



**GERMAN NATIONAL REPORT 2003 FOR THE EUROPEAN
OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS**

by Volker Busch-Geertsema

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Volker Busch-Geertsema is senior researcher with Gesellschaft für innovative Sozialforschung und Sozialplanung e.V., Bremen (GISS)

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Author: Volker Busch-Geertsema,

Gesellschaft für innovative Sozialforschung und Sozialplanung (GISS), Kohlhöckerstrasse 22,
D-28203 Bremen

Phone: 49 - 421 / 334 708-2

Fax: 49 - 421 / 3 39 88 35

E-mail: giss-bremen@t-online.de

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following report follows the new structure of national reports for the European Observatory on Homelessness. While thematic research is organised and published separately, the national reports provide an update of national developments in three important areas of interest in relation to homelessness.

1. An update on recent policy developments relevant for the fight against homelessness (chapter 2 of this report)
2. A statistical update on recent developments concerning the extent and the nature of homelessness (chapter 3 of this report)
3. A review of recently published research in the area of homelessness (chapter 4 of this report)

Information on policy developments, new data and research publications mainly covers the period of the year 2002 and the first half of 2003. Some earlier developments are included when they have not been commented upon in earlier national reports.

2. POLICY UPDATE

2.1 *Housing*

2.1.1 New Housing Act put into force in 2002

The new Federal Housing Act (*Wohnraumförderungsgesetz*) became law on 1st January 2002 and replaced the 2nd Housing Construction Act. The aim of the old Act to provide state support for the housing needs of “broad strata of the population” was explicitly given up. In section one of the new Act it is stated that the target group of support is “households which are not able to procure decent housing by themselves and are in need of support”. For the first time explicit reference has been made to “homeless persons and other persons in need of support” as one of the target groups of state subsidized housing. In section 14 and 15 of the new Act it is stated that municipalities, housing providers and other organisations (e.g. providers of social services) may conclude cooperation contracts in order to “support measures for social housing provision”. Among the examples for possible aims of such cooperation contracts are the introduction or prolongation of allocation rights and rent limits, the coverage of tenancy risks and the provision of financial guarantees and area based initiatives of various kinds. While in the past such contracts were possible as well, the new Act provides a new legal basis for cooperation contracts.

It remains to be seen whether the new regulations will be used to improve access to housing for disadvantaged groups and especially for homeless people and those threatened with homelessness. One of the main problems is, that the total stock of social housing is shrinking rapidly, that the production of new social housing has reached a minimum level and that municipalities as well as housing companies currently seem to be more interested in measures to prevent a further concentration of disadvantaged households than in giving those households priority for access to regular housing.

2.1.2 Tougher financial barriers for access to housing

Although housing benefit was raised in 2001 for the first time after ten years in Germany and a significant increase of expenditure for housing benefit was registered at the national level (a report on the effects of the reformed housing benefit system is expected to be published in the course of 2003), many local experts of services for the homeless deplore that municipalities are increasingly restrictive in fixing the limits for “acceptable” rent payments as part of social assistance. At the same time many housing providers have tightened their control measures against applicants with high debts. Such changes may vary considerably from town to town and they have not yet been systematically researched but there is evidence from a number of

case studies that financial as well as other barriers are making it more difficult for homeless persons to gain access to housing even in areas with a general oversupply of empty flats.

2.1.3 Increased role of NGOs in the prevention of homelessness

There is evidence from a number of non-governmental organisations that they have been developing new initiatives to take an active part in the prevention of homelessness. Traditionally prevention of homelessness was seen as a task of the municipal administration in Germany. They have the powers under sect. 15a of the Federal Welfare Act to assume rent arrears in cases of threatening homelessness and they also receive information on all court cases for eviction because of rent arrears.

Recently a number of service providers for homeless people in the voluntary sector have started to develop their own services to provide advice and support for tenants who are threatened by homelessness and have not been homeless in the past. Some of these service providers have gained experiences for specialist preventive intervention by acting as social rental agencies for formerly homeless people (e.g. *Neue Wohnraumhilfe Darmstadt*, *Soziale Wohnraumhilfe Hannover*, *Ambulante Hilfe Stuttgart*).¹ Recently they have enlarged their services to regular housing companies which also contribute to the payment of those services. But many other NGO service providers are also active in the field of the prevention of homelessness. A recent survey of the National Coalition of Service Providers for the Homeless (*Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe*) shows that 60 % of services which answered to the written survey (147 of 242) worked in the field of prevention (Specht-Kittler 2002). Even if the result is not fully representative (from 590 services included in the survey only 40.8 % answered and it seems probable that those working in the field of prevention showed a higher participation) it shows a surprising number of NGOs which are complementing the municipal services or sometimes acting directly on behalf of the municipalities. Some innovative examples of NGO services in the field of prevention are presented in a recent issue of the experts periodical *wohnungslos* (4/2002; v.d. List 2002, Englmann/Knecht 2002, Epskamp 2002). Common features are an active approach to secure direct contact with households threatened by homelessness by visiting them at their homes. The background of a current tenancy crisis and the problems connected with it are sorted out and information and advice is provided on how to prevent an eviction. In cases of need personal support can be provided and access to specialist support can be facilitated. Generally it is seen as an advantage for NGO that it is easier for them to gain the confidence of tenants who are threatened by homelessness and that they are more successful in getting into contact with them.

¹ Further information on social rental agencies in Germany can be found in Busch-Geertsema 2001.

2.2 Social protection and employment

2.2.1 The new implementation order for Sect. 72 of the Federal Welfare Act

Already in August 2001 a new implementation order for Sect. 72 of the Federal Welfare Act came into force. Sect. 72 is the “homeless-section” of the Federal Welfare Act and regulates important rights of persons in “special social difficulties”. There was an important change in the law itself in 1996 and for decades experts and lobby organisations had been asking for a change of the implementation order as well. The main reason was that it used an outdated wording still distinguishing between “persons with an unsettled way of life” and other “persons without sufficient accommodation” and thereby provided the legitimization for the historically deep-rooted separation of responsibilities for “local” and “non-local” homeless people (other target groups mentioned in the old implementation order were ex-prisoners, “vagrants” and “disturbed young persons”). Instead of naming different target groups the new implementation order now lists different “special life circumstances” as examples which – if connected with “social difficulties” – cause the individual right for support under sect. 72. Among the special life circumstances mentioned in the implementation order are “lacking or insufficient housing”, “uncovered basic costs of living”, “release from a closed institution” and – mentioned for the first time in context of sect. 72 – “life-circumstances which are marked by violence”.

