

HC3.2 NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING HOMELESSNESS

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents an overview of strategies and major legislation tackling homelessness at the national and regional level, as reported by OECD, key partner and EU countries responding to the 2019 OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing, and other sources. Homelessness strategies are defined as policy documents setting out targets and actions to tackle homelessness, requiring links across policy sectors.

Further discussion of homelessness can be found in the OECD Policy Brief, Better data and policies to fight homelessness in the OECD, available [online](#) (and in [French](#)).

Key findings

17 countries out of 42 countries have an active national strategy to combat homelessness, and in an additional 11 countries, there are regional and/or local homelessness strategies.

Canada, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United States all currently have an active national homeless strategy in place. Greece has drafted and announced a national homelessness strategy, but it has not yet been adopted (Baptista and Marlier, 2019).

Due to the distribution of competences across levels of government, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic and Sweden have regional and/or local homeless strategies in place. The United Kingdom also has separate strategies across the constituent countries of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Korea, Israel, Latvia, Mexico, Malta, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey did not report any homelessness strategies in place.

Housing First strategies exist in an increasing number of OECD and EU countries

There has been a general trend across some OECD and EU countries towards a Housing First approach to support individuals with high and complex needs. Housing First models aim to provide tailored, intensive support for homeless people with high and complex needs by placing them in *permanent, immediate housing* and enabling them to exercise control over their support services (Pleace, Baptista and Knutagård, 2019^[25]). Housing First is distinct from previous models that made access to accommodation contingent on the completion of counselling or treatment programmes. A series of random control trials have shown that Housing First can produce greater housing retention among the chronically homelessness compared to treatment-as-usual groups; there is less agreement about the implications of such approaches on health outcomes (O’Flaherty, 2019^[24]).

Thirteen OECD countries report housing first strategies at the national level: Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, New Zealand, Portugal and the

United States. In other countries, in the absence of a formal housing first strategy at national level, such approaches have been adopted in some regions and/or municipalities; this is the case in Australia, Austria, Germany, Iceland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England). A housing first strategy is currently under consideration in Israel. Nevertheless, there is wide variation in the implementation of Housing First models (Pleace, Baptista and Knutagård, 2019^[25]).

A selection of experiences with Housing First in OECD countries include:

- **Australia:** There are a number of Housing First programmes in Australia. Notable programmes include Common Ground, Street to Home and Way2Home. Many of these programmes are city-based. For example, a Way2Home service program was established in Sydney in 2010 to help people experiencing homelessness move into long-term housing.
- **Canada:** Backed by a large body of empirical evidence, the Housing First approach was introduced into the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the previous federal homelessness programme, in 2014. Under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Housing First Investment targets required certain communities to invest a minimum amount in Housing First activities and focused eligibility for these investments on individuals who were chronically and episodically homeless.
- **Finland:** Finland is one of the few OECD countries in which homelessness has steadily declined in recent years. The government credits the longstanding “Housing First” strategy that brings together homelessness NGOs, the Y-Foundation, cities and the central government. From 2008, with the adaptation of the Housing First principles, Finland reports a breakthrough of early intervention in the prevention of long-term homelessness. The three principles of Housing First in Finland: i) there is an ethical duty to provide a decent standard of living and environment to homeless people; ii) both national legislation and international agreements require Finnish public authorities to address the problem of homelessness; and iii) reducing homelessness is an economically rational endeavour, because it reduces social and health care costs.
- **Ireland:** A housing-led model has been part of Government policy on homelessness and the Housing First programme has been in operation in the Dublin region for a number of years. *Rebuilding Ireland*, the Government’s Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness was published in 2016. Pillar 1 of the Plan is focussed on addressing homelessness and includes specific measures to minimise rough sleeping and to deliver inter-agency supports for those experiencing homelessness, aiming to extend the use of the Housing First model and including targets to triple the number of tenancies in the Dublin region, while also extending the programme to other urban areas, initially Cork, Galway and Limerick. Since the publication of the *Rebuilding Ireland*, the Government has extended the Housing First programme nationally. In September 2018, the Government published the *National Implementation Plan for Housing First*. The plan includes targets for the establishment of Housing First tenancies in each local authority, with an aggregate target of 663 tenancies in the period 2018-2021. The publication of this National Implementation Plan for Housing First 2018-2021 is a significant milestone that underpins the Government’s commitment to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.
- **Luxembourg:** Launched in October 2014, the Housing First service of the National Committee for Social Defence (*Comité National de Défense Sociale* - CNDS) is a pilot project providing long-term housing for chronically homeless people. The concept is based on the idea that a homeless people first and foremost need housing, and the other problems can be addressed later. The CNDS has 20 studios in the same building (“congregate housing”) and supports two beneficiaries in studios scattered throughout Luxembourg (“scattered housing”).
- **Norway:** Beginning with the National Strategy to fight and prevent homelessness 2005-2007, Norway has had a housing-led approach to homelessness in several policy strategies. The current

