



Action for Inclusion in Europe City Working Groups

Research Paper 4

Lessons Learned Report:
Homelessness and
Destitution amongst
Excluded Migrants

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1. Introduction:

Action for Inclusion in Europe is a project led by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity (GEM) at the University of Oxford in partnership with 16 European cities.¹ The project aims to secure tangible reforms in city practices across Europe that address the exclusion of marginal communities from services and civic life, and facilitate a mutually positive sense of local belonging, via action-oriented learning exchange. Three thematic areas were focused on during the project in three separate working groups: *Cohesion and Belonging*, *Parental Engagement in Schools*, and *Homelessness and Destitution amongst Excluded Migrants*. This report summarises the lessons learnt during the course of the project in the *Homelessness and Destitution amongst Excluded Migrants* working group.

In each of the working groups, senior city officials were brought together over a period of ten months to develop high-level strategic thinking on social policies, learn from research evidence and the experiences of other cities, and deliver improvements in services. Three meetings of the *Homelessness and Destitution amongst Excluded Migrants* working group took place in Dublin, the London Borough of Islington and Vienna, where working group participants shared good practice on the thematic areas, identified problems that required solving and potential solutions to those problems, and discussed ways of overcoming challenges in the implementation of solutions.

Each city was required to develop an action plan for securing tangible reforms, and as part of this process, consider the research evidence, and consult and engage civil society actors (including existing and new NGO partners), based on the principle that policies and practice are informed by the views of local residents and civil society actors, and by research evidence around what is most effective. Each city identified the actions they wanted to take forward, in light of the particular problems being faced in their city, within the overall theme of the working group. The result has been five different projects, addressing a range of problems in the area of migrant homelessness and destitution, with many achievements and valuable lessons to share. Each action plan presented a number of ideas and solutions to the identified problems, and these were developed and tested, and amended where necessary. Each city has documented their progress and produced a report, summarising their experiences, achievements and challenges, aiming to provide a number of lessons that can facilitate change in other cities across Europe experiencing similar problems.

This paper has a similar aim and highlights the key themes and lessons learnt from across the cities in this working group. The paper focuses in particular on the considerations that cities should find useful in seeking to reform city practices in the area of migrant homelessness, along with some of the common challenges to implementation that cities should be mindful of in the process of bringing about change.

¹ Aarhus, Antwerp, Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Dublin, Ghent, Gijón, Glasgow, Hamburg, Helsinki, London Borough of Islington, Rotterdam, Tampere, Turin, Utrecht, Vienna

2. The selection of cities

Cities across Europe were invited to submit an expression of interest to participate in the project in January 2015, via the Eurocities and Cities of Migration networks. Five cities were selected to participate in each of the three working groups. As part of the process of selecting cities, a number of factors were taken into consideration, including that cities had experience to offer and something to learn in one of the three thematic areas; that they shared the objective of engaging civil society actors in developing solutions and have a willingness to incorporate learning into new initiatives; that participating officials have policymaking responsibilities and influence within the city; and a commitment to championing the project locally, regionally and nationally to ensure on-going impact. A broad geographical spread was sought in the final selection of cities.

On this basis, the following cities, representatives and practices were chosen:

Dublin, Ireland

Participant: Dáithí Downey, Deputy Director, Head of Policy and Service Delivery, Dublin Region Homeless Executive

City background: Dublin City has a population of 527,612, with almost 1.3m in the larger county Dublin area, of which 15.7% are non-Irish nationals. Dublin's housing and homelessness crisis, which is related closely to the recent period of economic crisis in Ireland, includes a large migration element. The council has responded with a strategic, housing-led approach incorporating a range of innovative practices, such as the re-use of empty/void properties, establishing a dedicated programme for habitual rough sleepers with multiple needs such as substance misuse and mental health issues, and altering service allocation priorities.

Action plan: Finding routes into employment for the 'multiply-excluded homeless' is the basis of Dublin's action plan. It includes an audit of data available to the council to build evidence on multiply-excluded homeless migrants in the city, including the extent and experiences of MEH amongst Dublin's migrant population. Secondly, the action plan involves the establishment of a working group for MEH migrants in the Dublin region to generate proposals for a new, dedicated training programme, which will be for homeless service providers to support MEH migrants into the labour market. This programme will be informed by evidence collated during the project around interventions that can help improve labour market activation and participation among MEH migrants and will aim to improve understanding of MEH and diversity awareness among homeless service providers. This objective will be included in the Dublin Integration Action Plan 2016-2020 and the group will involve representation from the central government Department of Social Protection. The idea is for a change of focus from exclusion to and establishing a broader understanding of policy challenges at play.