There were fears among the financing agencies (municipalities and regional authorities) that the new wording might lead to an enlargement of the target group which is entitled to support under sect. 72. Therefore several changes were introduced into the new implementation order to secure “cost neutrality”. The priority of “ambulant” against “stationary” types of support (priority of advice and accompanying support in housing instead of provision of beds in socio-therapeutical institutions) was emphasised and control of the duration of stays in institutions for the homeless was tightened up, the importance of self-help and the duty of service users to co-operate was strengthened and regulations for an improved case-management were introduced. Furthermore the implementation order focuses on personal support (advice, counselling, arrangement of specialist advice and measures) and ignores possible rights for direct material support under this section of the law. According to the new implementation order measures under sect. 72 have to be “lasting” (“sustainable”), which raised fears that this might lead to restrictions in cases where the authorities deny positive effects of support measures by arguing that the persons concerned would not be able or not be willing to “change”.

All in all the reform of the implementation order was welcomed by legal experts and providers of social services for the homeless, although there was criticism against some of the new formulations and their potential for restrictive interpretation in practice (Roscher 2001; Brühl 2001).

While the new implementation order has put an end to using the old-fashioned term “people with an unsettled way of living” in the legal context on the national level there are still a number of regional laws on the *Länder*-level which distinguish between the financial responsibility for measures for “local” homeless people on the one side and for those who are aiming at the “settlement” of “people with an unsettled way of life” on the other side. A long-lasting claim in this respect is a unified financial responsibility for all homeless people at the *Länder*-level. This claim has only been realised in Baden-Württemberg and in the small city-state Bremen up to now.

2.2.2 A new type of basic pension for older people and for severely handicapped people

Since January 2003 a new law has been regulating the provision of means-tested minimum benefits (*Bedarfsorientierte Grundsicherung*) for people over 65 years of age (and also for permanently handicapped people over 18). A kind of basic pension is provided under very similar regulations than those for social assistance. The new *Grundsicherungs*-benefit is also financed and administered by municipalities as it is the case with social assistance (*Sozialhilfe*). Major differences are a slightly higher level of the basic monthly payment (15 %, meant to cover extra needs which in the system of social assistance are covered only in the case of individual applications) and less family obligations because the income of children or parents is not taken into account for the means test, as long as it is lower than 100,000 Euro per year. The basic aim of this new system of a guaranteed minimum is to reduce the number of “hidden poor”, who did not dare to apply for social assistance in fear of having to ask their adult children or their parents for covering part of it (this is also a reason for a substantial part of homeless people for not taking up social assistance). One of the problems of the new system is, that in many cases the level of monthly payments is even lower than the individual claims for social assistance would be. Recipients can still claim additional social assistance in these cases but this makes things even more complicated than before.

2.2.3 New law to protect victims of domestic violence

On January 2002, an Act to improve civil court protection in the event of domestic violence (Act to Protect Against Violence – *Gewaltschutzgesetz*) entered into force, introducing a general right to allocation of the marital home (forms of co-habitation other than marriage are also taken into account) to the victim if violent acts have taken place. The Act also enables the courts to issue protective orders in accordance with which violent offenders may be prohibited from entering the shared home, being within a certain radius of the victim, visiting certain places where the victim uses to stay (workplace) and contacting the victim (e.g. by telephone). In the context of the discussion on this new Act (which shows parallels to the legislation introduced earlier in Austria) a number of regional states have also changed their police laws in order to provide better police protection for victims of domestic violence in cases of urgency. One of the main measures is a ban by the police for the offender to entering the shared home

for a certain period (from ten days up to three weeks). During this period the victim can apply at the civil court to allocate the home to her exclusive long-term use.

It is hoped that the Act will also have a preventive function in providing a better protection for women from threatening homelessness caused by domestic violence. It clearly helps to raise public awareness on the problem of domestic violence. On the other hand many victims of domestic violence are still reluctant to make use of the new regulations because doubts remain about the reliability of protection provided by them. There are wide local and regional differences according to the provision of additional specialist advice and information for victims of domestic violence. Whereas a number of municipalities have introduced new “intervention-offices” (*Interventionsstellen*) for this task and have formed specialist teams for cases of domestic violence in the local police and in courts, others have done less or nothing to improve the effectiveness of measures against domestic violence.

It is still too early to measure the impact of the new law and the new regulations in the police laws and in public administration on homelessness of men and women. One of the possible effects of the new legislation might also be, that services for single homeless men have to reflect on the necessity to provide access for part of their clients to training and therapeutical measures against their violent behaviour.

2.2.4 Changes in active employment and job placement policies and the related systems of social security

The most important recent changes in the field of social protection are related to proposals of the so called “Hartz Commission”. This commission of 15 experts was appointed in February 2002 by Chancellor Schröder and chaired by Peter Hartz, Volkswagen personnel director. The commission – originally charged with improving the efficiency of the Federal Labour Office – published a series of far reaching recommendations which might have serious consequences for the German system of social protection. The proposals of the Hartz Commission were published in August 2002, about a month before general elections took place in Germany and Peter Hartz combined the presentation with the vision that the high number of unemployed in Germany (about four million at that time) might be halved within a period of three years if the commission’s proposals would be realised. A number of proposals are aiming at speeding up the job placement process and encouraging and enforcing labour mobility, mainly by imposing new duties on the unemployed and enforcing the conditions for receiving unemployment benefits. The list of possible sanctions (benefit cuts and complete loss of entitlements) is enlarged, for example to cases in which unemployed people failed to register at the labour office for work early (i.e. at the time of dismissal) or in which they did not accept a job offer in other parts of Germany (the rules as to which type of job offer has to be accepted as “reasonable” are to be enforced considerably but depend in part on social criteria and the duration of unemployment). Pressure on the unemployed to proof their willingness and their efforts to find a job is increased. So called “Personnel Service Agencies” (PSAs) are to take the role of temporary

work agencies and keep a large share of the unemployed in work by hiring them out to regular companies or – in times when this is not possible - by providing them with training schemes. Here, as in a number of further proposals, the Hartz Commission aims at directing employment efforts nearer towards the regular job market thereby reducing employment schemes of non-profit organisations in the so called secondary labour market. A number of measures to facilitate self-employment, temporary employment and low-wage jobs are part of this strategy.

