■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL
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ETHOS – *TAKING STOCK*

Background

ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion – was launched in 2005 and has been used in various ways both at national and transnational level. The European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH) is currently examining ETHOS from a measurement perspective (i.e. looking at data availability for each category).

FEANTSA has decided to complement this work by taking stock of the *use* and *interpretation* of ETHOS over 2005-2006 in order to help FEANTSA members better understand its impact and potential, and to highlight examples of methods and uses of ETHOS which could be used in other national contexts. Information was gathered from three main sources:

- Data collection working group members and observers representing: France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, UK, Norway and Belgium
- Other FEANTSA members who have actively used ETHOS at national level
- Other external organisations who have made use of ETHOS for transnational purposes

This short paper is divided into two main sections. The first section explores the **use** of ETHOS, namely the presentation of ETHOS, the debates on ETHOS, achieving comparability through ETHOS, and the different pieces of research commissioned on the basis of ETHOS. The second section looks at the **interpretation** of ETHOS, namely focussing on the main issues raised within each of the four conceptual categories: roofless, houseless, insecure housing, and inadequate housing.

ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion

Conceptual Category		Operational Category		Generic Definition	National Sub-Categories
ROOFLESS	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Rough Sleeping (no access to 24-hour accommodation) / No abode	
	2	People staying in a night shelter	2.1	Overnight shelter	
HOUSELESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 3.2	Homeless hostel Temporary Accommodation	
	4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation	
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 5.2	Temporary accommodation / reception centres (asylum) Migrant workers accommodation	
	6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1 6.2	Penal institutions Medical institutions	
	7	People receiving support (due to homelessness)	7.1 7.2 7.3 7.4	Residential care for homeless people Supported accommodation Transitional accommodation with support Accommodation with support	
INSECURE	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 8.2 8.3 8.4	Temporarily with family/friends No legal (sub)tenancy Illegal occupation of building Illegal occupation of land	
	9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1 9.2	Legal orders enforced (rented) Re-possession orders (owned)	
	10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents of domestic violence	
INADEQUATE	11	People living in temporary / non-standard structures	11.1 11.2 11.3	Mobile home / caravan Non-standard building Temporary structure	
	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Unfit for habitation (under national legislation; occupied)	
	13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding	

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Use of ETHOS

Presentation of ETHOS

In order to promote dissemination of ETHOS, the typology has been **translated** into a number of official EU languages by FEANTSA members or external partners. Translations now exist in English, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Spanish, Catalan, Swedish, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Portuguese, Greek, Norwegian and Estonian.

Translation of ETHOS has been carried out in different ways. In most cases, the full ETHOS typology has been translated literally. In a few cases, the ETHOS typology has been translated in the linguistic sense and "translated" to match the national context (thereby rearranging certain categories) as is the case in Flanders-Belgium. In countries which have the same official languages (such as Germany and Austria; Belgium and the Netherlands; France, Luxembourg and Belgium), different translations have been produced to match the cultural and national context. In countries like Greece and Sweden, the translations were carried out in consultation with all relevant organisations. In some cases, the ETHOS typology is disseminated in the language of the country together with the original ETHOS version in English.

The ETHOS typology has been presented on various **websites** (of FEANTSA members and external partners) such as in Italy (FIOpsd - IT), in Austria (BAWO - DE), in Hungary (Refomix - HU), in the Czech Republic (CZ), and in Poland (PL). The transnational CATCH project has also included a presentation of ETHOS on its website.

Some FEANTSA members and external bodies have presented ETHOS in their **newsletters** as in Ireland (Homeless Agency - EN), in Portugal (REAPN newsletter - PT), in France (Centre d'Analyse Stratégique - FR), in Belgium (*Les Echos du Logement* – Région wallonne - FR). Other EU networks like EAPN and the social platform have referred to ETHOS in their news flashes or newsletters.

