

**EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION (SCSS) EXPLORATORY  
WORKSHOP**

**DEVELOPING THE EU SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE BASE  
ON INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO PREVENT AND  
ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS**

**York, United Kingdom, 26-28 March 2006**

**SCIENTIFIC REPORT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The European Science Foundation (ESF) Exploratory Workshop on 'Developing the EU social scientific evidence base on integrated approaches to prevent and address homelessness' was held at the University of York on 26-28 March 2006. Twenty two participants attended the meeting from nine countries (Austria; Belgium; Czech Republic; Germany; Poland; The Netherlands; Norway; Spain; United Kingdom (including England and Scotland)).

2. The central aim of the Workshop was to consider and progress the development of robust cross-national evaluation to inform EU policies on homelessness and social inclusion. The Workshop had three more detailed objectives:

- to examine critically the evaluative tools and research programmes used to investigate homelessness to date in the EU;
- to consider the feasibility of how best to develop more robust methods of cross-national evaluation, and;
- to build the research infrastructure to allow the development of more robust research through a consideration of present networks and the establishment (or integration) of a standing research group.

3. A total of fourteen presentations were made. The Workshop was arranged around six main themes:

- 1) The COOP project;
- 2) An appraisal of existing EU evaluative tools;
- 3) National perspectives on evaluation;
- 4) EU comparative perspectives on theory, evaluation and policy making;
- 5) The development of a comparative research agenda;
- 6) Building the research infrastructure.

4. The first two themes reviewed the contribution of the COOP project and other key EU research programmes to the development of evaluative tools to assess integrated approaches to homelessness. It was concluded that some tools offer a basis for further development but none are entirely adequate to progress work in this area. A number of gaps were identified including the need for clearer definitions, 'easy to use' tools and 'baseline data' to underpin research evaluations.

5. Themes 3 and 4 enabled the expert group to undertake a targeted and informed review of research on homelessness at both the national and European level. A lack of conceptual clarity within the homelessness field was identified, in particular epistemological assumptions need to be made explicit, whilst methodological approaches sometimes lack robustness. A consensus was reached as to the key theoretical, methodological and substantive issues that required further development. Particular development is required in longitudinal work. Prevention (and in particular the re-occurrence of homelessness) was agreed as a research priority for future work.

6. A half day of the Workshop was dedicated to the development of a comparative research agenda (Theme 5). The first stages towards an innovative programme of cross-national primary research on homelessness were made with the prioritisation of

a Collaborative Research Project (CRP) under the ESF EUROCORES programme. National teams, usually involving two or three institutions, agreed to produce a first outline of country-specific research priorities by June 2006, to be developed further into a collaborative bid for 2007.

7. The final theme focussed on the steps needed to build the research infrastructure in this area. The coordination of existing networks could be improved and it was not considered useful to add to this by establishing a new research group on homelessness. FEANTSA's Observatory on Homelessness, as well as the European Network of Housing Research both bring together homelessness experts at regular intervals. An ad-hoc sub-group of the European Network of Housing Research homelessness working group was established to progress the development of a more robust evidence base. The first meeting will take place in early July in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

The importance of the provision of adequate housing for homeless people and other vulnerable groups is recognised at the EU level. Growing research-related attention has been focussed in this area over the last decade. However, the overall social scientific evidence base on the prevention and solution of homelessness remains poorly developed. This European Science Foundation (ESF) Exploratory Workshop aimed to consider and progress the development of robust cross-national evaluation to inform EU policies on homelessness and social inclusion. The Workshop had three more detailed objectives:

- to examine critically the evaluative tools and research programmes used to investigate homelessness to date in the EU;
- to consider the feasibility of how best to develop more robust methods of cross-national evaluation, and;
- to build the research infrastructure to allow the development of more robust research through a consideration of present networks and the establishment (or integration) of a standing research group.

This report outlines the scientific content of the six main themes that the Workshop addressed across the two days:

- the COOP project;
- an appraisal of existing EU evaluative tools;
- national perspectives on evaluation;
- EU comparative perspectives on theory, evaluation and policy making;
- the development of a comparative research agenda;
- building the research infrastructure.

Under each heading, key points arising from the papers and subsequent Workshop discussions are outlined.

