



Denmark 2005

Preventing and tackling homelessness

Access of the most vulnerable to key services: decent housing, health and care services, lifelong learning, financial services, legal advice services and transport



Minutes

Peer Review Meeting
Copenhagen
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on behalf of





1. Welcome address

Thomas Børner, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Affairs

This peer review represents a fine example of the implementation of the 'Lisbon strategy' adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government in March 2000.

On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government set the goal for the EU for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, with more and better jobs and improved social cohesion.

The aim was to modernise the European social model, invest in people and combat social exclusion. The European Council invited the Council and the Commission to *„promote a better understanding of social exclusion through continued dialogue and exchanges of information and best practice, on the basis of commonly agreed indicators“*.

All this would be achieved by introducing a new 'open method of co-ordination' to ensure more coherent strategic direction and effective monitoring of progress.

I had the pleasure of participating in the Danish Prime Minister's delegation in Lisbon, and now, five years later, I feel it would be safe to admit that I was not altogether happy with these new signals coming from the EU. Did this mean that the EU would use this as a back-door approach to seize new powers in the social area? And how would the public feel about the EU entering the field of social policy?

Fortunately, there was no cause for concern. I am firmly convinced that all relevant players have warmly welcomed the open method of co-ordination in the social area, and it has certainly not given rise to Commission initiatives that have encroached upon the Member States' powers in the social area. The method has actually been so extensively integrated as to be included in the new Constitution, which states that: *“the Commission shall act in close contact with Member States by making studies, delivering opinions and arranging consultations both on problems arising at national level and on those of concern to international organisations, in particular initiatives aiming at the establishment of guidelines and indicators, the organisation of exchange of best*



practice, and the preparation of the necessary elements for periodic monitoring and evaluation". Which as far as I can see describes the open method of co-ordination.

I would briefly like to mention another method which is, in my opinion, vital for the attainment of the Lisbon goals – the gender equality mainstreaming strategy, a method that factors gender and equality into all activities. This is a key method in the combat of social exclusion.

Research has shown that the poverty situations of women and men are very different, for example with regard to homelessness. And because homeless men and women face such different conditions, we also need to implement different measures for men and women in order to best prevent and combat social exclusion. To make the strategy as effective as possible, while at the same time promoting equality, we must, therefore, ensure that both gender and equality are considered in strategic as well as more concrete terms for achieving the Lisbon goals.

With regard to combating of poverty and social exclusion, a number of objectives for the member states' policies were adopted not long after the conclusion of the Lisbon Council:

1. to facilitate access to resources, rights, goods and services for all
2. to prevent the risk of exclusion
3. to help the most vulnerable
4. to mobilise all relevant bodies

The member states have converted these objectives and a number of sub-objectives into national action plans, and they are collectively the subject of comprehensive joint reports between the Commission and the Council. In my opinion, these reports provide an excellent overview of the efforts being realised in the member states to combat poverty and social exclusion, and they illustrate that combating poverty and social exclusion is a top priority in all member states.

In Denmark, the strategy may not have occasioned many separate initiatives, but, and this is important, we have now for the first time ever implemented a coherent Danish strategy in this key area which used to be scattered across many different ministries. And we will probably have to admit that this would not have been the case, had the EU not acted as a locomotive.



We have now learnt our lesson, and we believe that we have now also learnt to include the NGOs in this work. We have even invited some of the people affected by the poverty strategy to bilateral meetings with the Commission, which I believe would have been inconceivable only a couple of years ago. So the open method of co-ordination has also taught us to open the ministerial doors.

All this now means that we have a better overview of the action areas and thus a better basis for future strategies. So in Denmark we are generally pleased with the co-operation which has set the agenda for a social Europe in future years. We are confident that this co-operation will bring added value to the EU in the form of a social dimension that no government can ignore.

Another impact of the open method of co-ordination is to make it more visible if a government starts diluting its social efforts: It runs the risk of being exposed at a Council meeting. Although we do not use recommendations as they do in the employment area, I doubt that any minister would like to see his country fall behind. A well-known Danish politician has compared the open method of co-ordination to the 'weight watcher' principle. You manage to lose weight, because you don't want to lose face in public.

In conclusion, the Danish experience with the open method of co-ordination can be summed up as follows:

- In the social area, the method has placed the combating of social exclusion on the political agenda in the member states and has resulted in social policy being recognised as a necessary area of co-operation;
- We have learned that we must place things in a context and consider the gender and equality aspect to target the public policies and measures. At the same time, we have learned to involve all relevant NGOs;
- We have started to make special efforts to get inspiration from other EU countries;
- We constantly seek inspiration from the people who are involved in the area as part of their every day lives;
- We have learned that we must constantly demonstrate the improvement in the quality of life and that we are on the right track.

This is the idea behind today's peer review. With this introduction to the Lisbon strategy seen from a Danish perspective, I wish you all a good meeting.



2. Introduction

2.1 Peer reviews in the field of social inclusion policies

Hughes Feltesse, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission

I should like to express my deep appreciation to Danish authorities for making this contribution to the social inclusion peer review programme. As the 2004 Joint Inclusion Report stressed, being homeless, without a roof over one's head, having no fixed abode, is probably the most extreme form of social exclusion in Europe. I am convinced that this review of homelessness policy, focusing especially on helping those whom other measures have repeatedly failed, will be very useful to other Member States in tackling an area that the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs declared a priority in March 2005.

The idea of finding a solution for people whom regular efforts to reintegrate have failed seems extremely relevant for most policy-makers in Europe, as some of the comment papers stress.

A year ago we held a very fruitful peer review in London, and I am convinced that this one will complement it. It will also support the Member States as they prepare their National Action Plans for 2006.

For those new to the peer review exercise, let me recall its three main objectives:

- **Mutual learning:** this means that the peer country representatives expect nothing less than a frank and objective account not only of what works well, but also of what does not work as intended, or even not at all. However the host can also learn from the peers' critical remarks and comments on how policy has been implemented in their respective countries. It is very important to reach a better understanding, to combat poverty and social exclusion, but it is not sufficient.
- The second objective of the peer review programme is more ambitious – to facilitate **the transfer of policies and institutional arrangements** that have proved effective in combating poverty and social exclusion. Therefore each participant at this seminar has a responsibility to draw key lessons as to what they think really are the best practices. They are key actors in enabling the effective transfer of policy, as a result of their privileged access to information and their capacity to know what is happening on the ground.



The transfer of policies is also supported by the wide dissemination of the results of this seminar, through the newsletter, website and synthesis report.

The aim of the peer review programme is not competition – we are not interested in ranking the policies, and it is not a ‘hit parade’. Our focus is the reasons why certain policies work in certain conditions and whether they can be replicated elsewhere, if appropriate care is taken to adapt them to the institutional setting and economic conditions.

- The third objective of the peer review programme is to **improve the effectiveness of policies and strategies** in the area of social exclusion. Indeed it is a vital challenge. We think that social exclusion policies have to overcome scepticism or open criticism in many circles where economic and employment goals are seen not only as a condition but the only way to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Therefore, even if success is a word to be used sparingly, the peer review programme should be looking for opportunities to highlight success stories or at least inspiring stories. Mutual learning and the exchange of good practice are *raison d'être* of the open method of co-ordination. Therefore I am not exaggerating when I say that with this second seminar on the issue of homelessness the open method of co-ordination has reached the stage of enabling a wider exchange between all the Member States on this key issue.

But let me say also that the peer review seminars are not the only method of exchange and mutual learning under the open method of co-ordination. The other instruments already in operation are a programme of exchange projects, the peer review meetings organised by the Social Protection Committee to review the overall national action plans, and a series of studies.

Let me conclude by saying that myself, my colleagues in the Commission, the consulting consortium and the members of the Programme Committee here present will attentively follow this seminar, not only because we want to learn more about homelessness policies but also because we try with each seminar to improve the whole process within the open method of co-ordination. For this purpose let me say we count on receiving your evaluation forms. We hope also to have your feedback from an evaluation survey we will carry out some time after each seminar to find out what the real results of this process are in your countries and on EU level.



2.2 Presentation of the programme

Flip Maas, peer review manager

Flip Maas thanked Eigil Andersen and Peter Juul for their work setting the meeting up and for making available translations of copious background documents. He remarked that part of the learning of the UK peer review has been adopted and transferred to Denmark.

He then guided participants through the programme, which is divided into two parts:

- Day 1: what is there in Denmark and in the peer countries? What are the policies and administrative constraints etc.
- Day 2: what can we do? What can we learn and what is transferable? Henk Meert and Bill Edgar will indicate the key questions from the peer country comment papers and we will discuss these in working groups.

There are also horizontal issues: what is the effect of the division between national and local authorities? How are users involved? Can the Danish policy function in other administrative frameworks, and what do we need to accomplish that?

A guide then gave the group a short history of the meeting venue, North Atlantic House, which was built in the 18th century as the warehouse for imports from Greenland, Iceland and the Faeroes.

3.

3.1 Preventing and tackling homelessness: the Danish policy approach

*Peter Juul, Ministry of Social Affairs, and Inger Koch Nielsen,
Senior Researcher, National Institute of Social Research*

In Denmark the Ministry of Social Affairs has the overall responsibility for most welfare initiatives, including programmes aimed at the homeless. This is an ambiguous area because homelessness connects with a wide range of problems beyond the mere lack of housing. Abuse, mental illness, violence, crime, inferior labour market attachment and poor social networks are some of the problems connected with homelessness. In the last ten years research has revealed the enormous complexity of homelessness, and usually conclude that the group



is extremely heterogeneous. Maybe it is a typically Danish phenomenon, but although there is no official definition we run programmes anyway.

In fact Section 94 of the Danish law on social services gives a rather good definition of the concept of homelessness: who should be the users of reception centres and shelters. They are for:

“persons with special social problems who are without – or are unable to live in – their own apartment, and who are need of a place to stay, and of offers of activating support, care and subsequent assistance.”

