June 2013

Housing-Led Solutions to Homelessness in Rural Areas

1. Background

There is increasing consensus amongst stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels that 'housing-led' approaches to tackling homelessness are particularly effective. However, little attention has been paid to the specificities of applying these approaches in rural contexts. This paper highlights a number of challenges to implementing housing-led approaches in rural areas, and makes recommendations as to how these can be overcome. It is aimed at policy makers and service providers as well as other interested stakeholders.

The paper was developed by the FEANTSA Housing Working Group in the context of their broader work on housing-led approaches. The group considers that, in a context of increasing momentum around a shift towards housing-led policies in European contexts, the specificities of rural contexts should be addressed and their policy and service implications fully considered.

2. Rural Homelessness

Although "rural areas" have been analysed in many countries for decades, there is no single internationally accepted definition. This is largely explained by:
- The diversity of perceptions of rurality and its defining characteristics;
- The inherent need for definitions to be tailored according to the "object" analysed or policy concerned;
- The difficulty of collecting relevant data at the level of basic geographical units (administrative unit, grid cell, plot, etc)

For statistical purposes, the EU introduced a new typology of 'predominantly rural', 'intermediate' or 'predominantly urban' regions in 2010. The typology uses a population grid of one square kilometre resolution and creates clusters of urban grid cells with a minimum population density of 300 inhabitants per km² and a minimum population of 5 000. All the cells outside these urban clusters are considered as rural. For the purposes of this paper, a broad conception of rural homelessness is applied, taking account of diverse realities reported by FEANTSA members. There is therefore no precise overlap with the official EU statistical typology.

There are no European statistics regarding the extent of rural homelessness. This reflects an overall lack of robust data on homelessness at the level of many Member States, as well as the fact that assessing the extent of rural homelessness presents specific methodological challenges. Furthermore, rural homelessness is less visible than urban homelessness and its "hidden" nature is exacerbated by a predominant conception of homelessness as an urban problem.

Existing evidence from a range of countries indicates that levels of homelessness are indeed lower in rural areas than in urban ones and that homeless services are concentrated in towns and cities. However, rural homelessness is a persistent reality which should be taken into account when developing and implementing policies and services. All of the living situations described by the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (see annex) occur in rural contexts. For all of the countries represented in the Housing Working Group (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland France, Ireland, Spain, UK), there is some degree of rural homelessness and housing exclusion. The table below provides an overview of the situation in the different countries.

Country	Overview of rural homelessness situation
Austria	In Austria, almost all homeless services are situated in cities of at least 30, 000. In rural areas, there is little or no homeless service provision. Addiction treatment centres are the only type of service which are more likely to be located in rural areas.

	People who become homeless are often forced to go to cities to obtain support. As responsibility for homelessness lies with the provincial governments, homeless services are mostly funded through local funds. In rural areas, homelessness is not considered a priority and tends to be framed as a problem of individual circumstances and shortcomings. Home ownership is dominant in most rural areas and there is little affordable rental property available for people on low incomes. Public transport is another challenge which makes it difficult for homeless people in rural areas to access housing, employment and services.
Belgium	In Belgium, there is a general trend of people to migrating from rural areas to urban areas to access services. Most homeless services are located in larger cities. At the same time, some people move out to rural areas to stay in campsites when they become homeless. There is a problem of inadequate housing in remote areas. Church parishes offer fewer and fewer services, which has created a gap in provision.
Czech Republic	Visible homelessness and homeless services are mostly concentrated in urban areas. The strategic framework for tackling homelessness "Concept of working with homeless people in the Czech Republic to 2020" states that villages of less than 20, 00 inhabitants do not require local homeless services. Less visible forms of homelessness such as staying with family and friends because of lack of housing options, as well as inadequate housing, are challenges in rural areas.
Finland	In Finland, there is very little actual homelessness in rural areas. However, there are people at risk of homelessness. This concerns people who are very excluded and need specific health and social services but are unable to access them in remote areas. As in many contexts, accessibility of mainstream services needs to be reinforced for this target group.
France	Homelessness is generally concentrated in cities where the supply of affordable housing is most constrained. Nonetheless, *Fondation Abbé Pierre* estimates that approximately 15% of the population in rural and peri-urban local areas experience poor housing.[1] Areas experiencing rural decline have a relatively high concentration of homeowners with low incomes, frequently but not only older people, who live in inadequate and very inefficient housing (e.g. Centre of Brittany). A lack of housing suitable for young people is a challenge in some rural areas, reflecting an overall lack of small units and affordable housing for rent. House prices have risen sharply in certain more attractive rural areas, making housing increasingly unaffordable for lower income households. Seasonal workers in rural industries such as tourism and agriculture may also be particularly vulnerable to homelessness.
Ireland	Homelessness and homeless services are mostly concentrated in major urban areas in Ireland. Nonetheless, "hidden" homelessness in rural contexts is a reality.

