



Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in Social Inclusion

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Peer Review: Building a comprehensive and participative strategy on homelessness

Minutes



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



*The Peer Review was hosted by the Institute for Social Security,
Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Portugal*

Day 1

Welcome addresses

Luisa Guimarães (Institute for Social Security, Portugal) welcomed the participants to Lisbon. She explained that Portugal is finalising its National Health Plan 2011-2016, which is to promote good citizenship, access and equality, the quality of interventions, and healthy policies. In this context, and within Portugal's National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (ENIPSA), the Ministry of Health has undertaken to guarantee homeless people access to quality healthcare. The idea is that the system should be proactive and should investing more in helping those who are more vulnerable. Homeless people are a particularly vulnerable group, with below-average life expectancy. They also often have mental health problems and/or are addicted to psychoactive substances, such as alcohol and drugs. The development of targeted measures is therefore justified. The health sector sees the Portuguese homelessness strategy as a basic coordinating instrument that can generate efficiency gains throughout the health system. For example, it can limit indiscriminate use of emergency health services, avoid the duplication of services and reduce the number of hospital readmissions. This is a cost-effective strategy, and case management is seen as a good investment.

Antoine Saint-Denis (European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) thanked the Portuguese hosts and the peer countries for the excellent preparation of this Peer Review. We are, he said, at a turning point in the European Union, because of the crisis, changing social needs and growing financial pressure, but also due to the policy changes taking place at the moment. The peer countries have been involved in many anti-poverty activities since 2001. That emphasis is continued in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Each Member State is now discussing national poverty-related targets, following an agreement at the European level to reduce by 20 million the number of people living at risk of poverty or exclusion across Europe. The European Commission will soon make a proposal concerning a European Platform Against Poverty. So the general framework is changing. Hopefully, we will build on what has been achieved over the past decade in order to make further progress on reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion in Europe.

There are also some important developments specifically concerning homelessness and housing exclusion. The European Commission, together with the Member States, has been very active in this field. Knowledge, studies and surveys have been developed, together with assessments of national policies. The 2010 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, from the Commission and the Council, has now provided a policy framework. He was pleased to note that the strategy built up in Portugal has clearly been influenced by the European strategy. He invited all Peer Review participants to be both participative and frank during the discussions, so that a clear view would emerge both of the Portuguese strategy and of its interactions with realities in the peer countries.

Building up a National Strategy on Homelessness in Portugal

Isabel Baptista (Study Centre on Social Intervention, CESIS, Portugal; representative of Portugal in the European Observatory on Homelessness) said that, up to the end of the 1990s, social policy had tended to have a low profile in Portugal. After that, the making and implementation of social policy began to take on a territorial character, and to build more on cooperation between public welfare bodies and NGOs. This increased the sustainability of social programmes, as did Portugal's growing exposure to EU influences. The European Commission played an important role in fostering new forms of governance mechanisms within the Portuguese social sector. But to what extent have the organisations working with the homeless benefited from these dynamics or else been kept almost untouched by these changes? This is an important question for Portugal, but also for other countries in similar situations. In Portugal, this sector has always been very dispersed and lacking in guidelines. It is marked by the strong presence of non-profit organisations, both religious and non-religious. Each has its own agenda and outlook, and this made it difficult to build partnerships. Also, homelessness was long seen as a marginal issue in Portugal.

Key drivers prior to the launching stage of the Portuguese National Strategy included:

- The first **national survey on homeless people**, held in 2004 and involving all local authorities and local support services.
- The first **national count of the homeless**, at the end of 2005. This was coordinated by the Institute for Social Security (ISS), which mobilised different teams across the country, ranging from local authorities to NGOs.
- Later on, an ISS **evaluation of shelters for the homeless**, which pointed to flaws in service coordination and a lack of strategic cooperation.
- A growing awareness of a **European commitment to tackling homelessness**. European research played an important role in building the Portuguese strategy. Both the public authorities and the Portuguese NGOs took part in European programmes. This led to influential exchanges of ideas with counterparts in other countries.

The National Strategy tackled an issue that had a low level of political, social and media recognition. The multidimensional nature of homelessness meant that various approaches and commitments were needed. So the starting point was to invite in different sectors and levels, which then came up with the structure for the cooperation strategy. Key stakeholders were also involved in these initiatives. Their participation was scaled up in order to legitimise the process and come up with an initial strategy document. Efforts were made to maintain full participation by NGOs, but there were some delicate issues of representativity and recognition. The Portuguese NGOs do not have an umbrella organisation, so the relevant federations had to be identified. The stability of the core technical group had to be ensured. Putting together the National Strategy required leadership combined with flexibility and transparency. Portugal is a "good southern student" in Europe when it comes to producing strategic documents, but often faces operational difficulties in actually implementing them. In the case of homelessness, the new strategy had required a refreshed operational structure. It has introduced a type of institutional endorsement that did not previously exist. But is this sufficient? Should Portugal be moving towards legal enforcement? A major challenge is to reconcile the diverse local dynamics and structures across

Portugal with a common strategic approach. Resourcing, financial or otherwise, has to be reorientated if the new strategy is to work. Here too, the role of the State is fundamental.

Implementation of the Portuguese National Homelessness Strategy

Teresa Caeiro (Institute for Social Security, Portugal) recalled that Portugal had already had a number of national plans addressing vulnerable groups, such as victims of violence, drug addicts, mentally ill people and victims of people-trafficking. In some countries, these are included in the definition of homelessness. Locally, action for these groups is certainly expected to link up with the Portuguese homelessness strategy. But the definition of homelessness chosen is the one considered to be operationally most useful:

A homeless person is someone who, regardless of nationality, age, sex, socio-economic status and mental and physical health, is:

- *roofless and living in a public space or insecure form of shelter or accommodated in an emergency shelter, or*
- *houseless and living in temporary accommodation for the homeless.*

All the participants committed to both the definition and the strategy by signing letters of commitment, but there is no legally binding document. Some participants have already introduced elements of the strategy into their activities. The challenges embodied in the strategy are important, as they ensure that participants are motivated and will convert the strategy into action at the local level. Social networking is important here, although some partners may have some initial problems with the orientations drawn up for local groups. Another challenge was to improve the participation of homeless people at the implementation stage.

Planning involved defining the stages of implementation, and this entailed some readaptation of the definitions drawn up previously. It was also important to identify new stakeholders and involve them in the implementation. A new organisational structure was needed for the implementation group (GIMAE), which had now become a very large body involving many organisations. So it was restructured and the division of tasks was decided.

In some locations, Stage 1 of the implementation is still in progress, while others are moving into Stage 2. Time was taken over Stage 1, as it involved the dissemination of the "homelessness" definition and of the strategy. It is important that all the participants fully understand these and get used to working with them. Stage 1 included the creation of seven local networks in the localities identified by the 2005 study as having larger numbers of homeless people. Also part of Stage 1 was the characterisation of situations on the basis of the recommended variables. The role of FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless) in the drafting of the Portuguese strategy at this stage was fundamental. Not only did it motivate the NGOs to share experience at the European level, it also started promoting meetings between ministries from various countries. FEANTSA arranged for university inputs into the recommended variables for the information system. Unfortunately, implementation of that system has not always been as rapid as might be wished. Stage 1 included the establishment of local focal points and meetings to create or support local networks in the seven priority municipalities, the development of supporting tools for local intervention, and a permanent contact point for local networks, responding to requests by phone or e-mail or through meetings.

After nine months, a questionnaire was sent out to monitor local implementation. A questionnaire to characterise the homelessness situation was also sent out. This was in the form of an Excel file incorporating the recommended variables. Some resistance to filling in these questionnaires was encountered, but in fact their aim was to avoid the duplication of data. Evaluation of Stage 1 covered GIMAE's meetings and activities, but also local network activity. Only 58 of Portugal's 308 municipalities identified local intervenors with whom the GIMAE could link up directly. But although there were just seven priority municipalities, six others also decided to establish groups for the homeless. The evaluation showed that, one and a half years into the strategy, its aims had so far not been very effectively met. However, some local groups have developed effective implementation activities.

Stage 2 involves the creation of further new local networks, bringing the total to thirteen; a training programme for professionals, volunteers and the directors of some institutions; implementation of an Integrated Intervention model, including the use of case managers; and building up an information system to be used by all the local networks. Greater support for the networks by each of the GIMAE specialised sub-groups is envisaged. Financial support will go to temporary housing programmes, accommodation for victims of domestic violence, canteens, vocational centres and outreach teams. Up to now, all of this has been State-financed, but it is hoped that reformulation will lead to much more effective use of funding in future. Some specific funding schemes, such as one for local homelessness projects, are to be published in 2010 and will be open for local applications from 2011. Also to be funded are evaluation studies, in order to ensure that guidelines will be broad enough to be adaptable to local realities and dynamics. Stage 3 will correspond to the stabilisation and maintenance of implementation.

