



# Homelessness in EU cities and towns

Policy Lab Preventing and Fighting Homelessness, 8 December 2021

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*Joint Research Centre (JRC)*

*European Commission*

# Joint Research Centre (JRC)

- In-house knowledge and support service
- Policy neutral
- Evidence based support for EU policies
- 1400 scientific publications per year
- 83% of core staff PhD



## Urban Dimension

Urban Agenda for the EU  
Sustainable Development Goals

1. EU state of play
2. JRC study
3. EC policies and initiatives

# 1. EU state of play

# Methodological challenges

- Different definitions

ETHOS light:

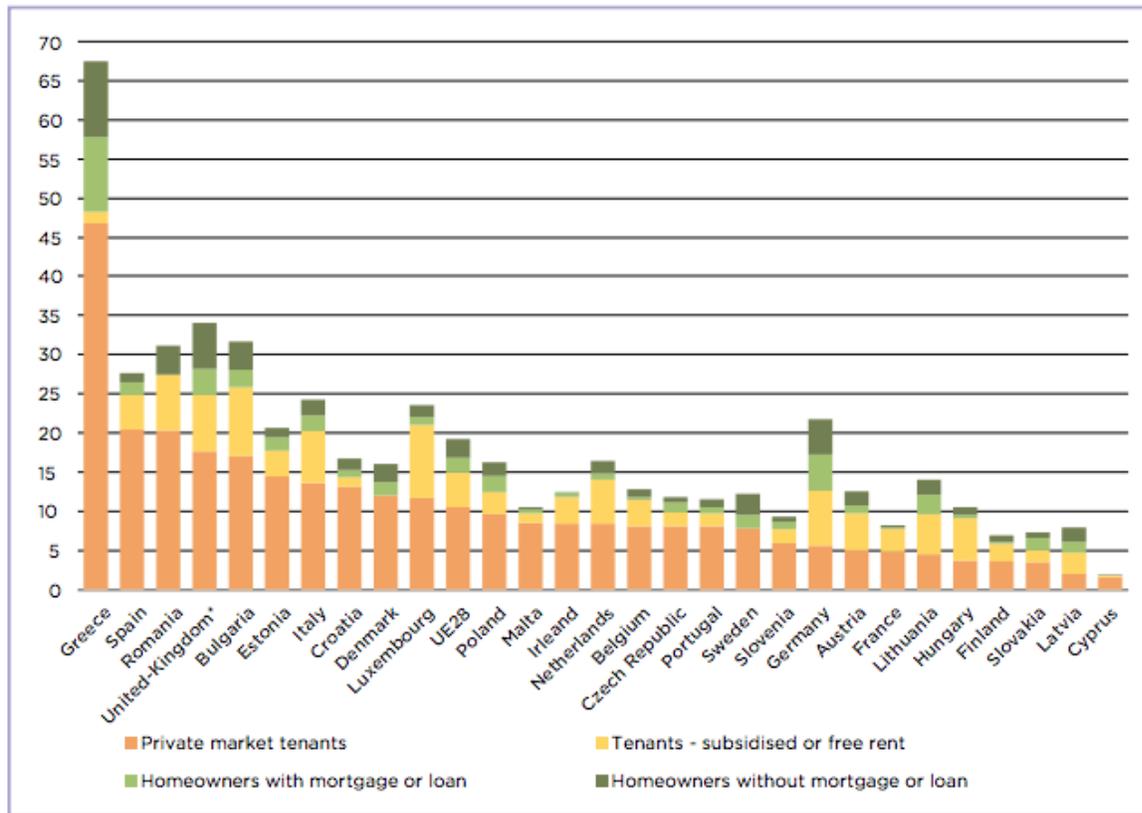
- People living rough
- Emergency accommodation
- Accommodation for the homelessness
- Institutions
- Non-conventional dwellings
- Family and friends

- Different data collection methods

- Street count
- Housing census
- Service use
- Administrative records
- Surveys

# Leave no one behind..

Households that spend more than 60% of disposable household income on housing in 2019



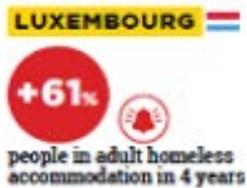
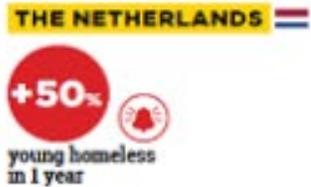
Source: Eurostat/FEANTSA