Several proposals of the Hartz commission relate to the traditional division of responsibilities for long-term unemployed people between social welfare offices of the municipalities (for recipients of social assistance) and the federal employment offices (for recipients of unemployment assistance). This traditional division is one of the characteristics of the German welfare regime and its work- and earnings-related system of social security benefits. Up to now all those unemployed people who had paid social insurance contributions from wages for a minimum period (12 months) while they were employed were entitled for earnings related benefits (*Arbeitslosengeld*, paid from the unemployment insurance, 67 % of last monthly net pay for recipients with children, 60 % for those without) for a certain period of time when unemployed. Up to the age of 45 the maximum period for entitlement to unemployment benefit was 12 month, while this period was longer for those older than 45 and could last for a maximum of 32 month for over 57 years old unemployed people.² After the relevant period of entitlement to unemployment benefit has expired, the unemployed persons concerned are still entitled for payments (unemployment assistance, *Arbeitslosenhilfe*) and services from the labour office and these payments are still related to former earnings (albeit on a lower percentage of 57/53 % of last net income), but they are tax-funded (and financed by the central state) and means related to a certain extent. There is no time-limit for entitlement to unemployment assistance as long as recipients are registered as unemployed and are willing and able to take up work if available.

If the unemployment assistance of recipients and additional income by household members is lower than a certain minimum they may claim additional social assistance (*Sozialhilfe*). Social assistance provides also for a minimum income for all (or most) other people without sufficient income³ including a high number of unemployed people without any entitlements to payments by the labour office (because they either never paid enough contributions to qualify for insurance payments or they had lost entitlements for various reasons). Social assistance is financed and paid exclusively by municipalities/ local authorities. It is strictly means-tested and other incomes of the recipient, his or her family and other household members are taken into ac-

² The maximum length of entitlement also depends on the length of time in which contributions were paid.

³ As mentioned before there is a new separate system providing basic income support for older people and the permanently handicapped (*Grundsicherung*) and since 1994 asylum-seekers as well as other groups of refugees have been provided with yet another type of assistance (under the *Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*) which is on a lower level and following a number of special discriminatory rules (for further details see Busch-Geertsema 2002a).

count. In the last decades municipalities were confronted with an ever increasing number of unemployed recipients of social assistance and have enlarged their own efforts to integrate these into the labour market or at least to provide them with job schemes which entitled them after 12 month to receive unemployment benefit (and later unemployment assistance). The result were two parallel structures of unemployment schemes, the one administered and financed by municipalities and focussing on “employable” recipients of social assistance and the other one administered by the Federal labour office and financed by insurance money and central state funding.

Criticism against these parallel structures and a lack of cooperation in employment policies was taken up by the Hartz Commission and a number of measures were recommended. So called local “Job Centres” shall combine employment efforts and social services for all unemployed people who are able to work. The Job Centre shall have a stronger focus on job matching and counselling activities than the former local employment offices. They shall also be in charge of activities formerly undertaken by municipal social welfare offices – not only in relation to employment but also in relation to helping unemployed people with other social problems like health and debt counselling etc. The Job Centres cooperate closely with the Personnel Service Agencies (PSAs). In addition to this a new distinction and naming of benefits is proposed. Unemployment assistance shall in future be renamed into “Unemployment Benefit II” (*Arbeitslosengeld II*) and shall cover all unemployed people able to work who do not (or not any more) qualify for unemployment benefit (renamed Unemployment Benefit I, *Arbeitslosengeld I*). In contrast to the past and in contrast to Unemployment Benefit I (which will basically remain as before), Unemployment Benefit II will not any more be related to the former income of recipients but provide a means-tested (and not time limited) minimum income administered by the Job Centres for all unemployed people able to work (also for those who were only entitled to social assistance in the past). All those who are (currently) not able to work or are not “employable” remain – in case of need – clients of municipal social welfare offices and recipients of social assistance (which is renamed “*Sozialgeld*” instead of “*Sozialhilfe*”). The Harz Commission left the details of this far reaching reform to be sorted out by a commission for the reform of municipal finances.

Criticism against the Hartz proposals point to the fact that most of them are focused exclusively on job placement and on the efficiency of administration whilst the core of the problem is not job placement but the lack of vacancies. Some of the Unions were opposing the increased pressure on unemployed people to move to other areas of Germany and to work for low wages, the deregulation of temporary jobs and the possible replacement of stable jobs by precarious forms of self-employment. Nevertheless the proposals were fully backed by Chancellor Schröder and great part of the SPD/Green coalition government. They have already realised a number of the recommendations after winning the general elections in September 2002. Two bills became law 1st January 2003. They make it obligatory to organise at least one personnel-service-agency per regional job-centre, deregulate temporary employment and low-paid “mini-jobs”, and include measures to facilitate employment of older unemployed persons. Un-

employed people who start a one-person- or family-business and do not earn more than 25.000 Euro per year can receive a grant (degressive monthly payment) to cover their social insurance expenses during the first three year. A number of further measures for reforms in the social insurance sector are under way at the time of writing this paper, including changes in the health insurance system and a reduction of the maximum duration of entitlements for unemployment benefit (I) for older people to a maximum of 12 month for those up to 55 and of 18 months for those older than 55.

Meanwhile it has become clear that the level of “Unemployment Benefit II” will be similar if not identical to the one of current Social Assistance. First steps for reducing the level and for enforcing the “subsidiarity” of unemployment assistance have been taken. New regulations for taking into account the income of family members and savings will lead to a loss of entitlement for a considerable part of new applicants. Would the new regulations be imposed on all of the currently 1.7 Mio recipients of unemployment assistance in Germany, more than 27 % would loose their entitlement (but the new regulations count for new applications only). The proposed organisational and financial changes for merging the administrative and financial responsibilities for all “employable” unemployed people has not yet taken place. Taking into account that in 2001 more than 900,000 “employable” recipients of social assistance were aged 15-64 and were neither employed nor in training or qualification schemes, it should be clear that the shift of responsibilities for administering and financing their benefits from municipalities to the federal employment offices is an ambitious task. It would not only lead to a significant shift of the financial burden from municipalities to the Federal Employment Service Agency (and to national tax resources) but at the same time a large number of municipal personnel would have to be moved from the municipal social welfare offices to the local job centres.

In view of the expected changes many municipalities have reduced or completely stopped their own employment schemes for recipients of social assistance. At the same time funds of the federal employment offices for “active employment policy” have been redirected towards the new measures proposed by the Hartz Commission. Many NGO-initiatives providing employment and training schemes for the unemployed are in a serious crisis because they cannot expect funding for the future. The continuity of some of the social infrastructure is endangered because it was based partly on using employment schemes for carrying through social tasks. It is feared that the new measures orienting exclusively to the regular labour market and new management principles for “profiling” and “assessment” of the unemployed at an early stage will enforce the process of “creaming” and focus employment efforts on those easy to integrate in the labour market, while the long-term unemployed, those with low or no qualifications and with severe difficulties to find regular work will be further disadvantaged by the current reforms.

