

# HOMELESSNESS AROUND US



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# HOMELESSNESS AROUND US

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*Dear Reader,*

This book is dedicated to the problem of homelessness and as such is a true rarity in the existing professional and academic texts in the country. The homelessness is a specific and complex social phenomenon and a process which involves individuals exposed to a multitude of social risks, are marginalized and often live in poverty and social exclusion. The specific actions and policies targeting the homeless as a vulnerable category of people exceed the national boundaries, while taking into consideration the flexibility of their profile which has recently expanded to include categories of people such as immigrants, youngsters and children.

This book is a rare contribution to the problem of homelessness, particularly as it provides insight on:

1) the theoretical and conceptual basis of the analysis on homelessness, as well as empirical data on the challenges faced by the homeless people, and

2) a comparative analysis on the homelessness and the respective policies in many European countries, as well as a review of the situation and the relevant measures in the Republic of Macedonia implemented to alleviate the challenges posed by the homelessness at national and local level.

Such dual approach allows the book to help support further exploration of the critical debates on homelessness in the Republic of Macedonia, while being a remarkably useful tool for the creators of the policies and the measures that affect the living conditions of the homeless people.

In light of the above, a greater acknowledgment is due to the Association for Research, Communications and Development – PUBLIC, which, while working on civil society issues, has decided to focus its research on homelessness. Their initiative is likely to prompt further theoretical and applicable research endeavors by other civil organizations that would ultimately help improve the prospects of dealing with the challenges of homelessness.

Prof. Dr. Maja Gerovska - Mitev

## INTRODUCTION

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The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and the new UN Document-Sustainable Development Indicators 2025, have made the fight against poverty and hunger a priority task, a significant part of which is the homelessness.

The increasing societal inequalities, high rates of unemployment and social exclusion have contributed to the rise of homelessness on a global level, whereas the ongoing crisis with the emigrants, refugees and the internally displaced persons, pose an additional risk.

The limited concept of homelessness leads to a conclusion that the number of homeless people in the country is negligent. The homelessness has thus far been largely perceived as public homelessness, comprised mainly of people sleeping on the street. The new definition, resulting from this research, includes two new profiles – hidden and potential homelessness – with nine categories and 15 subcategories. These include people who stay with family or friends, women in domestic violence shelters, people with prolonged stay in institutions due to absence of home, people with a confiscated mortgaged home, people living in temporary, unconventional places, etc.

The research, conducted by PUBLIC Research Centre, provides the basis for measuring the homelessness in line with the ETHOS typology which will enable an appropriate approach to this increasing problem and creation of evidence-based policies, built on data comparable not only at European, but at a global level.

A further outcome of the research is the

package for methodological work with these groups – prevention, early intervention, intervention in crisis and social integration, as well as the instrument for measuring the depth of homelessness. Based on the research, the web page Homelessness.mk has been developed (bezdministvo.mk), which provides an integrated approach to this phenomenon in Macedonia.

Verification and further elaboration of the research findings were made as part of the conference Homelessness Around Us – Public, Hidden, Potential, which gathered representatives of institutions, NGO sector, informal associations, business sector as well as representatives of vulnerable groups, as classified by ETHOS.

The research was conducted throughout a period of 14 months, in a total of 138 research units including experts, representatives of the media, the civil sector and homeless people.

The team of the PUBLIC Research Centre would like to acknowledge the efforts made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in providing participation of the institutions in this research, the Social Activities Institute and the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy, the Faculty of Philosophy for the provided academic and professional consultancy, the Red Cross of the City of Skopje which enabled a facilitated access to the vulnerable groups subject of this research, as well as to the Association of Social Workers of the City of Skopje, as the most relevant authority on the issue of homelessness.

## I

**WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?***Short theoretical summary*

The phenomenon of homelessness can be viewed from three different aspects, either as a condition of having or not having a home, a limited inclusion in the social life or a process in which the individual faces identity problems.

The first aspect of homelessness denotes absence of housing. A person in such situation is typically deprived of the basic human needs, leading to various deviations.

The rooflessness or homelessness may be public (*sensu stricte*) or hidden (*sensu largo*), where the homeless people are sheltered in reception centres, shelters, with or without institutional support, or with the support of relatives and friends. The public (street) homelessness is often a result of potential homelessness which consists of unstable and insecure housing. The international standards call upon the need of considering the potential homelessness an integral part of homelessness.

Gradually the homeless people form a particular pattern of behavior, such as inadaptability to the social situations, and some of them, exacerbated by specific circumstances, reach for alcohol and narcotics and take part in criminal activities in order to survive. The result is often detrimental to their personality and health.

The homelessness may be involuntary, a result of poverty, unemployment, debts, mortgages, and violence, or elective. The latter resembles vagrancy and is a rare phenomenon in our country.

Registered examples of homelessness indicate that it can last for more than a decade.

The second aspect points us to observe homelessness as a process in which the socialization of the homeless person takes place in a specific manner. The homeless person “falls out” of a specific community due to his/her constant mobility.

When the person is deprived of the possibility to fulfill certain societal roles, he/she loses the ties with the community, resulting in termination of the family, neighboring and friendly relations.

The inability to fulfill certain roles is tied to the ambiguity in the expectations of the homeless persons. The staff in the social welfare centres expect them to take an active and compliant participation in the social life, whereas others tie the homelessness to passivity and apathy. A third, slightly different group of expectations, comprise those of the other homeless people, who look at homelessness as an integral part of a symbolic interaction. Therefore, the homelessness is more of a process rather than a condition.

The homeless people become immersed in their loneliness, hopelessness and despair. The start of the homelessness is a turning point in their lives, which leads to insecure and disorganized life.

The emotional void exacerbates the actual

homelessness (lack of roof over the head).

The inclusion in the world of homeless people carries along a need for self-defining as a homeless person.

The first phase in the new life of public homelessness, in line with the *in vivo* codes of a specific group of homeless persons, may have different names. In any case, it is a phase when the individual feels lost and is equally unrecognized by his/her closest people and by the other homeless persons.

During this period, the individual is wary of being identified with the other homeless people. The constant tension induced by the process of becoming or not becoming a homeless person limits the affiliation of the person to a specific group.

In this case the person reaches for alcohol, personal hygiene is gradually neglected, and the individual is on the lookout for food and other homeless people. Slowly, the homeless person overcomes the uncertainty and plunges into a more inviting world – the one of the homeless people. The individual's initiation into homelessness is simultaneously the beginning of the identification with the new social group.

Given the three perspectives, the homeless person may be observed as a dysfunctional person who loses the social ties and roles and is under constant scrutiny by the homeowners.

Our research team is strongly opposed to any labeling of homeless people, given that a range of circumstances have contributed to their homelessness, and the bias can additionally complicate their situation.

## II

## ETHOS – EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION

*(European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion)*

The homelessness is one of the main societal problems dealt with by the Strategy for Social Protection and EU Accession. Prevention of homelessness and resolution of the housing issues requires understanding of the way and the process which leads to homelessness, thus creating wide perception on the meaning of homelessness.

FEANTSA (European Association of Organizations Working with Homeless People) has developed a typology on homelessness and housing exclusion under the name of ETHOS.

ETHOS starts with the conceptual framework which defines the three segments of housing. The absence of any of these segments will indicate homelessness.

Having a home means: possession of an appropriate space which is exclusively owned by the person and his /her family (PHYSICAL DOMAIN). The space should offer a possibility for maintenance of privacy and social relations (SOCIAL DOMAIN) and there should be a legal right for the use of the space (LEGAL DOMAIN).

This leads to four different basic forms or concepts: 1.without roof, 2.without a home, 3. insecure housing, 4. inappropriate housing. Each of these may be described as a lack of home.

ETHOS classifies the persons without a home based on their life situation or housing situation.

These conceptual categories are divided in 13 operational categories, which may be used for defining different goals for the policy as marking the problem with homelessness, development, monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

Operational category	Life situation		General definition	
People living in difficult conditions	*1.1	In a public space or out in the open	Life on the street or in public places, without shelter which resembles a residence	No roof
People placed in urgent housing	2.1	Sleep-over shelters	People who do not have regular place of residence and use the services of the shelters for sleepover	
People housed in shelters for homeless	3.1	Hostels for homeless	Short-term stay	
	*3.2	Temporary housing		
	3.3	Transition Housing Centres		
People housed in shelters for women	*4.1	Shelters and reception points for women	Women, mostly domestic violence victims, housed in shelter-centres intended for short-stay	
People placed in housing intended for immigrants	*5.1	*temporary housing / shelter centres	Immigrants in shelters and in centres for short-term housing due to their immigrant status	No home
	5.2	Housing for workers – immigrants		
People soon to be released from prison, from health care or other institutions	*6.1	*Correctional and penitentiary institutions	No available home prior to leaving the institution	No home
	*6.2	*Health care institutions (including centres for rehabilitation of addicts, psychiatric hospitals)	Stays longer in the institution due to absence of home	
	*6.3	*Institutions for children / homes	No identified home (ex. until the 18th birthday)	
People receiving long-term support due to homelessness	7.1	Residential housing of elderly homeless people	Longer-term housing with care for former homeless people (usually for a time period longer than one year)	
	7.2	Supported housing of former homeless people		
People living in insecure housing	*8.1	Temporary housing with relatives and close friends	Life in conventional residence, which is not a regular place of residence and is used due to absence of personal home	Precarious housing
	*8.2	No (sub) lease agreement	Usurpation of housing (no legal documentation for lease)	
	*8.3	Usurped land	Usurpation of land (no documents for ownership)	
People living under threat of eviction	*9.1	Legal decision for eviction (rented residence)	Eviction decision is in effect	Precarious housing
	*9.2	Repossession of mortgaged home	Creditor possesses legal decision to takeover ownership	
People living under threat of violence	*10.1	Incidents registered by the police	Police acts to secure safe harbor for the domestic violence victim	
People living in temporary, unconventional residences	11.1	Mobile homes	Life in temporary home with no conditions for regular housing	Inadequate housing
	*11.2	Unconventional objects	Shelter or substandard cabin	
	*11.3	Temporary structures	Tent or cabin	
People living in uninhabitable residential conditions	12.1	Usurpation of an uninhabitable object	Defined as inappropriate housing according to national housing legislation	
People living in overcrowded home	13.1	According to the highest norm for overcrowdedness at national level	In case when the national norm for the number of people living in one room is surpassed	

- IN MACEDONIA THE CATEGORIES ARE MARKED WITH ASTERISK (\*)

## ETHOS IN MACEDONIAN CONTEXT

The ETHOS typology has been adapted to the Macedonian legislation and to its institutional structure and as such excludes the following subcategories of people: those sheltered in urgent housing, overnight centers (2.1), people placed in hostels for homeless (3.1), people placed in transition centres for homeless (3.3), people housed in shelters for workers-emigrants (5.2), people with long-term housing support due to homelessness – residential housing and supported housing (7.1 and 7.2). The adaptation has been made due to the inexistence of housing options and services for these categories of people in the Law on Social Protection.

The subcategory 11.1 (people living in mobile homes) is also not considered, due to absence of such homes in the country.

The operational categories of people living in inappropriate housing (12.1) and people living in overcrowded home (13.1) have also been excluded given that ETHOS general definitions require the existence of domestic legal definition of inappropriate housing and standards of what constitutes an overcrowded home. The Macedonian legislation does not distinguish such definitions. The Macedonian National Housing Strategy (2007-2012) uses the terms appropriate and minimal housing, although these are not clearly defined. The Strategy makes use of the term appropriate housing which serves to denote housing widely accepted by the society as satisfactory i.e. housing standard which the society is aiming for in the future.

A clear definition of standardized housing, accepted by the society, is not provided.

The term minimal housing is more restrictive with regard to the required level of housing standards which the society considers minimal and it entails the required material and legal housing standards to meet the minimal basic needs of the beneficiaries. There is also no clear definition of the material and legal standards provided.

### III

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

*(Denmark, Finland, Holland, Scotland, Italy, Austria, Croatia, Germany,  
Serbia, and Slovenia)*

### 1. All of the above countries, except Serbia use a wider definition on homelessness

Homeless are considered the individuals who lack permanent residential address where they can be contacted, including the people who live on the street, in shelters or in reception centres, people who need to be released from institutions and prisons within three months who lack a permanent place of residence, as well as people who live in insecure and unsafe housing, including the accommodation with friends or relatives.

### 2. Underlying reasons of the problem:

a) **structural**, related to transition from socialist to capitalist system (Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia)

b) **classic**, categorized in the following manner:

- *societal* (poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, conflicts, interaction problems),
- *institutional* (leaving the institutions, absence of guaranteed housing policy)
- *individual reasons* (addictions, mental disorder).

### 3. Demographic characteristics and profile of homeless people - homeless people, predominantly men (approximately 80 percent);

- predominately between 40 to 60 years of age<sup>1</sup>;
- The bulk of the homeless people are single;
- The bulk of the homeless in developed countries are foreigners;
- The bulk of the homeless have completed primary education;
- The homeless are often professionally passive, undertaking occasional work under no employment contract;
- In developed countries the homeless are younger and stay in homelessness for a shorter period of time.

### 4. Number of homeless people

To approximately establish the number of homeless people, a distinction would need to be made between homelessness in a broader and homelessness in a more restricted context. Generally, the approach to measuring homelessness varies from one country to another depending on the respective homeless population. In the countries with highly developed evidence-based policies on homelessness<sup>2</sup> the data is gathered based on:

1. Polls (counting of homeless people sleeping on the street): national counting (or counting in cities with predominant homelessness);
2. Registries: service providers, municipalities or NGOs;
3. Census of the population and living conditions.

In less developed countries such as Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, the measuring of homelessness is based on the data acquired by the respective services.

### 5. Location of living

- Approximately 80 percent of the homeless live alone (it refers to people who reside outside of institutions);
- Large cities are the places most frequented by homeless people;
- Approximately 60 percent of the homeless reside in different institutions. The others live in railway stations, basements, wagons, gardens, etc.

### 6. Sources of income

- Main source of income of the homeless is the social welfare, unemployment benefits and sick leave, and pension or salary.

### 7. Policy on homelessness

In three of the analyzed countries (Finland, Denmark and Holland) there are national strategies on homelessness. Germany, Austria and Scotland have developed a decentralized approach.

For instance, in North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populated region in Germany, a regional action plan on homeless people has been developed. In Austria, there is no national strategy on homelessness<sup>3</sup>, however Vienna (where most of the homeless have been identified) has passed an integrated programme on homelessness, known as Viennese Programme for Integration of Homeless People, which provides a thorough analysis of the prevention, accommodation and reintegration of the homeless. Despite having no specific strategic document in addition to the legal framework, Scotland has developed an integrated, ambitious policy, with clear goals, effective participation of the stakeholders, allocation of appropriate resources and monitoring and evaluation system. An important aspect of the policy on homelessness in Scotland is the clear commitment of the Government towards eradicating the phenomenon. This commitment is one of the 45 national results to be accomplished by each successive government. In Italy, the new efforts of the central aim at development of a strategy for addressing the issue of homelessness, as well as promotion of a housing policy. No strategies exist in Croatia, and Serbia for addressing the issue of homelessness.

The system **housing first** is the most popular proposal for addressing the issue of homelessness in the majority of the countries: Denmark, Finland, Holland, Italy, Austria, Scotland and Germany, whereas currently underway in Croatia is the implementation of the first project of this type. Despite the fact that "a home first" is not a widely accepted approach in Slovenia and little if any attention is dedicated to the permanent housing, still in Ljubljana a programme is developed which is focused on transitory housing. In Serbia this approach has yet not been accepted.

In December 2010, the European Parliament has supported activities as regards homelessness with its Declaration 61/2010. An integral

Housing first is a model developed in the United States of America, which provides the homeless people with access to independent housing, supported also by a permanent mobile network provided in their homes. The effectiveness of this approach in terms of provision of stable housing, health care and the drug abuse prevention is assessed very positively.

In the international discourse "Housing first" is considered an alternative to the generally accepted "scaled" model in which the transition from the urgent shelters toward a more transitory housing, prior to securing permanent housing, is carried out step by step. A home first represents a change of paradigms, where the independent housing is the first step, and not the last

part of the Europe 2020 Programme is the programme European Platform of Cooperation in the Fight with Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP), which partly focuses on homelessness.

For a longer time now there is a global ongoing discussion on the need of redefining the social policy towards homelessness. From legal regulation and addressing homelessness (managing homelessness) to solution of the problem (ending homelessness).

7. Civil society participation in the resolution of the problem of homelessness

The participation of the non-governmental sector in managing homelessness may be assessed very highly. In most of the analyzed countries, special groups have been formed, mostly federations, for provision of support to the homeless people.

### 8. Research on homelessness

Throughout Europe the research on homelessness mostly focuses on the process of entering into homelessness as well as the underlying reasons of homelessness. There are very few analysis which deal with measuring the outcomes of a certain solution, monitoring and evaluation process.

<sup>1</sup> However, most of the countries, in recent years, mark an increasing trend of young homeless persons.

