



NINTH OVERVIEW OF HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE

2024

Fondation Abbé Pierre - FEANTSA



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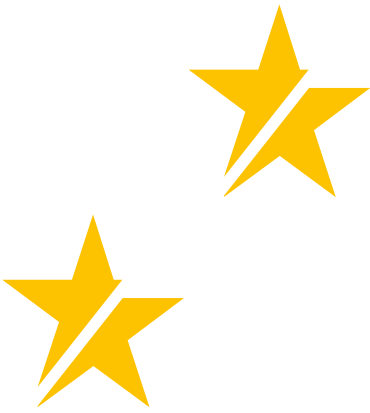
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2024



EDITO- RIAL

The figures on poor housing speak for themselves: rents are soaring, housing prices are increasingly out of reach, and the shortage of affordable housing is worsening by the day. Nothing that has been done so far appears to be improving these trends. Meanwhile a growing number of young people face a reality that compromises not only their present, but also their future.

If the value of a society is measured by how it treats young people, Europe is clearly facing a profound challenge. In one of the world's most prosperous regions, nearly 400,000 minors live on the streets or in emergency or temporary accommodation. Several million are in unfit housing. This situation is all the more urgent because housing is fundamental to social justice and equal opportunity. Deprived of the

conditions they need to live and grow up with dignity from the very start, these children risk being unfairly disadvantaged in their life trajectories and excluded from participation in their society's future.

Homelessness has been on the European agenda for several years, and awareness of the deepening housing crisis is certainly increasing. The intentions of the newly re-elected President of the Commission for a new mandate speak to this clearly: a European strategy to combat poverty; an unprecedented European plan for affordable housing; a Commissioner responsible for housing; a European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing; and a doubling of the funding available for affordable housing as part of cohesion policy.

These initiatives are welcome, but there are many important points to be

clarified before their credibility can be assessed. The announcements and promises are laudable, but they are not enough to address the problem. For now, the Member States remain the primary parties able to influence the situation, and European budgetary policy severely limits their ability to invest in robust solutions. We must rethink our entire approach to ensure that the fundamental right to housing is finally respected.

It is no longer time for corrective measures and minor adjustments. The crisis is too profound. We need to act more ambitiously. Governments and local authorities must join forces to combat homelessness and ensure that no child is excluded from housing, to regulate the property market and rents, to produce social and affordable housing for families, and to radically reform renovation campaigns

by prioritising the most vulnerable households. Alongside these long-term social and inclusive policies, a range of immediate, concrete measures must be implemented on the ground. Every initiative, every project can hold significant impact.

We cannot leave entire generation behind because of immobility and inaction. Young people are our future. If we give them the stability they need, they will be able to build a fairer, more just and more united society. It is up to us, today, to make decisions that will guarantee their success tomorrow.

Freek Spinnewijn
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Christophe Robert
Managing Director, FAP

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CHAP. 1

HOMELESSNESS
IN EUROPE
**THE STATE
OF PLAY**

1.

AN ISSUE HIGH ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA

«Homelessness remains an issue in many Member States, along with challenges related to housing affordability and accessibility, particularly in urban areas, to energy poverty and to the high cost of living impacting a broad range of people, but mostly those on low incomes, calling for integrated strategies and follow-up. Taking into account national competences, continued action is warranted on accessible, efficient, green and affordable social housing to meet the housing needs of all, to eradicate homelessness and to promote a housing first approach.»

*La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights,
16 April 2024*

Since the Lisbon Declaration and the launch of the European Platform on Combating Homelessness (EPOCH) in March 2021², the issue of homelessness at EU level seems to be gradually gaining political legitimacy. The La Hulpe Declaration – ratified on 16 April 2024 by the Parliament, the Commission, the majority of Member States, the main trade unions and several civil society representatives – is one of the latest indicators of this breakthrough. The declaration underscores the importance of maintaining the issue as a top political priority and supporting national programmes that tackle it directly. It also acknowledges the Platform's central role by advocating for an increase in its resources. As is the case for the European Union insofar as the social sphere is concerned, the Platform lacks legally binding tools, but its robust political mandate gives reason to hope that it will be able to encourage other stakeholders to invest more, by highlighting the effective measures being implemented at local level. It is to be hoped that these geographically dispersed measures will spread, gradually bringing about real change.

2. STATISTICS ON HOMELESSNESS

Towards a more systematic approach

There has been much laudable progress regarding the quantitative evaluation of homelessness in Europe. Firstly, some national and regional surveys were systematised and refined in 2023 and 2024. For the second year running, the Federal Statistics Office in **Germany** has carried out a particularly in-depth survey on people staying in accommodation centres³. Building on a study aimed at improving the data collection system in **Austria**⁴, administrative data for measuring homelessness has been revised and expanded. Supported by the Flemish and Wallonian authorities, the King Baudouin Foundation presented two regional estimates⁵, based on the results of counts carried out in **Belgium**. Lastly, alongside the national statistics, two local surveys conducted in the **Netherlands** – using a proven methodology⁶ – furthered understanding of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness. Overall, these improvements are evidence not only of a growing desire to understand the problem more comprehensively, but also of the methodological harmonisation that is ongoing at EU level; all these studies explicitly refer to the categories from FEANTSA's ETHOS light typology⁷.

Alongside the numerous advances in the field, the many initiatives being used to measure the problem at city-level deserve a mention. The pilot study by **Spain's** General Directorate of Family Diversity and Social Services and implemented by the SIIS (Information and Social Research

Service) in 27 cities is a good example of this⁸. For this large-scale project, the size and composition of the homeless population was evaluated over one night in communes of varying size and type, taking into account both people rough sleeping and those residing in accommodation centres⁹. During the night counts that involved no fewer than 2,251 volunteers, two out of five people were surveyed on their profile and their background. What largely emerged from these questionnaires was that the main cause of homelessness for the people surveyed was structural, i.e. their administrative status (38%) and their lack of financial resources (30%). Analysis of the data also shows that a significant proportion of those surveyed had been homeless for over two years (45%).

The idea that statistical measurement of homelessness contributes to guiding policy interventions seems to be gaining ground, including in the EU institutions. By funding the *European Homelessness Counts project*, the Commission is following the lead of researchers who have long been calling for an EU-wide evaluation of the issue. It is a tall order as the goal is to coordinate a series of counts in several European cities using the ETHOS light categories as a common basis. As part of the goal to systematise approaches that attempt to define the number and profiles of homeless people, the project aims to both establish a common framework for defining housing exclusion and to encourage the standardisation of data collection techniques. This methodological standardisation will, in particular, enable meaningful comparison. The *European Homelessness Counts project* will see 15 cities participating in the first year¹⁰. In the roll-out of this initial phase and according to

the interest shown, the counts may be repeated the following year: the 15 cities from Phase 1 will repeat the count, along with potentially 20 new cities.

The following two data sources may facilitate a more detailed overview. On the one hand, the *ad hoc* module on working and housing conditions in the EU-SILC (*European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions*)¹¹ carried out by Eurostat in 2023 will provide data on the prevalence of homelessness among the European population: The statistical data made available in 2024 will, in particular, integrate a variable to estimate the proportion of people homeless during the previous year. On the other hand, the full results of the 2021 population census (including the housing stock) carried out in each Member State¹², provides valuable information on the number, geographical distribution, and profile of those identified as homeless or living in non-conventional dwellings. In addition to putting the different national and regional realities into perspective, these results should *a priori* give some indications as to the socio-demographic features of those experiencing housing exclusion. While the figures taken from these two large-scale surveys may prove difficult to cross-reference with existing data, they will unquestionably provide new angles with which to approach and study the issue.

Inventory of the data available

For now, the national statistics remain inadequate for objectively gauging the homeless population across Europe as a whole. Furthermore, despite significant progress in this regard, the lack of homogeneity in the methods and pro-

cesses used to count homeless people at local level continues to be a major barrier to aggregating and comparing at EU level.

Nonetheless, efforts to gather and compile the latest available data in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation is ongoing, as shown by the results of a study recently published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹³ as part of the EPOCH work programme. Based on the responses to the questionnaire (QuASH – *Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing*) given to member countries¹⁴, the OECD compiled data on the statistics approved by the public authorities, how they are produced and the realities that they cover. In total, 40 governments (26 of which are in the EU) participated in drawing up a very comprehensive catalogue that enabled homelessness to be estimated per country in a fairly precise way. For each figure provided, the date of the survey, the definition of homelessness used, the data collection method, and the ETHOS light categories covered¹⁵ were stated; any inclusion of minors, asylum seekers, refugees, and/or domestic abuse victims was also noted.

The following table provides an inventory that differs in part from the OECD's¹⁶. It also distinguishes between two types of methodology: point-in-time counts, which provide a snapshot of housing exclusion at a specific moment (*green*); and flow data recording, which is carried out over a long period and provides the averages or prevalence data (*green*). Results from surveys considered too old or not sufficiently robust (*red*) were not included – which explains the absence of data from Bulgaria, **Cyprus, Greece, Malta**, and **Slovakia**. For all countries listed, the source, method, date, duration, and results of the survey are given¹⁷. Where possible, data specific to each housing exclusion situation covered have been reorganised to align with the ETHOS light cate-

gories. In cases where people found themselves in situations that defy clear categorisation, the figures were considered relevant to several cate-

gories. Data pertaining to living situations that are not described by ETHOS light typology were categorised as "Other".

ETHOS LIGHT**EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION**

1	People living rough
2	People in emergency accommodation
3	People in accommodation for the homeless
4	People living in institutions
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends

COUNT TYPES

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE METHOD USED AND QUALITY OF DATA COLLECTED

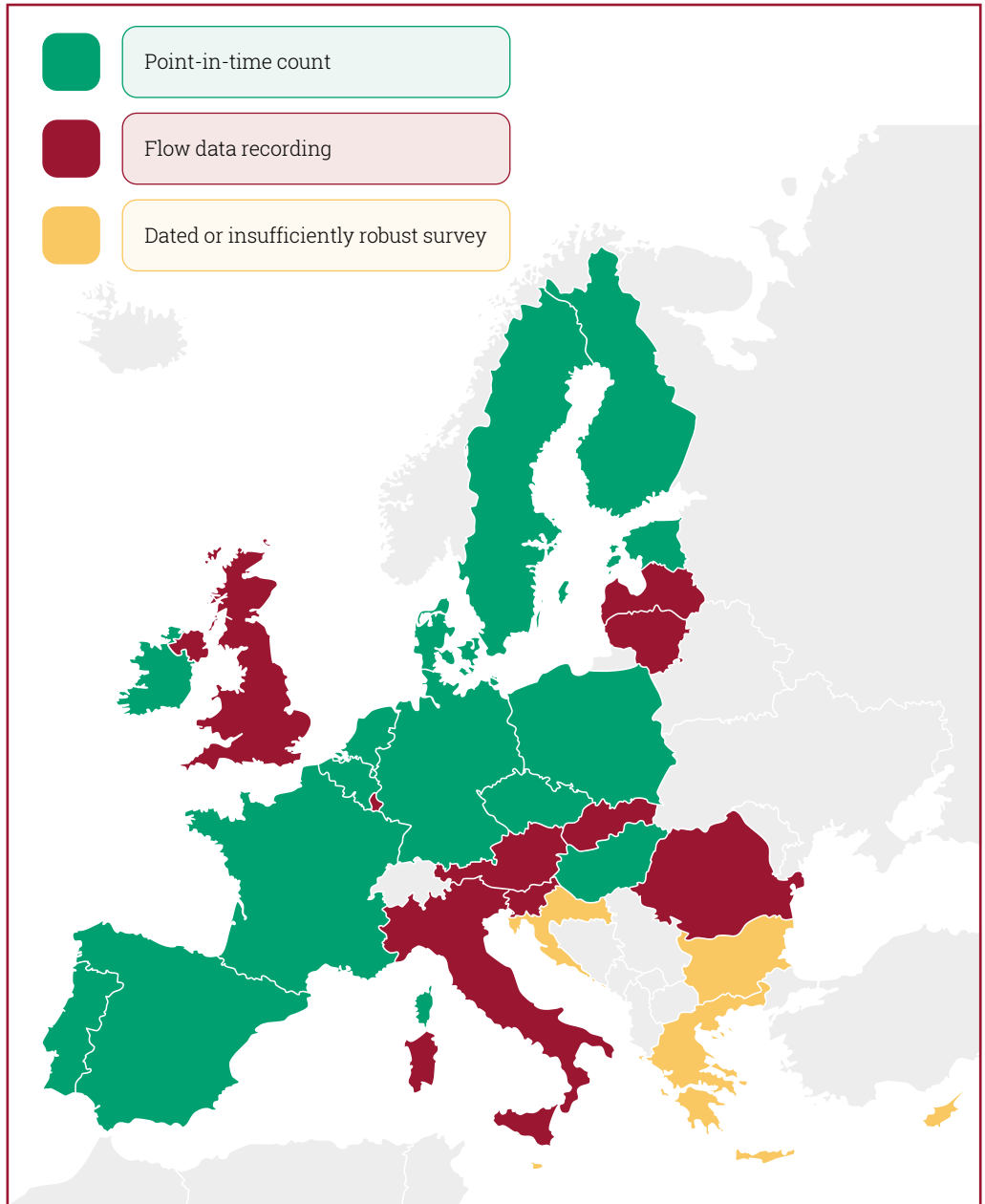







Photo : @juliedebellaing/DoucheFLUX

DATA ON HOUSING EXCLUSION**STATISTICS FROM RECENT SURVEYS, COUNT TYPES, AND DETAILS BY ETHOS LIGHT CATEGORY**

Country	Source	Method
 Austria	Statistik Austria	Recording
 Belgium	Bruss'help / FRB & Administrations régionales	Count / Extrapolation
 Czechia	SocioFactor	Count / Extrapolation
 Denmark	VIVE	Count
 Estonia	Eesti Statistika	Count
 Finland	Asumisen rahoitus- ja kehittämiskeskus	Count
 France	Fondation Abbé Pierre	Count
 Germany	Destatis / GISS & Kantar Public	Count / Survey
 Hungary	Menhely Alapítvány	Count
 Ireland	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Count
 Italy	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Recording
 Latvia	Labklājības ministrija	Recording
 Lithuania	Statistics Lithuania	Recording
 Luxembourg	Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région	Recording
 Netherlands	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek	Count / Extrapolation
 Poland	Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej	Count
 Portugal	ENIPSSA	Count
 Romania	Ministerul Muncii și Solidarității Sociale	Recording
 Slovakia	Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny	Recording
 Slovenia	Inštitut Republike Slovenije za Socialno varstvo	Recording
 Spain	Instituto Nacional de Estadística	Count / Extrapolation
 Sweden	Socialstyrelsen	Count
 UK	Crisis	Recording / Extrapolation

Date	Period	ETHOS 1	ETHOS 2	ETHOS 3	ETHOS 4	ETHOS 5	ETHOS 6	Other	Total
2022	1 year								19,667
2022 - 2023	1 night	2,328	2,484	12,566	3,588	7,827	13,475	3,592	45,860
2022	4 months	12,000		18,426		16,058	54,244		100,728
2022	1 week	535	248	2,955	195		1,152	704	5,789
2021	1 night								1,068
2022	1 night	464		414	412		2,139		3,429
2021	1 night		166,331	42,743					209,074
2022 - 2023	1 night / 1 week	32,467	8,280	363,780			52,033		456,560
2023	1 night	1,530	5,738						7,268
2023	1 week		13,318						13,318
2021	1 year								96,197
2022	1 year		5,997						5,997
2022	1 year		4,317						4,317
2022	1 year		445	251					696
2023	1 night								30,600
2019	1 night	2,551	4,299	16,962	3,062	3,456			30,330
2022	1 night	5,975		4,798					10,773
2022	1 year		1,053	840					1,893
2020	1 year		7,609	3,052					10,661
2021	1 year			1,239					1,239
2022	6 weeks	4,508	11,498			5,478		7,068	28,552
2023	1 week								27,383
2019	1 year	17,042	46,875	22,371		18,556	137,588		242,432

New European estimate

These statistics enable to propose a new approximation of the European homeless population. The estimate is based on a compilation of data from point-in-time counts (*green*) covering people in situations of housing exclusion described by ETHOS Light categories 1, 2 and 3: a total of 737,198 people counted in 11 countries. This total is then compared with the sum of the population of these 11 countries (295,153,618 people according to Eurostat) to obtain an average rate (0.250%). The percentage is finally applied to the European population (515,155,514 including the UK) to determine the result. Overall, Europe could count 1,286,691 rough sleepers, people in night shelters and people in temporary accommodation for the homeless. It should be noted that this figure partly testifies to an objective trend in homelessness in certain countries, but it also largely reflects improvements in the accuracy and coverage of counts.

1 287 000

ESTIMATE OF
THE NUMBER OF ROUGH
SLEEPERS, PEOPLE STAYING
IN NIGHT SHELTERS AND IN
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Data should be interpreted with caution

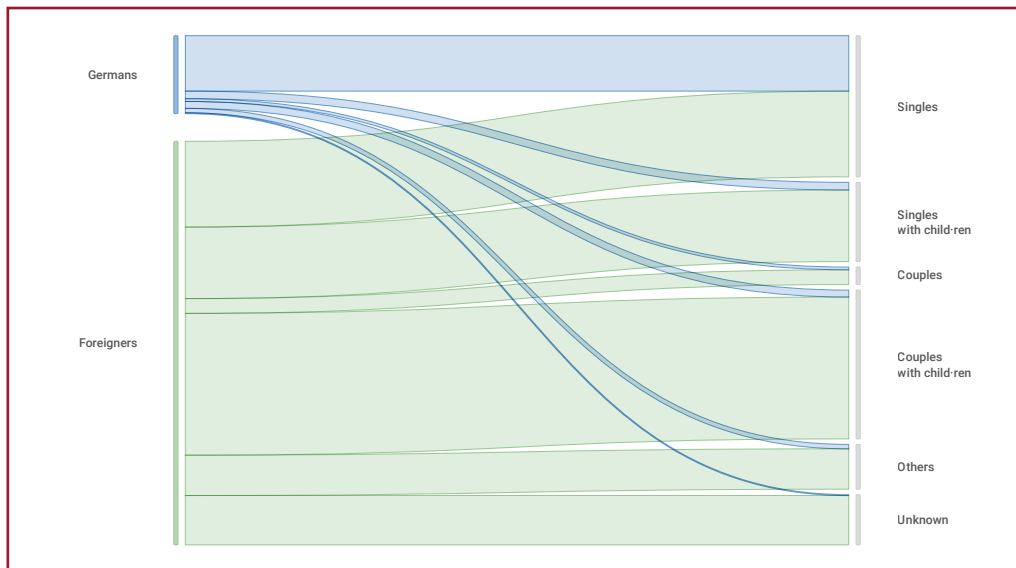
Quantitative measures are essential to fully assess homelessness. Nonetheless, the survey data cannot be completely disconnected from the contexts in which they were produced, at the risk of distorting the data. In fact, high levels are due largely to the countries' means of effectively counting the homeless population: the political attention the problem receives, a wide definition of homelessness, the social services that contribute to raising awareness around the problem and the techniques for data capture on a large scale. Conversely, in some countries that report a low number of homeless people, the issue is possibly not given adequate importance and is thus largely underestimated. While diagnostic statistics can serve to force public authorities to face their responsibilities, the raw figures alone only rarely show the gravity of the situation.

3. SOME RECENT NATIONAL DATA

GERMANY

On 31 January 2023, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany collected, for the second year running, a set of data on homelessness in Germany¹⁸. These data relate exclusively to people in accommodation centres managed by local authorities and independent homeless organisations – with complementary surveys counting rough sleepers and people temporarily living with family and friends to be repeated in 2024. In total, 372,060 people were counted at the beginning of 2023, which is a significant increase on the previous year mainly due to better communication of the data by the organisations involved. Also of note is that more than one-third of people counted (35%) were Ukrainian refugees (130,000 in 2023, compared to 305 in 2022).

When these new groups who sought refuge in the country are included, the proportion of foreign nationals counted reaches 84% (*figure 1*). This group includes a particularly high number of adults and children living in families (67%), i.e. couples with children represent 35% of foreign nationals. This reality is in clear contrast with the family composition of homeless people with German nationality. For this group, the proportion of singles was 71%. The figures recorded in 2023 further reveal a slight change in the gender mix. While most homeless people are men, there are proportionally fewer than was observed in 2022 (54% compared to 63% of people whose gender was stated). The average age of those counted has not changed significantly (31 years in 2023, compared to 32 years in 2022) although the number of people under 18 has proportionally increased somewhat (31% compared to 27%).

