

Housing, homelessness and social policy in
Europe.
How to tackle social exclusion ?



Bulgaria

Current situation in Bulgaria



Number of homeless people / people at risk of losing their homes



- Population - **7 364 570** people (Bulgarian ethnic group – 84.8%, Turkish ethnic group 8.8%, Roma ethnic group 4.9%)
- The population at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion is **49.1%**
- Current number of registered homeless people is **1370** (end of September 2013)

Number of homeless people / people at risk of losing their homes



- Despite the fact that Bulgaria has a higher figure of the indicator “housing per 1 000 habitants” (467/1 000) that the average European level (420/ 1 000) the population living in overcrowded dwellings is estimated to **47,4 %**
- **30,8 %** of the population has the household been in arrears

Availability of affordable and social housing for different social groups



- In 2004 the Bulgarian government adopted the *National housing strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*
- “*residual*” or *targeted* approach - the social housing targets only the neediest
- Social housing consists of *municipally owned dwellings* let to particularly needy people and represents **3%** of the total housing stock in the country

Availability of affordable and social housing for different social groups



- Housing policies include also measures supporting households with *utility payment* and assistance to homeowners through *subsidies for purchase and renovation* of dwellings
- *The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works* is responsible for housing policy at the national level

Availability of affordable and social housing for different social groups



- *Municipalities* own and manage the public rental stock, which is diminishing progressively
- ✓ Suffer from a chronic *shortage of funds*
- ✓ Have *limited possibilities* to maintain their existing stock
- ✓ There has been *no investment* in the construction of new public housing for almost two decades
- ✓ Allocate available dwellings on the basis of *waiting lists*
- ✓ Allocation targeted at *households with special needs*: orphans, disabled, chronically ill, elderly and single parents

Current policies in Bulgaria



Policies tackling homelessness



- The policies for combating homelessness and housing exclusion are developed, implemented and monitored at all three levels of governance – *national, regional and municipal*. Key priorities feature:
 - ✓ Development of suitable *institutional framework* of the housing system
 - ✓ Clearly defining and actual undertaking of the *public responsibility* in relation to housing
 - ✓ Strengthening the *participation of the municipalities* in the processes of forming the housing policy
 - ✓ *Decentralization* of the functions and the responsibilities on the housing policy

Social services available to homeless people



- Community-based social services that provide shelter and support for homeless persons and children:
 - ✓ Centers for temporary accommodation
 - ✓ Shelters
 - ✓ Protected housing
 - ✓ Centers for Street Children
 - ✓ Crisis Centers
 - ✓ Transitional homes
 - ✓ Supervised homes
 - ✓ Units “Mother and baby”
 - ✓ Family-type centers

Social services available to homeless people



Inclusion of different social groups via housing



- Most vulnerable groups:

- ✓ The Roma
- ✓ Young people leaving the specialized institutions
- ✓ Elderly people
- ✓ People with disabilities
- ✓ Single parents with children
- ✓ Children at risk
- ✓ People from ethnic minorities
- ✓ Migrants
- ✓ Refugees

Refugees



Civil society and NGO`s initiatives regarding homelessness



- Project “*Public Canteens*”
- Project “*Soup Kitchen*”
- “*Charity on the street - food for the homeless*”
- “*The street is not a home – Samusocial for Sofia*”
- “*Social inclusion through the creation of community centers for children and families at risk on the territory of Sofia Municipality*”

Evaluation of policies and social services in Bulgaria



Advantages and failures of the housing policies in Bulgaria



- Advantages:
 - ✓ Approval and support by the target group
 - ✓ Commitment and support from Municipalities

Advantages and failures of the housing policies in Bulgaria



- Weaknesses:
 - ✓ A major problem remains funds
 - ✓ Lack of skills for good project management
 - ✓ The number of provided housing units is much smaller than the real needs of the housing poor
 - ✓ The proper use of housing funds is doubtful
 - ✓ Etc.

Evaluation of housing policies



- Policies fail at *specifying concrete targets* for reducing homelessness at national, regional, and local levels
- Lack of *long-term* vision for supported or *permanent accommodation*

Evaluation of housing policies



- Insufficiency of efforts regarding the *timely contact with tenants and early identification* of people at risk of homelessness
- ✓ Policies that identify people at risk of losing their home
- ✓ Mediation services
- ✓ Legal minimum for rental contracts, regulation of rental prices
- ✓ Special mortgage schemes

Evaluation of housing policies



- *Limited range of anti-eviction measures*
 - ✓ Instant re-housing programmes
- Lack of *cooperation* between social and health systems
 - ✓ Special public health insurance packages
 - ✓ Provide training of health care professionals and shelter staff
 - ✓ Creation of effective social nets, focusing on people in the process of deinstitutionalization

Evaluation of housing policies



- *Misuse of funds*
 - ✓ Ensure that funds are appropriately spent that housing support covers real costs and flexibly adapt for fluctuating incomes
- *Exclusion of the target groups from society*
 - ✓ Improve service delivery by promoting integrated approaches
 - ✓ Enable greater service access to homeless people

Evaluation of housing policies



- Mechanisms and procedures for obtaining state accommodation is a *slow and cumbersome procedure*
- ✓ Make easier the process of obtaining state accommodation
- ✓ Provide locally available and accessible emergency dwellings
- ✓ Ensure that information is reaching the vulnerable groups

Evaluation of housing policies



- *Extreme weather conditions*
 - ✓ Preparation for seasonal bad weather in time
 - ✓ Quick mobilization of services
 - ✓ Ensure a wide local outreach by involving public spaces

Evaluation of housing policies



- Problem with *employability, workplace discrimination* towards homeless people
- ✓ Mobilize the employment services
- ✓ Offer training for the vulnerable groups
- Institutions *do not cooperate* with the targeted groups
- ✓ Ensure that homeless people participate in service delivery and the relevant policy-making,
- ✓ Make sure that their basic human and civil rights are respected



As a conclusion it is safe to say that Bulgaria is struggling to cope with many issues at the moment, which puts the problem with homelessness in the periphery.

The problem with homelessness can greatly benefit from more publicity. Making sure that a wide range of stakeholders, national ministries, public authorities, NGOs, charity organizations, and the society as a whole are involved in the solution of this problem is hugely important.

Thank you for your
attention !