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[1] Fondation Abbé Pierre (2013) *Rapport Sur L'Etat du Mal-Logement en France*, available at: http://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/publications.php?filtre=publication_rml

Spain	There is a lack of data on rural homelessness in Spain. The national statistical institute (INE) survey of homeless persons, which recorded that 22,938 homeless persons used accommodation and catering centres in 2012, focuses only on those municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants.[2] Nonetheless, rural homelessness is an important issue in Spain.[3] Inadequate and insecure housing is prevalent in some rural areas; often linked to rural population decline and an ageing population. NGO service providers provide services to thousands of homeless people in rural areas. In some areas, this concerns a high proportion of seasonal workers, many of whom are immigrants.
UK	There are no up-to-date figures available on rural homelessness for the UK as a whole. There was a higher proportional increase in homelessness in rural areas than urban ones from the 1980s to the early 2000s. In England in 2010, the Commission for Rural Communities reported that homelessness had fallen in all areas since 2003/04 and remained lower as a rate per population in rural local authority areas.[4] Levels in rural areas was approximately half that found in "major urban areas" and two thirds the level found in "large and other urban areas". There is a lack of up-to-date evidence on the impact of the crisis and current welfare reform on rural homelessness. Rural homelessness in the UK is linked to problems of affordability due to urban-rural migration amongst affluent groups; second home ownership; lack of social housing; and low levels of house building.

The causes of rural homelessness are broadly similar to those of urban homelessness and can include structural, institutional, relationship and personal factors. The relative importance of different causes may vary according to the specific characteristics of a given rural context.

It is difficult to generalise about the profile of people experiencing rural homelessness in Europe. Overall, there is an on-going broadening of the profile of people that experience homelessness with increasing proportions of women, migrants, young people, and families.

3. Housing-Led Approaches

Housing-led approaches are increasingly recognised as effective in tackling homelessness. This has been reflected in a number of key policy recommendations at EU level, including the recently published Social Investment Package,[5] which calls on Member States to confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on housing-led approaches. The term housing-led covers homeless policies that focus predominantly on:

- access to permanent housing solutions as soon as possible for homeless people;
- targeted prevention for people at risk of homelessness;

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[2] Data available on the INE website:
http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t25/p454/e02/a2012/&file=pcaxis
[3] López Ruiz and Cabrera 'International perspectives on rural homelessness : a sociological perspective on homelessness in rural Spain', in *International Perspectives on Rural Homelessness*, Milbourne, P and Cloake P (Eds)? London ; New York : Routledge, 2006.
[4]Commission for Rural Communities (2010) State of the countryside 2010, available at:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110303145243/http://ruralcommunities.gov.uk/sotc2010/
[5] COM(2013) 83 final

- provision of needs-based, person-centred support services to formerly homeless people/those at risk of homelessness. Such support addresses issues such as tenancy maintenance, social inclusion, employment, health and well-being for people who are living in housing, rather than prior to re-housing. It is delivered on a "floating" basis rather than in an institutional setting.

Housing-led policies seek to normalise the living conditions of homeless people and end situations of homelessness quickly and sustainably. This represents a significant departure from the "staircase" response to homelessness, which is the dominant approach in most EU contexts. According to this approach, stable housing is the **end goal** in the reintegration process and homeless people, particularly those with complex support needs, should move through various stages in different residential services before becoming "ready" for housing.

The Housing First model is a key reference in the context of housing-led approaches. It combines rapid access to housing with flexible, needs-based support delivered on a floating basis. Housing First has proved to be highly effective in ending homelessness for people with a long history of rough sleeping and/or living in shelters combined with complex needs. Its impressive results in this respect have made it highly influential internationally; contributing towards growing interest in housing-led homelessness policies.

4. EU Policy Context

EU policies and instruments are relevant to social and rural policy development and can thus potentially support tackling rural homelessness.