<sup>2</sup> Denmark, Finland, England, Holland, Italy, Germany and Austria

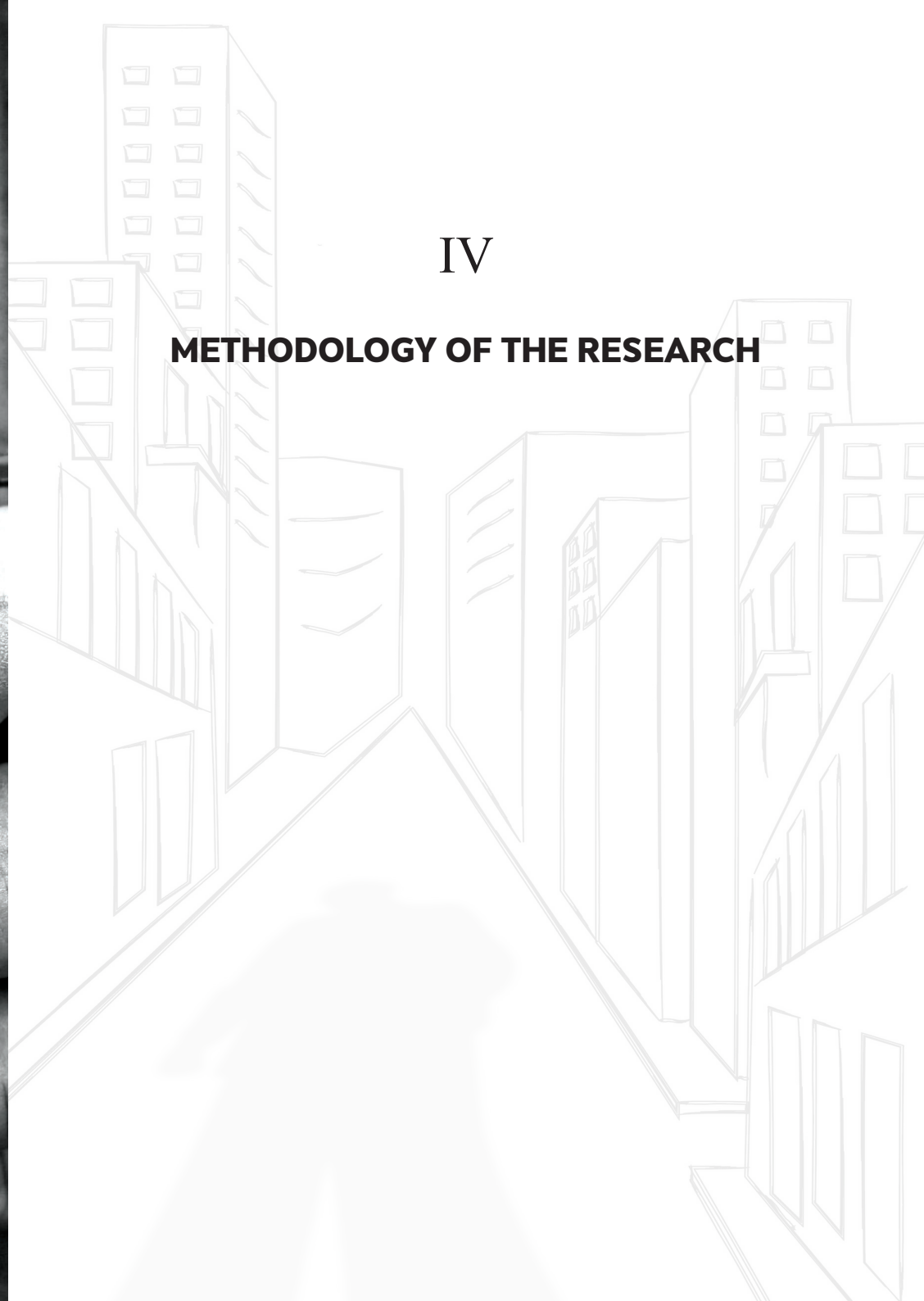
<sup>3</sup> FEANTSA Country Fiche - Austria





## IV

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**



This research deals with the issue of homelessness in Macedonia, particularly with the identification of its specific features: definition, profiles, measuring, and remediation policy.

The reasons and the conditions for homelessness, although essential, are not the primary goal of this study. The most recent extensive research on street children and indirect homeless people in Macedonia was conducted by ZSD in 2001<sup>4</sup>. In 2004, the Law on Social Protection has identified the homeless people as a marginal group.

This study comprises two parts: The first part provides description of the experiences related to homelessness from 11 countries in the region and Europe, including Macedonia. A detailed review has been made of the legislation, the existing literature, national strategies and action plans. The selected countries show varying trends of homelessness and have been selected according to the growth of the phenomenon – countries with a decline in homelessness, countries with a surge in homelessness and countries with steady homelessness.

The empirical part of the research is primarily based on the qualitative approach. The main empirical mass consists of two groups:

- primary - comprising homeless people based on the ETHOS - European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion), a tool developed by the European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and by the European Observatory on Homelessness aimed at transnational use;

- secondary - representatives of governmental social institutions, local self-government, nongovernmental sector as well as representatives of the police and academic institutions.

### Goals

- Formulation of the first definition on homelessness in Macedonia, according to the ETHOS conceptual frame;

- Defining an instrument for measuring the gravity of the homelessness and categorization of the homeless for continued monitoring of the phenomenon, in line with the EU standards and based on the ETHOS;

- Identification of the elements of the systematic approach to defining the homelessness problem in Macedonia;

- Development of the first homelessness web page in Macedonia;

- Monitoring and evaluation of the policy on homelessness in Macedonia.

### Additional Goal

- Developed module on homelessness, to serve as a matrix for training of social welfare staff.

### SAMPLE

As mentioned, the representative sample comprises two groups:

Primary – interviews with 65 homeless people, conducted from August to February 2015. The interviews were conducted at the Momin Potok centre for homeless, in the premises of Public Research Centre, in other associations working with people targeted by ETHOS and in other institutions housing homeless people. A small percentage of the interviews were conducted by telephone, with the support of citizens, in order to protect the identity of the people.

Secondary - people directly or indirectly linked to the problem, of which 16 experts, 57 academics, as well as representatives of the local self-government, social institutions, and the civil sector.

### METHOD

From a methodological point of view this analysis is aimed at assessing the social impact (impact factor) which serves to describe the current situation with the provided care and promotes positive societal change in Macedonia on the issue of homelessness.

## TECHNIQUES

### 1. Analysis of Documents

Comparative analysis of the countries in the region and Europe, their legislative framework, national strategies and action plans.

**2. Expert interviews** with representatives of academic institutions, governmental social institutions, local self-government and the non-governmental sector. Interviews with experts focused on defining homelessness, its causes and respective coping strategies.

**3. Semi-structured interviews** with representatives of socially-engaged NGOs, dealing with ETHOS operational categories, exploring whether the users of their services have housing problems and the type of assistance offered to these groups.

**4. Structured interviews** with homeless people (quasi Case Study) for the development of homeless profiles in Macedonia (ETHOS). This is the most extensive and important technique in this research. The interviews were conducted with the following profiles of homeless people:

1. NO ROOF, i.e. PUBLIC HOMELESSNESS
2. NO HOUSE, i.e. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS
3. INSECURE AND INADEQUATE HOUSING, i.e. POTENTIAL HOMELESSNESS

The questionnaire is designed to prompt self-evaluation and self-perception of the homeless and is custom made for the purposes of this research.

In the analysis of the answers, the focus was placed on the focus group needs, their treatment by the community and the institutions, the effects of homelessness on their physical and mental health, their social relations with the families, friends and other homeless people, the reasons for the homelessness, as well as the vision for the future and the personal stance on how to overcome homelessness.

5. Discussions in the four **focus groups** were

held with representatives of the respective ministries, local self-government, social welfare centres and the socially-engaged NGO sector. The focus group discussions were carried along the following items: definition on homelessness; causes; demographic characteristics and profiles of the homeless; number of homeless people; place of their residence; respective public policy; participation of the civil society in addressing the issue.

### INITIAL PRESUMPTIONS

- The homelessness is more of a process, rather than a static phenomenon

- The homelessness is analyzed from three aspects:

People with or without housing,

People with limited inclusion in the social life and

People with identity problems

There are three types of homelessness in Macedonia: public (no roof), hidden (no home) and potential homelessness (insecure and inappropriate housing).

- The evidenced instances of family homelessness are fairly complex and require additional research.

- Men comprise the bulk of the public homelessness

- The current attempts for addressing the issue are exceptionally curative

- The socially-driven NGOs catering to homeless people mostly offer services of psycho-social and existential nature

- The homelessness is in close correlation with the poverty

- The public perception of the homeless is mostly discriminatory

- Securing housing, employment and health and psychological counseling are the most burning issues for this target group

- There is a need of a specific reception centre, to provide further treatment of the homeless people.

- Aggravating risk factors:

- diseases, illiteracy, lack of information on how to exercise the rights of social protection, low qualification, disability, insecure or inap-

<sup>4</sup> Stojanovski N. Darkovski, D. Petrova, D. Dzevelevkov, 3001, ZSD Field Research for children on the street/street Children

propriate housing, domestic violence, refugee status, lack of citizenship, inaccessibility to the institutions of the system.

## TERMINOLOGY

### *Definitions of Homelessness Profiles*

#### **Profile A**

Grouping of homeless people, based on their similar characteristics and other features.

**Profile B**, according to the main indicator of homelessness – housing

1. The public homelessness encompasses roofless people, without any housing support.

2. The hidden homelessness includes people with or without institutional support, which they are expected to leave within a given period of time (women sheltered in domestic violence centres, emigrants housed in centres/reception points/public housing for emigrants, people due to be released from penitentiary,

health or other institutions, without available housing.

3. The potential homelessness includes people with insecure housing (provided by relatives, friends, in usurped residence or in a home built on usurped land), people under the threat of eviction (due to mortgage or unsettled debt in rented housing facilities, people under the threat of violence and people with temporary, non-conventional housing.

**Curative programmes** – comprise the secondary or tertiary prevention, i.e. are implemented in a situation when the problem is already existent.

**Substandard housing** includes absence of public utilities such as electricity, waterworks and sewerage, as well as substandard and insecure building construction.

**The preventive measures on** the homeless labor market include seasonal or temporary work (in line with the welfare-to-work concept).

# V

## **BASIC INFORMATION ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN MACEDONIA RELATED TO THE TRADITIONAL AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONCEPT ON HOMELESSNESS**

## THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

In the first few years of the independence of Republic of Macedonia, the social protection system was focused on the social rights (benefits) and services provided to the citizens. It has since continually developed to ensure compliance with European legislation<sup>5</sup>. The intensity of the changes of the system is also seen through the fact that as of 2009 the Law on Social Protection has been supplemented and amended 15 times. The Republic of Macedonia fosters an EU aspiration, but at the same time, it has an economy which is closer to the developing countries, which are characterized with simpler systems for social protection compared to the EU countries. Macedonia has a lower income per capita and a much higher unemployment. These are factors which limit the potential, the funds and the schemes for social protection, which makes Macedonia a very specific case in Europe<sup>6</sup>.

In Macedonia, the social protection is defined as an activity of public interest<sup>7</sup>. According to the Constitution, the state provides social protection to the citizens, in line with the principle of social justice<sup>8</sup>. According to the Law on Social Protection, the social protection is a system of measures, activities and policies for prevention and combating the social risks of the citizens, thus reducing the poverty and the social exclusion and strengthening their capacity for protection. The Law also provides a definition of the social risks which

are identified as follows: health risks (disease, injury, mental disabilities); aging risks; risks of the families with children; unemployment risks, loss of employment-based income; risks of poverty and other risks related to social inclusion.

The Government of Republic of Macedonia adopts a National Programme for Development of the Social Protection, which sets forth the goals, the priorities and the future directions of the social protection development for the citizens in the RM, along with the measures of active social policy, at the mid - and the long term. Furthermore, the Government adopts an annual programme for implementation of the social protection rights, which establishes the areas of social protection, the needs of the population, the social prevention and the manner and the means for its implementation<sup>9</sup>.

Beneficiaries of social protection in Macedonia are the Republic, the municipalities, the City of Skopje and municipalities in the city of Skopje<sup>10</sup>, whereas the central institution, in charge of policy development, strategic planning, administration, as well as oversight over the implementation of the social protection laws, is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. According to the Law on Social Protection, the municipalities are in charge of implementation of the social protection, and adoption of programmes for the needs of the citizens in the area of social protection, in

line with the National Programme<sup>11</sup>. The municipalities enable exercising of the social protection of the following at-risk groups: people with disabilities, children without parents and children without parental care, children with mental and physical disabilities, children on the street, children with pedagogic and social problems, children with single-parent families, people at social risk, abusers of drugs and other psychotropic substances, precursors and alcohol, victims of family violence and human trafficking, and elderly people without domestic care.

The respective institution in charge of conducting studies on the social phenomena and problems as well as advancement of the socially-related activities is the Institute for Social Activities<sup>12</sup>, which conducts oversight over the professional work of the institutions for social protection, as well as over other legal entities and individuals, active in the areas of social protection. For implementation of the system of social protection, institutions for social protection are being formed (centres for social work – CSW and social institutions for non-institutional and institutional protection). The network of public institutions for social protection comprises 27 inter-municipal centres for social work, three municipal centres (CSR), 11 institutions for social protection and 33 centres for daily and temporary housing of the beneficiaries. The social welfare centres, form part of the Sector for Social Protection within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In line with the law, the Social Welfare Centre operates as a professional institution with public competencies in the sphere of social protection<sup>13</sup>. The Social Welfare Centre carries out the following public competencies<sup>14</sup>: decides

on the social protection rights, and on matters governed by the family-related legislation.

## THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF HOMELESSNESS

The traditional concept of homelessness encompasses people living on the street or people with temporary accommodation in homeless shelters. The work of the social welfare centres and other institutions in Macedonia focuses on this limited category of marginalized people.

The professional work of the centres, with the homeless as a special marginalized and socially excluded group, starts with the detection of the case, opening up a file for the beneficiary and establishing his/her identity. This is implemented through inspection in the personal documentation of the person. Often, these people have incomplete personal documents or have none whatsoever. This requires parallel work on two levels: securing personal documentation, in cooperation with the Interior Ministry, and meeting the various needs of the beneficiary, such as: accommodation in a health care institution and providing urgent medical care; accommodation in an institution for elderly people and an institution for elderly people with disabilities; accommodation in an institution for elderly people with moderate and severe disabilities in the mental and the physical development; and accommodation in a homeless centre.

The Law on Social Protection prescribes non-institutional protection for the homeless people in Macedonia, i.e. centres are created for the homeless and day -centres for street children – children on the street. In line with the Law on Social Protection, the right to

<sup>5</sup> Coffey International Development. 2011. Administering and financing of social services in Southeast Europe: case of Macedonia. Kosovo. Available at: [http://www.cea.org.mk/documents/111201\\_tregullimi\\_qeverisjes\\_financimit\\_maqedonise\\_en.pdf](http://www.cea.org.mk/documents/111201_tregullimi_qeverisjes_financimit_maqedonise_en.pdf) (Accessed on: 22.04.2015)

<sup>6</sup> Dimitrioska, C. (2011). Study on „National programmes and benefits in the scope of the system for social protection in Republic of Macedonia, Skopje.

<sup>7</sup> Article 5, Law on Social Protection. Official Gazette of PM, no. 79 as of 24 June 2009

<sup>8</sup> Article 35, Constitution of Republic of Macedonia

<sup>9</sup> Article 4, Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of RM, no. 79, 24.6.2009

<sup>10</sup> Article 3, Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of RM, no. 79, од 24.6.2009

<sup>11</sup> Article 11, Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of RM, no. 79, од 24.6.2009

<sup>12</sup> Член 129

<sup>13</sup> Article 133

<sup>14</sup> Article 134

accommodation into a day-centre, among others, is also provided to the homeless. In Macedonia the homeless are mentioned in strategies and documents which refer to social protection, but there is no specific document to govern the issue. People sheltered in the centre for homeless have no right to use social financial benefits. The homeless person is expected to stay in the centre for six months, with the possibility of extension to another six months. During the stay, the Social Welfare Centre undertakes activities to facilitate the integration in the social environment following departure of the centre. The Institute for Social Activities in Macedonia has developed a thorough review of methods and techniques of all profiles of staff employed in the centre (social worker, psychologist, lawyer, and sociologist) for work with homeless people<sup>15</sup>. Also, a small partnership network for in the work with the homeless has been presented at the level of the local community (police, health care institutions, NGO sector, media and citizens).

### THE WIDER CONCEPT OF HOMELESSNESS

The contemporary concept of homelessness is presented by ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion), a tool developed by FEANTSA and the European Observatory on Homelessness, and is aimed at international use. According to ETHOS, homelessness is treated in a wider context which includes the hidden homelessness (people without a home: women placed in shelters, people placed in shelters for emigrants, people soon to be released from prison or other institutions), as well as potential homelessness

(people living in insecure and inappropriate housing).

Given that we are strong proponents of the implementation of this wider concept of homelessness in the country, we provide the following analysis of the housing in Macedonia and the related legislation.

### HOUSING IN MACEDONIA

Housing exclusion is a complex phenomenon which is closely tied to the other forms of social marginalization. The housing problems are the main causes of social exclusion, mostly manifested through homelessness, unfavorable and inappropriate living conditions, but also living in poverty zones<sup>16</sup>. The three basic obstacles to decent housing - economic, cultural and legal - are in strong correlation with the people facing social exclusion, as well as with scarcity of the residential locations due to specific societal circumstances. It is mostly manifested as substandard or poor housing, including lack of access to financial resources for improvement of the housing conditions or as a legal uncertainty, mostly related to the large number of illegal constructions in the country<sup>17</sup>. Having a home may be understood as having appropriate housing (or a space) where the individual and his/her family have property rights (physical domain), which enables them to preserve their privacy and relations (social domain) and have ownership of the home (legal domain<sup>18</sup>).

The transition processes in the Republic of Macedonia have prompted changes in the housing sphere as well. The 1998 Housing Law (Official Gazette of RM no.21), has abolished

the category of social housing and has introduced a new housing system as an economic category. The legislative housing framework in Macedonia recognizes six categories of people without housing as potential beneficiaries of the social housing: children without parents or parental care; beneficiaries of social and regular financial support; people struck by elementary-natural disasters; people with disabilities and people in need of assistance and care by other people; socially endangered Roma community members, and single mothers with underage children<sup>19</sup>.

According to data of the National Housing Strategy (2007-2012), the Republic of Macedonia has a surplus of residential space of some 130.000 residential units, which indicates that many families own more than one apartment, whereas a large number of "homeless families" have settled in rural areas, in residential facilities or weekend-houses, deserted as a result of the increased migration to the urban areas. The state of these rural residential facilities is predominantly poor, i.e. there are no basic living conditions (electricity, water, sewerage, roads, schools, ambulances, postal offices, organized traffic). There are areas with solid infrastructure, however primarily used as recreational settlements.

The Strategy uses the terms appropriate and minimal housing, however these are not clearly defined. The term **appropriate housing** seeks to denote standardized housing, one that is accepted by the societal norms as such, i.e. general housing standards of the society. The definition of this category does not refer only to the residential premises and its refurbishment, but also to legal housing issues. A precise definition of this category is essential to the governing of the subject-matter with regulation related to construction of new residential buildings (construction, maintenance and use).

The **minimal housing** category is more restrictive in the determination of the level of standards defined by the society as the lowest level of housing standards and it encompasses the minimal physical and legal housing standards for the beneficiaries.

