

MEHOBEL

The Measurement of homelessness in Belgium

DURATION
15/12/2015 - 15/03/2018

BUDGET
449.622 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Homelessness is an extreme manifestation of poverty and social exclusion which reduces a person's dignity as well as his productive potential and is a waste of human capital (EC, 2013). Policy attention for this target group has increase in passed years. Yet recent European data show that homelessness is on the rise (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2014), caused by socio-economic changes, the economic crisis, austerity measures (Loopstra et al, 2014); the extensiveness of the welfare state (Benjaminsen & Andreas, 2015) the various kinds of migration processes (Pleace, 2010), the growing lack of affordable dwellings (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012) and the deinstitutionalisation of care for persons with physical and mental disabilities (Thornicroft & Thansella, 2009).

Reducing homelessness is one of the priorities of the Belgian as well as the European fight on poverty reduction. The European Commission calls on member states to tackle homelessness by comprehensive strategies based on prevention, a housing-led approach and to prevent evictions. An essential part of a national strategy against homelessness is a validated information and monitoring strategy. However, at the moment there is no good view on the information collected, nor in Belgium nor in one of the regions.

This research project has a policy-oriented and a scientific goal. On the one hand, we want to develop a methodology to measure and monitor homelessness in Belgium. On the other hand, we want to contribute to the growing evidence base concerning measuring and monitoring homelessness, and more specifically we aim to develop innovative approaches to measure the dark number of homeless people, to produce stock and flow data and to integrate the lived experience of homeless people into the monitoring strategy.

We distinguish between four sub-goals:

- (1) To review the scientific evidence base concerning measuring and monitoring homelessness. Based on this study, three national good practices are selected. The applicability of these national strategies for Belgium is a crucial point.
- (2) To analyse the current measurement and monitoring strategies in Belgium. This analysis will zoom in on administrative databases (such as CBSS, NOVAPRIMA, Belgian Census 2011, EU SILC CUT) as well as registration systems of services for the homeless. Special attention will be paid to the possibilities of linking databases and the use of a unique client identifier.
- (3) To develop methodologies for the measurement of hidden homelessness (also known as the dark number). A part of this work package is to study the possibilities of the capture-recapture technique. Policy makers and practitioners will be involved to bring into light the extent and accessibility of this phenomenon. Special attention will be paid to the experiences of homeless persons with data collection and the accessibility of services.
- (4) To develop and validate a Belgian homelessness monitoring strategy.



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The project will be executed by a multidisciplinary research team in which economic, sociological, psychological and social work knowledge will be combined and integrated.

Attention will be devoted during the development process to create support. Stakeholders will be involved and invited in focus groups and expert panels. The same applies to workers from homeless organizations. The voice of homeless persons will also be heard. Furthermore, this projects aims to have a scientific impact with the publication of the results in peer reviewed journals.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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