In the social area, the EU fosters the cooperation of Member States, the coordination and harmonisation of national policies, and the participation of stakeholders. The Europe 2020 Strategy has set a target of reducing by 20million the number of people living in poverty in the EU.[6] Tackling homelessness is a key priority in this respect, as underlined by the Social Investment Package.

In the context of its Common Agricultural Policy, the EU also supports rural development. The proposed Regulation on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for 2014-2020 includes promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction in rural areas.[7] Basic services are included as a priority under Article 21. This includes small-scale infrastructure and the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services, including social services. This creates opportunities to tackle homelessness if Member States include this priority in their multiannual national/regional programmes. Hitherto, rural development policy has not played a significant role in fighting homelessness but there is potential that could be developed by relevant national and regional managing authorities. LEADER is an EU instrument for local development which allows local actors to develop their area. The LEADER approach helps local rural communities to elaborate and implement strategies for improving quality of life with small-scale projects, which can also address social inclusion issues.

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[6] COM(2010) 2020 final
[7] 2011/0282 (COD)

5. Challenges for Implementing Housing-Led Approaches in Rural Contexts

5.1 Service Scarcity

Rural areas, even in countries that are generally "service rich", tend to lack specialist homeless services. This is because such services are often concentrated where homelessness is a "visible" problem. Scarcity of homeless services also reflects funding constraints - sparsely populated rural areas are less likely to provide the economies of scale that make services viable. As a result, homeless people may adopt coping strategies that maintain "hidden" homelessness or be obliged to access services in towns and cities.

The lack of homeless services is a major challenge when it comes to addressing rural homelessness. Limited availability of specialist homeless services, including accommodation services, means that housing-led approaches may be particularly relevant in rural contexts if housing can be successfully secured. However, long distances and inadequate transport can make the provision of floating support more time-consuming, expensive and challenging.

As well as homeless services, a lack of access to mainstream employment, health, housing and social and other services can be an additional barrier to effectively supporting homeless people or those at risk of homelessness in rural contexts. Specialist services focusing on drug and alcohol, domestic violence and young people's projects may be particularly lacking and contribute to homelessness not being prevented. Whilst some specific homeless services can and should be developed on the basis of need in rural areas, there is a very important role for mainstream services to play in preventing and tackling homelessness in these contexts.

Limited transport services can also be a major constraint in providing solutions for homelessness in rural areas. Difficulty accessing transport may prevent homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, from accessing services that are available in the broader local area. This can also be a barrier to employment. Distance and transport factors can make it expensive and challenging for services to be delivered, particularly along the lines of "floating" support.

5.2 Lack of Affordable, Quality Housing

Rural housing markets can have various specificities which make it more difficult for people to access affordable housing. In general, rural housing markets are likely to be dominated by private ownership and have a lack of affordable rental accommodation.

In some rural areas, there is an acute lack of affordable housing. For example, in parts the UK, urban-rural migration, growing second-home ownership, low levels of construction and the selling off of social housing stock has contributed to a lack of affordable rental housing in rural areas.

The suitability of the housing stock in terms of local housing needs can also be a challenge. A lack of small, affordable units for single people or smaller households is often a problem. This can be a particular challenge for young people from the local area who wish to live independently, as well as for older people who can no longer manage their larger home.

In some rural contexts, housing may be affordable but of inadequate quality. Housing conditions in rural areas can be considerably worse than in urban areas. This is more likely to be the case in areas where demand is low and where processes of depopulation have/are taking place. Some

homeowners in rural areas find themselves without the resources to maintain, adapt or repair housing and forced to live in very poor conditions.

Certain types of inadequate housing are more likely to be found in rural areas, such as caravans on sites. In Belgium, research has shown that people who are no longer able to cover housing costs in the city may choose to move into a rural caravan site as a way of coping with their situation.[8] Whilst this is normally intended as a temporary coping strategy, it can often become a permanent living situation.

5.3 Rural Economy Factors

Specificities of rural economies can contribute to rural homelessness. Lower incomes and reduced job prospects make it difficult for people to cover housing costs in some rural areas.

Tied accommodation, where housing is provided by the employer, is associated with some economic activities which are common in rural economies such as tourism, agricultural work, and care work in more remote settings. People living in tied accommodation are particularly vulnerable to homelessness if they lose their jobs.

