsatisfactory functioning of the housing market and that of the housing systems, a lack of affordable housing, the ramifications of which housing subsidy systems are unable to handle effectively, are significant factors contributing to large groups becoming excluded from housing. At the same time, it is not only the

failure of the housing sector that results in homelessness. As the labour market changes, many will not find employment providing a regular and secure income, and restriction of the welfare systems as well as the deserving-undeserving approach gaining ground in the allocation of subsidies contribute to the social marginalisation of disadvantaged groups.

Homelessness, then, is more and more seen as a complex and multi-dimensional problem, resulted by a combination of housing and social exclusion processes (Avramov, Tosi.). Structural and personal factors combine and strengthen each other in exclusion processes. This is reflected in changing approaches in each country. For a long time in several Western European countries, personal problems and conflicts were considered as the sole cause behind homelessness, but structural causes have recently gained more focus. At the same time, in other countries (e.g. Germany, Finland) homelessness is one-sidedly thought to be the consequence of functional problems of the housing market and of there being too few options. That was the basis for an improved approach including the significance of personal and other, social aspects (Hertting et al).

The concept of hidden homelessness (as well as the broad definitions of homelessness and similar other concepts), and new information about the dynamism and cycles of homelessness generated new policy trends. Homeless policies have so far been focusing on rough sleepers and visible groups, groups that were somehow in contact with care providers. Policies were aimed at decreasing the number of those living in the street or to improve their conditions, primarily through emergency shelters and supplementary services. A broader approach suggested by hidden homelessness, however, triggered more comprehensive policies focusing on (1) prevention, (2) early intervention, and (3) complex reintegration programmes.

Professional circles, however, were not unanimously supportive of extending homeless policies over hidden homeless groups. Several experts pointed out that if all housing issues were termed as a homeless problem, there was a chance that homeless people in the strict sense of the word will not receive adequate support and assistance. The following quotes refer to this possibility:

„However, if almost any form of housing definition can be defined as homelessness, there is a danger that the unique distress and urgent needs of those people who are identified by narrow definition ... are lost and neglected.” (Hertting et al)

„Overcrowding, poor housing conditions and insecurity of tenure are all very important problems affecting hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people, but apart from their most extreme manifestations, they cannot be regarded as homelessness. Quite simply, being poorly housed is one thing, having nowhere at all to live is something else.” (Pleace et al, quoted by Fitzpatrick et al)

Communicating groups affected by all forms of housing exclusion as homeless to policy makers may involve another danger. People in hidden homeless groups is estimated to be between several hundred thousand, or even million in each country; even in the EU 15 countries the number of hidden homeless persons was more than ten times higher than the literally homeless. The issue is even graver in the new member states, a larger proportion of the population being affected by housing problems (chapter III.2). If all these millions of people are classified as homeless, it may even trigger political rejection. This possibility is also suggested by the fact that

official policies, though to a varying degree, will usually apply the narrow homeless definition.

That makes it important for the policy to define appropriate categories within the broad homeless definition, to which adequate policy instruments can be assigned. The issue of hidden homelessness can be resolved within a broader, comprehensive policy program, including a housing policy, employment and welfare policies, their coordination and their increased focus on the most vulnerable groups and on those regions on the way to segregation, where the problems surface in a geographically concentrated way.

Within the housing policy programmes are needed, which are able to handle the anomalies of the housing market, and ones that provide more options to people with modest means. Housing allowance systems, arrears management schemes connected with housing expenditures and housing loan payment seem to be top priorities of these programmes, irrespective of the form of tenancy. As social housing is globally shrinking, it is important that the proportion of affordable housing is increased both in the private rental and in the owner occupied sector. At the same time social housing needs to be made more available to homeless groups. These programmes will contribute to improving the housing security of low income groups and their chances to obtain a housing unit.

The number of sub-standard housing units can be decreased through upgrade or renovation programmes, or, on the other hand, through continuous demolition and by replacing them with new construction. In these programmes it is important that improvement of the housing stock should not be an exclusive priority, but the housing conditions of people living in sub-standard housing are also improved and further exclusion of these people from housing, as a result of a decrease in cheap housing, is avoided.

Programmes targeted at helping unemployment and easing poverty are instrumental in improving the housing situation of hidden homeless groups. At the same time, they have a dual benefit, as not only increased employment, or obtaining a better labour market position result in a better housing status, but better housing (higher quality, less crowded unit, secure dwelling) has also proved to result in higher working capacity and better performance. Employment or training programmes targeting people of poor education will ensure better positions in the labour market; these programmes need to be coupled with adequate welfare subsidies, to provide an incentive for obtaining better and longer lasting jobs, while creating an affordable and secure housing situation for the long term will provide a background to permanent employment.

