

Analysis of the situation of the homelessness in Spain

Dolores Ruiz Bautista

Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Equality

The Context

The European commitment with the situation of homeless people has been reflected in the different policies, plans and activities of the Public Administration in our country. The different Spanish **National Action plans for Social Inclusion** (five until now) elaborated in the framework of the European Social Inclusion Strategy, have included homeless people among the people in situation of greater vulnerability. Among the measures offered in the different plans, those directed specifically to the homeless people are centred on access to resources and rights of these people and for the attention of their more basic needs through the establishment of integral attention programmes.

Particularly the V Action plan for Social Inclusion 2008 - 2010 is explicit when among the measures specifically addressed to the people without home it considers the following one:

"Develop programmes aimed at offering medium and long-term shelter and accommodation in centres that include social support activities that go beyond the basic accommodation and maintenance assistance as well as complementary activities or social and labour-market integration measures, in collaboration with NGOs".

The socio-economic situation of the last few years has been formed in accordance with certain changes, such as:

- Demographic: by reduction of the birth rate, aging of the population, one-parent families, immigration, etc.
- Socio-economic: decrease in jobs in certain traditional sectors (agriculture, mining), increase in the service sector, industrial delocalisation, etc.
- Cycles of the real estate sector: growth in the period 1996-2007 and current crisis (real estate bubble burst and, therefore, activity in the construction sector, in which the high economic growth in recent years had been based to a great extent, has fallen substantially, affecting all the other sectors of the economy).

Lodgings for the most vulnerable people. - The "Survey on the people without home (EPSH 2005)", made by the National Statistical Institute (NSI) esteems that the number of people without home reaches the figure of 21,900 people. Of which:

- 82.7% are men. The average age of this collective is of 37.9 years and their income is from EUR 302 a month.
- Almost half of this population has sons (46%); only tenth party lives with them.
- 30% are never teetotaller and have consumed drugs.

- 37.5% take more than three years without any own lodging.
- Half of the population without home looks for work.
- 51.8% are Spanish and the rest foreigners.
- The foreigners without home take, of average, three years and seven months in Spain and a year and eleven months in the Autonomous Community where he/she has been located to them.

However, other sources show their estimation nearer to 30,000 people without home.

Regarding the housing sector, the data provided by the former Ministry of Housing are the following. In 2007, there was a house by each 1.88 inhabitants; according to the Register of Inhabitants on the 1st January 2008 of the NSI, the population in Spain reached the figure of 46,157,822 inhabitants and Statistics on the Park of Accommodation units of the Housing Ministry considered at 24,495,844 the accommodation units to 31 December 2007. The average size of a Spanish home, according to the NSI, was of 2.78 people in 2007. From this indicator, 1.88 inhabitants for housing, it is concluded that the problem of the housing is not quantitative.

In the current situation, a renewed effort has been carried out concerning the consideration of problems linked with the shanty towns, the reloading and the lodgings for especially vulnerable collectives.

Intervention with homeless people in Spain

Social intervention with the homeless people is made in Spain from two areas:

- The Public Social Service System that is managed by the Autonomous Communities and the Local Corporations, in agreement with the development of the establishment of powers in the matter, determined by Spanish Constitution of 1978, establishing the State of the Autonomous Communities and the competencies of local government through Law 7/85 of 2 April, regulating of the Bases of Local System. The approval of the Laws of Social Services of the Autonomous Communities establish a public Social Service system and guarantee corresponding co-ordination of the resources and initiatives of a public nature and social initiative.

The Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Equality, through a social programme named *Agreed basic provision Plan of social local corporation services*, begun in 1998 as a result of an initial technical and administrative economic agreement of cooperation, among the three level of Civil Administration (Central, Autonomous and Local), has permitted the development and the consolidation of the basic network of social primary attention services, from the methodological and technical perspective of the agreement and technical cooperation.

The Agreed Plan defines the Social Services System as that "group of services and provisions that, being inserted with other elements of Social Welfare, having at an aim :

- The promotion and full development of all the people and groups within society, for the obtaining of a greater social welfare and better quality of life, in the environment of coexistence.
- The prevention and elimination of the causes that lead to exclusion and social fringe of society."