So ‘houselessness’ is neither a sufficient condition of homelessness, nor a necessary condition: you might have a tenancy agreement but be unable to stay in your flat.

The statistics on homelessness include women who have been driven out of their home by domestic violence. However the following discussion does not include these women, but focuses on the most vulnerable groups of the homeless.

In Denmark we estimate that 11,000 people are affected by homelessness in each year. About 8,000 use institutions such as reception centres and shelters for short or long periods, but at a very approximate estimate a further 3,000 never contact these institutions. The total of homeless people depends on whom you include in the definition.

In 2004 public expenditure in this area is estimated at around 750 million kroner (c. €100 million). For the last six to eight years the most marginalised groups, including the homeless, have been the object of attention by all political parties. Parliament has generally agreed to support extra efforts in this area, and the introduction of the NAPs has also focused attention on these groups. In 2000, the previous government introduced a special homeless plan, which aimed to improve conditions for the homeless. In 2001 the incoming government set the goal of improving life for the most socially marginalised people – the homeless, drug and alcohol abusers, prostitutes and the mentally disabled. In March 2002 it introduced its action programme *Our Common Responsibility*, which aims to ensure that the most vulnerable groups have a meaningful life, and respects their own needs and desires. In short, its key words are “better life quality”.



The housing action programme prioritises the most vulnerable groups and focuses on solving a range of specific acute problems so as to create a real home for them.

Some of its objectives are: 75 new alternative care home places, 300 new special homes, housing assistance aimed at maintaining the home, and establishing an emergency offer of night shelters and cafés so that no one is refused due to lack of space.

The support and contact person scheme

One new tool designed to improve life quality is the support and contact person scheme (*støtte- og kontaktarbejdet for hjemløse*). It has been piloted in three regions, and has helped 50-60 homeless people with a staff of less than 20. The users are long-term homeless, who are characterised by multiple problems such as isolation, addiction and ill health. However, even though they were reached through street work, only a quarter of them are actually “houseless”. The idea of the scheme is to give people the support they want and need, and to have a better co-ordinated and more flexible effort.

When interviewed, the users say they have had good support because they have been involved in deciding what sort of support they receive. This might be practical support in dealing with the authorities or to find a place to live. They report that when they have a support person with them they get a better standard of treatment and a wider range of facilities offered.

The recommendations are that that the scheme should be made permanent and nationwide but that it should continue to appear separate from the municipal system, to preserve the users’ trust. Access should continue to be direct through outreach work, and not through the social services offices. The support persons are employees, not volunteers, and have varied professional backgrounds, and it is recommended that they should have professional backing.

The implementation mechanism

What has the ministry done to achieve these goals and how do we interact with the regional and local authorities? Denmark is very decentralised society, with 13 regional and 271 local authorities (communes) with tax-raising powers. The ministry operates through enabling legislation, which is broad and flexible



so that it does not require constant amendment to cope with emerging needs. We support the legislation by issuing instructions and recommendations, but local and regional authorities are responsible for fleshing out the legislation and delivering services. Local authorities are charged with providing the general assistance such as cash benefits, job activation schemes, pensions and housing benefits, while regional authorities are responsible for more specialised services such as reception centres, shelters and boarding houses. More than half such institutions are run by voluntary organisations under contract with the regional authorities. In those rare cases where a local or regional authority fails to provide the necessary services, it will be exposed by the press or general public and held to account by government.

There is currently a tax freeze, which squeezes local and regional budgets. To speed up the implementation of the action programme, we therefore decided to offer local and regional authorities the “carrot” of a special fund which they could apply to for support for new projects. It offers highly favourable financing over a relatively long term and with a low rate of self-financing. The latest programme provides full capital funding and full support for running costs for the first two years. It is not until the third year that 20% self-financing is required, rising in the fourth year to 40% and so on. In any case this contribution is recycled back to the local and regional authorities in another form, so it is in fact fully financed. It is a system that we have operated for 15 years, so we know it works.

The programme was launched in 2002 with a budget of 500 million kroner (almost €70 million) over three years. Local and regional authorities and voluntary organisations submitted bids worth 1.3 billion kroner (€180 million).

Alternative care homes and supported housing

Long-term drug or alcohol abusers have often lived in the street for over 20 years. They are not old chronologically, maybe 50 years old, but they are in such a bad state that they need constant care and attention, that is a place in a care home. However their behaviour means they cannot be housed in a conventional care home, so we have created alternative care homes that can handle their behaviour and abuse. The programme has resulted in 80 places and it is hoped to provide more.

We have also opened about 185 of a total of 300 specialised supported dwellings, for people leaving institutions. We will also launch about 200 projects



providing support, training etc, and teach homeless people how to live in a home again.

Many homeless people have behavioural problems that require flexibility in housing provision. Since 2003 we have passed legislation to guarantee drug abusers an offer of treatment within 14 days of request, and this will be extended to cover alcoholism in July 2005.

We have also implemented a programme of specialised permanent dwellings for the homeless, *skæve huse til skæve eksistenser*, often called 'freak houses for freak existences', 'special houses for alienated people' or 'unconventional houses for unconventional existences'. These are unconventional small dwellings often with communal rooms. Here residents can behave differently without causing problems. This 'hardware' is accompanied by 'software' in the form of housing assistance. We have about 300 of these homes nationwide and another 100 are in the offing.

The main idea is low-cost permanent housing with 1-2 rooms, always with a bathroom, kitchenette and access to common rooms. They are run by municipalities, housing associations, voluntary organisations and homelessness shelters themselves. The tenants have a rent contract. The target group are people who cannot live on their own even with support, have had difficulties living in a shelter, or have been too long in a shelter. The projects themselves decide whom they want to take in, often after consultation with the other residents. Most projects are for middle-aged men, but there is one for women and one for young people. Some projects accept mentally ill people or addicts, while others do not. They are not wheelchair accessible. Some projects make demands as regards participation in common activities.

The schemes are covered by a 'social caretaker' from between 24 hours to a couple of hours a day. They give each tenant individual support and help with problems. Tenants may choose to give the caretaker a key to their flat so that they can be rescued in case of emergency, but in principle the flats are private residences. He will help to resolve conflicts between tenants, give practical help, arrange joint activities, and mediate with all the various authorities concerned.

Users say they feel at home because they know that they can stay there permanently and do not have to live on the street. They are safe and secure, hygiene is improved and contact with medical and social services is improved.



They have privacy but also establish social relations with other tenants, and also perhaps re-establish contact with their family and even their children whom they could not previously see. Most are in receipt of a pension. Most tenants who are addicts are receiving treatment with methadone and tenants do not want drug pushers on the premises.

Recommendations for future projects are:

- involve the target group in the planning if possible (it is not easy)
- keep the neighbours informed, to avoid the NIMBY effect
- flats should be bigger, with two rooms to provide room for children or girlfriends
- access should be opened up for physically handicapped people
- schemes should be located nearer to town centres, near services, not on outskirts
- more durable construction (which will reduce maintenance costs)
- more and better TV channels!

There is political consensus that users should be consulted on policy, but it is difficult to organise homeless people. As there was no national advocacy organisation to speak on their behalf, the ministry has supported the establishment of SAND, an association consisting of homeless and formerly homeless people. It has ten regional committees, publishes a magazine and has access to radio and television broadcasting.

When the current government came to power in November 2001 it wanted to set up an independent watchdog and advocate for socially marginalised people. The Council for Socially Marginalised People that has been set up has identified many problems concerning socially marginalised people and speaks up for them, even when this involves criticising the government.

Denmark is currently discussing the restructuring of regional and local government. This is likely to mean that there will be only five regional authorities and about 100 municipalities. All welfare provision will be devolved to municipal level so that services become more cohesive. The decision will be made in June 2005.



3.2 What is the effect of homelessness policy?

*Ole Gregersen, Head of Research Department,
National Institute of Social Research*

The Institute carried out a longitudinal study of homeless people over 5-7 years, and also analysed the self-evaluations of homeless people themselves about 7 years after they have stayed in a homelessness institution.

People who had stayed in homelessness institutions in 1997 were followed up using their social welfare registration numbers (CPR numbers). A total of 4,700 users was identified, a sample of 1,600 was selected and 852 people were interviewed.

Of the 4,700 about 3,000 (64%) were available for interview in 2004. Of the rest, 14% had died, and 13% had claimed research protection (which means researchers are not allowed to contact them). As far as bias is concerned, these two factors probably cancel each other out to some extent; those who died are likely to have fared worse, while those who claimed research protection are likely to have fared better.

We tracked four key characteristics. Of those who had been in a homeless institution in 1997, 85% had spent some time living in their own residence by 2003. (This does not mean they were currently living in their own residence, as there is some turnover.) Over the same period about 85% had worked for six months or more, and 50% had spent some time living with a spouse (an existing or a new relationship).

The factors that correlate with finding one's own residence are being a woman, having children, being well educated, having Danish ethnicity, being young, and having few criminal convictions.

Most of the factors that correlate with finding employment are the same. They are: being male, having no children, being well educated, being young, having a Danish background, having with no or few criminal convictions and having a long period of cohabitation.

As regards their labour market status in 2004, 20% of shelter users were in work, 21% on unemployment benefit, and 50% receiving a disability pension. Of those who had stayed in a family institution, 45% were in work and 28% on



unemployment benefit. As regards housing status, 78% of those interviewed were living in their own normal residence.

Denmark also keeps statistics on the number of 'hardships' or 'deprivations' that individuals face – we ask 49 questions along the lines of whether in the last few years people could not afford to buy medicines or food, or invite family or friends for dinner. 72% of the Danish population suffer from none of these hardships, while 5% suffer five or more hardships. The homeless population is more extreme: one-third of homeless people suffer none of the hardships, but one-third suffer five or more.

A major barrier to escape from homelessness seems to be public debt – but the opposite is true for private debt, because if you have private debt, someone has probably judged you to be creditworthy.