Some rural areas have high levels of seasonal work in sectors such as agriculture and tourism. Seasonal workers, many of whom are third country nationals and some of whom are irregular migrants, are particularly exposed to homelessness and inadequate housing conditions. In January 2010, the Italian national authorities found around 2,500 African seasonal workers in Rosarno, most of whose immigration status was regular, sleeping in tent settlements and abandoned warehouses lacking even basic sanitation facilities. Appalling living and working conditions have also been identified in areas in southern Spain. Permanent housing solutions are not usually an option for this group because of the temporary nature of their stay. Nonetheless, respect for human rights and dignity requires that temporary housing is secure and of an adequate standard.

5.4 Rural Community Factors

Some features of rural communities may present specific challenges for homeless people and homeless service provision. In smaller, more close-knit communities, people who become homeless may be more exposed to stigma from the local community as they are likely to be known. At the same time, homelessness can also be less visible and less recognised in rural areas than in urban areas because the coping strategies that homeless people adopt, such as living with family and friends, living in inadequate or insecure housing, or moving a lot may help to re-enforce the invisibility of their homelessness and mask the need for solutions. There may be resistance to the provision of homeless services in more exclusive rural settings because this in not in keeping with dominant perceptions of the area. In more close-knit communities, moving from a situation of homelessness into housing may be particularly fraught because the local community's awareness of someone's history can create additional pressure. The price of "failure" in this sense may be particularly high in some rural communities. This is also a challenge for service providers – if landlords or people in the local community experience formerly homeless people struggling or failing in independent accommodation, it may become more difficult to secure such accommodation from a small pool in the future.

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[8] Henk Meert (2000). 'In my Caravan, I feel like Superman : Back to the roots of a Residual Housing Sector'. Paper presented at the ENHR Conference Gävle, Sweden June 2000

6. Overcoming Challenges: Key Approaches and Examples of Good Practice

6.1 Floating Support

Given the scarcity of specialist, residential homeless services in many rural areas, the provision of "floating" support is key to averting homelessness for people at risk and to supporting a successful transition from homelessness once a tenancy is secured.

Tenancy support services help people who have their own accommodation but face difficulty in maintaining their tenancy. They combine floating social support, advice and case-working to help people to connect to mainstream services.

One example is the Wallich[9], which provides tenancy support services in a range of rural local authorities in Wales, including Carmarthen, Powys and Ceredigion. These services successfully assist people living in insecure tenancies and those at risk of becoming homeless. The services are available to anyone over the age of 16 (including families) and work with people to find long-term solutions to their problems. Key areas of focus are rent arrears, threat of eviction, family disputes and landlord disagreements. The services provide crisis intervention to anyone immediate risk of becoming homeless.

The "dispersed foyer" is an approach that can be used to deliver support to young people facing homelessness in rural areas. Foyers are an intervention that integrates housing with education and training and employment opportunities for young people. Traditionally, foyers are delivered in congregate settings. In a "dispersed foyer" there is a central hub that young people can access for specific activities and which provides an administrative base, but much of the individual support is provided on a floating basis to young people housed independently.

Newark Foyer and Dispersed Housing is a supported housing project for 16 to 21 year olds who are homeless or are being threatened with homelessness. It provides housing with access to training and was established in 1999 by Nottingham Community Housing Association. The housing consists of fully furnished flats in a number of towns and villages in the Nottinghamshire area (Newark, Ollerton, Blidworth, Rainworth and Clipstone). The foyer is administered from a central hub in Newark town centre serviced by two local train stations. A range of support is provided to help the young people gain employment, access further education and training, complete a structured learning programme, gain independent life skills e.g. managing finances, shopping etc and support in accessing welfare benefits. Each young tenant is provided with a named support worker who engages in support planning and risk assessments tailored to meet individual needs. NCHA uses a Support Management and Response Team (SMaRT) which delivers out-of-hours support. This is an award-winning service, providing around the clock care and support through telephone support and assistive technology. In addition, some activities are offered at the central hub such as monthly service user meetings and weekly life skills sessions.

The lack of specialist homeless services, and the limited prospects for developing such services in many rural areas, means that mainstream social, health and housing services need to be particularly involved in supporting vulnerable individuals. A flexible, joined up approach is required and case management may be particularly valuable.

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[9]For more info, see website: http://www.thewallich.com/

6.2 Housing First

As described above, Housing First is one of the most influential housing-led models of service provision in homelessness at the current time. It combines rapid access to permanent housing with floating support. Despite the challenges, Housing First has been successfully adapted and implemented in rural contexts.