ETHOS has been referred to and presented in different types of **reports** including in the Italian official contribution for the NAPincl 2006-2008 (IT), in the European Commission evaluation report on the Open Method of Coordination (EN), in FEANTSA member annual reports such as in the Brussels member AMA, in research papers such as one produced by the Norwegian Building Research Institute (NO), in a US paper on homelessness on a global scale (EN), in a transnational report on institutional support for people experiencing homelessness "Assisted Living" prepared by the ESF/EQUAL Partnership HOME@WORK (EN), and a host of other publications.

Finally, ETHOS has been presented in the **media**. In Catalunia, the newspaper "El Punt" published an article presenting ETHOS supported by real-life stories from people with living situations corresponding to the different categories of ETHOS. In Sweden, an article was published the newspaper "Skanes Fria Tidning" about the European fight against homelessness and referred to ETHOS as a fundamental tool in this fight as a means of defining and understanding housing vulnerability.

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Debates on ETHOS

ETHOS has not only been presented, but also *debated* in certain countries.

In two countries, there have been **parliamentary debates** on ETHOS. In Spain, the Catalunian parliament used FEANTSA's definition as the basis for parliamentary debate on homelessness (CT). In Sweden, the national parliament discussed homelessness, including the four conceptual categories of ETHOS, and has passed a motion based on this debate (SE).

In some cases, **meetings** between FEANTSA members have been organised to discuss ETHOS - like in France where FEANTSA members FAPIL, Emmaus ad FNARS (together with the French national correspondent of the EOH) met to discuss the availability of data for each ETHOS category. Similar meetings or local round tables involving FEANTSA members and EOH researchers have taken place within and between organisations of homeless service providers in Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Poland, Greece, Sweden, Belgium (meeting report - FR), Luxembourg, and the Czech Republic, with the aim of improving understanding of ETHOS and how to use it in their national context.

Seminars have also been organised with a wider range of participants (including ministry representatives, local authorities, researchers, etc) to discuss the potential of ETHOS in defining homelessness in a national context.

This was the case in the **Czech Republic** where a seminar was organised on 15 March 2006 on definitions of homelessness as part of a two-year national strategy to tackle homelessness – ETHOS categories were then analysed in detail in different expert working groups. The idea of this national seminar was to create a definition and typology of homelessness in accordance with ETHOS, a definition that could potentially serve as a basis for a methodology to be used by the public authorities to collect data on homelessness.

In **Spain**, a national conference on homelessness was organised in Madrid on 17 November 2005 by the Caixa Foundation where the coordinator of the EOH was invited to lead discussions on ETHOS.

In **Greece**, a conference was organised on 16 June 2006 in Athens, on "Homelessness in Greece: issues and perspectives" where ETHOS was presented and discussed with various experts (national and European) and from different sectors.

In **Ireland**, a seminar on definitions of homelessness was organised by the Homeless Agency on 22 June 2005 where delegates examined the role of ETHOS in interpreting the 1988 Irish Housing Act definition and its fit with current practice in terms of assessment of homelessness.

In **Estonia**, a national seminar on "80 Years of Social Welfare in Estonia" was organised by the University of Tartu on 6-7 October 2005, involving representatives from the university, from the Ministry of Social welfare, Tartu Municipality and other experts in social affairs including homelessness experts who drew attention to ETHOS.

In **Poland**, there have been meetings about ETHOS with the University of Gdansk (November 2005), workshops for the University of Gdansk including information on ETHOS (January-April 2006), a national conference in Warsaw organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs where information on ETHOS was disseminated by the Pomeranian Forum and Caritas Polska, and finally a National Working Group meeting took place in March 2006 involving the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Caritas, St. Brothers Albert Aid Society, Monar, Pomeranian Forum, the Polish national correspondent - Julia Wygnanska- and the experts of the Health Working Group of FEANTSA.