The system is articulated through the development of four basic provisions of social services: Information and Guidance, Family Support and Aid at Home, Alternative Lodging and specific activities of Prevention and Insertion. It is likewise complemented with the financing of any of the following types of centres:

- Centres of Social Services;
- Centres of Welcome;
- Hostels.

The evaluation data of the Agreed 2009 Plan (that includes the whole national territory with the exception of two Autonomous Communities), stemmed from the independent information provided by the Communities and Cities, are the following: financing of 12 hostels, with 653 places, those 14,014 users in lodging and 13,630 in maintenance (foods). Likewise more than 100,000 users have benefited of the provision of Lodging Alternative.

- Meanwhile the Ministry for Health, Policy Social and Equality make annual *call for proposals for NGO to finance activities for social inclusion*. These funds come from the contribution of the citizens through the tax system (tax to the income). Within this integral programme, homeless people are included as beneficiaries.

These programmes have as aim to establish integral nature strategies, with activities of intervention in all the areas, to favour the rehabilitation and progressive social incorporation of vulnerable group such as homeless people.

According to the priorities set, the programmes that have the followings characteristics will be awarded with the highest punctuation in order to be approved:

The programmes have been made with the support of the respective City councils.

- The programmes of welcome and lodging of a half and long stay in centres that develop activities of social accompaniment that exceed basic help of lodging and maintenance and make additional actions or carry out social and labour integration measures.
- In the programmes of welcome and lodging, the construction and acquisition of equipment, the adapting and improvement in centres, as well as the grant of equipment, provided that they credit a co-financing.
- The programmes addressed to the establishment of travelling multidisciplinary equipment of social attention in the street.

- Programmes that, in the area of the housing, consider mediation with the private sector for access to the housing in renting system, for people in situation or risk of exclusion.
- Programmes of creation or maintenance of flats of social insertion, which provide temporary lodging and support during the insertion process labour partner of these people, promoting personal development and social ability factors for social integration.

All the subsidised programmes will have to complement those already established by the Autonomous Communities and/or City councils and must have the support and collaboration of social services of the territory or action area.

In of 2010 we have had a credit of 9,235,265.23 Euros, to subsidise the activities of 25 organisations, with its corresponding programmes. The programmes intended for the people without home represented 36.09% of the total of the expenditure dedicated to programmes for the social inclusion.

- As last remarkable activity of the Health Ministry, Social Policy and Equality, it is necessary to emphasise the *technical cooperation with the Autonomous Communities and the Spanish Federation of Town Councils and Provinces (FEMP)*. In the development of the political action of cooperation and consensus between the Civil Services from November of 2009, to initiative and coordinated by the Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Equality, the activities of start-up of a forum of work have been begun and debated - *working party on people without home*.

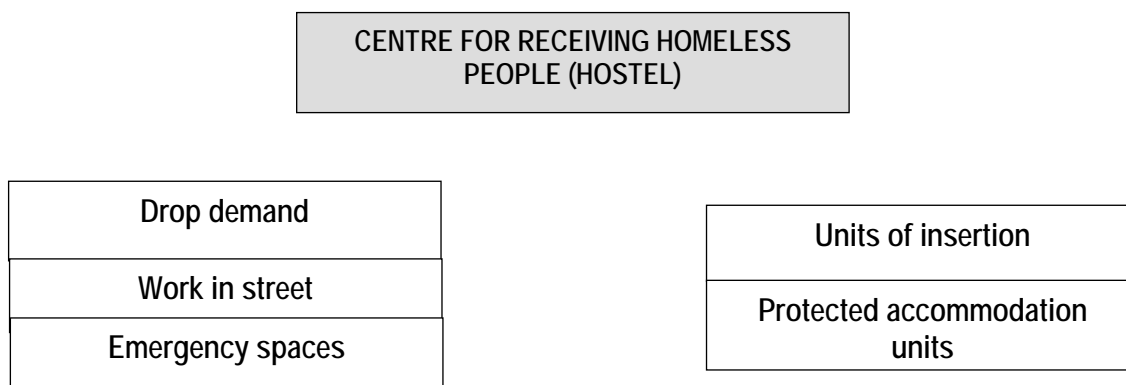
The aim is the design of a model of social participation with PSH, in the competing framework of the Public Administration that has been described previously, and which the AACC (Autonomous Communities - regions) have legislative competition, of planning, control and inspection, but the Local Corporations carry out.