Experience has shown that welfare systems need to be reviewed, in terms of groups that are excluded from or receive insufficient subsidies. More efficient focusing of welfare subsidies will also help improve the situation of the poorest.

Mention must be made of the importance of area-based programmes aimed at deteriorating, segregated neighbourhoods. Social urban rehabilitation is a complex programme, which aims at re-integrating an area and its inhabitants in urban society and economy. It simultaneously addresses improvement of the housing stock and of the housing environment, complex social issues (unemployment, poverty, insufficient public safety, bad health status of the population), boosting the local economy as well as rebuilding the local community.

At the same time comprehensive policies need to find answers to more individual causes leading to homelessness. Of course, these causes cannot be clearly separated from each other, since they are interrelated and one may be the consequence of another. Still, from an analytical and a policy aspect, an attempt to separate them may prove to be practical (Fitzpatrick et al). The most frequent individual causes are family and relationship breakdowns, physical and emotional abuse, alcohol and drug misuse, release from institutions (orphanage, hospital, penitentiary, etc.), mental illness and other health problems, social isolation. More and more programmes of both prevention and reintegration are being developed for these problems. The programmes focus on individual case management, which, since these problems surface in a cumulative way, means a complex service of social and healthcare components, which necessitates further development of each service and coordination between sectors and services. As the profile of homelessness changes, more and more young people and primarily those with low education becoming homeless, the policies lay a special emphasis on programmes targeting young people, and focusing on the management of family crises, violence within the family, drug addiction and other problems arising from a lack of education.

IV.2. Actual examples of broader homeless policy

The next section will present some examples of the broad interpretation of homelessness in actual policies or policy proposals. We did not venture to systematically review homeless policies or their changes, our goal being presentation of some actual cases of information revealed through the hidden homelessness concept having an impact on the generation of integrated policy guidelines.

1. The already mentioned British Crisis organisation elaborated a policy proposal to address the problem of hidden homelessness. The primary focus of the policy was to improve the situation of the single homeless, as they constitute the larger part of hidden groups. As a first step, the policy paper recommends a hidden homeless census, which would gauge the magnitude of the problem, and the situation of affected people. It also deems it necessary that in the allocation process of allowances and certain benefits the same criteria be applied to vulnerable singles as to families with children. It would perhaps be most important to reform the Housing Benefit, both in terms of its size and of eligibility criteria. Talking about housing benefits, it underlines the necessity of a National Rent Deposit Scheme, which would make it easier to obtain a housing unit in the private rental sector (ensuring a security deposit required to enter tenancy or for a rent advance), and would facilitate access to social housing for disadvantaged single people. Proposals include design and construction of new models of affordable housing for the single homeless, and setting up a national advisory and support programme to enable the would-be homeless retain their tenancies. It also includes employment and healthcare programmes to improve healthcare services for homeless groups, with special regards to mental, as well as alcohol and drug related problems. (Crisis, 2004)
2. The summary of the London homeless policy outlines major trends in the new policy. It includes monitoring and coordination of agreements relating temporary accommodation, setting up a grading system for B&B, and development of an on-line system improving homeless access to services, and facilitates tracking of cases and setting up a aggregate data-base concerning the homeless. It also targets the

improvement of temporary housing for asylum seekers. Research for preventive purposes was initiated to reveal characteristics of hidden homeless groups, related risks and experience with housing advice service (they work with concealed households identified in the London Housing Survey). To coordinate housing advice services, a consistent pan-London strategy was developed so that services could be provided in a complementary and efficient way. The overall evaluation of services is positive in the study, seen as a cost effective instrument to make the housing market more efficient and to safeguard individual rights. Extending various forms of move-on accommodation as a permanent or temporary solution to people discharged from hostels or institutions (hospital, prison) is also included in the program; to this end the study deems it necessary to survey the demand and reveal the problems of the current system. (GLA)

3. The Australian National Homeless Strategy was organised around prevention, early intervention and improving the social safety net. The objective of the strategy is to develop a new, integrated approach, focusing on a social coalition involving the government, business and community organisations in a consistent system. With a stress on the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness, on integrating various services and on coordination between sectors, the strategy finds cooperation instrumental in efficient case management. As part of the welfare reform, income support is increased for those in need, in conjunction with a rent assistance programme, assisting people renting units in the private rental market and receiving income support at the same time.