FIGURE 1 - GERMANY**DISTRIBUTION OF THE NATIONALITY OF PEOPLE COUNTED ACCORDING TO FAMILY COMPOSITION**

Destatis 2023

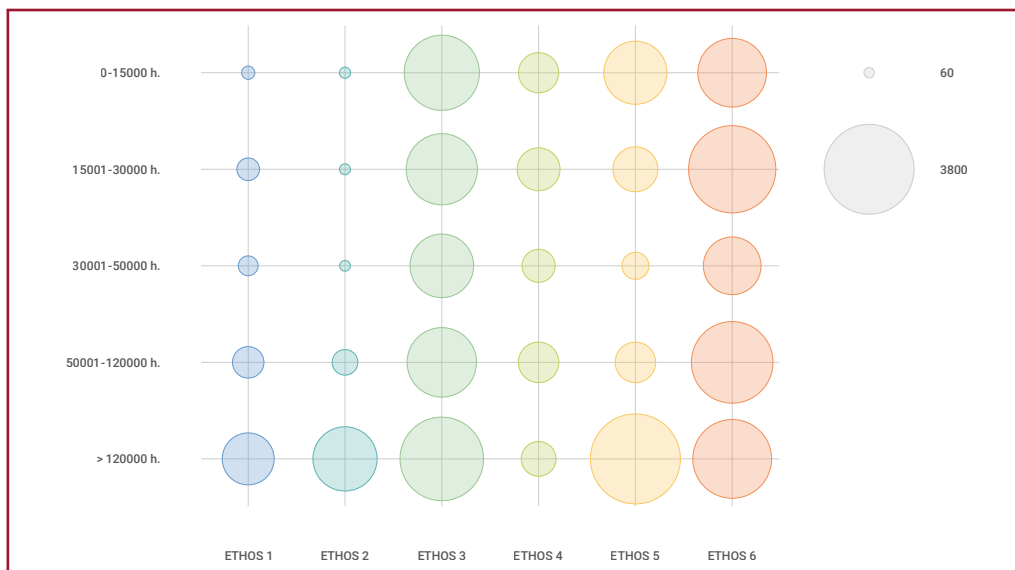
BELGIUM

For several years, an increasing number of counts have been carried out in Belgium's cities and provinces. The results of these surveys, based on a common methodology and carried out with the same protocols, can now provide an overview of homelessness country-wide. Supported by the King Baudouin Foundation, the Flanders region and the OWSA (Wallonian observatory on homelessness), researchers involved in the local counts presented two regional estimates in March 2024, based on the data collected across the country¹⁹. When collated with the figures from the last count conducted in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2022²⁰, the results of these estimates in Flanders and Wallonia offer an unprecedented overview.

Estimates suggest that there are approximately 19,479 homeless individuals in Flanders and

19,247 in Wallonia. When the 7,134 people in the Brussels-Capital Region are included, there were at least 45,860 homeless people in Belgium. The detail in the estimates along with the particularly robust methodology used in the local counts enables the data to be analysed per ETHOS light category and per city size (*figure 2*). While it is not surprising that the number of rough sleepers, people in emergency accommodation or in non-conventional dwellings (squats, etc.) is proportionally much higher in large cities (42% of people counted in cities of over 120,000 inhabitants), it seems that the number of people staying in homeless accommodation or temporarily housed with family/friends is significant across all communes (6,993 and 7,407 people respectively for cities of less than 50,000 inhabitants compared to 5,573 and 6,068 for cities of more than 50,000).

FIGURE 2 - BELGIUM
BY ETHOS LIGHT CATEGORY AND BY CITY SIZE



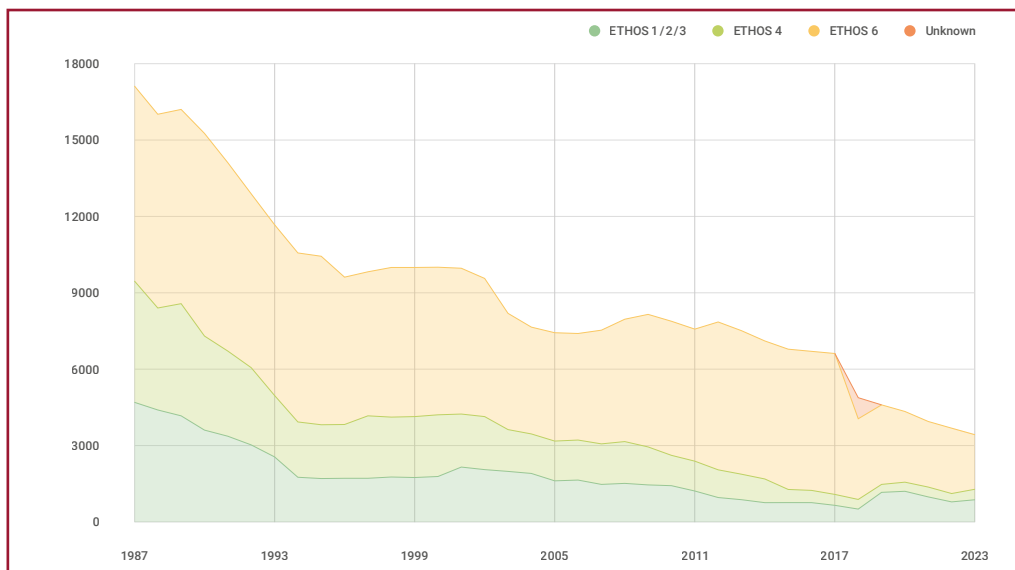
Bruss'help/KBF & Regional Administrations · 2022-2023

FINLAND

Since the end of the 1980s, the ARA (Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland) has carried out an annual survey on homelessness in **Finland**²¹. Each year, the country's municipalities are asked to provide a data set based on the social services registers, housing applicant registers of municipal rental housing companies, and service providers' customer registers. Despite the apparent accuracy of this method, the data collected are for information purposes only, mainly because the data collection methods and the evaluation criteria can differ from municipality to municipality. The quality of data further depends on the level of participation, which has fluctuated slightly over the years. In 2023, 72% of Finnish municipalities (i.e. 210 of the country's 293) responded to the survey. Of these, only 83 noted the presence of homeless people in their district.

On 15 November 2023, 3,429 homeless people were identified. Of these, 14% were rough sleeping or in emergency accommodation, 12% were in homeless shelters, 12% were living in an institution due to lack of housing and 32% were staying temporarily with friends or family. Between 2022 and 2023, the total number of homeless individuals decreased by 7%. Notably, the number of women and individuals under 25 experienced particularly significant reductions, with decreases of 17% and 35%, respectively. A large majority of the people counted were in metropolitan areas. While the figures in Helsinki have seen a clear drop (-18%), the capital is still where 22% of the country's homeless population is living. Long-term data collected in Finland shows the effectiveness of its national strategy implemented to combat housing exclusion (figure 3). Between 1987 and 2023, the number of people who were homeless or experiencing housing exclusion fell by 80%.

FIGURE 3 • FINLAND
CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE COUNTED PER ETHOS LIGHT CATEGORY



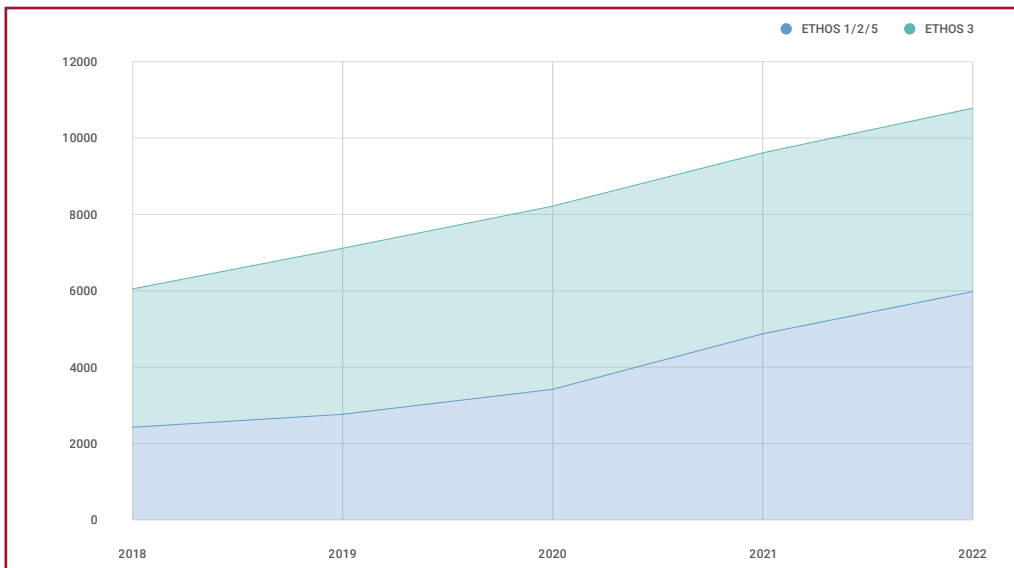
ARA - 1987-2023

PORTUGAL

Since 2018, data has been collected at national level in **Portugal** by a group of organisations charged with implementing and following up on the national strategy for integrating homeless people (ENIPSSA – Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Pessoas em Situação de Sem-Abrigo). Each year, a questionnaire to gather information on the size and composition of the homeless population is sent out to the mainland's 278 municipalities via various institutions working at local level. Two broad categories of circumstance are identified in accordance with the Council of Ministers' resolution that ratified the national strategy for the period 2017-2023: rough sleepers, people in emergency accommodation or makeshift shelters (*sem teto*) and people staying in homeless shelters (*sem casa*).

According to the results of the most recent survey, carried out on 31 December 2022, there were 10,773 homeless people in **Portugal**²² – 55% of them were sleeping in public spaces, in unconventional dwellings or in emergency accommodation (5,975 people) and 45% were staying in homeless accommodation and supported accommodation (4,798). The highest proportions of homelessness were found in the country's three southern regions (0.213% in Alentejo, 0.160% in the Lisbon metropolitan area and 0.151% in the Algarve). The data collected through questionnaires also provides several socio-demographic indicators: 72% of those identified were men; 38% were aged between 45 and 64; and 79% were Portuguese nationals. With regard to changes in numbers of homeless people, data recorded since 2018 indicates a significant increase (+78%). However, this can partly be explained by improvements in data collection by the municipalities.

FIGURE 4 · PORTUGAL
CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE COUNTED PER ETHOS LIGHT CATEGORY



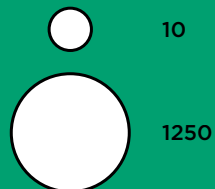
ENIPSSA · 2018-2022



Photo : @juliedebellaing/DoucheFLUX

COUNT RESULT IN 27 SPANISH

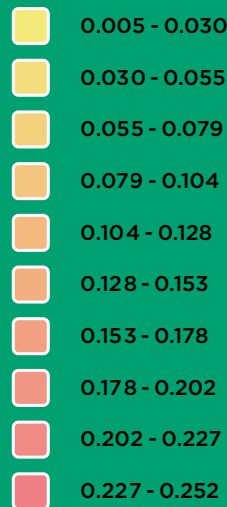
PEOPLE
COUNTED
BY CITY



TOTAL
NUMBER
OF PEOPLE

6144

PERCENTAGE
AMONG THE
POPULATION



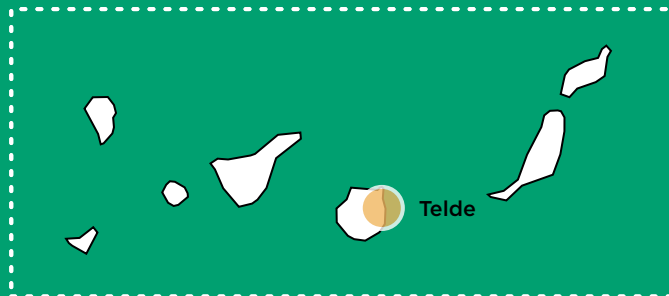
46.3 %

people
in public
spaces and non
conventional
structures

53.7 %

people
in accomodation
centres and
Housing First
units

SIIS Centro de Documentación
y Estudios (2024)
*Proyecto piloto de recuentos
nocturnos de personas sin
hogar en España 2023 :
Principales resultados y
aprendizajes de los recuentos
nocturnos llevados cabo en
27 ciudades*
San Sebastián : Ministerio de
Derechos Sociales



S CITIES



4. CONSIDERING EACH UNIQUE CONTEXT

Homelessness is a reality across all of Europe, but the form it takes and its causes can vary significantly from one country to another. In essence, the socio-economic and political contexts unique to each Member State – along with legal and administrative specificities – shape both the analysis of the problem and the strategies for addressing it. The elements detailed in this section aim to give a brief overview of these specificities within some EU Member States. The information was collected through questionnaires issued to FEANTSA members.

According to the figures published by **Austria's** Federal Statistical Office, there has been an overall drop in the number of people identified as homeless by the municipalities. This downward trend has, however, long been queried by homeless associations, which point to shortcomings in the data collection system. The figures are in part provided by accommodation centres and platforms where homeless people can register and receive their post; however the list of these structures is not regularly updated and thus does not account for changes occurring over time. For this reason, the ministry of social affairs recently authorised Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Austrian Academy of Sciences) to carry out a feasibility study with the aim of improving national data collection. The results of this study highlight, in particular, the need to broaden and to combine data sources in each *Land* in order to cover a wider range of homelessness situations²³. Redesigning the measurement system will also provide a clearer understanding of the extent of homelessness and its changes over time. Over the last two years, inflation in Austria has been higher than the euro area average (10.5% compared to 9.2%

in December 2022 and 5.7% compared to 2.9% in December 2023)²⁴. This level of inflation has had a strong impact on house prices. Average rents inclusive of charges increased by 8.0% between Q3 2022 and Q3 2023 (reaching EUR 9.5 per m²)²⁵, a trend that risks leading to a hike in evictions and consequently an increase in the number of people left without a housing solution.

Homeless numbers are falling in **Denmark** according to figures from the latest surveys carried out in 2019 and 2022. This significant drop in the number of people counted by VIVE (the Danish Center for Social Science Research) is in contrast with the upward trend recorded between 2009 and 2017. A number of factors account for this change. The provisions and measures taken during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 to protect vulnerable groups and to help people to get off the streets are undoubtedly a determining factor. The noteworthy decrease in the number of people forced to spend the night in public spaces is very likely linked to the extended capacity in accommodation centres – between 2021 and 2022, the number of beneficiaries of refuges and homeless shelters increased by 5%²⁶. At the same time, national data shows a significant decrease in the number of homeless individuals aged 18-24, which several observers attribute to greater political action on the problem of youth homelessness. In recent years, several cities have deployed support and integration measures specifically targeting homeless young people. It is worth noting that in some areas these measures are financed by public-private partnerships. For example, social investment funds and Bikubenfonden have enabled Aarhus commune and Roskilde municipality to convert accommodation centres into temporary housing,

to offer intensive support to young people with addiction problems, to develop employment programmes and to increase the resources allocated to Housing First solutions²⁷.

Ireland has experienced a drastic increase in the number of people in emergency accommodation over the last 10 years. The situation is the result of a confluence of factors: a severe shortage of social and affordable housing exacerbated by austerity measures taken to address the 2008 financial crisis²⁸ along with soaring rents in the private rental sector and heightened vulnerability of the poorest households. The increased number of families in homelessness rose sharply at the beginning of 2014, which was when excessive dependence on the private housing market entered a new phase. To mitigate the lack of social housing, the Irish government and local authorities chose to rely on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), a support measure that aims to enable access to the private rental market for households eligible for social housing²⁹. However, by subsidising excessive rents in an unregulated market with rampant speculation, this measure contributed to rising housing costs, and as a consequence, to increased evictions in the years since. And yet, until recently, the HAP was the only measure enabling homeless people in emergency accommodation to be rehoused. However, following a winter moratorium on evictions and the establishment of tighter regulations on rents in 2022, many landlords sold their properties or withdrew from the market, thus causing a drop in the number of homes available for rent. As both a cause of the housing crisis and an obstacle to resolving it, this vicious circle has resulted in an ever-increasing number of people in emergency accommodation for extended periods.

The homelessness situation in **Czechia** remains uncertain due to a lack of surveys conducted at regular intervals using a consistent methodology. Nonetheless, studies conducted in 2019 and 2022 give an indication as to the extent of housing exclusion at national level: a large proportion of people are living in homeless accommodation or are staying temporarily with friends/family through lack of any alternative. In 2023, the country had 212 long-term accommodation centres with a total capacity of 7,182 places. At the same time, organisations working on the ground have noticed an increase in the number of people accessing low-threshold services (such as food banks) and seeking basic necessities from day centres. Increasing poverty among a section of the population is likely connected to the effects of the economic recession and the significant increase in the cost of living, particularly housing. **Czechia** is one of the European Union countries that has seen the highest rate of inflation over the last two years. Figures from Q1 2023 published by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce³⁰ are particularly telling: the average rent increased by 6.4% year-on-year and housing-related products and services rose by 17.8%. According to the same statistical data, between 2022 and 2023, price hikes in electricity, natural gas, and heating amounted to 32.6%, 73.2%, and 45.0% respectively – a worrying trend given that in spring 2021, at least 910,000 people were already experiencing energy poverty³¹.

5. MEASURES CURRENTLY IN PLACE TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

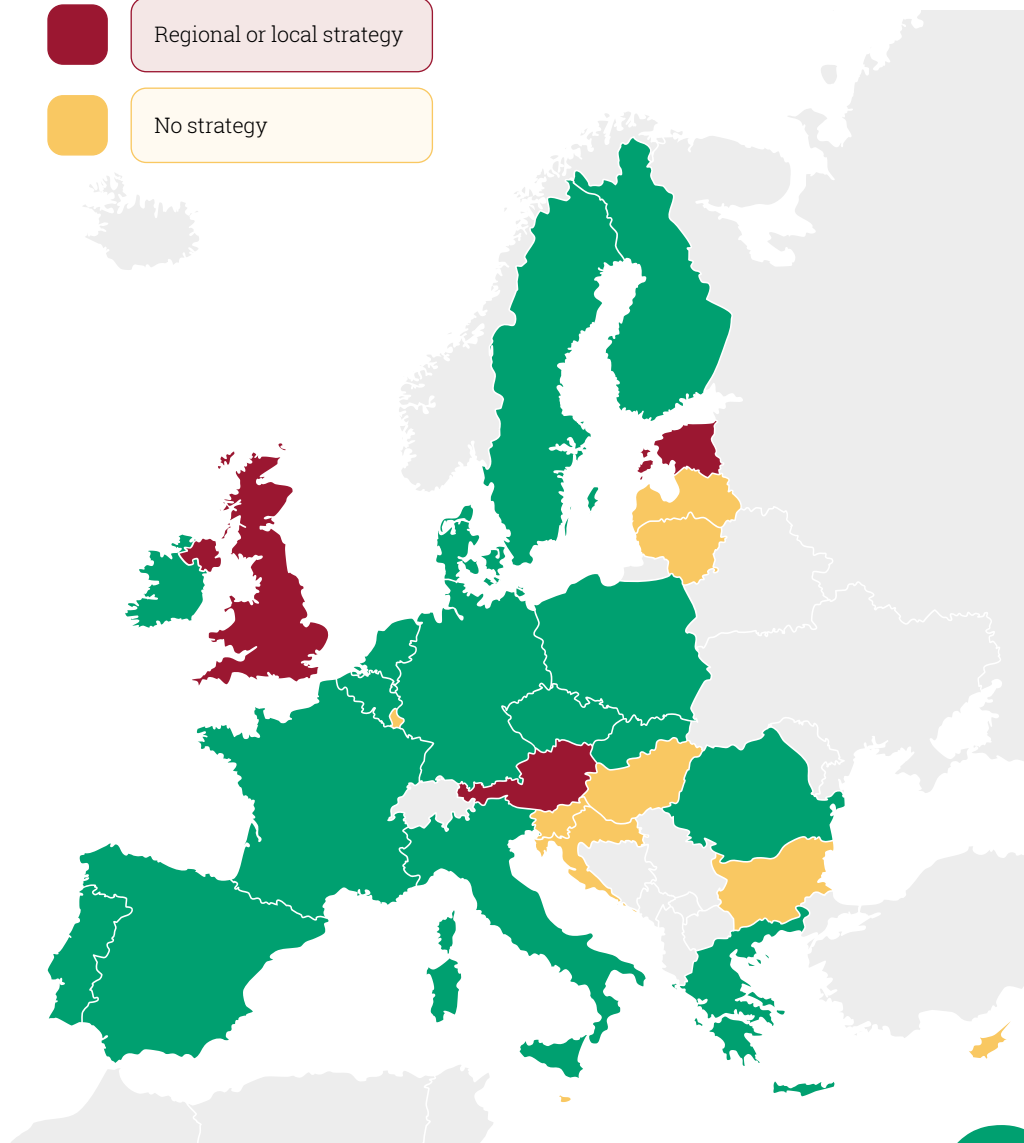
In recent years, many Member States have established, updated or strengthened national strategies to structure and coordinate the various homelessness prevention and management measures. The objectives and timelines announced as part of these roadmaps are often detailed and generally ambitious. This is evidenced by research published in April 2024 by the OECD³², which offers an overview of these policy programmes along with a statistical review of data recognised by governments. On the basis of responses to the questionnaires on affordable and social housing (QuASH) in 2019, 2021 and 2023, this study shows that 16 Member States claim to have an active strategy in place to combat homelessness at national level. Two countries – **Austria** and **Estonia** – have coordinated policies at regional level due to how competencies are decentralised across their jurisdictions. In the **United Kingdom**, each nation has its own strategy on housing exclusion: in **England**, resources are mainly directed towards prevention so that nobody ends up sleeping rough; in **Northern Ireland**, the approach entails a joint intervention by different bodies to support households at risk of housing exclusion; in **Wales**, the reorganisation of services aims to guarantee rapid and sustainable rehousing of people; and in **Scotland**, cross-sectoral collaboration aims at prevention centred around the individual and their needs³³.