Gijón, Spain

Participant: Pilar del Amo Morán, Manager, Social Services Foundation, Gijón City Council

City background: Gijón has a population of 278,294 of which 15,446 are migrants from over 130 different countries. The city has an unemployment rate of 24%, with 20% of the city's residents receiving services from the social services foundation. The recession in Spain and austerity measures in public services have impacted municipalities and their residents in such a way that adjustment and innovative practice has been a crucial mechanism for addressing social problems. As part of its integration strategy for migrants, Gijón has established an information hub for migrants servicing a range of welfare and labour market information needs, including legal advice for regularisation of immigration status. The municipality commissions the 'Active Inclusion Network', bringing together agencies and NGOs from across the city working with homeless people to develop services strategically in order to meet a diverse set of needs. It is also part of the 'Network for Active Inclusion' project, which seeks to address the needs of multiply excluded homeless people. Additionally, the city works with NGOs to provide supported accommodation to homeless migrants in order to reintegrate them back into labour markets with dedicated and expert interventions.

Action plan: Gijón's action plan involves the development of a Housing First model of homelessness provision for the first time in the city. Flats will be provided for people with special difficulties, and they will be required to engage in training. Entitlement for the housing will be for both migrants and other local residents in need, with NGOs making referrals into the project, and with direct links to floating support for residents.

London Borough of Islington, United Kingdom

Participant: Henry St Clair Miller, Manager of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team and UK national NRPF Network, Islington Council

City background: Islington is one of 32 London Boroughs and has a population of just over 200,000, 36% of which were born outside of the UK. Henry manages the council's No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) team, which provides services to homeless migrants under social services duties. He also manages the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Network, a national organisation working with local authorities across the UK on the strategic and policy issues relating to homeless migrants. Islington Council is the leading local authority in the UK on these issues, pioneering innovative practice and having significant influence on policy and practice across the UK.

Action plan: As part of its action plan, Islington is seeking to develop and adopt a council-wide approach to migration, achieving a tangible shift in outlook by demonstrating how a humane approach to excluded migrants can be compatible with local authority priorities on achieving cost-savings, reducing homelessness and achieving 'fairness' for all residents, regardless of immigration status. Further, it is seeking to engage with the homelessness agenda on migration issues at a national level to increase the reach of the NRPF Network; establish a contract with a local law centre to follow good practice in case resolution in light of legal aid cuts; and develop an online tool for local authorities and advocates in the NGO sector to navigate the complex welfare legislation and ensure service users are able to access services when eligible. One further aim is to engage with Labour Party as they review policy on immigration.

Utrecht, The Netherlands

Participant: Jan Braat, Senior Policy Advisor, Utrecht City Council

City background: With more than 330,000 residents, Utrecht is the Netherlands' fourth largest city. 38% of the city's residents have a migrant background. Utrecht is a leading local authority in the Netherlands on the issue of homelessness amongst migrants, and Jan is an active member of the Eurocities working group on migration and Chair of its subgroup on undocumented migration. The city addresses issues facing a broad range of migrants, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children, people who have been trafficked and undocumented families with dependent children. The city has developed innovative local policies in the context of a restrictive national framework, and is committed to adopting international human rights principles in its policies and practice. To this end, the city partnered with NGO Defense for Children International to submit a complaint under the collective complaints mechanism of the European Social Charter on emergency support for destitute migrants. Their complaint was successful and has since influenced national policy in relation to the funding mechanism for these services. Further innovative practice in the city includes dedicated Polish street outreach workers, an award winning programme for unaccompanied children turning 18 and strong links with local mental health projects.

Action plan: Utrecht's action plan focuses on the improving the process of decision-making in the allocation of shelter to undocumented migrants, establishing an agreement with national government on the provision of food, shelter and clothes for refused asylum seekers, and developing a business case for a new local model to support the reception, housing and integration of refugees, which aims to kick-start the integration process from the outset rather than waiting until refugees obtain their official status.