New stakeholders identified at the planning stage included the Ministry of Defence, as some former members of the armed forces are homeless; the Ministry of Education, as the strategy includes some goals related to non-discrimination in the school curriculum; the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF), which was invited to participate but declined; the National Statistical Institute (INE), both for the gathering of statistics on homelessness and for their linkage to the 2011 census, which will include homeless people; NGOs; researchers, as considerably more research than in the past is now being conducted into homelessness in Portugal; and homeless people, who participate in one of the GIMAE sub-groups.

The restructuring of GIMAE has included an enlarged Commission, which met every three months to review progress reports during the initial phases, and now meets bi-annually. An operational group prepares and coordinates the work of the sub-groups, in which the NGOs, researchers and homeless people are involved. Eight sub-groups have been created. The recommended variables now have to be incorporated into the social security information system, so that it can be accessed by all the NGOs who have case managers. They will then be able to feed in data on situations. Locally, a set of temporary responses to housing needs is in operation, as are vocational workshops, canteens and street groups. These work separately. The aim now is to assess whether they can respond to the problem, or whether they need to be reformulated. Local agents were asked to discuss this, so that the necessary changes can be made in terms of regulation. Risk indicators have been drafted, such as eviction rates. This work is to be further developed. Monitoring is still at the initial stage. Some meetings have been held to prepare a more adequate evaluation model, which could be passed on to the local networks, but this has not yet been achieved. Training is scheduled to begin in 2011. Media work has not yet begun, but is expected to focus on the fight against discrimination and on the progress of the strategy.

In general, the pre-existence of local social networks has been a factor for success in implementation of the strategy, and valuable lessons have been learned from the pilot projects. Limiting factors have been a lack of resources, the delay in starting up the information system, a lack of efficient monitoring tools, and the absence of an enforceable legal status.

Discussion

Juha Kaakinen (Sosiaalikehitys Oy, Programme to reduce long-term homelessness, Finland) asked if there are any specific measures for the seven priority municipalities identified in Portugal. To stimulate their activity, are mainly legislative demands or mainly financing used? When allocating any available extra funds, is a municipality's level of activity on this issue the main criterion, or the number of homeless people in the municipality? **Teresa Caeiro** explained that, under the National Strategy, where there are enough local partners to tackle this issue, they should come up with their own diagnosis and provide a plan of action for the whole municipality. homeless. But the lack of a legal status for the strategy means that municipal engagement in the process cannot be made mandatory. Finance will go to projects that stem from a local diagnosis and an agreed local plan of action. But of course, the number of projects for Porto and Lisbon will be higher than for the rest of the country.

Dolores Ruiz Bautista (Ministry of Health and Social Policy, Spain) said Spain is currently engaged in a process of involvement with its Autonomous Communities (regions) and NGOs on the homelessness issue. It is perhaps too soon to think in terms of a Spanish national strategy, but some terms of reference are being sought. There is no national legal basis for tackling homelessness, as this is a devolved issue. How did Portugal set about building the evidence base for its strategy? Did it encounter the same data gathering problems as in Spain? **Isabel Baptista** confirmed that similar problems exist in Portugal, even though its governance structures are less complex than Spain's. There is no centralised data system in Portugal. Building one is part of the National Strategy, but this aspect is lagging behind schedule. The quality of the information gathered in 2004 and 2005 was by no means satisfactory, but it did provide an opportunity to start working on a National Strategy. The 2004 survey gave a first overview of local action, or inaction, on homelessness across the country. It also showed that the concept of homelessness was not clearly understood in many municipalities. The second survey, in 2005, was more directed towards understanding the reality on the streets nationwide. On this basis, the national authorities went round and talked to the local ones, and came up with a plan to hold a head count of homeless people on one particular night, using local groups to conduct the survey. Undoubtedly, some homeless people were not counted during this exercise. But it was an important exercise that mobilised the stakeholders and built awareness of the issue, thus making it easier to continue the work. Also, it did produce at least some data that could be presented to the central partners, so helping to make the case for a National Strategy.

Ivana Ćirković (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Serbia) sought more details of how Portugal sets about coordinating the implementation of its strategy. Serbia experiences difficulty in gathering together all the stakeholders in strategies or projects that tackle at least two sectors, although this becomes easier when the projects are donor-driven, for example through EU pre-accession funds. As regards Serbia's anti-poverty strategy in 2003-2009, her unit was created at the central government level with the specific mandate to coordinate and monitor the strategy and report on its implementation. Who is in charge of the implementation of the Portuguese strategy, and what are the channels of communication? **Antoine Saint-Denis** asked who is responsible for what in terms of provision of services to homeless people in Portugal. Is it the State and the local

authorities alone, or is the situation more complex? He wondered if the lack of a legal basis is unusual in the Portuguese context. Are most reforms introduced by means of a law? If so, does this imply that the homelessness issue has not yet attained the kind of political consensus that would be needed for the adoption of a law? **Péter Bakos** (ReFoMix, Hungary) asked if regular, perhaps annual, counts of rough sleepers are planned as part of the evaluation of the Portuguese strategy. Hungary has conducted regular counts since 1999, currently covering about ten major cities. **Teresa Caeiro** explained that the ISS is responsible for coordinating the strategy. At the local level, the coordination centre is in some cases the social security office, but in others it is the town hall or the NGOs. Responsibility for the delivery of services generally rests with the institutions that receive funding for that purpose from the social security, sometimes with co-financing by the municipalities. Most of Portugal's national plans are gazetted as legislative decrees, but in the case of the homelessness strategy, it had been thought better to await its implementation and identify any local obstacles before adopting a law. Past experience suggests that unenforceable legislation can hinder practical progress. Nonetheless, some of the problems now being encountered are certainly due to the lack of a legal status. So now is the right time to take this next step. Head counts will become easier once the information system has been implemented. In the meantime, counts will be made twice a year. But it is hoped that, from 2011 onwards, homelessness figures will be drawn from the national database.

Presentation of the Discussion Paper

Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Thematic Expert, Heriot-Watt University, UK) emphasised the growing importance assigned to the homelessness issue at the European level in recent years. This has had a big impact on developments in Portugal and a number of other countries. The European Parliament has adopted a Declaration calling for an end to street homelessness by 2015. The 2009 Joint Report of the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Committee remarked that sustained work was needed to address homelessness. In the same year, the Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion was assigned the task of gathering evidence on the social and economic inclusion of homeless people. The resulting synthesis report made a series of suggestions for tackling the barriers to that inclusion. Most importantly, the 2010 Joint Report calls on Member States to develop integrated homelessness strategies. That is not just a call to action. The report also gives some very detailed guidance about what those strategies should consider. It suggests that they should have a strong focus on prevention, particularly on preventing evictions from rented property and ensuring that people who leave institutions have somewhere to go. It encourages Member States to move on from a focus on crisis or emergency provision to provision aimed at the "progression" or resettlement of homeless people back into appropriate long-term accommodation. The Joint Report clearly endorses the "Housing First" approach. This is a significant policy signal from the EU. It reflects a growing body of evidence from a number of EU countries, notably Finland, that Housing First works. It is a departure from the more traditional "staircase" approach, which expects that homeless people who have problems such as alcohol or drug addiction will do something to address them before they are given access to housing. So the "staircase" approach is to get them "housing-ready" before they are offered stable accommodation. Housing First, on the other hand, places the emphasis on stabilising the housing situation in order to create a context in which the other issues can be resolved. The Joint Report also points to the need for improved governance in relation to housing policy, for leadership and consensus-building, and for the involvement of all stakeholders throughout the process. This involvement has been a key strength of the Portuguese strategy.

Other relevant EU-level initiatives have included the development of the “ETHOS” typology by FEANTSA. Its purpose is not to impose one definition of homelessness on everybody, but rather to provide a structure within which the definitions in use can be clarified, in order to facilitate mutual learning and discussion on homelessness. The EU has funded a number of research studies and conferences on this topic. The European Consensus Conference would be an important step towards taking the activities and research forward.

