

People with no Sheltered Housing: Opportunities and Solutions for Social Reintegration

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Abstract:

In May 2007, with the support of the managing board of the Night Sheltered Housing Oradea, we could make a quantitative inquiry on homeless persons from Oradea. The population investigated by the current study consisted in persons whose situation corresponds to the first two categories of ETHOS classification: homeless persons and persons accommodated in night sheltered houses. Methodologically, our paper is part of the municipality inquiries concerning the homeless persons or those sleeping in night sheltered houses (see also Buach-Geertsma et al 2010). The study objective aims the measuring of homeless persons' bank at the moment of our research.

The present paper starts with a presentation of the problem of defining, measuring and explaining the homeless phenomenon. In this way, we placed our analysis in the context of recent debates on the phenomenon and we showed the incidence of this in different contexts that can be referential for the area we carried out our analysis (municipality of Oradea). The next chapter describes the phenomenon in Oradea, the causes of becoming homeless and how long this takes place. The important sections are those dedicated to homeless persons and those implying their socio-professional reintegration. We end the paper by presenting the solutions revealed in the questionnaires we made and from discussions with the specialists, and from a synthesis of explicit conclusions concerning the phenomenon.

A significant part of the results from this material have been produced in interviews with 111 persons of a total number of 150 de rough sleepers from Oradea. The identification of the homeless persons has been made through the "snow ball" technique in which the already interviewed subjects provided information on other homeless identification or contact place. Besides the inquiry we have made a group inquiry of 8 specialists from Oradea local municipality and NGOs with direct activity in the area of people with no shelter. These persons' demographic profile reveals a majority of men aged between 30-35 years and an overrepresentation of people of Roma and Hungarian origin. Among the persons who have been in the situation of having no sheltered accommodation for a shorter period of time, there have been the young post-institutionalized; meanwhile, among those being in this situation for more 5 years, there have been divorced people or those facing serious economic or health problems.

Our data, in addition to describing people with no sheltered housing and to supporting hypotheses concerning the individual, structural or institutional causes for losing a home, will highlight the main risk to which the minors from the centres for child protection and the old people from the city centre, victims of gentrification phenomenon, are subjected.

The aim of our study is also to bring into play the methodological difficulties of direct investigation for the homeless persons. The simple estimation of the number of this population even in a not very big city and of a reduced and well known population with no sheltered accommodation implies a high degree of precision. Collecting data directly from the homeless persons raises the following problems: the respondents' lack of credibility, which often tends to present mystifications being exposed to unpleasant interaction with the local authorities and to their reduced communication ability, especially those with mental abilities. On the other hand, communication with those familiar with the homeless people, often reveals prejudices concerning the causes in which the homeless are, and the tendency of making ethic judgments towards these situations.

Finally, the great fluctuation of persons with no sheltered housing, the significant mobility of some categories (the nomads who are moving from one place to another one especially on railways) and the possibility of mixing up this

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category with other marginalized, for example beggars makes our attempt of describing this population rather difficult.

Keywords: homeless, socio-professional reintegration, prejudices, risk.