In **Sweden**, ETHOS was discussed at a meeting with all partners concerned, including the Swedish minister for social affairs, national parliamentarians, representatives from local authorities, people

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experiencing homelessness, representatives of home-owners and tenants unions. The issue of considering children as a target population under ETHOS was raised (although children are to be considered under the ETHOS categories if they indeed in one of the 13 living situations described).

In **Hungary**, three consecutive workshops were organised in BMSZKI on adapting the ETHOS definitions to the situation in Hungary. The meetings were attended by housing experts from the Municipality of Budapest as well as experts representing the National Statistics Office.

There have also been **transnational discussions** on ETHOS. The EU project on minimum social standards examined ETHOS as a potential model for setting EU housing adequacy standards (EN). The transnational CATCH project on homelessness used ETHOS as a framework for exchange of information on homeless policies/programmes. The Urban and Housing Intergroup of the European Parliament (composed of Members of European Parliament from different political parties and different countries) discussed ETHOS at its meeting on 29 September 2005 (FR). The European umbrella of social housing providers (CECODHAS) invited FEANTSA to present and discuss ETHOS in the framework of its social policy working group.

Achieving comparability through ETHOS

ETHOS has been used for improving comparability between countries. It has been used in national reports on homelessness aimed at an international readership, and in transnational exchanges in the framework of transnational working groups on homelessness like the Eurocities network and the FEANTSA network.

In **Sweden**, the National Board of Health and Welfare published a national report "Homelessness in Sweden 2005 – scale and character" (EN). In order to clarify which part of the homeless population were covered by the survey, the report refers to FEANTSA's work on definitions to facilitate comparisons of measurements in different countries. The report clarifies that the Swedish definition used in the survey methodology includes the living situations outlined in the roofless and houseless conceptual categories, to some extent the insecure housing categories (although excluding people threatened with eviction), and excluding the inadequate housing category. More information will shortly be available on this in the 2006 FEANTSA Observatory national report on homeless statistics in Sweden.

The 2005 social inclusion peer review on the **Danish** homeless programmes "Alternative housing for alternative lifestyles". The report of the European expert of the peer review uses ETHOS to clarify which form of homelessness is tackled by the Danish programme examined: "The focus of this peer review initiative lies in the *first* of these [ETHOS] categories and includes people who sleep rough (on a regular basis) and people who use night shelters and homeless hostels." (EN) The other countries participating in the peer review – Germany, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – were therefore fully aware that transferability of such a programme in another context could only successfully be applied to a certain profile of homeless people whose housing status is "roofless".

The **Informal meeting of Housing Ministers** publishes annual housing statistics. Since 2004, ETHOS and FEANTSA statistics on homelessness (namely the houseless categories) have been included in the publication to provide some comparable data on housing exclusion. The 2004 publication on Housing statistics in the European Union (collected by the Czech and Swedish ministries of housing) is available EN. The 2005 report will soon be published.

The **Eurocities** working group on homelessness (consisting of 13 cities: Warsaw, Genoa, Copenhagen, Glasgow, Oslo, Newcastle, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Helsinki, Utrecht, and Vienna) carried out a 2-year project on exchange of practices/methods used in local homeless strategies (see Final report – EN). In order to carry this out, the working group was obliged to have a common framework for the exchanges, discussions and comparisons. ETHOS proved to be a useful tool for comparing figures on

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homelessness collected by each city in order to fully grasp the profile of people included in the figures. The main focus of the project seem to be categories 1, 2 and 3 of ETHOS – these were used as a framework for collecting service-related information such as number of services, capacity, client frequency, etc. Despite the different nature of services provided and local government responsibilities for each city, ETHOS was considered helpful for the Eurocities analysis of local homeless strategies.

