GENERAL THEME

Housing, Homelessness and Social Policy in Europe: How to tackle Social Exclusion?

Due to the ongoing economic crisis poverty and unemployment rates are rising in Europe. Paying the rent or the mortgage becomes more and more difficult for an increasing number of Europeans. Joblessness, poverty and indebtedness lead to insecure housing and in the worst case even to homelessness. Besides the “traditional groups” of homeless people, now also “new groups” of people - such as young people, well-educated people, families and migrants – are at risk of insecure housing or homelessness. Insecure housing and homelessness are seen as severe and extreme forms of social exclusion.

Social policymakers and societal initiatives, on the other hand, aim to find new forms of (social) housing for excluded groups. People with (psychological) disabilities, migrants and vulnerable old people are being located in new facilities in neighbourhoods.

The European Commission has added improved access to affordable housing to its key actions in the Europe 2020 strategy. Housing support is now also included in the EU Social Investment Package. As the European Union and EU member states have the shared ambition to fight poverty and social exclusion they have to rethink housing policies and invent strategies to prevent and tackle insecure housing and homelessness, while at the same time developing housing policies in order to include excluded groups in society.
The preparatory report serves two main purposes. First, students gather basic information regarding affordable housing, homelessness and housing policies in their country which will enable them to participate actively in discussion sessions with an appropriate level of knowledge about their social and political situations. Second, students present their preparatory reports on the first day of the program to all other participants. These presentations provide all participants with some information about housing, homelessness and housing policies in different cities and countries.

At the beginning of the Erasmus Intensive Program, every student group will make an oral presentation of their preparatory report. It is recommended to use PowerPoint and each group will have 20 minutes for their presentation.

Please email an electronic copy of the report to: ip2014@tilburguniversity.edu
The electronic copy will be put on the IP’s website. The deadline is January 31st, 2014.

**Topics to address in the Preparatory Report**

In brackets below is indicated the approximate length of the sections of the report. If necessary, use an appendix for additional information. Do not forget to mention the sources of your information.

1. [1 or 2 pages] Describe the **current situation** in your country and / or city regarding:
   a) The number of homeless people as well as people at risk of losing their home
   b) The availability of affordable and social housing for different social groups

2. [3 pages] Describe the **current policies** in your country and / or city to:
   a) Prevent and tackle homelessness
   b) Provide affordable housing (via for instance housing benefits or social housing) for all or for targeted groups
   c) Include social groups via housing, as people with disabilities, (vulnerable) old people, migrants and people with anti-social behaviour.

3. [3 pages] **Answer / reflect upon** the following questions:
   a) How are civil society and NGO’s involved in preventing and tackling homelessness and social exclusion? How are the (local) government and private organisations working together?
b) Given the great diversity in housing and housing policies in EU member states, reflect upon the advantages and challenges of housing and housing policies in your country.

c) Are housing policies in your country suitable to tackle homelessness and include excluded social groups in society? If not, what needs to be done?

Sources of information

- FEANTSA, The European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless: http://www.feantsa.org/
- CECODHAS Housing Europe, the European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing: http://www.housingeurope.eu/
- Centre for Housing Policy, University of York: http://www.york.ac.uk/chp/
- Different sources of information about Housing Affordability and Social Housing in Europe: http://libraryeuroparl.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/social-housing-in-europe/
- Europolitics issue about Social Housing in Europe: http://www.union-habitat.eu/IMG/pdf/EU_rethinks_the_role_of_social_housing_-EUROPOLITICS.pdf