In order to build stronger communities, those church, community and charity organisations are promoted that aim to assist people in a critical situation. For family assistance, support is provided to manage transitional situations, and the family relationship service has been extended to avoid crises related to family breakdowns. Young people are targeted by special prevention and reintegration programmes. These schemes include a series of services enhancing family reconciliation for young people as well as management of problems at the time of a young adult's becoming independent from his family.

Homeless people are also a target group of the government's new housing programme. One of its top priorities is increasing the public and community housing sector, to be achieved by new diverse and innovative forms of housing, as well as combining the housing programme with other schemes. Programmes in the strategy also focus on creating new jobs and management of the problems of other vulnerable groups (victims of abuse, mentally ill). (Australian Government)

4. The study entitled "Poverty, social exclusion and homelessness in Austria" claims that homelessness can be efficiently managed if intervention is ensured at different levels. This requires coordination between social, family housing policies. In terms of prevention, it should be avoided that people lose their homes; in order to avoid evictions, debt management and legal advisory programmes need to be promoted. For the permanently homeless it is important to provide adequate shelter and services, as well as efficient advice and care. Reintegration programmes should help homeless people find their way back to the community; it is not enough to reintegrate them back to the housing sector, a long term care must be provided to those that need to recapture the ability to live in a home and to establish social ties. (Mülleder)

5 . Feantsa has also stressed that elimination or mitigation of the homeless issue requires reinforced housing policies. The organisation sent a special policy statement

to the EU calling for inclusion of housing aspects in its anti-poverty and social cohesion policies. As it is well known, housing policy is not incorporated in EU policies, however, the policy statement points out, that the fight against poverty and social exclusion cannot be successful without efficient housing policies.

The policy statement also points out that homelessness is not exclusively the result of individual social problems; inadequate housing policies greatly contribute to homelessness and they pose a significant obstacle in the reintegration of the homeless.

The EU must work to increase the social role of housing policies in each country, and to provide increased focus in housing policies on the most excluded groups. Decisions of the European Union in themselves can contribute to the efficiency of social housing policies, through for example VAT regulations, if the housing for the most excluded is in a lower VAT bracket. It is also suggested that Structural Funds should provide financing for housing projects targeting groups at the bottom of housing exclusion. It is all the more so, as the purpose of Structural Funds is to develop social and economic cohesion, which is not possible without eliminating extreme poverty, and as the Funds' top priorities include management of urban problems, homelessness being a mostly urban phenomenon.

The EU Charter Fundamental Rights includes a right to housing assistance as an instrument in fighting social exclusion and poverty. It is not clear, however, what housing assistance should cover exactly. It is suggested, therefore, that it is surveyed what measures each country has taken within the context of housing assistance. (Feantsa)

As the examples illustrate as well, there has been a significant pressure on official policies recently to handle the homeless phenomenon in the broader context of the problem. The new policy attitude, presently existing mainly in recommendations more than in actual programmes, urges the increase of affordable housing, the treatment of the anomalies of the housing market and the strengthening of the social safety net.

V. Summary

As it was shown in this paper the concept of hidden homelessness, the perception of visible and non-visible homeless groups has revealed important information about the nature and cycle of homelessness. As a consequence, it seems there is consensus among researchers, organizations dealing with homelessness on the need for broadening the definition of homelessness to include less visible groups of homeless as well. Though, it is controversial whether all forms of housing hardships should be included in the concept. Some experts argue that inadequate housing situation such as substandard and overcrowded housing should be excluded from the concept of homelessness despite admitting that they are severe problems, which should be addressed by housing and social policies. While others argue that both the homelessness and inadequate housing situations are partly the consequence of the same negative changes in the economy and welfare systems resulting in social and housing exclusion, therefore a broadest homeless concept should be adopted.

Reflecting to this dispute - without deciding on the conceptual issues, instead rather taking a practical point of view – we have argued that the demonstration of all groups without adequate housing, often representing millions by countries, can be effective

only if each category and related problems are clearly defined and sufficient policy tasks to tackle these problems are also assigned. In this way the often referred danger that the need of people in most severe situation, the literal homeless would be neglected with the broadening of homeless policies, also can be avoided. The narrower homeless policies, with a complex approach, should aim the literally homeless groups and those who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. While the broader policies should be targeted the vulnerable groups experiencing social and housing hardship.

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