national strategy, *Housing for Welfare: National Strategy for Housing and Support Services, 2014-2020*, also promotes a comprehensive housing-led approach.

- ***New Zealand***: Housing First is funded by the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD funds providers to deliver Housing First services and pays rent subsidies for tenants. Private property owners, *iwi*, community housing providers and HNZ provide housing places. In some cases, local councils contribute funding and support, enhancing the services that providers can offer. Housing First launched in Auckland in March 2017, expanded to Christchurch, Tauranga, Hamilton and Rotorua in 2018-19 and is expanding to further locations in 2019.
- ***United Kingdom***: England has launched a three-year, government-funded project which aims to help approximately 1000 people over the pilot and is currently being piloted in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and West Midlands (a total of 23 local authorities). Data and comparability issues

Table HC3.2.1: National and regional strategies for combating homelessness

Year	Homelessness strategy		
	National level	Regional/local level	
Australia	2018-19	There is no official homelessness strategy, but the <i>National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)</i> commits the Commonwealth Government jointly with the state and territory governments to the achievement of outcomes including people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion. Funding is available from the National Affordable Housing Special Purpose Payment (NAHSPP) and the 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)	NPAH, states and territory governments are required to have a publicly available housing and homelessness strategy in place. They are responsible for determining where services are located, which service providers are contracted, and the amount of funding each service provider receives under NPAH. All states and territories have developed a Project Plan setting out the strategic overview for the delivery of services and how they will address the priority areas.
Austria		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There are integrated strategies in Vienna (e.g. Vienna Housing First Initiative), Upper Austria and Vorarlberg.
Belgium		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	Integrated Plan Against Homelessness 2017-2019 (Flanders)
Brazil		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level, but the National Survey on the Homeless Population in Brazil (2007-2008) helped to identify characteristics of homelessness, and extend access for homeless people to social support (e.g Bolsa Familia and welfare benefit for the elderly and disabled).	
Bulgaria		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level. Homelessness is addressed as part of the National Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy 2020.	
Canada	2019	<i>Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy</i> is a community-based programme that provides direct financial support to Designated Communities (urban centres), as well as Indigenous and rural and remote communities across Canada to support their efforts in addressing homelessness. Following a comprehensive community planning process, communities determine their own needs/priorities, and fund innovative projects. Reaching Home replaces the previous Homelessness Partnering Strategy.	..
Chile	2018-22	The national homelessness strategy is part of the <i>Política Nacional de Calle</i> , with the overarching objective to establish an integrated system of services to overcome challenges on the street, and the following specific objectives: strengthening the existing institutional framework for the management of a national homelessness policy; implementing long-term solutions including Housing First strategies; establishing concrete goals to reduce homelessness; and strengthening the capacity of the "Winter Plan" to reduce the number of deaths and adverse health impacts of the homeless population.	..
Colombia	2018	There is a Public Social Policy for Street Dwellers.	

