

THE CZECH GROUP OF FEANTSA: SAD, SALVATION ARMY, NADĚJE

S U M M A R Y  
FROM A SEMINAR ON  
HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE  
OLOMOUC, 4. 3. 1998



NADĚJE, občanské sdružení, Praha 1998

Summary from a Seminar on Homelessness in Europe, Olomouc, 4. 3. 1998

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## **Foreword**

*The entry of the Czech Republic to the European Union and its effort to join the European Union represents a challenge for every citizen to be prepared for a life in Europe without any borders. This also concerns civil initiatives and the non-governmental, non-profit sector as such.*

*The Czech Republic is the first country of the Central and Eastern Europe represented in FEANTSA. The problem of obvious homelessness and help to people excluded from the society are new problems for us (although there were plenty of homeless people hidden in prisons, psychiatric homes, in factory hostels and other institutions even in the period of the "advanced socialism"). The exchange of experience, new information and moral support of people joined in FEANTSA can be a guidance and encouragement for us. The first visit of FEANTSA representatives is the evidence of this.*

*The seminary on homelessness that took place in Olomouc on the 4th March 1998 gave us, the Czech attendants, an insight into the experience of our colleagues from the EU, and vice versa - FEANTSA representatives had the opportunity to see our problems concerning homelessness in the CR.*

*The proceedings are compiled on the basis of tape recording and adjusted into a written form. All adjustments and revisions are made in accordance with our best conscience in order that the meaning of the individual reports is not modified. Exceptionally some contributions are shortened in the discussion part. Basic information on FEANTSA, its members in the CR, information on the IGLOO program and information on homelessness in the Central and Eastern Europe from the point of view of FEANTSA are included as supplements. The second appendix is the list of attendants and newspaper articles.*

*The organizers of the seminary, the Czech group of FEANTSA, the SAD, the Salvation Army and Naděje, have agreed that the publisher of these proceedings will be Naděje. The proceedings are published in the hope that it will contribute to the help of the poorest ones living among us.*

*Ilja Hradecký*

## INTRODUCTION

*Antonín Plachý, SAD Chairman*

When preparing the whole program we shall now go through, we wanted to meet together with people working in the field, i.e. the hostels for homeless people as well as with people who have relevant responsibility at the district and city authorities.

We know that we stand somewhere at the bottom end of the scale of interest in social services. We all may feel it. Very often we are marked as those who care for alcoholics and loafers, and that it makes no sense to do that. And each of us is sad over it in some way. We do know that every human being has the right to a fresh new start. We do know that there do exist people whom we have helped to find some kind of peace and reconciliation in their lives.

I believe that none of us is interested in gaining a glory for himself. We know that we cannot expect any glory because we care for homeless people. If we wanted to excel we would have had to work in some other field that is more lucrative but we all want to help those who need to find a new way after having been released from a long-term imprisoning, whether they are young people or teenagers, people who have been healed from some addiction, women who want to stop with their way of life on the street and find some permanent warm place, mothers who were abandoned and in spite of this they want to give their children at least some privacy. And this is what unites us.

We have realized this even at the seminary organized by FEANTSA where there were people from all over Europe, and although there was a language barrier we felt close to each another. We all talked about our work which is neither useless nor hopeless. Everybody experienced problems and asked the same questions: Do we do it well? Is there any meaning in it? Should I not do something else? And so, I am glad that we have met here together with our guests from abroad, and we will seek answers not only the questions mentioned above. ...

Let me ask the Bishop Josef Hrdlička to greet you briefly. We know that the Bishop is close to our clients, we know that he visits the prisoners in Mírov, and he helps the charity home called "Samaritan" in contacts with those people.

*Msgr. Josef Hrdlička, the ordaining Bishop of Olomouc:*

Dear friends, I would like to welcome you on behalf of the Archbishop Jan Graubner. I would like to say that in the Scripture the theme of asylum, homelessness, is very topical, and that the Son of God introduces himself as a homeless man. Since the time he was born in the manger in striking poverty till his death of a slave on the cross, during his whole life he was passing through different lands. His words that birds have nests and foxes have holes and the Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest is well known. We can see that the Son of God identifies himself with this type of human poverty which is homelessness. It is said that all we do to the last poor man we do to Him. So we can see that this theme is very important in God's eyes.

And let me share with you just a piece of the Bishop's observation. We find there is even one more type of homelessness which can be found even in people who have some property, money, houses, and comfort. It is a sort of inner homelessness. Here, I would like to quote a verse by an English poet Thomas Elliott, one of the greatest authorities of the 20th

century literature who wrote: "There where is no temple, there shall be no homes". By this he wants to say that if a man turns away from his Creator, if he refuses His order, there can be nothing good, no homes, only destroyed families, wrecks of homes. That's why it is so important that we see that the fundamental focus of all life, all order, all love from which home is actually born, whether it is a family home or institutional homes including asylum, must stand on this love which comes from God.

So I would like to wish you that this meeting would be led and inspired by the Spirit of God.

*Antonín Plachý*

I have some information on what we have already gone through with our friends. They arrived to Prague on Monday. We saw the institutions of Naděje and of The Salvation Army. Yesterday, we officially visited the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Mrs. Hejná, and we were received by the President of The Health and Social Board of the Parliament Mr. Špidla. Then we went to Olomouc, where we visited the asylum house, and today, after this seminary, we drive to Karviná and Havířov. On Thursday morning we shall visit Opava and in the afternoon this entire mission will finished by the press conference in Prague.

Today's program is as follows: this time it is a little less traditional. In the first part Mr. Ilja Hradecký will speak about the homelessness in our country. Then our guests will inform us on some facts about the FEANTSA organization and its work and policy. The main part will be the discussion. We did not want to decide on any theme because we thought that in a mutual discussion a wide range of problems can be dealt with.

## HOMELESSNESS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

*Ilja Hradecký, NADĚJE*

I was asked to speak on the theme of homelessness in the Czech Republic. The problem of homelessness in the Czech Republic does not exist - you see, the term "*homeless person*" does not appear in a Czech dictionary; you will not find it in any dictionary in the sense we use it. It is the remnant of the past time, when the word such as for example prostitution did not appear in any law, which meant that prostitution did not exist, the word homeless did not exist, which meant that homelessness did not exist, and this situation is the same up to now. The problem of homelessness surely does exist, we know it, and we meet it every day. But it is difficult to define who the homeless person is, what homelessness is, what it means to be without a home.

I have heard an odd proposal: to call the homeless "the shelterless", because they have no shelter. It is very absurd, and it was meant quite seriously in order to establish this expression. But it is quite insufficient to speak about an absence of a shelter. There are people who have a shelter in our hostel, and still they are homeless. On the other hand even if we widened the term "homeless" then some ten per cent of our population might have been included into this category because everyone who does not live with his/her family in his/her own flat would be a homeless person. It is therefore necessary to find such a definition that would determine who is included.

I understand the term "the homeless" in such a way that it is a person who has no background, no family, or no family relations, who is lonesome even in case he has many relatives, and who has no place to live in. Thus it has a much wider meaning than that the person has no roof over his head. It really is a difference to have a place where to live or to be accommodated somewhere. We do know some people among our clients, who were brought up in children's homes (orphanages), and now they are fifty or sixty years old and they have never had any place where to live because they were accommodated in factory hostels. To be without a home that means to be without a place where I can rest, to be without a place where to lay down my head.

We have experience with people who show some degree of resignation, often complete, sometimes it is not possible objectively to change it. We meet people who experience falls and rises and again new falls, and we strive to help people who are at the bottom of the society and who have become homeless.

As a rule we only help some of them, i.e. those who know how to find us or those who are taken to our institutions by somebody or those we meet just by chance in our work, but there are many homeless people left, mainly at the housing estates of big cities where they survive on dustbin rubbish and they do not seek help of any charity or any hostel for homeless people. We only know a certain range of homeless people.

The state of homelessness is, however, a result of something, it did not occur out of nothing. This fact has some causes. These can be categorized in many ways but I will not deal with that. I want to recommend you the book *Bezdomovství - extrémní vyloučení (Homelessness - Extreme Exclusion)* in which they are described. The primary cause of homelessness is mainly a primary absence of a home, i.e. in a person's early childhood. When I speak about the absence of a home I mean a total absence of a family as e.g. orphan hood, an unwished child or a child who was taken away from the parents. Such a child does not end up in a children's home - it passes through children's homes.

If I speak about an absence of a home, I also mean a life in a family that is deformed or incomplete or in a complete but non-functional family. The absence of a home marks a person most of all. If a person does not learn how the family functions then it is very difficult for him to build his/her own family. And the people who were passing through children's homes produce again children who again pass through children's homes.

If I speak about deformed or incomplete family I mean single mothers or divorced mothers and fathers who look after their own children. I also mean reconstructed families i.e. families where the child is brought up by a step-father or a step-mother, sometimes every two years with a different step-mother or a different step-father. I also mean quasifamilies i.e. free bonds where two people live together without having been married, but as a matter of fact it is a family because there are children involved. Free bonds of course cannot be as firm and stable as marriages where there is a promise, where there is an obligation.

I spoke about non-functional families, and by this I mean families where there are problems with alcohol or drugs, families where there is mental insanity of the father or of the mother, families where children or mothers are tortured or violated, but also families where children are deprived, whatever the reason may be. Deprivation caused by the fact that parents spend their time in pubs is the same in its effect as the deprivation caused by both parents being too busy in their job or business.

In our society there is a tendency to accelerate the consumers' way of life. We were not prepared for that. At once, after November, from the beginning of the nineties we have been brought to an ecstasy and we do not know how to control it. We do not know how to keep our self-discipline, and thus it is misused. If I speak about the consumers' way of life, I mean it generally, not only that people want more money, more excitement, more expensive things around them, more enjoyment and entertainment out of life, but I also mean that partnership between a man and a woman has become a consumption article with limited durability. Limited durability is typical for all consumer goods.

I do not know if my speech is clear enough. It is mainly evident in big cities, and mass media reflect it very well, that the criterion of that which is good is what *my* benefit from that could be, what *can I* get out of it, what are *my* benefits. And as long as *I* am satisfied with my marriage, *my* marriage will last. When *I* am not satisfied any more I will simply dissolve it and I will start something else. This is the reason why the goal marriage is not children and love towards them, and maintaining the bond until the death separates us.

This is the problem we shall meet with. It is necessary that we realize that such tendencies do exist, it is necessary that we ourselves defy it. I think we all that are sitting here, have come across the misery of life, and we want to do something positive. The way of life which we have chosen may be considered strange by many people. They say: "Those are the crazy people who care for the homeless, and why do they do it, what do they get out of it?!" You certainly know it, don't you? That is why it is necessary to look for allies, to look for similar people among us, to look for more allies, and spread light in order that we are able to show the primary causes of the problems we meet.

It is necessary to look for the possibilities of prevention, already in primary causes - in the deformed or non-functional families, in a total absence of family, if this concerns children who *are placed somewhere* as if they were mere things. The consequences can be to be prevented by a substitute family upbringing. Children's home is of course better than if children live on the street. This is without any question. In this we are in a better position than in Russia or in the Balkan states. But children's villages would be even a better possibility.

