RESEARCH DIGEST NO.1

ESSENTIAL READINGS TO UNDERSTAND HOMELESSNESS

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EPOCH
PRACTICE

The Research Digests are among the EPOCH Practice resources provided to representatives of EU Member States and all stakeholders working to combat homelessness in Europe.

The Digests aim to help policymakers and practitioners make use of academic research on homelessness

In 2025, six Digests will be published, covering various themes and disciplinary perspectives.

The first Digest, dated January 2025, offers five essential readings to deepen your understanding of homelessness and its underlying mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION BY NÓRA TELLER, PHD

Nóra Teller, PhD, is a sociologist at the Metropolitan Research Institute in Budapest. Her expertise spans research and consultancy in social housing, housing segregation and desegregation, housing finance, Roma housing exclusion, homelessness, and evaluating the use of EU funds for social inclusion. Dr. Teller is a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness and the European Network of Housing Research. She also serves as a co-editor of the European Journal of Homelessness.

With the support of FEANTSA, the European Observatory on Homelessness has been working on dynamising research and dialogue between research and policy in order to fuel evidence based public policy making for preventing and reducing homelessness for 35 years.

Thus, this digest series is very welcome as it serves exactly this goal. It is a guide to exploring the vast literature on homelessness in Europe and beyond. It shows the added value of research in understanding the complexity, scope, dynamics, and mechanisms of homelessness, and makes it easier to use research for informing better responses to homelessness but also uncovering the root causes, to enable prevention and reduction of homelessness.

Studies presented in this digest reveal recurring patterns of homelessness across the Global North, suggesting that systemic issues, rather than individual crises, contribute to the problem. Research shows that vulnerabilities caused by deficiencies of welfare structures, shaped by demographic, economic, and political pressures, push a number of marginalised groups into housing instability, perpetuating deprivation. Furthermore, key findings across Europe reveal how emergency-focused systems have often failed to respond and to address the underlying causes of homelessness, maintaining the status quo. The selection of research literature in this issue of the digest also includes resources on enhanced policies and tools to address this challenge.

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF HOMELESSNESS - BY JOANNE BRETHERTON AND NICHOLAS PLEACE, 2023

Summary of Content:

The Routledge Handbook of Homelessness, edited by Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace, provides a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis of homelessness. Divided into four sections with 41 chapters, the handbook explores the history, definitions, and causes of homelessness while examining contemporary debates across various academic disciplines. It addresses specific themes such as gender, sexuality, youth, families, migration, rurality, veterans, and health. Additionally, international case studies illustrate how homelessness is perceived and addressed globally. This handbook serves as a vital resource for students, academics, and professionals in sociology, human geography, public policy, housing studies, social work, economics, and criminology.

The added value of this publication: a recent and comprehensive guide, Section 1 provides a strong introduction, while the other sections allow for deeper exploration by themes or disciplines, depending on your interests and needs.

Find this publication by following this link: **The Routledge Handbook of Homelessness**

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES IN EUROPE - COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON HOMELESSNESS NO. 8, EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS, 2018

Summary of Content:
This report, based on responses to a detailed questionnaire from experts in 16 EU Member States, offers an in-depth analysis of services provided to homeless individuals across Europe. It discusses key challenges, such as the fragmentation of services, inconsistent funding, and the complexity of meeting diverse needs, including mental health and addiction support. The study also explores the integration of innovative approaches like Housing First and calls for greater service coordination and accessibility. The findings are based on contributions from experts such as Nicholas Pleace, Isabel Baptista, Lars Benjaminsen, and Volker Busch-Geertsema.
The report is part of a four-issue series, with follow-up publications addressing the quality of services, human resource management, and the financial sustainability of homelessness services. These studies aim to better understand the capacity of homelessness services to meet the growing demand across Europe, as well as their ability to adopt new approaches.

The added value of this publication: a rigorous and empirical study on the services provided to homeless people in Europe, with an unusual focus on rural areas and medium-sized towns.

Find the full research here.