	Year	Homelessness strategy	
		National level	Regional/local level
Croatia		There is no specific homelessness strategy in Croatia. Homelessness is tackled within the <i>Strategy for the fight against poverty 2014-2020</i> .	..
Cyprus (1)		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Czech Republic	2013-2020	The <i>National Strategy on Prevention and Fight against Homelessness in the Czech Republic to 2020</i> was adopted in 2013. The strategy was developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs together with an Expert Group on Tackling Homelessness.	There are no regional homelessness strategies, but some municipalities have their own strategies on tackling homelessness (e.g. the city of Prague).
Denmark	2018-21	With the 2018-2021 <i>Action Plan Against Homelessness</i> , the has entered into agreements with 24 municipalities to provide different kinds of support, including an assessment to identify gaps in the current municipal approach to homelessness, advisory services to help municipalities implement Housing First principles, as well as funding for pilot projects. Funding is awarded to municipalities to pilot an innovative approach identified by the central government, or to implement a solution of their own design. In addition, the government is developing national guidelines and a compendium of best practices, based on inputs from a range of stakeholders working on homelessness throughout the country.	
Estonia		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	With the Social Welfare Act (2016) the state delegates the task of assisting those in need to the local municipalities. Local municipalities are obliged to provide housing for persons or families who are themselves unable and incapable to provide it for them or their families. Persons who have gotten into a socially helpless situation due to loss or lack of means of subsistence will be provided inevitable social assistance (food, clothing and, if necessary, shelter). Also all other social benefits and services that the local municipalities offer are also available for the homeless.
Finland	2016-2019	The <i>National Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland (AUNE) 2016-2019</i> is in place, with public funding over this period allocated at EUR 78 million. The programme targets people who have recently become homeless as well as those who have been homeless for longer periods.	Municipalities have operational responsibility while regional/state authorities act as supervising bodies
France	2018-2022	France launched the Five-year Plan to Implement Housing First and Combat Homelessness in 2018-2022. The plan is structured around five priorities: i) produce and mobilise more affordable housing that is adapted to the needs of the homeless and people with poor housing conditions; ii) promote and accelerate access to housing and facilitate residential mobility among disadvantaged populations; iii) better support homeless populations and help them stay sheltered; iv) prevent interruptions in housing trajectories	A number of sub-national governments have developed homelessness strategies.

	Year	Homelessness strategy	
		National level	Regional/local level
		and ensure that emergency shelters can provide immediate and unconditional support; and v) mobilise territorial actors to put into place Housing First principles.	
Germany		There is no federal strategy on homelessness. National legislation sets out the obligations of municipalities in terms of social service provision. Since the mid-1990s, the <i>Social Code</i> has stipulated that all persons who are at risk of losing their homes are entitled to assistance - either in the form of loans or allowances for rent arrears. Police laws in the <i>Bundesländer</i> (regional states) oblige municipalities to provide shelter for roofless people	There are strategies in place at the level of the regional states. North-Rhine Westphalia for instance has a regional action plan on homelessness. It aims to develop innovative approaches and support municipalities to tackle homelessness. The main focus is the prevention of homelessness and access to housing.
Greece		The <i>National Strategy for Homeless People</i> has been drafted and announced, but not yet approved.	..
Hungary		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Iceland		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	Regional homelessness strategies have been developed.
Ireland	2016-2021	<i>Rebuilding Ireland</i> - the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness is designed to accelerate the expansion of the housing supply. The Plan also provides for early solutions to address the high number of households in emergency accommodation and to provide additional support services to address the issues that can trigger or prolong homelessness. <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i> contains measures to improve services for families, and particularly children, in hotels and other emergency and supported temporary accommodation. This 'whole-of-Government' plan has been developed in close collaboration with other key Government departments and agencies, under the oversight of a dedicated Cabinet Committee. The Plan sets out the path to achieving the critical national ambition of ensuring that all our people have access to quality and affordable housing	The Dublin Region has a Homeless Action Plan, 2019-2021
Israel		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Italy		Homelessness is addressed in the <i>Guidelines for Tackling Severe Adult Marginality in Italy</i> .	
Japan		The central government is responsible for establishing the <i>Law on Special Measure for Self-Sufficiency Support for the Homeless</i> and <i>Basic policy for Self-Sufficiency Support for the Homeless</i> .	The local governments are responsible for establishing plans implementing the <i>Basic policy for Self-Sufficiency Support for the Homeless</i>
Korea		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level