Vienna, Austria

Participant: Michael Langwiesner, Policy Officer, Vienna Social Fund

City background: Vienna has a population of 1.78 million and 40.7% of its residents are from a migrant background. The Fonds Soziales Wien (Vienna Social Fund), Department of Supported Housing, coordinates, leads and monitors services for homeless people on behalf of the City of Vienna. The Social Fund provides the full range of housing-related services to residents with a diverse range of housing needs. Homelessness amongst migrants is a major issue for the city and its services have responded accordingly, whilst being constrained by national policies in this area. In winter, the city has provided additional night shelter spaces for excluded migrants, increased capacity in its street outreach teams and in its counselling centre for mobile EU citizens. Furthermore, the city has a year-round dedicated housing project for mobile EU citizens who have health problems and a framework for the provision of housing services to refugees to prevent homelessness on being granted status.

Action plan: Vienna's action plan seeks to develop an entirely new approach to working with destitute migrants, by improving the counselling services delivered in the city, developing language courses for service users and training courses for professionals, putting together a

communications strategy for its work with homeless mobile EU citizens; developing innovative front-line services for chronically homeless mobile EU citizens, including a labour market programme to aid integration; and the provision of housing to chronically homeless EU citizens with a long, undocumented residence in Vienna and who are unlikely to return.

3. What we learnt from the research

The academic and grey literature on migrant homelessness and destitution provides a range of evidence on the causes of homelessness and destitution amongst excluded migrants, the groups who are affected and the challenges for cities in addressing these problems.

The literature seeks to define both homelessness and destitution, and introduces some useful concepts to understand and analyse the phenomena, providing a tool for understanding a range of homelessness and housing circumstances in addition to the financial and material consequences of being excluded from welfare services and labour markets. It has been argued that having an operational and conceptual definition of homelessness is important for getting the problem on the political agenda, identifying the nature and extent of the problems that require solving and for monitoring progress with these solutions (Amore *et al*, 2011; Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010). There are many challenges in establishing a definition of homelessness that is meaningful in different national contexts due to localised sets of policy circumstances. FEANTSA (The European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless), a pan-European NGO working to combat homelessness, and the European Observatory on Homelessness, developed a European Typology of Homelessness and Social Exclusion (ETHOS) that has currency in policy circles and is cited widely across Europe (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). It is a broad definition with four categories that span more to less acute homelessness experiences. They are: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. This results in a range of homeless and housing situations being incorporated within the definition, such as people living rough or in night shelters, those due to be released from institutions, people under threat of eviction or violence and those in unfit or overcrowded conditions.

Multiple exclusion homelessness (MEH) is another useful term to describe incidence of homelessness for people experiencing 'deep social exclusion' with distinct routes into homelessness and requiring special considerations regarding solutions to their problems. Deep social exclusion may arise as a result of having experienced institutional care (prison, local authority care, mental health wards) substance misuse and street culture activities (begging, street drinking, sex work, shoplifting) (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2012).

Destitution is a term used widely in the literature on migrants living in poverty and with limited access to services. It is defined in many reports, encompassing a homelessness element and incorporating a financial or material domain; in other words, those without the means to obtain basic material goods. Some go further to argue that the term describes those who are in a position of social exclusion; have limited financial, social and human capital; are subjects of processes that sustain disadvantage; and do not have control over their own lives (Regioplan Policy Research, 2014; Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 200; JRS, 2010).

A body of evidence developed since the 1990s explains the causes of homelessness as resulting from certain structural conditions, weak welfare systems and labour markets in particular, triggered by adverse life events such as eviction or relationship breakdown. Chronic or episodic homelessness is more likely to be caused by deep social exclusion, including drug/alcohol or health problems. Whilst some migrants share such individual problems, the situation for migrants is distinct on a structural level, as there are additional factors precluding access to welfare services and labour markets, making them more vulnerable to homelessness and destitution, should they experience adverse life events.

Structural factors that cause homelessness are deeply embedded in broad social and economic structures, including firstly, a shortage of housing and poor housing affordability; secondly, weak labour market conditions and unemployment; thirdly, poor welfare and social services provision; and fourthly, problems accessing housing and discriminatory practices of statutory authorities or private landlords (affecting certain groups who are thought to be risky tenants, for instance) (Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010; Edgar *et al*, 2004). For migrants, a number of additional structural factors are identified in the literature that cause homelessness and destitution. They include formal exclusions to welfare and housing services, and to labour markets, which are codified in immigration, housing, welfare and/or employment legislation.