- Almost 225 million households in the EU
- 10 percent overburdened by housing costs
- > 37 million (16.7%) households in overcrowded conditions
- > 15 million (7%) households difficulty in maintaining adequate temperature
- > 29 million (13.1%) households living in damp conditions

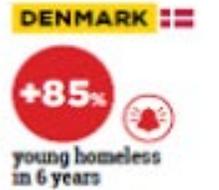
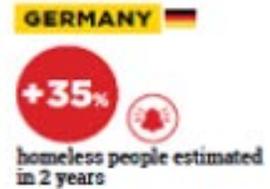
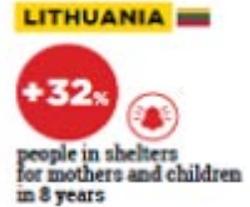
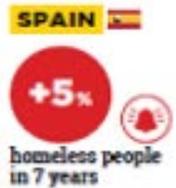
Approximately 700.000 homeless people on the streets or in shelters on any given night in the EU

# Europe trending upwards

**GREAT-BRITAIN**   
LONDON



**IRELAND**   
DUBLIN



# EU State of Play: Challenges

- Homelessness levels have risen in most parts of Europe during the last decade. The financial crisis, dating back to 2008-2009, seems to have aggravated the situation.
- The profile of the homeless population has been changing and now includes more young people and children, migrants, Roma and other disadvantaged minorities, women and families are increasingly at-risk of homelessness.
- Lack of comprehensive data which would allow for monitoring homelessness in the EU.
- High social cost of not tackling homelessness