Substitute family care is the best compensation for a real family. I think it is necessary to do more in this field. The fruit of substitute families will not be seen in our days, we shall see it in twenty, thirty, maybe forty years. It is a tendency which can significantly influence the extent of further homelessness because children will grow up in an environment where there is a certain function of the father, certain function of the mother, where there is a kitchen in the flat, a bedroom, a sitting room, where it is necessary to prepare meals, to do the laundry, to iron and to clean the flat. Children from children's homes have not come to know that. And the problem of young people who leave children's homes is that they do not know what the family life is, they are not able to manage their own budget, and they lack a close advisor. The fosterlings of children's homes very often become homeless.

As to the deformed or non-functional family, I have no simple recipe, I do not know. In these cases individual help is necessary, help inside a specific family to specific children so that they should not end on the street and become homeless. But education is necessary in order to change the opinion and thinking of the whole society. There still remains the question how this can be effective. And there is one more thing in which it will be necessary that we engage ourselves more actively in: it is enforcing changes or more exactly creating a housing policy which in fact does not exist.

I spoke about prevention but I do not think that we should leave our present work. It is important, we shall have to continue, and we shall have to carry on for a long time. We have many friends in common - I mean our clients because we want to treat them in a friendly way, and they really see us as their friends as they come with confidence and expect help from us. It is necessary that we should not leave this work that we stand firm in it.

Finally, I would like to say that I was touched by the word of Bishop Hrdlička. It represents a great impulse and a great obligation. I realize that all we do we are obliged to do - we who trust in Jesus Christ, and all which we do not do remains to be our debt.



## FEANTSA - GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

*Misia Coghlan, the FEANTSA office in Brussels*

I would like to thank you for your hospitality and for your invitation to visit the Czech Republic. FEANTSA is about solidarity and support for organizations working with the homeless. And therefore it is very important for us to come and learn and understand what is happening on the ground. I am just going to say a few words about what FEANTSA is and what we do before handing over to John Evans the vice president of FEANTSA. So we can perhaps set the context for you so that you can ask us questions and we can open a discussion.

My name is Misia Coghlan I am the development officer in the FEANTSA office in Brussels. There are three of us working in the FEANTSA secretariat. FEANTSA itself means "The European Federation for National Organisations Working with the Homeless". It is the French abbreviation of *Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri*.

FEANTSA is a relatively young organization - we were founded in 1989 - following the National Year for the Homeless. We receive almost all our funding from the European Commission, and specifically from the section of the commission dealing with employment and social affairs. We receive annual funding. And technically speaking we exist in order to support organizations within the European Union. Of course we see our role as being larger than that and of bringing in and supporting work in Eastern Europe as well. Particularly because of impending enlargement of the EU. And within the small secretariat in Brussels I am the person responsible for developing contacts with Eastern Europe.

Now, what we do in Brussels? We essentially have four roles. *We lobby and campaign* at European level. Secondly we facilitate *information exchanges* between our members. Thirdly we *develop partnerships* with other organizations that have an interest in homelessness or complement our work in some way. And finally we manage what we call the *European observatory on homelessness* which carries out research of homelessness within the EU.

Our lobby role is essentially in order to have housing recognized as being of importance at European level. Until now housing is not recognized as being a competence of the European Union that means that housing is not officially discussed or forced part of the legislative framework of the EU. However, one of the primary objections of the EU within the treaty is to combat social exclusion. And FEANTSA is arguing that housing must be addressed at European level because it is essential to the social cohesion of Europe. We campaign for true social Europe in which the needs and rights of the citizens are placed on an equal footing with economic concerns. And access to decent affordable housing is recognized as a fundamental social right which must be accessed before other rights such as employment, health, education, or the protection of children can be enjoyed.

FEANTSA is in such a position that we are able to track common trends at European level. Every country has its special characteristics but there are many common trends across Europe. For example there has been a disinvestment, a reduction in funding in social housing across Europe. And dismantling of the social protection system or the reduction of the funding towards benefits. Last year, in May 1997 the European Parliament adopted a resolution which was essentially drafted by FEANTSA calling for the recognition of housing as a fundamental right.

Another of our campaigns is to lobby for the need for NG organizations. We formerly recognized and systematically consulted all matters dealing with a social policy. As much of the work in social policy is being devolved these organizations need to have equivalent status in order to do our work effectively.

The second of our jobs in Brussels and this is very close to my heart because this is what I spend most of my time doing is to organize regular thematic seminars on subjects of importance to our members. We want to provide the support to our members and specifically to give them the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences and also to visit projects in the host countries. For example last year we had the pleasure of receiving all of our Czech members at the seminary on the homelessness in Paris. To give another example of the seminary: we organized the seminary in London on partnership with the private sector, with private business to look at how we could work together and cooperate in combating homelessness and in building projects together. And this year we will be organizing a seminary in Vienna on new partnerships to fight homelessness and looking more specifically to partnerships with a public sector taking the Austrian example as a model.

Just briefly to give you some examples of the types of partnerships we are building, one of our partnerships is called the IGLOO program. This is a partnership with the trade unions and the social housing providers and FEANTSA across the EU is essentially developing projects providing skills training in construction and renovation work and psychological social support to those working in the projects and housing. There are numbers of projects across the different countries, and there is an European Coordination Office in Brussels.

Finally a very important aspect of our work in Brussels is a research. It is essential to gather information in order to raise awareness of homelessness. And therefore we manage the *European Observatory on Homelessness* which has a network of fifteen national correspondents across the EU and again research coordination. The observatory research is topic annually and it develops a transnational analysis. The themes we have been working on in recent years are the General Social and Legal Context of Homelessness, Trends in the Housing Market in Europe, New Types of Services for the Homeless, Youth Homelessness, and this year we will be working on Supported Housing Scheme.

There is information about FEANTSA at the back of the room including our research reports. Our report on youth homelessness will be published in the next couple of weeks and you are very welcome to contact the Brussels Secretariat in order to obtain the copy.

Now finally, when I was discussing this seminar with our Czech members I was asked to talk about what FEANTSA could mean for Eastern Europe. And now I would like to turn that question back to you to ask you how you see the role of organization such as FEANTSA in the Czech Republic and Eastern Europe in the context what I have just said and what Mr. John Evans is about to say.

Thank you very much.

## THE HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

*John Evans, Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless, Scotland*

First of all I would like to echo Misia's thanks to all of you for inviting us here to share our mutual experience and to try to tackle the problem of homelessness. I hope not to talk too long because I think the most important thing today is that we share our experience.

When Misia and I discussed the way in which we would present this we felt it was very important that you have plenty of opportunity to ask us. We do not promise to have all the answers but we are certainly willing to share our experience with you.

I would like first of all to say a little bit about who I am. Unlike Misia I do not work full time for FEANTSA, I have a full time job in Edinburgh in Scotland and that is principally working with the organization called *The Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless*. And I imagine that in many ways I am doing the same kind of work that many of you are doing. The Council for the Homeless is directly involved in delivering services to homeless people. It is a large NGO which is supported to a great extent by the local authority, and it runs among other things shelters for young people. We are planning to open a hostel for young women. We also run the centre of help which has been only a day centre until recently but now it is open twenty four hours a day. People come there to rest and spend their time in some activity, e.g. watching TV, playing the billiards and other activities, and they are provided with things they need.

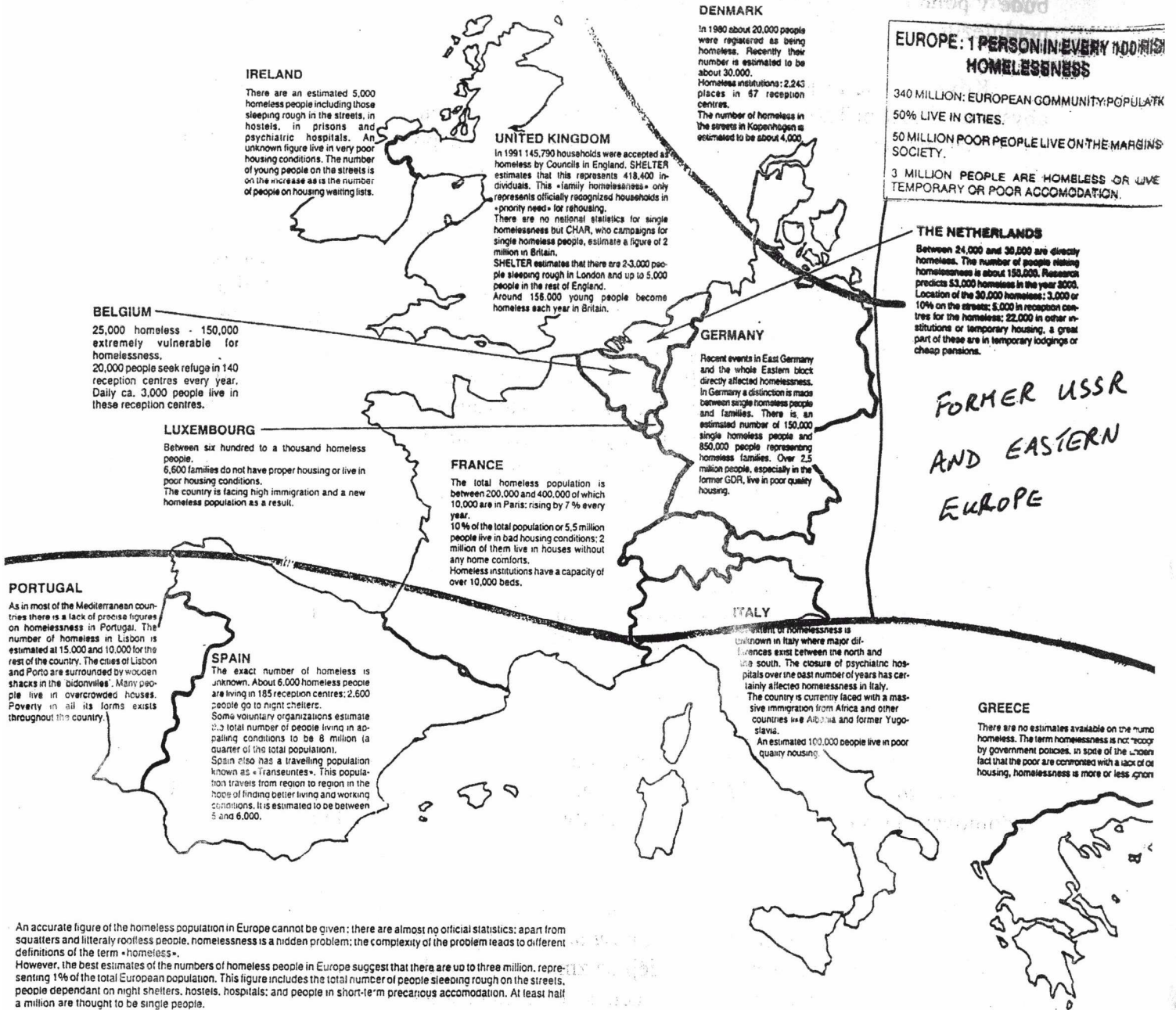
Let us return back to our theme which is the homelessness in Europe. The problem of the homelessness and the way how to cope with it is different in various areas of Europe. From this point of view we can divide Europe into four parts (*see the map on the next page*).

To the first group according to the level of homelessness and experience belong the Northern countries *Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland*. In these countries there is the lowest number of the homeless because the governments of these countries have been seriously engaged in these problems for many years.