Structural explanations provide a useful account of the social and economic conditions that can make people vulnerable to homelessness and destitution, but they fail to explain why, as a result, some people become homeless and others do not. As such, factors relating to individual circumstances are also key to understanding the causes of homelessness and destitution. There is evidence to suggest that the majority of homelessness is triggered by two 'adverse life events': relationship breakdown and eviction. Those recently released from prison and those who have recently lost their jobs are also particularly vulnerable to homelessness (Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010). Whilst these adverse life events may only cause homelessness on a temporary basis and may require simple interventions, the literature identifies a sub-group within the population of homeless people who are more likely to experience entrenched or episodic homelessness. Such experiences are strongly linked with certain forms of 'deep social exclusion' such as substance abuse, experience of institutional care (prisons, local authority care, mental health wards) or 'street culture activities' (begging, sex work) (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2012). Some migrants may also have experienced deep social exclusion, however additional individual factors may also help to explain homelessness, including those that create barriers to accessing services: poor language skills, inability to negotiate unfamiliar systems, and low levels of skills or employability (Regioplan Policy Research, 2014; Mostowska, 2014).

Homeless people can be grouped by welfare need, helping us to understand routes in and out of homelessness. Some have deeper social needs that are likely to cause entrenched homelessness, whereas others will experience adverse life events that cause homelessness in the short term but can be relatively easily resolved. Migrants are a distinct sub-group within the population of homeless people. However, they are not a homogenous group, having various routes in and out of homelessness.

Research in the US has divided the homeless population into those experiencing chronic, episodic or transitional homelessness (Culhane and Metraux, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008), which provides a useful way to understand the temporal nature of homelessness as well as the routes out of homelessness that may be effective for particular sub-groups of homeless people. These broadly correspond with particular welfare needs, such that those experiencing problems of 'deep social exclusion' are more likely to be chronically or episodically homeless, whilst those experiencing adverse life events such as eviction or relationship breakdown are more likely to be transitionally homeless. The evidence suggests that the majority of homelessness is transitional. Whilst all homeless people need access to affordable, decent housing what differentiates them is their support needs, transitionally homeless people requiring labour market or financial solutions and chronically/episodically homeless people requiring more specialised social/health support (Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010).

Research comparing experiences of homelessness between settled populations and migrants in the UK found that pathways into homelessness were more likely to have structural causes for migrants and they were less likely to have experienced 'deep social exclusion' as a result of institutional care, troubled childhoods, substance misuse or street culture activities than UK nationals. Migrants were more likely to have slept rough and to have experienced destitution and serious material deprivation. Where migrants experienced multiple exclusion homelessness, their personal and social needs tended to develop after they had been in the UK for some time as they were not pre-existing problems (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2012).

Evidence relating to homeless and destitute migrants suggests that there are distinct routes in and out of homelessness for migrants with different immigration statuses, forming distinct sub-groups within the population of homeless migrants. These include asylum seekers, for whom it has been argued that poor housing conditions and a lack of sufficient financial allowances to cover basic needs are provided in a number of EU states under restrictively interpreted reception standards; although strategic litigation in Germany and the UK has been successful in raising minimum levels of support to asylum seekers (ECRE, 2005; Bales, 2015; Price and Spencer, 2014). Destitution amongst refused asylum seekers has received some attention, mainly in small, city-level NGO reports, highlighting the removal of statutory support for those whose asylum claims are unsuccessful and their refusal to accept voluntary return, as well as difficulties collecting data on this hidden group (Prior, 2006; Restore of Birmingham Churches Together and the Church Urban Fund 2005; Woodcock, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006). Homelessness and destitution amongst migrants with irregular status has received less attention in the literature, although studies have found that those with irregular status receive little or no mainstream welfare support and may be subject to removal should they seek to access it (Price and Spencer, 2014). Those newly granted refugee status, although rarely excluded from welfare services or labour markets, often experience difficulties transitioning from centrally provided to locally provided housing support (Allsopp *et al*, 2015).