REARRANGING THE DECK CHAIRS OR REALLOCATING THE LIFEBOATS? HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES - BY DENNIS CULHANE, STEPHEN METRAUX, 2008
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION, 74(1), 111–121

Summary of Content:
In this article, Culhane and Metraux critique the traditional shelter-based model for homelessness assistance in the United States, arguing that these services often fail to address the root causes of homelessness. They propose alternative, community-based models that would better serve those in housing emergencies and prevent long-term homelessness. The authors suggest reallocating resources from shelters to programs focusing on housing stabilisation, and advocate for the expansion of permanent supportive housing for chronic homelessness. Their work challenges the efficacy of the current system and calls for a more humane and cost-effective approach.

The added value of this publication: this article provides a well-argued foundation for the idea that changing existing shelter-based responses to homelessness could lead to better outcomes for homeless individuals and families.

For more details, you can access the article here.

ADVANCING A FIVE-STAGE TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION -
BY SUZANNE FITZPATRICK, PETER MACKIE, JENNY WOOD, PUBLISHED BY HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY, 2019

Summary of Content:
This paper presents a five-stage typology for homelessness prevention: universal, upstream, crisis, emergency, and repeat. It aims to provide clarity and avoid the overlaps seen in current classifications. Based on international evidence and UK data, the authors argue that while progress has been made in prevention, significant gaps remain in areas like affordable housing and targeted interventions. The paper highlights the growing focus on early prevention and housing-led models, although challenges persist in many countries, particularly regarding repeat homelessness. The study calls for more comprehensive evidence across global contexts.

The added value of this publication: this paper stands out by providing a more structured framework for comparing and improving homelessness prevention strategies across different regions and over time.

For more details, access the full paper <u>here</u>.

THE ETHOS DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION -
BY BILL EDGAR, EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF HOMELESSNESS, 2012

This paper introduces the ETHOS framework, a tool developed by the European Observatory on Homelessness to harmonise data collection and policy understanding of homelessness across Europe. The framework broadens the definition of homelessness beyond rooflessness, encompassing situations of housing insecurity, inadequacy, and extreme precarity. By adopting this inclusive perspective, the paper aims to address the diverse realities of homelessness and provide a robust foundation for evidence-based policymaking. It highlights the structural factors, such as poverty and lack of affordable housing, and individual consequences, including social exclusion and health challenges, that interact to perpetuate homelessness. The paper also underscores the complexities arising from differing housing systems and welfare regimes across Europe, advocating for greater standardisation and cooperation.

The added value of this publication: a key strength of this article is the ETHOS framework's adaptability, bridging the gap between policy and the lived experiences of those in precarious housing. Its expanded definition fosters more targeted interventions and collaborative, equitable policy responses.

Follow <u>this link</u> to explore the full article.

BEYOND ACADEMIA

Scientific research illuminates reality in a rational and demonstrable way, providing a solid and verifiable foundation for public action. In this 'Beyond Academia' section, we will take a step aside to close each Research Digest by presenting sources that explore homelessness through the lens of other intellectual tools: culture, the arts, activism, and practices. Reality must be understood through all its prisms.

LES INVISIBLES - BY LOUIS-JULIEN PETIT, 2018: A PORTRAYAL OF HOMELESS WOMEN AND SOCIAL WORK DYNAMICS

"Les Invisibles", directed by Louis-Julien Petit (2018), is a poignant French comedy-drama that highlights the struggles of homeless women and the social workers dedicated to helping them. Set in L'Envol, a day shelter facing closure, the film follows the staff's unconventional and often humorous efforts to support the women in rebuilding their lives. Through moving backstories, it explores gender-specific challenges of homelessness, such as vulnerability to violence, societal stigma, and motherhood.

The film also critiques systemic failures, including the lack of sustainable housing and bureaucratic obstacles, while celebrating the compassion and resilience of social workers. Blending humour and emotional depth, "Les Invisibles" offers a powerful commentary on solidarity and the urgent need for systemic reform.