## 2. JRC study

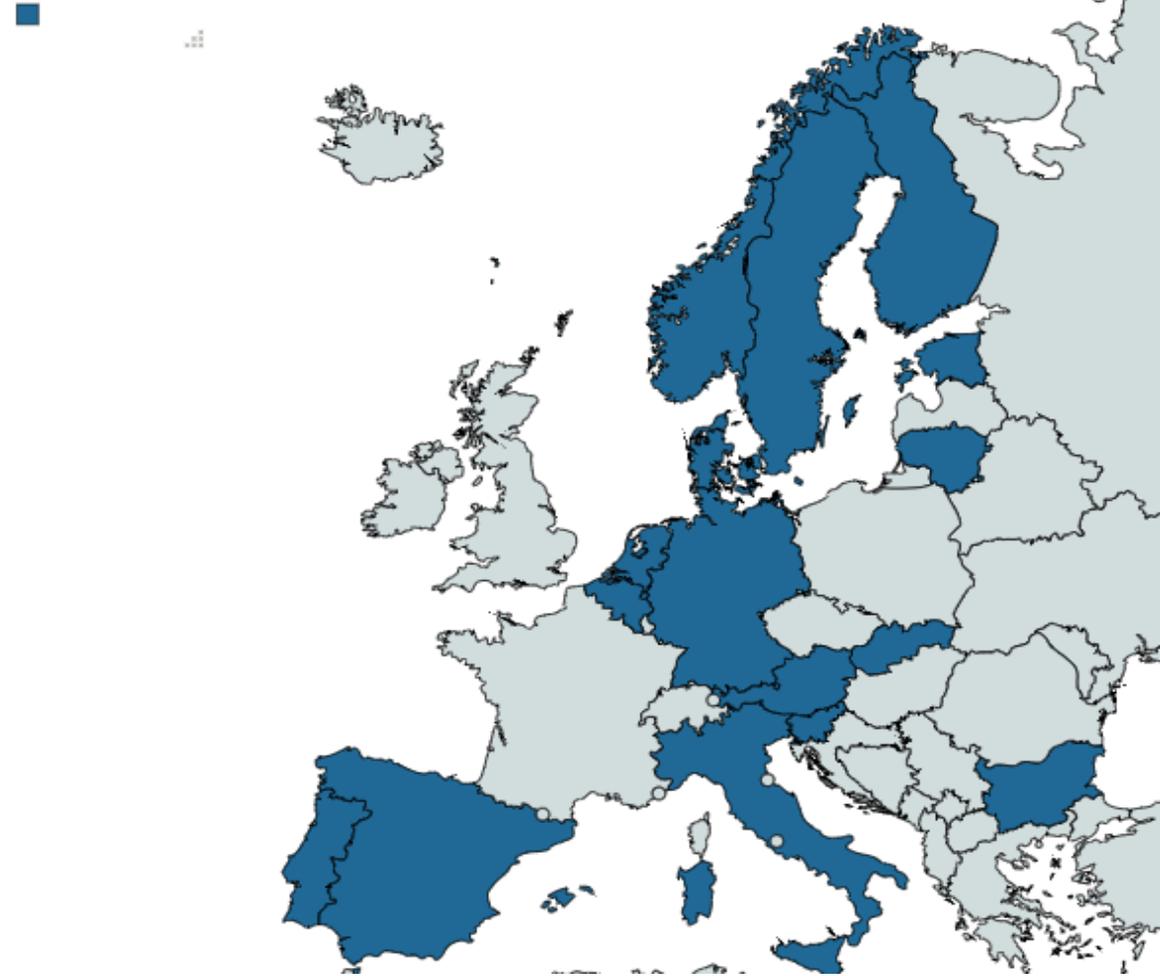
# JRC survey

- JRC EU survey (supported by FEANTSA and EUROCIITIES) spring/summer 2020.
- Pandemic: better data?
- **Objective:** get a better understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness, data collection & policies, developments during the pandemic, and potential policy implications.
- 131 respondents from 16 MSs
- Cities and smaller towns

Output early 2022:

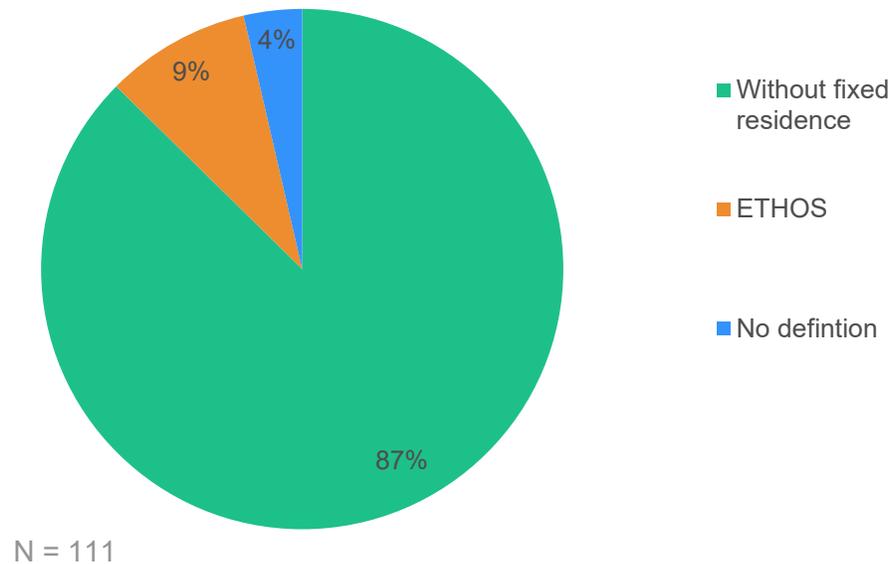
Science for Policy report + Policy Brief  
(*Van Heerden, S., Iodice, S., Proietti, P.*)