Finally, our interviewees were asked to evaluate what sort of services they had received:

- 13-43% had received housing related services, about half are satisfied with those services;
- 25-38% have received network related services – e.g. a support and contact person – and 80% are satisfied;
- 25-37% have received work related services – e.g. an action plan – and just under half of them are satisfied.

4. Comments by peer participants

4.1 Germany – Volker Busch-Geertsema

The Danish approach to tolerating unusual forms of housing has already been presented as an example of innovative practice in a study of European examples of tackling homelessness commissioned by the German government in 2001. Examples of the permanent use of garden allotments, self-built accommodation, trailer camps and other forms of alternative housing which have grown up spontaneously are also common in Germany. It can be better to allow these houses to stay rather than pulling them down, which is what many municipalities do. A very strong point in Denmark is user involvement – this is a good practice example for Germany.



But there is a big “but”. It becomes more difficult and dangerous if unusual housing is imposed from above through a government programme, and if it is used to solve problems for people other than a very small majority. The overwhelming majority of homeless people want to live in ordinary housing and can live in ordinary housing – if they get enough assistance and support. The support has to be improved.

Before one decides that someone cannot live in ordinary housing, the first step is to provide adequate support. However even if this has been done, there will always be some people who do not want to, or really are unable to, live in ordinary housing. In this case alternatives are acceptable.

There are also two small points. Firstly, although the title of the peer review is “preventing and tackling homelessness” I can see little information concerning the prevention aspect. Secondly, as regards data protection, we should anonymise data about homeless people and not publish the addresses of shelters and housing schemes and details of their inhabitants on the web.

4.2 Poland – Piotr Olech

The Danish system adjusts the help it offers to the needs to the target group, and provides continuous support. It responds to the needs of the citizens, regardless of the evaluation of those needs. It recognises and addresses needs that are generally not accepted or are perceived as destructive. In short, the system provides unconditional support. This contrasts with the solutions used in some other countries, where the system tries to create the need, and impose the solution through positive and negative reinforcements. Such an approach means imposing a number of conditions that homeless people must fulfil. This means that some homeless people are without services, or have to resort to night shelters or rough sleepers’ services. The Polish system has some kind of philosophy of a staircase of transition, as in Sweden. This leads to a double exclusion:

- first of all exclusion from decent housing and from the social welfare system;
- and secondly social exclusion.

The Danish freak houses are quite different, and are a great example of a more holistic system that better fulfils the needs of homeless people. The chief difficulty in transferring them to Poland is, paradoxically, the underdeveloped reintegration system in Poland.



One very important part of the integration system is temporary housing – training flats – where people can practice independent living. In Poland there are very few such flats. It is therefore hard to implement the reintegration process. The freak house system can only be adopted in countries that have a very good reintegration system, where it is possible to say that some people are “impossible or difficult to integrate”.

One may also assume that attempts to adopt similar approach in Poland would meet with stronger opposition than in Denmark. Homelessness is still a new phenomenon in Poland and public opinion holds that homeless people are guilty of their own situation. So offering someone a freak house would be seen as a social injustice. We have to remember that though the ‘unusual houses’ may be sub-standard in Denmark, they are almost standard in Poland.

Poland has a difficult housing situation, because of factors such as low incomes, unemployment, disability and age, on top of which the social housing sector is undeveloped. Hence the example of the Barrack Project. It is a ‘skew’ or ‘crooked’ house, the idea for which came from the Saxenhøj project in Denmark. It is like the freak houses project, but in Poland the target group is quite different: the barrack is a training flat for homeless people undergoing the process of reintegration. To sum up, the Danish system could be seen as a very holistic ideal model, but to bring it to life in Poland we have first to create a whole reintegration system.

4.3 Netherlands – Rina Beers

The headline from yesterday’s edition of *De Telegraaf* “ASOs in containers”¹ illustrates the shift in the public mood and tolerance for nuisance on the streets and deviant behaviour in the Netherlands. For a long time the Netherlands was characterised as a tolerant country, but this is definitely shifting. The government is researching coercive methods of removing people from the street on an involuntary basis. Though we have a wonderful shelter system, reintegration and support schemes there is the recognition that there is a group of people in the street whom we cannot reach with the shelter system. The situations in Denmark and the Netherlands are very comparable. We need to find another solution help these people.

However what we see is that public debate and government policy are veering towards involuntary measures and sanctions rather than support systems.

¹ *asocialen in containers* – antisocial people in containers



One of the things we hope to learn here is how to integrate these people into society voluntarily, without having to limit civil rights. We must also recognise that society needs a solution for the nuisance people cause, especially given the small land area the Netherlands has to support a population of 16 million people. Tolerance depends on recognising that there is a real problem there. Whether the policy is transferable to the Netherlands I am very curious to learn, because the paper does not give all the details such as funding, staffing requirements, skill levels needed or how to deal with the problem of social isolation.

4.4 Estonia – Triin Raag

As in Poland, in Estonia homelessness is a new problem that has grown up in the last ten years. We now have 3,500 homeless people. The main problems are unemployment, age, disability, alcohol and drug use. The population does not tolerate homeless people and believes it is a person's own problem if they do not have anywhere to live. At the same time there is a culture of home ownership, so we do not have a good network of social housing. Therefore if someone has no access to normal housing, their only option is a shelter. The basic social system is not very well connected to the labour market system and does not work very well. We are taking our first steps and have started an orientation programme for people coming out of prison, to prevent them from being left on the streets.

The Danish policy and programme are challenging, and is not realistic at the moment to think of implementing it – it would not be fair to the public at large.

4.5 Czech Republic – Petr Janousek

As in Poland and Estonia, homelessness is a new problem and society would deem it socially unjust if we just copied the freak houses project. But there are some other issues.

As regards construction standards, if a public authority supported such a project, it would have to meet certain standards that would make it very expensive. We would therefore have to create a new standard for such buildings. This would require co-operation between various bodies such as NGOs, the state, regions and municipalities.



The *Our Common Responsibility* programme is very relevant to the Czech Republic, because democracy is new there, and people in power do not want to communicate with other people who want to take action. Working together in partnership is very difficult. We still have a long journey ahead of us in building up this spirit of working together.

As regards the freak houses, I should like to find out how to avoid creating 'homeless ghettos' in the search to minimise nuisance to neighbours.

Finally, we still do not have a new law on social services. We are still operating under the law which was made under the Communist regime in 1953 and renewed in 1971. It now looks as if a new law will be passed in 2007, but for the moment it means for instance that we still do not have a definition of who is homeless.

4.6 Latvia – Solvita Rudovica

Most homeless people live in the capital, Riga, and the number is growing year by year – in particular more people are being evicted for rent arrears. As a result social services should be provided to meet their needs. There is one municipal shelter with 170 places: 136 for men, 15 for women and 30 for families. In addition, Riga municipality buys night shelter services from two NGOs. About 70% of people using the night shelters are ex-prisoners. For this target group the main problems are alcohol addiction, poor health, and lack of motivation, and Riga's shelters offer help from doctors and nurses as well as social workers. However a lot of homeless people do not play an active role in solving their problems and do not co-operate with the social workers.

The lack of cheap flats is another serious problem. Homeless people cannot compete in the labour market, and as a result they have a very small income. Another very big problem is that we do not have enough NGO social services providers. The department of health of the city council has started work on a strategy to solve the homelessness problem; it involves night shelters at different levels, a daycare centre for homeless people, the development of street social work, the building of cheap housing, the compilation of a single customer database and the expansion of the network of social services.



4.7 Luxembourg – Roland Maas

Luxembourg's policy in the field of homelessness is implemented at two levels – firstly through government-funded work by NGOs, and secondly in the framework of the NAP/incl., which is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Family and Integration, and also involves the Ministries of Health and Equal Opportunities.

In recent years the number and visibility of homeless people sleeping rough, mostly in Luxembourg City, has increased, and the government has had to adapt its policy to the changed profile of the homeless. The Danish model has moved away from crisis intervention towards recognising the structural and agency factors underlying homelessness. Some of this has been incorporated in Luxembourg at the two levels, for example through the opening of a new emergency night shelter for drug misusers, a new temporary supported housing project and the reform of services for mentally ill people as a result of changes in psychiatric practice.

Luxembourg's homelessness policy is only just starting to be restructured, so it could be useful to check if the new strategy is suitable at all levels. Some elements of the Danish model, such as user involvement and tailored support, should be implemented at the agency level in Luxembourg. However many of these elements are very costly, so we should consider which of them are needed. Yet we do not know the size of the target population and we do not know if such a programme would be acceptable to the public.

Part of the homeless population can be resettled in conventional housing. A special housing scheme could solve some problems, for example it would free up beds and protect newcomers in emergency shelters who are not yet in contact with drugs. However given the size of Luxembourg's population we do not know if such a scheme is needed.

4.8 FEANTSA – Liz Gosme

To provide a service provider's perspective, we carried out a shadow peer review among our 100 or so members in 29 countries. We sent out a questionnaire to which 17 of the 25 EU countries replied. To summarise the main findings, the practice under review is characterised by unusual elements that do not necessarily exist in other EU countries:



- the focus on the hard core of the homeless population, the 'roofless' according to our classification
- the pragmatic approach, which aims to create housing for all, not reintegration for all
- the recognition that homeless people are individuals with specific needs
- the fact that the individuals involved have a great deal of responsibility, as tenants of their own homes and through regular consultation
- the emphasis on strong social networks. The stable permanent housing provides the conditions within which tenants can build meaningful friendships which can be close to family life

The second series of findings were certain problematic aspects:

- firstly the NIMBY attitudes that can be a barrier to creating free zones where alternative lifestyles can be lived
- these areas can be created in suburbs where isolation can increase the risk of exclusion
- sustainability, both for the service providers and also for the tenants
- potential lack of flexibility, to adapt to individuals who may want to move out

Factors to be taken into account when considering transferability include:

- dependence on Danish cultural factors: a strong welfare tradition and tolerance for diverse lifestyles
- it is aimed at a very narrow target population, and should be kept restricted to that group
- monitoring and evaluation are needed to verify whether individuals' specific needs are being met and to what extent they want to move out, as well as to maintain quality standards, as this is permanent housing
- scale should be kept small
- location should be central to prevent risk of social exclusion
- involvement of users is crucial for planning living areas and for improving living conditions

In terms of follow-up of this peer review, our members compared the English rough sleepers strategy examined last year with this review, and recognised that these approaches are complementary.