The second group is created by the states of the Central Europe that are highly industrialized as *Germany, Belgium, The United Kingdom* etc. This is the area where homelessness, I think, is probably seen at its worst. Maybe a little later I will talk about the reasons for that. But it is very much tied with the economic situation, with unemployment and as Misia mentioned with reduction in the social security provision.

The third area covers the Southern European states, *Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece*. And because of traditional way of life in those countries homelessness is not recognized in the same way as further in the North. The services for homeless people on the ground are in a much more embryonic state. It is very difficult to get the national governments of those countries to recognize the extent of the problem. And there are of course very practical reasons for that because if you are without a roof over your head then it is far worse to have to sleep outside in the middle of winter in Helsinki than it is in South of Spain.

And the fourth area is simply where we are now – *Eastern and Central European countries*. And whilst you have invited us here to learn from us we are certainly here to learn from you, and not only in a sense of understanding the extent of homelessness but also to learn from the ways in which you are approaching it.



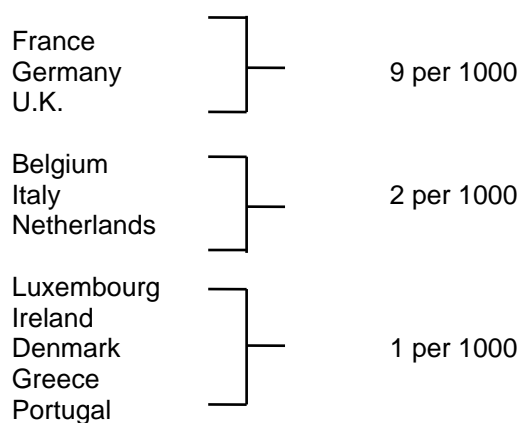
I do not want to give you too many statistics but some brief overview is probably worthwhile and that can give you an idea about the estimates of homeless people in the European Union countries. One of the difficulties that exist is that the collection of information and data in the different countries is not uniform and therefore it is quite difficult to make a comparison. But broadly speaking there are three bands. The homelessness is higher in the larger industrialized countries than it is in smaller industrialized countries and larger still than it is in the more rural southern countries.

## ESTIMATION OF NUMBER OF THE HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE EUROPE UNION

Country	Year/data source	Population (m)	No. homeless
Belgium	1993, users of services for one year	10,0	26.379
Denmark	1992, users of services on one day	5,1	2.947
Germany	1990, estimate for one year, West Germany only	64,0	850.000
Greece	1993, estimate for one year	10,3	10.000
Spain	1990, estimated users of services	39,1	29.659
France	1992, estimate for one year	57,5	627.000
Ireland	1993, estimate for one year	3,5	5.000
Italy	1992, estimate on the basis of a survey	152.000	
Luxembourg	1992, users of one service in a year	0,3	608
Netherlands	1991, estimate for an average day	15,2	30.000
Portugal	1993, estimate from survey	12,8	2.870
UK	1992, estimate for year based on information from official sources and service providers	57,9	642.980
		<b>346,7</b>	

Source: Mary Daly, FEANTSA 1994

### HOMELESS STATISTICS



Homelessness higher in larger countries  
Homelessness higher in northern countries

Source: FEANTSA

Again this discussion area reveals the growth of homelessness which I think is equally important. When I started work in Edinburgh which I do think is translatable across to other countries as well, so when I started working with homelessness in Edinburgh some almost twenty years ago there was a very traditional situation which had existed for probably almost the century. And homeless people generally were middle-aged elderly men many with an alcohol problem. And this was similarly reflected in the other industrial countries such as Germany and France and Holland.

In the mid 80's something which Misia has touched upon began to happen and that is that with increasing financial difficulties governments of countries began to cut back on a social security provision. And with the cutback in levels of social security provision then more and more people began homeless. This was particularly illustrated from the United Kingdom where in 1988 all entitlement to any kind of benefits in kind or in cash was taken away from young people, and they still have no entitlement to benefit. The effect in numerical terms was that over the period of about three or four years the number of homeless young people in the UK increased by between four and five hundred per cent. At the same time as the recession began to bite across Europe the percentage of people who were unemployed began to rise, and more and more families began to find themselves in economic difficulties, and I think there is no doubt that this accelerated what was already in process with the breakdown of the traditional family as we know it. Along with that at the same time most European governments began a program in reducing their investment in social housing. So effectively more and more people with less and less money had chance in less and less housing.

**THE RIGHT TO HOUSING IN MEMBER STATES**

Member state	Does a right to housing exist?	Source of that right
Belgium	indirectly	Law and practice
Denmark	indirectly	Law and practice
Greece	no	
Spain	no	
France	yes	Through law (Loi Besson, 1990)
Ireland	no	
Italy	no	
Luxembourg	indirectly	Through law and practice
Holland	indirectly	Through law and practice
Portugal	yes	Through the 1976 Constitution
UK	yes, for limited categories	1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act
Germany	indirectly	Through law and practice

We often state that the *right to shelter* is a basic human right, and I do not think anybody will argue with that. But in practice, contrary to general expectation, very few states

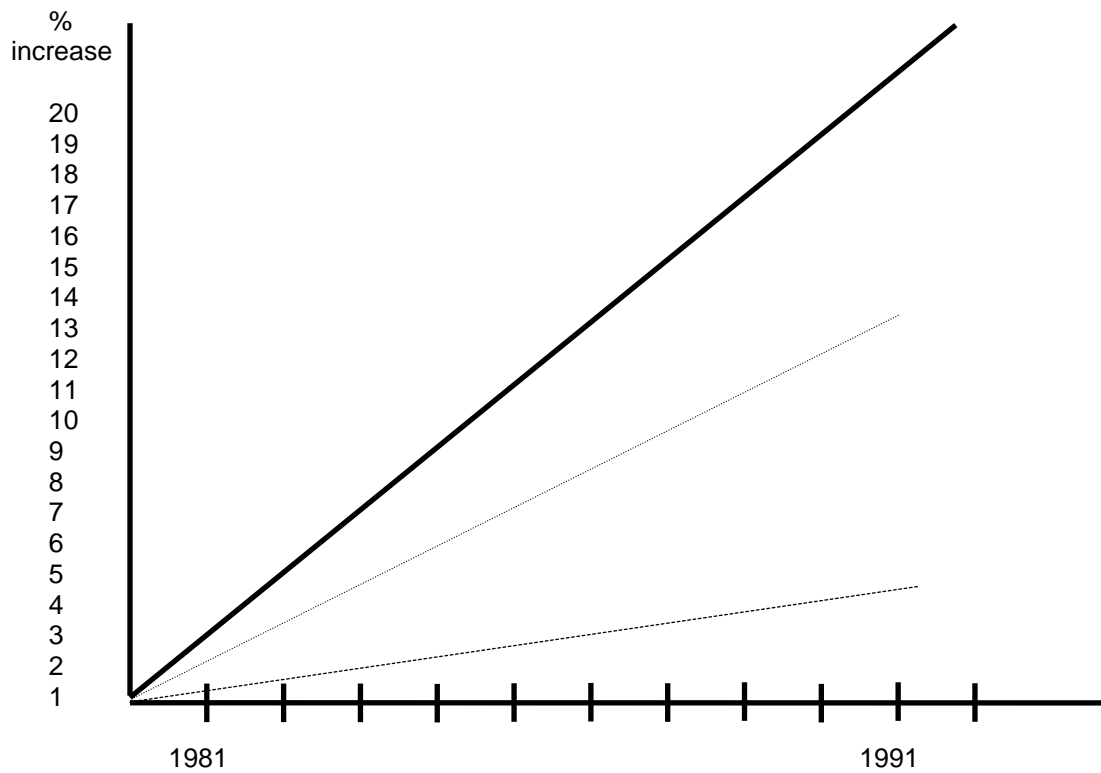
in Europe actually enshrine that right within their legal system. So if you look at that what I have said now you see that in fact there is only one country which has enshrined in its legal system the basic right to housing without any condition to touch, and it is Portugal. I should say two, because it is France which in many ways with its Loi Besson has been a model on which NGOs in many have focused their attention. So the basic right to shelter, to roof over your head simply does not exist in most places.

Just a few statistics on the provision of housing stock in the EU. You can see that current situation is that *social housing* is very much in the minority. And private housing through the deliberate efforts of most Western European governments has been promoted. And the area which in many ways was the second greatest access point for people in need of housing to get it, the private rented sector, has declined dramatically. And the reasons for this are very much connected to the withdrawal of benefits. In many countries, some ten or fifteen years ago the person without any income, the unemployed person had access to the benefit that would pay their rent. And successive cutbacks in social security provision budgets have actually reduced successively the amount that people can claim towards their rent. So in terms of business venture it has become less and less attractive to actually run private housing for rent and to let it out to the social sector. And that is a process which is still continuing. If I give an example from the UK, I will take it from Edinburgh, ten or twelve years ago. It was possible in the City of Edinburgh itself that have access to an extensive list of private accommodations somewhere in the region of five thousand properties. And that availability has now dropped to below five hundred.

One of the other major reasons for the growth in homelessness has been the *demographic changes* that have taken place. I do not know if you actually see that, but the bottom line indicates the growth in population in the EU in the 1981 to 1991, and it is the red line. The second line, the green line, represents the increasing housing stock over the same period. And on the face of it there has been a greater increase in the housing stock than there has been in population. But the third line represents the number of individual households. And that clearly greatly exceeds not only the population growth but also the increase in housing stock. This is directly related to the changes in society and the average family size is now no longer two adults and several children. But there are far more single people living either alone or with children. And so there is an increasing imbalance with many smaller houses being required but simply not being built or provided.

Now I shall talk a little bit about the definition of homelessness that is used by FEANTSA. The simple one which I suppose most of the general public identify with is people who are living on the streets. People who are roofless. And who have nowhere to stay at a particular point and time. But certainly the definition that we would use in FEANTSA, and I think most organizations working with homeless people would use is much wider. And with moving to these other three categories then maybe even wider, certainly people living in institutions, not because they want to be there but because they simply have nowhere else to go. People living in all kinds of insecure accommodation from which they can be evicted at almost the moment's notice. And people living in accommodation which by any reasonable definition is substandard. But clearly what is substandard very much depends on a local definition very much within individual countries. But the statistics within the European Union countries for people living in e.g. accommodation without a proper sanitation run into many millions, I believe working from memory that they are some 70 million people in the EU who live in substandard accommodation.