Survey coverage

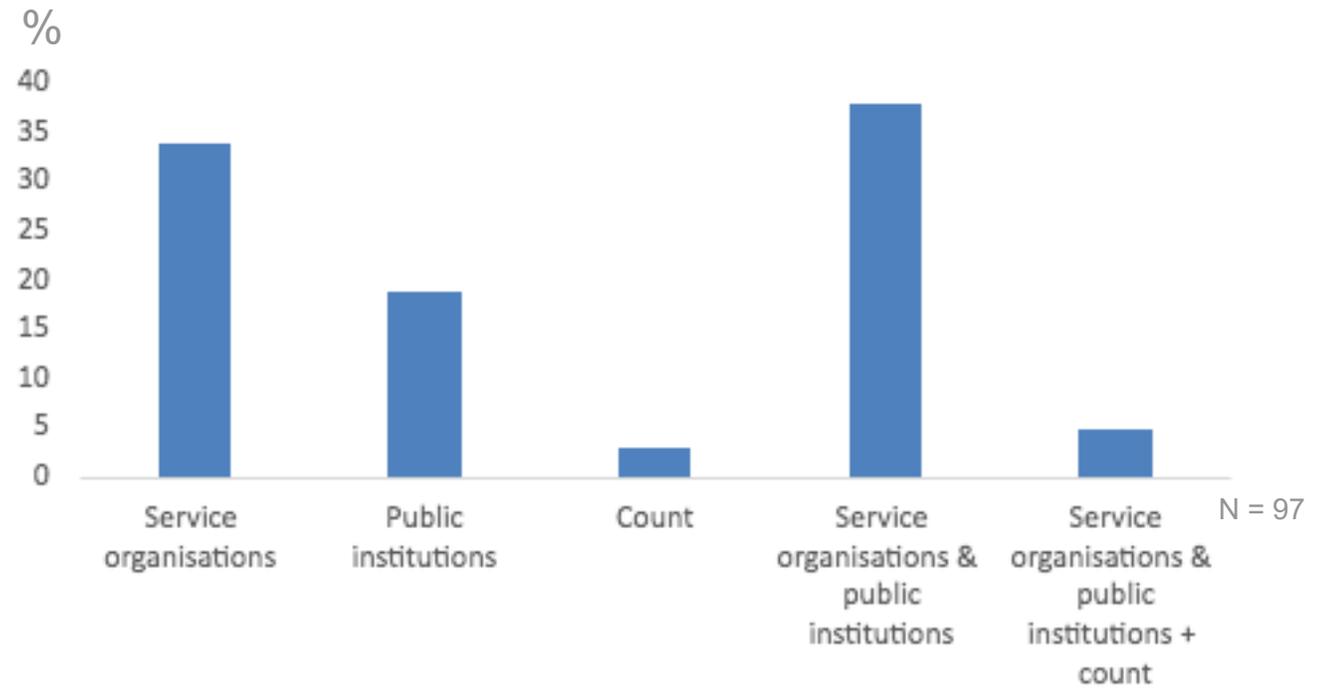


# Definitions and data sources

Definition 'homeless'