At the present time, we have a document that has been drafted in collaboration with an expert in the matter that defines a Public Attention Service to homeless people, with the following premises.

Premises for intervention

- **Local leadership:** Public responsibility from municipalities. The ways of assuming this responsibility have to be diverse, as diverse is the situation of each town council. Despite this it is necessary to establish a homogeneous model to guarantee a minimum common of protection to these people, for which the local organisations have to have the economic and technical support of their Autonomous Community and of the General Administration of the State. According to the important tradition and presence of the social initiative in the attention to the homeless people, the collaboration with these organisations has to be promoted and to be supported primarily to develop the network of Centres and Services.
- **Diversity:** Diversify answers in view of the diversity of situations.
- **Integrity and work in network:** To intervene with homeless people is required to tackle very diverse areas. Therefore it is essential to articulate networks that permit acting in the areas that is necessary in view of the specific needs of each person.

Structures



According to the characteristics and sizes required by each locality, the attention network to homeless must have as a referential element the Centres of Welcome (Hostels) and to develop the following centres and services: Drop demand, work of street, Units of Insertion, Protected Accommodation units and Spaces for emergencies.

- **Centres of Welcome for Homeless people (Hostels):** As key referential element of the network of centres and services for this collective in each territory, must comply with the following duties:
 - **Cover of the needs of lodging, food, clothing and health**, in an immediate and transitory way.
 - **Primary attention for people without home and moved**, in the framework of the Social Service System.
 - **Complement and support for social primary attention services in each town council**, providing lodging and basic attentions.

Its strategic nature in the network ensures that they must be of public ownership. They have to be managed directly by the local Administration, both their direction and the units that determine the attentions and access to services of the centre.

The local authorities will be able to establish agreements with non profit-making organisations to increase the minimum of places in Hostels or Centres of Welcome, guaranteeing that who lodge in them they may benefit from the primary attention that the centres of public ownership guarantee.

- **Drop demand:** as a complement to the Centres of Welcome and Hostels, for people who have been permanently in the street makes non-viable any alternative.
- **Units of insertion:** Hostels and Centres of Welcome have to offer lodging of a half and long stay to favour insertion processes, under conditions of privacy that make possible a personal coexistence and, where appropriate, relative.

- **Lodgings for families:** family coexistence is a right of the people and paradigm of the social insertion that must be respected and also promoted in the centres for homeless people. They are necessary protocols with the Offices of the public prosecutor of Minors and Minor Services of the Autonomous Communities to arrange access and permanence of under age in the Centres of Welcome for Homeless people, always accompanied by its parents or legal tutors.
- **Protected Accommodation units:** as an intermediate step to a standardised housing, so much for people alone as for family units. The City councils must establish mechanisms for access to accommodation units of municipal rent, to people that complete itineraries of insertion in the network of centres and services for Homeless people.
- **Lodgings for emergencies:** The City councils have to establish spaces and ways to accommodate all the people that it need in situations in which to spend the night in the street may be a serious risk.
- **Specific centres:** the attention to the specific needs of the Homeless people will have to be made whenever it is possible from resources standardised, to avoid stigmatising situations. With this criterion, the network could be completed with specific centres to work situations that so it require.
- **Intervention of street:** the attention network to homeless people must be completed with services of the street, coordinated with the Hostels or Centres of Welcome.
- **Ceiling for everyone:** It should be put forward as an aim in the medium term that exist enough resources so that no person has to spend the night in the street against his/her will.

Management

- **Dignify:** Some measures to dignify the attention in these centres are:
 - Comprehensible information on conditions of use and rights of its users, instead of only to emphasise prohibitions or limitations.
 - The data of personal identity are to be the only information necessary to attain these centres.
 - The register of data has to be made satisfying the requirements of the Law of Protection of personal data.
 - Establish accessible mechanisms to present claims, complaints and suggestions, and to answer the latter with agility.
 - Lay down penalty procedures adjusted to right.
 - Establish mechanisms of participation adapted to the characteristics of its users.
- **Make flexible:** characteristics of the people who use the centres for homeless people and, in particular, the hostels and centres of welcome use, require that their rules are designed so that they permit sufficient flexibility in its implementation.