## POPULATION, HOUSES, HOUSEHOLDS



**Legend:**

household formation ———  
housing stock .....  
population - - - - -

Source: FEANTSA

### FEANTSA'S WORKING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

1. People who are roofless
2. People living in institutions because they have nowhere to go
3. People living in insecure accommodation
4. People living in sub-standard or inappropriate accommodation

**Note:**

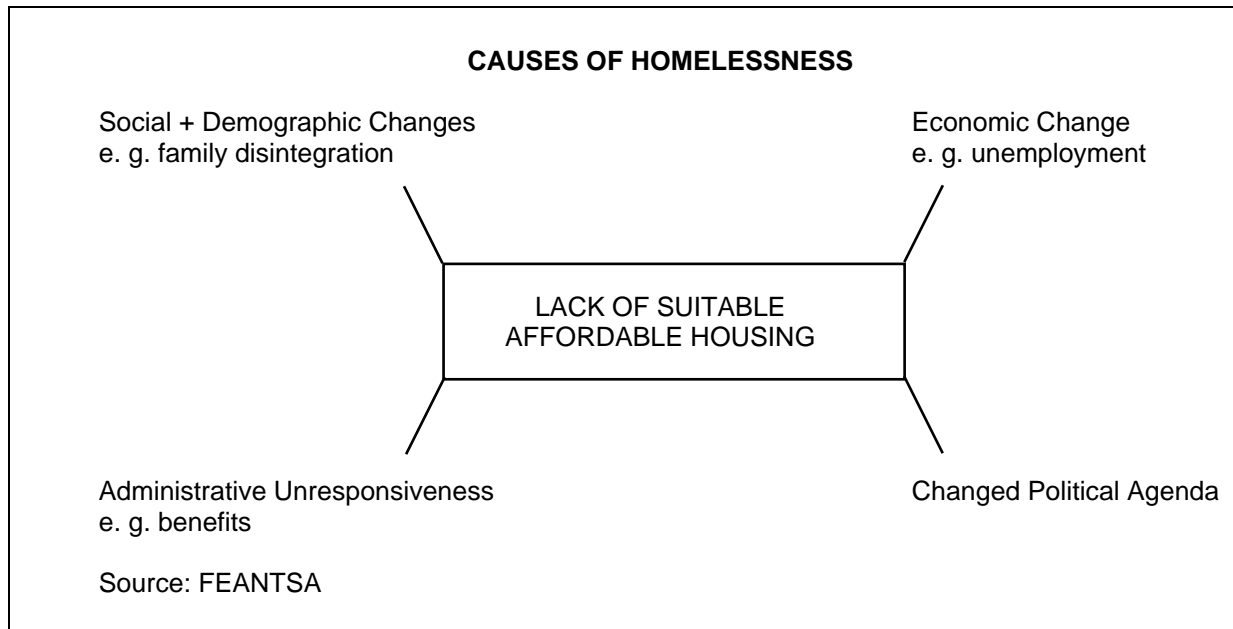
Account also needs to be taken of -

- i) duration of homelessness
- ii) short-term crisis v. long-term homelessness

Source: FEANTSA



FEANTSA also believes that there are two more other issues that need to be taken into account when you are looking at the *definition of homelessness*. One is the length of time that the person or the family may be homeless. And the other is whether that situation of homelessness is a short crisis to which a resolution can actually be seen to be on the way or whether that situation of homelessness is going to be long-term and there is no obvious resolution of it.



This is an attempt to put in perspective some of the causes of homelessness but they are many. But no matter what other problems homeless person or family might have if there is not a supply of adequate affords of housing for them then every other is a waste of time. So working from all the different causes whether it is a social situation, the demographic changes, family disintegration, whether it is economic changes or growing unemployment or it fits the cutbacks in social security levels and the unresponsiveness of governments to provide the ministerial benefits or whether it is changed political agenda within the individual country right the heart of the problem is that you have to have the houses there and they have to be affordable, people have to have the means to be able to pay the rent. And from what I have heard from various people, your colleagues and other people over the last couple of days, it seems to me that within the Czech Republic what is going to be the very core of this problem is that there is no supply of affordable housing for the people to access.

I think that one of these things that we have to work harder at NGOs is *to combat the general perception of homeless people*. The general public has fixed in their mind a stereotype of what a homeless person is. And generally speaking they see homeless people as fairly undesirable. And this also reflects on the attempts to raise funds or finances for homeless projects. Homelessness is not a popular cause.

Generally speaking people who are homeless do fall into a broad range of categories. Before I go on to mention these I think I have to say that if I am asked and if FEANTSA is asked to define a homeless person we would say that it is you or me. Anyone can be homeless.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

1. Poverty
2. Unemployment
3. Illiteracy
4. Mostly Male (66 % - 80 %)
5. Mostly Single (90 % men + 60 % women)
6. Minority are migrants + refugees (note Germany, Greece, Italy)

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## ROUTES TO HOMELESSNESS

Men - visible (unemployment etc.)

Women - hidden (family breakdown etc.)

Source: FEANTSA

In the Western European countries, Germany, France, the UK, we are seeing many professional people who through no fault of their own find themselves homeless. But point on which people find themselves homeless is that they are almost without exception very, very poor indeed. If they were not poor they would find themselves a house. Most homeless people, not all, but most are unemployed and many of them have very poor skills in terms of education. Most are men, although there is a lot of evidence suggesting that the situation is changing and that more and more women are becoming homeless.

But there is a concept which has been flatly called *hidden homelessness*. And this refers to many people, and particularly to women who are homeless but do not appear in statistics and do not appear on the streets because they are able to live on someone else's floor. Most homeless people are single. And significant minority in certain countries is in fact emigrants and refugees, particularly in Germany, Greece and Italy.

Maybe I will stop there and we will move on to the discussion and questions. Thank you very much.

### FEANTSA 'S KEY STEPS

1. Homelessness must be recognised as part of the measurement of housing need
  - Common Definition
  - Reliable Statistics
2. Legislation to Promote a Rights Based Approach In All Countries
  - Without qualifications
  - No Options Provisions as „Let Out“
3. Housing Strategy for Homeless People
  - Within Overall Housing Policies
  - Stock of Social Housing in Spain, Greece, Italy + Portugal is Small
  - Deal with.....
    - Supply
    - Access
    - Quality
    - Permanency
    - Support Services

### FEANTSA 'S KEY ACTIONS

1. SUPPORT TO NGO'S
  - Encourage Collection of Data
  - Encourage Professional Approach
  - Aid Campaigning
2. PUBLICISE HOMELESSNESS TO WIDEST AUDIENCE
  - Media Events
  - Sleep outs
  - Speak outs
  - Street Newspapers
3. CAMPAIGN AT EU LEVEL FOR HOUSING TO BE ACCEPTED AS A COMPETENCE
  - Funds for Housing Issues
  - European Level Responses
  - Pooling of Information

### CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS THROUGH EUROPE

Providing services of shelter, clothing or food	80 %
Providing information about entitlements	60 %
Providing resettlement, reintegration services	50 %
Lobbying, research, advocacy	20 %

Source: Mary Daly: Homelessness the rising tides - 1<sup>st</sup> report of the European observatory on homelessness. FEANTSA, Brussel, 1992.

## DISCUSSION

*John Evans:*

I would like to ask what you consider to be the most important thing for the work here, so that the work with the homeless could start and become better; what should be started with.

*Václav Rak (The hostel for homeless people in Chrudim):*

Perhaps the most important thing is the sympathy of local and district authorities, willingness to establish hostels for homeless people or some similar institutions. Several times I came across a situation when the officials of local authorities would be happy to have some institution like this in their town or district, but there was no sympathy with this type of problems. The reason may be financial problems of the district or the town. But it still remains the cause of the absence of hostels for homeless people. And if there is no roof over your head, it is impossible to start the work.

*Miloslava Bičíková (Pardubice):*

What is the experience with other ways of solution of homelessness in the world? For example, do there exist any farms where the homeless have the opportunity to find their place, where they can e.g. have their permanent residence and employment, where they are led to live as independently as possible on their own and where they could even have some privacy and responsibilities?

*John Evans:*

I am not sure I've got all of that, but basically it is training of people who are unemployed. The first question is connected with dealing with government, and it is about lobbying, and I do not think there is any easy way to do that. I suspect you have a better chance as a smaller country than the larger countries. Government in the UK and in places like Germany and France is very remote. As I said in the beginning I live and work in Scotland, we are about to get our own parliament, some of you may know, and we have every hope that we shall be able to work very much along the Scandinavian principles with our parliament in Scotland.

I do not think there is an easy way to lobby, I think it is a hard and long process. It is like water dripping on the stone and making its way slowly. But I also think that what we have to be careful as NGOs is that we do not compromise our principles. There is an increasing expectation in many Western countries where services are delivered through the NGOs that those services would be delivered cheaply. And I do not think you can deliver good services cheaply. And that is up to the NGOs to maintain the standard, maintain the quality. And as a tool of lobbying the demonstration of this quality is very important.

*Antonín Plachý:*

I just want to add to the item of lobbying that we all try to lobby in some way even if it concerns the highest authorities but the problem in our country is that the authorities change too often. So if I should use Mr. Evans comparison, the situation is such that when we start working on the stone and we start making our way a little bit, the stone leaves and somebody gives us another stone, and we have to start again from the very beginning. But we continue to do it patiently, as there is nothing else we can do.

*John Evans:*

The second question was about working with young people in terms of training. In France there is the foyer system which addresses accommodation and training for young people. But it is not particularly addressed to homeless young people. The concept of the foyer, of accommodation and training has been transferred to other countries, particularly to the UK. It has not, I think, totally succeeded. And there are various projects on the ground outside of our system which has obtained funding which attempt to offer basic pre-vocational training because what is apparent with many of young people who are homeless is they have very low educational skills that they are not able to read and write at any level of fluency. We in fact have a scheme in Edinburgh which has now been running for just over year, and it is not particularly aimed at young people but takes people almost of any age. In practice most of those who take part are between 18 and 30, and it offers training in basic skills, painting and decorating, and the people who are involved in it go out to the community and paint and decorate the homes of elderly people who cannot afford it. There is another team that goes out to country parks and builds footpaths. And there is a third area which is completely different, and that is the workshop for making musical instruments.

What has become apparent in running that scheme for a year is that simply provide the training does not work. You have to provide support at every level. Emotional support to restore the person's dignity and to restore their belief to themselves. It is not an easy job, it is not a cheap scheme to run. But at the end of the first year I think this success can be measured by the fact that number of people have moved on to further training. Some have moved on actually into employment. We in fact had one young man who was quite clear that what he wanted to be was a funeral director. Finally he succeeded in convincing a manager of certain of an undertaker's after a long lasting effort, and this manager helps him now in negotiations with directors of other similar services to establish his own undertaker's firm, and it seems that he will succeed.

One of the difficulties is that people who come to these courses must be taught a working discipline. In the UK they do not get any money for this in addition to their wages, and thus the only motivation they can have is that they like their work. Everything is bound with the new governmental changes at the labour market, people do not get any unemployment benefit unless they try to find work. In other European countries, e.g. in Germany, training programmes for young people are on a high level. In Germany it is well connected with the commercial sector. On an agreement with the trade unions some commercial firms provide young people with employment. But again they are also very expensive schemes to run and the results are not very quickly achieved.

In the UK, Germany, France and most Western European countries we now have people who are maybe the third generation of unemployment within a family. And some are in the second generation of homelessness. And it is very hard to break down what has become really a tradition.

*Miloslava Bičková:*

I would like to make more exact what I meant. If there is anywhere in the world or in Europe - any institution that would be sort of a detached workplace of a hostel for the homeless, where there would be some surveillance, maybe not so strict, not 24 hours-a-day, where people who were able to stay in a hostel for the homeless and proved that they can work and live independently on their own, could try whether they are able to live like this

permanently, to establish e.g. an agricultural farm where they could live and work. So my question is: does some institution like this exist?

*Ilja Hradecký:*

I do not know whether such an institution for the homeless does exist in our country, but for the drug addicts who want to be healed from this drug addiction, there do exist several institutions like this. Both categories merge very much.

*John Evans:*

As far as I know nothing exists for homeless people in that way. Such places certainly exist for people who have been drug addicts.

*Misia Coghlan:*

Just to add to that: youth homelessness is generally an urban phenomenon at least in the EU. However, I mentioned the IGLOO programme - this is the example of types of projects that provide sheltered workshop type environments. And I know that e.g. in France there are several IGLOO projects which are rural projects. In our newsletter there is a contact point in France who can give you more details of French IGLOO projects.