One of the strategic goals of the National Strategy on Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010-2020) is the achievement of standardized and harmonic housing for the categories of citizens which face housing exclusion: children without parents or parental care, beneficiaries of social and regular financial support, people with disabilities and people in need of assistance and care by other people, socially endangered Roma community members<sup>20</sup> and single mothers with underage children. This strategic goal envisages the achievement of the following results:

1. Reduced degree of substandard housing conditions expressed through lack of communal sockets and other infrastructure or insecure construction of poor quality;
2. Reduced degree of overcrowded homes, expressed in under-average usable residential area per family member;
3. Eradicated spatial segregation of ethnic and other types of communities as a result of the existent cultural and social matrixes;
4. Reduced risk of loss of the tenancy status due to legal insecurity as a result of a change or consistent implementation of the legislation in the field of construction and spatial and urban planning.

However, of note is that the part of the National Strategy which focuses on social protection, which calls on to the creation of a social protection system for the poorest citizens, as well as providing access to non-institutional and institutional forms of protection and capacity building of the social protection system, focuses on the elderly people, children without

<sup>15</sup> ZSD, Professional and Methodological Instructions and Manuals, Book 1, Skopje 2007 p. 26-28

<sup>16</sup> Spicker, P. Housing and social exclusion. Scotland. University Dundee

<sup>17</sup> Kostov, 3. (2010). Skopje. Definition, characterization, classification and indicators of social exclusion in the housing in Macedonia. Magazine on social politics, 3 No. 6, pg. 511 - 590,

<sup>18</sup> Edgar and others (2004, p. 5), Development of operational definition for homelessness. (2004). Third statistical review of homelessness in Europe (p.5). Available at:

<sup>19</sup> Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, 2009: 4)

<sup>20</sup> Along with the poor, the social group where the worst examples of substandard living are registered in Macedonia is the Roma ethnic community

parents and parental care and victims of domestic violence, **whereas the homeless people are not singled out as a specific category.**

In the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Republic of Macedonia, as part of overcoming the problem of poverty in substandard conditions, the following measures have been established: finalization of the infrastructure (traffic and communal) in unplanned settlements, provision of urban services and legalization of eligible objects.

Therefore, the meeting of the minimal spatial conditions, refurbishment of the apartment with basic communal infrastructure (electricity, water, sewerage) and traffic connectivity between the home, the settlement and the city – as well as the legal ownership of the home or tenancy rights comprise the basic minimal preconditions for humane living.

In 2007, the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy for Housing in Republic of Macedonia (2007-2012) envisaged the adoption of the Law on Social Housing, before September 2008, to regulate the social housing and the exercising of the right to social housing of the vulnerable groups. This Law has not yet been adopted, however the Strategy conceptually does not foresee new orientation and structural reforms towards securing systemic mechanisms that would enhance the social housing funds in Macedonia<sup>21</sup>.

The draft-programmes of the City of Skopje envisage support to the activities of the Red Cross Homeless Reception Point of the City of Skopje for its activities in the area of social, children's and health care.

## PROBLEMS WITH HOUSING

According to the last census, there are a total of 564.296 households, or 698.143 apartments (all types of residences), with the bulk of

As regards access to bath tub or indoor toilet, in 2012, 90,4 percent of the total number of households have had access to shower or bath tub, i.e. 95,5 percent of the urban households and 82,4 percent of the rural households, whereas 86,9 percent of the total number of households had access to in-door toilet, i.e. 94,3 percent of the urban households and 75,3 percent of the rural households.

the population located in Skopje.

In accordance with the State Statistical Office, in Macedonia in 2012<sup>22</sup>, 14,1 percent of the households had problems with leaking roof, damp walls, foundations, broken and rotten windows, whereas the percentage of families facing this problem is higher in the urban environment (16,3 percent) compared to the rural areas (12,8 percent). This percentage has diminished significantly compared to 2010, when 25, 1 percent of the total number of households declared that they face this problem.

The average housing area in Macedonia is 71m<sup>2</sup>, i.e. on average 21m<sup>2</sup> per family member, however there is no data available about the average number of inhabitants living in one home. In the country, a large number of families live in the home of the parents, and there is an increasing number of homes where more generations live together (Center for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation, 2004<sup>23</sup>).

The assessments point out that in Macedonia there are some 100 substandard settlements, with some 274.000 inhabitants (World Bank, 2005: 46). The official assessment is that the substandard households in Macedonia make up 12 percent of the total number of house-

holds (Center for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation, 2004<sup>24</sup>), but it is a common knowledge that the number of the settlements and families living in substandard conditions is much higher (Kostov, 2010)<sup>25</sup>.

Given that the last census of the population has identified a total of 564.296 households (with 3,58 average number of members) it would mean that in 2012, a total of 79.565 households have had problems with leaking roof, damp walls, foundations, broken and rotten windows, a total of 54.174 households had no access to bath tub or shower, and a total of 73.923 households had no access to in-door toilet.

The 2006 World Bank Report<sup>26</sup>, Question related to the urban and municipal development, Note on Policies<sup>27</sup>, has identified substandard settlements (SS) in 14 largest cities in Macedonia, and the following conclusions have been drawn:

- The socio-economic characteristics of the inhabitants include high rates of unemployment, instability of income and dependency on informal activities. The largest substandard settlements are mainly inhabited by e-Alabamians and e-Roma households;

- Not more than 40 percent of the inhabitants have stated to have moved away from the rural areas;

- Two-thirds of the inhabitants have declared to feel safe from moving, although many have no papers with which to prove residential ownership;

- The bulk of the inhabitants have declared that they pay property tax and communal services bills;

- The physical conditions of their housing are often inappropriate (unstable materials, lack of water protection, or dangerous locations), particularly in Skopje;

- The most serious problems with the residential infrastructure were lack of sanitary drainage of sewage and insufficient collection of the solid waste. The access to water, sewerage and to collection of solid waste were the best in Skopje, and the worst in Kumanovo (second largest city in Macedonia).

According to data of the State Statistical Office, during 2013, on the territory of Republic of Macedonia 1.275 illegally built objects have been registered, of which, 247 housing facilities<sup>28</sup> (19,4 percent). In the sphere of legal uncertainty, which also implies social housing exclusion, it is estimated that in Macedonia there are some 40.000 illegally built housing facilities, of which some 80 percent in the sub-urban areas in the capital City of Skopje.

<sup>24</sup> Regional Policy Research and Cooperation Centre (2004), Report on Poverty Housing in Macedonia, Skopje. (p.14)

<sup>25</sup> Kostov, 3 (2010), Skopje, Definition, characterization, classifications and indicators of social housing exclusion in Macedonia, Social Policy Revision, 3 No. 6 p. 511 - 590

<sup>26</sup> The World Bank has sponsored a survey with a questionnaire of 14 largest cities in March 2004, which focused on the degree of coverage and shortcomings with the services of water supply, collection and drainage of sewage, solid waste management, and household energy. This survey was used for identification of the basic conditions and the degree of substandard settlements, which represented, on average, 11 percent of the number of the population in the surveyed cities.

<sup>27</sup> World Bank. (2006), Questions related to the urban and municipal development, Note on Policies: Report no: 37278-MK. Available at: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IB/2007/08/08/000310607\\_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MACEDON1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IB/2007/08/08/000310607_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MACEDON1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.4.2015)

<sup>28</sup> According to its use, the housing facilities may be residential, business-residential and recreational

<sup>21</sup> Dimitrioska, C. (2011). Study on „National programmes and benefits in the framework of the system of social protection in Republic of Macedonia, Skopje

<sup>22</sup> State Statistical Office (2015), Survey on Income and Living Conditions, 2012, Skopje

<sup>23</sup> Regional Policy Research and Cooperation Centre (2004), Report on Poverty Housing in Macedonia, Skopje, (p.11)

## BENEFICIARIES OF SOCIAL SERVICES – POTENTIAL HOMELESS PEOPLE

According to 2013 data of the State Statistical Office<sup>29</sup>, a total of 106 homeless people have used social protection rights and services, with the bulk of them at the age between 26 to 45, or 44 people in total, and 29 people at the age between 22 and 25.

According to data of the Red Cross of the City of Skopje in Macedonia there are 318 homeless people, but the actual number is considered to be much higher due to the persistent high level of poverty (30,4 percent in 2011 and 30,9 percent in 2010, according to SSO<sup>30</sup>), high unemployment, aging of population, domestic violence, and finance-driven divorces.

Following statistical data and data from the 2002 census of the population in Macedonia, the bulk of the most socially-disadvantaged part of the population, the e-Roma (some 45 percent have registered their residence) resides only in 10 municipalities: Bitola, Vinica, Gostivar, Debar, Kumanovo, Kicevo, Kocani, Prilep, Tetovo and Stip. The Roma families often live in substandard housing conditions, with no appropriate drinking water supply and sanitarium. The homes of the Roma families are small, designed to meet the basic needs, with a living space of less than five square meters per family member, with more than 50 percent of the population. An entire 77 percent of the

families have sanitary knot in the yard (outdoor toilet), and 58 percent use an outdoor water tap. Ten percent of the Roma population have no water supply for drinking and daily hygiene. It is estimated that some 50 percent of these families have no appropriate sewerage in their homes<sup>31</sup>.

## OTHER RELATED LAWS

The Law on Housing, in line with the Law on Social Protection, stipulates that a minimum of 25 percent of the total funds for construction and maintenance of residential buildings and apartments, in state ownership, be intended for socially endangered people – with no residence<sup>32</sup>. The authorization to lease these apartments to socially endangered people – with no residence, lies with the Government<sup>33</sup>.

Law on Indebting of Republic of Macedonia with the Council of Europe's Development Bank, upon the loan agreement on the project for construction of apartments for rent to people with low income which envisaged construction of apartments to be rented to low-income people, which envisaged a 15 million euro loan for the implementation of part of the Programme of The Government of Republic of Macedonia for construction of 10.000 social apartments, to be rented to low-income citizens and the young married couples<sup>34</sup>.

**The Law on Local Self-Governance**<sup>35</sup> is the basic legal teamwork which governs the pro-

cess of decentralization. Through this law, the municipality, in line with the economic politics of the country, is financed, among other, by own sources of income<sup>36</sup>. **The local self-governance units** are the main carriers of the social protection and are responsible for the **creation** of public institutions for social protection, **development** of non-institutional forms of social protection and **implementation** of social pro-

grammes, in cooperation with the public sector, private sector and the NGOs. In line with the Law on Local Self-Governance, the municipalities and the City of Skopje, among others, are in charge of provision of social protection and care of children on the street, the people exposed at social risk; people concerned with abuse of drugs and alcohol and housing of people at social risk.

<sup>29</sup> Social protection of children, youth and adults; 2013-2014, Skopje, State Statistical Office

<sup>30</sup> State Statistical Office

<sup>31</sup> Roma Community in Republic of Macedonia – Housing and Health Care - Situation and Challenges (2006), Skopje Moon - Humanitarian and Charity Association

<sup>32</sup> Article 30

<sup>33</sup> Article 34

<sup>34</sup> Article 2

<sup>35</sup> Official Gazette of RM no. 5/2002

<sup>36</sup> Article 11 of the Law on Self-Governance Official Gazette of RM, no. 5/2002.

## VI

**RESULTS FROM THE RESEARCH****6.1  
OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH***(lessons learned)*

The research on homelessness in the Republic of Macedonia was based on the qualitative and the quantitative approach. In addition to desktop research of the comparative analysis of the situation in a number of European countries, the situation in Macedonia was explored via interviews with experts and representatives of socially-engaged NGOs as well as focus group discussions.

For the primary group of homeless people (in line with ETHOS), the structured interview technique was applied (quasi case study) to a total of 138 research units.

The main task of the research varies depending on the research sample. The following text will present the key diagnostic methods.

**THEORETICAL REMARKS**

The interviewees have stated to feel discriminated compared to the other vulnerable categories, namely in that they are not considered a priority in our country, either by the governmental, religious, business sector or the civil organizations. They consider themselves a subject of declarative rather than an essential interest.

The homelessness is primarily a burning issue for the single parents (mostly mothers), divorced mothers (with or without children), drug users, sex workers, human trafficking victims, parentless children and children lacking parental care.

The experts' definition on homelessness derives from their practical experience, given that, in Macedonia, there is no official operational definition on homelessness. Therefore, they single out several categories of homeless people, namely:

a) Fully homeless people and roofless people. These predominantly include individuals who reside on the street and sleep in inappro-

priate conditions, on the benches, in a deserted building/house, hovels, garages, or public transport centres. These are the people who come to mind when first mentioning the term homeless person.

b) Families living in inappropriate, improvised or substandard housing (no water, electricity, toilet, kitchen), experiencing health-related, financial and social problems;

c) People/families without permanent place of residence who often face the risk of becoming homeless. These are the people who live in poverty, in a rented place, and often change their place of residence due to their inability to cover for the living expenses because of their poor health.

The experts are critical that in addition to the street homelessness, as the most conspicuous form of poverty and social exclusion, many other situations including accommodation at friends and relatives, life in temporary, open space or substandard living conditions, need to be considered as potential or hidden homelessness and be addressed by the social policies.

There is no clear definition in the Macedonian Social Protection Policy of what is a homeless person.

**PROFILES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE**

A profile is considered a group of people (in this case homeless people) with similar personal traits and other features. The profiles may be singled out according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the focus group, subject to analysis, such as gender, age, education, etc.

Given that our concept is based on the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), we use their criteria for categorization of the profiles. At the same



time, we acknowledge that in the classic “short definition” on homelessness, the number of profiles is significantly lower than the one of ETHOS.

The interviewees remark that, in general, there is no information on the profiles of homeless people in the Macedonian analyses.

Given the housing criterion, in Macedonia there is:

**Public homelessness**/homeless people without roof over their heads – people who reside on the street

Exiting from long-term homelessness and preserving employment are the biggest challenges for this group. Health care and psychological counseling services are their most direct needs. Combatting addiction (mainly alcohol) is one of the obstacles towards ensuring continued progress in the work with this focus group.

**Hidden homelessness**/people without home, sheltered in institutionally or otherwise supported housing

Improvement of the conditions in the collective housing, reviewing of social welfare packages and services which will be additionally available to the beneficiaries of the such housing as opposed to the current practice of solely securing “roof over their heads” after which they will be forgotten.

The social and psychological support programmes for individual work with domestic violence victims or addicts could improve the individual feeling of acceptance and self-help, as well the feeling of belonging to the community. There is a lack of information and support on matters of exercising their rights.

This focus group requires assistance in securing employment via professional training programmes or requalification (which includes training in the local languages) or direct access to state-owned and private companies that would receive subsidies for providing employment to this group of people. The employment and the regular income constitute the primary step in the transition of this category of people toward independent, non-institutional life.

Additional efforts are required for the de-

velopment of programmes to help reduce the discrimination and the negative stigma by the society, as well as ensuring their more successful social inclusion.

**Potential homelessness**/people living in insecure and inappropriate housing

Securing a home and employment are an immediate need of the people who are temporarily residing with relatives and friends or who have secured an illegal place of residence.

The individuals residing in an illegally built object require support and counseling on matters of legalization of their buildings. The persons and the families with substandard housing require assistance for improvement of the quality of their homes (access to electricity, water and sewerage).

At the same time, this target group would benefit from assistance in pursuing employment through professional qualification and requalification training programmes.

#### MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

According to the interviewees, the bulk of the homeless people lack appropriate education or capacities for independent labor market participation, adequate work habits, communication skills and a sense of responsibility.

In Macedonia, the percentage of homeless people who have deliberately opted for homelessness as a lifestyle is small.

- There is a pattern of “heredity” in the homelessness.

- The reasons for the occurrence of homelessness are of both economic and psychological nature. There is a strong link between homelessness and addiction.

- The homeless people (public homelessness) often move between cities, during which they select “popular” places, depending on the degree of their solidarity. Such is the case with the city of Tetovo and the so called “sadar” custom, which stands to denote humanity and solidarity of people experiencing hardships.

- For establishing exact and precise data about the underlying reasons of homelessness in the country, a thorough investigation

is necessary. Macedonia is probably not different than any other country in respect of the reasons leading to homelessness, but rather by its lack of interest in prevention of the phenomenon.

#### A VIEW AT THE ACTUAL SITUATION AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The statements of the interviewees reflect the actual state of homelessness in the country, locate the contentious aspects in the approach and the treatment of homelessness as well as offer solutions for tackling the problem:

- The NGO projects offer short-term solutions or solutions of temporary nature.

- The Interior Ministry does not keep records of the homeless people.

- Lack of creativity in the work of the social welfare centres.

- A need for development of creative models of self-employment and employment of homeless people through social entrepreneurship.

- Promoting of non-institutional living of people with long-term hospitalization in medical and psychiatric institutions, as well as subsidized housing for the other categories of homeless in the urban environment, among other citizens, as opposed to their segregation in private centres at the outskirts.

- “First a home”, a programme implemented in many countries throughout Europe which addresses housing and other issues of the homelessness.

- Development of a more humane approach toward the homeless people as opposed to labeling, stigmatizing and ghettoization, which are the main characteristics of the current system of work with this target group.

- A greater involvement in the support and prevention by the state and local institutions.

- Development of programmes for re-socialization and social inclusion of this target group;

Only one socially-engaged NGO works primarily with homeless people (public homelessness), whereas the other civil organizations work predominantly with people living in sub-

standard housing or people of low social status who are facing homelessness. In our terminology, these are considered potential homeless people. The same organizations assess that for some 30 percent of their beneficiaries there is a risk of losing their home. Part of them point to larger numbers, which mostly refer to e-Roma or to people with mental disabilities. The civil organizations consider that they provide various social services to the vulnerable categories of citizens, although they are not reimbursed by the state.

As one of the most important ways of tackling the situation they consider the record-keeping and the creation of database of people who face housing problems; prevention or professional work with people who are facing potential homelessness; good coordination and cooperation between all respective institutions, civil organizations and other actors working with people and the families facing problems which can lead to homelessness.

With the aim of reducing and preventing homelessness, it is necessary to have continued commitments that would ensure continuous and sustainable social development, including:

- Creation of equal opportunities for all vulnerable groups on the labour market;

- Development of a national programme with a focus on elimination of hunger;

- State-subsidized funds intended for people facing extreme poverty and social exclusion;

- Securing and promoting quality social services for obtaining professional qualification opportunities for the vulnerable categories of citizens in various spheres, such as education, housing, health protection, social protection and employment;

- Improvement of the form “social housing and housing of vulnerable groups” and passing of a separate law on social housing;

- Increased involvement of the local self-governance, the community, the civil sector, business, religious associations and citizens in the policies on social exclusion and fight against homelessness;

- Greater institutional consistency and interconnectivity in providing timely and appropriate services for individuals and families at risk;

- Implementation of the measures prescribed by the National Strategy on Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion for the period 2010-2020.