FEANTSA transnational work has been reinforced by ETHOS over the last year. The 2005 European report on social emergencies and crisis intervention makes reference to ETHOS to clarify the specifically French concept of "Urgence Sociale" (social emergency) and enable comparable transnational exchanges to take place. The Norwegian shadow peer review report prepared by FEANTSA in August 2006 also makes use of ETHOS for analysing the Norwegian homeless strategy. This strategy defines the target population of the strategy in terms of status on the housing market and aims to help people in most of the living situations highlighted by ETHOS. The definition used in Norway for measuring the scope of homelessness was mapped onto ETHOS (equivalent of categories 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.1 and 11.1 - and 4 and 6 with some limitations) which enabled peer organisations to understand the figures on homelessness in Norway.

Research on ETHOS

ETHOS is considered a useful tool for research purposes. This section will give just a few examples of studies/projects on homelessness using ETHOS as a framework.

At EU level, the **Urban Audit** collects data on homelessness. The 2006 round of data collection on homelessness is based on different categories taken from ETHOS, namely:

SA1027V	Number of roofless persons	C, N		
SA1029V	Number of people in accommodation for the homeless	C, N		
SA1031V	Number of people in Women's Shelter	C, N		
SA1030V	Number of people in accommodation for immigrants	C, N		

The Urban Audit glossary refers to the four conceptual categories of ETHOS and the decision to focus on the two first conceptual categories of ETHOS: rooflessness and houselessness. Countries are collecting data on homelessness from more than 300 European cities based on this common definition From 2007, this data will be available and used for transnational urban analyses.

In **Greece**, a piece of research entitled "Homelessness in Greece – psychosocial profile and living conditions in the streets of Athens and other big cities" used ETHOS as a guide for formulating survey questions.

In **Poland**, three main pieces of research have been carried out on the basis of ETHOS. The 2005 report "*Sociodemographic Portrayal of the Population of the Homeless in the Pomeranian Region – a survey*" (based on the feedback from 2753 interviewees) originally planned to use the Roofless and Houseless categories only, but more ETHOS categories were used to include people living in garden sheds, for example. The chapter on the methodology of the research discusses target groups in relation to ETHOS. The survey carried out between January and May 2006, *Psycho-social profile of homeless people in the Tricity are (Gdansk, Gdynia, Sopot)*, used ETHOS as a part of survey to describe pathways of homelessness. Finally, there is a project in the pipeline about Standardisation of Services Provided to People who are Homeless in Poland. ETHOS is being used by organisations like the Pomeranian Forum and Caritas Kielce as a tool to map existing services provided to people suffering from different forms of housing exclusion (see upcoming 2006 FEANTSA Observatory national reports on homeless policies/statistics in Poland) – the services provided by these organisations correspond mainly to the roofless and houseless categories of ETHOS.

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In France, the study of the 115 national observatory (emergency number for homeless people) will use categories of ETHOS as a basis to define people who call this number, and further research will be carried out by the French national correspondent of the EOH with researchers from the EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales).

In **Luxembourg**, ETHOS was discussed by an expert group (CEPS/INSTEAD, voluntary organisations, and representatives from the Ministry for Family Affairs). A decision was taken to use ETHOS as a basis for measuring the extent of homelessness in Luxembourg.

In **Portugal**, the FEANTSA member AMI (International Medical Assistance) which has homeless services throughout Portugal is adapting its interagency information sharing methods to the ETHOS typology. ETHOS was also used in a study undertaken by the Institute for Social Security (Ministry of Labour and Social Security) on Homelessness Services in Portugal. The ISS working group chose to focus on the roofless category only. This study will be presented in October 2006.

FEANTSA Observatory correspondents are also using ETHOS to map homeless services in their country, homeless definitions in their country, and homeless data available in their country. The 2006 national reports (available end 2006) provide excellent examples of the use of ETHOS in national research.

Interpretation of ETHOS

ETHOS was never conceived for a national system - it was conceived as a European definition allowing for comparability between countries. The four categories in the ETHOS typology therefore cover all forms of homelessness and housing exclusion in EU 25. FEANTSA decided not to state clear boundaries between homelessness and housing exclusion. Rather, it is up to national experts to determine the boundary according to national legislation and cultural context. In certain cases, countries find that some ETHOS categories do not have an equivalent at national level. In other cases, national living situations can fall in two categories. The issues raised as a result of interpretation and debate on the ETHOS categories at national and local level show some similarities and differences between countries.