Of the 15 Peer Reviews conducted so far, five have been on homelessness. This is an indication of the priority now given to the topic. Importantly, the present Peer Review would place that discussion in a Southern European context. The Portuguese strategy is being pursued in the context of a welfare state that is relatively weak, when compared to some of those in Northern Europe. But the Portuguese example shows that it is nonetheless possible to take forward a homelessness strategy that can have real benefits for the organisations involved in this field and ultimately also for homeless people themselves. The Portuguese strategy focuses particularly on enhancing the evidence base and improving service quality. It is implemented in three main areas: prevention, intervention in case of crisis, and follow-up support. There is clearly a strong emphasis on national and local organisational structures. This is likely to be of interest to other countries that are moving towards a strategic model. The underlying philosophy emphasises evidence; inter-agency cooperation (an important step forward in the Portuguese context); staff training as a means of improving service quality; housing needs and responses – one of the key outstanding challenges in the Portuguese strategy; support; and moving the State from a mainly funding role to one of strategic coordination. Financial, human and logistical challenges remain. This is a long-term strategy, which aims to bring about a paradigm shift. Aspects of the Portuguese policy raise a number of points for further discussion, she suggested:

- It opens a **“window” in the South**, by showing that progress is possible even where resources are very limited – provided that the strategy is right and the right people are on board. Does it provide a useful **model for other countries**?
- It has introduced a **“housing” dimension** into the treatment of homelessness, but this is still viewed primarily as a **“social” issue**. What balance should be struck between the two?
- It secured **stakeholder commitment** through a process of institutional endorsement. But it takes time to build that momentum.
- Is the Portuguese focus on a **narrow definition of homelessness** sensible or does it raise concerns about equality and other issues? A narrow definition can help to build consensus, but it may also render some groups “invisible”, as their homelessness tends to take different forms. Women, Roma and young people may be among these groups.
- Is the Portuguese strategy’s emphasis on **staff training** and **strengthening the evidence base** likely to be cost-effective, or should other priorities prevail?
- **EU-level initiatives** have clearly had a big impact on the Portuguese context. Has that been the case in other countries? If not, how could the impact of the EU measures be enhanced?
- What impact will the **economic crisis** have? Will it generate new forms of homelessness? Will it reduce funding for the development and implementation of strategy and for service delivery?
- What balance should be struck between **national strategy** and **local flexibility**? The emphasis may need to vary from country to country, due to different administrative structures.

- Where a **culture change** is needed in both statutory and voluntary agencies, how can that best be progressed?
- Do we actually need to change **the public's perception of homeless people**? Or should we just get on with tackling the issue, without waiting for public opinion to shift?
- Should national strategies set **concrete, quantifiable targets**, such as a set reduction in the number of rough sleepers on the streets? Or should they rather, as in the Portuguese case, focus on **policy implementation and milestones**?
- What concrete difference does a **"rights-based approach" to homelessness** make? For example, should a right to housing be enforceable through the courts?

Discussion

Alcina Ló (Institute for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Portugal) commented that representation within her GIMAE sub-group on drug-related issues has been very strong and positive. So she felt that there is much to be gained from the National Strategy. Her role within GIMAE is also part of her institute's current internal process of analysis. The institute is committed to getting the national guidelines implemented in its local operations. It also works in full coordination with the social security system, with which it has a protocol. **Piotr Olech** (Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Getting Out of Homelessness, Poland) noted that national statistical offices are required, under the 2011 European census, to provide information on primary ("roofless") and secondary ("houseless") homelessness. Does Portugal intend to make use of that information? What political support does the National Strategy have in Portugal? How many people within the ISS are working on the coordination of the strategy? **Teresa Caeiro** pointed out that European census will apply Eurostat's definition of homelessness, which is not the same as the Portuguese one. The European definition includes those in temporary housing. As regards political support, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity was among those presenting the strategy, and the various ministries are committed to developing the relevant elements within it. At the ISS itself, one person works on the coordination of the strategy, assisted by a deputy when needed. At this stage of implementation, it is very difficult for just one person to manage the whole activity. She emphasised that the Portuguese strategy also includes some very specific goals, such as reducing the time involuntarily spent on the street to a maximum of 24 hours. **Isabel Baptista** added that, in her personal view, political support for the strategy was not clear at the outset. It was built up as the strategy began to unfold. This was due to the commitment of all the stakeholders, and to the assessments. As a result, everyone pushed for more political support. As regards coordination, the most important thing is not the number of people working on it, but whether they can work in an autonomous way. We must provide the right conditions.

Neil Munslow (Eurocities Working Group on Homelessness) appreciated that the Portuguese are having to do a lot with rather few people. But how far have they gone in calculating expenditure on provisions for the homeless, such as hostels, and in seeking control over that spending? **Teresa Caeiro** said the strategy receives a set budget from the State. She did not think that the overall sum spent on homelessness will decrease, but perhaps it will no longer be possible to set up new teams with new equipment. Investment will be more focused on housing. For that, a finance programme of €11m has been created. **Ricardo Caldeira** (Municipal Chamber of Cascais, Portugal) thought that, for the municipalities, the setting of a national policy framework had been vital to the achievement of progress. This had been a matter not so much of enforcement as of feeling sheltered by an umbrella at the national and European levels.

Teresa Caeiro asked whether other countries are able to quantify the total costs involved in their national strategies. How do they go about establishing their budgets? **Neil Munslow** suggested that it is easiest to calculate the resources used to tackle homelessness in its narrowest definition: street sleepers. The broader it becomes, the more difficult it is to determine budgets. One way of estimating costs more accurately is to follow individuals' use of homelessness services and other services, such as those related to drugs. But this method is expensive, and it raises issues of privacy and data-matching. **Alcina Ló** was positively surprised to see the budget available in Finland for the fight against homelessness. What areas of spending does it cover? **Juka Kaakinen** replied that the Finnish national programme to reduce long-term homelessness allocates over €200m for a four-year period. This includes the construction and purchase of housing for homeless people and the provision of services for them. The major part is spent on housing. Most of the funding comes from the State, but the municipalities also contribute – especially for the support personnel. This is the first time that Finland has had this kind of intersectoral cooperation. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Health contributes about €10m towards the personnel costs, and the municipalities put in the same amount for the support personnel. Over the past two years, 130 new support workers have been taken on. This is the biggest hiring ever of new workers for homeless services. A lot of money is involved, certainly, but Finland conducted a scientific survey of the costs of homelessness. It showed that this programme saves money. At one pilot unit in Tampere, the savings amounted to about €14,000 per homeless person per year. So €200m is actually not so much, compared to the savings made by getting homeless people housed. This economic argument is the main one being used in favour of a further Finnish programme for the next four years. In the present economic climate, value-for-money arguments are particularly important. He suggested that more research into the costs of homelessness is needed, also at the European level. **Lars Benjaminsen** was very pleased to see the Portuguese emphasis on case management, as this is one of the methods that have proved most effective in bringing people out of homelessness in Denmark – especially when accompanied by a targeted housing solution. One of the approaches in the Danish strategy is to simply look at what it costs to provide a case manager and similar interventions to the individual over a period of time. The total Danish homelessness budget is about €65m over a four-year period. A substantial part of that money has been set aside to provide targeted new housing, and another big portion is earmarked for the provision of social support. A lot of the emphasis has been on calculating how many people can be put through that social support, given the budget allocation, and how much a case manager costs over a certain period of time. **Teresa Caeiro** felt that, as Portugal has not yet had much experience of case management, some time will be needed before its cost can be calculated. The main concern now in budgeting for local projects is to ensure that it can cover both housing needs and case managers for each individual. **Dolores Ruiz Bautista** said two sources of financing are involved at the national level in Spain – the social services and what was until recently called the Ministry of Housing. The ministry's spending aims to give vulnerable people access to housing, of which there is no shortage in Spain. The Ministry of Health and Social Policy has two main budget lines in this field. One is to finance the NGOs' programmes for homeless people. Each year, there is a call for proposals under this tax-funded budget of almost €10m. The other budget line finances the social services, under an agreement between the national, autonomous community and local administrations. This spending includes the financing of centres, hostels another alternative lodging and specific activities of Prevention and Insertion for homeless people. But the autonomous communities and local government also spend money on tackling homelessness. So it is difficult to give an overall figure for Spain.