*Pavel Kosina (Prostějov):*

The problem is how to handle the group of the homeless that are maybe unjustly called "professional homeless" who sleep on benches in parks, and seem not to have any interest in changing their situation, even in asylum houses they do not like or want to keep the regime, the hygiene, (prayers in the Salvation Army hostels), and I wonder if we have the right to press them to keep those rules and to what extent. So the question is how to handle these people, and successively how to work with the people who are in the category of the endangered because I think that for those people the funds are more needed, and the money is wasted on hopeless cases.

*John Evans:*

I think that this is very important issue indeed. And I think that the statutory authorities and the NGOs have for many years worked to help homeless people. But what we have all forgotten is to ask homeless people what help they want. Instead of working for them we should be working with them. In number of countries are what I call self-help groups of homeless people, and they are the homeless people you will find on park benches. And given some practical help in terms on how to set up an event and a meeting they have formed themselves together into things which go under various names but which are often called "Speak outs". And that is the opportunity for homeless people themselves to say what they want in order to re-establish themselves back into society. The group that is based in the UK produced a Pretend Draft Act of Parliament which addressed all the needs that various homeless people thought should be addressed. I do not deny that there are probably some people who want to be homeless but I think that it is a very small number, much smaller than we imagine. And when we let homeless people express their own needs and if we address those needs than by far the vast majority of them can resettle themselves. But again it is not a quick exercise, and neither is it an inexpensive exercise.

And accept that, if you can, and this is a point where I think governments have to be lobbied very hard, to demonstrate to them that it is much more expensive to continue to deal with someone's image in condition of homelessness than it is to provide them with a house. Many local authorities in England, in Germany, in France and in the Netherlands used to put people into bed-and-breakfast kind of accommodation when they were homeless. And even over the relatively short period of say a year *it is much cheaper to provide those people with a proper house*. So what is the comment on the gentleman's comment about people here in the CR I think in all the other evidence says that very few people want to be homeless. Most of them can and want to be settled into what we call a normal way of life.

*Ilja Hradecký:*

I would like to add to this something from our experience because we have been working with homeless people for a relatively long period of time, especially in the centre of Prague, where I think the number of them is the highest. We have more than ten thousand names of homeless people in our data base who have sought our help. If we see a TV interview with a homeless person, which TV is happy to do, and that person says: "I like this way of life", this is not true. They are people who have resigned from any effort to settle back to a normal life, because they tried and failed. There is about 85 - 90 % among our clients who seek our help in Bolzanova street who are handicapped or suffer from some chronic disease, the cause of which is mostly mental disorder. These people (I think all of us have similar experience) cannot be said to have made such a decision, it is difficult to imagine that anybody decides e.g. to stay on the street in a frosty weather and to live on garbage of his free will, just because he likes it and is happy to live like this. The reality is such that there is a sort of public opinion which is the remnant of our socialist way of thinking stating that if there was somebody who had not been working for 14 days, he was a creature avoiding work and he should be imprisoned. This was the situation here during the socialist period - fortnight days without any employment were a crime.

*Pavel Kosina:*

I would like to make the problem of a homeless person clearer. I think that most of them had no intention at all to become homeless. The very basic help is available in many places, and so he gradually gains the concept that it is possible to profit from that even in the future, and the effort to change his situation is not a response to this help. On the contrary, I think that he tries to benefit from this aid with trickery. I think this is more frequent than a response: "I can pay back for the help I was given by setting back in life in a way I am expected to do."

*Ilja Hradecký:*

It has been already said that it is necessary to work with each client individually, to seek motivation for his future life together with him. He must decide on his program himself, we just can lead him to that. Our assistance is important so that he should get out of his depressions, of his mental problems to the state of his own initiative and activity. This is a matter of our personal approach. It is true that the public will still view these people who do not know what to do with themselves negatively for a long time on. Moreover, the public will confuse them with people who may not be homeless, with people who are drunk at railway stations and who are considered to be homeless. At the Main Station in Prague we have the experience that many of the people who are presented as the homeless by our mass media in

fact are not homeless people at all. They are people who do live somewhere, and who are here because for example they want to steal or to behave illegally in some other way.

*A man (who did not introduce himself):*

I would like just to add my observation of the causes of homelessness. From my point of view there are three fundamental causes: First is alcohol or drug addiction, in the second group there are people who are not interested in having any job, and the third group are people who are physically or mentally disabled. From this issue other categories of homeless people follow.

*John Evans:*

Going back to the question before the last one I think we could get into a very deep philosophical discussion here why should people be grateful for being offered the basic human rights.

*Helena Miklová (County Office Zlín):*

I would like to say that it is a question of an approach. One thing is the approach of the society and public opinion, this is a matter of lobbying and of culture or education, and other thing is what my personal approach is. And the question I wanted to ask as the bill on social help is being prepared; in this bill there are mentioned half way houses. I want to ask whether in Western Europe these half way houses are combined, I mean if it is possible that young people from children's houses, reform schools and prisons live together or if they are categorized even in those hostels according to their orientation or according to the problems connected with the problems they come from?

*John Evans:*

Yes, a comment on half way houses. The principles which are now increasingly being worked for half way houses are that people should be given as far as possible a permanent home when they need one. And the support that they need is given to them in their home, and as they become more independent the support is withdrawn. There, the obvious big advantage is that they are not continually uprooting people and moving somewhere else. When they have reached the point when they can reasonably even with a lot of support be expected to manage in their own house, and to get their own house, and as they become more and more proficient the support is withdrawn, and eventually they just live the same as you and I. Of course, it comes back to the old problem that you have to have enough affordable housing.

*Antonín Plachý:*

How do you choose people for these houses?



*John Evans:*

What generally happens is that particular schemes are taken into projects that are aimed to particular groups of people. A negotiation will take place with those authorities that have houses whether it is the local authority or a housing association or even a private landlord. And then if e.g. it is a scheme for young people, the young people who are homeless initially come into some kind of an emergency hostel where they are given initial help with all the kind of things securing their benefits, securing their access to doctors, and anything else they need, and then when they reach a point at which the staff in the hostel, and the staff will support them when they will want, believe it is right then they will be offered a house. Of course you cannot get it right all the time, and some go round several times before they eventually make it. But the same system is used for different groups whether it is a single parent or homeless young people or homeless people in an older age group.

*Miloslava Bičíková:*

The organization that has come into existence in the UK, the organization of the homeless people, how many members it has, and what demands can it present or what is the scope of possibilities?

*John Evans:*

You mean they speak up. Clearly people who are homeless on the street have not the facilities or in many cases the ability to organize themselves like that. But I think when you get to know some of the people there is a lot more ability and initiative there than you first think. It is really that an organization has to create the opportunity, it has to make available maybe an office, a telephone, stationary. And what seems to happen is that a small group of homeless people who are a little bit more articulate tend to come forward and take it over. And in practice what usually happens is that the organization that is sponsoring it assist the group of homeless people to get access to a hall for a day's conference for example.

And then they are given all kinds of facilities, "graffiti wall"... Some role may also play the opportunity to make some music, the opportunity simply to stand up and say whatever they want to say. And I think the most important for the homeless people themselves is simply the fact, that if I say something about homelessness, the press maybe will listen to it, politicians maybe will listen, but if a homeless person stands up and says it, they will take ten times as much notice. And what is continually surprising is the amount of hidden talents that is there which is not used, there are some very talented people who you think are homeless and hopeless, they are far from it.

*Miloslava Bičíková:*

This was very interesting, but it was not the answer to my question. I am interested to know whether there is any organization of homeless people in the UK which has to be represented by several members, how many members it has and if they have any right to lay any claims, as e.g. the right to have a shelter, to gain social benefits, etc. If there is something like trade unions here.

*John Evans:*

Yes, I think it does remind of something like a union of homeless people. There is usually a small group, and it is a small group of maybe five or six people who will take on the major task and who will actually devote themselves to it almost full time. But if the event is organized and held, then I think it is surprising that several hundred people will turn up to it. I mean if you tell the media, the television, the press or whatever that something is taking place and there are going to be several hundred homeless people talking about themselves and about their situation and what they believe should be done to help them, then that has a real impact, and the media are definitely in my experience very interested in it. I have to say politicians tend not to like it.

*Mike Stannett:*

You have said that you have been impressed with the progress made so far in the last eight years. And many people here are hostel directors and they recognized that the next step is to provide some type of follow on accommodation, and we recognize that it is a huge problem for us to solve. What suggestions or advice or strategies would you say we need to be looking at to be able to break down this wall that we face? Realistically speaking, are we in for a long war?

*John Evans:*

I think that is an impossible question. I think the answer is yes, you are in for a long war. But do not think that others have not been there before you because almost every other country has been there and has taken many, many years to begin to break it down. If housing authorities are faced, as most of them are, with waiting list for the houses, and the choice is between giving it to a single homeless person who has no dependents, and a family with children then the house will always go to the family. So I think from what I have learnt so far that possibly the biggest task facing you is to secure a supply of housing. I am sure I do not know enough about your situation here to make any comment at all upon how you think about it, all I can say is that what has happened in other countries has not been just one single approach but many approaches. On the one hand it has been to persuade the owners of social housing whether it is a local government or central government or a housing association.

*Ilja Hradecký:*

Before finishing this seminary I would like to say what is on my mind, and that is what our colleague from Prostějov has been speaking about. It is always the question of how to help a person who is coming for help. I am convinced that if we provide food for everybody who needs it we can protect the society from theft or burglaries caused by poverty and desperate need, if we make the hygiene available for that person we can protect the society from contagious diseases, and if we force such person to go to the doctor's (and we do force them to go to the doctor's indeed) we can protect him from various suffering and the society from infections. If we are in doubt whether this person trades upon us or not, it is certainly worth giving that person at least the minimum.

*Antonín Plachý*

We have opened up a lot of problems, and there are maybe more specific tasks before us. I mean specifically housing. It may not seem possible at the moment but if we remember our beginnings with several hostels in the whole republic, and now e.g. the S.A.D. has 47 members, and others apply for membership, I think that even the seemingly unrealistic goals may be coming closer to their fulfilment.

## FEANTSA

Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri  
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless

1 Rue Defacqz, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgie

FEANTSA is supported by the European Commission and the European Parliament.

FANTSA has more than fifty members (national/regional organizations and street newspapers) in Europe and in the U.S.A.. FEANTSA is governed by a General Assembly which elects an Administrative Council which appoints an Executive Committee. Its headquarters are in Brussels, Belgium.

## GOALS

1. Alert the European institutions and national governments to the need to alleviate and eliminate homelessness.
2. Promote policies which will alleviate and eliminate homelessness in the Member States of the E. U.
3. Forward specific proposals to the European Parliament and the European Commission to tackle homelessness and monitor the progress of these institutions.
4. Coordinate the national organizations working with the homeless in order to help and support them in their struggle to combat homelessness.
5. Encourage the exchange of information between non-governmental organization in the area of research and practise with regard to the homeless.
6. Develop research and studies which explore the nature, extent and causes of the problem of homelessness in the member States.
7. Alert public opinion.