Intervention

- **Integrated and integral processes:** From the work in Network, the traditional mechanism of the "Referrals" has to give way to "joint processes" of intervention in which the various centres and services that form the network in each locality are committed. These intervention processes must consider:
 - Strengthening and support for the motivations of change.
 - Accompaniment and stable and emotive personal references.
 - Integrate personal facets in the different aspects in which each situation is shown: lodging, employment, health, pensions and subsidies, leisure and relational aspects, etc.
 - Intervention strategies in the long term, that considers the possibility of steps backwards and relapsed.

- **To favour the take root:** The interventions must be directed to favour take root. Relocations do not have to be facilitated that are not justified by intervention. It is suitable to facilitate the registration to whom they usually live in the municipality and are in need of home; and for non resident, when it is justified in an intervention process, that it entails the take root in the municipality. The registration does not have to be facilitated for people registered in another locality, without justified cause, since it might mean the loss of its right to certain social security benefits for several years.

- **Legal protection:** It is necessary to establish protocols with the Offices of the public prosecutor to take part with people without home in situation of extreme deterioration that the social or health resources are denied to use, to get an effective legal protection to them. These procedures must have the implication of health services, particularly of mental health. In the case of protected people, its lodging in the attention network to homeless people must be of a limited exceptional nature and, and always to demand and under the responsibility for the organisation that has assumed protection.

- **Co-ordination:** The centres and attention services to homeless people must be integrated in the social service network of each locality, being their hostel or centre of welcome the reference to this integration. It is essential that mental health services establish specific activities in co-ordination with the centres and attention services to homeless people, especially for long –term users and of low demand. The national and local police, by their contact in the street or its intervention in emergency situations, are referring to contact people that can need to be taken care of in hostels and centres of welcome for homeless people.

- **Knowledge:** Management of the sector requires establishing a homogeneous system of information and a basic indicator group that give significant information to a local, autonomous and state level.

- **Co-ordination among local organisations:** A great amount of the users of the attention network to homeless people is shared in different localities. For this reason it is proposed creating a local network driven and supported by the Autonomous Communities and the General Administration of the State. One of its uses would be to establish reciprocity

agreements that permit the continuity in the attentions. It would also be useful to agree self-control mechanisms.

- **Communication with the population:** The stigma that goes with people without home makes a communication strategy necessary in which the means of communication have a decisive role, carrying out a relation based on positive and normality concepts, and not only as an answer to conflicting situations or movements of rejection of the introduction of centres and services.

Following the process of this working party to make a *final proposal of a model of attention to homeless people in Spain*, a seminar of debate is going to be held coming 25 and 26 November, with the participation of all the actors involved in the subject and with a work methodology about: paper presentation of the framework document, round tables of the each one of the sections: premises, structures and intervention and workshops.

As last point, trying to synthesise the difficulties to access to the housing in Spain, from the point of view of the housing policy, it could be highlighted the following points:

The problem of housing is found essentially in the difficulty for its access due to the high price of the latter, more specifically: by disturbance among the price of the housing and the family income. It is also possible that accommodation units have been built in areas where these are not necessary as a usual and permanent residence (those named second residences) and, on the other hand, they fail in places in which there is indeed demand as such a usual and permanent housing, of first necessity.

Another question to arise is if the proportion among accommodation units of free price and the ones of official protection is the suitable one.

It would also be necessary to reflect on the proportion between access in property and rent. In order to promote access in rent system the Public Society of the Rent has been created, and with similar social object, they have been created by the Autonomous Communities and the City councils. However, since the middle of 2007, the average price of the housing in property is being readjusted to the drop. In short, for 2008, the official data base the diminution by 2.3%, tendency that has been kept in 2009 and increased slightly in 2010.

What impact will the economic crisis have on the ability of Member States to pursue effective strategic approaches to homelessness?

Regarding to the impact the economic crisis, we can take into account two different aspects. First, Spanish public administrations and NGOs dedicated to homeless people in Spain, stated that the economic crisis has not affected yet ordinary people. People affected by this crisis can still rest on social networks that prevent them to fall under a homeless situation. We will be able to see the effects of the crisis in two years time. Second, the impact of the crisis on the homelessness policies has not been perceived yet, although there's no doubt that budget and public expenditure restrictions will necessarily have an impact and will derive on cuts in general. We will have to emphasize prevention measures in order to prevent people who have lost their jobs or have lodging difficulties or minimum income for subsistence, to fall into homelessness