Roofless and houseless

Both these categories are generally accepted in all countries as forms of "homelessness". There is a general consensus on using the first two conceptual categories in everyday work. But all four conceptual categories are used by FEANTSA members in their advocacy work on homelessness and especially for promoting preventive approaches to homelessness.

The living situations in the **Roofless** conceptual category (people living rough and people staying in a night shelter) are accepted in most countries as the worst form of housing exclusion, and describe living situations which can be found in all EU countries. However, some countries like Greece for example do not operate services which answer to crisis situations as described in generic definition 2.1 "people staying in an overnight shelter".

The **Houseless** category is wider than the roofless category, comprising 5 categories from people in accommodation for the homeless, people in women's shelters, people in accommodation for migrants, people released from institutions, people receiving supported forms of housing for the homeless.

Category 3 (people in accommodation for the homeless) - is applicable in all EU countries. Although it is important to note that in a number of countries, accommodation under category 3 could also come under category 7 (people receiving supported forms of housing for the homeless), as is the case in Poland and France. Or in countries like Greece, supported housing is not made available for people in resettlement programmes but rather for people with disabilities, mental health problems, and other similar needs– although this could mean that homeless people are being provided with supported

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accommodation but for their mental health or addiction problems rather than to prevent their homelessness. Whereas in other countries, there is a clearer distinction made between low-level support in hostels and temporary housing, and support to resettle a homeless (or formerly homeless) person or sustain a tenancy (2005 Review of statistics on homelessness in Europe). This is the case in Austria, Finland or Ireland.

Categories 4 (people in women's shelters), 5 (people in accommodation for migrants) and 6 (people released from institutions) are living situations which have limitations in terms of lack of social space and privacy, and are generally temporary solutions. In many EU countries, these groups are not recognised as people suffering from homelessness, even if some of these people live in conditions of houselessness. In France, categories 4.1 (and 10.1 victims of violence) are not generally included in homeless surveys since they are not considered as people experiencing homelessness. In some countries, there have been debates around category 5 since accommodation for migrants or asylum-seekers are always temporary while awaiting legal status. However, this category of homelessness applies for people who have received legal status and have no place to go. In most countries, category 5.2 Migrant workers accommodations cannot be transferred at national level since this living situation exists in few countries only like France where this form of service provision dates back to waves of labour migration in the 1970s. Category 6 has not really raised any major issues and has been recognised as important for preventing street homelessness.

Category 7 (Supported accommodation) refers to supported housing as part of a rehousing scheme of homeless people. It has been difficult to find a generic definition that applies across Europe. Moreover, category 7 has been interpreted as a permanent solution to homelessness in some countries (if the supported accommodation provides a fixed contract). But this category refers to a situation with a short tenancy and dependent on accepting support (otherwise the person is likely to be evicted) – this then qualifies as homelessness. As reported above, some living situations under category 7 also come under category 3. In the UK for instance, services under category 3 are funded under budget lines for services under category 7. In Germany, the determining factor for being considered homeless is tenancy. If there is no fixed tenancy, then a person does not have a "home". So homeless counts in Germany now include only people in supported housing with insecure tenancies. And people from all other ETHOS categories are registered as homeless if they have no tenancy. In France, the ALT services (Aide au Logement Temporaire) should fall under category 7.3, but NGOs also use ALT services for people who need emergency accommodation (category 3.1). The different forms of supported accommodation (residential care for homeless people, supported accommodation, transitional accommodation with support, ordinary accommodation with support) do not exist in all countries and therefore have not all been transposed to existing *national* versions of ETHOS. In Poland, there have been discussions on where to fit "Communities" such as the Barka Foundation in the ETHOS framework since they do not consider themselves as homeless or houseless. However, the final decision was to add such a living situation under category 7 supported housing, since this is a form of supported housing similar to the Skaeve Huse in Denmark or the Maison-relais in France.
Insecure housing and Inadequate housing