The following table shows the 16 national strategies identified by the OECD and presents the important principles and measures that emerge from each official document. It is important to note that the table is based solely on the content of publications approved by governments or relevant authorities. It does not evaluate the relevance or feasibility of the programmes, nor does it take into account the political and socio-economic contexts in which the projections were made. The characteristic elements of the strategies are organised into five themes (coordination, prevention, law, support and housing). For the purposes of readability and balance, a maximum of three elements were selected per country and per theme. These elements may relate to a guiding principle or a specific measure; therefore their number does not necessarily reflect the importance of each theme within the documents. The table simply aims to give an overview enabling immediate identification of the subjects that are recurring, absent from the agenda, or currently being tackled.














STRATEGIES TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

INFORMATION COMPILED BY THE OECD (QUESTIONNAIRE ON AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING - 2024)

-  National strategy
-  Regional or local strategy
-  No strategy



COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL STRATEGY**PRINCIPLES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE STRATEGIES REVIEWED BY THE OECD (2024)**

Strategy	Period	Coordination
 Accord de coopération concernant le sans-abrisme et l'absence de chez-soi	2023 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Harmonisation of support services Data collection
 Strategie sociálního začleňování	2021 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Needs assessment
 Fonden for blandede byer - flere billige boliger og en vej ud af hjemløshed	2021 - 2035	Coordination and monitoring
 Ohjelma pitkäaikaisasunnottomuuden poistamiseksi vuoteen 2027 mennessä	2024 - 2026	Coordination and monitoring Limiting temporary solutions
 Plan quinquennal pour le logement d'abord et la lutte contre le sans-abrisme	2023 - 2027	Coordination and monitoring Needs assessment Data collection
 Gemeinsam für ein Zuhause. Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Wohnungslosigkeit	2024 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Needs assessment Data collection
 Εθνικό Σχέδιο Δράσης για τη στήριξη των αστέγων	2023 - 2027	Coordination and monitoring Needs assessment Data collection
 Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland	2021 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Reducing vacancy rates
 Piano nazionale degli interventi e dei servizi sociali	2021 - 2023	Coordination and monitoring Harmonisation of support services
 Nationaal Actieplan Dakloosheid Eerst een Thuis	2023 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Data collection
 Strategia rozwoju usług społecznych	2022 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Deinstitutionalisation
 Nacional para a Integração das Pessoas em Situação de Sem-Abrigo	2025 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Deinstitutionalisation Data collection
 Strategia națională privind incluziunea socială a persoanelor fără adăpost	2022 - 2027	Coordination and monitoring Data collection
 Národná koncepcia prevencie a ukončovania bezdomovstva	2022 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Needs assessment Data collection
 Estrategia Nacional para la lucha contra el sinhogarismo en España	2023 - 2030	Coordination and monitoring Deinstitutionalisation Data collection
 Regeringens strategi för att motverka hemlöshet	2022 - 2026	Coordination and monitoring Data collection

Prevention	Law	Support	Housing
	Guaranteeing the right to housing	Organisation of winter accommodation	
Support for tenants in difficulty	Guaranteeing the right to housing Ensuring access to healthcare Combating discrimination	Harm reduction Debt mediation Professional integration	Building affordable housing Development of social housing agencies Housing First
Housing benefits		Personalised support	Subsidised housing Creation of social housing Housing First
Detection of risk situations Rapid rehousing programmes		Personalised support	Subsidised housing Housing construction and renovation Housing First
Support for tenants in difficulty Preventing rental evictions	Guaranteeing the right to housing Prioritising access to social housing	Development of the referral system Personalised support	Creation of social housing Development of social housing agencies Housing First
Housing benefits Preventing redundancies	Ensuring access to healthcare Combating discrimination Decriminalisation	Revision of accommodation standards Professional integration	Building affordable housing Housing First
Detection of risk situations	Combating discrimination	Development of street work Creation of accommodation facilities Professional integration	Subsidised housing Creation of social housing
Strengthening tenants' rights Support for tenants in difficulty	Prioritising access to social housing Social housing reform Ensuring access to healthcare	Revision of accommodation standards Creation of accommodation facilities Personalised support	Creation of social housing Building affordable housing Housing First
Preventing family estrangement	Ensuring access to social benefits Guaranteeing the right of residence	Emergency social assistance Assistance with domiciliation	Housing First
Housing benefits Debt prevention Preventing rental evictions	Legal support services Combating stigmatisation	Development of the referral system Personalised support Attention to specific vulnerabilities	Creation of social housing Building affordable housing Housing First
Debt prevention Preventing rental evictions Support on release from prison	Combating stigmatisation	Development of street work Revision of accommodation standards	Creation of social housing Housing First
	Ensuring access to social benefits Ensuring access to healthcare Guaranteeing the rights of foreign nationals	Creation of accommodation facilities Personalised support Professional integration	
Detection of risk situations Preventing rental evictions	Ensuring access to social benefits Legal support services Combating stigmatisation	Personalised support Professional integration Attention to specific vulnerabilities	Subsidised housing Creation of social housing
Detection of risk situations Support for tenants in difficulty Debt prevention	Prioritising access to social housing Ensuring access to social benefits Ensuring access to healthcare	Revision of accommodation standards Harm reduction Professional integration	Housing First
Detection of risk situations Support for women victims of violence Rapid rehousing programmes	Guaranteeing the right to housing Ensuring access to healthcare Legal support services	Personalised support Harm reduction Professional integration	Housing First
Preventing rental evictions	Ensuring access to healthcare	Development of street work Development of the referral system	Housing First

The documents reviewed vary widely in size and content. Some, such as the **Netherlands'** national action plan on homelessness (*Nationaal Actieplan Dakloosheid*), exclusively targets homelessness, while others, such as **Italy's** national plan of interventions and social services (*Piano nazionale degli interventi e dei servizi sociali*) covers a much wider remit. The documents also vary in their level of prescriptiveness, i.e. a legal text covering the federal coordination of actions for implementation in **Belgium**, a technical document setting the objectives and measures for housing policy in **Ireland** and an official inventory of existing and potential measures to promote inclusion of homeless people in **Romania**. Furthermore, the list includes long-established strategic plans such as **Finland's**, as well as very recent programmes, such as

Germany's. It also emerged through this review that the different Member States do not focus on the same aspects of the problem: the table includes, for example, strategies almost entirely focused on access to housing on the one hand, and programmes built mainly around respecting people's rights and fighting discrimination on the other hand. This general overview does not answer essential questions such as according to which criteria are these homelessness programmes being evaluated? And what conditions must be met to establish a proper strategy? And how should their feasibility and effectiveness be measured? Following on from FEANTSA's³⁴ previous recommendations, the work initiated as part of EPOCH will aim, among other things, to clarify these points and contribute to the solutions³⁵.

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See infographic in this chapter for an overview of the results.

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There are several reasons for the differences between the two collection approaches: sources used, how current the data is, how the results are sorted and organised into alignment with the situations described by ETHOS light, etc.

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A close-up photograph of a baby's face, looking directly at the camera. The baby's hand is near their mouth, with fingers slightly curled. The background is dark, making the baby's face the central focus.

CHAP. 2

**CHILDREN FACING
HOMELESSNESS AND
POOR HOUSING**
A EUROPEAN
REALITY

35

1.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PUT TO THE TEST

Regardless of whether they are living on the streets, in shelters and hotels, or forced to settle in makeshift shelters, slums, or overcrowded housing, many children in Europe lack the basic conditions needed for a dignified life and healthy development. Given the diverse forms of housing exclusion and substandard living conditions these children experience, pinpointing their exact number is difficult. However, existing studies, data, and reports from organisations working on the ground all point to a deep and widespread problem. This wholly unacceptable situation in one of the world's most prosperous regions is doubly harmful to children. Not only do the multiple detrimental effects of homelessness or poor housing conditions affect their current lives, but they may also hinder their future prospects and opportunities. It is undeniable that housing serves as a cornerstone for the development, well-being, and empowerment of young people. Physical and mental health, social and emotional relationships, education, and schooling are all aspects that heavily depend on the existence and quality of a child's home environment.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE NUMBERS

Child poverty in Europe

Child poverty is still a significant issue within the European Union¹. In 2023, nearly one-fifth of the population under the age of 18, amounting to 15.6 million young people, were living below the poverty threshold². In that same year, 4.2 million children under the age of six in Europe were growing up in families experiencing severe hardship. This issue affected both Eastern and Western European countries alike. In **France**, **Italy**, and **Spain**, as well as in **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, over one-fifth of very young children lived in households with extremely low incomes. The data also showed that single-parent families were particularly exposed to poverty³. In 2023, nearly one-third (31.9%) of individuals raising one or more children alone were unable to provide a decent standard of living for their families. In **Slovakia**, **Malta**, **Bulgaria**, **Luxembourg**, and **Spain**, more than two in five single-parent families faced some sort of financial hardship.

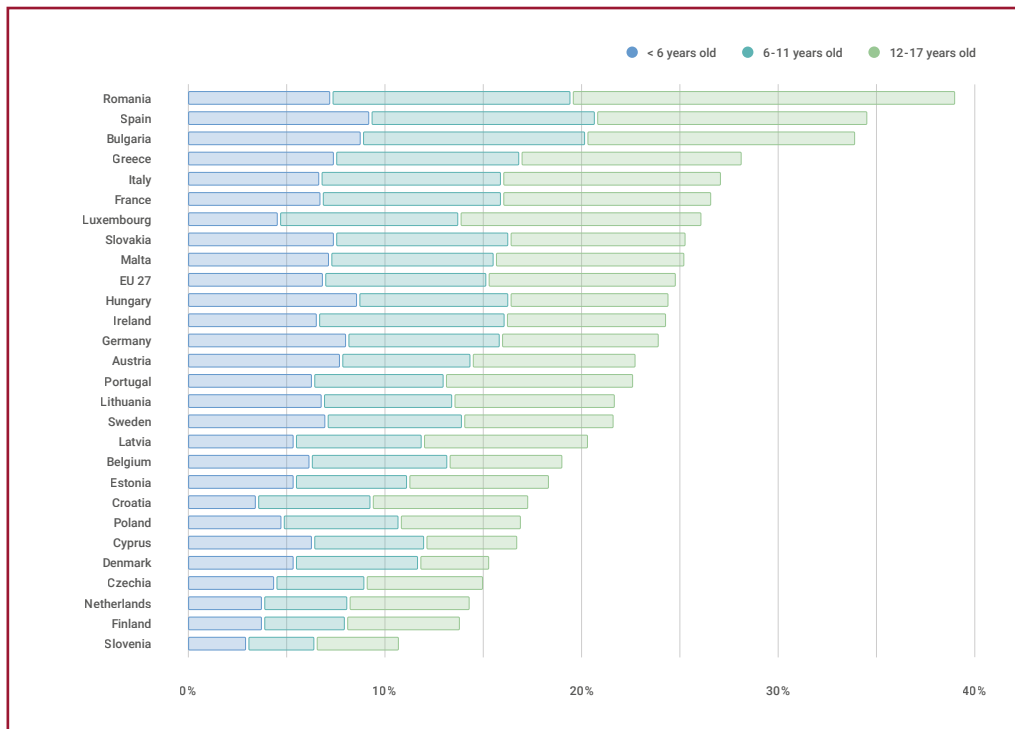
Combining the economic, social, and material dimensions of poverty in one indicator gives us a picture of a particularly alarming situation. In 2023, nearly one in four children in Europe (24.8%) was at risk of poverty, living in a household with low work intensity, or suffering from severe material and social deprivation (*figure 1*). In total, almost 20 million young people under the age of 18 in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Among them, 27.9% were aged under six, 33.4% were between the ages of six and 11, and 38.7% were between the ages of 12 and 17. A strong correlation exists between parents' educa-

tional attainment and children's socio-economic conditions⁴. In 2023, while the risk of poverty or social exclusion affected only 10.7% of children whose parents held a higher education degree, it impacted 61.8% of those whose parents had not completed secondary education.

These average figures across Europe masked significant national disparities. In 2023, the rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion among minors were particularly high in **Bulgaria** (33.9%), **Spain** (34.5%), and **Romania** (39.0%). This contrasts sharply with the much lower rates observed in the **Netherlands** (14.3%), **Finland** (13.8%), and **Slovenia** (10.7%), which were well below the European average. Additionally, the risk did not affect all age groups equally across Member States. In **Romania**, out of the 1.36 million children at risk of socio-economic hardship in 2023, half were between the ages of 12 and 17. Conversely, in **Germany**, **Hungary**, and **Cyprus**, the majority of affected children were aged under six years. In **Denmark**, **Ireland**, and **Belgium**, children between the ages of six to 11 were slightly overrepresented among those at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

CHILDREN FACING HOMELESSNESS AND POOR HOUSING A EUROPEAN REALITY

**FIGURE 1 - MINORS AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION
(2023, IN %)**



Source: Eurostat · [ILC_PEPSOIN](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2023: Croatia · France

The living conditions and opportunities for the development of children in Europe can also be assessed using another composite indicator proposed by Eurostat⁵. This indicator includes 17 items covering various material and social aspects deemed essential (12 pertain specifically to children, while five relate to the households they belong to)⁶. The rate of child-specific material deprivation refers to the proportion of children under the age of 16 who lack access to at least three of these 17 items due to insufficient

financial resources. In 2021, this form of deprivation affected 13.0% of children in the European Union. More than one-third of children lacked adequate access to these essential goods and services in **Greece** (33.9%), **Bulgaria** (36.5%), and **Romania** (42.5%). The particularly high rates observed in these three Member States stand in sharp contrast to those in other countries, such as **Estonia** (3.8%), **Finland** (3.7%), **Sweden** (3.5%), and **Slovenia** (2.9%).

Around 400,000 homeless children in Europe

Although there have been significant advancements in recent years, data on homeless children at both national and local levels remains fragmented and challenging to compare, largely due to differing definitions and perceptions of the target group⁷. Despite these challenges, the range of available figures suggested that the issue is likely substantial and widespread.

In **Germany**, according to the latest count conducted in 2023 by the Federal Statistical Office, 101,505 children were living in accommodation facilities with their families⁸. These minors represented 28% of the total recorded individuals, and were predominantly of foreign nationality (90%), with a significant proportion being Ukrainian refugees. Meanwhile, surveys conducted by GISS & Kantar Public in 2022⁹ estimated that there were 1,121 children living on the streets and 5,575 minors temporarily accommodated by family/friends due to lack of housing. Advocacy groups believe these figures may be an underestimate, especially in light of a study by the Deutsches Jugendinstitut, which found that Germany had at least 7,500 minors sleeping on the streets in 2016¹⁰.

In **Austria**, the latest count of individuals officially registered as homeless by municipalities¹¹ reported 2,067 minors not having a home, which represents 11% of the population recorded in 2022. The data collection method used by Statistik Austria did not provide details on the specific housing exclusion situations of these children. However, it did offer precise information on their geographic distribution with nearly half of the homeless children recorded in 2022 (i.e. 48%) concentrated in Vienna.

In **Belgium**, minors have also been included in counts conducted in various cities and provinces over the years. In 2023, with the support of regional authorities and under the auspices of the King Baudouin Foundation, researchers estimated that there were 5,946 homeless children in Flanders and 4,713 in Wallonia¹². In the Brussels-Capital Region, the most recent count in 2022¹³ identified 977 minors as homeless. This number represented 14% of those recorded, a slight decrease from the previous count of 18% in 2020. In a compilation of all the most recent reliable data, the total number of homeless children in Belgium was estimated to be at least 11,697.

In **France**, data on the number of homeless children is relatively scattered. The most recent national survey conducted by Insee in 2012¹⁴ reported a total of 30,700 homeless children. Although several estimates have been made since then, there was no comprehensive statistical study offering a precise measurement. Nevertheless, it is clear that the problem has worsened as evidenced by figures from the national integrated reception and orientation services (SIAO), which manage accommodation placements¹⁵. On the night of 21 to 22 August 2023, for example, 29,780 children were accommodated in hotels with their families due to a lack of housing solutions. On the same night, 1,990 children could not be referred to accommodation services due to a shortage of available places.

In **Hungary**, children and families experiencing financial hardship and lacking housing solutions are typically placed in temporary shelters managed by child protection services. According to annual data from the country's Central Statistical Office¹⁶, 6,871 children were accommodated in shelters dedicated to families in 2023. Additionally, 783 children were placed in dedicated shelters that year. These numbers showed a slight increase compared to 2022, when 6,714 children were housed in shelters

dedicated to families and 672 in shelters dedicated to children.

In **Ireland**, which has been grappling with a severe housing crisis for several years now, the number of families in emergency accommodation had risen sharply. During the week beginning 25 December 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (DHLGH)¹⁷ recorded 1,916 households, comprising a total of 3,962 children, staying in various hotels and state-supervised facilities. From early 2021 to the end of 2023, the number of families sheltered in these facilities nearly doubled, while the number of children accommodated grew by 70% over the same period.

In **Italy**, of the 96,197 people identified as homeless during the population census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2021¹⁸, 12,804 were under the age of 18, representing 13% of the total. Nearly two out of five of these minors (38%) were of foreign nationality, and almost half were concentrated in the country's three largest cities (44%). Alongside this census, Italy's Federation of Organisations for the Homeless (fio.PSD) conducted a survey among its members in early 2024 to assess the situation. Out of 31 organisations, 16 reported that children were living on the streets in the areas where they operated, mainly in the northern regions. Most of these children, regardless of whether they were unaccompanied or living on the streets with their families, were of foreign nationality and came from non-EU countries.

In **Portugal**, data collected nationwide by the umbrella organisation ENIPSSA in 2022¹⁹ revealed that 15% of the 10,773 homeless individuals identified were under the age of 18 – a proportion that increased by 25% in just one year. While minors accounted for only 4% of those accommodated in shelters dedicated to the homeless, they made up nearly a quarter of those living on the streets or in emergency accommodation. It is worth noting

that in the Alentejo region, children and adolescents comprised 42% of the recorded homeless population.

In the **United Kingdom**, each nation employs its own methods to track the number of children in temporary accommodation. According to the government department overseeing hotel and emergency housing placements²⁰, 71,270 families, including 145,780 children, were receiving support in England at the end of December 2023, i.e. an increase of 9,300 families and 19,460 children from December 2022. Welsh government statistics²¹ showed that on 31 December 2023, 3,077 out of 11,273 people in emergency accommodation were under the age of 16. In Scotland, official data²² revealed that 9,860 children were living in temporary housing as of 30 September 2023, reflecting an 8% rise over the previous year. In Northern Ireland²³, authorities reported 4,556 households and 4,844 children residing in temporary accommodation as of January 2024.

In **Czechia**, a study commissioned by the country's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and conducted by SocioFactor in 2022²⁴ provided two key insights into the number of children facing homelessness. Of the 12,445 individuals temporarily accommodated in hotels or municipal shelters due to a lack of housing solutions, 1,393 were children under the age of 15. The study also found that 7,144 minors were living in unsuitable or unconventional housing (such as non-residential spaces, squats, or mobile homes) representing more than two-fifths (44%) of those forced to live under such conditions.

While these data do not provide a comprehensive account of child homelessness across Europe, they can serve as a basis for estimation²⁵. To calculate this, statistics from point-in-time counts referring to minors in situations described by ETHOS Light categories 1, 2, and 3 have been compiled, i.e. a total of 150,844 children across six countries. This figure is then compared to

the total number of minors in these six countries (35,833,050 according to Eurostat data) to obtain an average rate (0.421%). Applying this percentage to the total population of minors in Europe (94,915,891 children, including the United Kingdom), the estimated number of children who are unsheltered, in emergency accommodation, or residing in shelters for the homeless is approximately 399,561.

400 000

ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF
CHILDREN LIVING ROUGH,
IN NIGHT SHELTERS AND IN
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

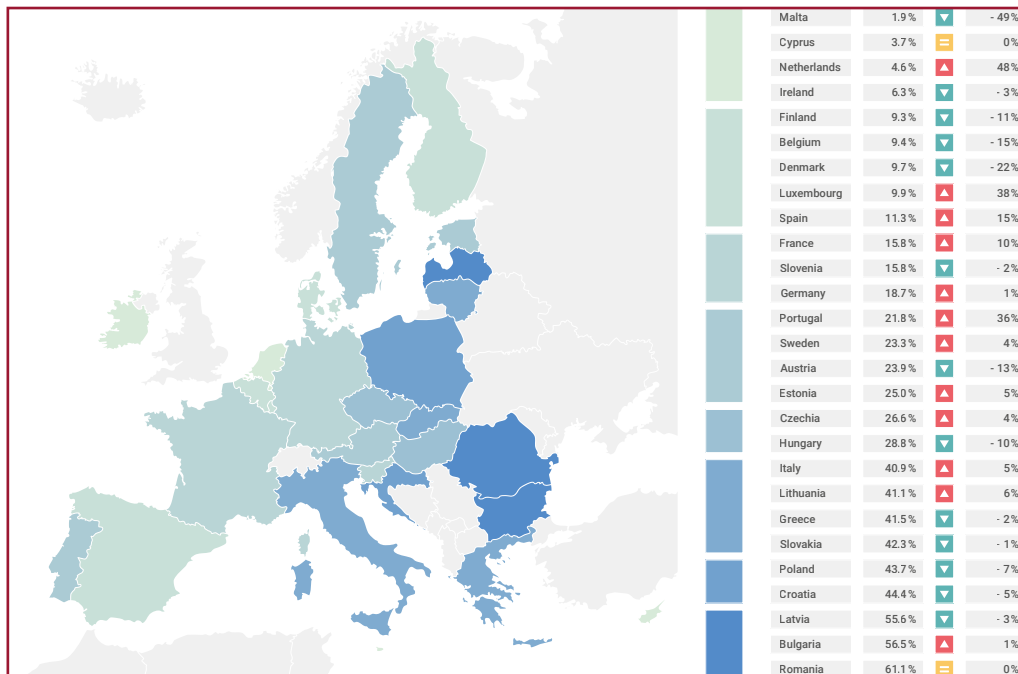
Additionally, the overcrowding rate varies significantly depending on household composition²⁶. In 2023, single-parent families in the EU had an average overcrowding rate of 26.6%, while larger families (two adults with three or more dependent children) saw a rate of 34.8%.