Teresa Caldas Almeida (High Commissioner for Health, Portugal) saw the National Strategy as a tool for promoting efficiency right across the Portuguese system. Rather than calculating the cost of a case manager, we should be thinking of the overall savings that can be made through the coordination of the whole process. Portugal's national health service is free and universal, so the structure exists to help homeless people. But tackling homelessness effectively can help the health service to reduce costs. **Cláudio Correia** (General Directorate for Health, Portugal) agreed. Via the case managers, the strategy will ensure better clinical follow-up after a homeless person has undergone emergency hospitalisation. One specific aim of the strategy's operational programme is that all homeless people should be registered with a health centre, which is the first line of care. Many homeless people have multiple pathologies, such as diabetes, mental illness and drug addiction. The strategy gives the health services the support they need to tackle these problems. **Teresa Duarte** (AEIPS, Homelessness Platform in Lisbon, Portugal) said that initial estimates by the Housing First project in Lisbon, for its first year, put the combined cost of rents and case management at €17 per user per day. This contrasts with services that place homeless people in boarding houses in Lisbon, which reportedly spend €30 per user per day. Initial data also show a dramatic reduction in the use of emergency services by people who have been put into stable housing. And they cease to use subsidised public canteens and bath-houses. More thoroughgoing analysis is still needed, but all the indications are that in cost-benefit terms, tackling homelessness properly is highly advantageous. **Juha Kaakinen** said those working with homelessness policy need to start using the language of economists: tackling homelessness is an investment, with a shorter payback time than for many other investments.

Implementation of the Portuguese strategy: practical examples

LISBON

▪ *Homelessness Platform (PSA) in Lisbon*

Rosário Reis (PSA Coordinator, Institute of Social Solidarity, Portugal) recalled that, in 2007, a working group drew up a step-by-step plan for homeless people in Lisbon. It aimed at integrated management of resources, the implementation of a proactive and preventive intervention model, and the training and qualification of stakeholders, leaders and organisations. The PSA was created in July 2009 to implement and develop this plan. The platform brings together public and private bodies, working in close cooperation with the Lisbon Local Social Action Council. The PSA based its activities on three axes: reorganising and optimising the network of equipment and services; implementing an integrated intervention model in Lisbon; and qualifying the intervention. The model to be presented was always to be linked to the National Strategy. Four different "ideal" responses, in line with Lisbon's needs, were identified: an emergency centre (with a help desk and an accommodation unit), temporary accommodation centres operating 24/24 (as opposed to night-time only, as up to now), transitional housing, and individualised housing (Housing First and supported housing). Each response is designed to match the different stages at which an individual may be: emergency and initial guidance; follow-up and motivation; insertion and autonomy. There is no obligation to go through all of these stages. That will depend on the needs of the individual. Each case is analysed by the case manager. The PSA also updated the list of organisations dealing directly or indirectly with homeless people in Lisbon. Their action and experience were analysed in terms of the three axes, and their training needs were identified. Specific proposals were made in line with the four "ideal" responses. For example, it was recognised that in the temporary accommodation centres, the number of beds needed to be reduced and the kitchens and toilets upgraded. The PSA is keen to establish common

priorities and good practice references, while preventing duplication of effort. Various meetings and awareness-raising actions, in cooperation with the GIMAE, are planned for the near future, as well as training. There will also be meetings with homeless people themselves. Each organisation will be able to contribute its ideas and explain how they could be implemented within the city. With the local authorities, work is under way to identify available spaces for individualised housing, as many houses are currently standing empty in Lisbon. Partnerships will be set up within the network, according to the needs identified, bringing in resource persons from the police, the health services, the employment services etc. The main constraints facing the PSA are the current economic climate, the significant number of organisations offering similar services within the city, and the difficulty of harmonising different organisational approaches and cultures. Each partner's strong points need to be used to promote change in the city.

- ***Housing First Project***

Teresa Duarte, the project's coordinator, explained that it supports homeless people, all of whom are mentally ill, in accessing and maintaining independent apartments, rented from community landlords in mainstream neighbourhoods. The priority criteria are: people with mental illness; people who are living on the street; people who have been homeless for longest. Housing First provides immediate access to individualised and permanent housing. Users are not required to seek psychiatric treatment or to deal with their alcohol problems in order to be housed. In line with the preference expressed by the majority of users in a survey, one housing unit per person is provided. Nobody shares accommodation. The apartments are scattered all over Lisbon. There are never two of them in the same building or even the same street. As far as possible, people are allowed to choose which area will they live in. A support team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Units for rent on the open market cost €350 - 400 per month. Tenants pay 30% of their monthly income towards the rent. Once they are integrated and in employment, they can take over the leases. The landlords have been very receptive, as they see benefits in this partnership. It guarantees that the rent will be paid in full and on time, and that compensation will be paid for any damage caused by the tenant. The landlords also know that they can contact the project if they have any concerns. The project's support service team currently has 5 staff for 50 participants. One of the team was previously homeless. Tenants must agree to regular home visits (at least six per month). They receive help with daily tasks, such as accessing health services and other resources and shopping in supermarkets, and they become very skilled at managing their money. 64% of the project participants are male. This closely reflects the proportion of men and women living on the streets. 71% of the participants are schizophrenic, 19% are bipolar, and 10% have other mental illnesses. 40.5% are also addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. 61.9% had been homeless for more than 6 years. This includes 9.5% who had been homeless for 16-20 years. Up to now, 90.5% of the participants have remained in the housing assigned to them. Most participants feel in need of continued support, mainly as regards training, employment and other activities in the community. Their use of emergency services has dropped dramatically. 45.8% had used an ambulance while homeless, but only 4.2% since moving into a house. All the participants feel that they have more opportunity to study, seek work or achieve other ambitions since moving into a house. On the street, their only concern was to survive.

- ***Mental health protocol***

Paula Domingos (National Mental Health Coordination Body, Portugal) described a protocol signed between her organisation and the Psychiatric Hospital Centre in Lisbon (CHPL). It stems from a recognition that homeless people have difficulty in accessing the mental health

services provided by the healthcare system, but also that traditional psychiatric services have difficulty in responding to homeless people's needs. Its aim is to make the most of resources by drawing on the CHPL's know-how to refine referral procedures, identify information channels and define the target group. The protocol emanates from both the National Mental Health Plan and the National Homelessness Strategy. People generally access mental health care via a health centre, but registration there requires an address. The protocol tackles this problem in the case of people who are suffering from severe mental illnesses and are not receiving psychiatric follow-up, without reference to the geographical area in which the health centre is located. The protocol sets out to ensure such follow-up for homeless people referred by case managers, coaching teams and other support institutions. It also aims to assist the training of professionals working in the Lisbon Homelessness Platform. Referral takes place by filling in a form - drawn from the National Strategy - that asks only for the minimum data needed in order to provide help. Information about the health situation of the homeless person is sent to the case manager on a return form, by e-mail or fax. Thus, the provision of mental health care for homeless people follows the partnership model set out in the National Strategy. It is based on articulated responses, integrated intervention and the role of the case manager.

Bernie Doherty (Dublin City Council, Ireland) asked how the Housing First project had set about convincing landlords to take part. And are there any plans to extend the project? **Teresa Duarte** admitted to initial doubts about the landlords' willingness, but the very solid guarantees provided, plus the fact that Housing First tenants are subject to exactly the same obligations as any other tenant, soon convinced them. Now, landlords who have a house available at the right rent have actually started to contact Housing First themselves. Initially, this was a one-year pilot project. But now efforts are being made to validate and extend it, perhaps up to 65 participants. The intention is also to extend the approach to other parts of the country, notably Porto. **Antoine Saint-Denis** asked how many beds Lisbon has for homeless people. **Rosário Reis** answered that the capacity is currently about 400. **Suzanne Fitzpatrick** said the Housing First project in Glasgow is using social, rather than private, housing. But it is having some difficulty in persuading the social landlords to provide permanent tenancies. The Glasgow project is currently considering what sanctions should apply to tenants who initially accept the visits and help, but subsequently refuse them. What happens in Lisbon if somebody starts refusing the visits? **Teresa Duarte** replied that anyone running such a project must maintain a certain dose of flexibility. But in fact, the question rarely arises. The tenants really do feel in need of the help. Rather than hiding away from the project, they want to stay close to it and use all its facilities. Occasionally, someone may find the visits intrusive. But they certainly will not be kicked out because of that. The project will keep in contact with them. This is a matter of trust, and trust has to be built.