Pathways Housing First Vermont[10] opened in 2010 with the aim of transferring the successful Pathways Housing First model from urban to rural contexts. The programme secures permanent and independent housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness, many with alcohol and substance use disorders. It provides a personalised, choice-based and recovery-orientated support package to these individuals. Since 2010, Pathways Vermont has housed more than 70 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in communities around the state. The programme has made innovative technology-based adaptations to the original Pathways programme in order to overcome the fact that service users are spread out over large areas with poor transport links and lack of access to strong and established social service networks. Users are provided with home internet access, a refurbished computer and basic digital literacy training so that they can engage in web-based video visits. Service providers in the Pathways team also use refurbished iPhones and laptops which allow for greater communication between teams.

Studies have consistently found that Housing First models are effective in helping people with complex support needs achieve residential stability and improve well-being. In addition, studies comparing the cost incurred by service use whilst homeless (shelters, hospitals, criminal justice system etc) with the cost of permanent supportive housing programmes show such programmes to be highly cost-effective, at least for part of the homeless population that has complex support needs. Most of these studies have been conducted in urban areas. However, more recent research in the US has also demonstrated that these cost savings occur in rural areas.

A state-wide comparative study in Maine demonstrated both positive programme outcomes and significant cost savings when people are housed with needs-based support.[11] The study found that rural supportive housing is less expensive than homelessness and provides people with a better quality of life. The 163 participants in the study came from across the state. The research examined the actual cost records of service providers and individual service records to determine costs. Permanent supportive housing placements reduced service costs of the following systems: shelter (99% savings), emergency room (14% savings), incarceration (95% savings), and ambulance transportation (32% savings). The total cost savings for the six month period was $219,791, or an average of $1,348 per person.

6.3 Sourcing Housing

As described above, access to quality and affordable housing is a challenge in many rural contexts. Ending situations of homelessness requires access to permanent housing solutions. An important part of the structural solution to this problem is an increased supply of affordable housing, including through investment in social housing in rural areas where there is need as well as maintenance of the existing social housing stock.

There is also some potential for using the privately owned housing stock, which is the largest part of many rural housing markets, in order to house homeless people in rural areas. Social Rental Agencies

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[10] See website for further info: http://www.pathwaysvermont.org/housing-first.html
[11] Mondello, M et al (2009) *Cost of Rural Homelessness*, Corporation for Supportive Housing/Maine Department of Health and Human Services

offer one way of mobilising privately owned property to provide affordable rental accommodation. These are schemes whereby private landlords are incentivised by guaranteed rents, tenant support packages and other measures such as refurbishment grants to rent to homeless people or people facing housing exclusion via an intermediary management organisation. The intermediary organisation supports the tenant to maintain the tenancy.[12] SRAs seeking to operate in rural areas face the same challenges as other homeless services in terms of viability. They are overall more likely to be concentrated in urban areas with higher levels of demand. Also, there is often a very limited stock of housing available to rent in rural areas. Having tenants spread out over large geographical areas, often with limited transport services, has time and cost implications which are also challenging for providers – the support element of the SRA model means that tenants should be visited regularly and be able to access key workers quickly. Nonetheless, some SRAs do operate in rural areas. For most of them, properties in rental areas are part of a mixed portfolio covering both rural and urban locations within a region.

In France, SRAs are known as *Agences Immobilières à Vocation Sociale* (AIVS), and work under a specific trademark. *L'Agence Immobilière Sociale 87* in the Haute-Vienne department of the Limousin Region is one example of an AIVS operating partly in rural contexts. It has two main missions: sourcing housing and providing "adapted tenancy management" for disadvantaged people. The tenants are mostly people with low incomes. 58% are single and 22% are single-parent households. Most are in receipt of housing assistance to cover the rent. They face difficulty accessing and maintain housing because of solvability constraints and therefore face homelessness. Like other AIVS, *L'Agence Immobilière Sociale 87* benefits from a strong partnership with the departmental and local councils, and accesses a variety of funding streams from national, regional and local level for its activities. However, it faces considerable difficulty in responding to the demand for housing because of a shortage of available properties to rent in the area. *Tandem Immobilier*[13] is another AIVS, located in the Oise department of the Picardie Region. It has a mixed portfolio, with tenancies in both rural areas and in towns. In 2012, Tandem brought 49 houses into the affordable rental market, housed 100 new households and managed 393 tenancies. AIVS such as *Tandem* and *L'Agence Immobilière Sociale 87* are supported in the framework of departmental action plans for housing vulnerable people.[14] These plans provide the framework for defining and harmonising initiatives to promote housing for vulnerable families. They are jointly developed by the Prefect of the Department and the President of the Departmental Council, in association with partner organisations. Such plans were made mandatory for departments by a law introduced in 1990. They are organized around three axes: diagnosis of needs, development of a range of "adapted" housing options and financial and social support for households. The functioning of AIVS within the framework of a broader plan for housing vulnerable people is a good example of how public authorities should plan housing interventions according to local need, including in rural areas.