Several million children are victims of poor housing conditions

Overcrowding was undeniably one of the major factors contributing to housing exclusion for children and their families. In 2023, one in four minors in the European Union – and over one in five children under the age of six – were living in overcrowded conditions. Young people are significantly more affected by this issue. By way of comparison, the overcrowding rate for the general population in the same year was 16.8%. Some countries were far more affected than others (*figure 2*). Over half of minors faced these poor housing conditions in **Latvia** (55.6%), **Bulgaria** (56.5%), and **Romania** (61.1%), while less than one in 20 children were affected in **Malta** (1.9%), **Cyprus** (3.7%), and the **Netherlands** (4.6%).

CHILDREN FACING HOMELESSNESS AND POOR HOUSING A EUROPEAN REALITY

**FIGURE 2 - MINORS LIVING IN OVERCROWDED HOUSING
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023, IN %)**



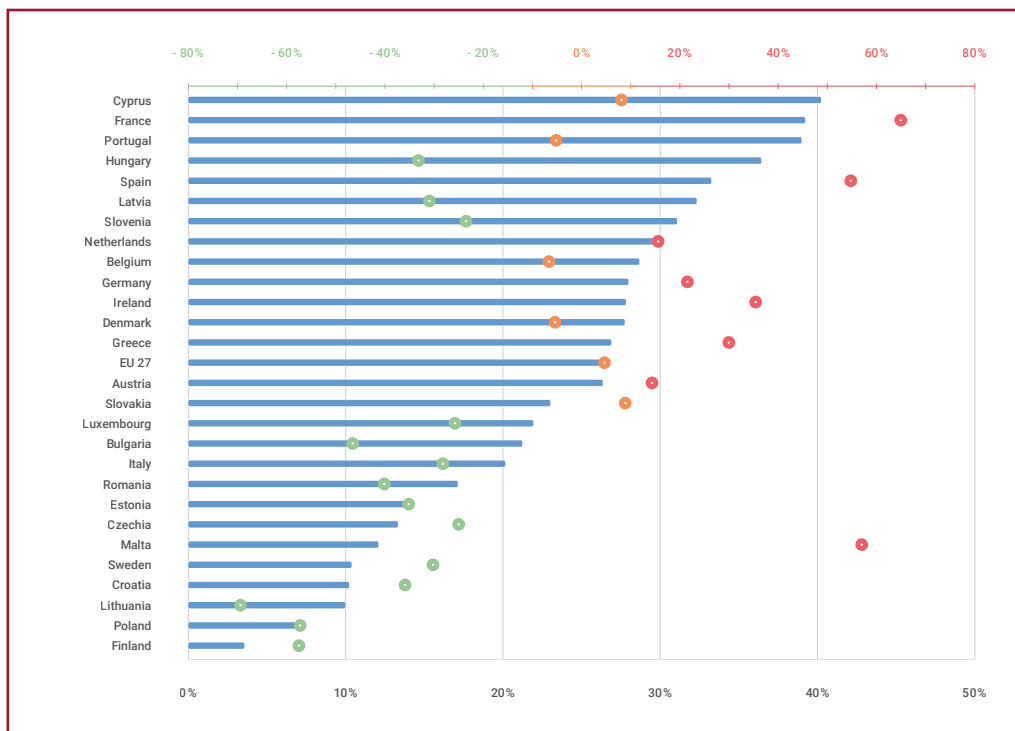
Source: Eurostat · ILC_LYH005A / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2022: France - Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: Poland

In 2023, nearly 14.5 million children in Europe were living in housing with leaks, damp foundations, or mould²⁷. These conditions, often hazardous to the health and development of young children, affected an average of 18.3% of those under the age of six. More than one in five minors were living in such sub-standard environments in **Luxembourg** (20.5%), **Spain** (25.7%), **France** (27.1%), **Cyprus** (30.2%), and **Portugal** (33.0%). Poor families, often unable to afford housing and forced to settle for the most run-down parts of the

housing or rental market, were particularly hard-hit (*figure 3*). In Europe, over a quarter of poor families (26.5%) lived in such deteriorating and potentially unsafe housing in 2023. The situation was revealed to be even worse in **Spain** (33.3%), **Hungary** (36.5%), **Portugal** (39.0%), **France** (39.3%), and **Cyprus** (40.3%). Over the past decade, the share of poor households with children living in these conditions had more than doubled in **Spain** (+54.9%), **Malta** (+57.1%), and **France** (+65.1%).

CHILDREN FACING HOMELESSNESS AND POOR HOUSING A EUROPEAN REALITY

FIGURE 3 - HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY THRESHOLD IN UNFIT HOUSING (2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2013 TO 2023, IN %)



Source: Eurostat · ILC_MDH001 / Last updated: 2024-06-12 / Missing data for 2023 (2020 data used instead); Ireland
Series break in 2013: Germany · France · Ireland · Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: Ireland

Poor housing conditions affecting children can take other forms. In 2023, over five million households with children were financially unable to maintain their homes at an adequate temperature (10.5% of families in Europe)²⁸. That same year, energy poverty affected 23.3% of households with children living below the poverty threshold in the European Union – impacting more than two out of five poor families in **Greece** (40.1%), **Bulgaria** (41.8%), and **Cyprus** (54.7%). Single-

parent families were particularly hard-hit in this regard. On average, 18.9% of single-parent families in the EU could not adequately heat their homes. It comes as no surprise that low-income individuals raising one or more children on their own are even more vulnerable. In eight of the 27 Member States, over a third of these families were forced to turn down the heat, compromising their well-being. In **Romania**, 60.1% had this problem, and in **Cyprus**, the figure reached 74.7%.

3. AN INTERPLAY OF MULTIPLE FACTORS GIVING RISE TO VARIED CIRCUMSTANCES

« There is increasing discrimination in the rental market. When a landlord hears a slight foreign accent over the phone, their decision is already made. It is the same for applicants with low incomes. And when it comes to the number of children, it is even worse than having pets. »²⁹

*Pascale Francotte, social worker,
30 September 2023*

For the most part, children who are homeless or facing housing exclusion are collateral victims of their parents' circumstances. These situations typically arise from a complex web of factors, making it difficult to pinpoint a single explanation. The loss of a home might occur due to relationship difficulties or psycho-social problems that have become overwhelming for a family that is already financially vulnerable. A family's planned move into housing may be derailed by a job loss or the withdrawal of a residence permit. A mother and her children might be evicted because she can no longer afford her bills due to rising costs. Generally, researchers analysing the mechanisms behind homelessness and housing exclusion³⁰ identify three broad categories of causes.

- **Structural factors** refer to the broader socio-economic conditions. The growing income inequality over the long term and the rise in job insecurity, combined with skyrocketing real estate prices and a shortage of affordable housing, create fertile ground for housing exclusion to spread. Racism and discrimination, territorial segregation, and political responses to migration flows – which leave many people in a legal limbo – are also key elements of these

structural factors.

- **Individual factors** encompass the personal and family experiences that shape life trajectories. Chronic illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues, and addictions are challenges that, when compounded by other vulnerabilities, can severely hinder access to housing or the ability to maintain it. Life events and traumas – such as the loss of a loved one, a marital breakup, or family estrangement due to violence – can also lead to or accelerate the loss of a home.
- **Institutional factors** include both failures in public policies and inadequacies in legislative standards. A shortage of support services or shelters; gaps in care; and dysfunctions in coordination, guidance, or allocation can significantly affect the duration and severity of homelessness or housing exclusion for individuals and families. Certain legal measures such as evictions can also be particularly harmful when implemented without either mediation or support.

The situation of unaccompanied foreign minors

In 2023, more than 41,000 asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in EU countries – the second highest number recorded since 2015³¹. The increase in these young people seeking international protection has led to several legislative and policy changes aimed at expediting procedures. However, these changes have been met with criticism from humanitarian organisations, which report signs of a gradual deterioration in reception conditions³². Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor highlights severe shortcomings in accommodation, healthcare, education, and social integration. In **France**, “many are forced to live on the streets, where they are exposed to various risks including sexual exploitation and illegal or hazardous work”³³. In **Greece**, overcrowded shelters have led some minors to abandon these facilities altogether and, in some cases, even sleep outdoors³⁴. Additionally, procedural delays and arbitrary denials of formal recognition of minor status often leave these children without the housing and support they are entitled to. Reports of illegal deprivation of liberty or inhumane detention conditions are also noted, particularly in **Spain, Lithuania, and Poland**³⁵. In **France**, the *Observatoire des expulsions de lieux de vie* (Observatory on evictions from living places) reports that “many UAMs have reported experiencing police violence (including rubber bullet shootings, repeated and unjustified use of tear gas, and racially motivated verbal abuse) during eviction operations conducted by law enforcement”³⁶.

Living rough in France

« The gap between the number of available places and demand is increasingly vast, and we constantly find ourselves highlighting the lack of sustainable and structural solutions: we keep fixing things only to see them unravel. Previously, having a baby automatically made you a priority group. Today, the criteria are becoming stricter, and having a child over one year old or being three months pregnant no longer necessarily qualifies you as a priority. Unfortunately, we are forced to categorise people, which is very harsh and completely disregards the principles of continuity and uncon-

ditional support that we strive to uphold. But we have no choice. And this is just the beginning; these numbers reflect developments over a very short timeframe. With the housing crisis worsening daily, if the government does not provide a more sustainable solution, the challenges will only worsen. »³⁷

Nathalie Latour, director of the Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité, 2 November 2023

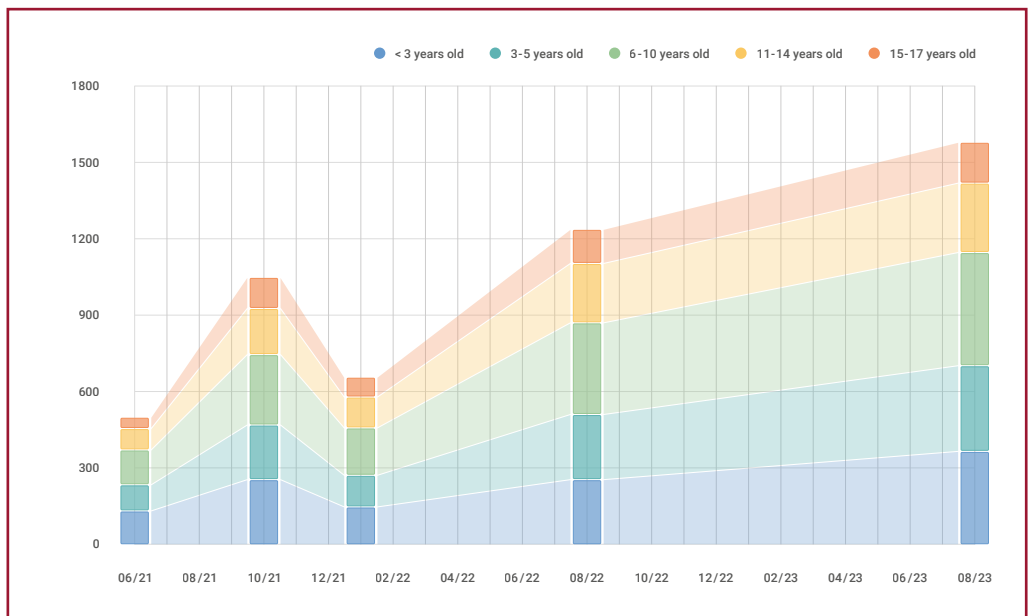
Following the first interministerial committee on childhood held on 21 November 2022³⁸, the French government, through its Prime Minister, announced an ambitious goal of achieving “zero children on the streets” as quickly as possible. One year later, charities were sounding the alarm. Not only has this promise not been fulfilled, but the situation had worsened. According

to data from integrated reception and orientation services (SIAO)³⁹, the number of children forced to spend the night outdoors has increased by 29%. On the night of 21 to 22 August 2023, out of 6,049 people who could not be housed due to a lack of space in suitable accommodation, 1,990 were under 18. More than three-quarters of these minors had slept on the streets the night before their families called 115 (the emergency accommodation number).

« There was a large tent where several families slept at night, sharing mattresses and blankets. We spent four nights like that, and then the children got gastroenteritis – they were really ill. We only ate tacos or whatever was given to us, as we could not cook anything ourselves. »⁴⁰

*Father of a family living on the streets
(beneficiary of Caritas), May 2024*

**FIGURE 4 · FRANCE: CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF MINORS LIVING ROUGH
(FAS & UNICEF · 2021-2023)**



Source : Eurostat · [ILC_LVHC05A](#) / Dernière mise à jour : 2024-06-20 / Rupture de série en 2022 : France · Luxembourg / Rupture de série en 2023 : Pologne

As reflected in the SIAO data analysed by UNICEF and the Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité in their annual reports (*figure 4*), the situation is highly concerning. Between the first and most recent data extractions, conducted

in June 2021 and August 2023 respectively, the number of children who were sleeping outdoors more than tripled (+235%). Of the 1,567 minors recorded as homeless in 2023, a significant proportion were very young children: 699 were

under the age of six (45%), 365 were under the age of three (23%), and 150 were under the age of one (10%). It is important to note that these statistics only account for children whose families requested shelter and were turned away. The actual number of minors on the streets, living in tents or makeshift shelters, was likely much higher. Paradoxically, the government further reduced budgets and the capacity of existing shelters in 2023, a move that is incomprehensible to organisations advocating for a more robust homelessness prevention policy to tackle these urgent challenges⁴¹.

Since January 2023, the Utopia 56 association has been holding nightly support sessions in front of the city hall in Paris to assist families living on the streets. These sessions provide an opportunity to meet with individuals, provide socio-legal support, and, depending on availability, direct them to shelters managed by NGOs or even to volunteers who will host them for a few nights⁴².

Temporarily in a hotel in Ireland

« Our aim is to swiftly transition families out of homelessness in order to lessen the trauma it inflicts on children. We also work to mitigate its impact by supporting children once they are housed, including organising activities outside the shelter or offering help with homework. Some children are anxious about attending school and our social workers are available to accompany them if needed. Although we cannot diagnose conditions, many of the children we encounter display signs of autism. Families are occasionally excluded because of a child's challenging behaviour, which clearly is not in

the child's best interest. Additionally, a notable number of those we assist have a history of domestic violence or mental health issues. »⁴³

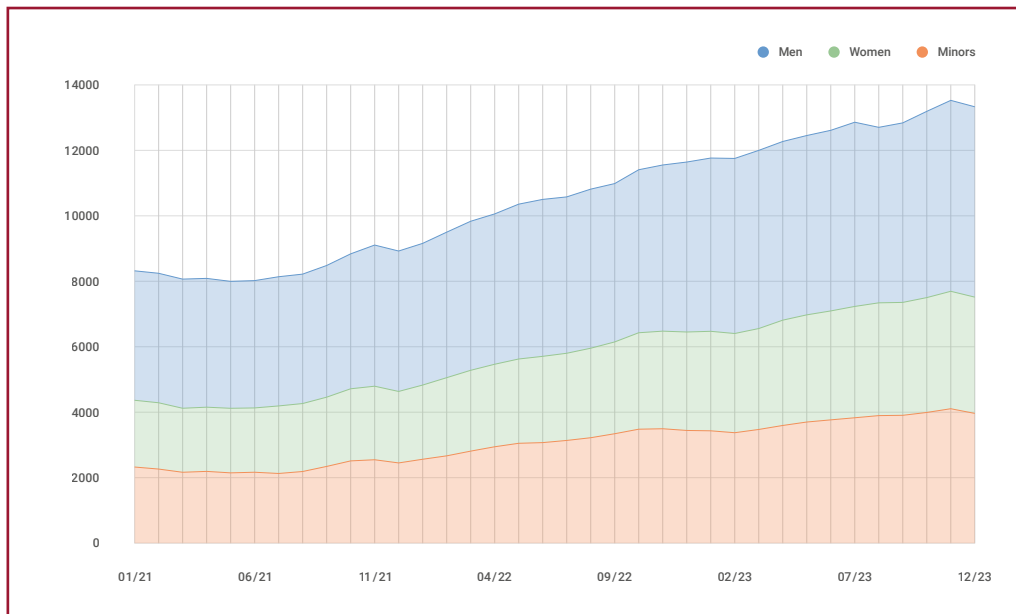
*Hester Rodenhuis,
coordinator of the Focus Ireland Family
Homeless Action Team, 7 May 2024*

Each year, the Children's Rights Alliance publishes a report to assess the implementation of the Irish government's policies on children and young people. The latest review is unequivocal⁴⁴: the number of children in emergency accommodation is at its highest since the first data were collected in 2014. In the six months following the lifting of the eviction moratorium in April 2023, the number of families in emergency housing increased by nearly 10%. In the spring of 2023, the Taoiseach established the Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office to coordinate efforts on child poverty and well-being. Child homelessness was one of the six priorities identified by the government⁴⁵. While organisations welcomed the initiative, they remained cautious nonetheless about its future effectiveness.

« I had to move every day for nearly three months with my four children, including my two-month-old infant. We had to leave the accommodation each morning by 10 am and could not get in until 7.30 pm. I was on the streets all day with my baby while the other children were at school. »⁴⁶

*Mother of a family housed in emergency
accommodation (MLRC beneficiary),
November 2019*

**FIGURE 5 • IRELAND: CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACCOMMODATED BY SEX AND BY AGE
(DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE - 2021-2023)**



Data extracted from the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS) and published monthly by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)⁴⁷ provided a detailed view of the situation. During the week of 25 to 31 December 2023, 1,916 families with a total of 3,962 children were accommodated in state-supervised hotels and other emergency shelters. The Dublin region housed the overwhelming majority of this population (73% of families and 76% of children). Long-term data revealed a dramatic increase in homelessness across the country (*figure 5*). Between January 2021 and December 2023, the number of children and families accommodated grew by 70% and 98% respectively. The proportion of minors in emergency accommodation during this period ranged between 26%

and 31%. Although the Irish government has implemented a strategy targeting young adults aged between 18 and 24 who were homeless, no specific measures were introduced for children in emergency accommodation.

In August 2024, during the inauguration of a family shelter, the Ombudsman for Children, stated that successive governments must take responsibility for what he described as a “traumatic breach” of the rights of children and young people who have grown up in emergency accommodation facilities⁴⁸.

In a shelter in Belgium

« Approximately 80% of the women we host have been victims of violence. The children have either experienced violence themselves or have been witnesses. They struggle to express themselves and have a hard time managing their emotions and anger. A significant number of them also face academic difficulties. While it is important not to generalise, we often see that parents are overwhelmed by these extremely challenging situations. My colleague organises activities that address the issue of violence. Concerning education, once the children arrive here, they receive dedicated support from an educator. Another challenge is the close quarters in the rooms, which can be difficult for the children to handle. Unfortunately, due to the building's design, we cannot change this, and it can lead to tensions between siblings, for example. »⁴⁹

Charlotte Vanraeynest, director of Home Victor Du Pré, 9 April 2024

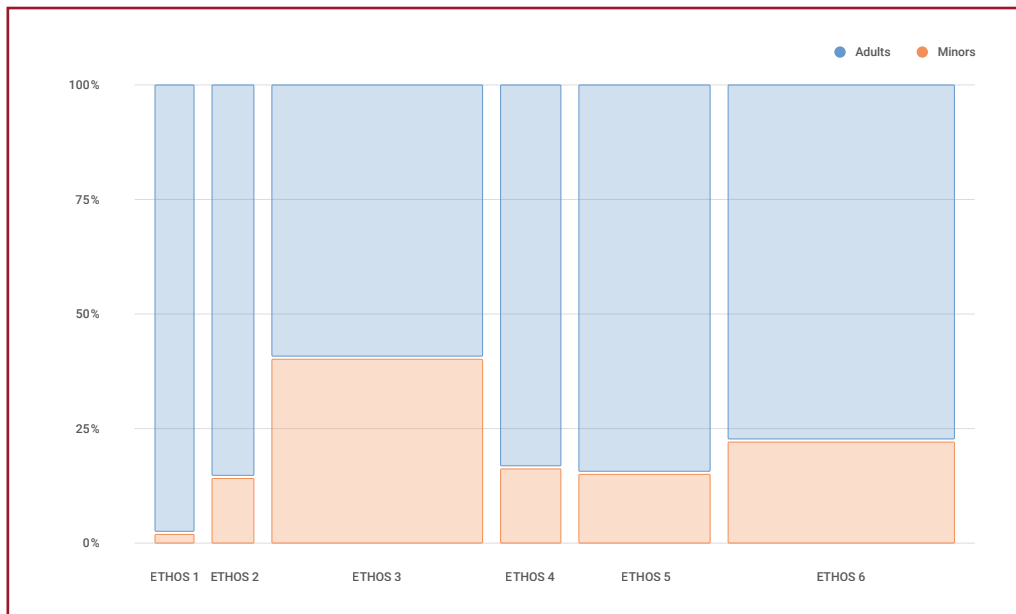
In **Belgium**, the staff working in shelters are unanimous: the number of women with children seeking shelter due to domestic violence is sharply on the increase⁵⁰. Consequently, for teams working in centres dedicated to this group, supporting parenting can be a significant challenge. In addition to the trauma related to violence, these families often face various psycho-social issues. The support work, which aims to ensure the well-being of the children and the autonomy of the mothers, must therefore be approached as a long-term commitment. However, as highlighted by the federations representing these shelters, the duration of stay restrictions imposed by regulations are sometimes inadequate, leading to considerable frustration for frontline workers⁵¹.