Péter Bakos was pleased that Housing First is now being adopted in Europe, after the United States. As the users contribute to the sustainability of the Lisbon Housing First project by paying 30% of their income as rent, he wondered what income they have. **Teresa Duarte** said some people have no income at all at the beginning. In that case, the project pays 100% of the rent. But one aim of the project is to help them regain the benefit and pension entitlements that they lost because they had no permanent address. As soon as that income starts flowing, they pay the 30%. **Juha Kaakinen** asked if participants are actually entitled to take over their tenancies. **Teresa Duarte** confirmed that the initial agreement with the landlord stipulates that the tenancy will be transferred to the occupant if and when the occupant is in a position to pay the full rent. **Lars Benjaminsen** was pleased that the cooperation of private landlords had been sought so successfully. In most other countries, projects of this kind have to rely on social housing. Does Portugal have any mechanisms for allocating social housing to vulnerable groups such as homeless people? **Lurdes Lima** (Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation, Portugal) said

various social housing schemes exist, but access to them is governed solely by income. There is no specific provision for homeless people or other vulnerable groups.

CASCAIS

Ricardo Caldeira emphasised that the local strategy for the integration of homeless people in Cascais is not a municipal plan. It was created by the institutions that make up the local Social Network. Coordinated by the city hall, their planning group for action on homelessness (GPISA) also includes representatives of the social security system and the local health structure. The points identified for action are closely linked to the National Strategy. The goals for the local plan's first stage (2010-2011) are: implementing a scheme of procedures for emergency interventions and follow-up on the situations reported; making a survey of the scale and nature of local homelessness; ensuring a common perception of the problem and the solutions; setting up a local organisation of the bodies involved; ensuring intervention quality, with a view to integrated interventions; helping to update the data for the National Strategy; ensuring that 80% of the cases have a designated case manager; and ensuring that, in 40% of the cases reported, agreement is reached on an individual plan for social integration. Analysis, planning and monitoring are coordinated by the GPISA. On the intervention side, two specialised teams handle initial frontline response, sorting and pre-diagnosis. Six parish¹ coordinating teams are responsible for diagnosis and the assignment of case managers. The municipality and the parishes make specific community resources (healthcare, accommodation, food etc.) available via the case manager. Some effort has gone into ensuring that all concerned will use a common format, drawn from the National Strategy, for gathering data on each case. In January 2010, Cascais had 100 reported cases of homelessness that fitted the national definition. When the new system was brought in, the number initially rose to 114. Of those, 41 are no longer active cases, either because they have been (temporarily) resolved by the network or the person concerned, or because the person has moved to another municipality or an unknown place of abode. Of the 73 active cases (67 men and 6 women), 48 have a case manager, and 17 of those are within the scope of the social insertion plan. 25 still have no case manager, due to a lack of resources. This is a major constraint, which needs to be overcome. 48 of the active cases are still sleeping rough. Of the 73 active cases, 16 are foreigners and a further 8 are of unknown nationality. The local strategy's achievements so far include better knowledge of the problem, more effective use of resources and greater use of case management. Obstacles include issues of mental health and of alcohol and drug addiction, which will require more specialised competences, as well as a lack of housing responses so far. To succeed, the local strategy needs more resources. Action envisaged in its second phase, from 2012 onwards, includes the adaptation of intervention methods, the development of strategies for families at risk of homelessness, and more staff training.

PORTO

Paula França (Institute for Social Security – Homelessness Strategy Coordinator for the City of Porto, Portugal) said the work on homelessness in Porto would never have been possible without the National Strategy. The 15 parishes of Porto currently have 2,237 homeless people in all, which is about 1% of the total population. A number of NGOs in Porto provide temporary hostel accommodation for homeless people. The social security also pays for people to spend the night

¹ Civil parishes (freguesias) are the administrative subdivisions of a Portuguese municipality – *Ed.*

in temporary housing. Altogether, some 90 voluntary organisations have been identified as working with homeless people, but in fact there are probably more. 62% of the homeless people in Porto are men. The majority are aged 20-50, divorced, often school drop-outs with low qualifications, long-term unemployed, with little or no work experience. Many of them come from areas of high unemployment outside the city. 50% of them are ill, and a significant number refuse treatment. Mental illness is particularly prevalent and difficult to treat. Their relationships tend to be short-lived, with frequent changes of partner. Many are from broken homes, with a background of drug addiction, prostitution and alcoholism. Most are quite familiar with the homelessness services, which they both use and abuse. Some live from begging. Some have minimum invalidity pensions or are on social reinsertion benefits. Most of those using the services are not available for participation in a life project. In Porto, an inter-institutional network is being built up. It consists of a Partnership including all the institutions, services and NGOs involved. This works in close cooperation with the National Strategy team. The important thing is to get to know all of the institutions in this field, talk to their managers, get them on board, and identify points of difference so that in future these problems can be resolved and duplication of effort can be avoided. The general conferences of the partners are big affairs, often bringing together more than 100 organisations. There are also smaller groups that focus on specific issues, and it is important that their proposals are evidence-based. **Sofia Guedes** (Case Manager, ARRIMO, Portugal) explained that social interventions under the Porto scheme are organised in a number of stages, in order to make the best use of resources. If there is a case manager present at a reported situation, the intervention can be approved immediately. If not, the call centre will try to ascertain the details and make a pre-diagnosis. As the assistance to the individual develops, more qualitative information will be needed, and this is where case managers with a knowledge of the street can be useful. Case managers have to be analytical rather than judgemental. A diagnosis is never permanent. This is an ongoing process. A case manager needs to be scientific, knowledgeable, well-trained, respectful of other people's lifestyles, tolerant, understanding, assertive, inquisitive and available. **Paula França** added that the Porto scheme has taken 1,528 people off the streets since April 2009. Of these, 1,006 are still in the follow-up process. The Porto scheme has managed to operate within its State-allocated budget of €98,100 per month, but funding is a problem, and she suggested that the EU should consider programmes in this field. One possibility being examined in Porto is to set up a company that would provide some employment for those homeless people who are capable of working, while at the same time generating some additional funds for the fight against homelessness. Responses to homelessness now being implemented in Porto are: social accompaniment for all, including those in the streets; long-term accommodation for those who are unable to achieve full autonomy; and a residential emergency unit for those who are not yet stabilised.

Day 2

NGO statement

Neil Munslow explained that some 200 cities across Europe pay EUROCITIES to lobby on their behalf. It has a working group on homelessness, in which ten cities are permanent members: Barcelona, Bergen, Malmö, Munich, Newcastle, Oslo, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Utrecht and Vienna. The cities' perspective matters because they have the tasks of establishing the scale of homelessness in their area, making the resources available to meet these needs, exercising the authority to coordinate these resources as well as other care and support services, predict the future needs of the local population, and implement the strategic requirements of the regional, national and European levels of government. Both EUROCITIES and FEANTSA welcome and support the Portuguese strategy which, in FEANTSA's words, shows that "progress on homelessness is also possible in an unfavourable structural and welfare context". Portugal has created a progressive and transferable framework for understanding need and for the application of resources to meet that need. National initiatives can secure change through some or all of three elements: strategy, legislation and finance. The more the better, but few European countries have all three. Portugal has chosen to use strategy. That is a framework, but we must not become too obsessed with seeking perfection. The pragmatic approach of starting to do something straight away has a great deal of value. The strategy sets some good universal principles to build on. Without a means of delivery, these can become rhetoric, but they are a great start. These common principles could be applied in any European country or city seeking to develop a homelessness strategy. FEANTSA noted "a general consensus that homelessness is a process/pathway and that there is a need also to include preventative measures in the strategy". Understandably, the strategy focuses on crisis. One way of rebalancing it towards prevention would be to take an explicitly whole-market approach. This could look at primary prevention activities within services for the whole community. The needs of homeless or potentially homeless people should be taken into consideration in local investment plans, health strategies, crime and disorder planning and similar initiatives. Education, training and employment services should also be involved. Secondary prevention activities should include improving the quality of emergency accommodation (which may mean choosing quality over quantity), preventing evictions through agreements with major landlords, and providing pathways out of hostels and into independence. Crisis prevention services for those on the street can be provided by multi-agency outreach teams, but here too, the aim should be to point to a way out. Other possible areas to build on include accreditation models for the quality of services, stronger links to budgets and commissioning as a way of enforcing strategic aims, simplified performance management based on headline outcomes, a three- or five-year cycle of reviewing definitions and aims and, if possible, recognising a legal right to accommodation. The Portuguese strategy is transferable, and specific progress can be developed from the universal principles it embodies. The Open Method of Coordination, and especially FEANTSA's role in it, demonstrably helps to improve service delivery and value for money. He found Lisbon's Housing First model particularly positive.