One crucial aspect of the systemic determination for reducing homelessness would be a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach, which is sensitive to the different needs and characteristics of the homeless and potentially homeless people.

A Protocol for measuring and monitoring the state of homelessness, as well as reporting on the progress made in overcoming this phenomenon are also necessary. For this pur-

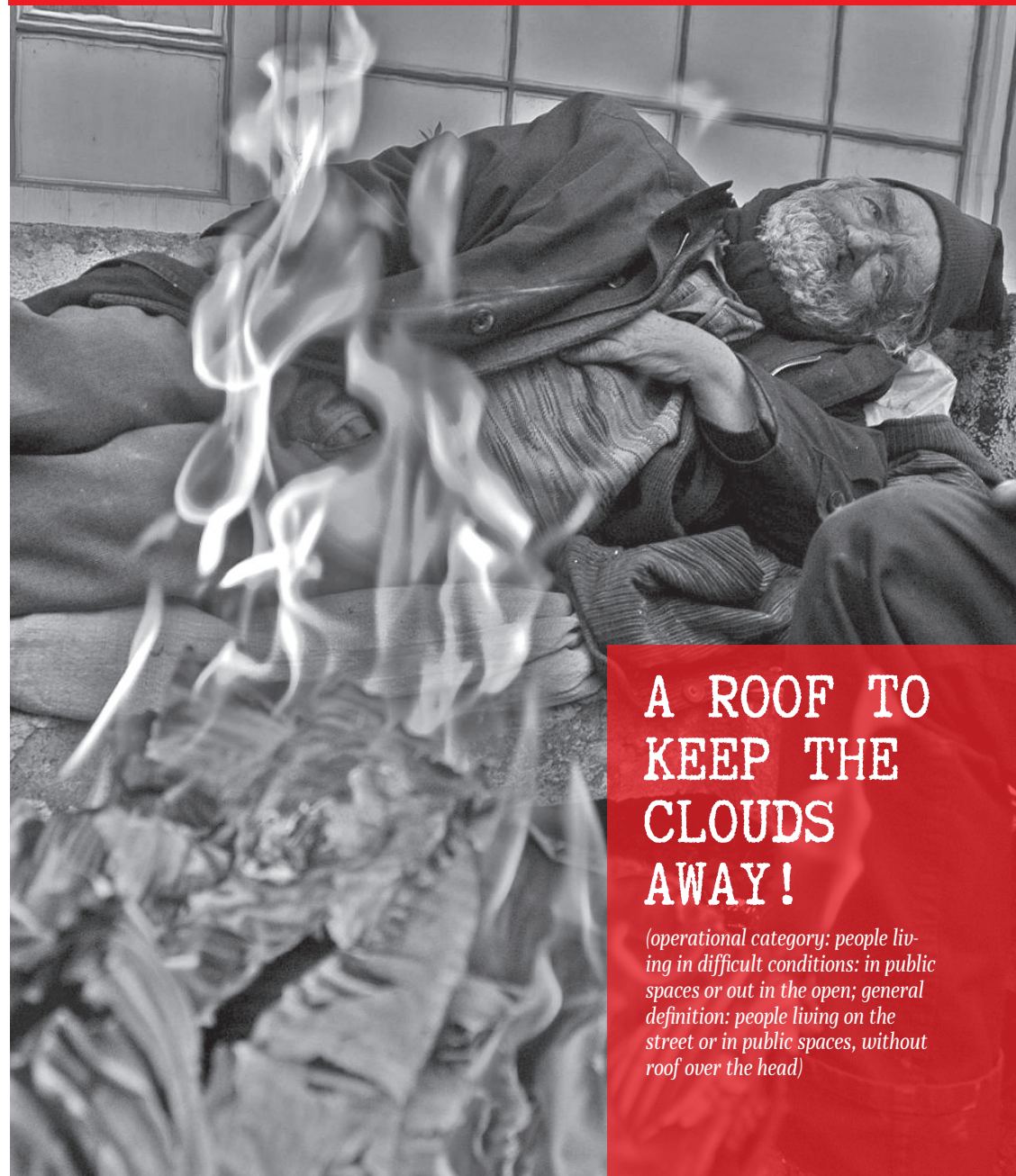
pose, it is essential to have a clear definition, national and regional strategies with appropriate action and monitoring plans and development of research programmes.

Equally required is the promotion of social innovation, particularly in the sphere of employment of homeless or potentially homeless people, promotion of quality social services and, particularly, information-sharing between these target groups for the available types of services, continued training of the professional teams and transnational exchange; programmes for improvement of the living conditions of the families at risk; support in obtaining personal identification documents, psychological and social support and programmes that would ensure reintegration in the community.

## 6.1 PUBLIC HOMELESSNESS

### 6.1.1 PUBLIC HOMELESSNESS

CATEGORY 1



**A ROOF TO  
KEEP THE  
CLOUDS  
AWAY!**

*(operational category: people living in difficult conditions: in public spaces or out in the open; general definition: people living on the street or in public spaces, without roof over the head)*

## OVER 24 YEARS OF HOMELESSNESS

N.B was born 38 years ago in Croatia and has never had the opportunity to attend school. Recently he has learned the letters, has difficulty writing, and is not familiar with the numbers. This makes his homeless life even harder. He is not familiar with filing in forms in order to register for social welfare or obtain documents, and he requires assistance.

He started his homeless life at the age of 14, as a result of family problems. His parents separated when he was very young, and he stayed to live with his father.

- Until I was 14 I lived with my father and my stepmother. My stepmother seemed to be bothered with me, as I had other stepbrothers and stepsisters. They all went to school, except for me. There were quarrels every day and I couldn't bear that. So, one day I went on the street and childishly said to myself: "Finally freedom! I'm saved!" I watched other homeless people on the street in Croatia, but I didn't know any better. I thought they have a good life. But later, when I grew up, I noticed the difference – recounts N.B.

He first strayed the streets of Zagreb, and soon after, in 1991, after acknowledging that the street life is no easy life, he came to Macedonia, to his grandmother.

- My grandmother lived with my uncle. He didn't accept me and I spent most of the time out on the street. And this is how my life went... My grandmother died 11 years ago and since then I have no regular place to stay. I'm out on the street – explains N.B.

His entire family currently lives in Belgium. He has relatives in Macedonia, but states that he has no contact with them.

- They all mind their business. You get housed for couple of days and then you are ousted... I also want to have a normal

life, but I don't get anything from anyone... I've been out on the street since I was 14; I haven't done anything stupid, unless somebody messes around with me. Then I have to defend myself... The street has taught me everything, but I didn't take the wrong way – to steal, to lie... I don't do that – says N.B.

At the moment he takes shelter in abandoned houses, on benches or in some safe harbor in the vicinity of the St. Kliment Ohridski church, where he sleeps on cardboard.

He spends his days mostly alone, and he rarely takes the courage to communicate with somebody.

- If I get the feeling that someone is ok, I'll sit down and strike a conversation, but I'm mostly alone. I'm afraid to talk to just anybody. I don't know their intentions. That's street life – says N.B.

He explains that the hardest thing in life for him is that he does not have a steady job and that should he have one he would be able to rent an apartment and pay his rent more regularly.

- Everything else will follow. I want to live like other people. I don't ask for much... only for a job and a roof over my head and a place to have a rest. I'm 38. If I didn't have these things in my childhood, at least I should have them now – says N.B.

He says that he feels people have no understanding for him, and that he even gets blamed for the situation he is in.

- Friends say to me "You are incapable! Go get yourself a job!" I feel really bad when they say these things to me. They'd better hit me than say this to me – he says and adds that he never considered begging as an option.

- I've never asked anything from anyone. Sometimes people who know me will give me 50 or 100 MKD. I don't want it but they put it in my pocket anyway. These people helped me to go through the winter more easily, they took me in. They are good people. They give me food, a warm place to sleep in. They don't leave me outside, but they have their supervisors, so they forbid them. I spent

eight months in the premises of one institution – explains N.B. He is often helped by the Red Cross, and he also tried himself as a sales person of the Face to Face street magazine, although sales were difficult for him.

His vision of the future is to have a modest home, family, work and a normal life.

- I want to have a purpose to live. I don't know why I live for. It's hard for me, I don't know... sometimes I feel like I want to die, to get this over with...or somebody to kill me, to hit me, to get away from all of this. This life is terrible – he explains with tears in his eyes.

### ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to a questionnaire which analyzes the situation with homeless people, living on the street. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the homeless and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between August to October 2015 in the shelter for the homeless in Momin Potok or in the premises of Public – the Association for Research, Communication and Development. One of the interviews decided to stop the interview due to personal reasons.

The analysis of the responses takes into account the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led to homelessness and its side effects over their physical and mental health, their social relations with their families, friends and other homeless people, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem with homelessness.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

Ten men and one woman were interviewed as part of the ranged from 17 to 59 years. Four of the interviewees were in their early fifties, three in their forties and two in their early thirties. The ethnic cross-section comprises three e-Macedonians, five e-Roma, one female e-Roma, two e-Bosniaks and one e-Turk. Nine

of the interviewees have citizenship of Republic of Macedonia, but often have no passport and/or ID card, whereas two have no citizenship and other documents. Only one person lives in a civil partnership, and one person with violent father, who is an alcoholic. The others are single, often divorced or separated from their partners and children. Three have no education; one has completed primary education with additional two years of high school, whereas others have completed vocational education, namely: graphic, mechanic, painter, culinary, or machinist training school. All of the interviewees live in Skopje, out in the open, or in church yards. Some of them occasionally take shelter in building construction sites or in urban ruins. One of them, after several months of homelessness has managed to temporarily rent a room (for five days). Another homeless person temporarily shares a room with a friend, while one person occasionally stays in the house of his violent father. The Stone Bridge, the Railway Station, streets and parking lots in Skopje, parks and benches, small shops and coffee shops which they guard for some change are some of the places that during the research had served them as a home.

Several people have become homeless early on in their lives, due to poor family relations or due to their refugee status from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have remained such for more than 15 years. Part of the homeless people live out on the street for a period of 4-6 years, and only a small percentage have lived on the street for less than a year or only for a few months. One of them has found shelter in a rented residence, and continued to live on the street afterwards. Only one person, during the period of the research, has temporarily rented a place of residence, and has also used services of the centre in Momin Potok.

### REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS, PERCEPTION AND IMPACT ON THE GENERAL HEALTH

Domestic conflicts are the most common reason for leaving home and becoming homeless. Divorce, poor family relations, unsettled

property and hereditary rights, domestic violence, and violation of the right to selection of partner, are the most common family disputes due to which people leave their homes and go on to live on the streets.

Some of the interviewees do not feel homeless and, regardless of the absence of an actual home, they do not consider themselves part of this group of people.

*"I used to live out on the street, but now I somehow manage to find money to pay for a room, where I live very modestly, but this is what I need for start - to become independent. "You are homeless when you are on the street""*, explains one 50-year old homeless person. *"A homeless person is a man who has nothing and is not willing to do anything to improve his life"* - says one 41-year old homeless person.

Some are ashamed of their status. *"I'm ashamed. I'm very uncomfortable when I see my friends, when I need to ask for their help or sleep over at their place, but after a while I've accepted it and got used to it"*, - recalls one 41-year old. However, despite everything, they request a normal treatment by the community. *"I've told them many times: do not look at me as some homeless person, but as your friend. I need to communicate, to chat with people, I didn't come to ask for your help, I only want to have a cup of coffee with you, to share something with you, to ask for advice - if I need it"*, says one 51-year old.

Only two persons are beneficiaries of social welfare in the amount of 6.000 MKD, i.e. 4.800 MKD for care. The others have no regular financial income. They rely on casual employment, collection of plastic bottles, street sales of Face to Face magazine. Three of them say that they make a living out of begging. They do not like the way they are treated when they work, and are usually less paid by the others. None of the homeless persons of category 1.1 has been housed in a social institution. One person stated that he had been offered a place in the reception centre for homeless people in Cicino Selo, but he had to pay the bills for refurbishment of the room, so he didn't accept the offer. Another one, despite his chronic illness, has been prevented by his

parents, who use social benefits on his behalf, to be placed in a health institution.

The bulk of the homeless people have health insurance and respective documents, but the illiterate individuals have difficulties using the services offered by the institutions. Others have either lost their documents along with their homes, or they have been destroyed. The bulk of the homeless people during the last year had visited the doctor. Some of them regularly attend medical check-ups and have their own doctors. Of note is that almost all of them face some chronic illness (cancer, thrombosis, hyperglycemia, hypertension, asthma, epilepsy, as well as alcohol and drug abuse) and are not able to cover their medical expenses. Three persons have not had medical check-up during the last year and one of them only uses medical consultancy in the Momin Potok Centre. Two persons have mental disabilities and only few of them indicate problems of insomnia, sickness, headaches, and prolonged neurosis.

#### PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION

The main problems faced by the homeless are the scarcity and the quality of food, the inability to maintain the personal hygiene and the inaccessibility to permanent employment. Their past had left traces of trauma in their lives. They also face psychological problems, fatigue, insomnia and inability to face their situation. Some claim that they are sometimes driven to desperation due to their poor living conditions.

Their needs are very modest: *"I need to pay the rent, the room, to have my TV set"*, claims one 38-year old.

Employment, and particularly, obtaining a regular job is a ubiquitous need, although not everyone is proactive in this area. They expect support from the community, to be offered a job or food and charity. Some of them have taken part in fights, disputes and quarrels, but most often are the object of violence and robbery attempts. Some combat alcohol and drug abuse; some are impulsive and explosive and are therefore often rejected by the community.

As regards their social communication, the homeless individuals rarely keep in touch with families and relatives. When communicating, it is mostly by phone or via Facebook. Only in one case the homeless person has financial support from his family. Three of the interviewees claim that they socialize with other homeless people, help each other and share their problems. *"We help each other"* states one 51-year old. The others stress that they do not socialize with other homeless people. Some are even angry because they feel manipulated. Their social ties include mostly their friends, supporting NGOs which sometimes provide them with temporary employment. The Red Cross, the community food centres, HOPS and the Face to Face magazine are some of the entities which they single out as providers of help to the homeless.

The homeless feel that the wider community is discriminatory towards them.

*"I'm treated like a dog. They say to me: You're incapable, get yourself a job!"* says one 38-year old.

Only few of them claim that they are treated fairly by the community, which is reportedly due to their decent appearance which conceals the fact that they are homeless. This issue stirred some emotions in one of the interviewees, causing him to leave the interview. Most of them claim that they have no one to communicate with because, as they say, nobody wants to associate with homeless people.

#### USEFUL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The possibility to have a bath, stay clean and get basic health and mental care by the Homeless Centre in Momin Potok is one of the most useful services and support being offered to them. However, they deem the frequency of the service (once a week) insufficient, and the capacities are limited, due to which one of the interviewees claimed that he is not able to use them. Some civil organizations offer services for specific marginalized persons, such as addicts. Some are involved in social entrepreneurship projects, however keeping a regular employment is a true challenge for this target

group. Useful services also come from friends and acquaintances who provide them with temporary accommodation, food, blankets or a short employment. A structured support is necessary from the institutions and a more organized support from the citizens. Addressing their status of social welfare beneficiaries, documents for identification and the use of regular health care are but some of their immediate needs.

Some of the homeless people have no positive hopes for their future. The diseases and the hard life does not offer hope for a better tomorrow. One interlocutor claims that he was aiming to leave the country, whereas another one claims that he has "dark thoughts" because of his difficult life. However, mainly, their vision for the future includes a home, steady finances, family, and friends. They aspire for a daily routine which will not bring fears of the unknown and they would like to cheer up with "few drinks". They simply want "a normal life", instead of the current one, filled with stress and fears.

*"I sometimes fear myself"*, says one 38-year old.

There is a strong consensus among the interviewees on the existent connection between the home and the employment. For some, securing a home is the first step in addressing the issue of homelessness, while for others, the employment is the first step to a stable life, and planning of the available financial means. Undeniably these two needs are interrelated and interdependent.

According to them, the homelessness should be addressed through securing a home and employment of all people, repurposing of all abandoned houses, buildings and barracks into accommodation for homeless people.

*"If I were rich I would make a factory for these people (points to the homeless) where they could work. And I would build a building with apartments to accommodate all of them. They should pay rent and also work. Instead we see monuments are built, buy a house, buy an apartment - all is a lie"*, says one 42-year old.

They claim there is no will or any initiative by the institutions to help the homeless.

They feel that they are usually perceived as lazy and unwilling to work, which is why part of the community is unwilling to help. There are tensions even among the homeless people themselves.

*“Give them a finger and they’ll take your hand”- says one 50-year old, stating his feelings of other homeless. “They are not content with anything. They will never thank you”, he says.*

They feel that the current solutions for the homelessness are based on several services from institutions, insufficient financial and social support and isolated instances of support from individuals, companies and organizations. They further feel that the business as well as the civil and humanitarian organizations would need to take part in tackling homelessness and offer a set of services, in addition to housing and obtaining qualifications

and improving their competitiveness on the labor market. Additionally, they are in need of psychological support for facing the problems with insomnia, fatigue, inability to see the way out and particularly for increasing the mental capacities for coping with life struggles.

The majority of the interviewees had a neat appearance and showed readiness for cooperation. Part of them, particularly those who combat alcohol abuse, appeared neglected and untidy. The linguistic communication had difficulties of its own, due to insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language or lower level of education. Few alcohol addicts also had blurred speech and thoughts. They often gave contradictory statements and abstruse explanations, particularly with regard to the causes which had led them to homelessness and reluctantly talk about their family.

#### CONCLUSION

Securing home, employment, health care treatment and psychological services are the most urgent needs of this target group. Although very useful, the current available services are considered partial and insufficient. Overcoming long-term homelessness and holding a permanent employment are the major challenges for this group. Dealing with the dependency, mostly on alcohol, is one of the obstacles towards ensuring continued progress in the work with this target group.