« The older one acts as if everything is fine, but deep down, he is not well at all. For the younger ones, it manifests differently, often through a lot of anger and tears. It is psychologically extremely difficult. We feel helpless. We are here to overcome our own struggles, and when we are not doing so well ourselves, it can be hard to manage this on top of everything else. »⁵²

*Mother of a family in a shelter
(Maison d'accueil le 26), December 2023*

CHILDREN FACING HOMELESSNESS AND POOR HOUSING A EUROPEAN REALITY

**FIGURE 6 • BELGIUM: DISTRIBUTION BY AGE ACCORDING TO ETHOS LIGHT CATEGORY
(BRUSS'HELP / FRB & REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS • 2022-2023)**



For a long time, Belgium's federal system made it difficult to quantify homelessness on a national level. However, comprehensive local counts and coordination efforts over the years now provide a clear picture of the situation nationwide⁵³. The existing statistics compiled showed that minors account for 26% of the recorded individuals (11,697 children compared to 34,163 adults). The overwhelming majority of them were either accommodated in shelters or transitional housing or were temporarily housed by family/friends due to a lack of housing solutions (*figure 6*) – children make up over 40% of those in these two situations. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the number of children accommodated in shelters increased from 178 to 275 between 2008 and 2022, representing a 55% rise. In 2022, these children constituted 36% of the population served by shelter and support structures.

In March 2024, the Walloon Parliament passed a series of decrees related to health and social action. Among the provisions, the new legislation included a reform of the support sector for people experiencing homelessness: shelters, in particular, will receive additional resources to support women who are victims of domestic violence as well as to organise subsequent support for families after their initial stay⁵⁴.

4. GROWING UP IN UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS

A threat to physical and mental health

It is now widely accepted that housing is one of the key social determinants of health. In its final report published in 2008, the commission established by the World Health Organization (WHO) to identify these determinants emphasised that “access to quality housing and shelter and clean water and sanitation are human rights and basic needs for healthy living”⁵⁵. Although the impact of homelessness and poor housing on health, particularly children’s health, remains insufficiently addressed, it is now well-documented⁵⁶. Living on the streets, between temporary shelters, or in unsuitable housing can severely impact sleep, nutrition, and hygiene – essential to the critical period of cognitive and emotional development in childhood. For younger children, physical illnesses or mental health issues resulting from these sub-standard living conditions can leave lasting scars that affect their future. These health problems are often exacerbated by the lack of access to care, with homelessness presenting a significant barrier to receiving medical attention⁵⁷.

For children living in slums or squats, basic services such as access to water and waste collection are often lacking. The resulting **poor hygiene** facilitates the spread of infectious diseases (such as whooping cough, measles, and tuberculosis) and the development of potentially severe dermatological and digestive conditions (including severe dermatitis, wound infections, and intestinal parasitosis). In **Bulgaria**, available statistical

studies revealed that Romani communities are particularly vulnerable to epidemics due to the unsanitary conditions in settlements: 89.3% of the 24,047 people infected during the measles outbreak in 2009 were from this community. The high population density and inability to isolate the sick also facilitated the spread of viruses such as hepatitis A⁵⁸. Additionally, the segregation of Romani communities further complicates access to healthcare – half of the Romani population in **Bulgaria** lacks health insurance⁵⁹. In **Czechia**, data showed a higher infant mortality rate among Romani communities, with poor housing conditions identified as a key factor⁶⁰. In **France**, neonatal mortality (aged under one month) and infant mortality (aged under one year) among communities living in slums are nine times and five times higher, respectively, than the national average⁶¹.

Poor housing conditions can also directly impact children’s **nutrition**. Due to financial constraints and the impossibility of cooking, many families staying in emergency shelters or hotels are forced to skip meals and/or consume lower-quality food. In France, the 2013 ENFAMS (children and families without private housing) survey conducted in the Paris region found that “nearly eight out of ten families and two out of three children” had experienced hunger⁶². The study also revealed that nearly half of the families had suffered from anaemia due to nutritional deficiencies: 50.3% of mothers and 37.7% of children⁶³.

Sub-standard living conditions are the cause of many health issues. In the United Kingdom, research based on the National Child Mortality Database⁶⁴ revealed that temporary housing conditions were among the factors contributing

to the unexpected deaths of 55 children between April 2019 and March 2023 – 42 of whom were under one year old⁶⁵. Factors cited include faulty heaters, leaks, and inadequate thermal insulation. Repeated exposure to damp conditions can also lead to respiratory problems such as asthma or persistent cough⁶⁶. For example, a two-year-old child in the **United Kingdom** died on 21 December 2020, from severe lung disease caused by mould in their home⁶⁷. Additionally, lead in old paint is a particularly dangerous source of poisoning, potentially leading to growth delays, behavioural disorders, or kidney disease⁶⁸.

Overcrowding which is common in hotels, emergency shelters, or when staying with family/friends, increases the likelihood of contracting infectious diseases. Children living in overcrowded conditions are ten times more likely to develop meningitis, a potentially life-threatening illness that can lead to complications such as hearing loss or blindness⁶⁹. Additionally, the close quarters and accompanying noise directly affect the quality of children's sleep, sometimes causing headaches, irritability, and disordered appetites⁷⁰. Disrupted sleep can further impair growth, hinder nervous system maturation, and affect memory development⁷¹.

According to a study conducted in France, children experiencing **energy poverty** were more likely to suffer from colds and sore throats (83.8% compared to 59.3% of children not exposed), exhibit more wheezing (29.8% compared to 7.1%), and develop migraines more frequently (35.0% compared to 16.9%)⁷². Additionally, challenges in maintaining an adequate temperature often compel households to rely on unsuitable or malfunctioning space heaters, raising the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning for children⁷³. In **Bulgaria**, due to a lack of funds to buy firewood, people living in slums often burn a variety of materials, some of which are toxic. Besides the health risks, these fires frequently cause acci-

dents, such as the one in February 2006 that resulted in the death of an infant⁷⁴.

Moreover, the risks associated with homelessness or poor housing can sometimes endanger the **physical safety**, or even the lives of children. According to Shelter, a charity advocating for tenant rights in the **United Kingdom**, "almost half of all childhood accidents are associated with physical conditions in the home. Families living in properties that are in bad condition are more likely to experience a domestic fire"⁷⁵. In **France**, on 14 February 2022, 13-year-old Aissé tragically died in a fire at a public housing apartment in Val-d'Oise⁷⁶. The fire was caused by a faulty electrical surge in one of the apartments, which lacked a fire safety system.

Mental health – defined by the WHO as "a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"⁷⁷ – can be significantly impacted when someone's living environment fails to provide protection. Several studies indicate that the prevalence of mental health disorders is particularly high among homeless children. According to the ENFAMS survey conducted in France in 2013, 19.2% of children in temporary housing facilities suffer from mental health issues, compared to 8.0% of children in the general population⁷⁸. Various factors can influence children's psychological development. Sleep disorders, common in overcrowded housing, particularly affect learning and emotional regulation. The lack of stimulation, such as limited space for play and movement, can also lead to developmental delays⁷⁹. Environmental toxins play a role as well. Lead exposure is linked to impaired intellectual development and reading deficits, while mercury exposure can cause sensory-motor and cognitive disorders, impacting memory, visual attention, and coordination⁸⁰.

More broadly, sub-standard living conditions and instability are significant factors leading to stress, **anxiety and depression for children**. According to a report by Shelter in the **United Kingdom** published in 2006, children who had lived in temporary accommodations for more than a year were three times more likely to suffer from anxiety and depressive disorders⁸¹. In **France**, a 2018 study identified stress factors reported by children living in hotels. These included material conditions (such as lack of space, dilapidation, or unsanitary conditions), regulatory constraints (such as bans on making noise or receiving visitors), and the instability of their situation (frequent relocations, changing schools, uncertainty about the duration of their stay, and fear of sleeping in an unsuitable place)⁸². These children are particularly exposed to the stress of parental problems, not only because they experience deprivation daily but also because the lack of space means they are constantly exposed to adult conversations⁸³.

All these conditions are even more dangerous because homeless children and young people often face **significant barriers when it comes to accessing healthcare**. According to a report published by the European Commission in this regard⁸⁴, despite having greater physical and mental health needs, these minors face various practical challenges, such as a lack of financial resources when services are not free, the requirement to provide proof of address or identification, and difficulties in scheduling or confirming appointments. They also encounter institutional barriers, including the inability to meet certain timing obligations, long waiting periods, and a lack of continuity in their care. Additionally, they are often subject to stigmatising attitudes, with insufficient attention to their specific needs, as well as suspicion and judgement from some service providers.

Inadequate accommodation for children's needs

In Dublin, the accommodation provided by authorities for the homeless are generally unsuitable for children with disabilities or specific health needs. Some families are relocated to housing far from their original neighbourhoods, effectively cutting them off from the medical services they had fought hard to access. "It's just hard, it's so, so hard... if I don't get put back on northside accommodation my kids are going to lose their services, and I have to re-start on this side", said one mother who has five children with various physical and mental health issues (including kidney problems, chronic laryngitis, growth delays, and behavioural disorders). It took years to get these conditions diagnosed, and now the children's ongoing care is at risk⁸⁵.

A compromised family and social life

« Teenagers can struggle significantly with their self-image. They often hesitate to reveal that they live in a shelter, feeling stigmatised because they do not have access to the same opportunities as others. »⁸⁶

*Kathleen Vander Auwera,
coordinator of L'Arbre à Bulles, 4 April 2024*

The family generally serves as the basic social unit that allows children to grow and develop: “as the primary instance of socialisation, it shapes the child’s emotional and relational experiences and thus greatly contributes to the development of their psychosocial skills, essential to their well-being”⁸⁷. However, the uncertainty and instability associated with a lack of housing, as well as the overcrowding and insecurity linked to sub-standard living conditions, can profoundly affect family relationships and cohesion. Frequent relocations, constant changes in routines and familiar surroundings prevent the establishment of a daily routine; lack of space, rest, and privacy foster tensions and conflicts within the family. Overwhelmed by worry, frustration, and stress related to their situation, parents may be unable to provide the necessary attention to their children. As a result, attachment is often less secure for children and adolescents who are homeless or facing poor housing. “Family roles can also be disrupted by the high level of responsibility placed on children”⁸⁸. Several studies show that homeless minors are more likely to protect and care for their parents, assuming responsibilities disproportionate to their age⁸⁹.

Inadequate housing or housing exclusion can sometimes directly result in family breakdowns. Without suitable housing solutions that accommodate diverse family structures or when forced

to leave an increasingly expensive home, family members may be left with no option but to separate⁹⁰. Additionally, there are cases where parents are denied joint custody because they lack the necessary space or comfort to accommodate their children⁹¹. In **Hungary**, a study by the Utcárol Lakásba association reveals that housing problems are among the main reasons for intervention by child protection services. Between 2008 and 2013, some 881 children were placed in care due to sub-standard housing conditions, and 127 due to their parents being homeless⁹². More broadly, housing issues can impair or worsen the parent-child relationship. In France, a 2002 Senate report emphasised that the prevalence of sub-standard, unsanitary, or overly cramped housing, coupled with a lack of suitable accommodation, hampers parents’ ability to raise their children effectively. Consequently, parents are often forced to send their children outside for reasons of convenience or safety, resulting in a lack of parental supervision⁹³.

In overcrowded housing or accommodation, children are often deprived of privacy and forced to live constantly under the scrutiny of others. According to a UNICEF survey in **Germany**, minors housed in refugee centres suffered acutely from this lack of privacy, particularly due to toilets that do not lock⁹⁴. A 2023 study conducted in the **United Kingdom** found that 313,244 children had been forced to share their beds with other family members⁹⁵. The research also indicated that one in six children was living in cramped conditions with no personal space. Without a “place of their own”, it is difficult for children to find the peace needed for sleeping, playing, and dreaming, and impossible for teenagers to create their own space and gain independence⁹⁶. “The lack of space, discomfort, and unsanitary conditions are ongoing daily constraints that children internalise. For these children, the social world becomes a place of material constraints that limit their potential”⁹⁷. More generally, housing

exclusion impedes children's social interactions, particularly because it limits their ability to invite peers into their homes. It also leads to shame, embarrassment, or fear of mockery when discussing their situation⁹⁸.

Impact on access to school, learning, and academic achievement

« School is even more important for these children because it is their only way out. These are children who are exhausted, who fall asleep in class, and therefore do not have the same opportunities as others. »⁹⁹

Fanny Talbot, teacher, 30 August 2022

School serves as both a place for knowledge transmission and one of the primary spaces for socialisation. For homeless and poorly housed

children, it can also become a "safe haven", offering a temporary escape from the rigours of daily life¹⁰⁰. However, the school system, in that it often exposes and perpetuates social inequalities, can also be a source of insecurity for these young people who are already facing stigma. Although school relationships are vital for homeless children and teenagers, they can easily be weakened by various material and symbolic barriers: not being able to afford school meals, wearing different clothes to their peers, or missing out on school trips that cost money¹⁰¹. The social exclusion these students experience is so significant that teachers frequently need to adjust their practices. According to Shelter, a **United Kingdom**-based charity, 49% of teachers work in schools that educate at least one child living in a hotel or temporary accommodation funded by local authorities¹⁰². Various socio-pedagogical tools have been developed by organisations to help teachers identify these students, address their specific needs, and provide support to their families¹⁰³.

Réseau d'Aide aux Élèves Sans Toit

In August 2023, at least 400 children were living on the streets in the Lyon metropolitan area¹⁰⁴. In response to this situation, the *Réseau d'Aide aux Élèves sans Toit* association¹⁰⁵ has been actively working for several years to provide support to homeless families. Teachers and parents, who are evidently in a key position to identify the issues affecting these children, have been working to raise awareness among public authorities and striving to find housing solutions. Families are often temporarily sheltered in schools and gymnasiums, with nearly sixty establishments serving as temporary refuges since 2014. Similar collectives have emerged in major cities across France to advocate for the rights of homeless children.

The school experience of homeless children is partly shaped by their life outside the classroom. A social psychology study¹⁰⁶ conducted in **France** demonstrated the impact of socioecono-

mic conditions on how often and for how long preschool children speak in class. According to the researchers, while affluent parents encourage their children to express their individual-

lity and stand out, parents facing economic hardship tend to advise their children to avoid drawing attention to themselves. "Because of limited resources and the unpredictability of their living conditions, they don't encourage them to believe they can have an impact on the world. Instead, they teach them to adapt and follow the rules *because life is hard and you just have to live with it*"¹⁰⁷.

« When he was at college, he was the best in his class. He learned French in three months. But now it's really complicated for him. »¹⁰⁸

*Santi, single mother facing homelessness,
10 January 2024*

Poor housing conditions also have a significant impact on students' learning and academic performance. Chronic exposure to noise, for example, affects reading skills, long-term memory, and attention span. Additionally, the length of time spent in sub-standard living conditions has a notable effect on school results¹⁰⁹. An econometric analysis conducted in France in 2016 specifically found that, "all other things being equal, a student living in overcrowded housing is 1.5 times more likely to struggle academically than a student in adequate housing", and that "noise exposure increases the likelihood of academic delay by 1.4"¹¹⁰. The instability that characterises the lives of homeless children also has serious consequences on the continuity of their education. It is well established that frequent relocations negatively affect reading and maths performance, and over time, increase the risk of dropping out¹¹¹.

Although education is a fundamental right, homeless children face numerous barriers to schooling. Issues such as the lack of a permanent address can complicate school registrations¹¹², and frequent changes of accommodation and

evictions disrupt the continuity of their education¹¹³. In **France**, among the 7,000 children living in squats and informal settlements in 2023, 70% had either never attended school or had dropped out¹¹⁴. Since 2020, school mediation programmes led by the French Interministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing (DIHAL) helped to double the number of these children enrolled in school (3,577 minors enrolled in 2022-2023, compared to 1,431 in 2019-2020)¹¹⁵. In **Romania**, the segregation of Roma children remains a persistent issue. Although the government acknowledged the gravity of the situation in 2004 and banned this practice through an ordinance in 2007, many public schools continue to perpetuate this form of discrimination. Children living in informal settlements, ignored in local urban planning, often lack access to nearby schools or end up in segregated educational institutions. Between 1998 and 2016, the proportion of such segregated schools increased significantly¹¹⁶.

5. ENDING HOMELESSNESS AND POOR HOUSING FOR CHILDREN

The essence of the foundational texts: ensuring decent housing for children

The right to housing for all is enshrined in several major international texts. These declarations and treaties, which consistently link housing to other essential needs, establish from the outset the idea that this right should be guaranteed to both individuals and families – a recognition dating back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Article 25 explicitly states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one’s family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services”¹¹⁷. Building on this foundational declaration, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted on 20 November 1959 outlines a set of needs and protections specific to children. Among these rights, which “every child shall be entitled to without any exception whatsoever [...] and without distinction or discrimination”¹¹⁸, is the right to housing: “a child has the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate nutrition, housing, leisure, and medical care”¹¹⁹.

Since these foundational texts are not legally binding on states, the international community has progressively worked to develop a series of obligations derived from these principles. This lengthy process culminated on 16 December 1966, with the adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights. Article 11.1 of this treaty recognises “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing”¹²⁰, and commits signatories to take appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary, and judicial measures to fully realise the proclaimed rights. This commitment was reiterated ten years later with the adoption of the Vancouver Declaration at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements¹²¹. The declaration reaffirms the fundamental nature of the right to housing and¹²² the obligation of governments to ensure this right by all necessary means for “vulnerable groups which have special needs – such as children, the elderly, the handicapped, and the disabled”¹²³.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted on 20 November 1989, by the United Nations General Assembly, expands upon the provisions outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As the most widely ratified treaty in history, this convention also completes the 1959 Declaration by definitively recognising the child as a fully-fledged legal subject. Comprising 54 articles and three optional protocols, the text outlines not only the civil, economic, political, social, and cultural rights that children are entitled to but also the obligations that governments must fulfil. While not central to the Convention, the right to housing is explicitly mentioned in Article 27.3: “states parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing”¹²⁴.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the United Nations body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 1966 Covenant by its signatories. It meets regularly for working sessions to review the progress reports of Member States. After its sixth session, held in 1991, the Committee issued a general comment on the right to housing to provide clearer guidance on its application. This comment clarifies the terms of Article 11.1 of the Covenant, stating that “individuals as well as families, are entitled to adequate housing regardless of age, economic status, group or other affiliation or status and other such factors”¹²⁵. The document further defines what is meant by the “right to adequate housing”, emphasising that it cannot be reduced to merely “having a roof over one’s head”. Instead, it should be understood as “the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity”. The Committee outlines several factors that must be taken into account, including security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, and accessibility¹²⁶.

There is indeed an international consensus on the need to guarantee children’s right to housing, but the various existing texts lack the binding mechanisms necessary for their effective implementation. Across Europe, despite the expressed intention to develop a strategy to combat child poverty and homelessness, the measures in place remain insufficient.

Insufficient EU provisions

The principles of the Council of Europe regarding the protection of children are outlined in the European Social Charter, dated 18 October 1961. The Charter stipulates that “children and young

persons have the right to a special protection against the physical and moral hazards to which they are exposed”¹²⁷ and that all appropriate measures must be taken by the contracting parties to ensure the effective realisation of this right. Article 16 of the Charter further states that these parties “undertake to promote the economic, legal and social protection of family life by such means as social and family benefits, fiscal arrangements, provision of family housing, benefits for the newly married, and other appropriate means”¹²⁸. The revised version of the Charter, which came into force on 3 May 1996, explicitly asserts that “everyone has the right to housing”¹²⁹. According to Article 31 of this new treaty, Member States are required “to promote access to housing of an adequate standard; to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination; and to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources”¹³⁰.

The European Union has also incorporated international principles into Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which states that “children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being”¹³¹. Moreover, Article 7 provides for respect for his or her private and family life¹³². Although the Charter of Fundamental Rights was integrated into the EU’s functioning treaties with the signing of the Lisbon Treaty, its implementation remains highly complex.

Adopted on 17 November 2017, by the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission, the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirms a set of rights outlined in the treaties. Although the document lacks coercive power, it aims primarily to revitalise a social Europe by setting a framework for national policies on equal opportunities, employment, social protection, and inclusion¹³³. Principle 11 of the Pillar specifically states that “children have the right

to protection against poverty”, emphasising that “children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities”¹³⁴. Meanwhile, Principle 19, which addresses homelessness and poor housing, urges Member States to fulfil three commitments: “access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need; vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction; and adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless to promote their social inclusion”¹³⁵.