Peer country discussions

Ivana Ćirković reported that Serbia has already passed to the formal implementation period of its poverty reduction strategy. Between 2003 and 2009, it managed to halve the absolute poverty rate, from 14% to around 7.2%. Due to the economic crisis, it rose again to 9.3% during 2009. As Serbia is a potential candidate country, its government began to tackle the rest of the EU social inclusion agenda in 2009. Over the period of the poverty reduction strategy, the system was

organised, the basic laws and strategies on the national and local level were defined, and relevant policy measures were identified to improve the status of the various groups recognised as being at particular risk of poverty. This led on to the idea of mapping groups who are recognised as vulnerable by the European social agenda. Serbia is now preparing its first national report on social inclusion and poverty reduction, covering the period 2008-2010. The government is expected to adopt it at the end of 2010. This is being used as an exercise to prepare the administration for the Joint Inclusion Memorandum that it will be asked to draw up when it becomes a candidate country. Serbia's statistical office is also beginning to pilot its contributions to the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). So altogether, it is establishing the framework long before it will be formally invited to do so. This gives Serbia the opportunity to start thinking about the "new" vulnerable groups, including homeless people. Participating in this Peer Review is a good starting point for Serbia's consideration of this issue. **Biserka Terzic** (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Serbia) found the Portuguese model very useful, particularly the Housing First approach and the training of case managers, as Serbia has strategies and action plans for refugees, internally displaced persons and Roma. **Ivana Ćirković** added that drop-in centres for children and adults are already being run by NGOs in Belgrade and some other cities, and a new law on social protection is being drafted, which for the first time will also recognise NGOs as service providers.

Dolores Ruiz Bautista said that, while getting to know the Portuguese policy is important to Spain as a Southern European country, the Spanish situation is very different due to the complexity of the governmental structures involved. Thanks to the European strategy, and the consequent development of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, Spain has organised a very good stakeholder network on all issues of social protection and social inclusion, that includes the creation of a committee of all the ministries involved in social inclusion together with a Committee of representative of Autonomous Communities and local authorities and a council of NGOs. But social policy, including homelessness policy, is primarily the responsibility of the autonomous regions, together with the local authorities. However, work is underway to build cooperation and consensus among the various levels of administration, and a working party on homeless people is being set up. At a seminar in Seville in November 2010, the federal government will present to the autonomous communities and local authorities a model consisting of minimum standards for services to homeless people and of suggested structures and management techniques for those services. In addition to national, regional and local funding for homelessness programmes, the Spanish Operational Programme for combating discrimination of the European Social Fund helps to finance social action NGO, which among their activities, helps homeless people in Spain and the new modification of the article 7 of the Regulation of the European Regional Development Fund that will support social housing, will be important for Spain, as it will contribute to improve the housing conditions of Roma people taking into account that Spain is the country with Europe's second-highest number of Roma. She hoped that elements of the Portuguese experience could be adapted to Spain's circumstances. **Felipe García Leiva** pointed out that much of the effective work to assist homeless people in Spain is currently carried out by locally based organisations, for example in major cities such as Seville, Madrid and Barcelona. He emphasised the need for any national Spanish policy to take full account of the situation and policies in different parts of the country. **Dolores Ruiz Bautista** assured him that it would.

Rui Eduardo Azenha Sampaio de Oliveira (Ministry of Defence, Portugal) felt that it is really too early to evaluate the Portuguese strategy. The baby is just learning to walk. Comments from the peer countries would be very valuable in the further development of the Portuguese strategy. **José Domingos** (European Anti-Poverty Network, Portugal) said the Portuguese strategy's emphasis on involving all the stakeholders augured well for other anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies. However, the definition of homelessness in the strategy is too narrow. The NGOs did not succeed in getting it broadened, but they did manage to bring in dimensions such as prevention and follow-up. So in general, the NGOs are pleased with the strategy. The big problem is resources. Small organisations already working under severe constraints cannot be expected to take on new management and coordination tasks under the strategy unless it also provides them with more resources. The strategy itself also needs more resources, and to obtain them, it needs a legal status. **Claire Gavin Ryder** (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland) said that the Irish strategy to tackle adult homelessness in the period 2008 to 2013, has been approved by the government and relevant ministries as an official policy document. A New Housing Act came into effect in 2009 and this gave new legislative provisions on homelessness also came into force on 1 February 2010 which put Homeless Action plans on a statutory basis. **Piotr Olech** noted many similarities between the Portuguese and Polish situations – notably the prominent role of the NGOs. In Poland, he had the impression of increasing competition between NGOs, which are now accepting government and municipal support. There is no federation of organisations dealing with homelessness in Poland. What he would take away from this Peer Review is Portugal's welcome emphasis on a multi-departmental, multi-sectoral approach. **Péter Bakos** said the situation is also similar in Hungary, where more than 50% of providers of homelessness services are NGOs. He thought the main lesson from this Peer Review is how to get all the relevant actors around the table. That needs to be done at the outset, so that they know what their role will be. Hungary has a strategy, which the government commissioned two experts on homelessness to develop in 2008. They did a very good job. The strategy takes a comprehensive approach, but it did miss one very important step: the involvement of all the relevant stakeholders. Political support has also been lacking. However, the new government has adopted a resolution for a mid-term action plan to reduce the number of rough sleepers. He praised the Housing First approach, which should also be tried in Hungary. He also appreciated the identification of the risk indicators in the Portuguese strategy, as prevention is a very important aspect. **Gellért Ghyczy** (Ministry of Natural Resources, Hungary) emphasised that creating a good strategy takes time. This is a big challenge in Hungary, where strategies tend to be rushed.

Teresa Caeiro said the Portuguese concern initially was to involve as many NGOs as possible, but this was not feasible in the working groups, as there were so many of these organisations. So representative federations were invited in. But bodies working with the homeless are not federated in that way, so they could not all be represented in the working groups. This led to some unease, also at the European level. These processes are not easy to manage. They can be conflictual and they do indeed require time. Consensus must be built before moving on to the next step. **Fátima J. Monteiro** (National Federation of Entities for the Rehabilitation of Mentally Ill People, Portugal) said the constitution of the operational group is an ongoing process, which new members can still join. The NGOs' role is changing. Initially, they brought their experience and views to bear on the formulation of the strategy. Now, they can provide technical support for its implementation and further development. Representation of homeless people themselves is another challenge. In Portugal, they do not have any organisation that represents them, so a kind of parliament of the homeless may be needed, together with capacity-building, in order to achieve that representation. There are some models that attempt to conciliate emergency responses with

preventive strategies. The creation of support groups to avoid evictions is one example.

Juha Kaakinen suggested that we are all very good at writing strategies and action plans, some of which are excellent literary products. But in the Finnish context, it has been realised that what finally counts is what homeless people gain from this exercise. There is no real commitment without financial commitment. That is why the Finnish strategy is concrete. Finland does not have unlimited financial resources. But precisely for that reason, the present Finnish strategy, which includes financial commitments by the different partners for the years to come, is very valuable. It makes implementation easier. **Ritva Creutz** (Helsinki Diaconese Institute, Finland) said the Finnish NGOs have quite good relations with the government, and more especially with the municipalities. The NGOs are seen as strategic partners who can implement some ideas that the municipalities cannot envisage, as it would take too long to get the administrative and political go-ahead. Finnish NGOs have also often been invited to take part in the policy planning stage. **Piotr Olech** said the path is sometimes more important than the destination. In terms of getting to know each other, the Portuguese organisations had been able to achieve a lot even while building the strategy. **Isabel Baptista** agreed that it is important to take the time to build consensus and legitimise decisions. But the path is not an end in itself. She entirely agreed that there is no commitment without financial commitment. This is a major challenge currently faced by Portugal's strategy. **Rosário Reis** said the approach taken to representation by the Lisbon Platform was first to introduce the different organisations to each other and then get them to elect representatives for each type of response. For example, all the temporary housing facilities together elected one representative. **Cláudio Correia** suggested that the financial problem is less one of funding levels than of optimisation of resources. For example, a homeless person who has been hospitalised should receive follow-up afterwards. Otherwise, that is not an efficient use of hospital resources. The strategy provides the leverage for allocating resources in an optimised way.