The biggest challenge for cities at present is meeting needs within communities in a context of fiscal constraints and as demand grows due to ageing populations with diverse needs. Further constraints are imposed on cities' ability to respond to emerging needs amongst migrant

communities by centrally- or regionally-imposed immigration restrictions, requiring new solutions and with a more limited set of policy tools at their disposal.

The current funding environment for cities across Europe is a major challenge. Although budgetary pressures on local services is a recurring theme in the literature (Tunstall, 1997; Fargion, 2007), austerity measures affecting public sector bodies and their contractors in recent years have been unprecedented in their scale in some parts of Europe (ETUI, 2014). At the same time, demand for services from cities has increased both in terms of general social protection systems (housing services, unemployment and other benefits) and specialised social services (mental health, disabilities, homelessness etc.) whilst populations age and diversify (European Social Network, 2014). In a context of fiscal conservatism, cities and their 'street-level bureaucrats' (public servants fulfilling statutory powers and duties) face ethical dilemmas in delivering care and support, including where restrictive immigration legislation reduces their power to help migrants presenting in need. Some service providers, it has been empirically demonstrated, deliberately overlook formal restrictions in order to meet presenting needs, however this depends on their being given a certain degree of professional freedom (Van der Leun, 2006; Mostowska, 2014). Some research argues that in some European countries, such as Ireland and the UK, cities and their 'street-level bureaucrats' have less freedom due to centrally-imposed, prescriptive policies and legislation (Wilson, 2003; Mostowska, 2014).

Interventions by cities and their partner agencies addressing homelessness and destitution are affected by the welfare regime in which they operate, some providing more generous provisions than others, and as such requiring a greater proportion of specialised services (such as drug rehabilitation and mental health support) over and above more basic solutions, such as rent deposit schemes and temporary housing. A range of interventions are used by cities from prevention to the provision of temporary housing, to outreach and specialised support for particular sub-groups of the homeless population. Their interventions have been grouped into rights-based, staircase and housing-first approaches (although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Rights-based approaches in Europe, existing only in France and the UK, guarantee an individually enforceable right to housing (although restrictions relating to migrants may apply). Several NGOs including FEANTSA have argued for right-based approaches to be established across Europe, however there is some disagreement in the literature on whether this is the only approach that might work, as many countries that have seen reductions in homelessness do not have rights-based approaches (Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010). The 'staircase approach' involves stabilising homeless people in temporary accommodation with the help of targeted interventions, then moving them on to more independent housing when they are felt to be ready (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). As the effectiveness of staircase has been increasingly critiqued in the literature (Sahlin, 2005; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin 2007; Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005), European countries have begun to adopt housing-first models of more permanent housing provision from the outset with floating support. Housing first approaches require services to be flexible and based on individuals' needs, they need to be in an appropriate location and they need to bring together a range of specialised services to meet various needs. The need for a stock of more permanent

housing can be difficult in areas with problems of housing affordability and supply (Busch-Geertsema *et al*, 2010).

Alongside a move towards housing-first approaches has been a shift in the broader welfare systems towards enforcement and conditionality as a policy tool in the form of sanctions, threats or rewards (Dwyer and Scullion, 2014). Such policy responses focus on personal rather than structural change, requiring homeless people to behave in certain ways rather than the development of demand-side labour market policies or the expansion of broader welfare services (Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 2001). Sanctions are administered by service providers working according to strict criteria with limited room for manoeuvre. Whilst in the UK, enforcement approaches have been argued to have reduced rough sleeping, research has also questioned whether such approaches promote the long-term welfare of homeless people (Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005).

The development of specialised, segmented services addressing the particular needs of sub-groups of the homeless population includes the emergence of targeted interventions for homeless and destitute migrants, for whom fewer policy tools are available (through the provision of mainstream welfare provisions or employment, for instance). It has been argued that resolving homelessness amongst migrants requires bespoke solutions, which can't necessarily be left to traditional homelessness organisations. Their needs are more likely to be around practical support, help into the labour market and help finding interim support in a context of welfare exclusions or immigration advice, rather than traditional models of support designed for those with problems of deep social exclusion but with the safety net provided by welfare benefits and housing/homelessness support (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2012).

4. Lessons learnt about the topic through the process

A number of common themes emerged as cities developed and implemented their action plans which provide useful guidance to cities across Europe who are seeking to resolve migrant homelessness and destitution in their area.