The relevance of the different changes mentioned before for housing exclusion and homelessness remains yet unclear. Meanwhile nobody expects that the vision of a dramatic reduction of unemployment will realise after putting the Hartz proposals into practice. Long-term unem-

ployed people and those with additional social difficulties will probably suffer most under the reduction of municipal employment schemes and can profit least from the new measures introduced. It is obvious that the reduced period of entitlement for unemployment benefits for older people and a reduced level of unemployment assistance will increase the number of poor people and the risk of poverty especially among older unemployed people. Both changes might also be seen as a step forward towards changing the basic feature of the German welfare state towards a liberal welfare regime. Earnings related elements are cut back and the role of low level and means-tested basic provision for the poor is gaining importance.

2.3 Urban development – Programme “The Socially Integrative City”

In 1999 the German federal government and the *Länder* launched a joint programme "Districts With Special Development Needs - The Socially Integrative City". The programme focuses on disadvantaged urban districts and is designed to pool resources (at different levels of local regional and national policies in the different fields of employment, economy, ecology, social affairs, youth, culture, urban development), to foster cooperation between all involved players and to mobilize the residents of the neighbourhood in selected areas.

Meanwhile the programme has gained vital importance for area based initiatives in a great number of German cities. Federal government provided funding of more than 50 million Euro per year in 1999 and 2000 and of 76.7 million Euro per year for the years 2001 and 2002. As *Länder* and municipalities have to contribute to the total funding by two thirds, the total amount available for funding the programme from 1999 until 2002 was about 767 million Euro. The number of projects and specific measures which received funding under the programme amounts to 300 in more than 210 municipalities.

Overviews on the wide range of programme activities and projects and evaluations of regional programmes are available (partly in English as well) at the homepage of the programme <http://www.sozialestadt.de>.

The significance of the programme for tackling homelessness is unclear. Targeted measures directed at homeless people in the area (e.g. to improve access to normal housing for them or develop better services) are mentioned very rarely. Many activities may have some preventive impact in reducing the risk of marginalisation for vulnerable groups. Redevelopment activities in the field of housing are also tackling unacceptable housing conditions. On the other hand the frequent aim of many area based initiatives to reduce the concentration of disadvantaged groups in those areas (for example by lifting of restrictions on flats previously reserved for low-income tenants) also contributes to exclusion of homeless people from access to important sectors of regular housing.

3. STATISTICAL UPDATE

3.1 Trends in Housing Markets

In most regions of Germany the situation on the housing market is still relaxed. Especially in East Germany a high number of empty housing units (about 1 Million dwellings) are the reason for a federal programme (“*Stadtumbau Ost*”) under which about 350,000 dwellings will be demolished between 2002 and 2009 in East German municipalities with financial support of the Federal Government. According to the Ministry of Housing 197 municipalities were approved in 2002 to receive funding under the first phase of this programme and are expected to demolish at least 45,000 dwellings (BMVBW 2003).

But also for many West German cities an increased quota of empty dwellings and relaxed housing markets are reported. Recent data from the West German regional state with the largest population (18 million inhabitants), North-Rhine Westphalia, show that about 1.7 % of the dwellings in the rented stock were empty for more than 3 month in 2001 (1.3 % in 2000). On the other hand the number of households registered on waiting lists for social housing had increased slightly in 2001 for the first time since 1994 (WFA 2002).

According to data of the German Federation of Tenants (Deutscher Mieterbund) housing costs (including rent, additional charges and heating) in Germany have increased by 14.2 per cent between 1991 and 2001 while the general inflation rate has only increased by 9.6 per cent in the same period.

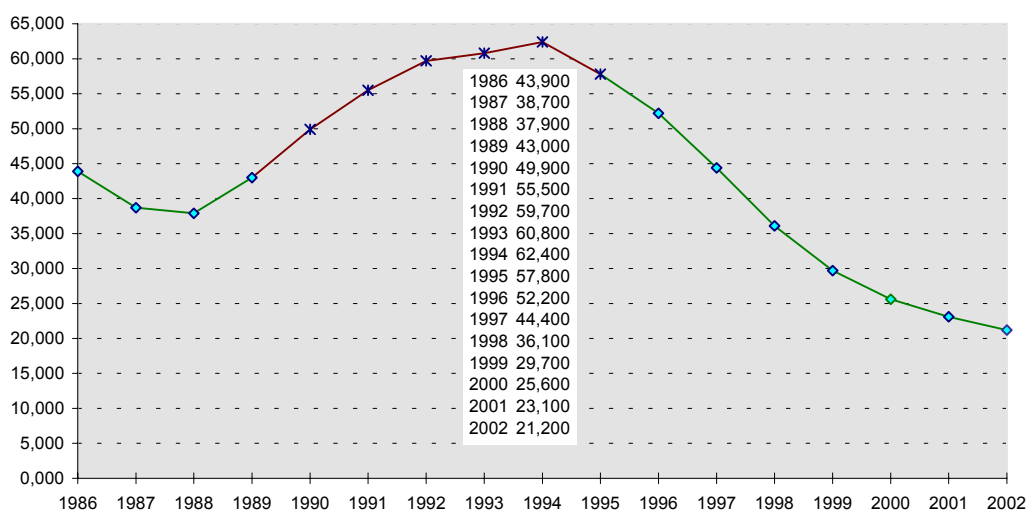
3.2 Trends in Homelessness

There are no official nationwide data on the extent and on recent developments of homelessness available. For more information on efforts to introduce such statistics and to test their feasibility the reader is referred to last years statistical update.

One of the best indicators to show long term-trends in homelessness is the annual survey of homeless people accommodated by municipalities in temporary accommodation in North Rhine-Westphalia. It is an annual one-day stock count carried through by all municipalities on behalf of the office of statistics in that state. The count does include all homeless people provided with temporary accommodation by measures of public order laws by 30th of June each year. It does not include the (mainly single) homeless persons in institutions of welfare organisations in the voluntary sector and further subgroups of the homeless like those sharing with friends and relatives or sleeping rough.