*(Article 3b of the Statutes - Moniteur Belge - 19 October 1989)*

## ACTIVITIES

1. Research: Since 1991 FEANTSA has been in charge of the European Observatory on Homelessness, which was set up to collect and publish up to date information and statistics about homelessness in the Member States. The Observatory works through a network of 15 national correspondents, Each year it publishes 15 national reports and a transnational analysis which indicates trends at a European level.
2. Networking: FEANTSA forwards to its members detailed information on Community policies and programmes likely to support projects or initiatives in favour of the homeless. FEANTSA offers its members the possibility of coordinated actions on a common basis and with common objectives in all Member Sates (media events, preparation of the annual meeting of the European housing ministers, press conferences etc).
3. Lobbying: FEANTSA represents its members at the various European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe).

4. Communication: FEANTSA helps to make the issue of homelessness more widely known through:

- a wide distribution of its publications
- articles in newsletters and the press
- its presence at all important seminars and meetings at European level which deal with housing and social exclusion
- organization of international meetings and seminars, media events and press conferences

## **S.A.D. AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

It is apparent the European Union is concerned and a little nervous of the social situation of Central and Eastern Europe, especially regarding the level of poverty, the growing number of homeless people and related social problems, this is rightly so.

This concern is on two levels, one from the side of the united governments and the other from the side of Humanitarian organisations.

The governmental concern is twofold: they are worried about the consequences that a large influx of refugees would have on the E.U.; also they are uncomfortable about the costs required to keep the present status quo when the E.U. enlarges its membership to include some of the former communist countries.

The Humanitarian organisations are frustrated with the slow process of the E.U to take more action within the existing membership concerning the elimination of poverty and homelessness, let alone what will happen within an enlarged Union.

The E.U. has recognised that there is an immense problem within the former Eastern block countries but it is not true to say that all these countries should be tarred with the same brush.

There are different levels of recognition and resources being made available by various countries to meet the basic human needs of their peoples.

The E.U., through organisations such as FEANTSA and Phare has helped to give advice, expertise, resources and finance to the growing NGO sector in these countries.

The S.A.D. (association of hostel runners) in the Czech Republic is evidence that even with limited resources, skills and finance, that significant self-help can be achieved to help the homeless people. Though for this to be consistent and to encouraged to develop, it requires continual backing and support from an open and stable government and international help.

Relatively speaking, the Czech Rep. has been more open, stable and progressive than any other emerging democracy. This outlook has helped to provide an atmosphere that encourages greater involvement and investment by international organisations/ foundations. Also giving confidence for home grown projects.

The S.A.D. is a member of FEANTSA and hopes to be able to contribute to the developing understanding between the new democracies and the E.U., especially in relation to the misery of poverty and homelessness, related problems and the ever growing negative influences of some aspects of western culture.

The S.A.D., amongst other organisations, wishes to play its part in influencing the social legislation of the Czech government concerning homelessness and its struggle to meet the social criteria of membership of an enlarged E.U.

The S.A.D., though young and relatively inexperienced, has grown quickly and is dedicated to improving the situation of homeless people, to improve its own understanding and quality of services provided. Also to educate society that they too have some responsibility in this area.

The S.A.D. believes that membership of FEANTSA will better enable it to meet these goals and that it will be of mutual value, providing both sides with increasing trust and confidence.

## **ASSOCIATION OF RUNNERS OF SHELTER HOUSES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

The hostels started to arise in the beginning of 1990. They arose without restraint. They were established by state institutions, municipal or non-state organisations. They started to get information and make different conceptions. It was natural in that chaos, that some people understood the problems and the need for a network of hostels. The SAD arose after many negotiations. The members of this association are individual hostels in the Czech Republic. It is very encouraging that this organisation with 47 members grew from a few original members. In this organisation there are associated state, non-state, municipal and church hostels. These hostels are for men, women and mothers with children.

The membership is getting to be a prestigious affair. This association receives only hostels with a conception for social care and who guarantee a rehabilitation program. It means that a hostel is not only accommodation, but has to have a program for helping homeless people. The type of help depends on skills of employees, resources and financial possibilities.

### ***How is SAD organised?***

We are the only organisation of its kind in the Czech Republic, which brings together different sorts of hostels. At the Head of the SAD is the 7-member board, which is voted for a 2 year period. The SAD members meet at least 4 times a year at the main meeting and once at a common seminar. At the main meetings and seminars education and training dominates the programs, which is visited not by members SAD only, but by social workers of state sphere and self-government as well.

In this year we are finishing the education training for hostel leaders at the university in Ostrava.

We are accepted into the international organisation FEANTSA, which associates national organisations for homeless people. It is an organ of the European Union.

### ***Purpose of SAD***

We would like to provide together an entire conception of care for homeless people. There is missing data on which to plan for the future e.g. how many hostels are needed and where they need to be established. There is missing the elementary rules for finance. We are aware, that hostels can not solve problems of citizens at risk on our own. It is necessary to co-operate very closely with other people, who are interested in the homeless and related problems i.e. alcoholics and people with other dependencies. We shall also co-operate with people, who are preparing alternative punishment and probation care.

The other SAD task is to offer not only consultation , but also a possibility of short-term attachments and preparation for new employees.

We co-operate also with department for social research , to help build a picture of homeless people in the Czech Republic. But it is not possible to solve it without accurate research.

There is lot of problems in this area. We are aware, that it is possible to solve it only with a wide co-operation. Only in that way we will be able to help not just people in emergency situations, but the whole of society as well.

SAD Office : c/o Tusarova 60, Praha 7, 170 00, Czech Republic

## **THE SALVATION ARMY (ARMADA SPASY) IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

Since 1989 and the fall of Communist power in Central and Eastern Europe and the adoption of varying degrees of Democracy, the Salvation Army has been able to restore and continue its work in those countries from which they had been previously banned and expelled.

This includes East Germany, Hungary, Czech and Slovak Republics, Russia (CIS) and Latvia. Of course the Salvation Army is known all over the world for its practical expression of Christian service particularly for the underprivileged and the “excluded”.

Perhaps in the Czech Republic, out of all the new developing democracies, that this mixture of social action and spiritual care is most clearly expressed.

### **After 40yrs.**

In 1990 President Havel invited the “ Armada Spásy” ( Salvation Army) to resume its work after being banned for 40 yrs. The Czech Rep. was in need of the influence of a Christian organisation with such qualities and experience.

The Armada Spásy brought its typical leadership and experience to bear upon the opportunities and problems facing the excluded people of the Czech Rep. in its first seven years of freedom.

The new democracy had huge social and human rights issues to deal with and needed to start making plans to look to the needs of society.

### **Leading Role**

The Armada Spásy plays a leading role in helping meet the immediate humanitarian needs of those who have become marginalised, forgotten and hidden.

The A.S. opened its first hostel in the whole of the former communist block in 1991 in a small mining town called Havirov in the north east of Moravia on the edge of the industrial basin of Ostrava.

This first step served as a model for others interested in working with the Homeless and they could come and see what and how such work could be done.

It cannot be over-exaggerated what this first step achieved. It gave confidence to others to do something similar, especially heralding a new era of church and state co-operation and international co-operation. This was the beginning of the growth of Charitable and NGO partnerships in the area of social care.

It was also symbolic that this started in Havirov which was a new town, built as the role model of the Socialist Republic.

### **New Ways Of Care**

Now the A.S. has hostels and social projects throughout the Czech Republic, employing nearly 200 staff in 20 projects, under the guidance of leaders from Holland, UK and the USA. At the same time, training-up native leaders who are now beginning to take up leadership positions, eventually leading to self-sufficiency.

The projects themselves reflect the needs of the communities in which they are set and include the most vulnerable in society. The A.S. has not only been instrumental in changing the nation’s response to homelessness, but also has led the way with new forms of elderly convalescent care and community care through day centres. Though we take these types of



projects for granted in the West, they are at the forefront of new and effective ways of recognising and meeting individual needs.

### **Co-operation and Stability**

It must also be recognised that in the C.R., without the co-operation, relative openness and stability of the Czech government and relevant Ministries, that this has encouraged an atmosphere of trust and confidence in each other which has made it possible for organisations to make the necessary investments. This is perhaps beyond that of any other Central and Eastern European country.

### **Influence**

The A.S. influence goes beyond the corridors of central power, but also to the grass roots municipalities, which is essential for the developing and functioning of the social projects. Other areas of influence are amongst both the other existing and emerging churches. As A.S. projects are ecumenical in their staffing policy, this has led to a breaking down of the ancient barriers of distrust and bigotry at a local level.

The A.S. links with other charities, churches, NGO 's and the state. It became obvious that a network or association of projects should be formed to help provide a more cohesive system of care for the homeless. The A.S. was the main instigator and influence for the foundation of the SAD. A young umbrella organisation of hostel runners.

### **Further Changes Necessary**

With the encouragement, expertise and funds from the E.U., the area of NGO care is growing. However everything is relative and no matter how much outside help is given from the A.S., other international organisations and the E.U., there are still many changes of attitude and policy necessary by the government and society in general.

This includes a deeper commitment to the growing needs of the homeless, better facilities, better assessment of individual needs, specialised help and programs, greater involvement from the public sector by sponsorship and more public awareness that they too can help.

### **FEANTSA**

The Armada Spásy ( The Salvation Army) has membership of FEANTSA, through this we hope to receive support for our projects, to be able to give information and advice of what can and is being done in the C.R. as part of the total picture for this part of the world, to seek up-to-date information on new ways of helping the homeless, to be able to be part the preparation in meeting the social criteria for the C.R. in becoming a member of the E.U.

### **Future Plans**

The A.S. continues to grow in effectiveness and has plans to develop existing projects through training and increased resources. There are also plans for new projects, especially with young people in mind. In relation to young people at high risk of long term homelessness and unemployment and the increasing effects of the negative influence of western culture, also as part of the recently developing "alternative punishment" system for young people.

The A.S. brings more than leadership and experience to Central and Eastern Europe, but also a message, that together in God's strength and wisdom we can find a better way. There is hope for the hopeless.

Armáda spásy, Tusarova 60, Praha 7 Czech Rep.

"A Heart to God and a hand to man"

## **PROGRAMME OF NADĚJE FOR HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE**

Naděje is a civic group founded on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1990. Its Statutes stipulate that Naděje is a non-political, multi-denominational group active throughout the Czech Republic. Naděje's mission is to spread the gospel and bring it to practical life; its objective is to develop a network of services to people in need, based on Christian principles. Naděje provides material, moral, medical, legal and spiritual help. Involvement in the project takes place on a solely voluntary and informal basis, both in the local chapters and at the Board level.

### **Integration programme**

The Integration programme (in place since Naděje's emergence in 1990) is intended to provide help to people on the periphery of the society, or those who face an imminent threat of being cast out. Its purpose is to provide sympathetic assistance in the identification of goals in life and a place in the society. The Integration programme is composed of several tiers, with special services directed to certain categories of socially disintegrated people. The base tier has served two purposes since 1990: a crisis centre offering psychotherapy and catering to vital needs, and the start up of the integration programme itself. All of the base tier services are offered free of charge. The first, second and third tiers, operated since 1991, involve various types of asylum accommodation and the attendant services. A special emphasis is placed on work. The clients contribute to the boarding and amenities in different ways. The fourth tier represents separate housing outside any asylum, with occasional calls of the social worker. Some special services are included in the project's integration programme:

- a) a general surgeon is open to homeless people;
- b) a centre of assistance to young people after drug addiction treatment is planned for 1996;
- c) residential quarters for young people who left children's homes after coming of age (1996).
- d) an old-age residence for the homeless is planned;

### **Modifications of the integration programme**

Parts of the integration programme are aimed at the specific groups of clients: help for young people, help for elderly and homeless people, postpenitentiary help, work therapy and health care.