Joining up with different policy agendas

- Migrant homelessness can be a sensitive, controversial topic. It is also niche and can fall between the gaps of different areas of responsibility: for instance, migration, health, homelessness/housing and social services. It cannot, however, be isolated from the broader policy and financial challenges of cities. In order to raise migrant homelessness on the agendas of existing services, departments or agencies, it has proven useful to make new allies and create partnerships across overlapping agendas, which brought new actors on board. Examples include seeking to address migrant homelessness as an integration issue, a 'fairness' issue and as a child safeguarding issue. This also provides an opportunity to approach migrant destitution not as a 'migration problem' but as a 'homelessness' or 'integration problem.' This approach facilitates practical solutions by involving a range of

actors and eschews the dangers of an over-reliance on return to resolve homelessness at local levels.

- This worked well in **Dublin** where migrant homelessness was put on the agenda via a council-wide integration strategy. **Islington's** Council Board has adopted a council-wide approach to migration, which outlines how solutions to migrant homelessness in the borough are compatible with the council's 'fairness' agenda.

Durable, rather than emergency responses

- As suggested in the research evidence, restrictive national legal frameworks often mean that cities are unable to apply traditional solutions (such as welfare and employment support) to resolve homelessness and destitution amongst migrants. Hence, there is an overreliance on emergency services. However, there was recognition from the outset amongst the group that a shift was required away from emergency responses to more durable solutions, based on the evidence of what works. It also requires building an understanding within cities that migration can be long-term and that long-term solutions can be required, and in the absence of much data on durable solutions to migrant homelessness building an evidence base to support interventions.
- In **Vienna**, a clear shift was achieved in the overall approach to migrant homelessness in the city from an overreliance on emergency shelters to one focusing on reintegration into housing and labour markets. In **Dublin**, the action plan involved collecting evidence on successful labour market interventions with multiply-excluded migrants, to add to the body of evidence around what works for longer-term labour market integration.

Articulating a convincing and authoritative narrative

- A major concern for cities was the potential for attracting negative public attention to their activities, both from residents and the media. There is a need to address potential concerns, in order to be able to implement services without creating too much turbulence. This requires, firstly, being open to the possibility of talking publicly as a city with confidence about how it is resolving problems, and having a consistent narrative across the city from senior to officer levels. Given that migrant homelessness can be a sensitive and controversial issue, a convincing narrative can centre around a problem solving approach that prioritises keeping people from harm, cost-saving, poverty reduction, and child and adult safeguarding, for instance. The narrative should emphasise the evidence base that has informed the city's approach. Secondly, cities found that providing solutions to a range of residents, including migrants, was a way to encourage broad support for their activities and allay fears that the solutions were exclusive or preferential.
- Each city in the group has developed a set of solutions for the problem of migrant homelessness, which demonstrated that they were doing something constructive and based on evidence of what works. A key lesson from **Utrecht** was not to hide from the media but to be prepared for engaging and to explain what cities are doing in a way that builds public support for it e.g. through the presentation of evidence. Utrecht's 'human rights approach' was a label councillors were happy with and had a political rationale that

strengthened their hand in relation to the public and central government. The housing solutions for migrants proposed by the city included a co-housing model with students and low-income young people in housing need. Also, in **Gijón**, its new ‘housing first’ initiative is for both migrants and settled residents with no immigration-based eligibility criteria.

The power of evidence

- Across the cities in the working group, data was being collated and analysed to create a body of evidence to inform activities proposed in the action plans. Evidence has instrumental power, telling cities what they need to know and it gives them leverage when arguing a case. Evidence is important for determining which interventions are successful and which are not, for demonstrating the need for services and for planning those services, and for advocacy with central government. It is also important to frame the evidence to build an argument that is authoritative and also palatable for different interest groups, for instance, framing evidence to support financial arguments or human rights arguments.
- Researchers and data analysts play a central role in **Dublin** City Council’s Homeless Executive and their approach in this project has been to support policy development through developing an evidence base around interventions that work with MEH migrants. In **Islington**, the development of a national database of local authority supported migrants has given them leverage when presenting their policy position vis-à-vis central government.

