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# **Social exclusion of homeless people in Poland**

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## Introduction

According to the Institute on Social Exclusion<sup>1</sup>, the notion of social exclusion refers to the complex processes by which groups of people or entire communities are denied access to the rights, opportunities, and resources (e.g. housing, employment, health care, democratic participation) that, under ordinary circumstances, are available to all the members of society and that are crucial to social integration. The definition of social exclusion adopted in the document "the National Strategy for Polish Social Integration"<sup>2</sup> states that social exclusion denotes the lack or limitation of opportunities to influence or use, or participate in basic public institutions which should be available to everyone, especially the poor. As the researchers of this phenomenon imply, the inability to fully participate in society can be the result of both objective factors (depending on the social structure and social institutions), and subjective factors (psychosocial characteristics of an individual)<sup>3</sup> but the scope of groups of people it may affect cannot be so easily put into categories. These groups of people that are socially marginalized and discriminated against include, among many others, immigrants, minorities, unemployed, alcoholics, drug addicts, single mothers/fathers, and the homeless<sup>4</sup>. The last form of social exclusion, i.e. homelessness is considered the most brutal and dramatic<sup>5</sup> as it deprives a man of dignity, security, work, and participation in community and culture. This manifestation of social exclusion will be further analyzed in this report.

Homelessness as a form of social exclusion becomes a more common and noticeable problem in Poland. The CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research) survey ('The excluded areas', February 2007)<sup>6</sup> shows that - in the opinion of Poles – the groups that face the risk of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.adler.edu/page/institutes/institute-on-social-exclusion/about>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cie.gov.pl/publikacje/cd-sprawni-w-pracy/doc/26%20-%20NSIS.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy\\_wykluczenia\\_spolecznego-wybrane\\_aspekty\\_PL.pdf](http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy_wykluczenia_spolecznego-wybrane_aspekty_PL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.asm-poland.com.pl/twojzansaplus/materialy/Wykluczenie\\_spoleczne\\_wytyczne.pdf](http://www.asm-poland.com.pl/twojzansaplus/materialy/Wykluczenie_spoleczne_wytyczne.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pfwb.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Wsp%C3%B3lnie-stanowisko-KPR.pdf> p. 2

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy\\_wykluczenia\\_spolecznego-wybrane\\_aspekty\\_PL.pdf](http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy_wykluczenia_spolecznego-wybrane_aspekty_PL.pdf)

exclusion most acutely are the unemployed (42%), the poor (32%), the homeless (22%) retirees (21%), pensioners (15%), the handicapped and disabled (13%), and the uneducated (12%). However, it is hard to clearly define the concept of homelessness, since this is a multidimensional phenomenon. Andrzej Przymeński defines homelessness as a situation of a person who cannot ensure a shelter that could be considered as his or hers, and which would fulfill the minimum conditions to be categorized as a living place<sup>7</sup>. While analyzing the notion of homelessness it is worth considering the reasons for it. Researchers emphasize that the causes are mutually-conditioned, i.e. rarely only one of them led to the situation of homelessness.<sup>8</sup>

From the historical perspective, homelessness in Poland is certainly not a new phenomenon but there are socio-economic transformations taking place since the early nineties that highlighted the socially unacceptable nature of this problem<sup>9</sup>. Until 1981, the authorities pretend that the problem did not exist because the ideology of socialism, which was to satisfy all the needs of citizens, did not allow to, make it public.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, the problem of homelessness and poverty is more often discussed nowadays. The increasing awareness is supposed to lead to the development of methods of effective assistance to the homeless. Homelessness assessment is a demanding task due to the lack of knowledge about the actual number of homeless people in Poland. Some of these difficulties arise from the fact that the assistance system for the homeless most of the time is created by NGOs, which by their nature are independent; so they carry diverse visions and missions. Although the large organizations that tackle the problem of homelessness in Poland were founded years ago, they still could not establish common standards for taking care of such people<sup>11</sup> (the most common

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<sup>7</sup> M. Abucewicz – Szcześniak, *Bezdomność we współczesnej literaturze przedmiotu*, Polityka Społeczna nr 1/2001, p. 17

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.monar.org/content/zdjecia/Diagnoza\\_Zespól\\_Badawczy.pdf](http://www.monar.org/content/zdjecia/Diagnoza_Zespól_Badawczy.pdf) p. 52-95