Following the action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights presented by the Commission on 4 March 2021, Member States unanimously approved a recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. While this text is non-binding and specifically targets children at risk of poverty, it encourages each government to identify and catalogue “homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative, especially institutional, care; and children in precarious family situations”¹³⁶. Additionally, the recommendation reaffirms the necessity for these children to have unconditional access to “free healthcare, free education, affordable early childhood education and care, decent housing, and adequate nutrition”¹³⁷. It stresses that this guarantee is a crucial mechanism “to combat social exclusion among children and minimise the risk of homelessness”¹³⁸.

Recognising the limitations of the European Child Guarantee, Ursula von der Leyen has proposed an increase in funding as part of the political guidelines for the next European Commission¹³⁹. It is hoped that Member States will also take more proactive measures to address these challenges.

More widespread measures

Addressing homelessness and poor housing where children are concerned requires significant structural changes, such as raising wages and social transfers, regulating the housing market and capping rents, increasing the supply of affordable housing for families, and expanding and renovating social housing. Additionally, a variety of measures that have already been tried and tested across Europe could be scaled up to address the immediate needs of homeless children.

- **Identifying** situations of housing exclusion among children is crucial for ensuring immediate and appropriate support. Such identification should be conducted by all services that may come into contact with parents and in all places frequented by children, especially in schools. In **France**, the Réseau d'Aide aux Elèves sans Toit guide has developed a guide for teachers and parents of students¹⁴⁰ to better address the needs of families with school-aged children. This guide covers the identification of families without a permanent address, paying close attention to specific behaviour in children, and directing families to the appropriate social and administrative services. Additionally, preventive and intervention methods in schools have also been tested in the **United Kingdom**¹⁴¹.
- Public authorities should prioritise **preventive measures** to thwart evictions and loss of housing. Adapting and enforcing eviction moratoriums, expanding debt mediation services, conducting rapid interventions in cases of rent arrears, and providing immediate housing for families by temporarily covering their rent are all strategies that can help break the detrimental cycle of insecurity, which has severe consequences for children.

- The **adaptation of shelter and temporary accommodation facilities** and **engagement** with both children and parents must be central to addressing the needs of households in difficulty. Standards for shelters and accommodation centres need to be adjusted to meet children's specific needs, particularly regarding space, so they can live in a peaceful environment and grow up with dignity. Children should not be placed in centres designed for adults, and families must be able to stay together. While mothers and children are rarely separated, fathers are still too often forced to seek alternatives when space is limited. Furthermore, homeless children and parents should be consulted in the development of school plans⁴².
- Addressing the needs of children and families experiencing housing exclusion requires **integrated services** with providers that are trained to support these individuals. In **Finland**, the national strategy, which combines financial assistance with the widespread implementation of Housing First programmes, has significantly reduced the number of homeless families in the long term.
- The healthy development and well-being of children also require **affordable housing** situated in **suitable surroundings**. On one hand, high housing costs deprive families of many of the requirements that are essential for children's well-being, such as holidays, access to leisure activities, and cultural experiences. On the other hand, homes must be safe, located near public transport, and within the vicinity of green spaces. Like the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), urban planning must take into account children's needs and priorities in order to create more inclusive housing, spaces, and cities. Ensuring suitable housing and environments also involves improving buildings' energy efficiency and implementing local solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change.

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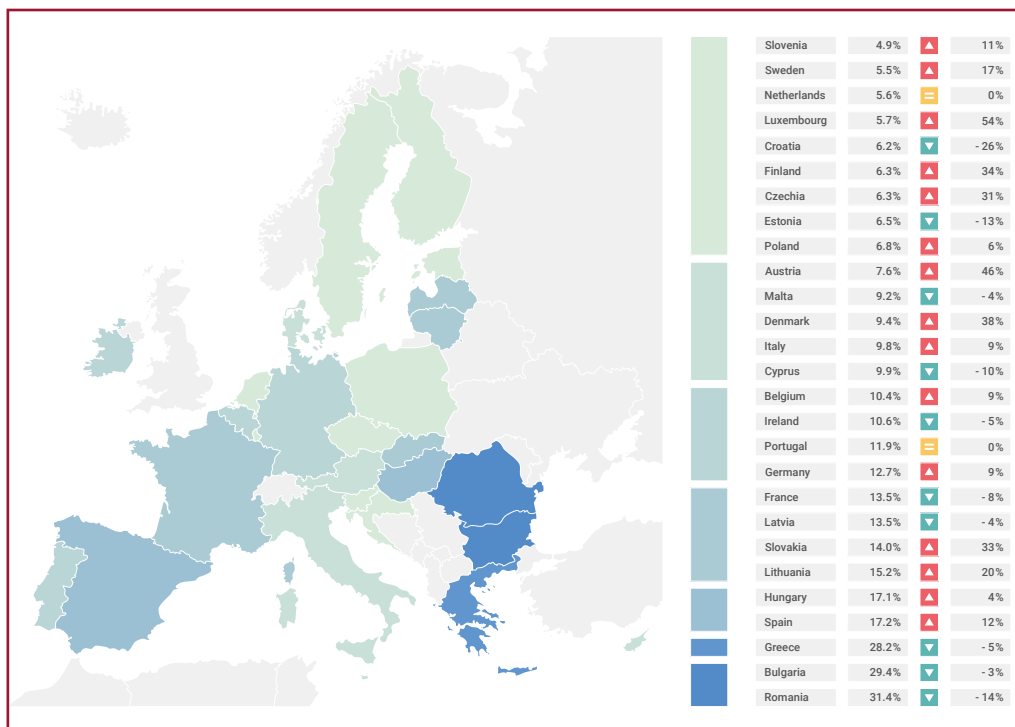
Most of the data discussed in this chapter are based on Eurostat statistics, in particular the latest edition of EU-SILC (the European Union statistics on income and living conditions)¹. This survey examines the state of households in 2023², a year in which European inflation remained remarkably high despite a slowdown since the October 2022 peak. Throughout 2023, the European Union's annual rate of inflation continued to gradually stabilise, falling from 10% in January to 2.6% in December. As in 2022, there was significant variation in the rate across Member States. In August 2023, while the annual rate of inflation was 5.9% on average across the EU as a whole³, **Czechia** and **Hungary** had rates of 10.1% and 14.2% respectively. That same month, inflation remained below 2.3% in **Denmark** and below 2.4% in **Belgium** and **Spain**. Furthermore, all goods and services were not affected to the same extent: the rise in inflation was largely due to the drastic increase in the price of food, alcohol, and tobacco (+9.7% on average in the euro area in August 2023)⁴. This surge in inflation was mainly due to the economic turmoil caused by the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022. Nonetheless, the fact that it is persisting with such intensity warrants further exploration. Some have pointed to the effects of record corporate profits since the beginning of the conflict. An International Monetary Fund⁵ report demonstrated that 45% of euro area inflation in the period from Q1 2022 to Q3 2023 was a direct result of the increase in corporate profits.

1. THE POVERTY OUTLOOK

Poverty rates remained stagnant in the European Union. In 2023, almost 71.9 million people, i.e. 16.2% of the population⁶, were living below the poverty threshold (on less than 60% of the median equivalised income after social transfers). In the same period, more than one in five Europeans (21.4%) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁷. The number of people at risk has decreased only slightly on average since 2020 (-0.9%) and the number affected increased in 12 countries between 2022 and 2023, most notably in **Slovakia** (+6.7%), **Hungary** (+7.1%), and **Luxembourg** (+10.3%). The highest rates in 2023 were recorded in **Greece** (26.1%), **Spain** (26.5%), **Bulgaria** (30.0%), and **Romania** (32.0%). It should also be noted that the risk of falling into poverty or housing exclusion was higher for women than for men (22.4% compared to 20.3% on average in the EU).

While the European population at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell slightly over the last number of years, the number of people living in social and material deprivation, i.e. unable to cover certain expenses deemed necessary to maintain an acceptable standard of living⁸, increased slightly (+3.1% between 2020 and 2023). In 2023, more than 58.6 million people (13.1%) were living in social and material deprivation across the EU. The rates observed were especially high in **Greece** (28.2%), **Bulgaria** (29.4%), **Romania** (31.4%) and were lowest in **Luxembourg** (5.7%), the **Netherlands** (5.6%), **Sweden** (5.5%) and **Slovenia** (4.9%). Over the course of a year, the proportion of the population affected rose in at least 15 Member States. The most noteworthy hikes were in **Denmark** (+38.2%), **Austria** (+46.2%), and **Luxembourg** (+54.1%).

FIGURE 1
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MATERIAL AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023, IN %)



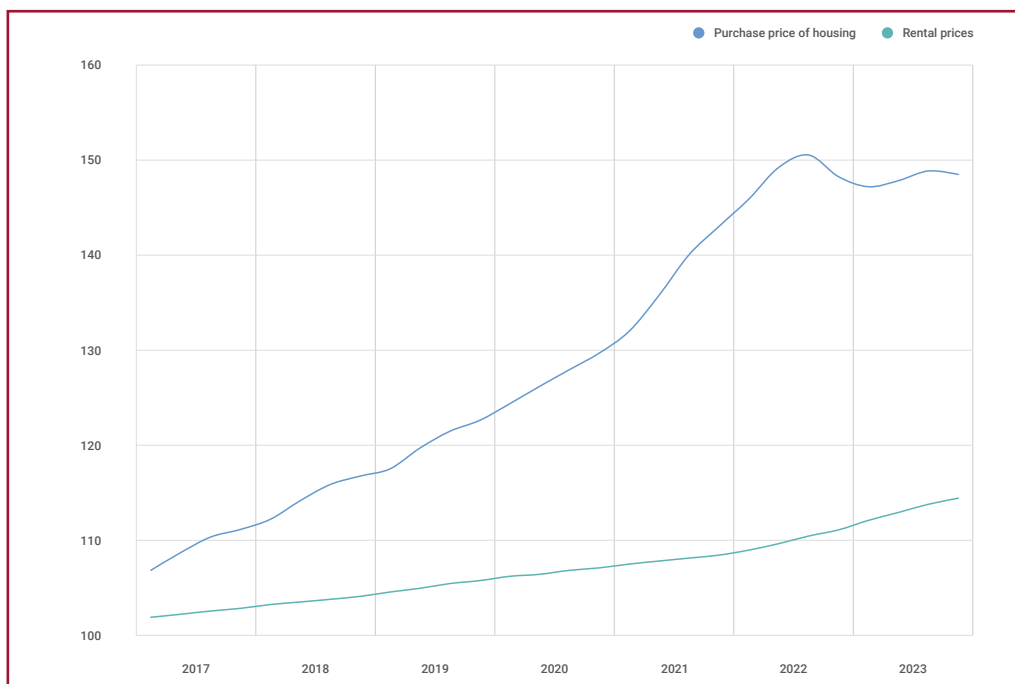
Source : Eurostat · ILC_MDS07 / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2022: France · Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: France

According to a study carried out by Ipsos and Secours Populaire in June 2023, of 10,000 Europeans surveyed across 10 countries (**Germany, France, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom, and Serbia**), three in ten were living in difficult financial and material conditions⁹. Almost half of those surveyed (48%) felt they were at risk of falling into poverty in the short term. Additionally, one in three working individuals surveyed reported that their income did not cover their living expenses. The overwhelming majority (80%) also reported having faced complicated choices caused by

their difficult financial situation. For example, 62% had to cut down on travel and 46% had to turn down the heating to limit the cost of their bills. Even worse, almost one third (30%) of Europeans surveyed had skipped meals and more than one third (37%) stated that they had skipped medical treatment due to lack of funds or financial worries. While inflation was slightly less alarming than in 2022, according to this survey it remains a worry for many households. A significant 62% of respondents expressed doubt about their ability to cover the increased price of food.

2. PRICE AND QUALITY OF HOUSING IN THE EU

FIGURE 2
HOUSE PRICE TRENDS
(EU 27, INDEX: 2015 = 100, AVERAGE ANNUAL INDEX)



Source: Eurostat · [PRC_HPI_Q](#) / [PRC_HICP_MIDX](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-05 / 2024-07-02

Both house prices and rental prices increased significantly in the European Union over the long term (48.5% and 14.6% respectively since 2015). Regarding property prices, there was a clear surge in the property price index between Q1 2021 and Q3 2022 (+14.0%), followed by a period of stabilisation up to the end of 2023 (+0.2%). This curve partially tracks the overall inflation trend. By comparison, the rent price index continued its upward trajectory at a regular pace (+0.1% per month on average between January 2017 and December 2023).

In 2023, the average annual index of residential property prices in the EU-27 rose to 148.1 (2015 = 100, average annual index). While at European level this index remained stable on average between 2022 and 2023 (-0.3%), the respite must be viewed relative to the dramatic increase in prices since 2020 (+16.6%). Over the last three years, all Member States with the exception of **Finland** (-0.2%), saw an increase in this index. During this period, property prices climbed by more than half in **Lithuania** (+51.7%) and in **Hungary** (+52.5%).

TABLE 1
**RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY PRICE INDEX (2015 = 100, AVERAGE ANNUAL INDEX)
AND CHANGE FROM 2020 TO 2023 (IN %)**

		2020 - 2023
Hungary	272.4	52.5
Lithuania	214.2	51.7
Czechia	211.7	37.6
Portugal	205.8	33.3
Estonia	197.7	48.9
Latvia	190.9	31.0
Bulgaria	186.7	35.8
Slovenia	186.2	37.3
Netherlands	183.3	27.2
Croatia	179.9	38.0
Poland	179.8	32.8
Slovakia	175.1	20.7
Luxembourg	171.5	13.5
Ireland	169.0	25.3
Austria	163.7	20.8
Malta	153.4	19.1
Germany	149.2	7.6
Romania	148.4	15.6
EU 27	148.1	16.6
Spain	147.7	15.8
Denmark	137.1	12.1
Belgium	136.1	15.2
Sweden	131.9	8.0
France	131.3	12.6
Cyprus	110.3	2.1
Italy	108.3	7.9
Finland	105.4	-0.2

Source: Eurostat - [PRC_HPLA](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-05 / Missing data: Greece

The average annual index of rents in Europe reached 113.3 in 2023, i.e. an increase of 6.3% in three years. With the exception of **Greece** (-2.1%), increases in rental prices were observed in every Member State since 2015, the reference year. Increases were as high as 60.4% in **Slovenia**,

66.5% in **Hungary**, and 68.2% in **Lithuania**. It is worth noting that between 2020 and 2023, all EU countries experienced an increase in rents. **Lithuania** (+30.0%), **Poland** (+32.3%), and **Slovenia** (+38.5%) saw some of the biggest increases.

TABLE 2
RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PRICE INDEX (2015 = 100, AVERAGE ANNUAL INDEX)
AND CHANGE FROM 2020 TO 2023 (IN %)

		2020 - 2023
Lithuania	168.2	30.0
Hungary	166.5	28.1
Slovenia	160.4	38.5
Estonia	159.0	27.0
Poland	158.4	32.3
Ireland	157.7	21.2
Malta	138.3	19.7
Austria	132.4	10.9
Czechia	131.0	15.1
Romania	130.2	18.2
Bulgaria	128.4	17.2
Portugal	121.1	9.3
Belgium	119.7	11.9
Croatia	119.4	10.2
Cyprus	119.4	9.7
Netherlands	118.5	6.3
Finland	114.3	3.9
Slovakia	113.9	10.6
Sweden	113.8	6.7
EU 27	113.3	6.3
Germany	113.1	5.1
Latvia	112.7	7.6
Denmark	112.7	6.2
Luxembourg	111.1	4.9
Spain	108.6	4.0
Italy	105.1	3.6
France	104.8	3.7
Greece	97.9	6.3

Source: Eurostat · [PRC_HICP_AIND](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-17

In addition to these price observations, some Eurostat data offered partial insights into the quality of housing in Europe. Two indicators in particular enabled the most pressing aspects to be explored, namely the percentage of people

living in overcrowded housing and the percentage living in unfit housing. When looked at alongside the purchase and rental price hikes, the long-term trends of these two measures provided another angle for analysis.

TABLE 3
PEOPLE LIVING IN OVERCROWDED ACCOMMODATION
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2013 TO 2023, IN %)

			TOTAL POPULATION	
	2023	2013 - 2023	2023	2013 - 2023
Romania	50.9	-21.0	40.0	-20.9
Slovakia	48.6	-12.7	30.5	-23.4
Latvia	46.6	-2.7	40.9	8.5
Bulgaria	45.5	-14.2	34.9	-21.0
Sweden	40.8	5.4	16.4	26.2
Poland	40.3	-34.9	33.9	-24.3
Greece	39.6	-5.7	26.9	-1.5
Austria	38.7	23.6	14.5	-1.4
Czechia	38.4	-10.1	15.9	-24.3
Italy	36.3	-12.9	25.4	-6.3
Hungary	31.8	-52.4	15.6	-64.5
Croatia	31.4	-32.9	31.3	-26.9
EU 27	29.6	-7.5	16.8	-8.2
Portugal	27.7	40.6	12.9	13.2
Lithuania	27.2	-23.2	26.0	-7.1
Germany	26.8	59.5	11.4	70.1
Finland	26.7	17.1	8.8	27.5
France	24.9	19.1	9.9	33.8
Denmark	23.7	-11.9	8.7	10.1
Estonia	22.6	-9.2	17.0	-19.4
Belgium	18.1	115.5	5.7	185.0
Slovenia	17.4	-31.0	10.3	-34.0
Luxembourg	17.0	-17.5	7.4	19.4
Spain	14.5	31.8	7.6	46.2
Netherlands	11.5	-16.7	3.7	42.3
Ireland	9.3	111.4	3.9	39.3
Cyprus	5.0	2.0	2.2	-8.3
Malta	3.1	-53.7	2.4	-46.7

Source: Eurostat · [ILC_LVH005A](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2013: Lithuania / Series break in 2023: Poland

Overall, overcrowding rates across the EU was on the decline. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of households forced to live in cramped conditions decreased by 8.2%, and by 7.5% for poor households. In some countries, the problem improved significantly, like **Hungary** (-64.5%), **Malta** (-46.7%), and **Slovenia** (-34.0%). One in six (16.6%) Europeans were living in overcrowded

accommodation in 2023, and almost one in three people living below the poverty threshold. In six Member States, overcrowding rates exceeded 30%. Furthermore, when it came to poor households, the rate exceeded 30% in 12 Member States. In **Romania**, a little over half of all poor households were living in overcrowded conditions.

Overcrowding affects renters more than home-owners. In 2023, while overcrowding affected 16.4% of non-mortgaged home-owners and 8.2% of mortgaged home-owners, 24.6% of renters on the private market and 24.4% of renters in subsi-

dised housing were affected¹⁰. More than six in ten renters on the private market were living in overcrowded housing in **Slovakia** (60.8%), **Poland** (64.4%), **Bulgaria** (65.4%), and **Latvia** (68.0%).

TABLE 4

PEOPLE LIVING IN UNFIT HOUSING
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2013 TO 2023, IN %)

			TOTAL POPULATION	
	2023	2013 - 2023	2023	2013 - 2023
Portugal	38.4	-4.2	29.0	-9.1
Cyprus	36.9	5.1	31.6	1.6
France	33.7	50.4	21.1	64.8
Spain	31.8	46.5	23.0	37.7
Hungary	29.8	-42.7	12.6	-52.8
Slovenia	29.3	-26.0	18.5	-31.5
Ireland	27.7	46.6	16.3	14.0
Latvia	27.3	-38.1	18.8	-32.1
Netherlands	24.5	5.6	14.9	-4.5
EU 27	23.5	-2.9	15.5	-0.6
Greece	22.7	9.1	13.5	-3.6
Luxembourg	21.9	-19.5	18.0	17.6
Belgium	21.8	-19.6	14.5	-19.9
Denmark	21.8	-5.6	15.0	-9.6
Italy	21.5	-28.6	17.1	-25.3
Germany	20.3	5.2	16.0	22.1
Austria	18.7	-3.1	10.5	-16.0
Slovakia	18.3	-7.1	5.8	-22.7
Romania	18.1	-37.4	7.5	-53.7
Bulgaria	18.0	-43.8	8.4	-34.9
Estonia	14.5	-42.2	10.5	-40.0
Lithuania	13.2	-61.3	8.6	-56.8
Croatia	12.1	-43.7	5.6	-57.3
Czechia	11.7	-39.1	8.5	-15.0
Malta	10.4	-5.5	7.2	-38.5
Sweden	8.7	-26.3	4.8	-37.7
Poland	8.6	-53.3	5.7	-43.6
Finland	4.8	-31.4	5.3	1.9

Source: Eurostat · [ILC_MDH001](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-12 / Data missing in 2023 (data replaced by 2020 data): Ireland / Series break in 2013: Portugal
Series break in 2020: Ireland

The number of Europeans living in damp housing with leaks or mould improved only very slightly over the last ten years (-0.6% between 2013 and 2023). It is worth noting a relative fall in the number of poor households experiencing damp housing in the same period (-2.9%). However, this EU average hides drastic increases in some Member States such as **Spain** (+46.5%), **Ireland** (+46.6%), and **France** (+50.4%). In 2023, 15.5% of the overall EU population (23.5% of those living below the poverty threshold) were living in unfit housing. More than 20% of households were affected in **Spain**, **Portugal** and Cyprus. Over 30% of poor households were affected in **Spain**, **France**, **Cyprus**, and **Portugal**.

