



Making Europe more social and supportive: it does concern me! Europe is about us!

THEMATIC WORKSHOP:

‘DIGNITY & WELL-BEING’ "Mental health/housing"

From surviving to living well: home is where you can live well

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Issues

In brief

A social issue:

When a problem which affected individuals - tramps, *barboni*, the homeless - 20 years ago when SMES was created, gradually becomes a severe **structural social problem** threatening social cohesion and the very fabric of democratic society, what political strategy, programmes, and regional, national and European initiatives should we promote to curb this downward social slide?

According to the Quarterly Review - June (cf. Quarterly Review June 2012), the European Commission journal, the number of homeless people sleeping rough, including migrants and the elderly is rising alarmingly.

It has been estimated that nearly **4.1 million** people were homeless in 2009 and 2010 across the European Union. **(Cf. the EU Parliament)**

The issues for Europe (cf. social investment)

1. **The proportion of homeless people** has increased recently. The economic crisis seems to have exacerbated the situation in most areas of Europe.
2. **The profile of people living on the street** has changed.
3. **The absence of adequate data** to make it possible to monitor the homelessness phenomenon in the EU.
4. **The high social cost of the lack of initiatives** to combat the phenomenon of homelessness.

A well-being issue

Living rough erodes everybody's mental health to a varying degree.

The psychological suffering experienced by these people runs very deep and it is for this reason that it is very difficult to spot it in the meaning of the word '*suffering*'. Living rough really does '**drive you mad**' insofar as it brings with it the unbearable psychological and social suffering which afflicts anybody who finds themselves living rough having lost

	<p>everything – dignity, house, family, work and health.</p> <p>It is for this reason that the specific focus and the end purpose of SMES-Europa, (Mental Health and Social Exclusion) lies at the interface of these factors. It is at this intersection, in the expression of suffering, in the often visible needs and demands which are only occasionally voiced that all the issues of people living rough, highly socially excluded, marginalised, discriminated against and abandoned are hidden. At the same time, we must avoid media generalisations and when we refer to the poor mental health of some homeless people we need to reference some of the serious research available. <i>“Mental health: Facing the challenges, building the solutions”</i> (cf. Mental Health WHO)</p> <p>The consequences of the current crisis in terms of mental health, and the medium and long term consequences in particular, cannot not be estimated and evaluated today. The only thing that we can observe is the increase in the number of suicides and the despair in which an increasing number of families are living. (cf. Economic recession and suicide)</p>
<p>What is the European Union doing, or failing to do, in this area?</p>	<p><u>Precondition:</u> the European Union is the product of its Member States both at a citizen level and at a policy level, particularly in terms of social policy. We have to be very active during the European parliamentary elections which will also prepare the ground for the Commission and other institutions. (cf. the SSE manifesto)</p> <p><u>The EU is clearly not doing what its Member States are doing</u></p> <p>A striking example: only now is the European Union beginning to take an interest in <i>“all those bodies floating or finding their final resting place in the Mediterranean sea”</i>. because the Italian government seems to be starting to act and because José Manuel Barroso, the President of the Commission, and Martin Schultz, the President of the EU Parliament, at least, are prepared to pay posthumous tribute to the 300 coffins stored in a hangar in Lampedusa.</p> <p><u>‘Lampedusa, the failure of Europe’:</u></p> <p>Who will spare a thought for those who die on the streets, but only receive media attention at Christmas? http://www.mortselarue.org/</p> <p><u>The European Parliament</u> put forward a resolution in 2011 recommending that 2015 should be set as a target for resolving the scandal of homelessness! (cf. European Homelessness Strategy)</p> <p><u>The European Commission,</u> within the framework of the <i>“Europe 2020 strategy to eradicate poverty”</i>, launched <i>“social investments”</i> (cf. the social investment programme), which consists of investing in people by adopting measures to consolidate their skills and abilities in order to allow them to play a full part in the labour market and society.) There is a particular focus on the homeless (cf. homelessness).</p> <p>Cf. <u>Social Investment Package Key facts and figures</u></p>

	Denmark as a model for fighting homelessness effectively and permanently (cf. peer reviews 22/11/13)
Current regulations or laws on the subject <i>(where relevant)</i>	<p>The rules relating to social housing, expulsions, the minimum living allowance, etc. vary from country to country. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In France: The right to Housing law (Loi Dalo); ▪ French “Plans hiver” winter emergency shelter plans are fairly widespread; they act largely as a salve to the conscience ▪ Official residential address: this varies, but remains a very serious problem as access to services requires an official residential address.
Questions, focal points	<p><u>Confronted to the complexity of the needs</u> of people chronically homeless with health diseases both physical and psychological and social, What integrated, global and sustainable answer of assistance in the emergency ?</p> <p><u>Psychological distress and social suffering:</u> when homelessness is not simply to be homeless, but without being at home, having lost his own home and when this psychic pain is a deep wound that adds and enhances social problems; when mental suffering also becomes a social suffering, how to intervene to respect citizens' rights to facilitate access to public health services - housing - work?</p> <p><u>Advocacy and citizen participation:</u> how making hear the voice of those who have no voice, to enforce their rights and do not let them fall in the solitude and the exclusion?</p> <p><u>Responsibility and shared responsibility:</u> How to go beyond assistance and emergency and promote process of citizen active and participatory inclusion, especially involving local, political and administrative communities?</p> <p><u>Networking:</u> How can networking be extended to achieve significant synergies both for lobbying activity and advocacy initiatives at a local, regional, national and European level?</p> <p><u>Politicians & citizens:</u> Why is the gap between European citizens and European politicians widening? Should it be reduced or closed, or should we resign ourselves to seeing it widen further?</p> <p><u>European elections:</u> If “Europe is about us” and we are in favour of a “more social and supportive” Europe then should this not also be the case for those whom we delegate to represent us, through shared objectives and strategies? We should bear this in mind during the electoral campaign for the European Parliament.</p>
<p>Suggested workshop facilitation approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quick presentation of the participants 2. <u>What perception of homeless and homelessness?</u> « <i>social pain and marginalization</i> » (déf. Ethos – Feantsa) 	

- a. To be homeless (sleeping in the streets)
- b. To be homeless (with a temporary shelter)
- c. To be without a decent housing (threatened of expulsion)
- d. To be in an inadequate housing (caravans, squats)

3. **What perception of the mentally ill ? homeless :** ‘psychological pain’ and exclusion when the person loses its relation to

- a. “Individual home » (when the person is not good anymore with himself)
- b. “Familial home » (when the person is not good with his family)
- c. « Social home » (when the person does not participate anymore through the work)
- d. (citizen home » (when the person does not participate anymore actively to the community)

4. **Find again the meaning of the « home »:** priorities – interventions – process in order the declarations become policies, programs, strategies, projects :

- a. lobbying and advocacy to respect dignity and rights
- b. promotion and facilitation of the access to the rights/citizens services
- c. networks and shared responsibility for synergies which act for global solutions in the respect of the person.
- d. Inclusion process for a active, participative and supportive citizenship.

5. **CONCLUSION & MESSAGE**

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