<sup>9</sup> <http://asiasi.wordpress.com/bezdomnosc-w-polsce/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy\\_wykluczenia\\_spolecznego-wybrane\\_aspekty\\_PL.pdf](http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy_wykluczenia_spolecznego-wybrane_aspekty_PL.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy\\_wykluczenia\\_spolecznego-wybrane\\_aspekty\\_PL.pdf](http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy_wykluczenia_spolecznego-wybrane_aspekty_PL.pdf)

institutions and their actions will be discussed in the subsequent parts of this report). According to the estimation proposed by the University of Wrocław<sup>12</sup>, the number of the homeless increases from 13 to 17% annually but the anonymous author hedges himself stating that the absolute figures are impossible to estimate due to the migratory nature of the phenomenon. The changes in the sphere of migration in Europe were observed after the European Union enlargement in 2004 (ten new member states, including eight countries from the so-called Eastern Bloc ) and in 2007 (three new member states). However, the scale of economic migration results in an increasing number of social consequences, i.e. social exclusion and homelessness.<sup>13</sup> According to the initial analysis of the problem of homelessness among the Poles since 2004 □ it is impossible to establish the definite number of homeless Poles due to the lack of reliable data presented by most domestic organizations<sup>14</sup> and European states.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>

[http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://asiasi.wordpress.com/bezdomnosc-w-polsce/>

<sup>15</sup>

[http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf)

## Level and structure of homeless people exclusion

The problem of estimating the scale of homelessness in Poland is not widely analysed. In fact, the database available concerning this phenomenon appears to be insufficient providing an incomplete picture of the situation. The reason for the results of different research being divergent and partial may be that some homeless people receive help from several centers while others do not accept any form of help from official sources. Moreover, this group of people tends to migrate within the country, which causes additional problems with registering them. Therefore, a source that could provide some rough data about homeless people in Poland is thought to be the number of people who receive any kind of help from the social assistance centers, but there are also estimations of non-governmental institutions available for the public.

In 2005 M. Wachowicz tried to evaluate the number of homeless people in Poland by collecting data from social workers. He has estimated that in Poland, in 2005 there were 62 thousand (+/- 6%) homeless people<sup>16</sup>. The next research, in 2006 varied significantly claiming there are only 35 thousand homeless<sup>17</sup> people. The Polish Ministry of Labor and Social Policy attempted to estimate the scale of homelessness via conducting coordinated research in the country during one night to avoid counting the same people twice or several times. The research was taken at night on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2009 but because of the surprisingly good weather conditions it had to be repeated on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 when the temperature had dropped significantly<sup>18</sup>. According to the results, the number of people who were given help accounted for 18,227 and 20,960 respectively. More detailed results are given in table 1. Of course, there are more homeless people in Poland than the ones counted in the survey. It is assumed that approximately one third of homeless people took advantage of the accommodation provided in institutions for the homeless, despite severe weather conditions at that time.

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<sup>16</sup>[http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf), p.62

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.63

<sup>18</sup>[http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Pomocy%20Spolecznej/BEZDOMNOSC\\_d\\_iagnoza%2010%2011%202010.pdf](http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Pomocy%20Spolecznej/BEZDOMNOSC_d_iagnoza%2010%2011%202010.pdf), p 4-5

**Table 1** The number of people staying in social assistance centers in 2009<sup>19</sup>

No.	Voivodship	The number of people staying in social assistance centers on 16 <sup>th</sup> December, 2009	The number of people staying in social assistance centers on 26 <sup>th</sup> December, 2010
1	Dolnośląskie	1 696	1 922
2	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	945	1 066
3	Lubelskie	956	958
4	Lubuskie	369	371
5	Łódzkie	1 101	1 183
6	Małopolskie	908	1 300
7	Mazowieckie	2 710	3 210
8	Opolskie	583	642
9	Podkarpackie	612	712
10	Podlaskie	388	446
11	Pomorskie	1 550	1 746
12	Śląskie	2 490	2 959
13	Świętokrzyskie	507	539
14	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	616	768
15	Wielkopolskie	1 611	1 772
16	Zachodniopomorskie	1 185	1 366
<b>Total:</b>		<b>18 227</b>	<b>20 960</b>

According to estimates of the University of Wrocław the increase in homelessness accounts for 13 to 17% per year<sup>20</sup>. Studies indicate that almost 25% of the homeless avoid contact with any organized forms of aid as they want to avoid the consequences of official registration<sup>21</sup>. As the statistics show that homeless people are mainly in major cities

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Pomocy%20Spolecznej/BEZDOMNOSC\\_diajnoza%2010%2011%202010.pdf](http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Pomocy%20Spolecznej/BEZDOMNOSC_diajnoza%2010%2011%202010.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>, p6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

(Kraków, Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław, Warsaw and Łódź<sup>22</sup>) where there are shelters, social welfare homes, single mother homes, and other institutions. Homelessness in Poland affects mostly single men in middle age<sup>23</sup>. Most homeless people are over 40, and people aged 40-60 constitute the majority of them. As regards women, they are usually much younger<sup>24</sup>. It is interesting to note that 37% of the population are homeless for up to 5 years and 28% up to 10 years<sup>25</sup>. In 2005 government organizations granted support for 87 238 people (the comparison with previously presented statistics confirms only that a clear view of the scale of the phenomenon is impossible due to the impeded collection of data). Among those people, men accounted for 55 148, women accounted for 18 270 and there were 13 8295 children in the shelters<sup>26</sup>.