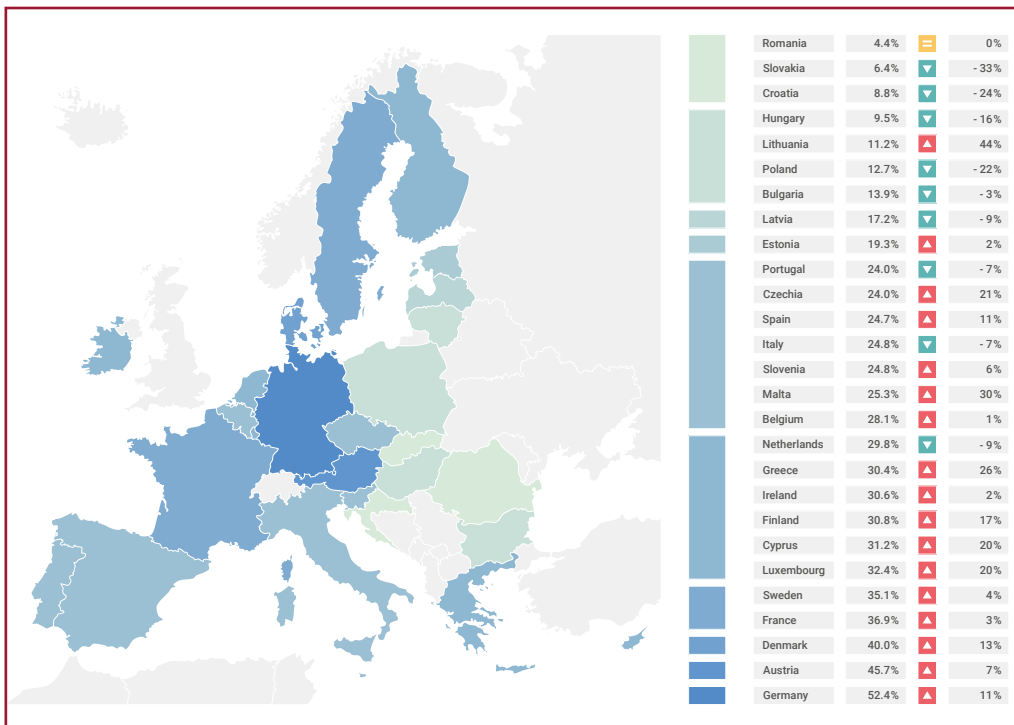
The recent rise in the number of people living in unfit housing sharply contrasts with the minimal changes observed over the long term. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of households living in unfit housing increased by 22.0% on average across the EU while the rate of poor households affected climbed 18.7%. At national level, some of the hikes recorded were particularly alarming; for example, the number of people affected increased by 56.5% in **Spain** and by 83.5% in **France**.

3. TENURE STATUS OF THE POPULATION

The majority of Europeans were home-owners. On average, just three in ten were renting their home in 2023 (30.8%). Nonetheless, there were significant differences between Member States in this respect. While home-owners represented the vast majority in **Hungary** (90.5%), **Croatia** (91.2%), **Slovakia** (93.6%), and **Romania** (95.6%), while in **Austria** and **Germany** respectively 45.7% and 52.4% of the population were tenants. Across the EU on average, the distribution of the population by tenure status did not change significantly over time; Europeans paying rent increased by 5.1% between 2013 and 2023. Within this average however, some statistics deserve a mention, such as the number of people paying rent in **Czechia** (+20.6%), **Greece** (+25.6%), **Malta** (+29.7%), and **Lithuania** (+43.6%).

Unsurprisingly, among those living below the poverty threshold, renting was much more common. In 2023, on average half of European households were living below the poverty threshold were tenants (49.2%). At least seven in ten poor people were tenants in **Denmark** (70.0%), **Austria** (75.1%), and **Germany** (75.3%). By contrast, the vast majority of people on low incomes in **Slovakia**, **Croatia**, and **Romania** owned their homes (84.5%, 89.4%, and 94.1%) respectively. While the number of poor people paying rent increased only slightly across the EU on average since 2013 (+1.9%), some national-level trends were noteworthy, particularly in **Malta** (+28.8%), **Romania** (+37.2%), and **Czechia** (+38.2%).

FIGURE 3
PEOPLE RENTING THEIR HOME
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2013 TO 2023, IN %)



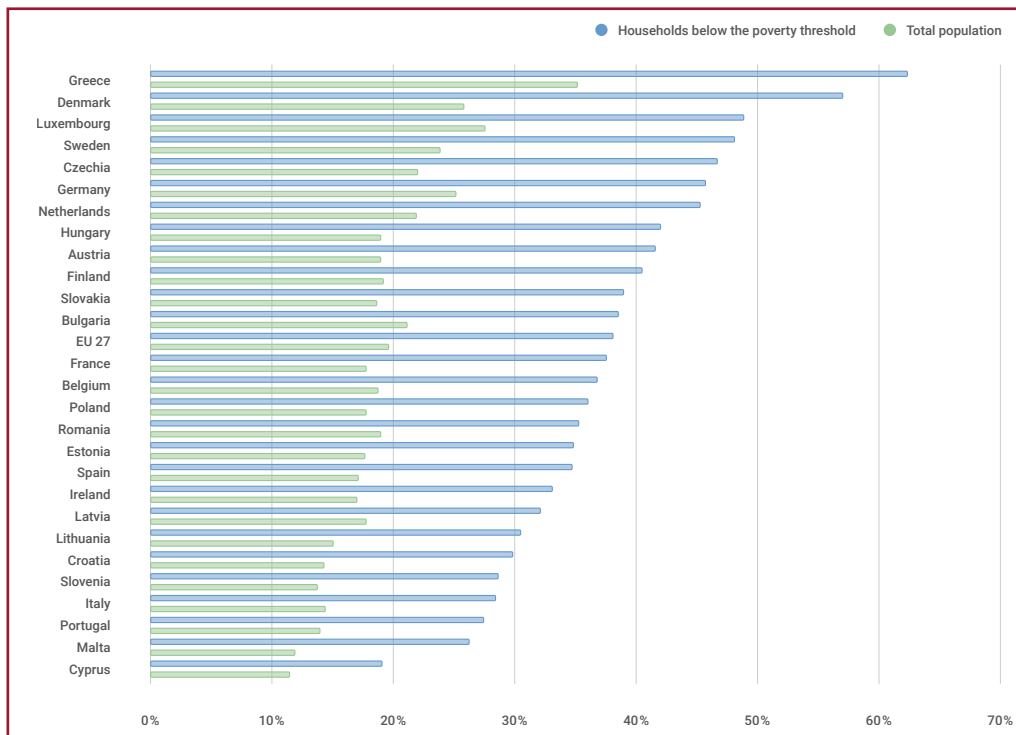
Source: Eurostat · [ILC_IVHQ02](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-20

4. INEQUALITY IN HOUSING COSTS

In 2023, housing costs as a proportion of households' disposable income was 19.7% on average across the EU. It should be noted that following a decrease of 11.5% in the period from 2013 to 2019, it increased from 2020 (+6.5%). For households living below the poverty threshold, this figure reached 38.2% in 2023. More than half of the budget of poor households was spent on housing

in **Denmark** (57.0%) and in **Greece** (62.4%). The proportion of income spent on housing was also particularly high for poor households in **Finland** (40.5%), **Austria** (41.6%), **Hungary** (42.1%), the **Netherlands** (45.3%), **Germany** (45.8%), **Czechia** (46.7%), **Sweden** (48.1%), and **Luxembourg** (48.9%).

FIGURE 4
SHARE OF HOUSING COSTS AS A PROPORTION OF DISPOSABLE HOUSEHOLD INCOME
(2023, IN %)



Source: Eurostat · [ILC_MDED01](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-09

The proportion of the EU population overburdened by housing costs¹¹ increased from 8.7% in 2022 to 8.9% in 2023 (+2.3%). Among young people aged 18-24 years, the percentage rose to 11.2% in

2023, an increase of 2.8% on 2022 figures. The proportion of young people facing these difficulties was 20.5% in **Sweden**, 25.3% in **Luxembourg**, 33.7% in **Greece**, and 35.4% in **Denmark**.

TABLE 5**PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE OVERBURDENED BY HOUSING COSTS
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023, IN %)**

			TOTAL POPULATION	
	2023	2022 - 2023	2023	2022 - 2023
Denmark	35.4	-7.1	15.4	4.8
Greece	33.7	14.2	28.5	6.7
Luxembourg	25.3	224.4	22.7	49.3
Sweden	20.5	21.3	10.9	19.8
Germany	18.4	8.9	13.0	9.2
Netherlands	17.9	-6.8	9.5	-5.0
Finland	15.0	-8.0	5.5	1.9
Estonia	14.3	47.4	7.6	55.1
Bulgaria	11.9	-16.8	11.1	-26.5
Romania	11.6	-0.9	9.1	7.1
EU 27	11.2	2.8	8.9	2.3
Czechia	10.4	42.5	9.1	31.9
Hungary	9.6	71.4	8.7	7.4
France	8.6	-11.3	6.5	0.0
Latvia	7.2	67.4	7.2	33.3
Austria	7.1	-24.5	6.0	-18.9
Poland	7.0	20.7	5.9	5.4
Malta	6.7	294.1	6.0	106.9
Lithuania	6.3	142.3	5.2	48.6
Spain	6.2	-26.2	8.2	-10.9
Belgium	5.2	-22.4	7.7	0.0
Slovakia	5.1	96.2	5.9	136.0
Portugal	5.0	19.0	4.9	-2.0
Italy	4.3	16.2	5.7	-13.6
Ireland	3.7	23.3	4.7	27.0
Slovenia	2.4	-29.4	3.7	-9.8
Croatia	2.2	0.0	4.0	5.3
Cyprus	1.9	5.6	2.6	4.0

Source: Eurostat · [ILC_LVHO07A](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-09 / Series break in 2022: France · Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: Germany · Malta

Foreign nationals were also more exposed than those born in a country to being overburdened by housing costs (19.2% compared to 8.3% in the EU in 2023). While the number of people from third countries facing this problem decreased

slightly on average since 2022 (-4.0%), the levels observed remain remarkably high for this section of the public in several EU countries, such as **Spain** (29.0%), the **Netherlands** (33.0%), and **Greece** (40.4%).

TABLE 6

**PROPORTION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS (EU-27 AND OUTSIDE EU-27)
OVERBURDENED BY HOUSING COSTS (2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023, IN %)**

	FOREIGN NATIONALS		NATIONALS	
	2023	2022 - 2023	2023	2022 - 2023
Greece	40.4	2.5	27.6	8.7
Netherlands	33.0	23.1	9.7	-11.0
Spain	29.0	-24.5	5.2	-8.8
Denmark	28.6	21.7	16.3	-0.6
Portugal	28.1	-11.1	3.9	-9.3
Czechia	26.8	87.4	8.7	29.9
Luxembourg	25.6	41.4	17.9	43.2
Bulgaria	22.4	-4.7	11.1	-27.5
Lithuania	21.9	114.7	4.9	36.1
Sweden	21.9	4.3	11.1	20.7
Italy	20.6	-14.9	4.7	-13.0
Slovakia	20.2	551.6	5.7	137.5
EU 27	19.2	-4.0	8.3	2.5
Belgium	17.3	-0.6	7.4	-1.3
Malta	16.4	-13.2	1.8	-10.0
Germany	15.7	9.8	12.9	6.6
Croatia	14.9	246.5	4.4	7.3
Ireland	14.9	35.5	3.0	15.4
Estonia	14.8	146.7	7.3	43.1
France	14.1	-5.4	6.4	0.0
Austria	13.6	-6.2	4.5	-25.0
Slovenia	13.4	7.2	3.4	-17.1
Poland	13.0	5.7	6.2	5.1
Hungary	11.8	122.6	7.9	-4.8
Latvia	11.3	17.7	7.1	34.0
Finland	11.2	60.0	5.9	-4.8
Cyprus	10.8	12.5	1.5	0.0

Source: Eurostat · ILC_IVHO25 / Last updated: 2024-07-09 / Missing data: Romania / Series break in 2023: Germany · Malta

Having a disability also appears to be a factor, though to a lesser extent, in the likelihood of experiencing these financial difficulties. In 2023, 11.1% of people with a physical disability were

overburdened by housing costs (compared to 8.3% of the population without a disability). In **Denmark** and **Greece**, the percentages stood at 21.0% and 31.5% respectively.

TABLE 7**PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY OVERBURDENED BY HOUSING COSTS (2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023, IN %)**

			NO DISABILITY	
	2023	2022 - 2023	2023	2022 - 2023
Greece	31.5	10.9	27.2	7.9
Denmark	21.0	1.0	14.5	2.1
Sweden	18.2	5.8	10.6	21.8
Luxembourg	17.6	17.3	18.2	32.8
Germany	16.2	7.3	11.8	3.5
Bulgaria	15.3	-36.8	10.7	-24.6
Belgium	14.3	3.6	6.5	-1.5
Netherlands	13.9	-13.1	9.0	0.0
Czechia	13.0	21.5	7.8	36.8
EU 27	11.1	4.7	8.3	3.8
Romania	10.7	4.9	8.5	1.2
Hungary	9.8	-14.8	7.5	-2.6
Estonia	9.4	32.4	7.7	60.4
Latvia	9.1	21.3	5.8	28.9
Poland	8.9	6.0	5.6	0.0
Austria	8.0	-5.9	5.4	-25.0
France	8.0	-4.8	5.8	-1.7
Croatia	7.8	6.8	3.0	11.1
Spain	7.5	-15.7	7.7	-9.4
Finland	7.1	1.4	5.5	-6.8
Lithuania	6.4	28.0	4.7	38.2
Malta	6.4	88.2	5.5	111.5
Italy	6.3	-11.3	5.8	-13.4
Slovenia	5.5	10.0	3.3	-23.3
Slovakia	5.4	80.0	5.9	168.2
Ireland	4.3	30.3	4.4	25.7
Portugal	4.3	-15.7	4.5	-4.3
Cyprus	3.2	18.5	2.7	3.8

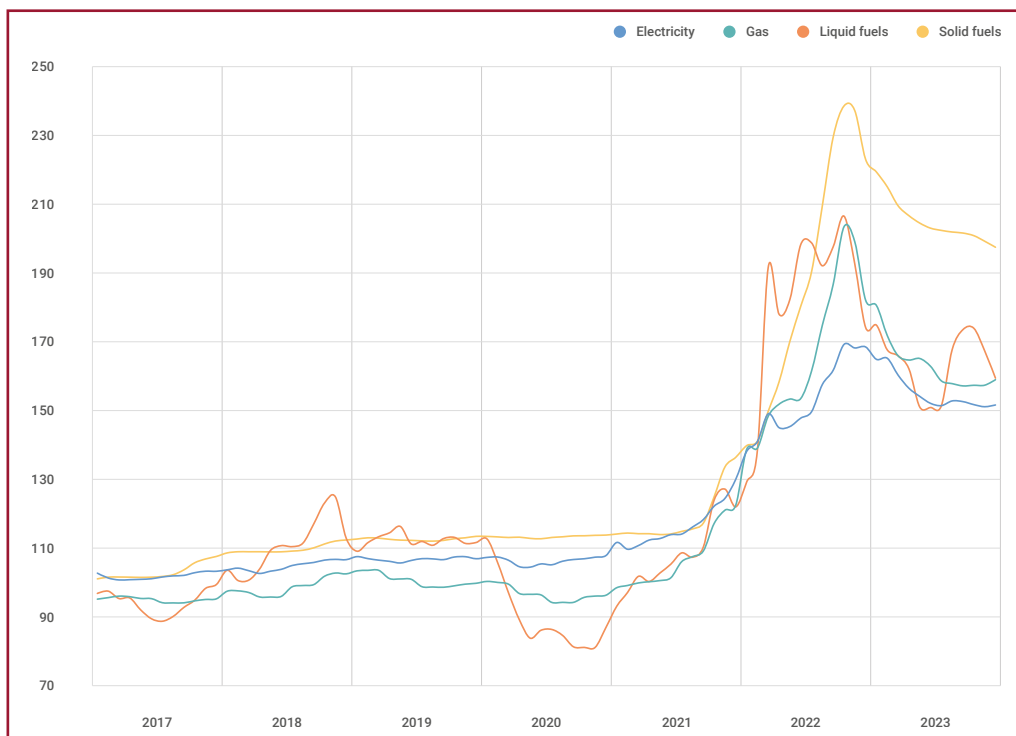
Source: Eurostat · HLTH_DHC06Q / Last updated: 2024-07-09 / Series break in 2022: France · Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: Croatia

5. POVERTY DUE TO SURGE IN ENERGY PRICES

The energy crisis that hit Europe due to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022 would appear to have gradually dissipated. Between December 2022 and December 2023, the index price of electricity, gas, and other fuels fell by 8.4% on average. This reduction should nonetheless be viewed relative to the price increases

over the three years up to and including 2023. The average monthly index (2015 = 100, average annual index) rose from 105.4 in January 2021 to 158.1 in December 2023, a hike of 50.0%. The price of electricity and gas increased by 35.8% and 61.3% respectively, and liquid and solid fuels by 71.2% and 73.0% respectively.

FIGURE 5
CHANGE IN PRICES OF ELECTRICITY, GAS, AND OTHER FUELS
(EU 27, 2015 = 100, AVERAGE ANNUAL INDEX)



Source: Eurostat · [PRC_HICP_AIND](#) / Last updated: 2024-07-02

This energy inflation affected Member States to varying degrees. In 2023, while the average annual index was 161.7 for the EU as a whole, it was 195.7 for **Italy**, 196.5 for **Czechia**, 198.0 for

Ireland, and 244.5 for **Estonia**. Furthermore, several countries saw significant hikes between 2022 and 2023, especially **Austria** (+18.2%), **Poland** (+19.4%), and **Czechia** (+39.4%).

TABLE 8**ANNUAL PRICE INDEX FOR ELECTRICITY, GAS, AND OTHER FUELS (2015 = 100)
AND CHANGE FROM 2022 TO 2023 (IN %)**

		2022 - 2023
Estonia	244.5	8.8
Ireland	198.0	15.1
Czechia	196.5	39.4
Italy	195.7	-5.0
Latvia	184.7	13.5
Lithuania	183.0	2.5
Romania	181.8	7.5
Austria	178.7	18.2
Poland	175.9	19.4
Cyprus	169.0	5.1
Netherlands	166.4	-37.0
Germany	163.1	11.3
France	162.5	9.0
EU 27	161.7	1.4
Finland	160.1	4.0
Bulgaria	148.1	4.0
Hungary	146.8	12.1
Slovenia	145.8	8.2
Belgium	144.5	-36.2
Sweden	143.3	-13.2
Luxembourg	142.6	-3.7
Greece	131.7	-17.0
Denmark	129.9	-15.2
Slovakia	129.3	11.4
Croatia	117.8	3.3
Portugal	113.4	-7.9
Spain	105.3	-27.4
Malta	99.4	0.0

Source: Eurostat · [PRC_HICP_AIND](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-18

Due to this surge in prices and the resulting effect on household budgets, a significant number of Europeans were struggling to maintain adequate temperatures in their homes. One household in ten (and more than one poor household in five) experienced this form of energy poverty in 2023. Since 2020, the number of people affected increased by 41.3% on average across the EU. The number affected increased by more than

half over this period in **Estonia** (+51.9%), **Hungary** (+71.4%), **France** (+80.6%) and **Spain** (+90.8%), and it more than doubled in **Ireland** (+100.0%), **Sweden** (+118.5%), **Denmark** (+130.0%), **Austria** (+160.0%), **Czechia** (+177.3%), and the **Netherlands** (+187.5%). In 2023, at least one fifth of households in **Lithuania** (20.0%), **Bulgaria** (20.7%), **Portugal** (20.8%), and **Spain** (20.8%) struggled financially to adequately heat or cool their home.

TABLE 9
INABILITY TO KEEP HOME ADEQUATELY WARM
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2020 TO 2023, IN %)

	POOR HOUSEHOLDS		TOTAL POPULATION	
	2023	2020 - 2023	2023	2020 - 2023
Cyprus	43.6	4.8	16.9	-19.1
Bulgaria	40.4	-17.9	20.7	-24.7
Greece	39.8	1.5	19.2	12.3
Portugal	37.3	10.4	20.8	18.9
Lithuania	35.1	4.5	20.0	-13.4
Spain	34.3	53.8	20.8	90.8
Slovakia	29.8	55.2	8.1	42.1
France	25.1	35.7	12.1	80.6
Romania	25.1	7.3	12.5	25.0
Netherlands	22.3	153.4	6.9	187.5
EU 27	22.2	22.7	10.6	41.3
Italy	21.6	25.6	9.5	14.5
Hungary	19.3	29.5	7.2	71.4
Croatia	18.1	3.4	6.2	8.8
Czechia	16.0	135.3	6.1	177.3
Latvia	15.8	19.7	6.6	10.0
Germany	14.3	-10.6	8.2	17.1
Denmark	14.1	29.4	6.9	130.0
Slovenia	13.9	41.8	3.6	28.6
Belgium	13.8	9.5	6.0	46.3
Ireland	13.3	95.6	7.2	100.0
Malta	12.7	-14.8	6.8	-5.6
Poland	9.8	10.1	4.7	46.9
Austria	9.3	121.4	3.9	160.0
Sweden	8.4	21.7	5.9	118.5
Estonia	8.1	47.3	4.1	51.9
Luxembourg	4.4	-24.1	2.1	-41.7
Finland	3.8	46.2	2.6	44.4

Source: Eurostat · [ILC_MDES01](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2020: Germany · France · Ireland · Luxembourg / Series break in 2023: Lithuania

In 2023, 6.9% of the EU population and 16.0% of households living below the poverty threshold were in arrears on their utility bills (water, electricity, gas, or heating). An increase in poor

households behind in payments was observed in 11 countries between 2020 and 2023, in particular in **Germany** (+63.6%), **Luxembourg** (+65.5%), and **Austria** (+77.4%).