*Help for young people, especially for children leaving children homes,* is focused on young socially disintegrated people, who are not able to find their social roles. There are these services offered to them:

- a) streetwork,
- b) services in a day centre,
- c) half way asylum house,
- d) work therapy,
- e) passive and active culture, sports etc.

*Help for elderly people* who are endangered by social exclusion. They need special approach and care.

*Postpenitentiary help* for people in prisons and after their leaving of prison. They usually do not have any place to return. We offer our help especially to young people until 25 years of age who have passed their first imprisoning. There are these tiers of care:

- a) the first contact in a prison,

- b) systematic help in our day centre,
- c) asylum in our half way house,
- d) work therapy and requalification,
- e) education, passive and active culture, sports etc.

*Ergo therapy and requalification* is except of asylum the most important stimulating factor, which is also an inhibitor of social exclusion. Most of people coming and looking for help in Naděje are handicapped. Many of them are lacking any goal of their lives. They are not able to manage their own lives. There are work therapy, qualification and requalification offered in our workshop. Its main goals are motivation, endurance and basic habits.

Health care of homeless people is based on our experience of application of our integration programme. People without any permanent housing are almost all handicapped. Many of them became homeless because of their handicap, because they were not able to get on with different situations in their lives. Other diseases are caused by their style of life.

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## IGLOO PROGRAMME

The IGLOO Programme seeks to promote projects which provide social support, decent housing, skills training and job opportunities to people facing problems of social exclusion..

*Poverty* is spreading throughout the European Union, as unemployment remains high. Official figures show that more than 57 million people - 17 percent of the population - live in households with less than half the national average income (source: Eurostat 1997).

Across Europe there is a growing recognition of the urgent need to tackle the causes of social exclusion at every level. At Amsterdam Summit in June, government leaders decided that the European Union should be able to take action in this area.

Those who cannot afford to obtain decent housing face the greatest obstacles to participation in society. The European Parliament has endorsed *FEANTSA*'s assessment that 18 million people in the EU are either **homeless** or living in bad housing.

There is no instant solution to the problem of social exclusion. Continued support, training and employment are needed to prevent the disadvantaged people of today from becoming the homeless people of tomorrow. This is why the **IGLLOO Programme** aims to achieve „Global Integration through Housing and Jobs“ (*In French, IGLOO stands for „Insertion Globale par le Logement et l'emploi“*).

The IGLOO Programme is the result of a unique cooperation at European level between three main partners: the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS) is an alliance of 47 bodies that rent out a total of 25 million people; the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) represents a total of 53 million people; and FEANTSA brings together more than 50 organizations that provide a wide range of services for homeless people in 18 different countries.

The IGLOO Programme seeks to promote projects which enable disadvantaged people to play a full part in society, by providing them with access to social support, decent housing, skills training and job opportunities. The target group consists of men and women who face problems related to social exclusion: including young people with few formal qualifications, as well as older adults who have been unemployed for a long period.

The three main partners - CECODHAS, ETUC and FEANTSA - have been collaborating at European level since 1993. The aim has been to build a network of IGLOO partnerships at national, regional and local levels, in to establish initiatives across Europe. IGLOO initiatives have already been launched in many countries, involving members of the three European partners, together with private enterprises, local public authorities, and national government agencies. In some countries, IGLOO projects are currently being implemented, with very positive initial results.

An European IGLOO Office is being opened in Brussels in October 1997, with an international team of staff to coordinate the establishment of new IGLOO initiatives, and to provide advice and practical support. the office will facilitate an exchange of information and know-how between the various IGLOO initiatives, in order to encourage the transfer of models of good practice between different countries. Also, proposals will be developed concerning legislation and policies at both national and European levels.

The international coordination of the IGLOO Programme is being financed through the „new job sources“ budget of the European Social Fund. On the ground, IGLOO initiatives are being financed through various sources at local and national levels, as well as obtaining significant support from European Community programmes. (CP)

## IGLOO: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

IGLOO initiatives seek to fulfil four key functions:

- Providing a framework of continuous social support in the form of specially adapted services which can respond to the specific needs of each individual, for example concerning personal, health and family problems.
- Increasing the supply of good-quality housing units, affordable for people with a limited income, and appropriate for single people as well as for families, either by renovating old buildings or by starting new construction projects.
- Running vocational training courses which give disadvantaged people the opportunity to learn valuable skills, and to obtain recognized qualifications in areas such as building work, furniture renovation, catering and childcare.
- Creating new jobs in areas related to the provision of housing such as building and renovation work, as well as in a wide range of local community services, in order to give people more opportunities for secure employment.

### IGLOO „ON THE GROUND“

In several countries, IGLOO partnerships are already working to implement projects, with very positive initial results. Here we present two examples of IGLOO initiatives.

In Finland, four pilot projects have been set up in deprived residential areas of large towns, where employment opportunities are especially limited. In Hameenlinna and in Jarvenpaa, co-operative enterprises are being developed to provide jobs in repair and renovation work, and to develop a wide range of social services including childcare. Meanwhile, in Jvaskyla and in the Kulosaari district of Helsinki, young people are being trained to work on the renovation of old buildings. These are being converted into low-rent housing units for young people, as well as workshop areas for new small enterprises.

In the Rhineland-Westphalia region of Germany, several local projects have been set up as part of the „Working and Housing“ („Arbeiten & Wohnen“) pilot programme. In Marl, an old building is being renovated and turned into separate housing units, with the work done by people who were previously unemployed and also at risk of becoming homeless. In Münster, a former municipal emergency shelter is being turned into housing units for both families and single persons. Individual projects are managed by local partnerships which involve public authorities, housing organizations and private companies.

FEANTSA maintains a network of IGLOO Contact Points in the countries of the EU. These Contact Points are provided by experienced individuals who have generously volunteered to facilitate an exchange of information between FEANTSA, the European IGLOO Office, and organizations providing services to homeless people at national, regional and local levels.

*Source: The Newsletter of FEANTSA, Issue 1, 09-10/1997*

## **CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: THE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC CHANGE**

The numbers of homeless people have grown dramatically in the newly democratic countries of central and eastern Europe, as economic transformation takes priority over social protection. A recent FEANTSA report considers what steps can be taken to tackle this situation.

This summer the European media devoted considerable attention to the severe flooding of rivers in eastern Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. One of the principal effects of this natural disaster was that many thousands of people lost their homes, as houses and apartment blocks were torn down and swept away by the flowing waters.

The recent floods have made worse what was already a serious situation concerning the numbers of people without access to decent and affordable housing. A high level of homelessness seems to be a common characteristic of all the newly democratic countries in central and eastern Europe, as they each undergo the transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market capitalist system.

*Housing Exclusion in Central and Eastern Europe* is the subject of a report recently published by FEANTSA, presenting the outcomes of a seminar which brought together participants from all the regions of Europe in Brussels in February 1995. The Report includes papers written by 12 researchers and experts from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, Russia, the Czech Republic and Serbia, and provides a general overview of the situation faced by homeless people in these countries.

The Report describes how national state authorities are generally failing to ensure that all of their citizens have access to decent and affordable housing. In particular, the closing down of workers hostels and orphanages has forced many of the most vulnerable adults and children out onto the streets. Many of those who become homeless have multiple problems associated with a history of institutional care or confinement, family breakdown, alcoholism or health problems, unemployment and a lack of financial means.

Increasing numbers of people are turning for help to local public and voluntary organizations which are working hard to provide effective assistance, despite facing a serious lack of basic resources. The voluntary sector, which was non-existent before the democratic transitions, is slowly beginning to emerge. These new services are emerging in a legal and institutional vacuum, they face financial and organizational difficulties and do not receive the political support they need from the public authorities.

An insufficient supply of affordable housing may be identified as one of the key factors of affordable housing may be identified as one of the key factors of housing exclusion. The policy choice to abandon the provision of social housing for rent in favour of a free market system is reflected in the general decline in the supply of low-cost housing and in the increase of rents for newly available housing and in the increase of rents for newly available housing. this policy is new for countries in transition to market economies and it adds new facets to the old housing crisis characterized by a general shortage of reasonable quality housing.

The scale of housing exclusion in the countries examined is greater than in the countries of the EU, because a higher proportion of the population is at risk of homelessness, while the living conditions of those who become homeless are much harsher. The most striking feature of housing exclusion in central and eastern Europe is that it is far more difficult for homeless people to find a way out of their predicament, because the opportunities for access to appropriate assistance are very limited.

The Report reveals the desperate situation of homeless people in countries which have dismantled one system of social protection without setting up new social safety nets. It is necessary to build new partnerships of public bodies and voluntary organizations across the whole of central and eastern Europe, in order to provide the wide range of services that homeless people in these countries so desperately need.

In a statement announcing the publication of the report, John Evans, President of FEANTSA, said: „Those of us who live in western Europe cannot afford to ignore the housing crisis which is bringing misery to so many of our fellow Europeans. Now that we want to bring some of these countries into the European Union, we have to face up to the fact that this is our problem too. The housing crisis in the countries of central and eastern Europe represents a social time-bomb under plans to enlarge the EU.

„But it is not enough to recognize the scale of the problem, we also have to take positive action to improve the situation. Following the Amsterdam Summit, I hope that the political leaders of the European Union will address themselves to dealing with social and economic exclusion, both in the current member states and also in the applicant countries. For our part, FEANTSA will continue to build links with organizations that are working with homeless people in all the countries of central and eastern Europe.“

*Source: The Newsletter of FEANTSA, Issue 1, 09-10/1997*

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Miloslav Utíkal, OCH - Olomouc  
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Names and surnames are adopted from a presentation list, some of them are illegible.  
We are sorry for eventual mistakes.

## ARTICLES FROM NEWSPAPERS

**Svoboda, Ostrava, 4. 3. 1998**

### **INTEREST IN HOMELESS PEOPLE**

...on Tuesday, the Brussels guests were received by some MPs, they have visited several ministries, and they will take part in the seminary "Europe and Homeless People" on Wednesday. ... The Czech Republic is represented by The Association of Asylum Houses and Naděje Praha. As we are not the members of the EU this is just an associated membership. The Opava hostel for homeless people has gained very good reputation, and therefore experts from abroad often visit it.

**MF Dnes, Praha, 7. 3. 1998**

### **AMONG THE HOMELESS THERE IS A GROWING NUMBER OF PEOPLE BROUGHT UP IN CHILDREN'S HOMES**

Praha(duš) - ...Ilja Hradecký stated that night shelters are still missing in Prague for people who live on the street. The lack of them is felt mainly during winter months. He also stated that the number of young homeless people who were often brought up in children's homes is more and more growing. "Naděje" opened a hostel for those people in Vršovice last autumn. This half way house is designed for about thirty young men up to 23 years of age...

The work of non-profit organizations in our country has been appreciated by the representatives of FEANTSA, the members of which are Naděje, The Salvation Army and the Association of asylum houses..

... "The Magistrate does support us financially but we have not enough money for investments, purchases and reconstructions of houses," shared the Director of Naděje his experience.

"Building of social houses is insufficient in the whole of Europe, maybe with the exception of Northern countries," stated John Evans, the president of FEANTSA...According to the director of Naděje there is about thirty to forty thousand homeless people.