Chart 1:

Homeless persons who are temporarily accommodated under the police law (Ordnungsbehördengesetz) in North Rhine-Westphalia (30th June each year)



Source: Landesamt für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik Nordrhein-Westfalen

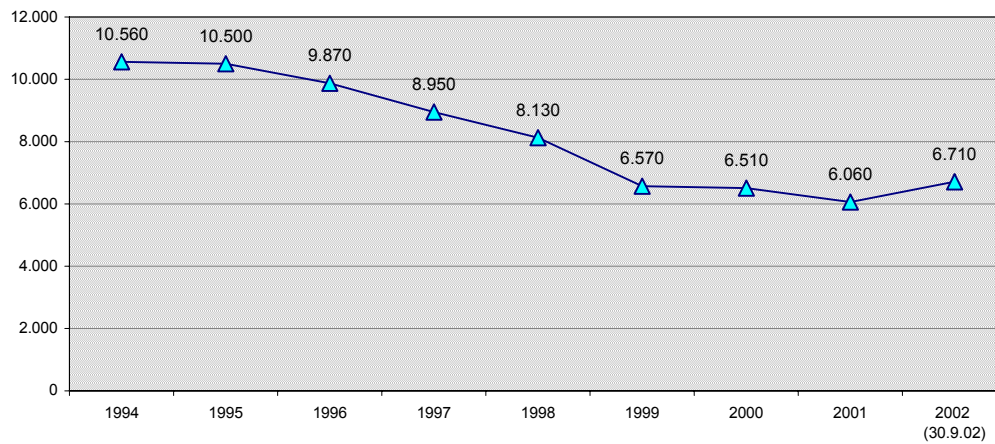
According to these data the number of homeless persons was growing from 1988 (37,900) and reached its peak in 1994 with 62,400. This was an increase of nearly 70 per cent between 1988 and 1994. The number has been declining since then (LDS NRW, various years). By 30th June 2002 it was at 21,200, which was a further decrease by 8 per cent in comparison to 2001.

Decreasing numbers were also reported for the City of Berlin where numbers of officially registered homeless people in temporary accommodation dropped from 10,560 in December 1994 to 6,050 in December 2001.⁴ In 2002 there was a significant increase for the first time since 1994 to 6,710 in September 2002 (data from social offices in all city districts, Senatsverwaltung Berlin, various years, published at internet).

⁴ Please note that some of the numbers of homeless persons in Berlin published in last years statistical update had to be corrected. The numbers provided in chart 2 of this report are the correct numbers.

Chart 2:

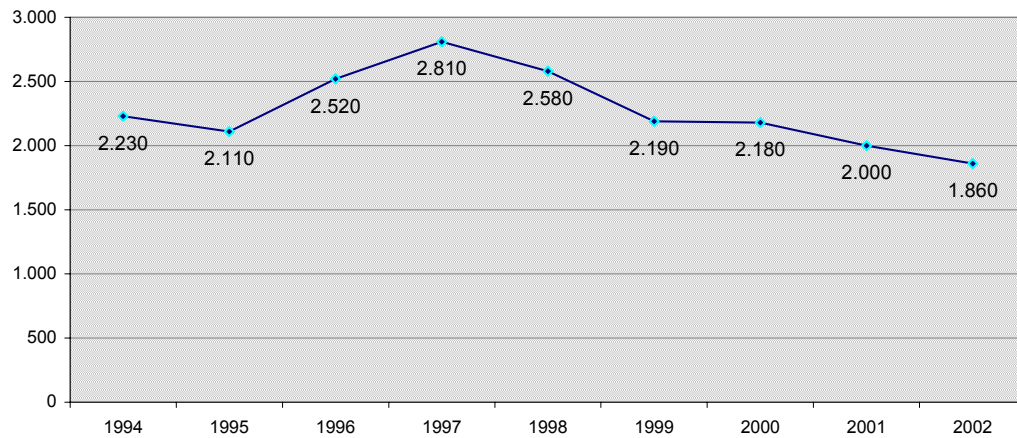
Homeless people in temporary accommodation in Berlin, 31.12. each year



Source: Senatsverwaltung Berlin, data collection of city district administration

The only East German *Bundesland* which provides (unpublished) data for part of the homeless population on an annual basis (known to municipal social departments at the end of each year; stock data) is Saxonia. These statistics show that numbers increased until 1997 but have been decreasing as well in the following years. For 2002 a further decrease by 7 per cent is reported.⁵

⁵ Please note that the Ministry has revised the data for 1997 and 1998.

Chart 3:*Homeless people in Saxonia known to municipal departments, 31.12. each year*

Source: Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Youth and Family in Saxonia

In May 2003 the national coalition of service providers for the homeless (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe, BAG W 2003) presented its updated estimate on the number of homeless people in Germany and the development over the last 8 years. The basis for these estimates is explained in last years statistical update (Busch-Geertsema 2002b). It is important to note that the numbers refer to an annual prevalence of acute homelessness and not to a stock number at a fixed day. The current estimate takes into account the decreasing numbers in several regions and municipalities which have let BAG W to assume a decrease of the total number of homeless people in Germany by 20 % between 2000 and 2002.

According to the recent estimate of BAG W about 23 % of all homeless persons (without repatriates) are women, 22 % children and young people under 18 years of age, and 55 % are men. The annual number of rough sleepers is assessed to be around 20,000 in 2002, including 1,800 to 2,200 women.⁶

⁶ Research into the extent and structure of street homelessness in Germany is underdeveloped in Germany. In recent years some local studies were published on this topic for the cities of Munich and Hamburg and for the area of Nürnberg, Fürth and Erlangen. For further information see last years research review.

Table 1:

The number of homeless persons in Germany according to estimates of the national coalition of service providers for the homeless (BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe)