### **Theme 1: The COOP project**

The first paper under this theme, by *Heidrun Feigelfeld* and *Deborah Quilgars*, introduced the COOP project<sup>1</sup>. The project, part of the Transnational Exchange Programme, worked across 37 institutions and seven EU countries to develop and utilise criteria to measure co-operative forms of working to address housing stress and homelessness. A network of both social scientists and practitioners from local authorities, housing providers, social care providers and umbrella organisations participated in seven urban areas. The project demonstrated the added value of co-operation as compared to working separately. With its focus on good practice and peer reviewing, the project contributed to the wider EU focus in this area that has included the EU Peer Review Programme (CAP), UN-HABITAT Best Practices, as

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<sup>1</sup> Feigelfeld, H., Adamski, J., Avramov, D., Cervený, M., Jones, A., Kleinhans, R., Kloth, M., Kruythoff, H. and Quilgars, D. (2005) *Co-operate! How to help people excluded from decent housing: Experiences from nine European cities*, Vienna: Stadt and Regionalforschung ([www.srz-gmbh.com/coop](http://www.srz-gmbh.com/coop)).

well as other Transnational Exchange Projects. With its emphasis on the development of criteria, the COOP project also informed research undertaken in the area of measurement of homelessness, alongside the work of EUROSTAT, CPA Thematic work and FEANTSA. Finally, COOP also attempted to evaluate service interventions, an approach also utilised in two projects under the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> EU funding framework (EUROHOME and EUROHOME-IMPACT).

The second paper, by *Melanie Kloth* and *Helen Kruythoff*, appraised the strengths and weaknesses of the COOP criteria developed for the evaluation of integrated housing practices. Criteria were developed in four main areas: the relevance and embeddedness of co-operative practices; effectiveness; efficiency; and transferability. Strengths of the criteria included:

- it is systematic and consensus based;
- provides a strong structure with three main criteria;
- generates a learning process for those participating that can be translated into improved services;
- criteria are fit for purpose.

Weaknesses of the criteria included:

- definitions of key terms and concepts required further development and shared understanding (e.g. prevention, user involvement);
- units of measurement were not easily comparable;
- a dilemma between the development of general or detailed criteria existed.

Recommendations for future work agreed at the Workshop included the need for: ‘baseline data’ to underpin research evaluations; clearer definitions, and; the setting of standards for future services (rather than only evaluating existing services).

## **Theme 2: Appraisal of existing EU evaluative tools**

In the first paper under Theme 2, *Dragana Avramov* considered outstanding issues in evaluative research in social inclusion. This paper outlined how research to date had consisted of three main components: conceptual analysis; contextual analysis; and applied topical research. Key projects and findings centred in these areas were described. The paper then considered the use of one evaluative tool in more detail: the IMPACT evaluation tool, developed by Chatel and Soulet under the EUROHOME-IMPACT project on ‘The housing dimension of welfare reform’<sup>2</sup>. This tool used eight key areas to evaluate services: relevance; internal coherence; effectiveness; performance; ethicality; efficiency; and legitimacy. The Workshop reflected on the value of this tool and concluded that it could function as a starting point for future work in this area. However, it was recognised that the tool was not easy to use ‘off the peg’. The evaluative tool used in research under the integrated state program North Rhine-Westphalia could also provide another model (see Theme 3).

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<sup>2</sup> Giorgi (ed) (2003) EUROHOME-IMPACT: The Housing Dimension of Welfare Reform: Final report, <http://www.iccr-international.org/impact/downloads.html>

The second paper by *Bill Edgar* considered the role of FEANTSA research, most particularly conducted by the European Observatory on Homelessness. The research focus is policy related to meet the needs of FEANTSA member organisations across 23 member states. Research activity includes national outputs and thematic research conducted by Observatory researchers, but the relatively limited available funding means that most of the work involves secondary rather than primary research. The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), developed by FEANTSA but utilised more widely in housing research, was outlined. The Workshop participants agreed that this was a useful tool that could assist conceptual clarity in future work (for example, by defining whether research is focussed on people who are ‘roofless’, ‘houseless’, in ‘insecure housing’ or ‘inadequate housing’).

Other conclusions from Workshop discussions under this theme included:

- the ethics of homelessness research should be taken into account;
- conceptual clarification is needed;
- homelessness is a multi-dimensional issue and needs an integrated approach;
- homelessness is also a dynamic process and data collection needs to reflect this;
- different levels of analysis are needed, ranging from individual data on life histories and data collection at the housing system/ national level.

### **Theme 3: National perspectives on evaluation**

At a national level, methodologies for the evaluation of programmes to address housing loss have been quite limited, with a few notable exceptions. Theme 3 included three papers providing perspectives on Belgium, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic.