Age group	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Below 19	5	3.5	4	0.3	9	0.6
20-29	19	13.4	62	4.5	81	5.3
30-39	18	12.7	139	10.1	157	10.3
40-49	21	14.8	308	22.3	329	21.6
50-59	20	14.1	517	37.4	537	35.2
Over 60	56	39.4	328	23.7	384	25.2
No answer	3	2.1	25	1.8	28	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1383</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1525</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 1: homeless people in Poland 2006<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.pcpr.info/bezdomnosc>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>, p.9

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.pcpr.info/bezdomnosc>

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy\\_wykluczenia\\_spoecznego-wybrane\\_aspekty\\_PL.pdf](http://www.rops-opole.pl/pobierz/projekt-pradziad/Problemy_wykluczenia_spoecznego-wybrane_aspekty_PL.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>, p.9

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf)

Age groups	2003	2005	2007	2009
Below 30	11.4	9.6	8.0	8.1
31-40	14.8	14.3	14.5	14.2
41-50	32.9	30.3	27.3	22.4
51-60	30.3	32.9	36.3	37.6
Over 60	10.6	12.8	13.8	17.7
Total	100	100	100	100

**Figure 2: homeless people in Poland 2010<sup>28</sup>**

Over 80% of the homeless are not married. Very often they are parents - this group is dominated mostly by women. Up to 20% live in formal or informal relationships. In other words, the homeless are mostly single people<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, the homeless are generally people who finished education at a vocational school stage or earlier. Respondents who hold university degrees represent a marginal group - no more than 3%. The homeless belong primarily to the working class or are farmers<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> [http://eohw.horus.be/files/freshstart/European%20Journal%20of%20Homelessness/Volume%20Five/EJH\\_2011%285.1%29\\_article-5.pdf](http://eohw.horus.be/files/freshstart/European%20Journal%20of%20Homelessness/Volume%20Five/EJH_2011%285.1%29_article-5.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.monar.org/content/zdjecia/Diagnoza\\_Zespol\\_Badawczy.pdf](http://www.monar.org/content/zdjecia/Diagnoza_Zespol_Badawczy.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

# Causes and consequences of homeless people exclusion

## Definitions of homelessness

- The situation of people who do not have the time and who by their own efforts can not secure such a shelter that could be considered as theirs, and which meets the minimum requirements to be considered as a living place.
- A relatively permanent situation of people deprived of their homes or of the people who do not own their homes.

## Causes of homelessness :

- the socio-economic situation of the country, including rising unemployment, the ongoing closure of workers' hostels, the lack of places in hospitals, of care facilities, of nursing homes, the lack of care for young people after the age of 18, the lack of facilities for HIV,
- the legal situation, consisting in the possibility to expel the tenant for rent arrears,
- for reasons related to pathologies, including alcoholism, crime, rejection or lack of care on the part of loved ones, divorce or permanent disintegration of families (formal or informal), prostitution of women, domestic violence,
- socio-psychological reasons, including the deliberate choice of a different way of life, the rejection of the prevailing system of values,
- for reasons of personality, including feelings of inferiority, loneliness, shame, a negative attitude towards the world and people.

## Causes for which the homeless feel responsible themselves:

- factors related to a disturbed process of socialization in primary groups, including poor preparation for independent living, lack of independent housing opportunities, inability to live with loved ones after divorces, separations, returns from prison,

- Causes related to the inability to adapt to the socio-economic situation, including giving up questioning the way they are treated by employers, lack of employment opportunities of fair wages,
- reasons associated with maladjustment to the lifestyle and cultural situation of your environment;
- the treatment of spouses as property, the consequences of divorce, the refusal to pay alimony;
- reasons associated with drinking and alcohol abuse.

The reasons for homelessness, according to government sources :

- family breakdown,
- eviction,
- return from prison without the possibility of residence,
- lack of permanent income,
- domestic violence,
- lack of social tolerance,
- addiction,
- the closure of coal mine hostels;
- leaving an orphanage,
- return from a mental hospital.

