



MPHASIS
Mutual Progress on Homelessness through
Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems

Conclusions of Final Project Conference
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MPHASIS

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A. General information:

- MPHASIS was a 2-year project (December 2007 - December 2009).
- The purpose of the project has been to improve the capacity of European countries to collect data on homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE); the project has involved 20 countries (19 European Union Member States plus Norway) and a diversity of partners including Ministries, Statistical Institutes, NGOs and Universities.
- The material produced for this final project conference and the CD, together with the report of proceedings and these final conclusions will form part of the report to the European Commission on the MPHASIS activities.
- The MPHASIS web-page will be maintained after the end of the project by FEANTSA and the University of Dundee.

B. Maintaining progress on MPHASIS in the future:

A clear message from the conference is that the MPHASIS national meetings have initiated dynamic action and that this needs to be maintained and taken forward. The EU has a key role to facilitate this.

We have seen in the country presentations that in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden there are linkages built between national, regional and local administrations in the framework of MPHASIS. Ten EU countries (and also Norway) have a National HHE Strategy. And we have also seen that in other countries the national meetings of MPHASIS had been the first time key stakeholders met to discuss HHE issues.

From the presentations and conference discussion, five areas can be identified where progress on measuring and monitoring HHE is required and is possible: "National governance", "Networking", "Monitoring progress", "Guidance" and "Research".

Progress in these fields will require a strategic approach by the EU to support these actions at national and/or sub-national levels.

1) National governance

- a. *Stakeholder involvement led by government:* all key stakeholders have to be actively involved in the measurement and monitoring of HHE; these include: the Ministries and public bodies who are expected to lead in this area as well as statistical institutes, service providers, academics and people having experience of HHE.

- b. *Cooperation*: close cooperation between all these key stakeholders is required. In addition, cooperation between data users and data producers needs to be improved to ensure that there is transparency in the purpose for data collection and that there is also a feedback to data producers to contribute to improving the quality of the information provided.
- c. *Action at all levels*: concerted action across the different policy levels (local, regional and national) and within each area (welfare, judiciary, health, etc.) is essential.

2) Networking

The evidence from the MPHASIS national meetings clearly demonstrates not only a demand for but also the significant added value of transnational learning and exchange in this area. Countries need to take advantage of all the opportunities that will allow developing such learning and exchange; the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion should provide a unique momentum for a leap forward.

- a. *Process and instruments*: regular Peer Reviews and Mutual Exchange seminars are needed to ensure further progress is made in the fight against HHE. Other methods, such as the 2010 EU “Consensus Conference” planned by FEANTSA, should also be explored.
- b. *Data collection*: transnational cooperation on HHE data collection should be continued with EU funding contribution (e.g. through the PROGRESS programme).
- c. *Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC)*: it is essential that HHE issues be considered an integral part of the Social OMC and be consolidated and continued post 2010.

3) Monitoring progress

- a. *Strategic approach*: in the next round of the *National Strategy Reports on social protection and social inclusion (NSRSPSIs)* which each EU Member State will have to submit to the European Commission, there should be a formal commitment to prevent and reduce HHE. For this, the Guidelines for the next round of NSRSPSIs should formally require countries to report on the information strategy they have (or are putting) in place to count and monitor HHE in the framework of the harmonised ETHOS definition¹.
- b. *Data sources*: a single data source is not enough for a proper count and monitoring of HHE: each country has to identify a good national “package” of available data sources (e.g. surveys, registers and clients’ record data) and to develop its statistical capacity as required at national and sub-national level.
- c. *Indicators*: on top of the recently agreed EU indicators on overcrowded households and households burdened with housing costs, the NSRSPSIs

¹ See: <http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Toolkits/Ethos/Leaflet/EN.pdf>.

should report as a minimum on indicators derived from the ETHOS categories 1 and 2 (i.e., Rough sleepers and People in emergency hostels).

4) Guidance

There was a general call for guidance on developing HHE Strategies and HHE Information Strategies. There are action points referring to the need for EU guidance on specific issues, which include the following:

- a. *Core socio-demographic variables* to be collected in the context of HHE statistics: EU recommendations put forward in this field by Eurostat should be followed.
- b. *Data protection*: not only legal but also trust and partnership issues need to be addressed.
- c. *2011 Census*: the next census to be carried out in 2011 in the various EU countries will have to cover homeless people; in this context, it is important and urgent to reflect on the best ways to cover at least ETHOS categories 1 and 2. There should be transparency in the documentation and dissemination of the census methods being adopted to count homeless people and people suffering other forms of housing exclusion.

5) Research

- a. *Register data*: further research focused on administration registers (population, dwelling, employment...) and service providers' registers is needed to improve coverage of individual registers and links between registers. This is also directly related to 3b above.
- b. *Hidden homelessness and housing exclusion*: our knowledge of HHE in conventional dwellings should be improved – a possibility worth investigating is the use of specific modules in existing household surveys (e.g. in the *Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)*).
- c. *Vulnerable groups*: targeted research is needed to better identify and understand the situation of vulnerable groups - for instance, surveys on people in temporary accommodation and living temporarily with family and friends.

Evidence of action in various countries and conference participants indicated that purely technical or legal (e.g. data protection) issues should no longer be put forward for justifying the absence of significant action in the fight against HHE. Action is required and possible.

In the short term, a useful way forward would be for the European Commission and EU Member States to agree on a **common framework providing guidelines for measuring, monitoring and reporting on HHE** utilising the actions specified in the measuring homeless study² and the above actions. This could be done *inter alia* on the basis of:

- a) the recently agreed EU indicators in the field of housing (covering overcrowded households and households burdened with housing costs);
- b) national indicators that ought to be developed according to these common framework and guidelines (in particular in the field of homelessness and poor housing quality);
- c) concrete recommendations and exchanges of good practices in the field of HHE current and/or potential data sources (see 3b above); and
- d) the outcome of the planned 2010 EU Consensus Conference on Homelessness.

The next step could then be to strengthen the EU and national monitoring tools, and improve the national strategies in these fields.

² See : Edgar W, Busch-Geertsema, Vi, Harrison M, Watson, P (2007) Measuring Homelessness in Europe, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Brussels