The first paper, by *Pascal De Decker*, considered what a homeless person might expect from housing policies in Belgium. Here the chronic absence of structured research was highlighted, along with the absence of evidenced based policies. The functioning of the housing market (predominance of home ownership, a squeezed private rental sector and low levels of social housing) and institutional features (e.g. separation of welfare and housing policies) means it is difficult for vulnerable groups to access housing. Some monitoring exists of homelessness cases but much more is needed. The paper by *Jerzy Adamski* and *Milos Cervený*, focussing on Poland and the Czech Republic, also highlighted the lack of research on housing and homelessness. Here, even basic data on the scale of homelessness was absent. This was a priority for future research alongside the development of more sophisticated methods of service evaluation.

In contrast the paper by *Sophie Eichner* described the positive experience of the evaluation of an integrated state program addressing homelessness in North Rhine Westphalia, Germany (that has supported 120 projects from 1996). The evaluation utilised a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. This included the use of indicators and a reporting system to collect data from projects in a range of fields of action (e.g. covering prevention, outreach, allocation of housing etc). This continuous evaluation offered a range of benefits including increased comparability.

#### **Theme 4: EU comparative perspectives on theory, evaluation and policy making**

Theme 4 moved from national evaluations to consider EU-wide perspectives on research and policy making.

The first paper, by *Suzanne Fitzpatrick*, considered the theoretical base of research on homelessness in the EU, in particular considering fundamental theoretical questions about how the social world is conceptualised. The need for research to take account of national teams' convergence/ divergence with regard to disciplinary focus, epistemological assumptions, and methodological approach was highlighted. One possible way forward in the development of more theoretically informed EU research on homelessness was outlined: the use of 'realistic evaluation' to investigate the long term impact of services interventions. This 'critical realist' approach would seek to uncover the underlying causal mechanisms through analysis of the qualitative nature of social objects and structures. Participants of the Workshop considered that it would be useful to investigate this approach in more detail.

The second paper, by *Volker Busch-Geertsema*, reflected on the findings of a recent survey of 3,600 households in Germany exploring homelessness prevention. This study demonstrated that successful prevention depends more on the way the service is delivered than the histories of the households concerned. In terms of replicability, however, it was accepted that it would be difficult to operationalise a similar study for other countries at present and that efforts to develop more differentiated definitions of prevention are absolutely essential to progress this at the EU level.

The final paper in this session, by *Henryk Adamczuk*, considered the development of strategies for social and housing policies in light of the National Action Plans. Three key challenges were outlined: firstly, to locate micro qualitative evaluation within the broader macro level social science; to generate a coherent series of reports bridging research and best practices; and the development of better theory to inform these evaluative projects.

The final session of Day One considered the key challenges of cross-national research. Participants agreed that there were a number of points that needed to be taken into account in developing further research:

- our theoretical starting point – do we want to construct overall, middle range or low level theories?
- consideration of how to locate micro qualitative evaluation within broader macro level social science process;
- definition and operationalisation of key concepts such as prevention;
- do we focus our research on service interventions or on the experience of homeless people?
- what is the most appropriate methodological approach, given the nature of the research question/ theoretical approach?
- How essential is longitudinal research? Can we reconstruct life histories in retrospect?

## **Theme 5: The development of a comparative research agenda**

A half day was dedicated to the consideration of how best a comparative research agenda on homelessness could be carried forward in the future. Two key issues were discussed here. Firstly, what are the key substantive issues that an EU social scientific study should focus on? Secondly, which funding sources might support this work and what are the steps required by the group to develop one or more proposals.

*Lia van Doorn* outlined the learning points from Day One to inform Theme 5. A brainstorming session, supported by roundtable contributors, then took place to identify the key principles and/or questions that needed to be addressed to develop a collaborative project, including:

- Central research question might address the broad issue of ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances’;
- There is interest in individual, institutional and broader housing systems/ societal level;
- Population of interest need to be defined with reference to ETHOS (broader than people who sleep rough), although if there was agreement on methodology then different projects could look at different groups;
- Interest in prevention but study needs to define this more closely (include primary/ secondary/ tertiary/ re-occurrence); particular need for research on repeat homelessness in a number of countries;
- There should be a focus on both processes and outcomes;
- A longitudinal approach would be desirable;
- Criteria/ benchmarking needed if evaluating services;
- Agreement on conceptual clarity/ theoretical perspective essential;
- Ethical implications of approach need to be considered.

The development of a Collaborative Research Project (CRP) under the ESF EUROCORES programme was prioritised. Whilst partners were keen to take forward a project proposal as soon as possible, reluctantly it was agreed that there was inadequate time available to meet this year’s submission date of 1 June. Rather, partners agreed to work towards the development of a stronger bid for 2007.