In the UK where the welfare state is minimal, the strength of the rough sleepers strategy is to facilitate access to services such as those dealing with ac-



commodation, health and drug addiction. However in the Danish context with very strong welfare services, the unusual houses are a pragmatic approach to improving the quality of life of a hard-core population, which is incapable of integrating into society. Our members found that the two approaches, though different, were in a sense complementary. The Danish model is perceived as one of the lower steps in the reintegration process, even though its aim is not reintegration. It can fill one of the gaps in the range of reintegration instruments.

Transferring practices has to be done with care. The Danish model would not necessarily be appropriate in countries where the only care available is emergency solutions like soup kitchens and night shelters. It needs to be implemented in the right context and also for the right reasons – in other words in the interests of the individuals themselves. I think the best way to do this is to develop data collection in this year of homelessness, to find out exactly who is homeless and draw up a profile and needs of the homeless in order to then apply appropriate approaches.

4.9 Eurocities – Gerhard Eitel

Eurocities has established a working group on *Strategies against Homelessness*, which includes Copenhagen, Genoa, Glasgow, Helsinki, Newcastle, Oslo, Riga, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Utrecht and Vienna. Madrid and Warsaw are also interested in joining. Its members have drawn up comparison charts of the various levels of homelessness provision they offer. The 'staircase' or 'pyramid' normally comprises the following steps:

- prevention of eviction
- day and night centres, street work
- free emergency beds, crisis centres, shelters
- beds for first-time placement (abuse-tolerant)
- beds for specific target groups (women, young people, families, mentally ill, ex-offenders, drug users etc.)
- supported accommodation
- permanent housing, training flats, 'freak houses', including for older people
- independent housing

The Viennese office for the prevention of evictions is extremely effective, and is able to avert two-thirds of cases that come to court. With 220,000 units,



Vienna is also one of the world's largest owners of social housing, and provides two types of 'freak houses', for younger and older people that cannot make the transition to independent housing. Access to affordable housing is important, and may be impeded if housing stock is privatised.

The conclusions are that if you want to successfully integrate homeless people, you should not place unnecessary restrictions on the way they can live, for instance on men and women living together, on keeping pets, or on drinking alcohol in their homes. Banning alcohol can deter people from coming in off the streets even in temperatures of -40° in Omsk!

Effective policies should:

- start by preventing evictions, to avoid the beginning of homeless "careers"
- work in co-operation with social workers to support mentally ill people (many homeless people are mentally ill)
- ensure that hostel residents can easily transfer to affordable flats (e.g. public or social housing)
- include the offer of special accommodation for long-term homeless people (e.g. 'freak houses') for older people as well as for younger people

5. Presentation of the discussion paper and main questions

Henk Meert, thematic expert

Mr Meert presented the thematic paper, which had been written in close co-operation with Bill Edgar, Co-ordinator of the European Observatory on Homelessness.

The peer review focuses on three specific topics:

- special nursing homes for older long-term homeless people
- the so-called 'freak houses'
- user involvement – the Council for Socially Marginalised People

Key questions for discussion

1. Policy context and grey areas
 - To what extent can hostels for the homeless be seen as a last resort? Are we aggravating homelessness by allocating budgets to homelessness that could more effectively be allocated to healthcare?



- Governance, co-ordination and inter-agency working: how do the health, social services, justice and housing systems work together in the transition from crisis intervention to resettlement? How does decentralisation affect this? Do prisons and hospitals have pre-release procedures?
 - Service delivery failures: is public housing provision sufficient? Could 'freak houses' lead to falling standards for public housing? Staffing culture and training.
2. Special housing for older people: how to meet their special physical, social and psychological needs? Do they have access to mainstream services for older people? Are residential care, small group homes and supported housing available? Should we refurbish existing hostels to avoid uprooting existing residents? The need for outreach.
 3. Resettlement failure. There are three types of factor:
 - structural: sustainable funding, fragmentation vs. co-ordination etc.
 - institutional: user involvement, rules, staffing and staff training, appropriate (shared) accommodation etc.
 - personal: relationship problems, personal problems, addiction, institutionalisation, multiple or undiagnosed problems such as learning disability or self-neglect etc.
 4. Unconventional permanent housing ('freak houses'): do we understand challenging behaviour correctly? Why is it challenging? Is it challenging because of inappropriate (shared) accommodation? Do the policies we develop also produce exclusion?
 5. User involvement and the Council for Social Marginalised People: this is about empowerment, which is probably the weakest area of practice in all countries. Can we learn from Danish practice how to incentivise users to participate?

Key questions for discussion in working groups

1. *General key questions for discussion*
 - Structural versus personal explanations – are our solutions used to hide or make good a structural deficiency?
 - Resettlement strategies – we should start from the assumption that all homeless people are capable of sustaining an independent tenancy. Policies should take more notice of this outcome
 - Support and housing – support needs to be for the individual
 - Health and homelessness – should health authorities be more closely involved
 - Alternative lifestyles or challenging behaviour – are we creating a more tolerant society, or are we responding to intolerance?



2. *Freak houses*

We have assumed that three conditions exist:

- there is a context of adequate welfare provision
- the planning system is sufficiently flexible to permit them
- users are consulted

This involves the following specific aspects:

- planning and building regulations, quality standards
- user involvement
- location – is integration spatial as well as social?
- scale and density
- responsibility (decentralisation)
- long-term support funding
- health needs
- tolerance / ghetto avoidance

3. *Transferability*

- Governance
- decentralisation, responsibility, co-ordination
- policy priority lacking
- finance (long-term, Chinese walls)
- Provision
- social housing (and access)
- support
- health and homelessness
- Homelessness services
- resettlement / chain of services
- range and capacity of services
- lack of specialised provision

6.

6.1 *Site visits*

Participants divided into three groups to visit:

- the “freak houses for freak existences” in Valby
- the Lærkehøj and Lindevangen shelters in Frederiksberg
- the Mændenes Hus men’s shelter in Vesterbro



6.2 Feedback on site visits

Rina Beers felt that the *skæve huse* are an impressive project, that has learnt from experience and made small changes as it went along, such as what type of people could live there, or what changes tenants could make to their accommodation. So it is not a blueprint, but an experiment to learn from. It definitely seems to be an idea that could be applied in the Netherlands. For a certain target group it can provide a very decent way of life.

Volker Busch-Geertsema was also impressed, but stuck by his comment that it should be restricted to a small group. He had some doubts as to whether you would be allowed to build houses like that in Germany for permanent use. Also, the social caretaker is a very important role and the city was very lucky to find such a competent person. He has to find the right balance between recognising tenants' rights and knowing when to intervene when problems escalate. It is also interesting that there is a national exchange of social caretakers, which is probably very helpful for them. It is also interesting to know that there are four *skæve huse* projects in Copenhagen, with houses for between 8 and 12 people each.

He evaluated a project in Hannover, in which 12 single homeless men and women occupied flats in one newly built house. The stories of communal life in this house and about the (limited) integration of its residents have many similarities with those reported from *skæve huse*, but the building offers less individual freedom, for instance to make building alterations.

Preben Brandt: It is important to realise that 'permanent' does not mean that you have to remain there for the rest of your life. It means there is no time limit on your stay – you can move on if and when you want. So although the *skæve huse* are targeted at people who are unable to live independently, it may be that after a few years they can learn to do so. They are a form of empowerment, training for living in a normal flat.

Inger Koch-Nielsen: There is a high turnover of tenants – out of 127 places, 90 had changed tenants over a three-year period. Most tenants had left not to go to their own self-contained flat; on the contrary some were kicked out, some just disappeared, and some went back to a shelter or to the streets.



Freek Spinnewijn mentioned that during his visit, he asked what the main need was, and was told “freak nursing homes for older people”. This shows that the context in Denmark is quite different from some other countries, where this might be regarded as a marginal problem. We need to recognise that the context is all-important, because for example the Romanian ministry is very interested in the idea of freak houses. FEANTSA has visited Romania, and it has a lot of freak houses but not so many freak people. There is the danger that people might be made ‘freak’ to fit the houses. If the context is not right, the peer review might have unintended effects.

FEANTSA is trying to understand who is homeless and why. What is the role of housing, employment and health policies? What do prevention and networking mean? Only when you understand the context can you talk about freak houses. They are very interesting to exchange information on, but in terms of transferability we have to beware of allowing ‘misunderstandings on purpose’.

Peter Juul: In Denmark over 15-20 years we have developed homelessness policies, modernised buildings, educated the staff. We have had a long period with good funding. So we have had the luxury to react to problems as they come up, even if they may seem to be small problems. But of course the basics are in place to cope with the mainstream. Our policy is rather like the Swedish staircase model, but without the penal elements. The idea is that, given the right support, people will reintegrate into the housing and employment markets. However we recognise that there are people for whom this does not work.

Bill Edgar: The Polish example shows that crisis intervention and freak houses will not work in the absence of the whole range of reintegration policy instruments.

I was also very impressed with the site visits, but there are three points that deserve to be made:

1. Scale: 8-10 units seems to be about right.
2. Access is not free, and nor is allocation done just on the basis of need. Over time, a lot has been learnt about ensuring that people can live together, and clear rules of allocation have been developed. It should be remembered that groups have to be managed.
3. Tenants and providers sign a contract, which starts with a mandate to deduct the rent from the tenant’s pension – and the law had to be changed to permit that. This is an important part of preventing the cycle of eviction from restarting.



4. Any new initiative like this needs to be monitored and evaluated on a range of criteria. A lot of lessons have been learnt and it would be useful for others to reflect on those lessons and on what structures need to be put in place.
5. The freak houses work well in Denmark because housing allowances are generous. It might not work economically elsewhere, because the rent seems a bit high and maintenance costs need to be covered. Freak houses are an important innovation, but they should not be seen as a cheap solution.