FEANTSA came into existence in 1989, and it joins sixty six organizations from the European Union and from the Central and Eastern European countries.

**Zemské noviny, 6. 3. 1998**

### **THERE WILL BE MORE AND MORE HOMELESS PEOPLE**

Praha(dob) - The desperate lack of social flats in the CR and increasing unemployment will cause a rise in the number of homeless people; their number now reaches about 30 - 40 thousand. This is the opinion of the president of the FEANTSA conference John Evans who said yesterday in the Prague centre of Naděje charity organization that the number of people without shelter in the EU countries is about 5.5 million. "I was pleased that the standard of the Czech non-governmental organizations helping homeless people is very good. They must, however, categorically claim the support for their work from governmental institutions," said Evans.

**Metro, Praha, 6. 3. 1998**

### **THE CR SHOULD BUILD SOCIAL FLATS**

Praha - The CR should build social flats for homeless people, is the opinion of the FEANTSA president John Evans, because accommodation in hostels offered by the non-governmental non-profit institutions will not solve the problem of homelessness. The CR can expect that the number of homeless people will grow, and the government should make use of the experience of the EU countries in solving this problem, said Evans yesterday.

**Hospodářské noviny, Praha, 6. 3. 1998**

**THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE MAY INCREASE**

Praha(rš)

... one of the mistakes is ignoring social housing; Evans believes that the continuous rising trend of unemployment will result in a rise in the number of homeless people, and if politicians and governmental institution ignore this phenomenon it will result in great problems. According to Evans e.g. in the UK the situation is such that two basic groups of inhabitants cannot in fact communicate with each other. On one hand there are people who have jobs and flats and whose living standard relatively grows up, and on the other hand those who have lost their jobs and often also roofs over their heads. ...

**Olomoucký PULS 6.3.1998**

**THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE INCREASES DRAMATICALLY**

The number of homeless people which is about 30-40 thousand in the Czech Republic increases by 10% every year...2000 people find shelter in 47 hostels the capacity of which is insufficient...the law does not know the term "homeless"...according to the experts who meet during the seminary called "Europe And Homeless People" it is necessary to solve the housing problem first of all, and to increase social housing...there are potential or hidden homeless people who live in poor conditions... "Homelessness of women is very often caused by a crisis in their partnerships accompanied by an aggression of their husbands or partners...the lack of housing available is a great problem not only in the CR but also in other European countries; our government has a possibility to learn from other EU countries where there live about six million homeless people at present - and a chance not to repeat their mistakes.

*Eva Brachtlová*

**Lidové noviny, Praha, 7. 3. 1998**

**MEN PREVAIL AMONG HOMELESS PEOPLE THE NUMBER OF WHICH IS ABOUT FORTY THOUSAND IN THE CR**

Praha - ....The causes why people lose their places where to live are ... most often unemployment and a lack of employment possibilities, the housing market which is not functional, family problems, alcohol and other drug addiction or release from an institution or from prison. ... Homeless men are more active in seeking help and services, and they display their problems more publicly, women on the contrary... became homeless because of partnership problems. Their homelessness is hidden. They live with their friends or they later return back. The causes of homelessness of children and young people are mainly family dissensions, escapes from children's homes, alcohol and other drug addictions. And recently also boredom, unfilled free time and passive watching TV. Claiming of social benefits is connected with a person having a permanent address. Therefore it is nearly impossible for homeless people to claim their social benefits...

**Svoboda 12.3.1998, Newspaper for Moravia and Silesia**

**HOMELESS PEOPLE AS A PROBLEM**

Opava(jih) - The delegation of two members of FEANTSA from Brussels visited the hostel for homeless people in Opava. ... Our republic also records only those homeless people who come and seek help of their own initiative. Other, and maybe greater part, lives in parks and stations without being recorded at all. Out of their midst come those who commit small criminal offences.

**MF DNES, Praha, 12. 3. 1998**

## **THE HOMELESS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC DO NOT OFFICIALLY EXIST AT ALL**

O l o m o u c - Though the people without homes battle for better places at the Prague Main Station, and though the hostels for homeless people are full, the homeless people actually do not exist in the country. The term "homeless" does not even appear in any law. The experts, however, estimate the number of them to be nearly one hundred thousand.

The fact that homeless people are not mentioned in the law causes many problems, says Mr. Antonín Plachý: "In negotiations with the authorities, we can only rely on their word. Nobody is obliged to give us a single crown when we have no recourse in the law." Therefore also hostels are run mostly by non-governmental organizations, apart from just a few exceptions.

Homeless people then cannot do anything but live at the periphery of the society without any hope for a better future. If they do not officially exist, there is no concept how to solve this problem. "If the existence of the homeless is acknowledged by the state, it will be necessary to solve the problems connected that are connected with them in this country. Then it will be possible to lay down some principles of care for those people, and legal framework within which we could act," claims Ilja Hradecký from the civil association Naděje (The Hope) which runs hostels for homeless people.

## **ALL HOSTELS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE BURSTING IN THE SEAMS**

Thirty or forty thousand people have sought help in the hostel out of which there was about 10% of women. But the staff of the hostels objects: "We look after just a top of the iceberg." They estimate the number of homeless people in the country to be twice this amount. "Only from one of the Prague centres we have about ten thousand names in our database," confirmed Ilja Hradecký. The estimations are also supported by the fact that two thousand beds available in 47 hostels are permanently occupied. The number of homeless people rises by 5-10% every year.

"All hostels are bursting in the seams. It is really a desperate situation. We put extra beds into rooms, and we must even decline mothers with small children," describes life in hostels Pavel Štrubl, the director of one of them run by the Charity in Olomouc. Money that he gets is hardly sufficient for running the house but it is not enough for repairs. The house falls to pieces before his eyes. "We have not got a single crown since the beginning of the year. Everybody wants information on our clients - the authorities, police, etc. But we have not even the computer network connecting our individual houses.," says Štrubl. The homeless, however, need a qualified supervision and expert help of psychologists, psychiatrists and special pedagogues. "Our salaries are about thirty crown per hour. We work in the environment where scabies, tuberculosis or hepatitis is nothing unusual. And we do not know when someone will stab a knife into our backs," continues Štrubl. The hope that the number of clients will decrease some time later he decisively rejects. "It is a time bomb. The amount of divorces increases, and these children from destroyed families are again potential homeless people."

## **A HOMELESS PERSON IS NOT JUST A DRUNKARD AT THE STATION**

The law makers, however, continue to ignore homelessness, and also the new bill on social help is considered to be very obscure by the directors of hostels for homeless people. "Our law says that a homeless person is a person who has no citizenship," claim the directors of hostels for homeless people. According to the definition of the European Union the homeless person is not only someone who lives permanently on the street, who has no home at a certain period of time or who lives in some charity institution, but also a person who has

an insecure accommodation from which he/she can be evicted at almost a moment's notice or who lives in a flat that has low standard e.g. without sanitation.

About 70 million people live like this in Europe according to the official statistics.

The opinion on homeless people, however, is totally different in the Czech Republic. "If you say "homeless person", the majority of people imagine only a drunk man at the Main Station in Prague. But this is a very cheap view. Nevertheless homeless people are e.g. people afflicted by floods, who are living in their relatives' homes because their houses are not fit to live in," object the directors of hostels for homeless people. Thousands of applicants for city flats as well can be considered so called hidden or potential homeless people. "These people generally live with their relatives under great psychical and economic pressure," is the opinion of the experts.

Mrs. Eva Fischerová (CSDP), MP and a member of the Board for Health Care and Social Policy stated that the bill on social help has not been even presented to the MPs. "We are still in the initial stage which is changing. It is an extraordinary term, and I think it should not even exist at all. I believe that every Czech citizen has the right to have a roof over his/her head, and in case he/she gets into a difficult situation, he/she should have a possibility to solve it by social housing. In case this also fails then the hostel must be available. In fact I would prefer that there is no homelessness for our citizens at all," means Fischerová.

### **DO NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES, EXHORTS THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Experts of the EU warn that we should not close our eyes before this problem. "Do not make the same mistakes as we did in the Western Europe. It is evidently proved that solving this problem some years later is much more expensive for the state than solving it now. It is difficult for these people to return back into a normal life," stated John Evans at the seminary called "Europe and homeless people"; he is the vice president of FEANTSA associating organizations which run hostels for homeless people and deal with problems of homeless people at the European Union. His opinion is that only a few governments want to admit this problem. Especially when it is not possible to determine the number of homeless people. "It is the same as if you want to count little fish while they are moving about. It is then difficult to give an exact number. The amount of homeless people you have up to now can be just a warning," means Evans.

European experts are convinced that the root of the problems of homeless people is in the lack of housing available. "This problem will not be resolved only by hostels. It is necessary that the problems of housing are solved. I am convinced that one half of the inhabitants of our hostel would be able to live without any help if social housing or flats were available," means Mike Stannett, director of the Prague hostel for homeless people of The Salvation Army.

*Martina Vacková*

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE  
*eradication of poverty*  
1997 - 2006**

On 17 October 1987, 100,000 defenders of human rights from all walks of life joined together on the Plaza of Liberties and Human Rights, Trocadero, Paris - the site of the 1948 signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - to „pay homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence... (and to) affirm their conviction that human misery is not inevitable.“ 1993 marked the first worldwide observance of this day after it was proclaimed in General Assembly resolution. In 1994 the General Assembly proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. Its objective is to create „a greater awareness of the fact that the eradication of poverty is...fundamental to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development“ and to catalyze concrete actions resulting in a „distinct and significant contribution to the efforts to eradicate poverty“ (General Assembly resolution 49/110, 1994). UN recognizes poverty as one of the biggest dangers to political and social stability, that was the reason to declare the decade 1997 - 2006 as the First International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless) has more than fifty members (national/regional organizations and street newspapers) in Europe and in the U. S. A. Its goals: Alert the European institutions and national governments to the need to alleviate and eliminate homelessness, promote policies which will alleviate and eliminate homelessness in the Member States of the E. U., forward specific proposals to the European Parliament and the European Commission to tackle homelessness and monitor the progress of these institutions, coordinate the national organizations working with the homeless in order to help and support them in their struggle to combat homelessness, encourage the exchange of information between non-governmental organization in the area of research and practise with regard to the homeless, develop research and studies which explore the nature, extent and causes of the problem of homelessness in the member States, alert public opinion.

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Vlastimila a Ilja Hradečtí

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This seminar took place on the beginning of the First International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. This summary contents speeches of director of Information Centre UN Andreas Nicklisch, senator Jan Zahradníček, founder of Hospic in Červený Kostelec Marie Svatošová, and Jana Filáčková from Ministry for work and social policy.

### SBORNÍK ZE SEMINÁŘE NA TÉMA BEZDOMOVSTVÍ V EVROPĚ, OLOMOUC, 4. 3. 1998 (SUMMARY FROM A SEMINAR ON HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE, OLOMOUC, 4. 3. 1998)

John Evans, vicepresident of FEANTSA, Misia Coghlan from FEANTSA office in Brussels, Ilja Hradecký, chairman of Naděje presented their speeches on the seminar for hostel and asylum workers and other persons providing help to homeless people.

Czech edition

### SUMMARY FROM A SEMINAR ON HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE, OLOMOUC, 4. 3. 1998 English edition

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