TABLE 10

**HOUSEHOLDS IN ARREARS ON THEIR UTILITY BILLS: WATER, ELECTRICITY, GAS, AND HEATING
(2023, IN % / CHANGE FROM 2020 TO 2023, IN %)**

			TOTAL POPULATION	
	2023	2020 - 2023	2023	2020 - 2023
Greece	67.3	34.6	32.9	16.7
Bulgaria	35.5	-19.9	17.8	-19.8
Romania	28.3	32.9	13.6	-2.2
Slovakia	22.9	67.2	7.2	38.5
Croatia	21.9	-16.1	11.6	-14.7
Hungary	20.8	-16.8	7.3	-29.8
Cyprus	20.5	10.8	9.0	-2.2
Spain	20.3	-16.8	9.6	0.0
France	20.3	33.6	7.5	36.4
Austria	16.4	67.3	5.5	77.4
EU 27	16.0	0.6	6.9	6.2
Slovenia	15.8	-9.2	6.6	-29.8
Ireland	14.4	-34.8	7.6	-7.3
Latvia	13.5	-4.3	7.0	-15.7
Lithuania	12.2	-2.4	6.5	3.2
Finland	11.7	-27.3	7.4	4.2
Portugal	11.5	33.7	3.8	8.6
Denmark	10.6	-14.5	4.7	11.9
Czechia	10.2	34.2	1.9	0.0
Italy	9.7	-35.8	4.1	-31.7
Luxembourg	9.6	-1.0	4.8	65.5
Germany	9.3	34.8	5.4	63.6
Belgium	7.7	-24.5	3.7	-2.6
Poland	7.6	-33.9	4.0	-14.9
Estonia	7.4	-17.8	4.6	-8.0
Sweden	7.0	-4.1	3.3	37.5
Malta	4.4	-68.3	4.9	-22.2
Netherlands	3.8	-34.5	1.1	-26.7

Source: Eurostat · [ILC_MDES07](#) / Last updated: 2024-06-20 / Series break in 2020: Germany · France · Ireland · Luxembourg

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Eurostat (2024) – “EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)”, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/overview>.

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Series breaks were recorded in Germany, Croatia, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and Poland (see notes below each table). The statistical trends for these countries are thus potentially less reliable.

3

Eurostat – IPCH - monthly data (annual rate of change) (PRC_HICP_MANR), last updated: 02/07/2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/PRC_HICP_MANR/default/table.

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Toute l'Europe (2023/10/02) – “Le taux d'inflation en Europe”, <https://www.touteleurope.eu/economie-et-social/le-taux-d-inflation-en-europe/>.

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IMF (2023/06/26) – “Europe's Inflation Outlook Depends on How Corporate Profits Absorb Wage Gains”, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2023/06/26/europes-inflation-outlook-depends-on-how-corporate-profits-absorb-wage-gains>.

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Eurostat – At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and gender - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys (ILC_LI02), last updated: 20/06/2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_LI02/default/table.

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The risk of poverty or social exclusion is an indicator corresponding to the amount of people “at risk of poverty after social transfers, severely deprived in material terms or living in households with very low labour intensity”. Eurostat – People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and gender (ILC_PEPS01N), last updated: 12/07/2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_PEPS01N/default/table.

8

Material and social deprivation is an indicator that shows “an enforced lack of necessary and desirable elements to lead an adequate life”. The rate of material and social deprivation refers to the proportion of the population unable to afford at least five of the following thirteen “goods and services”: paying bills on time; heating their home properly; meeting unexpected expenses; eating protein every other day; taking a week's holiday once a year; replacing damaged or worn-out furniture; owning a car; owning two pairs of shoes; replacing worn-out clothes with new ones; meeting up with friends for dinner or a drink once a month; taking part in leisure activities on a regular basis; spending a small amount of money each week on themselves; and having an internet connection at home. Eurostat (2024) – “Severe Material and Social Deprivation Rate (SMSD)”, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_\(SMSD\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_(SMSD)).

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Ipsos & Secours populaire français (2023) – “Baromètre de la pauvreté et de la précarité”, <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/barometre-de-la-pauvrete-ipsos-secours-populaire-pres-dun-francais-sur-cinq-declare-vivre-decouvert>.

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Eurostat – Rate of overcrowding per tenure status - total population - EU-SILC survey (ILC_LVHO05C), last updated: 20/06/2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_LVHO05C/default/table.

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The housing cost overburden rate corresponds to “the percentage of people living in households where total housing costs (‘net’ of housing allowance) represent more than 40% of total disposable income”. Eurostat (2024) – “Housing Cost Overburden Rate”, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Housing_cost_overburden_rate.



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CHAP. 4

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE 2024-2029

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All indications point to housing being a key priority in the next European Commission term. While many crucial details are still to be worked out, Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the next term, announced on the day of her re-election¹, highlight several significant developments, including an unprecedented European affordable housing plan, the appointment of a Commissioner responsible for housing, the creation of a European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing, and a doubling of the funding available for affordable housing through cohesion policy.

Addressing homelessness and housing exclusion is a fundamental aspect of the European Union's social policy framework. It is also a priority enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights². Although housing is not an exclusive competence of the EU, policies and legislation in other areas, including the environment, health, anti-discrimination, migration, citizenship, social affairs, employment, and taxation, among others, can be leveraged. Therefore, it is essential for the European Parliament and other institutions, alongside affected individuals and civil society stakeholders, to ensure that the right to housing and the topic of homelessness are considered in all relevant actions and strategies.

Through these recommendations, the Abbé Pierre Foundation and FEANTSA aim to urge Member States and European institutions to fully harness the EU's potential when it comes to combating homelessness and housing exclusion.

1. A EUROPE UNITED AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

European Platform on Combating Homelessness (EPOCH)

As the EU's first political initiative on homelessness, the European Platform on Combating Homelessness (EPOCH) commits institutions, Member States, and stakeholders to join forces to end homelessness – and make substantial progress towards this goal by 2030. Since its launch with the signing of the Lisbon Declaration in 2021, EPOCH has gradually taken shape. While the platform does not yet have the resources required to achieve its goals, its governance framework and working methods are already established. A series of activities have been initiated in three separate areas: learning, data and analysis, funding.

The La Hulpe Declaration, adopted during the Belgian presidency in April 2024, reinforces the core principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, emphasising the platform's significance and underpinning its authority. Much work remains under this new EU mandate to turn EPOCH into a genuine catalyst in combating homelessness. To ensure that no one is left behind, it is crucial for the EU to maintain a specific focus on homelessness through a series of targeted actions that are set out below.

- Pursue and fine-tune the EPOCH initiative under the new mandate.
- Adopt a Council recommendation on eradicating homelessness, as requested by the ministers responsible for homelessness in February 2024.
- Approve a new EPOCH work programme for the 2024-2028 mandate.
- Continue to develop the three focus areas of EPOCH (learning, data and analysis, funding) and initiate new workstreams, notably on mainstreaming homelessness issues into all relevant European policies.
- Building on the work already undertaken by the OECD, develop tools to better assess both developments in homelessness and the public policies to address it within each Member State.
- Guarantee access to shelter for everyone in Europe, making sure that this temporary solution effectively serves its purpose, which is to enable individuals to quickly transition to adequate housing.
- Develop and promote minimum quality standards for homelessness accommodation and support.
- Bolster the scaling up of Housing First and other proven solutions to address homelessness.
- Reallocate a portion of the structural funds that have not been committed by Member States to combat homelessness during the mid-term review of the current Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF).
- Designate a portion of structural funds for tackling homelessness in the future MFF to the tune of at least 3% of the new European Social Fund (ESF+).
- Examine the feasibility and added value of creating a specific European facility to finance housing solutions for homeless people.
- Ensure that EPOCH is included in the mandate of the next European Commissioner responsible for jobs and social rights, particularly during the first hundred days of the new Commission term.

Strengthening Freedom of Movement

Freedom of Movement is a fundamental right within Europe. Yet, 20 years after the adoption of the directive on the free movement and residence of Union citizens and their family members³, Member States are still violating this right for certain categories of EU citizens – particularly vulnerable mobile workers, who often face financial hardship and come from Eastern Europe.

- Clarify the rights of mobile EU citizens without a home, or those at risk of becoming homeless, within the framework of EU free movement legislation (this is essential to prevent arbitrary expulsions and denial of legitimate access to assistance and social security).
- Mandate the European Labour Authority (ELA) to monitor homelessness among mobile workers in the EU, prevent abusive employment practices leading to homelessness, and ensure that all repatriation of homeless EU citizens to their home countries is conducted in a digni-

fied and sustainable manner with full respect for their rights.

- Given the numerous violations, it is essential to bolster monitoring processes to ensure that the rights of EU citizens are respected, regardless of their economic situation, and to initiate infringement procedures when necessary. To ensure the swift and efficient portability of rights, it is also crucial to improve the coordination of national social security systems.

Ensuring the full exercise of citizens' rights within the EU

- Ensure that homeless voters can participate in European elections and the European Citizens' Initiative, even without a permanent address.
- Ensure that the European Banking Authority (EBA) fully enforces the directive on the right to a basic payment account so that homeless individuals can access a bank account regardless of their residence or financial situation.

2. A EUROPE COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE HOUSING CRISIS

Some 9% of Europeans are overburdened by housing costs⁴ and the shortage of affordable housing for low-income households is worsening. Buoyed by the outcome of recent elections and the Commission President's announcement of a future affordable housing plan, the European Union now has the chance to take a more proac-

tive role in tackling the issue. Measures will include financially supporting the production of social and affordable housing, through cohesion policy (Cohesion Fund for example). Additionally, the EU should participate in regulating short-term rentals to prevent price hikes and gentrification.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE 2024-2028

European affordable housing plan

- Guarantee that this plan specifically addresses the needs of those facing homelessness and supports tried and tested solutions such as Housing First initiatives.
- Take into account the various national definitions of 'affordable housing' and 'social housing' in the development of the plan, and, if necessary, facilitate dialogue among Member States regarding the concept of affordability.
- Guarantee that the plan contributes to the construction of housing accessible to low-income households and those facing social exclusion.
- Prioritise non-speculative, public, cooperative, and social housing within this plan.
- Strengthen the 'inclusive' and 'affordable' sections of the New European Bauhaus Initiative⁵.
- Conduct a social impact assessment before implementing the plan.
- Take a comprehensive approach to tackling the housing crisis by identifying all available levers of action, such as regulating financial and real estate markets, enhancing household affordability, and optimising allocation systems. Propose measures that promote effective public policies while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the authority of each governing body.

European Union financing

- Ensure that EU funds and financing are utilised to their maximum potential to support efforts aimed at combating housing exclusion.

- Create the European Investment Platform for Affordable and Sustainable Housing, as announced by the Commission President, with a focus on housing that is affordable and accessible for low-income households.
- Introduce strict social conditions and earmark a portion of the funding specifically for housing accessible to the most disadvantaged as part of the planned increase in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allocation for investments in affordable housing.
- Ensure that fiscal and budgetary rules allow Member States to invest in social housing within the framework of EU economic governance.
- Exercise caution with revising state aid rules for housing, as it could destabilise the legal framework for investment, undermining the general interest mission of social housing and ultimately facilitate its commercialisation.
- Launch a call for proposals to address housing exclusion under the European Urban Initiative - Innovative Actions (EUI-IA)⁶, a financing instrument for cities that aim to develop innovative solutions.

Short-term rentals

- Assess the impact of the short-term rentals initiative.
- Take any additional measures needed to ensure that local, regional, and national authorities can enforce their regulations.
- Update existing legislation to hold platforms accountable for publishing illegal listings.

3. A EUROPE ACTING IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE MOST VULNERABLE

While housing difficulties affect a significant number of European citizens due to their specific social or economic vulnerabilities, certain groups are particularly badly impacted. Young people, refugees, LGBTQI+ individuals, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and single-parent families struggle more than the general population when it comes to finding decent and affordable housing. This is particularly the case when such individuals are poor. It is crucial that these groups receive special attention from the institutions and Member States, with effective measures to combat discrimination and with provisions for support and protection where legislation allows.

Combating poverty

- Fulfil the commitment outlined in the President's Political Guidelines for the new Commission to create the first European Anti-Poverty Strategy. This strategy should establish more ambitious targets than merely reducing the number of adults and children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 10 million and 5 million respectively by 2030. Special emphasis should be placed on addressing the often-overlooked issue of extreme poverty at European level.
- Implement and further develop the Action Plan to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and ensure effective monitoring of ongoing initiatives.

Combating discrimination

- Develop an EU action plan to progressively eliminate marginalized Roma settlements by 2030, in line with the Council's recommendation^{s7} on ensuring equal access to adequate housing for Roma and combating segregation.
- Verify that Member States fully implement the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence^{s8}, which are major causes of women's homelessness.
- Guarantee that the forthcoming strategy for LGBTQI+ equality, the gender equality strategy, the recommendation on Roma equality and inclusion, and the strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities all contribute to combating homelessness and housing exclusion.
- Ensure that discriminatory laws do not obstruct access to or retention of housing.

Welcoming displaced persons

Access to adequate accommodation and housing for individuals who seek and receive international protection within the EU should be central to asylum policies. However, the Migration and Asylum Pact⁹, definitively adopted on 14 May 2024, fails to address these issues. Many asylum seekers and refugees currently live in extreme deprivation or in undignified conditions. The

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE 2024-2028

EU and Member States must ensure material reception conditions that are in line with international law.

- Ensure full compliance with EU asylum legislation; provide adequate reception conditions for all asylum seekers.
- Guarantee unconditional access to shelter for all individuals in need of protection within the EU.
- Allocate sufficient resources to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the ESF+, to ensure dignified reception; streamline the procedures for accessing these European funds.
- Allow for the financing of multidisciplinary support for displaced persons through the ESF+.

Child protection

- Verify that the European Child Guarantee¹⁰ – both the action plans and the resources allocated from the European Social Fund Plus – truly reaches the target group of children who are homeless or living in housing exclusion.
- Explicitly include measures to protect children from homelessness and housing exclusion in the Commission's recommendations for developing integrated child protection systems¹¹.
- Oblige Member States to ensure that unaccompanied minors are cared for by integrated services so that they are not forced to live on the streets.

Youth support

Young people in Europe, particularly impacted by the series of health and economic crises in recent years, are finding it increasingly difficult to secure housing. The rising cost of housing has made home-ownership increasingly out of reach and affordable rentals are becoming more scarce. Many young people are forced to stay with their parents and are therefore unable to establish an independent life. The policy guidelines for the next European Commission term emphasise that addressing the situation of these young people should be a priority in the future affordable housing plan.

- Promote measures that facilitate youth access to housing alongside the European Youth Strategy¹².
- Encourage Member States to implement a basic income for young people aged 18 to 25.
- Promote and support the development of housing assistance programmes.

Support individuals living in informal camps and slums

Slums, squats, caravans, and makeshift shelters: a significant segment of the European population is forced to live in inadequate and unsafe conditions. These individuals often lack access to running water, electricity, and sanitation, resulting in extremely challenging living conditions and significant health risks. Frequently situated on the outskirts of major cities, camps

and designated areas for 'travellers' are often cut off from public transportation and essential services, complicating access to healthcare for families and education for children.

- Ensure that the implementation of the directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption¹³ includes measures to guarantee

access to water for vulnerable and marginalised groups, including homeless individuals.

- Urge Member States to develop projects ensuring that individuals living in informal camps have access to basic services (e.g. water, sanitation, electricity, and waste collection) as well as education and healthcare.

4. A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE GREEN PACT

Despite the "Renovation Wave" announced by the Commission in 2020¹⁴, the actual renovation rate of the European housing stock remains woefully inadequate. The record-breaking surge in energy prices has also had dramatic social consequences for the worst-off households – a situation that could worsen with the introduction of the second carbon market for heating and fuels (Emissions Trading System 2 – ETS2)¹⁵. In response, institutions and Member States need to implement the measures adopted in the Green Deal and make sufficient funding available for comprehensive renovations and financial supports for households.

- Verify that the renovation of the European Union's housing stock, supported by the EPBD¹⁶ and EED¹⁷ directives, contributes to combating housing exclusion; make substantial and targeted public subsidies available for the renovation

of unfit housing and homes occupied by low-income households; implement social safeguards such as rent regulation and prevention of displacement due to renovations; and introduce measures to include particularly hard-to-reach households and communities.

- Ensure that the Social Climate Fund (SCF) specifically benefits the most vulnerable groups during the transition.
- Ensure that revenues from the Emissions Trading System (ETS) are used to assist low-income households in renovating their homes.
- Prohibit energy disconnections across the EU and guarantee the right to basic energy services and prevent suppliers from imposing prepayment meters on households struggling to pay their energy bills.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE 2024-2028

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**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN EUROPE
SUM OF COUNT RESULTS (ETHOS LIGHT 1 - 2 - 3) AND
EXTRAPOLATION TO THE EUROPEAN POPULATION**

Country	Date	ETHOS 1	ETHOS 2	ETHOS 3	Total population	%
 Belgium	2022 - 2023		17,378		11,742,796	0.148
 Czechia	2022		30,426		10,516,707	0.289
 Denmark	2022		3,738		5,873,420	0.064
 Finland	2022		878		5,548,241	0.016
 France	2021		209,074		67,728,568	0.309
 Germany	2022 - 2023		404,527		83,115,000	0.487
 Hungary	2023		7,268		9,599,744	0.076
 Ireland	2023		13,318		5,271,395	0.253
 Poland	2019		23,812		37,972,812	0.063
 Portugal	2022		10,773		10,352,042	0.104
 Spain	2022		16,006		47,432,893	0.034
Total			737,198	→	295,153,618	→ 0.250
 Europe	2023		1,286,691	←	515,155,514	← 0.250

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN IN EUROPE SUM OF COUNT RESULTS (ETHOS LIGHT 1 - 2 - 3) AND EXTRAPOLATION TO THE EUROPEAN POPULATION

Country	Date	ETHOS 1	ETHOS 2	ETHOS 3	Minor population	%
 Belgium	2022 - 2023		5,467		2,346,532	0.233
 Czechia	2022		1,393		2,002,981	0.070
 France	2023		31,770		14,364,262	0.221
 Germany	2022 - 2023		106,626		14,251,723	0.748
 Ireland	2023		3,962		1,231,414	0.322
 Portugal	2022		1,626		1,636,138	0.099
Total			150,844	→	35,833,050	→ 0.421
 Europe	2023		399,561	←	94,915,891	← 0.421

APPENDICES

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The data used to draw up this report were collected from the sources referred to below, and in particular from:

- Interviews with national / local members of FEANTSA and partner organisations
- Testimonials from sources described in footnotes
- Official FEANTSA publications, Abbé Pierre Foundation and the European Observatory on Homelessness
- Eurostat / EUSILC database

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HOUSING EXCLU KEY STATISTICS

200,138,400

100%

HOUSEHOLDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE POPULATION OF THE EU STOOD AT 447.6 MILLION PEOPLE ON 1 JANUARY 2023.

17,812,318

HOUSEHOLDS OVERBURDENED BY HOUSING COSTS

MORE THAN 40% OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS.

8.9%

33,623,251

16.8%

HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS

13,809,550

HOUSEHOLDS IN ARREARS ON THEIR

UTILITY BILLS WATER, ELECTRICITY, GAS AND HEATING

6.9%

1,286,691

!

**LAST ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS
PEOPLE (ETHOS LIGHT 1, 2 AND 3)**

SION IN EUROPE

6,204,290

3.1%

HOUSEHOLDS IN ARREARS
ON THEIR RENT
OR MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS

21,214,670

HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL
DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING
ADEQUATE HOUSING TEMPERATURES

10.6%

31,021,452

15.5%

HOUSEHOLDS LIVING
IN DAMP CONDITIONS

24,416,885

HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN HOUSING
SITUATED IN A PARTICULARLY
POLLUTED AREA

12.2%

SMOKE, DUST, UNPLEASANT ODOURS OR WATER POLLUTION
ON A REGULAR BASIS

%

PERCENTAGE
OF THE EUROPEAN
POPULATION

A HOUSEHOLD
CONSTITUTES ALL
THE INHABITANTS
OF THE SAME
DWELLING.
THE FIGURES
CANNOT BE
SIMPLY ADDED
TOGETHER
BECAUSE A SINGLE
HOUSEHOLD MAY
BE AFFECTED
BY SEVERAL
HOUSING
DIFFICULTIES.

SOURCE: EUROSTAT,
DATA FOR 2023

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