Volker Busch-Geertsema: Sometimes cheap solutions can end up being expensive. We do not know much about the long-term outcome of this experiment. For example central heating has not been installed, but tenants complain about the high cost of electric heating. Summerhouse style housing will need renovation sooner than conventional stone or brick houses.

Rina Beers commented that the caretaker and tenant whom they talked to at the freak houses could not really say what the user involvement actually consists of. **Hanna Fabricius** answered that the intention was to involve tenants, but it has been difficult. In Denmark the bureaucracy means that it can take three years to build a house. But many tenants have a shorter time horizon than that – every day is a problem for them. So the consensus was that it was not a good idea to involve them in the planning.

The ministry also wanted to involve the tenants in everyday life after the houses are built, but this is problematic because of interpersonal conflicts. The intention is that tenants meet and take part in decision-making, but it is difficult. They do however decide how to spend the budgets for environmental improvement. The ministry is trying to work out how to involve tenants, but it is a very difficult group to work with.

Volker Busch-Geertsema added that he had the same experience in Germany. If homeless applicants were asked how they wanted the kitchen to be, they would reply “you can build it any way you want – what I want is the apartment – and quick!” He felt that sometimes we should reflect on our expectations. For instance as regards relations with neighbours, many of us have neighbours whom we hardly know and we are very happy if they leave us alone. Sometimes it is a sign of normality if you have your own house and your own key and don’t care about your neighbours.



Preben Brandt said that it is important to understand that the freak houses are more an idea than the physical reality.

Freek Spinnewijn said that we struggle with the idea of involvement as well. It is very revealing to ask social workers who work in shelters what involvement means in practice. The management of a shelter is really part of a re-education process to make people understand that they have to take the lead in their own life. But from the moment you involve people in taking decisions on the lives of others, or on policy-making, you enter a very difficult field. I think there is a lot to be learnt from the Danish experience here. I think at European NGO level we make the mistake of confusing the two types of involvement.

Asked what the background and employment arrangements are for the social caretakers, **Hanne Fabricius** explained that the Ministry of Social Affairs pays for one or two staff per project for the first two years. After that the municipality takes over. The social caretakers are qualified as social pedagogicians. Given the importance of understanding the tenants' problems and being able to motivate them, people were chosen who had experience of working in hostels.

Volker Busch-Geertsema commented that in many countries the main problem is not finding financial support for the first two or three years, but finding longer-term finance. It has to be recognised that some people will need support for a much longer period than two or three years, and that this is something that needs to be financed. In Germany experts agree that we need a new regulation to cover this.

Freek Spinnewijn asked: "what about freak employment, health, education or culture for freak people?" FEANTSA sees that integration into the free labour market or the supported labour market is not an option for some homeless people. That is why in some countries the concept of "meaningful occupation" has been developed. The idea is that you keep people busy so that they feel useful, even though their job is not economically useful. Can the idea of freak houses be transferred to other policy areas?

Peter Juul agreed that Denmark has ignored the issue of employment. However the ministries of employment and social affairs are now led by the same political party so are co-operating better. Responsibility for activation policy was moved over to the ministry of employment and has consequently been



overlooked, but may now be reversed. It should be noted that people on methadone and ex-drug abusers run some very successful hotels. Some school dropouts make a lot of money in information technology. So there are a lot of experiments going on, but they are on a small scale. The idea of 'freakiness' can be broadened out.

Preben Brandt confirmed that Denmark has freak healthcare – 'nursing on wheels' taking medical care on to the streets – as well as freak culture – the Council for Socially Marginalised People holds a 'Users' Bazaar' (*Brygernes Bazar*) every year (this year on 4th June). However we should be aware of the danger of going too far in separating society into two parts.

Freek Spinnewijn: That is why it is so important to get the basic definition of homelessness right (some countries lack even the basic understanding of homelessness). Freak houses are a very interesting approach, so long as you know whom to apply it to. It is not necessarily rough sleepers. At FEANTSA we think in terms of "housing exclusion situations" but this does not work in the case of freak houses, because these are not concerned with the housing situation. I don't think we have fully understood what the basis of eligibility is for 'freak' policies.

In Denmark it has taken a long time to build up a pragmatic method. However one cannot expect countries that wish to adapt the experience to go through the same slow process. It would help them if we could define who the target groups are.

Peter Juul: In Denmark we take initiatives without having a strict definition of homelessness. The tenants in the freak houses come from two main situations. First, people who were staying for long periods in the shelters, which are meant to be a short-term facility. This was not what they needed, yet they were not ready to go into their own flat, or even to go into training for independent living. A second group was gangs of drinkers who were asked if they want to live as a group. It is not a very scientific approach. **Rina Beers** added that during the visit the caretaker said that he allocated using trial and error – some people fitted into the group and some did not.



7. User involvement

Preben Brandt, Chairman, Council for Socially Marginalised People

First of all it is important to think about what to call 'users' – or 'citizens', or 'clients', or 'patients', or 'consumers'. If we are not careful, confusion can arise. For instance I might think I am talking to a client, whereas he might think he is talking as a citizen. In some fields, for instance in dealing with drug users or in psychiatric care, it is common to involve users. However in the field of homelessness it is relatively rare.

Some examples of user involvement

1. *Hjemløsehuset ('The Homeless House')*

This has facilities including a café, hairdressers, bath, laundry, dentist and support services. It is operated by an NGO founded in around 2000, whose board includes homeless people, staff and volunteers. It is supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Users say: "It is really new and different to have homeless people in control. I like getting advice from someone who know what it's like."

2. *Hus Forbi ('Wrong Address')*

A street newspaper founded in 1996 by a 'fiery soul' and some homeless people. It started publishing four issues per year, now publishes seven and plans to increase this to 12. It has 130 sellers, who keep 8 kroner out of the 20 kroner (€2-70) cover price. They like having a voice, and like having something to get up in the morning for. *Hus Forbi* is a member of the International Network of Street Newspapers, which has 51 members worldwide. See www.husforbi.dk

3. *SAND – the national umbrella organisation for the homeless*

Ole Rudolf, Chairman of SAND, introduced his organisation. This four-year-old NGO is independent of government but is supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Its board is elected by ten regional committees, which are in turn elected by those shelters that choose to take part (not all do). SAND seeks to influence public debate. It demands dialogue with the government, respect and equal rights, and a level of income that guarantees dignity for homeless people.

4. *På Sporet ('On the Track')*

This 'freak house' settlement was founded when a group of homeless people started living in caravans in a railway yard. Instead of clearing it, the government has improved the facilities and made it official.



5. Council for Socially Marginalised People

Two of its members have experience of homelessness. It believes that homeless people should be treated as people, not as cases. See www.udsatte.dk User involvement has a legal base in Section 112 of the Law on Social Services and is also mentioned in Denmark's NAP/incl. It is a challenge to work with people who organise 'differently', but it is important to break down the 'them and us' feeling.

Questions

Rina Beers added that Dutch law, like Danish law, obliges shelters to have a client council. So even though the law cannot oblige homeless people to participate, it can oblige shelters to encourage them to participate. Some authorities are now insisting that any applications for projects be accompanied by an opinion from the client council.

Gerhard Eitel commented that Vienna also has a client council, which is a very good partner (although its legal registration was delayed by a few weeks when one of its members absconded with the registration fee).

8.

8.1 Working groups

Flip Maas introduced the working groups. He reminded participants not to consider only the 'freak houses', which it would be inappropriate to try to transfer to countries with less comprehensive welfare systems. He asked them also to consider important policy elements: what is the political framework? On what levels can users be involved? Who should the members of consultative committees be and how should the opinions of experts and homeless people be balanced? As regards relations with neighbours and society at large, are we looking just for tolerance, or for reintegration?

Some other issues that came out of the comment papers are: When starting up a service, what is the best order to do things in? Can mixed public-private funding be used? What about facilities for young people and women, who are an increasing component of the homeless population? How can we avoid failing to care for homeless people at the same time as reducing the nuisance they cause to other members of society?



Henk Meert clarified the key issues presented the previous day (see section 5 above).

Participants then divided into three groups.

8.2 Exchange of working group results: general assessment of the model and recommendations

Working group 1

1. Housing context: in new EU countries housing is an overall problem

First, it is important to have good information about what homelessness means. When talking about transferability you need to know clearly what the housing context is. It is no good talking about failure of integration if you do not have social housing available. This is a particular issue in the new Member States where there is a lack of social housing and homelessness is more an economic than a social question.

2. Homelessness sector: need for different range of services, and for networks

To create a coherent strategy you need to have wide range of services, including services that co-ordinate social support with housing. Services need to be organised in a network. Clearly, different countries are at different stages, and Denmark is dealing with residual problems that its comprehensive services have not resolved. In other countries where the homelessness sector is more embryonic, the focus is much more on crisis intervention and emergency support. If the concept of freak houses is evident in countries like Germany or Poland, they have a different function.

3. Role of the state

There are a number of transferability issues under role of the state, in particular the problem of central-local relationships. If responsibility is devolved to local or regional authorities, then sufficient resources – in terms of finance, skills and administrative capacity – must also be made available to fulfil these responsibilities. It is encouraging that in Denmark three regions took part in the support persons pilot, while in the Czech Republic EU funding was returned because no bids were received.



4. A legal framework supported by resources is needed

In Denmark the legislation is enabling, but in Luxembourg a mandatory approach is more effective. Equally in Scotland all local authorities are now required by statute to produce a homelessness strategy every year, and to house all homeless people within 28 days.

5. Public awareness raising: priority for homelessness policy

Tolerance comes from the public awareness that homelessness is a structural not a personal problem. And public awareness is raised if homelessness is a policy priority.

6. User involvement

User involvement is vital because equal opportunity should be not an aspiration, but an underpinning of all your activities.

7. Monitoring

There is no point making policy if you do not know how effective it is, so a budget should be made available for monitoring and evaluation.