## 6.2 HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

### 6.2.1 HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

CATEGORY 3



**ONLY ONE  
RECEPTION  
CENTRE FOR  
HOMELESS  
PEOPLE IN  
MACEDONIA**

*(operational category: people housed in shelters for homeless people; situation: temporary accommodation; general definition: short-stay accommodation)*

This analysis will focus only on subcategory 3.2 which includes homeless people with temporary accommodation in a centre for homeless people.

According to the bylaws<sup>37</sup>, the reception centre for homeless people provides a six-month accommodation, with a possibility of extension of the contract. Nevertheless, evidence shows that people have stayed there beyond 10 years.

The subcategories 3.1 (hostels for homeless) and 3.3 (transit accommodation centres) according to the ETHOS Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion shall not be considered due to the insufficient accommodation capacities and services of this type in the country.

## THE DEATH OF HER BROTHER COMPLETELY CHANGES HER LIFE

D.M.'s life has completely changed its track seven or eight years ago, when her 12-year old brother died of cancer. Reportedly, her father blamed her for his death.

- I felt really bad and hoped to become pregnant. It was a planned pregnancy from a short relationship. It was a way for me to keep myself distracted. In the sixth month of pregnancy I left my home to share an apartment with a friend, and when I gave birth, I went back to my parents. My mother looked after my son. Soon after, I met another man and I lived with him for five years. I had a second son with him.

We had many quarrels and disagreements. I was subjected to violence both by him and by his family. The police and the court were informed about the violence. I tolerated it

for five years due to the kids. He would come home constantly drunk. As a single parent I had an income of 7.500 MKD, but despite the financial support, I would run out of money and begged my mother to bring me diapers and milk. She would bring me those and then she would leave. She wasn't allowed inside. My partner used to hit me, and I was often covered in blood. I was kept tied for 24 hours and was hit with iron objects. My child used to say to me: - Please mum, don't die! - recalls tearfully D.M.

At the moment, she stressed, she has contact only with her mother. Her older brother is abroad and she has no communication with him, same as with her father, whom she keeps no contact with. - I have no contact with my father. He insulted me when he said that I should give my children to foster care. Then I started living in an abandoned house, without utilities and I stopped every contact with him. Zlatko and Katerina from the Social Welfare Centre helped me come to Cicino Selo“.

As of June 2014 she is accommodated in the reception centre for homeless people in Cicino Selo where she lives with her two extramarital children. She is expecting a third child from her extramarital partner who also lives with them in the centre.

Her older son is a first-grader and attends a daily school which they pay for with the money earned by her partner, who works as an electrician. They also cover the expenses for the school uniform.

Her younger son, who is three, does not attend kindergarten due to their insufficient finances to cover the daycare expenses.

- They must relieve us from payment of fees for the children. We sent a request to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, but we have no answer yet. They don't guarantee us the relief - explains D.M.

Asked about the conditions in the Centre, she answers that compared to the abandoned house where she used to live, she is really

grateful for the support offered in Cicino Selo.

She explains that they have water, electricity, food, and water heater, and that she is more than grateful with what she has, although the living conditions are exceptionally poor; the furniture is deteriorating; there is a strong smell of old staff in the room, metal beds and dilapidated mattresses.

- We receive a hot meal - musaka, lentils stew, and in the morning, we get dry food. If something gets broken in the room, we attend to it. There are electric heaters in the room. So far, we have not had any accidents, and if we detect any problem, my partner attends to it - explains D.M.

When she first came to the reception centre, she was accommodated in the cabin which caught fire in 2015 due to excessive voltage on the electricity network.

As she explained to us, there is no resident doctor at the reception centre, but she had been issued a certificate that she is a homeless person, based on which, she is released from medical expenses.

At the moment she has no financial income. The support as a single parent to two children has been cancelled after she had been accommodated in Cicino Selo.

On the question what are the most burning issues faced by the homeless D.M responds:

- The problem lies with us. We must learn our lessons. And when we live with the support of an institution we must live together and look after the premises which are now our home. I wanted to get out of here, but I got pregnant. To pay for rent, we must make a down payment for couple of months, but I have no job. After I deliver I will receive a third child support benefit, and I will also try to find a job with my security license - explains D.M.

She says that people cannot understand her as they have never been through what she has been.

- I used to have everything. I lived in a family with both parents employed, but now I have nothing, and I have to fight for my children - says D.M.

She is looking forward to a brighter future. - I hope to get benefits for a third child and

be able to pay the rent or be granted a social accommodation. It is difficult to start from zero - and she further adds:

- All of us who have found ourselves in this situation, we should strive to give our contribution and help each other. I would suggest building of nice residential buildings in Cicino Selo, but it is difficult. Knowing the people here, they will not keep the premises clean. They ask for help, but are not willing to help themselves.

Despite all, she says that she doesn't feel like a homeless person:

- We are sheltered here in the centre. The homeless people have no roof over their heads, and we do. Homeless are those who go to Momin Potok, sleep on benches, under bridges...

### ANALYSIS

Анализата што следува се однесува на прThe following analysis refers to a questionnaire which analyses the situation of the people accommodated in collective accommodation establishment i.e. reception centre. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the interviewees, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between November - December 2015. One interview has been conducted via telephone, one in the premises of Public and the others in the Cicino Selo reception centre.

The analysis of the responses focused on the needs of this focal group, the reasons for the homelessness and the side effects of the homelessness over their physical and mental health, the satisfaction with the services in the Reception Centre, the social relations with the families, friends and with other people in the Centre, the treatment by the communities and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome their problem in the future.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In the category of people housed in an institutionally supported collective facility interviews have been conducted with 6 inter-

<sup>37</sup> ZSD, methodological guidelines and manuals, Book 1, Skopje 2007.str 26-28

viewees, of which four women and two men. The age of the interviewees ranged from 28 to 68 years. One person is in his late thirties, one in his early forties, two in late fifties and two in early sixties. The ethnic cross-section comprises six Macedonians, one e-Roma and one e-Serb. All of the interviewees have birth certificates and citizenship of Republic of Macedonia, whereas one person has declared a loss of the documents along with losing of the home. One interviewee possesses ID card from Republic of Bulgaria. Only one person lives in civil partnership together with the partner and the children in the reception centre, and one person is married. The other six persons are divorced. Of them, one person has adult children and an underage niece. The other six persons are divorced, of which one person with adult children and underage niece lives in the centre, while the two underage children of another person are accommodated in a foster care institution. Two children have not completed any education, two have completed basic education, one has high school education, one has vocational school, one has two-year higher education, while another person has higher education. The interviewees come from different cities in the country and are housed in the reception centre in Skopje. One tenant, as a result of domestic violence, has been using sheltering services for a period of a year, in various cities. One person has been sheltered in the centre with his family for ten years, two have stayed for five years, two between 18 months and two years and two persons for one year. One person did not specify the length of his homelessness. Only one person resides permanently in an institution for a period of 10 years. One family resides with their two underage children and is expecting a third child, while one extended family with two adult sons, of which one is chronically ill and an underage niece, is housed in the reception centre. Two persons share a room and four persons have an exclusive room. Two of the children attend primary school, while one child is looked after by a mother who has no means to cover for day-care expenses. Seven people have health insurance and a health care card. One person is not

insured and has no health care card. Although he is a blood donor, has no benefits because of it. They also regularly visit the doctor. Some suffer from chronic illnesses and depression and claim that they have no financial means to cover for the prescribed medicine and often the one-off social assistance is not sufficient to cover for the incurred need for medicine. Only one person without medical insurance fails to visit the doctor and has occasional dental problems.

### DAILY LIFE IN THE INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIVE HOUSING

The daily activities in the collective housing include maintenance of the home, the corridor and the yard. However, the interviewees note that they do not keep the maintenance of the joint premises. *"Of some 60 people living in the premises, only 10 look after the centre - for the kitchen, for the toilet"* - says one 28-year old tenant of the centre. Some claim that their days are monotonous and stressful. *"During the day we do nothing, we just sit around and watch TV"* - states one 67-year old resident in the Centre, who has been in the centre for almost 10 years. Some keep themselves busy with crafts, go for a walk in the city, although having no free transportation is a problem for them. They point out to disputes and fights between the residents. *"I don't hang around with them, it's not possible, and I'm not considered one of them. And I'm not like them"* - says one 61-year old resident of the centre. Some are afraid to move freely in the surroundings of the centre. It is rarely that someone has contacts with the immediate surroundings of the reception centre. *"From time to time somebody from the village will look for me, I will go help them, they will give me some money"* - says one 57-year old resident of the centre. The collective housing contributes to greater association between the residents and they maintain close friendly relationships. However, some feel isolated and lonely even when they share joint premises with people in the long run. *"Human relations are at a very poor level here, there's violence all around, threats, loots, inhumanity"* - describes a 61-year old resident of the centre. The fear

of the social stigma makes them want to hide their place of residence. One person points out that his family does not know that he is residing in this institution. *"My son doesn't know I'm here in Cicino Selo. He thinks that I live in a rented place"* - says one 57-year old resident of the centre.

In general, the residents of the centre are not pleased with the quality of the living conditions and of the institution. *"It provides a roof over our head"* - claims one 67-year old resident in the centre. They are grateful that they have roof over their heads, electricity, water supply and two meals per day. The families with more family members use two or more rooms, while the single ones share a room, or are alone in the room. Some have invested in their room with additional furnishings, and have thus made it a more pleasant place for living. However, they are not content that they have no hot water and that the quality of the meals poor, and are not satisfied that the lunch and the dinner are served together, and so instead of three, they feel that they get two meals.

Generally, the residents in the reception centre feel safe. The institution has a security service and that makes them feel safer. Still, they underline that it is an open space and it is accessible to random passersby. One person states that he is concerned for his niece, who while departing for school is an object of remarks by the local people. They state some internal factors who make them feel insecure, such as: verbal disputes and fights between the residents; fear of fire caused by the heaters in the rooms and one interviewed family was also a subject of fire. Some women are afraid of the older men, particularly when they go to the toilet. They have even been assaulted, they are afraid of the drug addicts, who have also been placed in this centre. *"I'd like to get away from here"* - says one 57-year old resident.

### REASONS FOR LOSS OF HOME, PROBLEMS, AND SOCIALIZATION

Divorce, domestic violence, deteriorated domestic relations, job loss, financial frauds and mortgages are some of the reasons due to which people have lost or have left their home

and have therefore been sheltered in the centre. The family life stories of all the people have been filled with harassment, uncertainty, stress, fear for the children. *"I don't even know myself how I have brought my children up"* - claims one 57-year old resident of the centre.

Lack of their own home, unemployment and absence of regular financial income, isolation from the wider community, these are the most common problems faced by the residents in the collective housing of the homeless. Lack of free bus transportation prevents them keeping in touch with the environment or their relatives.

Institutional housing prevents them from having regular financial income. Few people have lost their social welfare benefits after they had been placed in the centre. However, the conditions and the location of the centre do not meet all their needs for food, hygiene, mobility and communication with the family and the friends. *"I can't even buy sugar for tea"* - claims one 57-year old resident of the centre. Only two people have occasional income. The partner of one family occasionally earns money on the black labor market and thus manages to cover for the schooling expenses for the children or maintenance of the home, while one person has had a month-long temporary employment and the entire income has been taken away from him due to unsettled debt. *"Those were the first money in the last nine years that I have had on my account"* - claims one 61-year old resident of the centre. Also, only one person helps out in the local work in the village, and receives a minor financial compensation for that. Two persons make crafts and have on several occasions succeeded to sell some of their products. One person has a professional license, whereas two persons had been part of a training programme for requalification supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and they hope that that would secure them employment. Several people had been offered donations by friends and relatives. Three persons have no financial income or support from the family or friends.

Some of them feel insecure as homeless persons. *"Homelessness is a condition when the people have no roof over their head and sleep on the street, parks, under the bridges"* - claims one

28-year old resident of the centre. *“A homeless person is to be pitied, he/she has nothing of their own. I can at least make the ends meet”* – claims one 57-year old resident of the centre. However, they are critical towards the conditions they live in, although they meet their minimal needs. *„No way, as long as we are not on the streets“* – describes one 68-year old the life conditions in the centre. Due to long-term accommodation in Cicino Selo she is ready to protest demanding more suitable accommodation for her family. *“If I'd known I'd have rather lived out on the street rather than here. As of January we wish, if we are not accommodated, to protest with our blankets before Parliament”* – she claims. Still, for the people, life in the centre is better than before. *“Compared to the abandoned house where we used to live, this is excellent”* – says one 28-year old resident of the centre.

Facing a new life situation for some people is a traumatic experience. *“In the beginning, the first few weeks, I was contemplating suicide, but I couldn't go through with that”* – said one 61-year old resident of the centre.

The interviewees are rarely in contact with their wider families: parents, children, relatives. Some claim that their families are not willing to help them and, although they thought that they would manage quickly, they are still homeless. Contacts with other state institutions or associations are also rare. Some had been aided by friends, businessmen, church associations, or employees in the local centers for social work. They are angry as the accommodation in the collective institutional housing prevents them in using other social services, such as: use of public cuisines, compensation for single parents, care and social welfare. Also, they feel neglected by the institutions and by the social welfare centres, as well as lonely and isolated. They feel that the wider community has no understanding for their situation. They feel abandoned and not accepted, with a sense of shame and marked by the friends and the wider family on how they have accepted their new residence. *“Many people that I used to know act like they don't know me now, they avoid me”* – says one 61-year old resident of the centre. *„Yes, I'm homeless and I find it difficult, but I deal with*

*it. I don't want to be pitied. I don't want to beg, nor ask for mercy. I'd accept cleaning toilets only to earn a living”* – he continues. Some of them would like to take part in associations working on the rights of single parents. The fact that they are also single parents or because of their situation they live without their children, motivate them to get involved in acquiring greater rights for this category of families.

#### **USEFUL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Although they are thankful for the provision of roof over their heads, they still consider that it is necessary to improve the living conditions in the centre. They acknowledge that part of the responsibility for maintenance of the premises is individual, however, it is necessary to have a greater inclusion of the state institutions and various package of social welfare. The furnishing of the rooms and the maintenance are taken cared of by the residents, and they are not able to cover for it. Therefore, the decreasing of the quality of living conditions is inevitable. They are pleased to have the services of a social worker who visits them once a week.

Also considered useful for them are the free legal aid, the personal support by the employees in the social welfare centers, the support of some church associations, civil organizations as well as donations from companies or citizens. They need more information for access to work, instruction for filling in applications for subsidized apartments, ways for obtaining requalification and professional qualifications as well as how the current status will affect their future retirement.

As regards their future, they are willing to leave the centre. They would like to get employed and their children to be able to live an independent life from the institutions, alone or with their families. They have modest requests. They consider that the construction of social housing with low rent may be the solution for homelessness or at least for the situation they are in, and for those that are not able to look after themselves, they propose appropriate institutional care. They also feel that the protection of the vulnerable categories of citizens should be improved, through intensified cooperation between the institutions

and the civil sector. They stress that a more humane approach to the problem is necessary, with greater understanding, and feel that the construction of social housing with small compensation may be the solution for homelessness or at least for their current situation. For those who are not in a situation to look after themselves, they propose appropriate institutional care. They also feel that the protection of the vulnerable categories of people should be improved through increased cooperation between institutions and the civil sector. They underline that a more humane approach is necessary to the problem, with more understanding and favoritism of the institutions and the community.

The interviewees had appropriate appearance, displayed readiness for cooperation and provided assertive answers. Only one person appeared neglected and tired, but with good communication skills and open for cooperation. No language barriers were registered. Neurosis was observed with some interviewees whenever personal injustices had been dissected and often postponed the interview as they had the need for personal communication. They understand the societal problems and brainstorm possible solutions. However, the impression remains that they are passive in resolving past personal family issues or in overcoming obstacles in their current life.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Improvement of the conditions in the institutional collective housing, reviewing of packages for social support and services, which will be additionally available to the beneficiaries of the collective housing as opposed to the current practice of securing “a roof” and be forgotten. Initiatives for liaison with the local environment may diminish the feeling of isolation and increase the perception for security in the centre. Programmes for mental and social support and individual work with the people – victims of domestic violence or combatting addiction could improve the individual feeling of acceptance and self-help, as well as improve the feeling of collective affiliation with the community. Still, the assistance to employment through professional training programmes or requalification programmes or direct access to state and private companies, is the first step in the transition of these people toward independent life.



## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER LEAVING THE SHELTER-CENTRE?

*(operational category: people in shelters for women, living situation: shelters and reception centers for women, general definition: women, mostly victims of domestic violence accommodated in shelter-centers for short-term stay)*

According to official data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in Macedonia there are four state owned shelter-centres as well as two crisis centres (which shelter victims for 24-48 hours). The latter are headed by NGOs, located in Skopje. In the state-owned shelter-centres located in Skopje, Sveti Nikole, Bitola and Kocani, the victims may be sheltered for a period of three months with a possibility of extension of additional three months.

Following expiry of the accommodation deadline, if the victim has nowhere to return to, nor has any regular income to live on independently, he/she is referred to the Cicino Selo centre for homeless people.

The shelter-centre has at disposal six to ten beds in each of the regional centres in Skopje, Sveti Nikole, Bitola and Kocani.

The civil organizations working on domestic violence have reacted to the reduction in the number of shelters, from seven in 2009 to four in 2011, to the reduction of the capacities in the shelter in Skopje as well as to the fact that in the Polog region (Tetovo/Gostivar) there is no state-owned shelter for victims of domestic violence<sup>38</sup>. The National Network against Violence on Women has warned that the two nationwide SOS-lines provide help only in Macedonian and, according to their data, only one crisis centre is currently operational<sup>39</sup>.

The data available to the National Council on Gender Equality with the SOZM show that currently only one shelter is operational with some 20 beds. According to them, the shelter in Bitola is not a separate object but rather an apartment, which is rented upon need, and fits only one family (a mother with kids). The

shelter in Sveti Nikole has problems with leaking and dampness, and is therefore not widely used. The shelter in Kocani has problems with heating – it is heated on firewood, so it is hardly functional during winter time. Hence, only the shelter in Skopje remains operational<sup>40</sup>.

## NOT ALLOWED BACK HOME, AFRAID TO GO TO WORK

- I cannot stay in the shelter-centre indefinitely. I have the feeling that everything is luke-warm, that the institutions do not react appropriately, that everything moves too slow. Who will guarantee that he will not violate the temporary measures? He had said that if he meets me he'll kill me – recalls disturbingly B.R. – victim of domestic violence, placed in one of the shelters in the country.