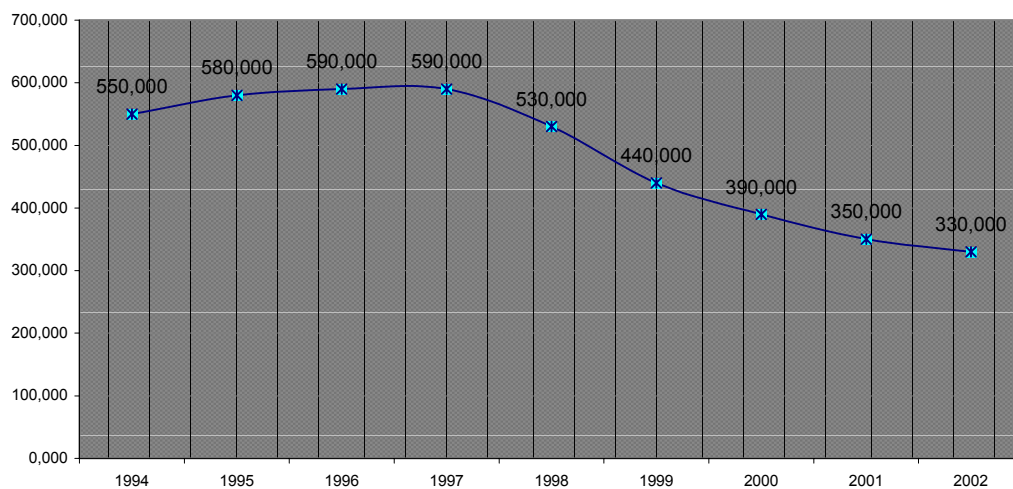
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Homeless people without "Aussiedler" (repatriates)	living in households with more than 1 person	370,000	390,000	380,000	370,000	330,000	260,000	220,000	200,000	180,000
	single homeless	180,000	190,000	210,000	220,000	200,000	180,000	170,000	150,000	150,000
	Total	550,000	580,000	590,000	590,000	530,000	440,000	390,000	350,000	330,000
"Aussiedler" (repatriates)		330,000	340,000	340,000	270,000	150,000	110,000	110,000	90,000	80,000
All homeless persons		880,000	920,000	930,000	860,000	680,000	550,000	500,000	440,000	410,000
Range +/- 10 %		790,000 – 970,000	830,000 – 1,000,000	840,000 – 1,000,000	770,000 – 950,000	610,000 – 750,000	500,000 – 610,000	450,000 – 550,000	480,000 – 390,000	450,000 – 370,000

all numbers rounded

Source: BAG 2003

Chart 4:

Homeless people (without repatriates) according to estimates of the national coalition of service providers for the homeless (BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe)



Source: BAG W 2003

3.3 Trends in the profile of the homeless population

There is no new information available on the profile of the homeless population. A working group of all relevant NGO welfare agencies providing services for the homeless has recently

reached an agreement on a standardised common set of basic data for the electronic documentation of their work with homeless clients. It is hoped that by providing a testing certificate for specialist data processing software the producers of such software will be let to use this standard data set and thereby make it possible to evaluate aggregated client data on a regional and national level (Bag W 2002). Although such a data-analysis would predominantly inform about the profile of those homeless people who are clients of NGO-services (which are almost exclusively serving single homeless people) and would not include most of the homeless clients (mainly families) of municipal services it would be an important step to gaining more information on the profile of a specific part of the homeless population. A first national analysis of data collected with the harmonised set of items cannot be expected before 2004.

3.4 Trends for the future

It has been mentioned in various national reports that long term analysis of the (West) German housing market after the second world war shows a cyclical development with repeated waves of housing shortage and empty housing and that housing policy has been following and enforcing this cyclical movement. There is no reason to believe that this will significantly change and that the level of homelessness will remain relatively low for the future. After the annual number of newly constructed dwellings in Germany had reached a peak of more than 600,000 in 1995, only 326,000 dwellings were constructed in 2001. The number of newly constructed dwellings in houses for several families decreased from 312,000 in 1995 to only 100,000 in 2001 and will further decrease to 69,000 in 2003 according to expert prognoses (Bartholmai 2003). Funding for new social housing has been reduced even more dramatically. While in 1994 more than 162,000 new social housing units were granted in Germany this number has fallen to 41,000 in 2001. As has been explained in earlier reports the existing stock of social housing in Germany is shrinking further rapidly because of the time limit of social obligations in Germany. According to estimates by the German Federation of Tenants the number of dwellings in social housing in Germany was at 1.8 million at the end of 2001 and was shrinking by 100,000 units per year.

4. RESEARCH REVIEW

4.1 Results published of follow-up study on ExWoSt-research field “permanent housing for the homeless”

In March 2003 highly important results were published of a follow-up study on the research scheme “Permanent Housing for the Homeless”. This scheme was mentioned in several of the earlier national reports on Germany and was set up in 1993 by the German Federal Ministry for Urban Development (*Bundesministerium fuer Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Staedtebau*). It formed part of the major scheme “Experimental Housing Construction and Urban Development” (*Experimenteller Wohnungs- und Staedtebau, ExWoSt*) and originally supported the scientific evaluation of seven pilot schemes for the construction of dwellings⁷ targeted for formerly homeless people in seven municipalities in Germany.

The underlying basic idea of this research scheme was that the integration of homeless people should be facilitated by the provision of the homeless with normal and cheap housing at normal building standards, with usual tenancy agreements, situated in non-stigmatised surroundings. Another requirement to participate in the program was that the projects had to be of manageable size and combine housing provision with further assistance in social integration. Special housing (like low-standard housing, temporary accommodation etc.) was explicitly ruled out.

Between October 1994 and March 1997 these pilot schemes in seven German municipalities were evaluated in detail.⁸ In the years 2000-2002 a follow-up study surveyed the long-term results of the seven pilot schemes included in the first phase plus four additional schemes.⁹ The results of this follow-up study were published in 2003 (BBR 2003).

In the eleven projects covered by the follow-up study 239 tenancies (with 456 persons) were created in 184 newly built or reconstructed dwellings for homeless people (for single persons as well as for homeless families). The tenancies were in use for three to six years in December 2000. 221 tenancies were covered by the survey in 12/2000. The results were encouraging: only 15 tenancies (7 % of all tenancies, excluding 8 which ended by the death of the tenant) had to be terminated by notice to quit and some of them also by eviction. Further 50 ended by

⁷ It was required of all schemes to create new housing either by building, rebuilding or completely renovating old buildings.

⁸ For details see BBR 1998 and last years research review.

⁹ The four additional schemes had to meet the same basic criteria and furthermore had to be in existence for sufficient time in order to allow for an ex-post analysis of tenancies (at least two years and nine months). Three of them were realised by municipalities and had replaced substandard temporary accommodation for the homeless (mainly families) by newly constructed or reconstructed dwellings at usual building standards.

“voluntary” leave, the majority of which let into other ordinary dwellings. More than two thirds of the tenancies still existed after this relatively long period. But by far not all of these tenancies had been sustained without any problems. In more than half of the still existing tenancies tenancy-problems arose, but could be settled thanks to early intervention by landlords and social workers and thanks to social support received. About half of the tenancy risks were caused exclusively by financial problems (rent arrears) and the other half either by a combination of rent arrears and other problems or by other problems only, like nuisance of the tenants to neighbours, non-permitted use of dwellings (subletting, pets), lack of cleanliness.