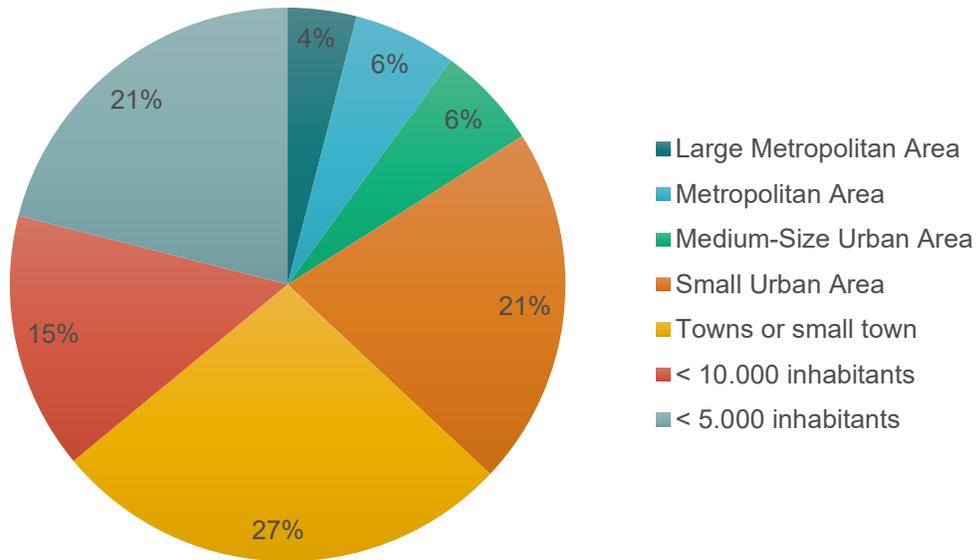


Data collection methods



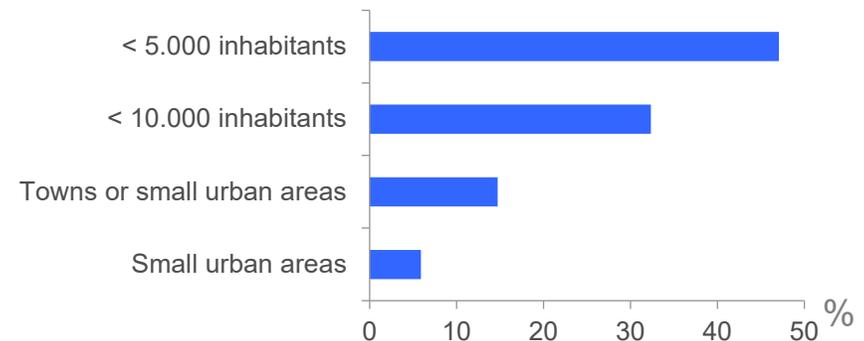
# Urban classifications and homelessness

Urban classifications



- Total population covered: 36.901.187
- Total homeless persons (known): 41.061
- Total share of population homeless (known): 0.13%
- Values between 0 and 0.95%
- Moderate positive linear relationship

'Zero homelessness' by urban classification



# Primary causes as stated by the cities

- 1) Mental problems and/or addiction
- 2) Loss in/of income
- 3) Family circumstances, such as divorce

# Main lessons learned:

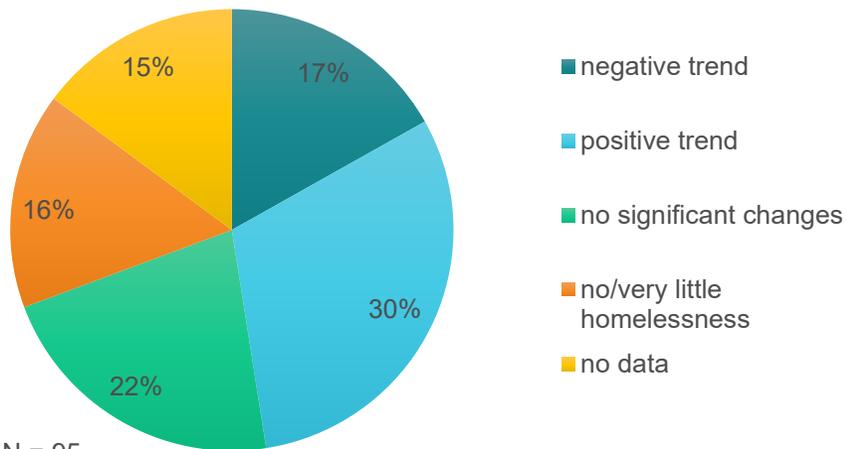
- Assistance to homeless people has to account for the diversity of the group in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and background.
- it is important also hold the private sector to account by regulated rents and binding conditions when public funding is addressed.
- Requires an integrated intervention and monitoring model – building a coalition between all partners
- Person oriented approach (case manager model)
- We need the homeless person to be involved in their change process
- The main difficulty in obtaining data is updating it.

# Profiles and trends

- More Youth
- More Women
- More Refugees

- Mostly men 82.5%
- Mostly nationals 74.5%

Trend last decade, before pandemic



Increase in homelessness:

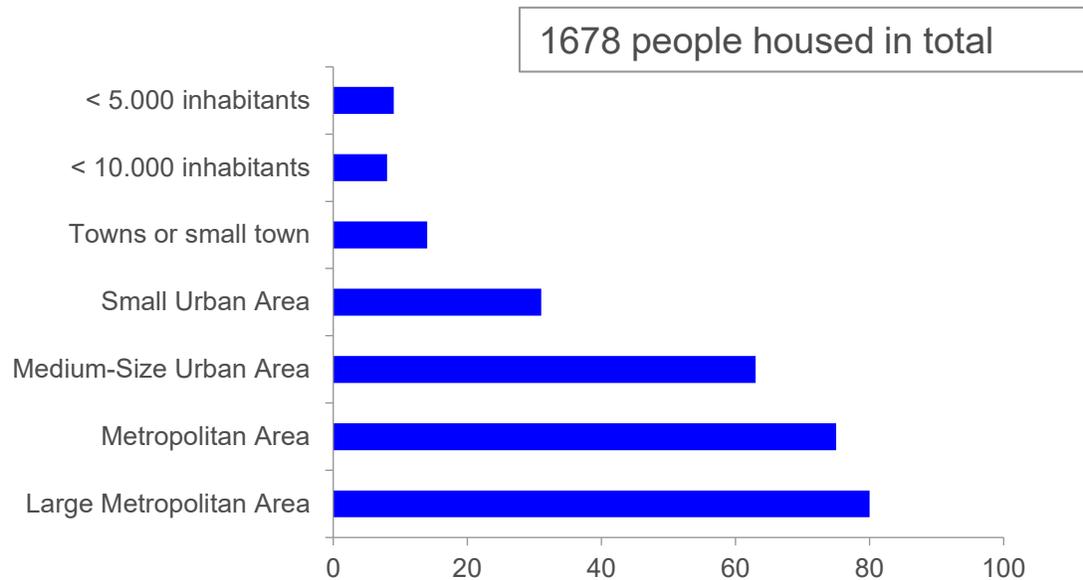
- Higher poverty incidence
- Less affordable housing
- Change in administration