She is a woman with higher education, a mother who, after the divorce, remains to live in the same apartment with her former spouse.

- On request of the children I allowed him to stay with us, but I was wrong – explains B.R. and adds that the problems have started intensifying in the last several years and that the quarrels have been exhausting.

- After the last harassment by him, I had to leave the home – explains B.R.

She is employed, however, she explains that when she was punished she was not allowed to even go to work.

<sup>38</sup> The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women in Republic of Macedonia – ECE and Action Zdruzenska: Shadow Report Report on the Implementation of the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women. Available at: <http://zdruzenska.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/izvestaj-vo-senka.pdf> [2.3.2016]

<sup>39</sup> National network against violence over women and domestic violence – voice against violence: Media advisory on the occasion of 25 November – International day of fight against violence over women. Available at: <http://www.glasprotiv-nasilstvo.org.mk/25-11-2015-soopshtenie-za-mediumi-po-povod-25-noemvri-megunaroden-den-za-borba-protiv-nasilstvo-vrz-zhenite/>[2.3.2016]

<sup>40</sup> MOST: Report from the public meeting of the MPs with the citizens, held in Kumanovo. Available at: [http://www.most.org.mk/images/MOST/Izvestaj\\_Kumanovo.pdf](http://www.most.org.mk/images/MOST/Izvestaj_Kumanovo.pdf) [2.3.2016]

She says that she had been reporting her former spouse to the police after each serious incident.

- When he is at the police, they warn him. He stays calm for a couple of months, but his behavior resumes – fights and beatings. If you have no bruises, in the police you are not seen as someone you have to be taken care of. They see it as no big deal. The court has pronounced temporary measures – forbidding him to harass me and ordering him to take counseling. But he continued with the beating. From the Social Welfare Centre so far they have not informed me that I can ask for help at the shelter-centre, and I have reported the case long time ago there. I just found out that I can be sheltered – explains B.R. and underlines that she is afraid for her own safety and that she is not able to go home. She doesn't feel safe and she cannot even go to work, nor come back to her parents as she feels that would affect their safety.

- He will not leave me alone. I don't know if there is a mechanism that can affect him. The MOI and the CSR are lenient. We have no prevention. Do I need to be killed in order for them to reaffirm that he has killed a woman? We have zero prevention. The harshest measure taken by the police so far is two hours of detention for the person who continually harasses me, both psychologically and physically. The night when I was taken in the shelter, the police detained him and kept him in custody for two hours. The next day he was circling the home of my parents. What do I have left? To live abroad? I only have Macedonian passport. Even if I do leave, I can only be tourist there – recalls disturbingly B.R. and adds that she is afraid of the fact that the harshest measure taken by the MOI in her case is two hours of detention for her violent partner.

#### ANALYSIS

Анализата што следува се однесува на прThe following analysis refers to a questionnaire which analyses the situation of victims of domestic violence who are placed in shelter-centres or use the services of the first family center in Skopje. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and

self-perception of the homeless and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between October 2015 to January 2016.

The analysis of the responses takes into account the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led to homelessness and its potential impact and side effects over their physical and mental health, their social relations with their families, friends and other people in the centre, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to aid the homeless victims of domestic violence.

#### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In the category of people-victims of domestic violence, who are placed in shelter centres or use psychological or social support, interviews have been conducted with four women. The youngest one is at the age of 39 years, while the oldest one has 53 years. One person is in his early forties and another one is in her early fifties. The ethnic cross-section comprises all Macedonians, who own birth certificate and citizenship of Republic of Macedonia. The interviews were conducted in the shelter centres for victims of domestic violence in Skopje and in the first family centre in Skopje. Two of the women are divorced, one is married and one has lived in a temporary extramarital relationship. One divorced woman has two children and although she had been divorced for nine years, she has continued to live with her husband and the children in a shared accommodation. All of the women have children and one of them has lost the custody over them. One woman has not completed primary education, one has completed primary education, one has vocational school and one has high school. One of the women awaits documents for accommodation in the reception centre for homeless people in Cicino Selo in Skopje. Only one person is not covered by health insurance and during the last year she had not undergone a medical checkup. The others regularly visit the doctor and have no significant health issues. Only one person claims to have occasional strong headaches and insomnia.

#### REASONS FOR LEAVING THE HOME AND SEEKING ACCOMMODATION IN THE SHELTER-CENTRE

One of the women is in the centre for the first time and at the moment of the interview she was spending her fifth day there. Two other people, a one or two months ago, have left the home of the violent partner and have been placed in the shelter-center for the first time, while only one woman did that a year ago and was previously sheltered in a monastery. The only reason due to which she has left the home is the violence by her husband /partner. One person, despite the divorce, has continued to live with her former husband because of the child, however the violence in the home has only intensified. Despite the regular reporting to the institutions in charge of domestic violence, she continued to be a victim of constant “disputes and fights” and had been forced to leave. One lady had left her former spouse, who was an addict and represented a danger for her.

Only two of the women are employed and one is a social financial support beneficiary. One of the women has a private business, who in the period of her stay in the shelter-centre does not work, and so she is facing risk of losing her independence. “Ever since I'm in the shelter, I don't go to work. I'm not allowed” – she stresses. The other employee works freelance, without social, health or pension insurance and is also facing a risk of losing the job due to her current status. They both receive threats by the former partners and are afraid of their safety at the workplace which is known to the partner. “He threatened me that he would kill me if I come back living in his home town” – says one of the women.

Three women are in close contact with their families, and one woman, who has not won the approval of her family for the extramarital relationship with her former partner, has kept no contact with them. One person keeps contact with the state institutions and expects to be placed in the shelter for homeless in Cicino Selo. Two women by the former partners have been receiving personal death threats and threats to their closest family by their former

partners. They had been banned contact with the family and were forbidden to go to work.

#### PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND INSTITUTIONAL LACK OF COORDINATION

Divorce and domestic violence have fully violated family relations and the relations with the wider family and with the children. Due to the current situation the victims risk loss of their job or as users of social welfare are not in a possibility to become fully independent and “put together” their lives more quickly.

The children are additional burden. Victims feel guilty for leaving their children or that have not been able to look after them better. One woman has lost her custody over the children, while another one has no other support from them, and they feel that if only she would “listen better” everything would be fine. “One of my children judges me because I have left and says to me that if I would come back home at the time of the incident, everything would have been fine. The other child supports me, but secretly” – recalls one of the women.

Insecurity dominates as a feeling in the given situation. “I cannot stay in the shelter forever. I have the feeling that everything is lukewarm, that the institutions do not react adequately, that everything is moving too slow. Who will guarantee that he will not violate the temporary measures?” – recalls disturbingly one of the women.

Their former partners had been repeatedly reported on the basis of domestic violence in the Interior Ministry and in the inter-municipal social welfare centres, however they feel that these institutions are lenient and have no sense for the degree of violence they undergo. “In the police if you have no bruises, they don't see you as a case on which they should work on” – says one the women. “The warnings received by the police services, the hours-long detention in the police station, the temporary measures and the ordered consultancy have not resulted in long-term change in the behavior of the partner. Things improve for a short while and deteriorate later on again” – say the women.

Lack of personal home and health insurance, unemployment and insecure monthly income,

as well as the inability to see their children are the major problems faced by the women – victims of domestic violence. The inability to look after and raise their children, judgment by their families and the wider community, as well as the lack of sense in the institutions that they have not done “enough” to preserve the family are the stigma usually they additionally struggle with. To see and look after the children, to keep stable employment and insurance, home and personal safety, are their direct needs. Their life in the shelter-centre is on the crossroads. *“I cannot come back home, and I cannot go to work. I cannot come back to my parents, I wouldn’t want this family to suffer because I’m there, and he will continue coming there. It would be best for me to be nowhere, neither here nor there. It should be a completely different place”* – explains one of the women.

The interviewees see themselves as persons without a home, with the difference that for them, homeless are those that have nowhere to go, unlike them, who may use institutional services or help from relatives and friends. They feel that the community is passive or indifferent to their situation. *“People from the community do not wish to interfere. They tell me to try and persevere”* – says one woman. Those who tried to counter the violent partner have also received threats. Women-victims of violence also believe they are being judged by their environment: parents, children and relatives. Therefore, some feel isolated, locked in their problem or have moved out from their previous place of residence. *“Most of the neighbors and the rest of the family do not support me and that is why I have strayed away”* – underlines one woman.

#### USEFUL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The victims of domestic violence are in contact with the state institutions and civil organizations, which give them advice and support. However, not all of them had the “right” information on where to report a case of domestic violence. Stuck in institutional

labyrinths, they had often spent years before they would find out which institutions and social services are available to them. *“The Social Welfare Centre has not told me so far that I could ask for their help, and I have reported the case a long time ago. It was not until now that I found out I could be sheltered there”* – recalls angrily one of the women.

Their families are aware of their placement in shelter-centres, however the fact that they are unaware of the location provides them with a sense of security. However, they are aware that this is not a permanent solution and they doubt the efficacy and the suitability of the institutional measures introduced against the abusers, particularly given that they had been receiving threats upon their lives. *“We have no prevention”* – they concluded.

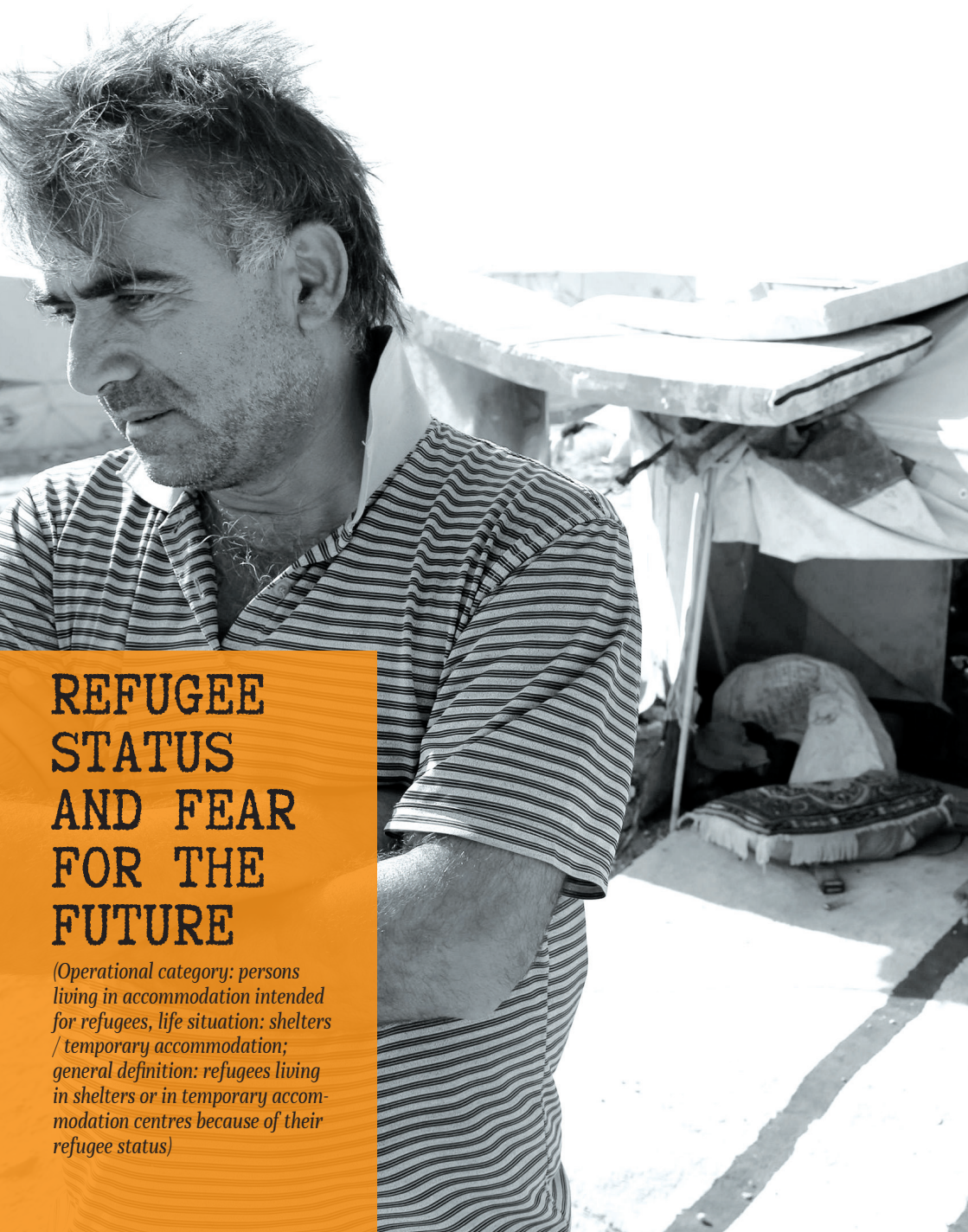
They deem useful the psychotherapy for victims, parents and underage children, consultancy on visitation and custody rights, and legal aid which is offered in the shelters. They need more information on the type of available social services, access to work and guidance on social housing applications.

In their vision for the future they all wish to have a secure home, employment with stable and higher income that would enable them to take over custody over the children or provide better care to them. In the approach to resolving problems they deem necessary to be provided with work in order to be able to plan for a new home, to guarantee their personal safety, respect the court decisions and pronounce more effective measures for the abusers. *“I’m powerless”* – says one woman. *“I remember that as a child there were community police officers who knew approximately where problems could emerge and they would pay more attention there. I would feel safer that way”* – pointed out one woman.

The interviewees were open for cooperation. They aim to depict the essence of the problems and give their directions for their remediation. Occasionally, the interviewees were overwhelmed by strong emotions and excitement; however they remained aware of their situation.

#### CONCLUSION

Raising the awareness of the general population on the services and the methods of institutional assistance (including the legal aid) in situations of domestic violence are necessary for initial encouragement of the victims to leave the abuser. There is a need for a formal reaction and urgency of the institutions, primarily by the police and the state organs dealing with social protection in cases of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not and should not be a private problem of the family. More effective institutional solutions for prevention and timely and quick reaction in crisis, particularly in the first days of leaving the home are necessary. More effective responses are necessary for re-socialization of the abuser, as well as programmes that will return the confidence and the sense of security of the victims. Programmes for psychological and social assistance and individual work with the victims of domestic violence would help them face the sense of guilt that they leave their children or that they haven’t done or “suffered” enough to keep the family together. The workplace of the victims is often under threat due to their situation of long-term suffering of violence due to relocation in the accommodation in the shelter centre or the danger of revenge of the abuser. Therefore, it is necessary for the institution to look after the protection of the workplace of the victims. On the other hand, the employees need assistance in finding employment that would enable them to leave independently. The institutions would need to conduct monitoring also in a manner that victims face challenges of the newly developed situation (work and social integration) and, if necessary, to enable and longer-lasting institutionally supported housing or other type of social support.



## REFUGEE STATUS AND FEAR FOR THE FUTURE

*(Operational category: persons living in accommodation intended for refugees, life situation: shelters / temporary accommodation; general definition: refugees living in shelters or in temporary accommodation centres because of their refugee status)*

The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (LATP) (146/2009 and 166/12) regulates the rights and obligations of asylum seekers, persons under subsidiary protection and persons with a recognized refugee status. Depending on the status they will acquire, the persons under subsidiary protection and the persons with a recognized refugee status are entitled to financial support which they obtain through the competent social welfare centres, for a period of two years (Article 53 of the LATP) in the case of the persons with recognized refugee status, or for a period of one year (Article 60 of the LATP), in the case of the persons under subsidiary protection. After the expiry of that period, the recognized refugees are equal to the citizens of Macedonia in respect of all social protection rights. According to Article 53 of the LATP, the basic financial assistance of the right holder and the allowance for the other family members is determined on the basis of the average monthly net salary paid per employee in the Republic of Macedonia, in the last three months. In accordance with Article 52 of the LATP, the recognized refugee and the persons under subsidiary protection shall be provided with accommodation, with the participation of the local government, which shall grant them a housing for usage purposes or a financial support needed for obtaining accommodation facilities, for a period of maximum two years as of the delivery of the decision for recognition of the refugee status. The responsibilities of the local government, in terms of the implementation of the provisions of the LATP, as well as the decentralized competencies, cannot be implemented in practice. In order not to prevent the exercising of the right to housing, the MLSP has developed “Mandatory instructions for determining the right to financial support needed to provide housing premises”. Entities responsible for the accommodation of the recognized refugees are the local government units and the government.

In order to avoid a situation of statelessness, the law allows the persons with recognized refugee status to acquire a Macedonian citizenship through naturalization. More specifically, Macedonian citizenship is acquired if, as of

the recognition of the refugee status until the submission of the application for citizenship, the person has lawfully and continuously lived on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia for at least six years; if not been punished with imprisonment longer than one year; he/she is older than 18; has housing and funds; has knowledge of the Macedonian language; has not been issued a ban to stay; does not constitute a threat to the security and defence; and has signed an oath of loyalty. Underage children, whose parents (one or both), have acquired Macedonian citizenship after their birth, may exercise the right to Macedonian citizenship by naturalization. Article 54 of the LATP defines the “basic health care services” available for these persons, in accordance with the regulations of the health care system, and provides for equality of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

In accordance with the Law on Primary Education, the stateless children may undergo primary education under the same conditions as the children who are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. Courses in their native language are organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). In accordance with the Law on Secondary Education, they have the opportunity to undergo free and compulsory secondary education, just like the children who are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

The issue pertaining to the learning of the Macedonian language should be regulated by law, as an integral part of certain mandatory integration programs. The MoES has an obligation to develop programs and courses for language instruction of children and adults wherein the participants will obtain formal certification.

The persons with recognized refugee status, in accordance with the Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, may apply for personal work permit for a period of one year, with the possibility of extension, and they are allowed to participate in the labour market, except for those job positions that require Macedonian citizenship. The issuance of this permit is free of charge.

Article 17 of the Law on Child Protection provides for a child benefit for foreigners, under special conditions.

## FIVE YEARS IN SOCIAL HOUSING. THEN WHAT?

B.M. was born in Serbia, 42 years ago. He has lived in Macedonia for about 17 years, but he does not have Macedonian citizenship. He submitted an application in 2013, but he was informed that he lacks some documents he needs to obtain in Kosovo.