While tenancy problems as well as social support provided have diminished over the course of time there remained certain risks for the future. More than two thirds of all tenants were living on transfer incomes and many remained in difficult life situations. Therefore social workers saw for nearly two thirds of the tenants a future need of social support either only occasionally, or in crisis periods or – for some of them – on a continuous basis.

The authors of the study come to the conclusion that about 70 per cent of the homeless rehoused by special projects could also have been rehoused in “ordinary social housing” given that two fundamental preconditions were secured: A “socially oriented” housing administration (which reacts quickly to emerging tenancy problems and looks for unconventional ways of solving such problems) and additional social work support in cases of need. For the remaining 30 % of tenants targeted projects with a closer connection between housing and social support seemed to be necessary, because the households concerned would otherwise not have been able to sustain their tenancies for a longer period of time. These are those households who had repeatedly run into tenancy problems and were not able to reduce the reappearance of such problems despite the social support provided.

The study proves that it is a wrong prejudice to judge homeless people as unable to cope in ordinary housing. In contrary a great majority of formerly homeless tenants re-housed were indeed able to sustain their tenancy and use the chances provided by it for social stabilisation. But it also showed that support measures for stimulating and stabilising the reintegration process have proved necessary not only for the transition from being homeless to being a tenant and for the first phase after moving into the dwellings, but in a substantial number of cases also for a longer period thereafter. A significant part of tenants remained vulnerable to crisis situations, because of limiting objective conditions as well as because of restricted subjective coping abilities, so that a need for crisis intervention and targeted measures to support reintegration reappeared again and again even years after rehousing. The obvious consequences should be to improve the cooperation between housing providers, municipalities and NGO service providers in order to improve the provision of homeless people with access to regular housing and with the social support necessary. Existing financial risks should be covered by public funds and tenancy problems should be tackled by a better (and more “social”) form of housing administration and by providing social support in an active, reliable and flexible manner fitting individual needs.

The report is available in German only: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (ed.; 2002) Dauerhafte Wohnungsversorgung von Obdachlosen. Nachuntersuchung (*Permanent Housing for the Homeless, Follow-up study*), Werkstatt: Praxis, Nr. 3/2003 (authors: I. Mühlich-Klinger, G. Schuler-Wallner), Bonn: BBR Eigenverlag

4.2 Evaluation results of a study on innovative schemes for occupational qualification and training for homeless women

In 1998 a national model scheme focussing on innovative projects for occupational qualification and training for single homeless women was started. It was carried through on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. In several ways it was conceptualised as the continuation of an earlier scheme by the same Ministry which had focused on support schemes for single homeless women. The evaluation of the first scheme was presented in last years' research review. Under the second scheme projects were funded in three of the four cities included in the first scheme (Schwerin, Stuttgart, and Karlsruhe) and in Kassel. The projects were evaluated by the same institute, but this time the main focus was on training and employment schemes for an integration of homeless women into the labour market.

The evaluation report (Enders-Dragässer/Richter 2002) provides an analysis of data from 263 women participating in special training and employment schemes in the four cities. Qualitative interviews were carried through with 49 participants and with a number of experts involved in the schemes. Participants data show that the definition of the target group was obviously enlarged to cover not only those women who were homeless at the beginning of taking part in one of the schemes (at this stage 70 % of the participants had a regular tenancy with rent contract, only 30 % lived in insecure or temporary accommodation, shelters, hotels hostels for single mothers with children or in supported housing) but also those who had experienced homelessness in the past or were living in bad housing conditions and had additional social difficulties. The schemes offered to the target group followed the principle that there was a clear separation but also close cooperation between providers of social services for the homeless and the agencies providing training and qualification schemes. While both agencies had a clear division of tasks the participation in these specific training and employments schemes offered another route to receiving social support from for those in need of it (e.g. women in "concealed homelessness"). On the other hand social work support of services for homeless women was extremely relevant for enabling the target group to get access and participate successfully in these schemes. As a rule it were low threshold schemes specifically designed for the needs and the competences of the target group of women with social difficulties. The specific type of effective cooperation was highly dependant on the regional conditions and on local and regional policies on which it had to be adjusted in each case. The authors of the study emphasise the particular importance of working standards which are adequate for women's needs and provide

enough “room for women only”, to be protected from male dominance and from male harassment and violence and to receive support by female professionals.

The evaluation emphasises the high and unexpected motivation of participants to make use of training and employment schemes which are specifically designed for them and which take their social difficulties and their special needs and resources as women into consideration. A high proportion of the participants wanted to become independent of social assistance and had a special interest in getting practical experiences and in improving their chances for integration into employment. A little more than half of all participants managed to improve their qualifications and plan further steps towards regular employment. Some could already find a job but a majority of them were participating in schemes for further qualification, training or education.

The publication is available in German only: U. Enders-Dragässer/S. Richter (2002) *Berufliche Förderung von alleinstehenden wohnungslosen Frauen (Occupational training and qualification for single homeless women)*; Modellprojekt im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 1998-2000, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer

4.3 Study on mentally ill men in services for the homeless

The national federation of “stationary” institutions for single homeless people (*Zentralverband Sozialer Heim- und Werkstätten*), the municipal department for social affairs of the city of Munich and a catholic organization providing social services for men in Munich (*Männerfürsorgeverein München*) have commissioned a study on “highly problematic clients” in institutions for the homeless, who are often subjects of disciplinary sanctions because of their deviant and sometimes violent behavior. Many of these clients are characterized as persons with multiple problems and a combination of mental illness and addiction to legal and/or illegal drugs. They have often passed through a high number of different institutions and stay in homeless institutions and low threshold provision as a last resort because they are excluded from all other forms of specialist support, especially of their behavior and because they do not define themselves as mentally ill and cannot cope with an abstinent life.

With a qualitative approach a sociologist and a psychiatrist aimed at

- ◆ providing a differentiated description and analysis of the personality structure of such clients,
- ◆ exploring the types of reaction of service personnel in the institutions in relation to these clients and their behavior, and
- ◆ analyzing the strength and weakness of existing cooperation structures with external services of crisis intervention and long term provision of psychiatric support and treatment.

A number of expert interviews and in-depth assessments of individual clients were conducted in eight institutions for homeless men (day-centres, night shelters, long-stay institutions in

Munich and in other parts of south Germany). It was originally planned to include two institutions for homeless women as well, but this plan was given up because the institutions were not willing to cooperate.