8. Target group: you need to know who the different target groups are

In Poland, the target group was changed so that the 'freak house' is used as a training flat. It was renovated with the help of Danish homeless people, in what is also a good example of international co-operation, activation and user involvement.

Working group 2

1. There are four conditions for the transfer Danish homelessness policies:

- the existence of a strong welfare policy, as regards not only housing but also social benefits
- three other previous stages (the initiatives we have seen are fourth-stage initiatives)
- a well co-ordinated overall policy, which is lacking in some other countries
- follow-up and monitoring

2. Role of the state

There is a triangle comprising *national government – local authorities – civil society / NGOs*. The state should play an enabling role, and should also be in possession of both incentives and sanctions – carrots and sticks – in its relationships with the other partners.



3. Transfer care, do not only reduce nuisance

If policies are transferred, the care aspect as well as the harm reduction aspect must be transferred, to avoid the creation of “repressive” camps which might be inspired by Denmark’s original approach.

4. Positive public attitudes

It is both necessary and possible to construct positive public attitudes:

- provide the right information (to avoid gossip); invite the neighbours to visit, have an open door policy, be the first with the information
- structured involvement: invite neighbours to sit on the board of the shelter
- importance of ‘unfocused’ meeting places and networking, e.g. at schools: pay attention to places where you can build bridges to neighbours

5. Freak houses, not freak people

Deliver freak houses, don’t make people into freaks because of the non-existence of sufficient conventional housing. You therefore need a decent housing offer (see point 1).

Discussion

Ole Gregersen added that implementing a transfer is easier if you make the offer attractive only to those people who are targeted. So you may have to add a gatekeeping instrument.

There was comment on disparities between theory and practice. There are large differences in implementation not only between east and west, but also between north and south in Europe. Estonia has an active policy, but is only now passing from passive to active actions. **Peter Juul** noted that one-third of Danish municipalities do not do their job in implementing homelessness policy.

Working group 3

1. Work in the framework of constant changes

Firstly the target group, the complexion of the homelessness population, is changing. There used to be a group of men who would travel in the summer and would use shelters in the winter. Nowadays there are more younger people and women, especially women from immigrant backgrounds escaping domestic



violence. Denmark even had one case where a couple delivered their son to a shelter as soon as he turned 18. So a five-year-old analysis is out-of-date.

This implies that legislation should not be too strictly drawn up, so that you can react to change without needing a new law. Attitudes change too.

2. A win-win attitude

The process of deinstitutionalisation is ongoing because it is cheaper (which is not to say it might not also be the better solution). So suddenly the residents are out on the street and in doctors' waiting rooms, and their erratic behaviour is a challenge to the tolerance and attitudes of the general public. There is a price to pay for saving the costs of providing residential care. We must turn this into a win-win situation.

So when it comes to trying out experimental solutions you can seek win-win solutions.

In Ålborg, every time the mayor proposed starting a skæve huse scheme, he met repeatedly with opposition from the neighbours, until eventually he stuck his neck out and simply insisted "it goes here," and set up consultative meetings. Attendance tailed off and acceptance grew to such an extent that no one noticed when the houses actually opened. The scheme later won a prize for good neighbourliness. The main opposition comes before you open up.

The ministry plans to carry out a study in NIMBY attitudes and how to deal with them.

Rina Beers interjected that in the 90s in the Netherlands, at the start of a new service centre for the homeless, they operated a 24-hour hot line – but no one called it.

3. Clear responsibility to finance services

Danish law makes it clear that it is the state's responsibility both to decide policy and to finance its implementation. The authority can choose to make a contract with an NGO or private company to deliver services, but it is the state's responsibility to pay for this, never the NGO's. **Inger Koch-Nielsen** added that NGOs also start up and finance new services without state intervention, such as battered women's shelters and support and contact persons for the mentally ill. Sometimes the state takes these over. A welfare state still needs an active NGO sector.



4. Prevention

It is important to try to prevent homelessness, for instance by providing a good service for care leavers. Harm reduction is the basic principle behind the Danish approach – to stop problems worsening.

However market factors enter into this. There are 60 m² of housing in place for every Dane – but the empty flats are in the wrong parts of the country, such as in south Jutland. The demand is for affordable flats in Copenhagen. Municipalities have the right to use up to 25% of social housing units for their clients, and most of them take up this right.

Discussion

The elderly homeless

Bill Edgar raised the issue of alternative residential care for older homeless people. Across northern Europe older homeless people are a growing issue. This group comprises not only long-term homeless people but also those who become homeless in their 50s or 60s, often men who are kicked out of the family home by their wives after the children leave home, or immigrants: in France a lot of residents in hostels for migrant workers are over 55.

Peter Juul: we introduced alternative care homes for elderly homeless people because we could see there was a need. There were people who had been drinking or using drugs for 25 years, who could not cope with a shelter, a rest home or on their own in a flat. Their need is for a high level of nursing care, with no conditions. We didn't want to reform them. We didn't say you must stop drinking or taking drugs. It may be a little barbaric or cynical but it is a harm reduction attitude: it is too late to do anything to reintegrate for these people, so give them as good a life as possible within the framework of their lifestyle. It was very popular and there is still a demand for more alternative care homes.

We are proud of what we have done, but we will carry out an evaluation this autumn. We have 75/80 places and will open maybe 25 more. There are difficult ethical problems because some residents are for example injecting heroin, and right-wing politicians say the staff should do something to stop it. But as it is their private home, it is a matter for the police, not the staff. We do not let people sell drugs in the communal rooms.



Inger Koch-Nielsen: we are talking about people who are maybe only 50 years old, but are prematurely aged through chronic homelessness. They need care as if they were old. It is not a case of old people becoming homeless, but homeless people becoming old very quickly. There is a small-scale qualitative study on elderly homeless going on just now which confirms this.

Rina Beers: added that the Netherlands has a history of nursing facilities in shelters. Of the 8,000 beds of all types of shelters – night shelters, residential homes etc. – 600 are nursing home beds, and the oldest are 30 years old. The problem is the same – people on the streets age earlier and have diseases that go untreated for a long time. Then once they are very ill they need nursing care, but nursing homes cannot cope with their deviant behaviour. Usually a wing of a shelter is adapted with a special lift etc. and usually comprises 10-40 beds. They are sometimes connected with a night shelter, because this is where you come across the people who have been out of the health care system for longest. Dutch night shelters are very simple, and of the 1,000 beds, only 60 are single rooms. But otherwise hostels provide single rooms. Other nursing homes that have problems with clients deliver them to these shelters because the staff know how to deal with their deviant behaviour. **Jaap van den Berg** added that in the Netherlands most nursing homes have four to a room.

Niels Rasmussen confirmed that Denmark has no general homeless problem among older people because of high pensions and housing subvention system. However it maybe does among young people and those with a foreign ethnic background.

Lars Jappe commented that while some politicians oppose drugs being used in nursing homes, they have no alternative, as drugs are also used in prisons.

Debt

Flip Maas asked how Denmark and other countries deal with the issue of debt. Lars Jappe reported that a survey of socially excluded people revealed that many of them faced a debt problem. A recently survey by the National Institute of Social Research shows that of people on benefit for more than four years, more than 60% have a debt to the public sector (maybe even more have one to the private sector). It is a government priority to get more people into jobs, but when they come off benefit they have to repay their debt. This acts as a disincentive to find work. So the Ministry of Social Affairs proposed a debt reduction scheme, and a working group has been started up among ten min-



istries. The government has set aside 25 million DKK (€3.3 million) a year for four years and the methodology is being worked out. Peter Juul added that although maybe 25 million kroner does not sound that much, it will fund a small percentage payment on a lot of debts that will never be repaid. For instance one freak house resident owed the railway system 250,000 kroner (€33,000), so there is no chance they would ever get it – it is cheaper to write it off.

Rina Beers mentioned a good practice from the Netherlands, the budget control shops (*inkomensbeheer*) where people can go and have all the administration of money – paying bills, insurance etc – dealt with, and agree an amount of money they will take as spending money. They usually pay a fee of about €15 per month.

Gerhard Eitel said that in Austria you can make an individual bankrupt. If you agree with the court and your creditors to cover between 5% and 50% of your debt, and live for seven years on the minimum income, the rest of the debt can be written off. It works quite well. But for homeless people even repaying 5% can be problematic.

Hugues Feltesse reminded participants that the Irish peer review last November was on the topic of indebtedness. He added that it is very important to take prevention into account. The main reason for housing eviction is debts: in the new Member States utilities debts, and in other countries unpaid rent or mortgage.

9. Conclusions on general assessment and lessons learned

Flip Maas recapitulated the objectives of the session: to assess Danish policies and practice, taking into account different national considerations. Comments should cover the policy framework as well as the more specific areas of freak houses, user involvement, public awareness, etc.

He asked participants to say what the general value of the review had been for them, what lessons they had found worthwhile to take with them, what might be transferable or adaptable – and even if possible for ‘soft commitments’ as to what action each will try to take. This will be followed up after a few months.



9.1 Czech Republic – Petr Janousek

The review has been very useful.

The freak houses project is so far from the reality of the Czech Republic that we have a long journey to travel before we can get even close to these standards, though we would like to. So there is little possibility to transfer right now.

However the main thing we would like to communicate when we return is the programme *Our Common Responsibility*, which divides responsibility between local, regional and national authorities and NGOs. The main task is to persuade authorities to solve the problems by communicating with all key players in the field, which is not really happening right now. I will therefore press the government to make partnerships, taking Denmark as a good practice that shows that where there is a common sense of responsibility, there are good results as well.

Peter Juul responded that Denmark tends to take this programme as a given, and does not appreciate how good it is, because the values are there and all political parties agree on it. So there is no need to debate it. But it is very good tool. If you adopt such a programme, it is a good idea to be realistic about how far you can go at first, and then to reengineer it after some time.

9.2 Estonia – Triin Raag

We have prepared our NAP for period 2004-2006 and at the moment homelessness is included in housing issues.