A plan of action for the development of a CRP bid was outlined by Workshop partners. Firstly, partners from each country identified national teams which, in most cases, involved working across two to four institutions. Secondly, each team agreed to produce a first outline of a national proposal by June 2006 and forward to the University of York and SRZ Stadt and Regionalforschung for collation. Thirdly, these national responses would be discussed at the European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) conference in Slovenia in July 2006 (see below). At this point, a further plan of action would then be instated to ensure that the propositions were developed into a full proposal.



## **Theme 6: Building the research infrastructure**

Two papers were presented under the last Theme. The first paper, by *Christel van Gerven* and *Christian Perl*, considered the practitioner view and their role in social scientific research. The importance of taking account of the cost of any evaluation for voluntary organisations or local authorities was stressed, as well as the respective power relationships between clients, practitioners and researchers – cooperation should be as equal as possible. Outcomes needed to be useable in terms of improving services. There was a particular interest in sustainability issues amongst practitioners.

The final paper of the Workshop, by *Isobel Anderson*, mapped the current role of international networks that are concerned with research on homelessness. Networks considered included FEANTSA's well established Homelessness Observatory, ENHR's working group on homelessness and CECODHAS. Ad-hoc research groups arising from particular projects (including COOP) and the European Housing Forum, an informal co-operation of a number of bodies, were also reviewed. There is an overall need for better links between networks.

The benefits of establishing a standing research group concerned with the evaluation of integrated housing practices to address homelessness were considered by participants. It was decided that to avoid duplication of work, the work arising from this Workshop should be linked into existing forums. More specifically, it was felt that the meetings of the European Network of Housing Researchers homelessness working group would offer a cost-effective and efficient forum for ongoing discussion. Most of the participants were members of the ENHR and would be attending forthcoming events.

### **ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS, CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE FIELD**

The ESF Workshop facilitated the bringing together of an expert group of researchers with an in-depth understanding of the substantive theoretical and research issues related to homelessness. The Workshop supported discussions across disciplines, including sociology, social policy, geography, politics and economics, with a multi-disciplinary team assembled to take forward research ideas.

Evaluative tools developed to investigate integrated approaches to homelessness were examined critically and their respective advantages and disadvantages reviewed. It was concluded that some tools offer a basis for further work but none are adequate as they stand. The learning from the recently completed COOP project was shared with a wider group of researchers, disseminating results but more importantly deepening understanding in this area.

Most centrally, the Workshop enabled an expert group to undertake a targeted and informed review of existing research and gaps within the evidence base to be identified. A consensus was reached as to the key theoretical and methodological issues that required further development. Prevention (and in particular the re-occurrence of homelessness) was agreed as a research priority for future work. The first stages towards an innovative programme of cross-national primary research on

homelessness were made. The core elements of a cross-national research bid were discussed and a plan of action for subsequent development agreed.

The Workshop considered how best to build the research infrastructure to facilitate the development of more robust research in this area. The avoidance of duplication of effort was prioritised. An ad-hoc sub-group of the European Network of Housing Research homelessness working group was established to progress specifically the development of a more robust evidence base with which to inform future targeted EU policies to address social exclusion.

The papers/ presentations from the workshop are now available on the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York website:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/ESF/ESFintra.htm>

*(NB: See also conclusions of Theme 5 and Theme 6 in the section “Scientific content”.)*

## FINAL PROGRAMME

**Monday 27 March 2006**

- 09.00            *Introduction (Suzanne Fitzpatrick, University of York)*
- 09.15            *Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)  
Reija Tuomaala (Standing Committee for the Social Sciences)*
- 09.30            **Theme 1: The COOP Project**  
(Chair: **Dragana Avramov**, PSPC Brussels)
- “Locating the COOP project within EU research on housing  
and homelessness”**  
(**Heidrun Feigelfeld**, SRZ Vienna; **Deborah Quilgars**, University  
of York)
- “Main outcomes of the COOP project: An appraisal of the  
strengths and weaknesses of COOP criteria in the evaluation  
of integrated housing practices”**  
(**Melanie Kloth**, InWIS / Ruhr University Bochum; **Helen  
Kruythoff**,  
OTB / University Delft )
- Discussion
- 10.45            *Tea / Coffee*
- 11.00            **Theme 2: Appraisal of Existing EU Evaluative Tools**  
(Chair: **Christel van Gerven**, City of Rotterdam)
- ”Criteria development at the EU level: An assessment of  
outstanding issues in the field of social inclusion”**  
(**Dragana Avramov**, PSPC Brussels)
- ”The importance of evaluative research for the European  
Observatory of Homelessness in the context of access to  
housing” (Bill Edgar, University of Dundee)**
- Discussion
- 12.30            **Discussion: What development is needed on evaluative tools?**  
(Input and Chair: **Helen Kruythoff**, **Reinout Kleinhans**, OTB /  
University Delft)
- 13.00            *Lunch Quarks Restaurant, National Science Learning Centre*
- 14.00            **Theme 3: National Perspectives On Evaluation**  
(Chair: **Henryk Adamczuk**, University of Central England)
- ”What can homeless people expect from housing policies in  
Flanders, Belgium?”**  
(**Pascal de Decker**, University of Antwerp)