There is more information about the scale of homelessness in Poland. It specifies the number of homeless people from 30 000 to 300 000. The only objective knowledge in this field is the number of people to whom assistance has been formally granted by the social assistance centers. This number is changed periodically, oscillating around a value of 30 000. In 2002 this figure amounted to 31 382 people.

However the reports sent in by NGOs to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in connection with the grant assistance provided to homeless people show that they provide help

to 80 000-130 000 people. Estimates on the number of homeless at 300,000 come from the Association of Monar.<sup>31</sup>

Consequences of homelessness:

The basic symptoms and effects of homelessness include:

- ☞ Social exclusion hindering or preventing the performance of multiple social roles;
- ☞ Dependence on external assistance benefits leading to the loss of motivation for work ;
- ☞ Addictions to alcohol and other psychoactive substances and dependency syndromes ;
- ☞ Unemployment, and more precisely living in the shadow economy, which even if it provides current income, makes it impossible for them to be entitled to many benefits , including future retirement pension;
- ☞ Getting used to homelessness ,indulging in an existence outside the system, leading to a feeling of lowering self-esteem and a decreasing motivation to return to society;
- ☞ The lack of control over their lives, limiting their efforts to meet current needs, without any long- term plans;
- ☞ Worsening health
- ☞ The disintegration of the family<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.sciaga.pl/tekst/58140-59-bezdomnosc>

<sup>32</sup> <http://mopr.szczecin.pl/dokumenty/program-przeciwdzialanie-bezdomnosci.pdf>

## Government role in preventing homeless people exclusion

Poland, in comparison to many European countries, does not have a coherent strategy to fight against homelessness. Despite the scale of the problem and its dangerous and extremely costly consequences, the country lacks any nationwide plan to solve this issue. Existing laws and regulations, implemented programs and projects constitute rather a dispersed and inadequate social policy. Currently there are many good but dispersed acts of law (e.g. the Act on Social Assistance of 2004, the Act on the Protection of Tenants' Rights (...) of 2001), several governmental programmes like the national "Support Programme for the Social Re-Integration of the Homeless" (this program subsidises NGOs) and also a programme of subsidies for entities creating shelters, houses for the homeless, and social housing<sup>33</sup>. There are many projects carried out partly thanks to structural funds, including the European Social Fund. However, they should be coordinated with respect to a clear defined government strategy.

In 2008, an initiative was launched to create a "*National Homelessness Strategy*." it was proposed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The Department of Social Assistance and Integration of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy became the organiser and coordinator of the process, and it invited selected NGOs to cooperate: St. Brother Albert', Aid Society, Caritas of the Kielce Diocese, MONAR Association, The Mutual Help Foundation BARKA, Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Getting Out of Homelessness, Open Door Association and "Being Together" Foundation for Social Enterprise<sup>34</sup>. What is also important is that representatives of non-profit organisations took part in the program out of their own initiative. Official meetings and consultations resulted in establishing the project called the "National Programme for Transition from Homelessness to Developing Social Housing 2009-2015"<sup>35</sup>. As they are so fragmented, the current social policy and systemic solutions in Poland

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<sup>33</sup> P. Olech, I. Rogozińska: Polish Homelessness Strategy in the context of European initiatives, including the Portuguese Homeless Strategy in: Peer Review Building a comprehensive and participative strategy on homelessness, Portugal, 4-5 November 2010, p. 1-3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Op. Cit. p.5

are rather aimed at providing emergency and immediate aid to the homeless rather than at preventing and decreasing homelessness<sup>36</sup>. Centers of Social Welfare and Family Support Centers are very important in integrating homeless people into the labor market. They have a huge institutional and human potential (well-trained and skilled staff) and have a lot of instruments that would help implementing promotion programs. The Law on social assistance on the basis of which Social Assistance Centers operate, does not regulate in any way the implementation of active labor market programs. With various tools it is possible to support this process; for example with the program mentioned above<sup>37</sup>.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has also conducted the programme supporting non-government organisations in combating homelessness since 2000. This programme, called “The Programme Supporting the Return of Homeless People to Society” (MPiPS, 2010b)<sup>38</sup> was conducted in two areas, the Central programme was directed to supraregional organisations and managed directly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, while the Regional programme was directed to the local organisations and managed by the Province Offices. There is also one more programme which is related to the problem of homelessness and it is now called – „The Government Programme of Financial Support from the Subsidy Funding to Provide Social Flats, Night shelters and Houses for the Homeless<sup>39</sup>”. The programme offers support for municipalities to realize programmes such as developing social housing, opening night shelters, houses for the homeless, sheltered housing and premises that are a part of the municipality’s housing stock but are not social housing (public housing).