Decrease in homelessness:

- Change in policy
- More affordable housing
- Lower poverty incidence
- Change in funding

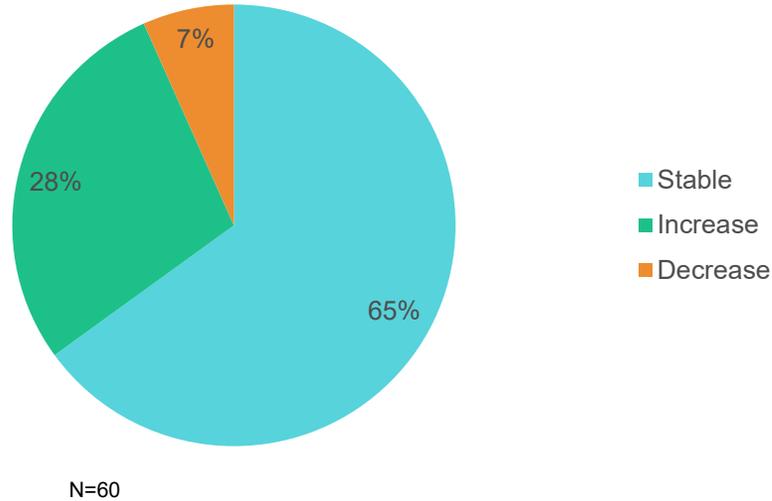
# Policies and Housing First

- Approx. 50% has a specific homelessness strategy
- Majority embedded in regional/national strategy
- Almost 27% has implemented Housing First policy



*“One problem having to do with the housing first approach is that people who are no more in the need of supported housing do not want to move out of the housing units because of the good services and safety the units can provide. [...] This means that the queues to the supported housing keep getting longer and longer meaning also that we need more emergency and temporary housing for people waiting to get their own home from the supported housing units.”*

# The pandemic and beyond



- An increase of the number of (young) women in shelters.

## Biggest challenges in shelters:

- Testing
- Isolation of ill people

“ In particular, all forms of informal support have been blocked (from casual or informal work, to temporary hospitality in friends' networks, to the help of shopkeepers ..) which has caused an increase in the demand for public support.”

“ Along with the usual profile of homeless people new profiles were observed: people that lost their rental rooms because they could not afford the rent, or because of the lockdown conditions (conflicts between flatmates, fear of contagion); people working in the informal economy (hospitality industry, riders, caring sector). For most of them, it was their first contact with social services.”