One thing that I will definitely take with me is that access to employment is not always the main aim for homeless people. At the moment policy is that all people should work, and all reintegration is focused on work. But I have learnt that this is not always the issue.

The housing situation, care and user involvement are also very important issues. At the moment people are not involved at all – or to be honest they are not talking loudly. Services should be run by NGOs who have been users themselves. I would judge that the freak houses are not feasible under current conditions.



Imbi Eesmets

The Danish social system is much more developed than Estonia's, and comparing the two enables us to devise new approaches and attitudes in the field of homelessness.

The Estonian social system does not have enough resources to help all those people who need systematic support and aid. The most vulnerable groups are children, disabled people and old people. These groups are treated as priorities in the NAP and the whole activity must be oriented into the NAP framework as well. On the other hand homelessness is a major problem which also involves medical, employment, housing and other issues. Homeless people have multiple problems connected with their health, behaviour and overall attitude. Supporting them means taking money from some other target group (children or disabled people), so if we need to support a large number of people, the choice is made according to the principle of social justice.

Poverty is quite widespread in Estonia as a result of low incomes, high living costs (food, housing), high unemployment in some districts (the eastern part of country, some counties without much industry, and rural areas) and competitive attitudes in business and everyday life. Reducing poverty relies on increasing the employment rate, supporting education and medicine, and working out the most suitable support system for groups at risk of homeless (long-term unemployed people, people being released from prison, families with children, disabled people, people with mental health problems etc.)

Creating adequate housing conditions for the homeless necessitates inventing new approaches in the social welfare system and society in general. The attitudes of personal responsibility, human rights and equal opportunities in society need to be balanced and fit into the overall economic and social situation. Estonia has gained from Denmark many positive and interesting ideas and examples of a well organised social system, but it is impossible to copy the Danish experience into the Estonian situation today. We started some years ago to work out a successful model of rehabilitation and now rehabilitation centres for different target groups are in place in several places in Estonia. But the effect the centres will have is indirect and their real positive effect will appear over time. The option of social housing, supported housing or open market housing does not leave homeless people much choice. In future the housing market must meet everyone's needs, but today it is a question of political will, money and time.



The prevention of homelessness will be the means by which we can slow the growth in the number of excluded people and bring the situation of at-risk social groups under control. The activity must include many counselling services and early aid for those who can be rehabilitated more easily and quickly. We must also offer more direct services for long-term unemployed people, families, ex-offenders and other groups whose integration affects the number of homeless. These direct services must be financed by the government, local authorities and other organisations as well by the target group itself. I think that building a stronger and more comprehensive social system in Estonia will produce the best effect on the homelessness situation. We are trying to develop our system of night shelters, rehabilitation and day centres and services (various temporary and supported housing options with additional services) in order to help people to retain their ability to work.

Co-operation between government, local authorities, NGOs and other companies must be evaluated more thoroughly and the major policies must be the basic background for ongoing progress in the field of socio-economic development in Estonia. It will be the key to a more healthy society.

Labour market integration

Peter Juul commented that in Denmark it is the overall approach that nobody should be suffering from drug addiction – we should be a drug free society. This is long-term goal but we know that there will always be drugs around and some people who are suffering from addiction. It is the same with work. Our long-term goal is that everyone should have work, and we must not give up on anybody. What we are discussing is two things: how we organise incentives to work and how we organise the labour market so that there are opportunities for everyone. But these strategies do not work together all the time. We have another government programme called *More people at work* which contradicts homelessness policy in some areas, for instance by introducing a cut in cash benefit as an incentive to work. But the most marginalised people cannot cope with the normal labour market, and there are not enough special working places for these people. We are working on increasing the number of people who are in work, and we are working on debt as we discussed, but we have problems.

We say “the shortest way to the labour market may be a long one”. It is important for everybody to feel that they are a part of normal society and to give them a way to get their self-respect back if they lose it. So we try to give



people a structure in their daily life – it could be something as basic as getting up at 9 o'clock in the morning is the first step – places where they can meet other people, a café where they can make coffee etc., constantly having in mind that they could get something that looks slightly like work. Some will manage and some will not. Some of these people do not have much education or many skills. So if you do not create working places you cannot just expect them to work. It is important that people have a good life quality, self-respect, and something to fill their day with.

9.3 Germany – Ute Buck

The main aim of German policy is to prevent homelessness, and the law provides that if someone faces eviction for non-payment of rent, the municipality will pay the rent to avoid eviction. But if prevention does not work, the principle is to rehouse people not in freak houses but in normal houses.

Since 1999 a Bund-Länder programme called *Soziale Stadt* (Social City) has existed, of which housing, living environment and also homelessness are part. This tries to get all local players together in districts or towns where there are social problems, to build a sense of local responsibility to solve the problems. In Berlin and Nordrhein-Westfalen there are also two other programmes run between municipalities and NGOs to help homeless people.

As regards the transferability of the Danish project, the main difficulty is to clarify who is responsible within the federal system: the federal government, the *Länder* or the municipalities.

In the context of the NAP/incl. process we have started a special programme called FORTEIL (*Forum Teilhabe und soziale Integration* – Forum for Participation and Social Integration). This was started in March 2005 and we have invited France, the Czech Republic and Sweden to take part. There will be six workshops at which we will practice the method of open method of co-ordination and perhaps discuss Danish efforts on homelessness.

Local partnerships

Peter Juul commented that a few years ago Denmark had a pool of money to enable actors to try “new ways in social and housing policy on a local basis”, the principal idea of which – as in Germany – was to form partnerships



between local authorities, NGOs, inhabitants, churches, sport clubs etc. to improve the situation in some problematic areas. The programme is coming to an end as the new government has decided that it is mainly an issue of integration, so the funding is being switched from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Integration, who will use it for a different purpose. So it will come to an end unless the local authorities find a way to fund it. It also has a preventive aspect because maybe you can ensure that a wide spectrum of inhabitants stay in the area, instead of moving out and creating more and more of a ghetto-like situation.

'Partnerships' is a buzzword, but one critical point is that the funding, even if it is not a lot of money, should be put in a common pool for everyone to see and discuss. The partners, not the municipality, should decide how the money is spent. Otherwise you get a false partnership. It is very important that though it may not be a lot of money, what money there is should be common and open.

Inger Koch-Nielsen warned that it takes a long time to establish partnership structures.

9.4 Latvia – Kristina Lasmane

Learning so much about this great variety of services for homeless people has made me see homelessness as a much more important issue when addressing social exclusion. This is something we have not addressed, as it is not a priority in Latvia, especially this broad approach to homelessness. But seeing all this stimulates new ideas. Our network of services is developing, and principles such as user involvement are already acknowledged, but it is a question of implementing them. We will work on it. The peer review comes at a very good time, as Riga council is working on a strategy to prevent homelessness, and I think they will be able to implement some of these ideas.

Peter Juul: Two things come to mind. You say you are impressed by the big variety of services for homeless people. At least we try to have a holistic view of people, which means each person is special. And if each person is special, you have to have a variety of measures to deal with each individual's problems. This is one reason we have so many methods.

This also underlines the need to have framework legislation that is not too strict, so that the local authorities have a framework within which they can



innovate to solve individuals' needs. You should not hamper them by laying down a restrictive list of the solutions that they can adopt.

The other point is that you remark that the homeless are a very important group when you talk about the social inclusion NAPs. This is also true for the employment NAPs. We say, "If you don't have a home, you can't have work". A home is a precondition for a job in practice. We have an example of waiter who lost his home, and had to keep his clothes in a locker at the station, which made it very hard to hold down his job.

9.5 Luxembourg – Roland Maas

Firstly, I'd like to say that Luxembourg took part in the London peer review last year, and this had the important outcome that the first survey of homelessness in Luxembourg was funded, which is very important for understanding the problem, because at the moment there is no scientific information.

From the Denmark peer review we have learnt the value of a well co-ordinated strategy. Currently Luxembourg has a lot of actors acting in the field of homelessness: each ministry operates its own 'stairway' for its clients, with the help of different NGOs.

The example of single-bedded rooms is very good because in Luxembourg there are normally between two and six beds per room. Giving homeless people owners' rights, as illustrated by the Danish alternative housing model, could also be a good model in the Luxembourg context.

Finally the importance of prevention and the relationship of the housing market to homelessness are important factors for Luxembourg to consider, as rents are very high. At the moment we do not know the size of the problem, but for example ex-offenders are one target group for whom a minimum of resources must be provided on their release from prison.

Peter Juul: Obviously I agree on the importance of a well-connected strategy. However we are now restructuring the administration, which may put this connectedness at risk.

For people coming out of institutions we have a relay system – we cannot put prisoners or psychiatric patients on the street if there is no one there to help



them. In the UK ex-soldiers have a high risk of becoming homeless. Perhaps we need a peer review on this.

Mainstream policy vs. specialist policy

As regards mainstream housing policy is it probably a good idea to have mixed forms of housing tenure. However if achieving this means selling off public housing so that there is insufficient left, then the homeless are the losers, and one ministry's policy conflicts with another's. We therefore have to be more interventionist on sectoral responsibility – for instance the ministry of housing cannot be allowed to make mainstream plans without talking into account the effects on marginalised people. Now the system is that the ministry of social affairs comments on their plans.

9.6 Netherlands – Jaap van den Berg

The general position on homelessness is very similar – at the shelter visit yesterday I could not see the difference between Denmark and the Netherlands. The main difference is the drugs policy, because in addition to shelters and other facilities we have special rooms where addicted people can use drugs and get treatment. Both countries have a very liberal system of homelessness shelters, and deal with the same problem – a group that does not fit into the system, and that we cannot reach. There are two solutions: either you can use unusual measures to reach them – the freak houses are a good example – or you can use force: force this group into the system. Rina Beers' paper shows the tension in Holland, where at the moment there is pressure to use coercive measures to bring people into the system. For instance Rotterdam wants to use the law on mental illness to lock people up in hospitals 'in their best interests'.