Some rural areas that have experienced economic and population decline have rather high levels of vacant housing. Activating this vacant housing can help to provide responses to local homelessness.

The East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust[15] provides housing and training for 16-25 year olds living in rural communities in East Cleveland in England through the renovation of empty properties. The Trust was established in 2000 following local needs analysis showing that local young people generally wished to stay in the area but felt unable to do so because of a lack of suitable, affordable housing and training opportunities. The Trust develops and manages affordable, supported accommodation. At the same time, it provides training in construction through the renovation of empty properties, as well

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[12] See FEANTSA toolkit *Social Rental Agencies: An Innovative, Housing-Led Response to Homelessness* for more info, available at: http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article620&lang=en

[13] See website for further info: http://www.tandemimmobilier.fr/

[14] *Le Plan départemental d'action pour le logement des personnes défavorisées* (PDALPD)

[15] See website for further info: http://ecyhtrust.com/

as through building and renovation for village halls, community buildings and for other voluntary sector organisations. In addition, the Trust provides support for the development of life and social skills.

In specific circumstances, it may also be possible to house homeless people or people at risk of homelessness through voluntary programmes involving households that have additional living space. However, such programmes are currently not widely developed and incur important risks. They should only be applied when in line with the wishes and needs of homeless people in rural areas and with proper risk management. It would be premature to consider such models "good practice" as there is very little precedent. However, it might be useful to test some approaches in rural areas where they could meet the needs of a small number of homeless people.

In Ireland, a programme called "Boarding Out" was developed for vulnerable older people in the 1980s. It still exists today but has not been widely implemented. It is therefore not possible to draw meaningful conclusions about its effectiveness. Nonetheless, elements of the approach might be relevant to homelessness in some contexts. The scheme mobilises private households to provide housing and basic care in the person's community when they became unable to live independently. Under the scheme, the Health Service Executive (HSE) can make arrangements for the boarding out of dependent older people in a private house and for the payment for all or part of the costs. The HSE has responsibility to check that the house is suitable for the person and that the householder is able to provide suitable and sufficient care, privacy, nutritious and varied food, and adequate attendance to meet the needs of the person. Regulations set out standards as to accommodation, cleanliness, safety and other related matters. The HSE pays the householder a maximum rate of half the weekly State Pension for the accommodation service. In addition, the person boarded out must pay an amount as agreed with the HSE and the householder. Boarding out may represent a service adapted to rural areas where the relatively sparse provision of health and social care may mean that specialist services are not available. A review of the policy by the National Council for the Aged[16] found that the scheme was largely positive and had considerable potential but could not draw more conclusions on its effectiveness. It did identify certain risks including (i) the possible isolation and vulnerability of the rehoused older person, (ii) unsatisfactory motivation or behaviour on the part of the carer or (iii) the carer's possible lack of competence to cope in certain emergencies. Taking account of these risks, it might be useful in some local contexts to evaluate the potential to apply the model to people facing homelessness. Some conditions might be that support needs were relatively light and manageable without specialist training, risk was properly managed, that the homeless person concerned wished to live in this type of arrangement, and that there was a secure rental contract. An advantage of the scheme is that it does not require capital investment and can be activated according to arising need.

One potential source of buildings and land for social housing in rural areas is the church. Churches face challenges managing vacant, unsuitable or underused assets in rural contexts. Furthermore, the church has historically played an important role in fighting poverty. There is therefore much scope for successful collaborations between churches, housing providers and homeless service providers to make this available for tackling homelessness and housing exclusion, including in rural areas.

The Faith in Affordable Housing[17] is a project run by the UK organisation Housing Justice. It focuses on inviting churches and other property-owning Christian organisations to offer their land/unused buildings for conversion to affordable housing, and provides guidance on the development and implementation of projects. Faith in Affordable Housing has recently launched a branch in Wales.