	Year	Homelessness strategy	
		National level	Regional/local level
Latvia		There is no homelessness strategy in Latvia, services are provided within the social policies framework (<i>Social Services and Social Assistance Law</i>)	..
Lithuania		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	Vilnius has adopted a programme on homelessness for the period of 2013-2018, covering accommodation and reintegration.
Luxembourg	2013-2020	The Government has adopted for 2013-2020 a <i>National Strategy Plan Against Homelessness and Housing Exclusion</i> . The main challenges for such a strategy were identified as: - an increasing part of the population living below the risk-of-poverty threshold, and increasing numbers of situations with higher risk of poverty (such as single-parent families); - a steady but strong increase in house prices and rents, with a housing market dominated by homeownership and private rental solutions; - a very limited stock of social rental dwellings (below 2% of the total housing stock in 2011).	..
Mexico		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Malta		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
The Netherlands	2019-2021	There is a national programme that aims to reduce homelessness among youth (aged 18-27) (<i>Actieprogramma Dak- en thuisloze jongeren 2019-2021</i>), as well as a strategic policy agenda established by governmental and non-governmental parties to deal with homelessness (<i>Meerjarenagenda beschermd wonen en maatschappelijke opvang</i>).	..
New Zealand	2019	There is no formalised homelessness strategy at national level. However, Budget 2019 is investing NZD 197 million over four years in Housing First.	A number of local authorities have developed plans to address homelessness in their local areas. These generally involve a wide range of stakeholders working together to develop solutions to the particular issues that present in their individual regions (e.g. Te Mahana Homelessness Strategy in Wellington).
Norway	2014-2020	<i>Housing for Welfare</i> is Norway's National strategy for housing and support services (2014-2020). The strategy is a cooperation between five ministries and a series of directorates, that outlines the goals of the shared work to help disadvantaged citizens in the housing market. The starting point is that everyone should live safely and well. The strategy describes national goals and prioritised focus areas, and the responsibilities and tasks in the housing and support services. Additionally it provides an overview of central government grants and lending schemes.	All municipalities have a responsibility to assist the disadvantaged in the housing market. Around 50 municipalities with major social housing challenges have entered into long-term and committed cooperation with the Norwegian State Housing Bank. The purpose of the cooperation is to support a comprehensive and locally adjusted policy that ensures that more people will receive the assistance they need.
Poland	2019	The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy implemented the <i>Overcoming Homelessness Programme</i> , which has four main objectives: prevent homelessness, conduct activation activities targeting the homeless population, support entities to adapt facilities that provide	There are local strategies for addressing social problems including homelessness, implemented by Social Assistance Centres and financed by local governments.

	Year	Homelessness strategy	
		National level	Regional/local level
		homeless services, and inspire and implement new solutions to help homeless people.	
Portugal	2017-2023	The <i>National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People 2017-2023</i> includes three main areas of intervention: i) promote knowledge, information, awareness raising and education regarding homelessness; ii) strengthen intervention aiming at promoting the integration of homeless persons; and iii) strengthen coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.	Municipal governments, regional governments and NGOs are present in the Planning and Intervention for Homeless People Centers (NPISA), with respect to homeless interventions at local level.
Romania		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level, but homelessness is addressed in the draft National Strategy on Housing, the National Strategy regarding Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, and the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Ethnic Citizens.	
Russian Federation		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Slovak Republic		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There are several strategies at sub-national level (e.g. Bratislava's strategy <i>Urbem Pauperats</i> (2017); Strategy for addressing homelessness in the territory of Trnava (2017))
Slovenia		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
Spain	2015-2020	The <i>Comprehensive National Strategy for Homeless People 2015-2020</i> . The general objective is to reduce the number of homeless people from 22938 in 2015 to 18000 in 2020. The strategy has 5 strategic objectives and 13 strategic lines.	
Sweden		There is no up-to-date national strategy. The previous strategy was <i>Homelessness, Multiple Faces, Multiple Responsibilities – A Strategy to Combat Homelessness and Exclusion from the Housing Market, 2007-2009</i> .	There are strategies and action plans against homelessness at local level, in the largest cities.
Switzerland		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	..
Turkey		There is no reported homelessness strategy at national level	There is no reported homelessness strategy at regional/local level
United Kingdom [England]	2018	The four countries of the United Kingdom have adopted different laws and strategies to tackle homelessness	In England, the cross-government <i>Rough Sleeping Strategy</i> , published in August 2018, sets out a GBP 100 million package to help people who sleep rough and put in place the structures that will end rough sleeping. The Government have committed to halving rough sleeping during the course of this parliament and ending it altogether. At municipal level, the <i>Homelessness Act 2002</i> requires each local authority to review homelessness in its area and to develop a new homelessness strategy every five years. The main objective of municipal homelessness strategies is to set out how an area will support homeless individuals in