As regards lessons to take back, recently the ministries of housing and social welfare have made an agreement to step up co-operation, and I will bring up freak houses as something for the Dutch situation.

Coercion

Peter Juul: On the issue of using force, this is also the case with the Swedish staircase model, but we feel that the penal element is 'unDanish'. We are currently discussing legislation on the conditions under which you are entitled



to put people in psychiatric care. There are movements towards using more force. This could be for economic reasons – for instance it would be cheaper to treat people at home, using force, rather than in hospital. There have been project initiatives with outreach teams (an American model) comprising a social and a medical person, with the doctor in charge. So there is an unholy alliance between the regional moneymen and the doctors, who want to give treatment without consent. So we get force by the back door.

There have been unfortunate cases, such as the Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh who was stabbed to death by a psychiatric patient (who had applied for treatment), which can be used to whip up fears. On the other hand we have people who want to stay in hospital because it is free, whereas in social institutions they have to pay. The hospitals would like to get rid of them.

9.7 Poland – Ewa Chylek

In general we appreciate the peer review and the opportunity to learn about the Danish approach to the problem of homelessness, even though the whole idea seems impossible to transfer to the Polish reality. However some aspects would be useful to transfer to Poland, for example involving different actors and service users. We know quite well about the triangle between national authorities, local authorities and NGOs. The lesson we have learnt is to continue this work and involve more social partners and stakeholders.

In Poland NGOs have been very active in the social services field, and have taken grassroots initiatives to fight homelessness. This may be the way to improve the legal framework. As for user involvement we have just started to take this approach.

As regards actions to take, we will integrate Danish ideas into the overall discussion on active social policy.

Piotr Olech

There is a big difference between context of homelessness in Poland and Denmark. In Poland it is more connected with the economic situation, unemployment, low income, debt and housing problems. In Denmark it is more correlated with social problems such as addiction. The priority in Poland is first of all to develop social housing. The second difference is that the Polish system is more



homogeneous, comprising only shelters and night shelters. This means that homeless people have to meet the needs of the system, rather than the other way round. Therefore freak houses would be difficult to develop, but they could be used as training flats to aid people in transition to permanent housing.

Alternative care houses are also important, as we have a total mish-mash of people in our shelters, including old people, addicts and alcoholics. We have no law on debt reduction, but we will try to develop one. On user involvement: we have some examples, but they are at the project level, not at the regional or national level.

It has been very useful to see the Danish experience of solving problems, and I hope Poland can develop similar solutions in future years.

Peter Juul: Regarding the comment that homelessness in Denmark seems to be a social problem and in Poland an economic one, maybe we should pause once in a while to remember that it is a multi-dimensional issue.

9.8 Eurocities – Gerhard Eitel

This meeting confirms the value of transnational exchange. I have learnt that it might be useful for some cities if we could produce a catalogue of measures. Eurocities has decided to adopt the FEANTSA definition of homelessness, which is very useful, and I am determined to promote 'alternative housing for alternative people'. In Austria the national government supports such measures specifically and Vienna already has such a policy.

As regards user involvement, we will seek to involve representatives of homeless people, and not only, as we do currently, of NGOs.

Finally we will take more notice of co-operation between our partner cities and the national level. It seems to work very well – especially the involvement of the local level in the NAP procedures. So it was a very useful meeting.

9.9 FEANTSA – Liz Gosme

The peer review is a very interesting framework to work in – to discuss specific issues among a wide variety of experts including service providers. We learnt a lot from this meeting and from our shadow peer review of the Dan-



ish experience, and will take the lessons and see to what extent they can be transferred. Obviously some countries are not ready for the freak houses project for example, but we have learnt a lot about other elements of Danish homelessness policy, namely that Denmark works on prevention and has an excellent user council, which has clearly had an impact.

In terms of follow-up we will evaluate this meeting with our members here today and will disseminate the outcome of both our shadow peer review and the overall peer review within FEANTSA and among our partners such as local authorities and social housing providers, as well as increasingly national parliaments. We are also organising a seminar at the European Parliament on 23rd May.

9.10 RETIS – Per Thomsen

RETIS is a network of cities and regions in the EU working on the fight against social exclusion. We have a small subgroup which is carrying out a peer review of homelessness, comprising Gijón, Florence, Brussels, Berlin and Ålborg. We first meet in December so this peer review has produced useful information for our next meeting.

9.11 Other Danish stakeholders

Hanne Fabricius was happy to learn about the NAP, and felt that the weak point might be that the municipalities and regions don't know much about it.

Ole Gregersen had found it useful to meet people and learn about their problems. He will try to use the results of the meeting to help user organisations in other countries, who are to meet in Brussels in the near future.

Preben Brandt had tried to use the visitors from abroad as a mirror for what is happening in Denmark. He will try to improve the quantity and quality of information and documentation that the Council for Social Marginalised People publishes. He will also raise in the Council the question of what is being done to prevent homelessness.



10.

10.1 Resumé and EU perspective – Hughes Feltesse

Mr Feltesse thanked the Danish authorities warmly for the high level of documentation, working conditions and hospitality from which the peer review had benefited.

1. Policy framework

On the EU level the NAPs reflect the analysis of the social policy of each member state, and we have now to prepare new NAPs in 2006. I am sure that the conclusions drawn from this peer review will help in drawing up these NAPs. But to improve the quality of the results, some key points need to be emphasised. Success depends on:

- a clear definition of responsibilities, supported by sufficient resource
- a clear definition of priorities
- support from a legal framework in such areas as debt relief

2. Mobilisation of all relevant actors

Mobilising all relevant actors is one of the Nice objectives for the social inclusion strategy, and here different key points need to be stressed.

Awareness raising: we have seen in the debate how important it is to raise the public's understanding of the issue of homelessness. It is this understanding that will lead to tolerance, the acceptance of difference, and confidence in the NAP. This is why the Commission has launched a first call for proposals for national awareness-raising campaigns, and there will be another call next year.

Capacity building: both administrative and social staff need the right skills, and Member States can use the European Social Fund to develop training schemes to raise these capabilities.

Partnership: we have seen again and again that authorities at different levels have to work together to find solutions that work. The Commission tries to support such partnership and networking.



Co-ordination: when we assess the content of the NAPs we look very closely at this, because if we want an integrated approach we need to have a capacity for co-ordination between the different ministries, agencies and actors. This means finding ways of overcoming resistance based on jealousy between different departments and agencies.

User involvement: a consultation process is also a key point for the social inclusion strategy, and I was very happy to see a very concrete realisation, which goes further than most. I think it should be a very good reference for the future.

Voluntary activity: strengthening voluntary social activities is a key point in the Danish programme. Often when we discuss this issue we forget the importance of civil society. We stress the lack of finance, but we forget the capacity of volunteers to give support. We have to organise this aspect of our society better.

3. Conditions of success

This kind of exchange and evaluation process is interesting because it helps us to see key points of the approach. One point that has been emphasised here is the need to have a good *diagnosis* of the context – which is different in each country. As Peter Juul stressed in his summary of working group 3, there are a lot of changes we have to take into account, such as those involving migrants, young people, the deinstitutionalisation process and domestic violence. We need absolutely to take these into account. We cannot have an approach that is the same everywhere. And inside each country we have to have the capacity for the same process of diagnosis, because the situation is not the same in big towns, small towns and rural areas, and the changes in the economy are not the same everywhere.

Secondly the *tailored* approach. This term has not been used, but it sums up what was expressed this morning as the demand from users: “see us as people, not cases”. When we stop to think about that, we can see a lot of opportunities to involve users, for instance by considering them as proper tenants, with all the rights of tenants to enjoy privacy, to invite friends etc. This is not a passive, but an active approach which in homelessness indicates outreach work. Another interesting point was *respect for diversity* of culture. This is a debatable topic. Some speak of the ‘freak’ culture and respect for it, but it applies equally to minorities, migrants and their traditional way of life. Finding



the right balance between *mainstream* services – education, health, employment etc. – and *specialist* services was also stressed. Some people warned that there is danger of increasing exclusion by providing freak education, freak healthcare and so on. Certainly we need to try to stay as much as possible in the mainstream. But sometimes people need support to stay in the mainstream, so we need also specific services and a wide-ranging approach.

A third area of discussion was the nature of the accommodation to be provided. The focus on freak houses was very interesting because the lesson drawn is that accommodation cannot be the same for everybody, and you have to provide housing that takes people's different situations into account. These needs may evolve over time. A key lesson is that schemes should be small-scale. Not necessarily just punctual, local projects, but *small-scale* schemes that take into account the local context but can be part of a large national programme.

The *trial and error* approach was important. Often the public sector is afraid to experiment. However NGOs can be more original and the capacity to experiment is certainly helpful in resolving social conflict situations.

Last but not least there is a very strong need for *monitoring and evaluation*. This point has to be stressed everywhere, because if we really want a supply of better quality, more effective services, we need a strong monitoring and evaluation process to demonstrate the need for and effects of change. Maybe this is the biggest challenge.

To conclude, I would say that this review has been complementary with last year's UK peer review, and that the results can be looked at together.

Flip Maas added that the Irish peer review can be consulted on the subject of indebtedness.

10.2 Resumé and closure in a national perspective

Peter Juul thanked participants, said the Danish hosts had enjoyed the meeting, and recommended participants to host their own peer review if they have the chance.

He commented that the NAP process is very beneficial as it obliges everyone to think about how they do things and to devise a strategy. And it is also important because it leads to mutual learning.



The Danish hosts had learnt that they should strengthen their preventive work, and pay more attention to the questions of debt and employment. On a smaller scale they plan to look into how much user influence there really is in the freak houses.

Flip Maas encouraged participants to complete the evaluation questionnaire, and explained that first an abstract and then (after consultation) full minutes will be published. Finally the synthesis report will be published on the website and on paper, in three languages.

He thanked participants for the way they submitted papers of high quality and to tight deadlines, thanked Peter Juul and Eigil Andersen again for organising such an enjoyable and useful event, and closed the meeting.