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[16] http://www.ncaop.ie/publications/research/reports/09_HomefromHome.pdf
[17] For further information, see website: http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/fiah.html

Depending on the national and local context, there may be other specific land and property holders that can be activated to provide affordable housing for homeless people, including in rural areas. The assets held by the National Asset Management Authority (NAMA) in Ireland and the equivalent SAREB in Spain as a result of the crisis are examples. In Ireland, some NAMA properties have been sold to social housing companies to provide such housing. However, the scope in many rural areas is limited because of a mismatch between supply and demand which means that many of the properties are not in high-demand locations or do not fit local needs. In some regions of Italy, property seized from organised crime is allocated by local/regional authorities to social service providers to provide accommodation for homeless people. This provides scope for delivering housing-led solutions, including in rural areas.

6.4 Housing Seasonal Workers

The temporary housing available to seasonal workers should be of adequate quality to respect human rights and dignity. For migrant seasonal workers, as having access to accommodation is usually a condition for entry, employers are largely responsible for providing it. Legal frameworks covering the conditions of entry and employment of seasonal workers should ensure that employers provide housing of adequate quality and that rents charged are not excessive.

There are examples of good practice in terms of accommodation for seasonal workers. In France, NGO service providers offer "social residences" to provide accommodation for seasonal workers.

API Provence[18], for example, runs a social residence called « *Le Figuier* » for seasonal hotel and restaurant workers in Cannes. Whilst not in a rural area, it is a useful example of the provision of good quality accommodation to seasonal workers. Local hotels and restaurants that hire seasonal workers rent studio apartments at « *Le Figuier* » on an annual basis. The apartments are furnished, self-contained units with a private bathroom. For part of the year, the accommodation is reserved entirely for seasonal workers (March to November). For the other part of the year (December – March), the hotels can propose the flats also to people with permanent contracts. The fact that the hotels rent the accommodation for the entire year facilitates management and maintenance. The employers pay API Provence and in some cases, pass a charge onto the seasonal worker. If needed, the seasonal worker can have recourse to a housing support payment.[19] Residents have a residency contract. Of course, providing such a service in for the hotel and restaurant sector in a city is easier in many ways than providing it in the countryside because the residence is very close to numerous places of employment. In a rural setting, the distances between places of employment are greater.

Homeless service providers also intervene to meet the basic needs of seasonal workers, given the lack of adequate temporary housing available to them in many cases. For example, in Spain, national legislation stipulates that employers of seasonal workers have an obligation to provide housing in conditions of dignity and proper hygiene. However, much accommodation for seasonal workers is very poor quality, and a large proportion of employers fail to provide accommodation at all[20]. Homeless service providers thus intervene to provide shelter, food and other basic provision.

The municipality of Valdepeñas, in the province of Ciudad Real worked with a group of NGOs including Caritas, *Mancha Acoge*, Red Cross and the Workers' Commission[21] to provide basic care for seasonal agriculture workers (with or without a contract) during the 2012 harvest season. The project

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[18] For more information, see website: http://resinemedia.net/api/api2/mieux_nous_connaitre.php
[19] *Aide personnalisée au logement*
[20] *Informe sobre el estado de situación de la población extranjera. Abril 2012 Foro para la Integración Social de los Inmigrantes accommodation*, available at:
http://dl243.dinaserver.com/hosting/carei.es/documentos/INFORME_ESTADO_SITUACION_2012.pdf
[21] *Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras*

worked with 224 seasonal workers, 206 of whom were immigrants and 18 of whom were Spanish. The problems that the service users faced included inadequate resources to meet their basic needs (food, shelter, clothing); difficulty accessing mainstream services; difficulty accessing the labour market, poor working conditions and discrimination; language barriers; a lack of rental housing available for temporary stays; and inadequate living conditions for children. The project responded to these needs by providing a reception service, temporary hostel accommodation, legal advice and childcare. The reception service was a temporary drop-in service which provided advice, food, information, clothing, blankets, basic healthcare, hygiene kits, and referral to other services. There was a range of temporary shelter accommodation provided through the project. One shelter in the town of Valdepeñas was opened only at the beginning of the harvest season, providing 2 nights' accommodation for people looking for work. In addition there were specialist shelters. An evaluation of the project demonstrated that it was successful in helping to respond to basic needs but further work with representatives of the agricultural business sector was also recommended, in order to find joint structural solutions such as decent temporary accommodation for the duration of the stay.