Claire Gavin Ryder said that Ireland has a very ambitious target – the ending of long-term homelessness, and of the need to sleep rough, by 2010. Many new policies and procedures have been put in place, and there is huge media and political interest in making sure that target is met, or at least that everything is being done to deliver on it. These efforts are centred on Dublin, where most homeless people live. **Bernie Doherty** said that full stakeholder buy-in from the very start is essential. Otherwise, that participation will be absent when it comes to implementing the strategy on the ground. For both the national Irish strategy and the Dublin regional plan, the Departments of Health and Local Government are involved, together with a network group covering all the NGOs. The homelessness services in Dublin are completely being restructured. For the NGOs to be willing to play their part in those changes, they obviously had to be fully involved in the decisions. The situation in Ireland is that the services have the money to rent housing, and vacant housing is available, but the landlords are reluctant to provide it to homeless people. So she had been particularly interested in Portugal's success in persuading landlords to take part. **Claire Gavin Ryder** added that Ireland is phasing out of transitional housing in Dublin completely, which is a big change. There will now be either short-term emergency stays or long-term supported accommodation, with the emphasis on mainstream housing, similar to the Housing First approach. **Suzanne Fitzpatrick** thought that, while there would probably be agreement in the UK about the general undesirability of transitional housing, there was a feeling that for some groups, notably young people, it might still be helpful. **Claire Gavin Ryder** said her department does not deal with youth homelessness, which is under the health sector. Some transitional accommodation is available there in the form of care homes. There are also some pilot foyer schemes for young adults, which will be mainstreamed in due course. **Bernie Doherty** added that Dublin has a night bus that picks people up who are homeless and ring a freephone number. Those people are then given an emergency bed for the night. But research before the

Dublin regional plan showed that some people were getting stuck in a repeating cycle of emergency accommodation. The plan now is that people presenting themselves as homeless will be put into temporary supported accommodation run by the NGOs and financed by the city. People will stay in such accommodation for no more than six months. Every NGO in Dublin uses the same questionnaire, called the Holistic Needs Assessment. This can be passed from one NGO to another if the person moves. During the six months, a care plan will be drawn up with the homeless person and the key worker. The person will then be found permanent housing, where a support worker will work with them to address their issues. Progress will be reviewed until the local authority is satisfied that everything has been dealt with. The person will then become a tenant, paying rent to the local authority. The visiting support will taper off, but the person will still have access to mainstream support – for example, in the case of mental health problems. **Juha Kaakinen** said Finland is also trying to get rid of transitional housing. The hostels and dormitories have now been converted into supported housing units, with permanent tenancies. The hostels were run mainly by NGOs, who at first were very hostile to the change. But now they enthusiastically support it, and the process is continuing. **Neil Munslow** asked how Dublin managed the move away from transitional housing. **Bernie Doherty** replied that much of the transitional housing was in private rented accommodation, so closing it down was simply a matter of terminating leases. Transitional housing belonging to NGOs or the public sector is being converted into permanent housing, where possible. **Claire Gavin Ryder** said the change had been less easy from a media point of view. There were some negative headlines, and the minister had to answer a lot of questions. But assurances were given time and time again that no place would close down without ensuring sufficient suitable beds and better outcomes. **Juha Kaakinen** said a similar discussion had taken place in Finland. It is important to have quantitative targets backed by clear financial commitments. Finland's strategy focuses on ten major cities, where 80% of its homeless people live, and the target is to eliminate long-term homelessness by 2015. Other municipalities that have just a few homeless people can take care of them through the normal programmes. **Neil Munslow** asked how and by whom the Irish assessment of people's needs had been carried out. **Bernie Doherty** replied that it was based on the Holistic Needs Assessment. It was considered that about 20% had long-term support needs and the rest had a range of needs between no, low and medium support. The staff carrying out these assessments are trained and qualified to do so. They are mainly care workers. **Alcina Ló** asked what "long-term" accommodation means in the Irish context. Is this a Housing First approach? **Claire Gavin Ryder** distinguished between two types of long-term accommodation. For people who cannot live independently, long-term supported accommodation would in some ways resemble a hostel, but the occupants would have their own doors and tenancies, and a suite of supports would be available to them. The other type would be mainstream accommodation, which would be close to the Housing First approach, but this is the type of housing that the Irish programme is having huge difficulty in obtaining. **Suzanne Fitzpatrick** asked if the Irish programme has tried paying a premium to the landlords, by offering above-market rents or a "finder's fee". **Claire Gavin Ryder** replied that, as the programme is offering to take out up to 20-year leases, and does in fact look for discounts. It is becoming reconciled to paying the market rate, but certainly does not want to go beyond that. **Bernie Doherty** added that paying above the market rate could upset the already very expensive private rented sector in Dublin, possibly leading to displacement and resentment.

Rune Kamstrup (Ministry of Social Affairs, Denmark) said similar criticism has been expressed by the Danish media about the closing of shelters. Previously, a lot of public money was given to NGOs for the running of shelters and there was little coordination. In 2008, the minister decided that the municipal level must become involved to a greater extent. This has taken time, but it has paid off, and the municipalities are really committed to this effort. The Danish strategy is focused on eight municipalities which have more than half of the homelessness situations in Denmark. The strategy (2009-2012) has four government-set targets. It is very much a top-down strategy, so a lot of effort has gone into convincing both the NGOs and the municipalities to commit to it. The NGOs running the shelters are often suspicious of the municipalities, and are reluctant to expose their occupants to municipal scrutiny. The government has also recently set a target of ending street homelessness by 2014, and additional funding has been set aside for more housing, in line with the Housing First approach. **Lars Benjaminsen** noted that one Danish target is to reduce the amount of time that people spend in the hostels. To convince the municipal level of the effectiveness of Housing First, reference is made to the wealth of evidence that targeted interventions really do help people to break out of homelessness. Considerable financial resources have been earmarked for Housing First. He emphasised the importance of anchoring the whole process at the local level and involving all the stakeholders. Denmark does not intend to close the hostels down. There will still be a need for short-term solutions for people who are newly homeless. **Rune Kamstrup** added that the strategy's insistence on municipal co-funding helped to cement municipal commitment.

Carla Fraga Benera (Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation, Portugal) said the role of municipalities in tackling homelessness is vital to the strategy. Her institute has programmes for co-financing private construction and renovation projects, so it could help to meet longer-term housing needs. But to do so effectively, it first has to have the list of needs identified by the NGOs.

Piotr Olech pointed out that some six million Polish citizens live in substandard, overcrowded housing. In those circumstances, taking people off the streets and putting them straight into permanent housing might be seen as socially unjust. On the other hand, moving homeless people from hostels or shelters into flats does indeed halve the overall costs. So Housing First is a complex issue in Central and Eastern Europe. Incorporating it into the Polish strategy would certainly provoke a lot of discussion. **Péter Bakos** added that about one million people are living in bad housing conditions in Hungary. So there is certainly a wider problem to be solved – not only for homeless people. But homelessness itself is socially unjust, and we are entitled to set some priorities. Other speakers accepted that wider social housing needs are the “elephant in the room” when any country advocates Housing First. One way of tackling this is to require a set percentage of social housing to be allocated to groups with priority needs.

Piotr Olech asked how Housing First programmes deal with objections from neighbours who may not want to live next to formerly homeless people. **Rune Kamstrup** said this NIMBY (“Not In My Backyard”) attitude frequently manifests itself in Denmark. Promotional material describing good practice examples has been distributed, but the problem undoubtedly still exists. **Lars Benjaminsen** suggested that good case management and social support can help to overcome this hostility. **Teresa Duarte** thought that Housing First accommodation attracts much less local hostility than hostels. In fact, neighbours may not even be aware that they are living next to a Housing First tenant. Or else they get used to them. After all, homeless people are individuals. And once they are in Housing First accommodation, they usually want to avoid attracting attention. Speakers from other countries confirmed that neighbours' reactions to Housing First schemes have generally been much less negative than was initially feared.

Apart from the housing aspects, **Ivana Ćirković** asked what programmes exist for the social inclusion of homeless people. And are children and young people who work on the streets considered to be part of the homeless? **Teresa Caeiro** said there are few street children in Portugal, but any cases would be handled in the usual way by the child welfare structures. Homeless people certainly need a whole range of measures apart from housing, not least employment services. Access to these services is available to them and their case managers. **Lars Benjaminsen** said Denmark selected three means of social support: critical time intervention, which is a form of case management, but limited to a short, critical period such as the transition from temporary to permanent accommodation; regular case management, for those with longer-term support needs; and community teams that include various specialists. Each approach corresponds to different support needs, and its effectiveness in each individual case is monitored. **Fátima J. Monteiro** emphasised that support programmes should promote integration and citizenship. **Péter Bakos** stressed the need to follow up on the recommendations of the EU Joint Report. The EU should urge Member States to commit to adopting national homelessness strategies. **Paula França** pointed out that this must include full financial commitment.