## Some more sustainable effects:

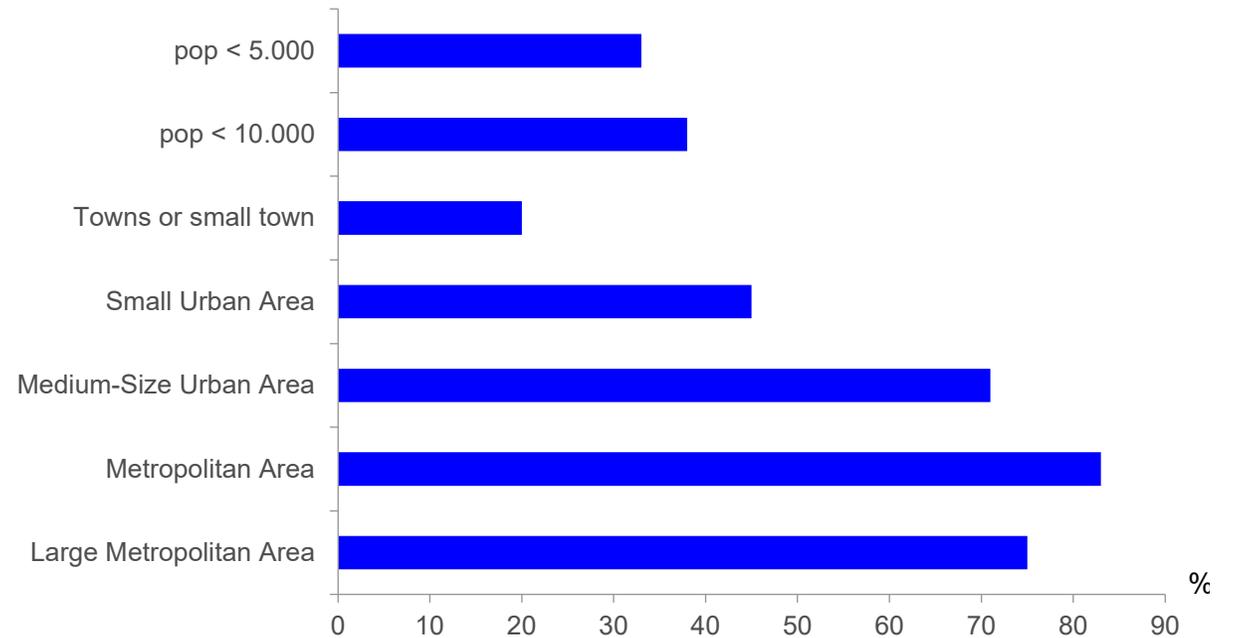
- Opening h.24 reception facilities;
- Security and privacy distancing;
- Development of autonomous housing projects;
- Activation of a single access and orientation center in the city;
- Strengthening integrated work with health services.

37% of the cities state that their pandemic recovery plan includes the issues of housing precarious and homelessness

# Social/public housing

- 38% of the cities state that homeless people can access social/public housing
- 69% state priority access routes for homeless exist

Social/public housing available per urban classification



# Homeless migrants

Report: a place-based approach to migrant integration

- *“When we look at the numbers, we see that migrants are here among the population of homeless people. However, implementing the ‘housing first’ strategy, so the fact to house people, of course, is only possible with people who have a prolonged residence permit.” (ROOF, Liège)*
- Migration policy often has different jurisdiction.
- The rigidity of the EU funding programmes can also be seen as reducing the capacity of local actors to adapt to the problems that might emerge on the ground during the project



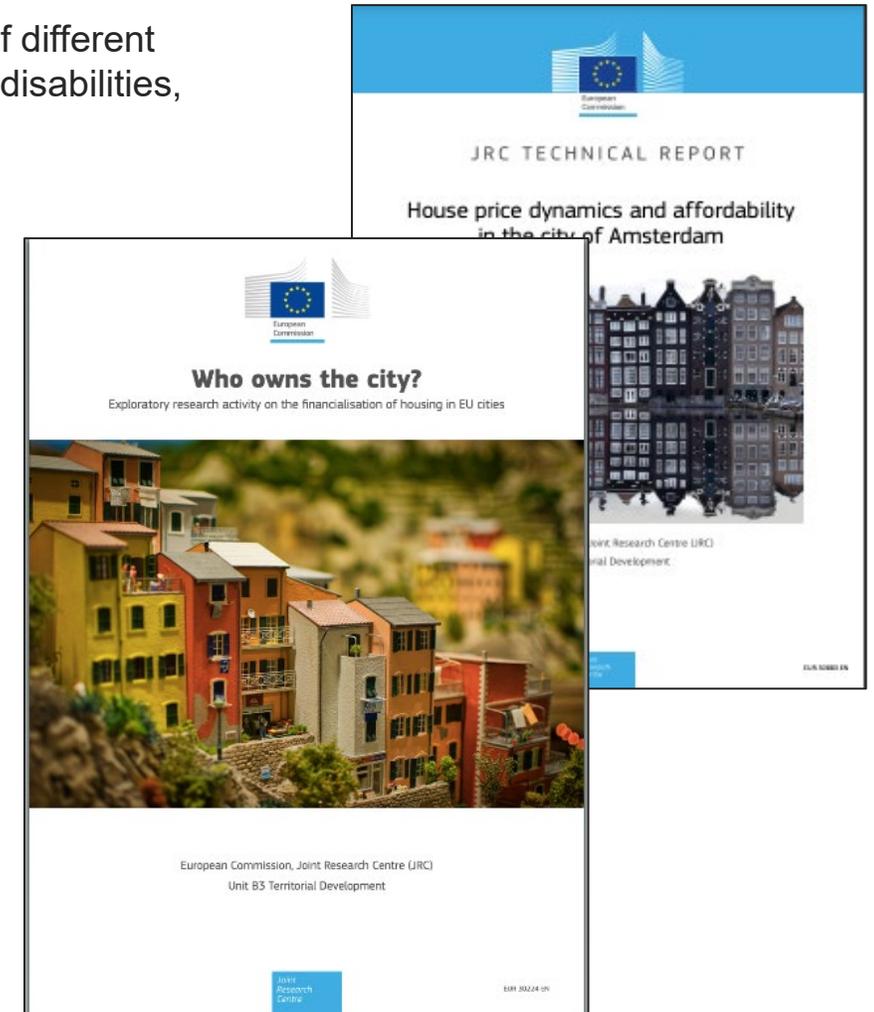
*Fioretti, C, Proietti, P, Tintori, G. (eds)*