FEANTSA welcomes the European Commission's proposal for a Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment[22] - in particular the focus on adequacy and calls for further clarity on the notion of adequate standards of housing, taking into account relevant legal guidance, including the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comment No. 4,4, which expands on the provisions of article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and according to which adequacy includes legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location and cultural adequacy. The adequacy housing for seasonal workers must be effectively monitored to ensure respect of rights and dignity.

6.5 Promoting Inclusion in the Community

As mentioned above, the small and relatively close-knit nature of some rural communities can mean that homeless people are particularly at risk of stigma and blame for their situation. Homelessness is often understood as a personal shortcoming. Homeless people are expected to try as hard as possible to overcome their "ill fate" through their own efforts. In this context, service providers can play a role in "mediating" between homeless people and the rest of the community. Close-knit communities can also be important source of informal support. There are many examples of successful initiatives to promote social inclusion of vulnerable people in such rural communities.

The Men's Shed model has been developed in Ireland on the basis of an Australian precedent. Men's Sheds are community-based, non-commercial organisations inspired by the "garden shed". They aim to provide a safe and inclusive environment where men can gather and/or work on meaningful projects. Their primary goal is to advance the health and well-being of the participating men. They specifically seek to address the difficulty that men may experience in building and using social relationships, and the related risks of poor health, drinking, risk-taking, isolation and depression. Whilst clearly not a solution to homelessness, Men's Sheds are one example of an intervention that can help to promote the inclusion of vulnerable people and thus contribute to preventing homelessness.

6.6 Transport Solutions

Innovative schemes can be developed to support people in rural areas to overcome barriers to social inclusion. In the UK, Wheels 2 Work schemes provide transport in the form of mopeds and scooters to people, mostly youth, in order to allow them to access jobs or training where public transport is not

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[22] COM(2010) 379 final

available. The scheme is supported by the Department for Transport and has been developed in many rural communities.

6.7 The Role of Mainstream Services

This paper has mostly focused on homeless services. However, it is important to remember that there are limits to the feasibility of maintaining specialist homeless services in areas of low demand. It is therefore also very important that mainstream services such as health, social, housing, children's services are well informed about homelessness and play a full role in preventing homelessness and supporting homeless people in rural areas. This requires joined up approaches and collaborative working. Integrated homeless strategies should support mainstream services to play a full role in tackling rural homelessness.

7. Policy Recommendations

In order to support progress on tackling rural homelessness, FEANTSA makes the following policy recommendations:

1. Housing-led approaches can and should be applied in rural areas in order to provide long term, effective solutions to homelessness. All 3 of the elements of housing-led policy responses are important in rural contexts:
   a. access to permanent housing solutions as soon as possible for homeless people;
   b. targeted prevention for people at risk of homelessness;
   c. provision of needs-based, person-centred support services to formerly homeless people/those at risk of homelessness. Such support addresses issues such as tenancy maintenance, social inclusion, employment, health and well-being for people who are living in housing, rather than prior to re-housing. It is delivered on a "floating" basis rather than in an institutional setting.

2. National/regional homelessness strategies should take rural homelessness into account and provide a framework for tackling it.

3. Local and regional authorities should develop awareness of, and measure the extent of, homelessness and housing exclusion in rural areas in order to adequately respond to local needs.

4. Relevant mainstream services such as health, social and housing services in rural areas should be aware of rural homelessness and supported to play a full role preventing and responding to it.

5. Relevant EU funding instruments, including the ESF, ERDF, EAFRD should be used to tackle rural homelessness in line with national and regional priorities.

6. Where relevant, in the context of the CAP and the EAFRD, homelessness and housing exclusion should be integrated into multiannual national/regional programmes for rural development as part of efforts to promote social inclusion and poverty reduction in rural areas. Basic services are included as a priority for the EARDF under Article 21 and national and regional authorities should consider the setting-up, improvement or expansion of homelessness services in this context. Member States should ensure that social service providers, including homeless service providers can participate in rural networks to define priorities and implement rural development programmes.

7. Legal frameworks should be developed and implemented at European and MS level to ensure the adequacy of accommodation for seasonal workers. The proposed EU directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment, should define adequacy of housing more precisely, with reference to relevant international legal instruments codifying the Right to Housing, and define maximal rates for rents for such housing. Member States should ensure that national frameworks guarantee the adequate temporary housing for this target group and that adequate monitoring systems are in place.

For more information, contact Ruth Owen ruth.owen@feantsa.org

FEANTSA is supported by
the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

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http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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