A number of countries, consider that only rooflessness and houselessness are forms of homelessness (in fact, the Czech Ministry of social affairs considers categories 1-4 only as forms of homelessness). In Hungary, the use of ETHOS is divided within public authorities: the first two conceptual categories are considered as social issues and therefore taken up by social departments, and the second two conceptual categories fall under the scope of activities of housing departments. Other countries associate the conditions of rooflessness and houselessness with life events that are often linked to living situations under the insecure housing and inadequate housing conceptual categories. Such countries (like Ireland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the UK) tend to tackle most ETHOS living situations in a single framework, since these are perceived as interlinked.

In some countries, the **Insecure housing** categories are considered useful for national policies based on prevention of homelessness (prevention of evictions, prevention of homelessness on release from prison or release from treatment institutions, etc) – and use such categories to measure the

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effectiveness of prevention policies for people threatened with homelessness. In other countries, some categories under Insecure housing are indeed forms of homelessness as is the case in Ireland and the Netherlands victims fleeing domestic abuse are considered in homeless strategies. In Hungary, the division between "roofless and houseless" and 'insecure and inadequate" is not as clear cut given that Act III of 1993 on social administration and social services partially includes the equivalent of category 8.4 (Illegal occupation of land) in its definition of homelessness.

In Greece, overcrowding is considered more as a cultural issue – even though this is not the case in all countries, very few countries actually have an official norm of overcrowding. In other countries like Poland and Hungary, living in garden sheds, squats, huts (and other such forms of homelessness) can be considered under rooflessness. In Poland, garden sheds could be placed under different categories according to three domains (social, physical, legal), namely categories 1, 8, 11, or 12. In Hungary, the 1993 definition "people spending the night in public places and non-standard housing" corresponds to both categories 1 and 11.

Under discussions on inadequate housing in France and Greece, the issue of fitting the Roma population or seasonal workers in definitions of homelessness has been raised. People from such groups can and should be considered under ETHOS if they are indeed in one of the 13 living situations outlined. If specific services of temporary accommodation are aimed at supporting people from Roma populations or seasonal workers, then these should be considered in the homelessness debate.

Conclusions

The aim of this short paper is to provide some insight into the use and function of ETHOS across Europe. ETHOS was launched in 2005 and has now been in use for just under two years. Initially, the outcomes of some country debates indicated confusion about what ETHOS is and is not. It is not a definition based on target populations or homeless services, but rather on living situations. It is a housing (or "home") based definition rather than based on the social, health or employment status of homeless people.

In most meetings and seminars organised on ETHOS so far, a FEANTSA representative (from the membership, from the Observatory or from the secretariat) has been present to avoid any confusion regarding ETHOS and to answer any questions relating to the typology. ETHOS is the outcome of annual monitoring through the Review of statistics on homelessness in Europe published by the EOH. It is therefore crucial for any discussions on ETHOS to be supported by these documents which explain the origins of all conceptual and operational categories of the typology.

It is clear from this stocktaking exercise that:

- ETHOS has provided a useful policy and research framework on homelessness both at national and transnational level
- ETHOS is now well understood and accepted as a practical tool for monitoring homelessness
- ETHOS is used differently from one country to another, but is contributing to enhancing the comparability of homeless policies, surveys, and data
- There is no clear cut homelessness/housing exclusion dividing line in the conceptual categories
- ETHOS is not a hierarchy of living situations – all these forms of housing exclusion are interlinked

Future actions:

- To improve the labelling of the operational categories of ETHOS
- Deeper analysis of the links between different ETHOS categories in order to establish pathways of homelessness – this would be helping for developing preventative measures
- Continue monitoring the use and interpretation of ETHOS in Europe
- Continue supporting FEANTSA members and FEANTSA partners in their use of ETHOS

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