Partnership working with NGOs

- NGOs play a key role in the development and delivery of services to homeless migrants. The nature of the relationship differs from city to city, and it is not always as friendly, cooperative and effective as cities might like. Working group members, however, were very open to working with NGOs and saw the convergence of NGO and city interests as a key driver for change. For example, there are certain things cities cannot be seen to be saying or doing, and they therefore need to work with independent NGOs to raise particular issues and provide particular services. NGOs are less constrained by restrictive policies, meaning they can step in where cities often cannot. NGOs may not always feel comfortable addressing the issue of migrant homelessness and destitution because it is a controversial issue. Furthermore, they may struggle to attract funding to work with homeless and destitute migrants. The constraints on NGOs may at times be similar to those on cities, but in spite of this there is shared ground and mutual concern, and cities and NGOs should try to work together to overcome any barriers to working with this group. It is important for NGOs to work with the progressive and collaborative departments of the city and to develop and maintain a good relationship with the city, avoiding adversarial relationships where possible.
- **Islington** sought to increase capacity amongst local NGOs by investing in Praxis’s cross-subsidising accommodation project for homeless migrants, and in doing to strengthen their capacity to drive policy change on migrant homelessness at a national level.

Driving change with the assistance of a task group

- Establishing a task group to oversee the action plan was a successful way of generating and maintaining interest and momentum, and provided a structured mechanism for implementing actions, monitoring progress and creating accountability and buy-in.
- In **Gijón**, the involvement of the Active Inclusion Network ensured that buy-in for the action plan was achieved from NGOs in the city. In **Dublin**, incorporating the action plan into the business of the city's Joint Homeless Consultative Forum led to the inclusion of its activities in the 2016 Homeless Business Plan.

Addressing the underlying causes of homelessness through the provision of legal advice

- Legal advice is key for resolving homelessness amongst migrants, for example by regularising immigration status or by enforcing rights to housing via administrative courts. Cuts to central government-funded legal aid, however, are taking place across European countries, but cities are playing an increasing role in commissioning advice for residents. Legal advice has political currency and is seen as worth investing in locally, as evidenced by **Islington's** £1m advice contracts. Whilst legal action can be a 'thorn in the side' of cities, there is nonetheless a commitment to the accountability it ensures.

Finding tailored routes into labour markets

- Labour market solutions for migrant homelessness are attractive across the political spectrum and a win-win approach. They are seen by cities as a key area of opportunity, a way to end dependency on welfare and helping people to lead independent lives. Traditional labour market solutions may however fail to take into account the specific needs of migrants, and there is a need to develop understanding around what works for this group. Evidence in the literature highlights culturally-specific employment support as a particularly effective tool, with co-nationals providing services in native languages.
- **Vienna** has employed an integration manager to develop partnerships between homelessness services and employment service providers. **Dublin's** action plan focuses on developing a better understanding of labour market inclusion for MEH migrants and incorporating the learning into service designs.

5. Challenges of the projects

It has also been important to document the challenges commonly faced by cities whilst implementing their action plans, so that cities wishing to pursue similar activities can prepare for potential problems in the process of bringing about change.

Challenging structural contexts

The overall context in which cities are seeking to address migrant homelessness is highly challenging. Cities are constrained both by the structural framework in which they are operating and a trend in European migration policy towards restriction and exclusion over and above

inclusion and integration. Housing 'crises' in Islington and Dublin have caused shortages and high costs, creating dilemmas for cash strapped cities in seeking to meet housing needs in a spiralling market and with cuts to budgets. Spain's weak economy has fuelled unemployment, and labour market integration for both migrants and settled populations remains challenging. The refugee crisis has seen large numbers of refugees arriving in Austria and the Netherlands by land, a phenomenon not anticipated at the outset of this project. Finding solutions to migrant homelessness are further hampered by increasingly restrictive access to welfare services for migrants. This particularly the case in the UK, where the government has a policy of 'making life difficult for migrants' by switching off services, and tying cities' hands in what they can do.

Increasing and diversifying demand

The profile of homeless migrants is diversifying and constantly changing, including increasing numbers of families with dependent children, mobile EU citizens, and in the case of Austria and the Netherlands, refugees. As the literature shows, homelessness is a differentiated process which is comprised of distinct sub-populations with specific routes in and out of homelessness. Whilst the literature often talks about homeless migrants as a homogenous group, the situation on the ground is very complex and migrants' experiences of homelessness are specific to the particular configuration of their presenting circumstances, requiring tailored solutions that can react quickly to changing circumstances.