The study concludes that mental problems and alcoholism of homeless men are presenting a growing problem in institutions for the homeless. Typical problems in the institutional context are withdrawal and isolation of the person concerned, but also nuisance and aggressive behavior. The institutions for the homeless are often confronted with a double dilemma in trying to cope with mentally ill clients. On the one hand they are neither qualified for psychiatric intervention nor do they have sufficient time and resources to provide adequate support, on the other hand it is extremely difficult to refer the clients in question to specialist support by psychiatric services and services for addicts. Particular focus is placed in the study on the requirements of such services which inhibit access for many homeless clients. They are confronted with regulations which they cannot cope with and it is required that they accept to be mentally ill and to be willing to change their future life. Often they only receive minimal treatment because of their low motivation and there is no adequate planning and procuring of after-care after stays in specialist therapeutical institutions.

One of the main conclusion of the study is, that the development of reliable cooperation structures is essential. Requirements for developing a functioning networking structure between services for the homeless and specialist services for the mentally ill and for addicts are not only formal regulations which have to be fixed by contracts, but also and foremost a modification of the predominant therapeutical approach of specialist services towards homeless persons. There is a need for a “de-dramatization” of the consumption of alcohol and a critical reflection on abstinence as a requirement for intervention by services for addicts. New therapeutical concepts for mental illness and addiction have to be developed which provide sufficient room for failures and relapses and which accept a low willingness by homeless people to receive psychiatric treatment.

The publication is available in German only: Romaus, R./Gaup, B. (2003) Psychisch Kranke in der Wohnungslosenhilfe. Interaktionsprobleme zwischen Personal und psychisch auffälligen Bewohnern in Einrichtungen der Wohnungslosenhilfe (*Mentally ill persons in services for the homeless. Problems of interaction between personnel and users of homeless institutions showing signs of mental disorder*; Heft 54 – Reihe Materialien zur Wohnungslosenhilfe), Bielefeld: Verlag Soziale Hilfe

4.4 New survey on homeless people „living on the street“ in Hamburg

The City of Hamburg has commissioned a free-lance sociologist to carry out a study on the profile of homeless rough sleepers in Hamburg. After a first survey on rough sleepers in Hamburg had focused on counting the total number of people sleeping in the streets of Hamburg,

the new survey aimed at producing more differentiated data on the socio-demographic and socio-economic profile of homeless people living on the street (age, sex, nationality, income, health status, duration of life on the street, causes of homelessness, reasons of use or non-use of night shelters, types of support needed to overcome homelessness, experiences with violence etc.). Rough sleepers were interviewed with a standardized questionnaire by personnel of almost 120 different services and institutions for the homeless and for drug addicts in Hamburg, including day centers, soup kitchens, church parishes involved in a winter-shelter-programme, advice centers etc.. Additional interviews were carried out with experts on homeless women to get more information on the special situation of women living on the street.

The definition of the target group covered all people who stated that they were currently sleeping rough at the time of the interview or had slept rough during at least half of the passed month. Included were also those homeless people who were using the winter-shelters, the night shelter on a container-ship and the municipal night shelter "Pik-As". The survey was carried through in the week from 20-26 March 2002. During this week 1,281 different persons belonging to the target group were interviewed (number cleared up after identification of double counting). The author emphasizes that the total number of rough sleepers in Hamburg will probably be somewhat higher: A number of important institutions in contact with rough sleepers (e.g. hospitals, ambulances, charitable cloth stores) were not included and rough sleepers who were unwilling to be interviewed or who were not in contact with any of the institution included in the survey during the week of interviews were not covered. It should also be kept in mind that the total number of homeless people in Hamburg is far greater than the number of rough sleepers. Apart from the winter-shelter-programme there are more than 3,000 places available for temporary accommodation of homeless families and single homeless persons in Hamburg.

The study focusing on the 1,281 rough-sleepers nevertheless produced a number of interesting results. A relatively high percentage (21.9 %) of women participated in the survey. The share of foreigners among the rough sleepers (17 %) was slightly higher than their share among the total population in Hamburg (15.1 %). A high percentage (about 42 %) of the rough sleepers had to leave their last flat because of an eviction or a notice to quit by their land-lord or land-lady. Compared to the survey in 1996 more rough sleepers of advanced age were found (almost a quarter were 50 and older) and – accordingly - more long-term homeless people. Especially the older and long-term homeless people showed a high distance from existing provision for the homeless and rarely made use of night shelters. Important reasons were overcrowding, the lack of privacy, fear of violence and theft, and nuisance through noise, dirt etc.. Recommendations of the study refer to an improvement of access to adequate regular housing for homeless people (and provision of adequate social support for settlement) and call for better standards of temporary accommodation to increase their acceptance by rough sleepers. Prevention should also be improved. A special focus should be placed on providing adequate support for long-term homeless people.

The publication is available in German only: Schaak, T. (2002) Obdachlose auf der Straße lebende Menschen in Hamburg 2002. Eine empirische Untersuchung über die soziale Lage „auf der Straße“ lebender Menschen in Hamburg. Eine Untersuchung im Auftrag der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, vertreten durch die Behörde für Soziales und Familie, entstanden in Kooperation mit den Verbänden der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege (*Roofless people living on the street in Hamburg 2002. An empirical study on the social situation of people living “on the street” in Hamburg. A study on behalf of the City of Hamburg, represented by the departments for social affairs and family, produced in cooperation with the welfare agencies in the voluntary sector*), ed. by the City of Hamburg, Hamburg

4.5 Ongoing research on homelessness which has not yet been published

There are a number of studies under way which directly focus on different aspects of homelessness but have not been published yet. One of these studies aims at analyzing the effects of the reform of the implementation order for Sect. 72 of the Federal Welfare Act (for details of this reform look under policy update). The study was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Security and was carried through by the institute *ISG Sozialforschung und Gesellschaftspolitik* in Cologne. The other study, commissioned by the Ministry, focused on the effects on the reformed section 15a of the Federal Welfare Act, which provides the most important measures for preventing threatening homelessness caused by rent arrears. A third important research project is the research network on “Homelessness and Support in Cases of Urgent Need of Housing” which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Sciences and which will publish first intermediate results in the course of the year. All three projects were described briefly in last years research review for Germany.

A new ongoing project which started in 2002 is a national survey on clients of all services for the homeless which are members of the protestant welfare agency *Diakonisches Werk*. The survey (commissioned by *Diakonisches Werk*, which is the most important welfare agency in the NGO sector providing services for the homeless) aims at covering the profile of all new clients of these services during a certain time and at analysing in detail their problems in relation to housing, income, employment, health, social situation and social ties. The study is carried through by GOE (*Gesellschaft für Organisation und Entscheidung*) in Bielefeld and results are expected for publication at the end of 2003 (see Poreski 2002).

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