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.fise.org.pl/files/1bezrobocie.org.pl/public/Raporty/POlech\\_raport\\_dot\\_aktzywizacji\\_zawodowej\\_bezdomnych2.pdf](http://www.fise.org.pl/files/1bezrobocie.org.pl/public/Raporty/POlech_raport_dot_aktzywizacji_zawodowej_bezdomnych2.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Act of 29 April 2004 on financial support in the construction of social dwellings, nightshelters and houses for the homeless in 2004 and 2005 (Dz.U. of 2004 No 145, item 1533).

The communities of municipalities obtain financial aid to launch initiatives aimed at developing social housing, sheltered housing, opening night shelters and houses for the homeless. Districts receive support to carry out initiatives designed to provide housing premises, i.e. protected flats, which serve to provide social assistance. Public benefit organisations in turn receive money to build new night shelters, houses for the homeless and protected flats. The Programme is managed by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego<sup>40</sup>. It is worth mentioning that apart from the national strategy, there is also the Social Assistance Act of 2004 which states that a municipality in which the person considered as homeless is staying is responsible for helping and improving his or her own situation. In most cases, in accordance with the objectives of the Act, local governments strive to provide accommodation, food and clothing access.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>[http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU\\_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf](http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/EU_Docs/PROBLEM%20OF%20HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20POLAND.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.pfwb.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/DIAGNOZA-Zesp%C3%B3%C5%82-Badawczy.pdf>

## Institutions and their actions

There are two basic categories of institutions that help homeless people, i.e. the institutions of public administration and non-governmental institutions<sup>42</sup>. The former group encompasses the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, local government, family support centers, healthcare, and police (departments for prevention and care). In some larger cities (e.g. Poznań, Gdańsk), where homelessness is particularly noticeable, the local social welfare centers or family assistance centers make a distinction in their structures between the teams of specialists for the support of homeless people. These specialists manage internal database of individuals who -within the framework of statutory benefits that are designed for the homeless – are given different kinds of support.<sup>43</sup>

There are many local non-governmental institutions that support the homeless, e.g. Wspólnota Chleb Życia (Community “Bread of Life”), Rzeszowskie Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta (The St. Albert Brother Assistance Association in Rzeszów) Gdańska Fundacja Kultury Chrześcijańskiej (The Christian Culture Foundation in Gdańsk), Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Wzajemnej „Agape” (The Mutual Assistance Association „Agape”), Fundacja Barka (The Barka Foundation)<sup>44</sup>. Their assistance often is about providing shelter, food, clothing, and benefits for medical treatment.

For the purpose of this report only the biggest and best computerized organizations that run the database in the Internet will be discussed. These involve<sup>45</sup>: Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta (St. Brother Albert’s Aid Society), Stowarzyszenie MONAR (MONAR) and its special program called Ogólnopolski System pomocy bezdomnym MARKOT (National System of homeless assistance MARKOT), Caritas Kielecka (of Kielce Diocese and Stowarzyszenie Lekarze Nadziei (Doctors of Hope). In Poland, the types of non-governmental

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.poradnikpr.info/?p=923>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.bratalbert.org.pl/portal/component?option=com\\_weblinks/catid,15/Itemid,23/lang,pl/](http://www.bratalbert.org.pl/portal/component?option=com_weblinks/catid,15/Itemid,23/lang,pl/)

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf>

facilities for homeless people include night shelters, hostels, homes for single mothers, social welfare hostels, homes for the elderly and the sick, homes for life activities, homes for the re-adaptation of the homeless, and charities<sup>46</sup>. Without a doubt, such emergency shelter beds are essential in any comprehensive strategy to address the problems associated with homelessness in a community<sup>47</sup>.

The first one, Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta (St. Brother Albert's Aid Society) is an independent Catholic charity operating in many Polish cities (running 75 shelters). The Society's goal is to help the poor and homeless by following the ideas of its patron, St. Brother Albert. The society fulfills its objectives through

- “establishing and running hostels, night shelters, permanent residence homes, social work, legal and psychological help, ministry
- running soup kitchens, bath houses, day rooms, clubs, organizing Christmas Eve suppers and Easter breakfasts, summer camps
- distributing food, clothes, appliances, household detergents, medicines
- cooperation with local and central government, the Catholic church, non-governmental organizations
- information activity, inspiring scientific research
- training for staff and volunteers ”.<sup>48</sup>