He has five children with his unwedded wife and recently his son also married, so now, eight persons live in two rooms, allocated to them in the residential unit for refugees in Vizbegovo, under a five-year usage contract.

Of them, only one has a work placement (the oldest son). He says that they do not pay their bills because of lack of funds to cover that expenditure, and they especially complain about the high electricity bills, which, according to him, in winter are as high as 6,000 MKD/a month.

- While we were in Shutka, we worked and we managed somehow. And since we came here - nobody knows us. We came to these fields here and who can offer us a job here? In Shutka, we had a choice, we had freedom. If we did not like a place, we were renting elsewhere. Since we moved into these flats, the situation has been getting worse and worse ... they are very small ... In Shutka we were living in a house for 11 years. There were three rooms, plus a hallway and a terrace - recalls B.M.

He and his wife came to Macedonia with two children, after being forced to leave the house in which they lived in Kosovo, where B.M. also had a job in his relative's company. They had three more children here.

- There were 500 of us, busses came and took us to the border where we stayed for nine

days. Then the UNHCR and various other organizations came and we signed a request to enter Macedonia. They took us to Stenkovec and placed us in tents, where we stayed two or three months. Then we were transferred to Struga, in the Majski Cvet resort and then they built a camp for us in Shutka. After a while they terminated the delivery of food and medical services, after which they told us that we must leave the camp. Since then we were staying in private accommodation in Shutka. The money was provided by the UNHCR and we were paying electricity, water and rent - said B.M.

They used to live like this until a year ago. A monthly financial benefit of 12,000 MKD had been paid to them, which they used for their utility bills, and some food.

- Since we have been accommodated in Vizbegovo we receive half the money we used to because here we do not pay rent, plus 2,500 MKD for electricity. They were terminated too. And here they make us pay for the electricity. I don't know, but there is a man upstairs, on the second floor, and he was summoned to go to court on the 10th of this month. EVN [Power Distribution and Supply Company] sued him - explained B.M. and added that the living conditions are bad and that the inhabitants of the building are completely isolated, which further complicates their lives. They said that because of the distance their children can no longer go to school.

He explained that in Macedonia he completed a course to become a welder, but the firm where he worked had closed down the business.

He said that he would not leave the place of residence assigned to him by the MLSP in Vizbegovo, because if he did, he would lose the right to social welfare. However, he added that the utility bills and the overcrowded living space are the most challenging issues for him.

I don't understand how the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has never inspected who lives here and what it is like to live here ... - said B.M.

His big desire is for his children to leave Macedonia and go somewhere in Europe, whereas he expects to get Macedonian citizenship and stay here. However, he says that he

fears the future because the contract for the use of the housing which he had signed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has a validity period of five years.

### ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to the questionnaire that analyses the situation with the persons with recognized refugee status in Macedonia, who are housed in social housing with a five-year usage contract. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the persons, and is designed for the purposes of the research. The interviews were conducted in January 2016.

The analysis of the responses focused on the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led to the abandoning of their home and the side effects of the refugee status on their physical and mental health, the satisfaction with the living conditions in the country, the social housing, the relations with their families and friends, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem of their potential homelessness in the future.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

Three women and two men were interviewed as part of the category of people with a recognized refugee status. The youngest interviewee was a female at the age of 32 and the oldest interviewee was 59. The other three persons are in their early forties. By ethnicity, all persons are e-Roma, although one person said she was Albanian, but since she is with her husband she has been registered as Roma. All persons have documents issued by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but with registered residence in Kosovo. They came to Macedonia after the war in Kosovo in 1999. They have all applied for Macedonian citizenship. Some have been living in the country for 18 years and some of them have applied for Macedonian citizenship as late as 2013. Together

with their children, they have refugee status. During the preparation of the documentation they faced the problem of inability to submit a birth certificate and no one has yet received an answer to their application. Three persons are married and have children; one person is in a civil partnership and has five children; and one person is separated from her husband. Three persons have four children, one person has five children, and one person has nine children, but only four are currently living with them. Almost all children are underage, were born in Macedonia and have a birth certificate, but not citizenship as well. One family also has a daughter in law living with them, i.e. the home is shared by eight persons. Two persons have not completed any education, two persons have completed primary education and one person has secondary education. The interviewees come from several cities in today's Kosovo and in 1999, during the war, they came to Macedonia together with their parents and families. In most of the cases they lived in rented accommodation in Shuto Orizari before moving to the social housing in Vizbegovo. Only the parents of one person had returned to Kosovo, and he/she founded a family and stayed in Macedonia. They were often harassed by the environment and that is why they left.

### LIFE BEFORE LEAVING HOME

When describing their life on Kosovo, they say it was decent. *"Although we were poor, we had a life"* - said a 59 year-old refugee. *"In Kosovo we had our own house and we were employed in a private firm"* - said a 43 year-old refugee. Some of them do not have a certificate for their ownership of the property, but even the ones who do have such certificates would not go back to Kosovo. They said that their houses are occupied by other families. *"I want to go back to that house because I would feel freer there. But, how can I go back? There are people there. We can't go back. Nobody is going back. If I go there alone, they will kill me"* - said a 40 year-old female refugee.

## COMING TO MACEDONIA - THE SUPPORT IN THE PAST AND TODAY

When they recall their early days in Macedonia, they say that they were getting a lot of support. *"It was very good in the past. We had food and drinks, we had sufficient amounts of everything"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee. Some of them lived in collective centres and in camps for three years and they had felt safe and supported. Some of them remember that they had been prevented in their intentions to emigrate in Western Europe and they especially remember the fact that some e-Roma celebrities had lobbied among the refugees so that they would stay in Macedonia. They were accommodated in Shuto Orizari and in Jurumleri, and the rental and utility fees were covered for them by the UNHCR.

Unlike in 1999, the persons said that today, they live in very difficult conditions. *"Now we don't have any support. At the moment we are waiting for hygiene products. We don't have any shampoo or dishwashing liquid. We don't get any assistance"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee. In the accommodation where they are placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for a period of five years, they don't need to pay rent, but they have an obligation to cover the utility costs for the flat. At the same time, reductions were made to the financial support from the UNHCR and the social welfare, which some of them receive, but is insufficient to cover even for the electricity bills. Thus, some families live with disconnected power supply and in damp rooms. According to them, at the moment, only the Red Cross provides donations. They said that both, then and today, they worked from time to time in order to be able to cover all the necessities of life. *"I collect cardboard boxes with my children and I sell them in order to provide bread for my family. My husband collects cardboard boxes, I collect cardboard boxes – that's how we live"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee.

All persons have health insurance and a health care card. Also, they regularly have medical check-ups, but they said that they do not have money to pay for the prescribed medicines. Some of them suffer from chronic

diseases of the heart and stomach, and they also suffer from hypertension, diabetes and depression, as well as ordinary colds, as a result of their poor living conditions. They said that the Red Cross often provides the necessary medicines.

## PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION IN THE COMMUNITY

The lack of home, unemployment, overcrowdedness of the home in conditions of poor hygiene and unstable monthly income, are the most frequent problems of the inhabitants of the social housing for refugees. The high debts for the electricity bills are an additional burden in their daily lives.

All persons use financial benefits the amount from 2,500 to 6,000 MKD and it is their only steady monthly income. However, they pointed out, that it is not enough to cover all the needs of the families comprised of many members. Some of the children of the refugees were involved in programmes for subsidized employment, but they were not employed after the end of the programme. Some of the women said that another reason why they do not work is the fact that there is no one who would take care of their children. The everyday life of those whose financial benefits had been cancelled is even harder. Only one underage child is going to school. *"The school is too far for the children and there is no transport provided for them"* – said a 32 year-old female refugee. They also complained that they do not have the support of the Social Works Centre, and that none of the institutions had inspected or controlled their living conditions. They also pointed to abuses of the housing rights of the refugees, because homeowners also use social housing. They think it is unfair to pay utility fees in social housing for refugees, because they are not able to earn money and pay the monthly expenditures.

Some of them feel homeless. *"Uncertainty makes me feel as a kind of a homeless person"* – said a 32 year-old female refugee.

They all fear for the future and what will happen after five years, when their social housing usage contracts expire. *"This is a tem-*

*porary solution. We will have to leave this flat. I fear for my children and for their future"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee.

As part of their life in Macedonia, the interviewees made friends and they have contacts with their extended families: parents, children and relatives. But, they point out that they have difficulties maintaining contact. They don't think they are very well accepted by the wider community. They feel that they are rejected and that they are not able to show and use their capacities. They don't have contacts with the institutions or the citizens' organizations. They pointed out that the only organization that provides support to them is the Red Cross and that they expect more assistance and understanding from the state institutions.

## USEFULL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

All persons are satisfied with the fact that they have "a roof over their head", although they would like to have better living conditions (dampness, poor isolation). *"It is nice to have a roof over your head, but, if I could, I would like to buy a house because this is not a suitable accommodation for an extended family"* – said a 59 year-old refugee. They think that the positive aspects include the support in food, clothes and medicines, which is provided by the Red Cross. They do not have any other assistance, although they need household items, clothes, blankets, etc. In winter, they also receive an allowance for firewood and the children sometimes get a New Year's presents. They expect

more help from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and possibilities to attend courses for some crafts.

In their vision for the future they all agree that they want to stay in Macedonia. *"There are no chances for our going back there"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee. However, they are pessimistic when it comes to the improvement of their situation. They would like to obtain Macedonian citizenship and enjoy all the rights as citizens of this country. They want to have their own homes, possibility for employment, transportation for their children to the school in Shuto Orizari, support for the children with special needs in the form of orthopaedic aids, speech therapists, etc. They think that if they obtain citizenship it would help them solve their problems. *"However, I doubt that it is possible"* – said a 40 year-old female refugee. They are aware of the uncertain future, especially after the expiry of the social housing usage contract, but they hope that the obtaining of a Macedonian passport will also enable them to leave the country. *"Well, if you get citizenship you also get a passport and a right to travel. At least the children should go and travel somewhere they will have a better life"* – said a 43 year-old refugee.

The interviewees had a neat appearance and showed readiness for cooperation. The linguistic communication went with difficulties due to their insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language. Some of them looked tired and older than their real age.

## CONCLUSION

Acquisition of citizenship and the entire spectre of human and civil rights, is the first step towards improvement of the situation of this category of people. Otherwise, their uncertain future becomes even more difficult. This target group needs employment support, organized in the form of trainings for further qualification or requalification (including also learning the local languages) or direct access to state and private companies which would be subsidized in case of their employment. For that purpose, they need a work permit and assistance in the administrative procedure for its obtaining. The employment and the steady revenues are a primary step in their transition towards life outside the institutions. In addition, anti-discrimination and anti-stereotyping programmes should be developed, that would ensure their more successful social integration.

## DO THEIR RIGHTS EXIST ONLY ON PAPER?

6.1. Life situation: penal and correctional institutions; general definition: absence of available home prior to the release from the institution

6.2. Life situation: health care institutions (including centres for rehabilitation of addicts, psychiatric hospitals); general definition: staying in the institution longer than necessary due to the lack of a home

6.3. Life situation: institutions for children/homes; general definition: does not have an identified home (for example, before the age of 18)

According to the Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette, No. 148/13), the persons at social risk have the right to services and support, such as: first social service that includes identification of a problem that arises from a certain social risk, informing the user of the possible solutions, services and resources for protection, the respective institutional network (Article 27), as well as the counselling services available to the individual (Article 28) and professional assistance to the family (Article 29). The measures and the activities are implemented in the centres for social work in cooperation with the municipality, the City of Skopje and the municipalities in Skopje, the preschool, school, and health institutions and the other state bodies and institutions, legal entities, individuals and associations. Accordingly, the persons who, at the time of leaving a penal and correctional institution, do not have a home should be advised by the centres for social work about their housing options.

In terms of the persons who were residents of an institution for children without parental care, opportunities have been stipulated for use of social housing, as well as financial aid before turning 26 years of age. The exercising of the right to financial aid by a person who by the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and parental care refers to those who do not have income and property from which they can support themselves by the time they are 26. The amount of the financial aid is 4,156 MKD for an unemployed person and 5,600 MKD for a full-time student<sup>41</sup>. The project Social buildings for Socially Vulnerable Groups is intended to provide access to adequate housing and fight against poverty and social exclusion

of certain categories of persons. The children without parents or parental care - persons older than 18 years, who until the age of eighteen were living in institutions or in other forms of care for children without parents are one of the target groups. Coordinator of this project is the Ministry of Transport and Communications, in cooperation with the inter-municipal centres for social work, and it is implemented by the Joint Stock Company for Construction and Management of Residential and Commercial Properties of importance for the Republic of Macedonia - Skopje. The project is co-financed by the Council of Europe Development Bank<sup>42</sup>. In accordance with Article 11 of the Law on Social Protection, the municipality, the City of Skopje and the municipalities in Skopje ensure the implementation of the social protection of the children without parents and parental care. Additionally, the continuation of the education of the persons who until the age of 18 had the status of children without parents and parental care at the higher education institutions is also encouraged with financial aid. The financial aid for university studies is 12,000 MKD per month if the person uses rented social housing, i.e. 24,000 MKD per month if the person does not use rented social housing<sup>43</sup>.

In terms of the persons who are placed in health and other institutions, in accordance with Article 178 of the Law on the Family (Official Gazette of the RM, No. 153/14), the support by the family members and other relatives is their right and the duty and obligation for the support are also applicable to other direct relatives, as well as to siblings. In cases where mutual support of family members and

<sup>41</sup> Project "We care": National programmes and benefits within the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia 2013: Exercising the right to financial welfare by a person who by the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and parental care. Available at: <http://creativa5.com/dev/giz/node/77> [28.02.2016]

<sup>42</sup> Project "We care": National programmes and benefits within the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia 2013: Social buildings for the socially vulnerable groups. Available at: <http://creativa5.com/dev/giz/node/1> [28.02.2016]

<sup>43</sup> Project "We care": National programmes and benefits within the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia 2013: Financial welfare for university studies of persons who by the age of 18 had the status of children without parents and parental care. Available at: <http://creativa5.com/dev/giz/node/60> [28.02.2016]

other relatives cannot be ensured in whole or in part, the Republic of Macedonia shall provide the means necessary for subsistence of the unsecured family members, under conditions determined in accordance with the law. In accordance with Article 179, if an adult is unable to work due to illness or a physical or psychological problem, and he/she does not have sufficient means of livelihood and cannot obtain them from his/her property, the parents are obliged to support such person throughout the duration of the inability. Otherwise, the obligation for support falls on other direct relatives, as well as on the siblings.

## I HAD TO GET DRUNK TO BE ADMITTED TO A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

M.A. has been staying in a psychiatric hospital for a whole year now, and her stay here has been prolonged as she has nowhere to return to.

She is a former user of the services of the hospital and she decided to knock on its door once again, because she thought it was her only chance to get a roof over her head after a long period of suffering domestic violence.

- When he would win at the gambling table, the situation was bearable. When he would lose - he was throwing me outside like a rag and then I was sleeping in garages. My doctor didn't want to give me a referral for this hospital because I no longer had a problem with alcohol. So, I intentionally got drunk in order to come here, so that they would admit me. That seemed like the only solution for me - said M.A.

In the last month, the hospital has increasingly insisted that she should leave and she sees a gloomy future for her because, as she says, they can discharge her any time.

M.A. has a pension, which she uses to repay a loan. She would like to be placed in one of

the homes for retirees, but at the moment, as she said, there is a long waiting list for the state-owned nursing homes, and she cannot afford the private ones.

On the other hand, the hospital staff explained that it is often that homes or other institutions have a problem with the acceptance of persons who have been discharged from a psychiatric hospital.

Because of her situation, T.A. had more than one suicide attempt.

### ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to a questionnaire which analyses the situation of people soon to be released from prison, health or other institutions. It analyses the situation of people in the following categories of institutions: penal and correctional institutions, psychiatric hospitals and institutions for children without parental care. These target groups are at risk of homelessness because often, before leaving the institution, they do not have a home, as is the case with the children without parents and parental care, who by their 18th birthday should leave the institution and they do not have an identified home or they stay in the institution longer due to the lack of a home. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the persons, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between September 2015 and February 2016. Two interviews were conducted over the phone, and the others were conducted in direct contact with the interviewees in Skopje.

The analysis of the responses takes into account the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led to the loss of home, the life in and outside the institution, the risk of homelessness, the social relations with the families and friends, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the housing problem of these focal groups.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In the category of people soon to be released from prison, health or other institutions, interviews were conducted with seven men and one woman. The youngest interviewee was at the age of 17 and the oldest was 65. One person was in the late adolescent years, two persons were in their late twenties, one person was in his early thirties and two persons were in their fifties. By ethnicity, five persons are e-Macedonians, two are e-Roma and one person is e-Turk. All the interviewees have a Macedonian birth certificate and citizenship. Some persons do not have identification documents (ID or passport), one person said that his ID card is issued to the address of his sister, while another person lost the documents when he lost his home. One person lives in civil partnership and has a 20 month-old baby that lives with his relatives. Five persons are single and have no children and one person is a widow with two adult children. Only one person is married and has two adult children, one of whom is living in the SOS Children's Village and the other had left that institution and is living independently in a rented accommodation. Three persons have incomplete primary education, two have completed a primary school, one has completed secondary education in duration of 3 years and two have completed vocational school. One person was recently released from prison, but he is expecting to be arrested again for another offense. Meanwhile, he has no home and he is living on the street with his unwed wife. Four people are placed in a psychiatric hospital. One person is a convict in a juvenile prison and during the permitted absences he is living with his mother, stepfather and brother, although he had previously been placed in an institution for children without parents and parental care. Two children without parents and parental care had left the institutional care when they turned 18 and currently do not have a home. One of them, along with several persons from the institution, was placed in a residence with compensation for the rent covered by the state, but due to the psychological pressure and mistreatment by his roommates, was forced to leave. Another person has been

providing for himself since he had left the institution. They expect to get social housing for rent, but they are facing difficulties in exercising this right. The interviewees come from several cities in Macedonia and they are currently placed or live in Skopje. Among the four persons who are not placed in a psychiatric institution, two have health insurance, while two are unable to regularly report to the social services in their home cities and they have lost their right to health care. One of them uses a homelessness certificate, which is accepted by some doctors, while the other person explains that he had a hard time saving in order to get a birth certificate and a citizenship document and is unable to do the same to obtain a medical ID card as well. Some of them complain about occasional health problems, but they do not have chronic illnesses.