**“Avoiding homelessness – Secure Permanent Housing” - experiences with the evaluation of an integrated state program against homelessness in North Rhine Westphalia, Germany”**  
(Sofie Eichner, University Duisburg-Essen)

**”Housing the poor – the need for evaluation in the New Member States”**  
(Jerzy Adamski, IRM Cracow; Miloš Červený, ÚRS Prague)

Discussion

15.30 *Tea/ Coffee*

15.45 **Theme 4: EU Comparative Perspectives On Theory, Evaluation And Policy Making**  
(Chair: **Pedro Jose Cabrera Cabrera**, Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid)

**”Developing the theoretical base of research on homelessness in the UK and EU”**  
(Suzanne Fitzpatrick, University of York)

**”Evaluating homelessness prevention in the EU: Reflecting on the findings of a recent survey of 3,600 households in Germany”**  
(Volker Busch-Geertsema, GISS Bremen)

**”Addressing homelessness across the European Union: The development of strategies for social and housing policies and National Action Plans”**  
(Henryk Adamczuk, University of Central England)

Discussion

17.30 **What are the key challenges for cross-national research?**  
(Chair: **Suzanne Fitzpatrick**, University of York)

18.00 *End*

19.30 *DINNER*

## **Tuesday 28 March 2006**

09.00 **Reflection on day 1: Key learning points**  
(Lia van Doorn, Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare; all)

09.30 **Theme 5: Developing A Comparative Research Agenda**  
(Chair: **Deborah Quilgars**, University of York)

**“Gaps in the evidence base: Assessing future priorities”**  
(Roundtable: **Dragana Avramov**, PSFC Brussels; **Isobel Anderson**, University of Stirling; **Evelyn Dyb**, Norwegian Building Research Institute; **Martin Lux**, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)

- “First outline of an international research collaboration submission”**  
 (Heidrun Feigelfeld, SRZ Vienna; Reinout Kleinhans, OTB / University Delft)
- Discussion
- 10.45 *Tea/ Coffee*
- 11.00 **Theme 5: Developing a Comparative Research Agenda (Cont)**  
 (Chair: Volker Busch-Geertsema, GISS Bremen)
- Discussion of, and decisions on, organisational implementation of a collaborative bid, in particular building of a core team to respond to present European Collaborative Research Project (ECRP) call**
- 12.30 *Lunch*
- 13.15 **Theme 6: Building The Research Infrastructure**  
 (Chair: Bill Edgar, University of Dundee)
- “Taking account of the practitioner view: The role of non-academics in social scientific research”**  
 (Christel van Gerven, City of Rotterdam; Christian Perl, Volkshilfe Österreich (NGO))
- “The added value of international networks: How current networks contribute to research and policy on homelessness”**  
 (Isobel Anderson, University of Stirling)
- Discussion
- 14.30 *Tea/ Coffee*
- 14.45 **Discussion of, and decisions about, future network activities**  
 (Chair: Melanie Kloth, InWIS / Ruhr University Bochum)
- A new network or integration into existing networks?**
- Future collaborations, networking and dissemination**
- 15.15 **Conclusions**  
 (Deborah Quilgars, University of York; Heidrun Feigelfeld, SRZ Vienna)
- 15.45 *Close of Workshop*
- Departure*

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

There were 22 participants in the Workshop. In addition, an ESF representative was also present. Of the 22 participants, 12 were female and 10 male. Two participants were aged between 20 and 29, five were aged between 30 and 39, seven were aged between 40 and 49 and eight participants were aged 50 or over.

There were representatives from a total of nine countries: two from Austria; two from Belgium; two from the Czech Republic; three from Germany; one from Poland; four from the Netherlands; one from Norway; one from Spain, and; six from the United Kingdom (four from England and two from Scotland).

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