Another institution that supports the homeless is Stowarzyszenie MONAR (officially translated as MONAR). MONAR is a non-governmental organization on national scope of activities<sup>49</sup> that helps people in difficult life circumstances and who may be socially excluded, like the homeless. “MONAR is not based on any specific political or religious ideas, but on

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.poradnikpr.info/?p=923>

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.everydaycitizen.com/2008/01/homelessness\\_shelters\\_vs\\_perma.html](http://www.everydaycitizen.com/2008/01/homelessness_shelters_vs_perma.html)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.bratalbert.org.pl/portal/content/view/93/27/lang,en/>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.rpo.gov.pl/pliki/1201270906.pdf> p. 20

universal values such as goodness, justice, love, respect for others and for oneself.”<sup>50</sup> The institution works in accordance with the ethical code and good practice standards adopted by parallel organizations around the world. Today, MONAR is one of the biggest organizations in Europe working in this field and every year it serves more than 30,000 persons in Poland. Within its basic activities, MONAR distinguishes: treatment and rehabilitation for drug-dependent people, drug prevention, harm reduction and social re-adaptation programs<sup>51</sup>. These re-adaptation programs are regular programs (since 1993) for the homeless, the lonely, the terminally ill, ex-prisoners and other people who, for different reasons, have found themselves living on the margins of society. MONAR has established centres called MARKOT (Movement of Homelessness Prevention) consisting of night shelters and residential centres. Here different programs for the socially excluded are undertaken e.g. therapy for alcoholics, post-penitentiary care, hospitals, health emergency, hospice care and a central unit for psychological and legal assistance and intervention.

Caritas Kielecka (Caritas of Kielce Diocese), a part of Caritas Polska (Caritas Poland), is a local charitable church organization which at the end of 2010 had 58 places of all-year-round activity and realized over 100 different programs.<sup>52</sup> The basic principle underlying all the actions of this organization is love for others propagated by catholicism. Therefore it mostly helps the handicapped, big families, single mothers in need, children in need, and the homeless<sup>53</sup>. As the information on the webpage suggests, numerous facilities in the Kielce Diocese are provided for the poor, e.g. houses for custodies, hospice, center of crisis intervention, center of social integration, resorts for the homeless, places of immediate assistance, and places of treatment of addicts and the unemployed. The volunteers are the main force of operation in parish groups, who regularly meet to exchange information about their experiences and to provide the ones in need with real support. However, there are nearly

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<sup>50</sup> <http://monar.org/about>

<sup>51</sup> <http://monar.org/activities>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.kielce.caritas.pl/index.php?mid=10>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.kielce.caritas.pl/index.php?mid=10>

700 hired employees who carry out 120-150 projects each year and together with the volunteers help about 30 000 people per year.

The idea of forming an independent humanitarian association in Poland came up after the introduction of martial law and was the result of frequent contacts with many charitable organizations from the West that helped Poland in this difficult period. Particularly close contacts were established with the French organization Médecins du Monde,<sup>54</sup> whose principles are followed by Stowarzyszenie Lekarze Nadziei (Doctors of Hope). The Local Clinic for the Homeless, which is conducted by Stowarzyszenie Lekarze Nadziei “Doctors of Hope” (operating internationally) has gathered a large number of interesting data about the homeless. The facility has been operating since 1991 and from the beginning it has kept a register of patients in the form of the disease cards, similar to those used in public health care facilities. According to the database, from 1991 to July 2006 the Clinic has given medical support to more than 7,000 patients.

Some of the above mentioned organizations are the members of FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. (Polish members of FEANTSA are: Barka Foundation, Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Getting Out of Homelessness, MONAR, and Saint Brother Albert’s Aid Society).<sup>55</sup> This is an umbrella of non-profit making organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe<sup>56</sup>. This organization is responsible for collecting data and statistics about the homeless in order to promote and facilitate the exchange of information about experience and the best practice between member organizations of FEANTSA. This exchange gives members access to effective and innovative approach to homelessness.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> [http://www.lekarzenadziei.krakow.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=66](http://www.lekarzenadziei.krakow.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=66)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.bratalbert.org.pl/portal/content/view/203/53/lang,en/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/hp.asp>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.bratalbert.org.pl/portal/content/view/203/53/lang,pl/>

## Other activities against homeless people exclusion

In 2004, in Wyszków, MONAR proceeded to implement the project under the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme. Its goal was to work out an innovative system of therapy combined with education to enable the homeless or those threatened with homelessness to enter or re-enter the labour market. The initiator and administrator of the project was the Human Aid Center Rożnowice, whose task was to introduce the project through its own centers and other associated centers like MONAR. But the body of participants included more institutions and organisations : welfare and mutual aid institutions/, as well as local authorities and educational institutions that are involved in fighting against homelessness by enabling those threatened by homelessness to get access to labour market access . The overall objective of the Partnership was to enhance the chances of return and to minimize social exclusion for people affected by this phenomenon. The programme was expected to create a favorable comprehensive Social Support System, which would reduce the social marginalization of the homeless, and support their return to the labor market and their free access to education<sup>58</sup>. The main objective was a three-fold one:

