

Position of the Camilian Mission of Social Assistance on

Measuring Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Poland,

November 2013, Warsaw

Camilian Mission of Social Assistance agrees with the belief that a good diagnosis of homelessness and housing exclusion is crucial for the effectiveness of social policy designed to alleviate its negative consequences to people. The overview of the quality of data and methodology used to describe the scale and basic characteristics of this phenomenon in Poland presents major challenges which should be addressed by institutions responsible for the diagnosis. Among these institutions are the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as non-governmental organizations providing services related to homelessness, including food distribution centers, nightshelters, shelters and other programs “for the homeless”. Our organization belongs to the second group, and we do feel responsible for addressing respective challenges in our own practice. In fact, we have already taken steps. We put forward four postulates to fellow stakeholders with the aim to foster a real change in the policy and, most importantly, in the lives of people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion in our country:

1. In accordance with the recommendations put forward by European Parliament in the Resolution of 14 September 2011 on an EU Homelessness Strategy, the ETHOS Typology should be used as a framework for measuring the scale of the population which should be targeted by the national policy on homelessness and housing exclusion.
2. It is recommended that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy gave up the “no-cost headcount” method as a main tool for measuring the scale of homelessness, and replaced it by an analysis producing basic indicators of homelessness, including annual *flow* and *prevalence*.
3. It is recommended to oblige service providers – especially non-governmental organizations – to implement internal electronic data collection systems on users of services. The registers should consist of essential data regarding homelessness, collected according to unified procedures and definitions in a way that enables the aggregation of data from different providers with full respect to national regulations on personal data protection. As an example of such system we suggest a **standard for data collection on homelessness and housing exclusion** created and pilot tested by the Foundation for Social Innovation and Research “Shipyard” in 2010-11. The obligations put on non-governmental service providers must be accompanied by a financial support system for fulfilling these responsibilities, established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. NGO service providers should actively support implementation of this postulate.
4. The process of planning, analyzing and interpreting results of research on measuring homelessness and housing exclusion should be delegated to the experts on social research in order to guarantee its methodological correctness and eliminate unjustified legitimization of simplistic beliefs and stereotypes.

The Full Position in PL includes a table presenting the data for ETHOS 2008 housing situations as gathered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Exclusion during one night “no cost headcount” conducted in February 2013 and in the course of the Homeless Census organized during the National Housing and Population Census in 2011.