Relevance and key learning elements

Suzanne Fitzpatrick drew together some of the consensus points from this Peer Review:

- The **Portuguese strategy** could provide a useful **model for other countries**, as regards:
 - *Process:* **Stakeholder buy-in**, right from the beginning, is essential. This is difficult and takes time. But relevant stakeholders, particularly those who will be delivering services such as NGOs, some sectors of government and municipalities, all have to have a sense of ownership of the strategy. After all, it will require various changes on their part. The best way to achieve that is to have them involved. As examples from various peer countries had shown, stakeholders need to be in a strategic partnership with the State, pulling in the same direction. There will always be arguments and tensions, but everyone has to be kept around the table and come up with a strategy that commands consensus. NGOs are a disparate group. They have their own agendas. They can be very powerful. So coordinating them and bringing them on board is a challenge. Particularly if they receive little or no state funding, the State does not have much leverage over them. **Political commitment** is also important here, and this too takes time to build. An umbrella organisation for NGOs involved with homelessness issues exists in some countries but not in others. Personally, she felt that such an umbrella organisation can help NGOs to arrive at an agreed common position, thus facilitating discussions with the State. Countries that do not have such an umbrella organisation might wish to consider establishing one, and states might contribute some initial funding to make this possible.
 - *Outcomes:* Participation in strategic development should not be seen as an end in itself. At the end of the day, we must ask ourselves if the strategies and goals have made any difference to homeless people's lives. Some very helpful examples around the Peer Review table had shown that at least two key elements are needed: some **concrete targets**, both qualitative and quantitative, clearly monitorable and with a timetable set for achievement; and an **implementation plan** for achieving the targets. The goals must also be backed by a clear, realistic **financial commitment**.
- **Definitions** of homelessness pose a dilemma in most countries. Narrow definitions can help to move things forward, but may risk excluding some groups of homeless people from the

action. Broader definitions are more inclusive, but may lead to a dissipation of energy. Each country will need to strike the right balance for itself, on a pragmatic basis. The peer reviewers showed sympathy for the Portuguese position, reached after long discussion among all stakeholders, that a fairly narrow definition is the most promising approach in Portugal. But even on a narrow definition, action further upstream and downstream must not be neglected. Steps must still be taken to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place and to provide people with continuing support after resettlement.

- **Cost-effectiveness** is a concern in all the peer countries. People working in the field of homelessness have to demonstrate that they give value for money, particularly in the current economic climate. Increasingly, they are expected to use the language of investment to justify their expenditure. Services for the homeless are beginning to use the robust cost-effectiveness measurement tools that are already applied in other social sectors. There is a need to demonstrate that the more progressive approaches to homelessness, as well as being more humane and just, can be cheaper. Some countries have made much more progress on demonstrating this cost-effectiveness than have others. The EU might be able to help here, by providing all Member States with the relevant methodological tools.
- Portugal's emphasis on generating a **better evidence base** was generally accepted and applauded. Until recently, Portugal gathered very little data on homelessness. In that context, marshalling the facts is an important means of building political and media support for programmes to tackle homelessness.
- **Staff training** was also regarded as a useful focus. It can help to improve the **quality of services**, as well as promoting the **culture change** that may be needed if services are shifting their focus from emergency interventions towards reintegration and active inclusion.
- **Case management** was seen as a particularly cost-effective form of intervention. A number of the peer countries already use case management. Those that do not, showed considerable interest in it as a way of delivering targeted, tailored services, particularly to those homeless people with more complex needs.
- The **Housing First approach** used in Lisbon met with great interest. A number of countries are pursuing this approach quite vigorously, and others are interested in developing it. It is a way of showing concrete results and improving people's lives quite quickly. Some concrete short-term steps may need to be taken while a strategy is still being developed. Housing First pilot projects are a good example of this approach. There is considerable evidence that Housing First does produce benefits and is cost-effective. Currently, most of that evidence is from the United States. But there are now many Housing First developments across Europe. It would be useful to pool experiences of working with this new approach. Housing First is a very promising approach, but it involves a number of challenges. Given the privatisation of housing stock in many countries, the social case for Housing First may not always be easy to make. This is particularly the case in countries with a legacy of low-quality housing, or with very tight housing markets. It is important to remember that a Housing First model is not a "Housing Only" model. Support and case management will still be needed alongside it.
- **EU support** for action to tackle homelessness was generally welcomed by the peer reviewers. It is particularly helpful for those countries that do not yet have a national strategy, or are in the early stages of developing one. EU requirements or recommendations in this field can strengthen the hand of those who are putting forward a progressive agenda in the Member States. The EU's 2010 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion calls on the

Member States to develop integrated strategies to tackle homelessness, and provides detailed guidance.

- Improvements to the **quality of interventions** are being implemented at the local level in Portugal. Further dialogue is needed among European countries about what exactly is meant by “quality”. How do we demonstrate it? How do we accredit it? How can we push quality standards up where necessary? In most countries, there is a recognised need for quality improvements in some aspects of services to homeless people. Are legislation and regulation helpful? Should we use financial levers, inspections and audits? Some of the NGOs may not be very amenable to such measures. They may have their own agendas and vested interests.

Closing remarks

On behalf of the European Commission and the participants, **Antoine Saint-Denis** thanked the Portuguese Institute for Social Security for hosting this highly substantive Peer Review. Clearly, tackling homelessness will have high priority as the EU moves forward with its Europe 2020 strategy. He cited four major European developments:

- The specific chapter devoted to homelessness in the 2010 Joint Report can be considered as an **EU policy framework**. It has been built on the basis of national contributions and has been approved by the Council of Ministers. It should therefore be regarded as a reference framework for policies on homelessness in all Member States. It clearly supports the Housing First approach. Its insistence on process development and improved governance is well reflected in the Portuguese National Strategy. A major achievement of the Portuguese strategy so far has been the building of partnerships and the forging of consensus as a basis for lasting action. There may be some questions about the division of responsibilities among the various actors and about leadership at the local and national level. Political commitment is also an issue. So far, there has been no specific legislation, but this may become necessary in future if the strategy is to have an impact on the legal framework for the services delivered to homeless people.
- The European Commission’s **Recommendation on active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market**, adopted in 2008, pursues a holistic approach based on three pillars: guaranteed minimum income support for everyone, ensuring labour market access for all, and the provision of in-kind social services. All of these are clearly relevant to the situation of homeless people. However, it should also be remembered that some homeless people (about 4% of them in Portugal) do have jobs.
- The **European quality framework for social services** will require some specific long-term efforts, given the diversity of social services in the Member States. However, we clearly need to address the issue of the quality of the services provided to citizens as part of the European social model.
- The **European Consensus Conference on Homelessness** is the first of its kind. The conference has been organised by the current Belgian EU presidency, with the support of the European Commission, and FEANTSA has played a key role in the preparations. To be held on 9-10 December 2010, the event is just the start of a process. Developed in the health sector, consensus conferences set out to build consensus in order to make policy progress among actors who are not in hierarchical relationships, but who are interdependent

and have various types of legitimation. The December event therefore has the potential to move forward on reaching consensus, so that some progress will be possible in the Member States. Concretely, on 9-10 December, a European jury consisting of personalities - some of whom having considerable experience of the homelessness issue while others do not - will listen to a series of experts selected by a preparatory committee. The conclusions of this consensus conference will be assessed by the Social Protection Committee and the Council and will certainly have some influence on policy. He invited all the peer reviewers to contribute to the visibility of this process.

Edmundo Martinho (President, Institute for Social Security, Portugal) said it had been a pleasure and honour to receive the Peer Review in Portugal, and to receive the peer reviewers' thoughts and criticisms about what Portugal is doing in this field. Firm political commitment to social inclusion, by national governments and the European Commission, is important. So are financial resources. But having a path to follow is essential. Portugal's National Strategy brought all the stakeholders together to set that path. He suggested that the broadness or narrowness of the homelessness definition is a false issue. The important thing is to reach a common understanding and focus. Housing was identified as a leverage point for Portugal's continuing work against homelessness, and the option taken was individual rather than collective housing. This is a key dimension, around which other life dimensions can be rebuilt. When assessing the quality of interventions, we can have only one criterion: their capacity to transform homeless people's lives. Europe can assist by helping Member States to understand how they can best integrate the homelessness issue into their overall poverty reduction strategies. He felt that the European Commission should be more demanding on the issue of homelessness. Clearer guidance is needed. Meanwhile, Portugal is strongly committed to moving its strategy forward. The resources will be available for carrying on this work. Portugal is committed to broadening the Housing First approach and spreading it to other parts of the country. Most of all, it is committed to keeping all the stakeholders involved in the process.