- 1) To facilitate access to free information and education and the integration of the homeless into our information society by creating Internet Support System (ISE);
- 2) To facilitate access to free aid and start the process of integration of our information society into the local community through the creation of Local Support System;
- 3) To create an integrated system of therapy, education and employment-related services, tertiary education institutions, to facilitate the reintegration of the homeless and socially excluded and ensure the development of that system through the creation of the central support system<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.wyszkow.monar.org/NSDKPU.html>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.poznan.pl/mim/turystyka/kampania-przeciw-ubostwu-najwyzszy-szczebel-dobroczynnosci,doc,1017,13690/kampania-przeciw-ubostwu-najwyzszy-szczebel-dobroczynnosci,27639.html>

Direct beneficiaries of the Project were 250 people, out of whom 125 homeless residents of rehabilitation/ integration centres and 125 people in danger of homelessness (young addicts or youths from households experiencing difficulties)<sup>60</sup>. The beneficiaries have in common a low level of education, a lack of skills/qualifications that are in demand on a modern labour market and personality deficiencies. They had been offered cursory assistance, involving addiction treatment or vocational training in jobs that are not looked for on the employment market. The Partnership involved employers in its activities: their needs and employment policies were taken into account. The organizers hoped to get feedback on the efficiency of the proposed methods and any form of help in training as a form of preparation to jobs offered to the homeless.

From a practical perspective, participants had a free-of-charge access to psychological support, information and education. Each participant signed a contract on his/her willingness to join the Project and follow an individual work plan for resuming education and employment. Every two months they received opinions on the progress made in education, interpersonal relationships and behavioural characteristics (self-discipline, punctuality and sense of organisation). What is more, they had free access to on-line Social Support System with databases on welfare, education and labour market (including offers, standard documents, excerpts from the labour law and ABC of self-employment)<sup>61</sup>. In addition, an e-learning platform (available courses in IT, basic English, secondary school subjects, award of completion certificates) had been developed. Access to computers was arranged in Poznań, Piła and Rogoźno (belonging to the local level of the Support System) in the centres' teaching/internet rooms. The work with beneficiaries was completed via therapeutic workshops ("family therapy", art classes and social skills workshop) which were intended to

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<sup>60</sup>[http://www.mrr.gov.pl/aktualnosci/fundusze\\_europejskie\\_2004\\_2006/Documents/SprawozdanieEQUALroczne%202008dlaDKF.pdf](http://www.mrr.gov.pl/aktualnosci/fundusze_europejskie_2004_2006/Documents/SprawozdanieEQUALroczne%202008dlaDKF.pdf)

<sup>61</sup>SPRAWOZDANIE z realizacji Roczego Programu Współpracy Miasta Poznania z Organizacjami Pozarządowymi na 2008 rok Oddział Koordynacji Współpracy z Organizacjami Pozarządowymi,

Poznań 2009

address personality deficits, enhance self-esteem, self-presentation skills, promote assertive attitudes and teach how to cope with aggression while developing the habit of working. Because the suggestions made by local employers were taken into account the programme contributed significantly to the effectiveness of training activities. All of the new tools mentioned above (educational programmes, on-line tools, training material) were forwarded to the homeless, local communities, local government institutions, employers and non-government organisations<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.wyszkow.monar.org/NSDKPU.html>

## Characteristics of Towarzystwo Pomocy im. św. Brata Alberta

It is an independent Catholic charity.

The aim of the Society is to help the homeless and the poor - in the spirit of the patron, Saint. Brother Albert.

The Society pursues its objectives through ;

- ☞ emergency shelters, night shelters, houses, residence,
- ☞ social work, legal assistance and psychological, religious ministry,
- ☞ running the kitchen, bath, community centers, clubs, organizing Christmas Eve and Easter breakfasts, ,
- ☞ dealing with the problems of food, clothing, furniture, cleaning products, medicine,
- ☞ cooperation with local government, state administration, the Catholic Church, NGOs,
- ☞ information activities, encouraging research,
- ☞ training of staff and volunteers.

The Society has been operating since 1981.

It is Poland's first non-governmental organization dealing with by the homeless. Until 1989 it was called Aid Society. Chmielowski Adam. It unites 2900 members organized in 63 circles. Each circle is trying to organize shelter, food or other assistance to homeless people and poor.