# An inclusive and sustainable housing market

“Adequate, accessible, safe and affordable housing [...] should meet the needs of different groups in society, including an ageing and more diverse population, persons with disabilities, young people and families “ (New Leipzig Charter, p.4)

Science for policy: housing affordability (rent and buy), middle and lower classes, impact of tourism, corporate and private investments, regulative policies, social housing, homelessness.

- Who owns the city? An exploratory study on the financialisation of housing in EU cities (*Van Heerden, S., Barranco, R., Lavalle, C. 2020*)
- House price dynamics and affordability in Amsterdam (*Barranco, R., Van Heerden, S., Jacobs-Crisioni, C., 2021*)
- Property investment and housing affordability in Lisbon and Porto (*under review*)



# 3. EU policy and initiatives

# Policy

EU Member States have primary responsibility and competence to address homelessness.

- Adopt long-term, housing-led, integrated homelessness strategies at national, regional and local level, and introduce efficient policies to prevent evictions.

Effective homelessness strategies may cover:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Quality homelessness service delivery
- Rapid re-housing
- Systematic data collection, monitoring and using shared definitions (ETHOS typology)

# Policy & funding

The EU's structural and investment funds can be used on the ground in Member States.

Each Member State will have to invest **at least 25%** of its **ESF+** resources in social inclusion and will be able to launch strategic political reforms to eliminate homelessness.

The European Commission's **Structural Reform Support Fund** (Technical Support Instrument) encourages Member States to finance larger-scale homelessness-reduction policies through housing.

The EU also funds research, transnational learning and mutual exchange through, for example, **the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation** (EaSI).



Housing is not an island

## Children and youth

The fight against material deprivation (formerly FEAD) will be included under ESF+ and must represent **at least 3% of the resources** invested. Part of the fund is earmarked for the fight against **child poverty**.

Member States whose rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion is higher than the EU average for 2017-2019 (23.4%), must spend **at least 5% of their ESF+ resources** on promoting equitable access for children to free healthcare, to decent housing and to adequate nutrition.

**Homeless children one of the five priority groups** in the Council Recommendation on the Child Guarantee.

## Renovation

To kick-start the recovery, the Commission's recovery plan intends to further support renovations for EU buildings.

The 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the recovery instrument **NextGenerationEU** provide opportunity to set off the **Renovation Wave** (Main instrument: Recovery and Resilience Facility)

New European Bauhaus (NEB)



# European platform to combat homelessness

European institutions, EU governments and civil society have committed to working together towards combatting homelessness in the EU

“Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness”

Trigger dialogue, facilitate mutual learning, improve evidence and monitoring, and strengthen cooperation.

Concrete deliverable of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

**New initiative to count homelessness in the EU!**

The signatories pledged to work together and to deliver actions within their respective competences. They agreed on the following objectives:

- no one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation
- no one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution
- no one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing
- evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed
- no one is discriminated due to their homelessness status

# Thank you



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