Year	Homelessness strategy	
	National level	Regional/local level
		their locality through partnership working and the delivery of key services. Local authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for 'statutory homeless', i.e. unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category (such as households having dependent children, households with a pregnant woman, etc.). Furthermore, for those who are found not to be in priority need, but are unintentionally homeless, local authorities are required to provide advice and assistance "to support the applicant's own efforts to find accommodation."
United Kingdom [Northern Ireland]	2018 The four countries of the United Kingdom have adopted different laws and strategies to tackle homelessness	Northern Ireland had a homelessness strategy in place for 2012-2017
United Kingdom [Scotland]	The four countries of the United Kingdom have adopted different laws and strategies to tackle homelessness	In Scotland, legal duties to house homeless persons were further developed, where local authorities since 2012 have a duty to find permanent accommodation for all applicants who are unintentionally homeless. To support the new legislation, the Scottish government during 10 years worked to increase the supply of social housing and to develop a "housing options" approach, i.e. increase ability of local authorities to offer support to maintain current tenancies, focusing on prevention of homelessness.
United Kingdom [Wales]	The four countries of the United Kingdom have adopted different laws and strategies to tackle homelessness	Wales developed a Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in 2019, aiming to re-shape services towards a rapid re-housing approach and long-term housing-led solutions (away from the provision of emergency, temporary and hostel services).
USA	2018-2022 <i>Home, Together</i> is the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, with the aim to end homelessness in America. The plan also targets specific groups, including veterans, people with disabilities, families with children, unaccompanied youth, and all other individuals. The four objectives of the plan are to: i) ensure homelessness is a rare experience; ii) ensure homelessness is a brief experience; iii) ensure homelessness is a one-time experience; and iv) sustain an end to homelessness.	..

OECD Affordable Housing Database – <http://oe.cd/ahd>

OECD - Social Policy Division - Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs

1. a) Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”; b) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing, 2019. 2016; OECD (2015); FEANTSA Country Profiles <http://www.feantsa.org/en/resources/resources-database>; Baptista and Marlier (2019), *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe: A Study of National Policies*, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8243&furtherPubs=yes>, Cortizo, R. (2019), “National Survey on the Homeless Population in Brazil: Giving a Face to Homelessness and Formulating Strategies and Policies to Address Homelessness”, www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/07/CORTIZO_Roberta_Presentation.pdf.

Data and comparability issues

This indicator provides an overview of existing major homelessness-specific policies in each country, as of 2019. Homelessness strategies differ significantly in terms of approaches, concrete initiatives undertaken, and level of funding. For a more detailed insight and on content, approaches and commitments of homelessness strategies across OECD, key partner and EU countries, please see the documents below.

Sources and further reading:

Baptista, I. and E. Marlier (2019), *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe: A Study of National Policies*, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8243&furtherPubs=yes> (accessed on 14 November 2019)

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Pleace, N., I. Baptista and M. Knutagård (2019), *Housing First in Europe: An Overview of Implementation, Strategy and Fidelity*, https://housingfirsteurope.eu/assets/files/2019/10/2019-10-10-HFinEurope_Full-Report2019_final.pdf (accessed on 24 October 2019).