"... Each one is to feed the hungry, homeless place, and clothing the naked. How much is not enough. ..."

This principle, applied in shelters organized by the Saint. Brother Albert, use the following facilities.

- ☞ The Society runs 80 premises with beds

- ☞ 43 hostels for men - 2370 places
- ☞ 7 re-adaptation flats for men - 51 places
- ☞ 11 shelters for men, 1 women, 1 for men and women - 587 places
- ☞ 8 houses for women and mothers with children - 250 places
- ☞ readaptation house for women and children - 15 places
- ☞
- ☞ 2 Department of Social Welfare, 1 Department of Welfare nursing and 5 shelters for the elderly and the sick - 225 places
- ☞
- ☞ a children's home with a temporary dwelling for adult students - 48 places
- ☞

In these establishments resides 3,600 people.

Work is also:

- ☞ 15 kitchen and cafeteria, preparing 2,800 meals a day
- ☞ 5 heating rooms and a common room for the homeless
- ☞ 6 free baths
- ☞ 19 points of supply of clothing and food
- ☞ four community centers for children and 3 for adults
- ☞ Centre for Social Integration, 3 Clubs Social Integration, Point Activation of the Unemployed, Club Albertinian

Although homelessness was not "noticed" by the state, already in 1978 by the Order of the consequences and help Orionist was called. Friendship House, later called the Shelter. Brother Albert House provides shelter for people just released from prison, alcoholics, the sick, as well as to socially harmless people with mental disorders. Homeless people learn to live in community. Residents have the responsibility of raising funds for maintenance, payment of

fees for their stay and they are to discuss current issues during group meetings and get assistance in solving them. Shelter becomes a real home. A place where as a family, a man learns how to live. Each boarder has a fully-defined role here prepared by a therapeutic community. The daily activities of passion and intuition of the first organizers was supplemented with knowledge and experience of social reintegration teacher. Friendship House of Warsaw became the nucleus of the first Circle of Local Aid Society. Brother Albert.

Aid Society. Brother Albert is an independent, Catholic charity operating since 1981. It is one of the first and largest non-governmental organizations in Poland to help the homeless. The aim of the Society is to help the homeless and the poor - in the spirit of the patron, Saint. Brother Albert. The Society now has its base in Poland, and brings together 2500 members organized in 51 circles. Each circle is trying to organize shelter, food or other assistance to homeless and poor people. The tasks of the Society is to organize care and assistance for Singles (home visits, shopping, appointments in offices), legal assistance, cooperation with authorities and public administration, social and ecclesiastical institutions. The Society also collects funds for dependents, provides material assistance and food for the poorest families with many children, and sometimes pays for vocational courses.

## Conclusions

Based on the information gathered, a strategy of social inclusion of homeless people in Poland and in Europe should involve a wide spectrum of measures.

Firstly, the society should be made aware of the problem by sharing of information and improvement of collective understanding of the “definition” of homelessness, the cause and effect, scale and nature of homelessness. Such an awareness must be increased by the teachers who should make pupils get to know such issues at school to help prepare young people for adult life and independent living. This awareness should also be the concern of the public sector staff – when they are better trained and educated about homelessness issues, they are more likely to react properly to any manifestation of the problem. What is more, these people should be also responsible for promoting new ways to eliminate the stigma of homelessness and any consequential discrimination and inequality.

Secondly, the homeless should be assured that they can get access to quality health and social services when required. The services for the homeless should be standardized, responsive, and integrated. It is essential they should be delivered timely and to agreed standards. A tight cooperation between the statutory and voluntary sectors is highly recommended. To adequately tackle the problem of the homelessness, the number of people in need should be properly calculated or estimated – only integrated activities of governmental and non-governmental institutions would enable it.

Furthermore, help should be provided for the most vulnerable people in our communities who have complex needs and whose living conditions are outrageous. The inclusion process should start by offering some new ways to help homeless people into employment. The active promotion of good practices and successful outcomes is likely to enable the homeless to take active control over their lives. To enhance the possibilities for employment, people should be given advice, especially in instances of long-term unemployment. However, to make it happen, the potential employers should be encouraged to give the chance to the homeless as well.

The best solution, but at the same time the most expensive one, is the providing of housing . If housing could be provided for those in need - everyone would have an access to a

decent, affordable place and could live in safe and sustainable communities with access to services and opportunities that contribute to the improvement of their health and social well being. To achieve this, fair and effective eligibility and selection criteria in the allocation of accommodation which targets those in greatest need should be established.