



**MPHASIS**  
**Mutual Progress on Homelessness through**  
**Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems**

**FINAL PROJECT CONFERENCE**  
**NOVOTEL ATRIA CHARENTON PARIS**  
**17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

**WORKSHOP**

**Session 3      Developing and Implementing a Homeless Information Strategy**  
**(Interpretation Fr/En /Sp)**

Chair: Rudi Van Dam (Belgian Ministry Social Security)

Presenter of Recommendations: GISS, Bremen – Volker Busch-Geertsema

Reaction from: Paolo Pezzani, Fiopd Italy

*Focus:*

*The workshop will focus specifically on –*

- 1. The Governance issues*
- 2. The Phasing and implementation issues*
- 3. Core Variables*

**BACKGROUND**

It is obvious that any effective policies or strategies to tackling homelessness need to be evidence based. Therefore it is essential to improve the information base about homelessness on a regional, national and European level and to develop Homeless Information Strategies.

Countries which have developed a National Strategy for Tackling Homelessness show that data are needed for a range of purposes, such as to

- ◆ prevent homelessness;
- ◆ tackle the causes of homelessness;
- ◆ reduce the level of homelessness; or even end (long-term) homelessness
- ◆ reduce the negative effects on homeless people and their families;
- ◆ ensure that formerly homeless people can sustain permanent independent housing.

It depends on the focus and strategic aims of the national homeless strategy which kind of data are required with priority.

The Measuring Homelessness Study has developed a number of recommendations for national authorities how to improve their capacity for data collection on homelessness and one of the main aims of the MPHASIS project was to facilitate this development by getting all relevant stakeholders together in national seminars and discuss the national status quo, the necessary steps forward and actions required.

### ***MPHASIS RECOMMENDATIONS / RESEARCH / OUTCOMES***

In the background paper for national MPHASIS seminars important requirements for the development of Homeless Information Strategies are discussed, the most important being a decision on clear responsibilities for coordination and implementation, clarity about the type of information needed, about the target group and services to be involved and the methods to be used. It has also been emphasized that appropriate budgets for funding are required and the implementation of the information strategy should be realistically budgeted and planned for.

A table shows the different steps recommended in the MPHASIS document towards developing and implementing a Homeless Monitoring Information Strategy (see below)

The national MPHASIS seminars have facilitated and in some cases initiated for the first time the process of consultation of all relevant stakeholders, and national position papers have provided a review of existing information sources. Some countries – especially those with a national homeless strategy – are more advanced than others in defining their information needs and in developing indicators and targets to be measured. Service provider databases, client registers and targeted surveys exist in a number of countries and are in the process of implementation in some others. But in a number of countries there are still weaknesses and barriers to overcome. Geographical coverage is incomplete and data from different client registration systems or different regions are not compatible. In some countries the definition of homelessness is restricted to rough sleepers and users of emergency shelters only or there is no consensus about the definition. A number of countries have conducted surveys in one year or in periods of several years, but miss information of a more continuous type. Technical problems concerning the reliability of data, double counting and data protection issues are often emphasized as obstacles despite existing methods of overcoming these problems. However the most important barrier to progress in improving the capacity of data collection on homelessness in certain countries seems to be a lack of direction, leadership and funding.

A questionnaire survey showed that most core variables proposed by the Measuring Homelessness Study are in use already or relatively easy to implement. As was to be expected the variables which need more harmonization are those providing information on previous accommodation, duration of (last episode of) homelessness and on the reasons of homelessness.

## Different stages and actions required to develop and implement a Homeless Monitoring Information Strategy

| Stage | Action                        | Description   |
|-------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1     | Consultation                  | Involve all relevant stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sectors  |
| 2     | Definitions                   | Agree a definition of Homelessness<br>Develop harmonised operational definitions of variables   |
| 3     | Information Needs             | Use the Strategy on Homelessness to identify what information is needed and where priorities lie to improve data collection   |
| 4     | Review of Information Sources | Identify what information is available and review its usefulness for policy development and evaluation  |
| 5     | Data Protection               | Ensure appropriate protocols exist for data protection and anonymisation of information   |
| 6     | Time-table of Implementation  | Plan the implementation (especially where phased introduction is required) to ensure the needs of stakeholders are met  |
| 7     | Service Provider Database     | Prepare and maintain a database of service provision  |
| 8     | Client Data                   | Implement a strategy to collate and aggregate client register data from service providers   |
| 9     | Administrative Data           | Ensure administrative data, registers and surveys can be captured to inform policy analysis   |
| 10    | Combining Information         | Establish joint protocols to eliminate double counting and harmonise operational definitions<br>Standardise systems of unique identifiers and methods of anonymisation of data<br>Identify appropriate geographies for analysis |

### On the strategic level

- 1 How to reach a decision on clear responsibilities for coordination and implementation of a Homeless Information Strategy in those countries where this is a problem?
- 2 How could national authorities get further motivated from the EU level to develop homelessness monitoring strategies with clear targets and indicators?

### On the organisational level

- 3 Can local and regional approaches to get more reliable information on homelessness in their area be an important step towards reaching a national picture, or are they rather part of the problem (making harmonization and compatibility of data on the national level more difficult)?

- 4 Is it necessary to base homeless information strategies on obligatory duties for municipalities and service providers to deliver the data needed, or can voluntary systems work?
- 5 How can problems to get sufficient funding for measuring homelessness be overcome?
- 6 Progress on the harmonization of definitions of homelessness and core variables has been achieved. Could a clear recommendation of the European Commission / Eurostat help to increase the European consensus on the nomenclature used to analyse and tackle homelessness?

**On the implementation level:**

- 7 What is needed to ensure that data collection on homelessness serves policy purposes as well as the different needs of homeless clients, their fieldworkers and service organisations involved in those data collections?

**PROPOSED ACTION POINTS FOR DISCUSSION**

| <b>Action Point</b>  | <b>Level</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b>                 | <b>Comment</b>                          |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Identify responsible agency for Homeless Information Strategy in EU member state | EU<br>National | DG Employment<br>ONS                  | Specify as a statement in the NAPs      |
| Specify budget for monitoring homeless information                               | EU<br>National | DG Employment<br>Responsible Ministry | NAPs                                    |
| Harmonisation Core Variables Definition  | EU             | Eurostat                              | WG on Harmonisation of Social Variables |

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