Concern around people who have nothing

A significant challenge is the dominant lens through which the public perceive and understand migration, in particular poor, settled residents that understand the issues they face as being caused by migration, resulting in people feeling angry and upset, as demonstrated by the recent protests at asylum centres near Utrecht. The city amended its action plan in light of this such that the proposed services were inclusive of all residents.

Divergence of national and local agendas

Local and central governments often come to the issue of migrant homelessness from different starting points, with central government's enforcement agenda contrasting with cities' inclusion agendas, for instance. Cities are constrained by national government in the degree of power they have over certain areas of policy and are in different positions of influence vis-à-vis their respective national governments. Policy in the UK is highly centralised and cities have little power there, however in the Netherlands and Spain, cities have a greater degree of power and freedom and can therefore be more flexible and innovative in their solutions to migrant homelessness. In Islington however there was nonetheless a discernible approach of challenging government where there is scope to, and doing the minimum necessary required by law whilst focusing energy in other areas. In Utrecht, on the other hand, the approach is somewhat more combative. If cities can identify ways in which they have leverage over central government, their position is strengthened. For instance, collating quantitative and qualitative evidence around welfare needs or the effects of poor central policymaking, can be powerful tools for cities. However, cities are also dependent in many cases on central government, including for funding and immigration

decision-making, and must have effective working relationships with them. Indeed, whilst cities have their own mandate and their own challenges, national policy cannot be ignored, and local strategic approaches should involve central government where appropriate.

Pace of change

The pace of change at city level can be slow and it takes time to develop constituencies of support within authorities and partner organisations. Building partnerships, getting allies on board, collating evidence and developing business cases cannot be done overnight. However, cities have shown that both smaller-scale objectives and seeds planted for larger-scale objectives can be achieved within short timeframes.

6. Future – anticipating results, further work to come on action plans, ideas for future research?

A considerable amount has been achieved by participants of the homelessness working group within the timeframe of the Action for Inclusion in Europe project: including policy change, the establishment of new, innovative service models, new partnerships and avenues for influence, including with central government, and research evidence to support change. The work is ongoing, particularly with the larger, longer-term objectives, which are being delivered as we speak on the solid foundations provided and learning developed during the project's duration. Dublin will begin the process of putting into play the strategic objectives on MEH migrants agreed in the city's integration plan; Gijón will roll out its Housing First project and subsequently evaluate it to determine whether it can be extended; Islington will build on the partnerships it has developed in the NGO sector and with central government to extend its influence; Utrecht will evaluate its innovative 'Refugee Launch Pad' and assess whether the model can be established in other parts of the Netherlands; and Vienna will publish its report on Vienna's winter emergency programme for migrants, providing an in-depth analysis of how to respond to the needs of service users and a strong evidence base for planning services in the future.

7. Conclusion: What have we learnt from the Action for Inclusion Project on city solutions to homelessness and destitution amongst excluded migrants

This project has demonstrated that cities have significant capacity to bring about positive change in the policies and practices that affect homeless and destitute migrants. However, they operate within certain constraints (some more than others), thus requiring them to work in partnership with external actors, such as NGOs and central government departments.

There are substantial public concerns on the issue of migration and cities must be sensitive to these concerns. However, residents want solutions to the problems facing their cities and communities, and so cities should address these issues with pragmatic responses. This sometimes requires addressing difficult questions such as return or regularisation, and having the confidence to talk about migration publicly.

Resolving migrant homelessness and destitution is part of broader policy agendas, and this impacts the way cities may wish to talk about solutions – for example, finding homelessness solutions that help to combat child poverty, or keep people and communities safe from harm – as well as who they involve in developing and delivering solutions. Getting a broad range of actors on board is crucial and working with them to develop a convincing narrative around what cities *do* for homeless migrants is a key part of the process.

There were a number of synergies across the participating cities, in spite of their varied contexts and diverse action plans. The flexibility of homelessness policies in Gijón, and in Spain more generally, was seen as something to emulate; Dublin and Gijón shared valuable learning on Housing First models; each city built on their data collection and analysis in order to inform their policies and service models; and the experiences of partnership working and building alliances were usefully shared where there were similar power dynamics between the various actors involved in bringing about change.

8. References

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