### INSTITUTIONAL LIFE AND UNCERTAINTY AFTER LEAVING THE INSTITUTION

One person has been placed in a psychiatric institution for less than one year, another one for two years, a third person for three years, with occasional breaks and one person has been "living" in the hospital for over 15 years. One person has repeatedly stayed in the institution. As a result of divorce and financial debts he had lost his home and was living on the street for some time, and then he was placed in a psychiatric hospital for four years. Now, together with his current wife, he has been staying in the institution for two years. Two other persons had been placed in different health or other penal and correctional institutions. One of them had been placed in a psychiatric institution for seven months and, after he went to his sister with the discharge list, he was once again brought to the psychiatric institution where he has been staying for 15 years now. He does not have a home because his parents' home was sold without his consent. Another person had been placed in an institution for care, upbringing and education of children and young people for three years and in an institution for children with social and behavioural problems for another three years, and he had used the services of



the station for homeless persons of the Red Cross and he slept in improvised dwellings, such as garages, cardboard houses, etc. He was under the guardianship of his relative, but after her death he stayed on the street. While he was working for some time he was able to cover the rent for his residence. He was staying with his brother for just four months, but he was told to leave.

An inmate in a juvenile prison comes from a dysfunctional family and he had previously been placed in an institution for children without parents and parental care. His brothers and his sister are also placed in institutions for foster care or in foster families. His family (mother, stepfather and one brother) live in rented room with substandard conditions. The room has a toilet, but no water and electricity. The family "earns" at the traffic lights. He had also lived on the streets, in improvised cardboard dwellings or on occupied land.

The two persons who abandoned the institutional housing on their 18th birthday live in apartments of their friends, who were willing to help them because they do not have accommodation. For this, they do not pay any compensation and they do not participate in the payment of some of the living expenses. This lasts for a longer period of time, up to five years.

The person who was recently released from prison is homeless and sleeps on the street, on a park bench together with his partner, but he expects to be taken to prison again. He grew up in an institution for children without parents and parental care and he spent some time in an institution for care, upbringing and education of children and young adults. He cannot live with his poor relatives for whom he would be additional burden and he is grateful that they are taking care of his child. "Now I'm not staying anywhere, I'm literally on the street" – said the 27 year-old former prisoner. He hopes to move in the illegally built house/room that has no electricity and water and that belonged to a homeless man that recently died. He was sentenced to prison for thefts. "I was breaking in trailers for food and clothes and I was occasionally sleeping there" - he added. He hopes

that he would get another opportunity to be hired as a seller of the Face to Face magazine.

#### PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION IN AND OUT OF THE INSTITUTION

Although they are different in their characteristics and capabilities, the thing in common for these three categories of people is that their leaving the institution would mean falling into homelessness. The persons released from a penal and correctional institution need to have a secured home, which is provided in cooperation with the centres for social work, but it is obvious that this system of institutional communication and coordination has its flaws. The persons who have been placed in psychiatric institutions for proper treatment, as a result of the rejection by their families, do not leave them even after long years since the need for their institutional treatment has ended. Some persons consider the institutional care as the only available form of housing and they are ready to repeat the offenses for which they had previously been treated in a psychiatric institution just to have "a roof over their head." The two interviewees who by the age of 18 had been placed in institutions for children without parental care, after leaving the institution have been facing difficulties in exercising their right to subsidized housing and housing allowance, and are forced to seek alternative ways of housing, which usually involves shared housing in the homes of their friends.

Divorce, death of a spouse, disrupted family relationships, psychological stress and loss of a job, financial debts and mortgages are some of the reasons why the persons had lost their homes or had failed to return to their home after their stay in a psychiatric institution. The individual life stories of the persons who do not have a home once their institutional care has ended are filled with uncertainty, stress, violence, suicide attempts, and also sorrow due to the rejection by their families and the society.

The persons who are in a psychiatric institution are aware of their health problems and they accept the prescribed therapy as a way

to properly function in the institution and in the society. "Since they found the therapy which is right for me, everything is all right" – said a 50 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. "With regular therapy, the situation is under control," said a 31 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. The hospital staff considers that they are ready for independent life outside the institution. But, some of them, despite the absence of medical indications, voluntarily accept their stay in the psychiatric institution. "I don't have a home," - said a 65 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution who is unable to live with her adult children with whom she has disrupted family relations.

Among the residents of a psychiatric institution, two are recipients of a pension and one is a recipient of financial welfare. The other persons do not have a steady monthly income. The person who has been released from a penal and correctional institution is without a job and a steady monthly income. The persons who have left the institution for children without parental care work in discotheques, without pay, just for tips, which at a monthly level amount up to 12,000 MKD, which should cover all their living expenses. None of them is a beneficiary of social welfare, primarily due to the fact that they are not able to report to the employment office in their hometowns every month.

The rejection by their families brings great sorrow for them. "I love my sister, despite everything. I am trying to find a way to make things right, but with no success. She hasn't come to the hospital in 15 years. It is a long period of time during which a person can set up a family," said a 50 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. "My brother comes to visit me once in a few weeks. He brings me two packs of cigarettes, some waffles, and that's it. The only thing my sister did was send me 50 Euros once," – said a 31 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. "I don't hear from my daughter and my sister. They don't call. I haven't hurt anyone, nor have I offended them or done or said something bad to them. My son called me once on the phone and told me: 'I look like you dad! I look like you dad! And that was it'" - said a 50 year-old inpatient

of a psychiatric institution. It is important that these persons are in need of socialization, particularly outside the institution.

The person who has been released from a penal and correctional institution also does not have a wide network of social contacts. He is spending his time with his wife and with other homeless persons. "With the homeless people, I can talk about my problems frankly. They understand me and the situation I am in. Maybe they cannot help me, but at least they understand me. They advise me where it is safer to sleep" said a 27 year-old former prisoner. For him, getting food on a daily level is also a challenge. "I go to the doors of the people and beg. I eat only if people give me food" - said a 27 year-old former prisoner.

The interviewees who have left a home for children without parental care say that they communicate only with their friends, but not with the staff of the institution in which they were accommodated by the age of 18. They communicate and support the former residents of the institution, but they also make new friendships. They consider that the institution does not prepare them for independent life. Although they are familiar with their obligation to leave the institution, they say that support is needed in the process of adjustment to the life outside the institution. "I started facing some things in life on my own. No one from the home told me what should be done and how to do it" - said a 29 year-old young man who was a resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care. "Instead of leaving the home with a calm head, they force you..." - he continued. Their communication with the other institutions is also not positive. They face institutional obstacles in exercising their right to social housing for rent. "I applied for social housing in the Gjorce Petrov settlement, but I was rejected because in my ID card the stated place of residence is the centre for social work in another municipality" - said a 29 year-old young man who was a resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care. "I am stuck in the administrative labyrinths, and when I turn to the Centre for Social Works about that issue they tell me they don't know

what I should do. The director tells me that he can help me only with social welfare" - he added. Another person also faces similar bureaucratic obstacles, and he cannot exercise the right to social housing for rent. *"The thing is that we're not from Skopje, we are waiting and cannot even get an ID card. I'm from Kavadarci and even if they offered me a flat in that city, I've been here for a very long time and would not go back there!"* - said the 19 year-old former resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care.

Other persons also did not receive institutional support in the past, and if they did, it would have enabled them to save their families. *"After they evicted us from the flat we literally had nowhere to go. There was nothing we could do but take the children to an institution for children without parental care. I went to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Transport and Communications ... but nobody did anything. In the Centre for Social Work they told me that we were not a social case"* - said a 50-year old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. A 17 year-old resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care has a similar opinion about the institutions. *"We were convicted in Veles and I have been there for six months now. I need to stay there for another year. They can reduce the sentence, but only with a lawyer, and I only have a lawyer appointed by the state. He is totally not interested in my case, he said that I would end up in prison and that was it, he didn't even defend me"* - he added.

The lack of housing is the main problem of this target group. It prevents the inpatients of health institutions to lead an independent life outside the institutions. According to the hospital staff, the persons should have been dismissed from the institutions many years ago because with the appropriate therapy they are ready to fend for themselves. Also, some of the former residents of the institutions for children without parents and parental care are facing administrative obstacles in exercising their social rights to get housing for rent in terms of which a necessary requirement is to be a resident of the municipality where the person applies for housing. The absence of a

home discourages those who are released from the penal and correctional institutions to continue leading a life which will not take them back to the institutions.

The unstable funding sources, unemployment or insecure employment prevents them to plan their further life. *"I manage somehow, I loan money from some acquaintances. I have debts, I know, but now, at the moment I'm not in a position to repay them. Previously, I was able to earn by selling a street magazine and cardboard boxes, but now I'm not. I don't even have the cart in which I was collecting cardboard boxes"* - said a 27 year-old former prisoner. *"I used to work in one of the largest markets for food, I came to work late and I was fired after three months"* - said a 29 year-old young man who was a resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care.

For the persons who are placed in a psychiatric hospital, the need for socialization is dominant in their perception of a better life. They feel lonely and isolated. The stigmatization of the families of people with psychological problems makes their immediate families and relatives rarely visit them. A 51 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution said: *"I don't need anything. I just want to be able to contact with my sister. I want her to talk to me and not to be at odds with me."* *"I miss having a social life. This normal conversation I had with you will get me going for 15 days"* - said a 50 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. Some feel forgotten by the institutions and the centres for social work. They even believe that the life in an institution is not great, but it is the best option they have at the moment. *"You should consider that you are alone in your life"* - said a 19 year-old former resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care. Some of them were helped by individuals in difficult life situations, such as covering the costs for a surgery.

They think that the wider community is not very understanding of their situation, and it stigmatizes, criticizes or condemns them.

Some of the persons feel homeless or at risk of homelessness. They are aware that if they leave the institution they would not have any-

where to stay. *"If I leave here, where would I go?"* - asked rhetorically a 50 year-old inpatient of a psychiatric institution. They think that homelessness is the hardest thing that can happen to a person and the very thought of it inspires fear, anxiety and helplessness.

#### **USEFULL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

In their vision for the future, all the interviewees said that they would like to have their own home. They would like to get a job in order to be able to live a life independent from the institutions, on their own or with their families. They would also like to set up a family. They believe that they should have access to social housing or to other institutions for the elderly without being stigmatized and restricted when it comes to the use of these services due to their previous institutionalized life or because of their place of origin. The persons who lived without parents and parental care think that they need to form an association which would advocate for their rights. *"We need an association that would ad-*

*dress the problems like mine. It should be a place where these people will openly talk about their problems and find ways to overcome them. Having an association to support you and dealing with a problem alone are two totally different things. I can't achieve anything alone"* - said a 29 year-old former resident of an institution for children without parents and parental care. They consider that a more humane attitude towards these target groups is necessary, with more understanding and care by the institutions and the community.

They need more information about the access to work and how to exercise the right to accommodation and housing allowance which is stipulated for the persons who are leaving an institution for children without parents or parental care. They expect greater flexibility of the institutions. They consider it unfair to be relocated to their home towns when they have been living in Skopje from the age of five.

The interviewees had a neat appearance and showed readiness for cooperation. The linguistic communication went without any difficulties.

**CONCLUSION**

The characteristics of this category of persons indicate a need of different sets of programs and services which are necessary for improvement of the quality of their lives. For the persons who have been placed in psychiatric institutions for many years, and who do not have their own home or a possibility to be accommodated with a relative, it is necessary to provide an opportunity for independent or shared non-institutional housing, which would be fully or partially covered by government/local funds. Some of these persons are not fully capable of independent life, so extra care can be provided in order to help them in their everyday lives and to gradually work on the increasing of their capacity to manage a household. In terms of their employment, it is necessary to think of alternative employment measures. The benefits offered by the government for subsidized employment of people with intellectual incapacity are going in that direction, but a system is necessary for monitoring and evaluation of the usefulness of these measures, especially in view of the findings for their abuse by the employers. It is necessary to integrate these persons in the regular labour market by respecting their capabilities. For those who use the institutional accommodation in order to "have a roof over their head" it is necessary to design a more coherent system of social measures which will enable independent extra-institutional housing.

The persons who have been released from a penal and correctional institution should be provided with housing. In addition, the institutions should be involved in their employment, in case of an absence longer than six months, or they should provide welfare packages which would temporarily help them in the reintegration and prevention of the risk for them to return to the institution. The chances for recurrence are biggest in the period after the release from the institution, and thus it is necessary to provide better system for assistance of these persons. The families of these persons should also be in the focus of the services, especially if the person who was in a penal and correctional institution was the provider of the household budget, even if it was as part of the informal labour market.

The state provides use of social housing and encourages the employment of the persons who have left an institution for children without parent and parental care through several projects. However, the system also has administrative and bureaucratic obstructions when it comes to the exercising of the social rights. This category of persons requires flexibility, especially in view of the fact that for many years their social relations were built in one environment and, for them, its leaving would mean losing both the community of social support and the socio-cultural capital. These persons should be also encouraged to continue their education through scholarships and subsidized use of dormitories (or, as it is exercised now, through financial assistance), especially in view of the fact that this category of persons is characterized by low level of education and has limited possibilities for integration in the labour market.

In terms of the community and the society, programs are necessary for overcoming the stigmatization, for psychosocial assistance and individual work with the persons who are struggling with addiction, for mentorship and for assistance of the persons who are starting an independent life at the age of 18. Also, programs are necessary for overcoming the discrimination and exclusion of these persons from the labour market. Bigger involvement of the local governments and the municipalities is needed in the social protection of these persons and in the creation of local assistance programs based on partnerships with the civil society and the business community.



## ALL STARTS WITH A SAFE ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD

*Operational category: people living in insecure housing*

*8.1. Living situation: temporary accommodation with relatives and close friends; general definition: living in conventional housing that does not belong to the person, is not his/her permanent place of residence and the person stays there due to lack of a place of residence.*

*8.2. Living situation: living without a legal (sub) lease contract; general definition: usurpation of a residence without lease documentation.*

*8.3. Living situation: usurpation of land; general definition: a home built on usurped land.*

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in the course of 2014, 1,075 illegally constructed buildings were registered on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, of which 18.2% are used for housing: residential, business-residential and holiday homes. Of these, two buildings are owned by the state<sup>44</sup>. Compared to 2013 when 1,275 buildings were registered, of which 19.4% were used for housing, the number of illegally constructed buildings decreased. One illegally constructed building is owned by the state<sup>45</sup>. When it comes to the illegally constructed buildings that are exclusively intended for housing purposes, in 2014, most of them were identified in the Municipality of Lipkovo (22 buildings), while 69 buildings were identified on the territory of the City of Skopje (most of them in the municipalities of Cair and Karpos - 18 buildings in each of them). In 2013 as well, most of these buildings were identified in the Municipality of Lipkovo (37 buildings), while 36 buildings were identified on the territory of the City of Skopje (most of them in the municipalities of Butel -15 buildings and Chair-12 buildings).

In the area of legal uncertainty, which also implies social exclusion in terms of housing, according to the Agency For Real Estate Cadastre, 144,957 illegally constructed buildings were registered<sup>46</sup>.

The Law on Treatment of Illegally Constructed Buildings (Official Gazette of the RM 23/11) offers an opportunity for legalization of the illegal buildings until 31 March, 2016 and for submission of the geodetic surveys until 31 December, 2016. The legalization request is to be submitted to the municipality where the building was constructed, provided that the

building which is subject to legalization had been constructed before 3 March, 2011.

In terms of social housing, until March 2015, 1,600 persons had not resolved the issue of purchase or lease of these flats and 900 people do not possess a document for allocation or have moved in illegally. In other words, about 2,500 flats are used illegally. In addition, there are about 800 apartments of people with low incomes. The total number, which also includes the apartments for officials and state-owned flats for other purposes, is 5,173 flats that are to get an owner and the application deadline was until the end of March 2015<sup>47</sup>. Eviction procedure is initiated when the person fails to conclude a lease or purchase contract or the Ministry of Transport and Communications has rejected the request and the person is no longer entitled to use the flat. Pursuant to Article 87 of the Law on Housing (Official Gazette of the RM, 99/2009), when a person moves in a flat without a lease contract or without other legal grounds, the owner has the right to repossess the apartment with permitted self-help. As part of the JS Company for Construction and Management of Residential and Commercial Properties, of importance to the state a Commission was established within 30 days as of the establishment of the need for self-help, which initiates a procedure with a notary and an enforcement officer and the eviction is performed. If they do not move out within 30 days with self-help, a court proceeding is initiated. In accordance with the law, they are to be previously notified, within eight days, to voluntarily vacate the flat. The court proceedings results in a final eviction judgment and, through an enforcement officer, the

possession of the apartment is returned to the institution<sup>48</sup>.

Of note is that this category of people often coincides with the people living in unconventional buildings and temporary structures, i.e. Category 11 of the ETHOS. During the classification, the research team was guided by the primary feature of the home, i.e. whether it is built on an occupied land (Category 8.3), and whether the living conditions are substandard (Category 11).

## A ROOM IS ALL I NEED!

Before getting married, B.V. had a nice and normal life in the Skopje's settlement of Taftalidze, together with her parents and her two brothers.

- In 1996 I got married, and then my brothers got married. The house is small and there was no room for me. By 1996 I had everything I needed - explains our interlocutor, who says that she now visits her relatives in the house she was born in, and they are helping her with food and money.

Currently, she is living in her friend's home in the Skopje settlement of Avtokomanda, together with her sick mother.

The sixty-year-old B.V. says she has been staying there for three days, where previously she had lived in Shutka for five months. She was accommodated by a family there.

- I realized they were not able to take care of me as well, so I left - said B.V., adding that she plans to rent a room for herself.

Two years ago, her husband, with whom she shared her life journey, died. She tells that they first lived in a rented apartment with the money from a sold apartment which was divided among her husband and his two brothers. For some time they lived with a woman they were looking after instead of paying rent,

but they were paying the bills. When the old woman died, their big problems started. They rented an apartment, and for some time they also lived in a house that a merciful man allowed them to use. After her husband died, she continued to wander the streets and change her place of residence.

B.V. explains that on Fridays she goes to the station for homeless people in Momin Potok where she gets food and can take a bath, and on other days she is at the market in Bunjakovec where she is helping the sellers. She says that for her labour she receives from 100 to 200 MKD per day and sometimes the sellers also give her food.

After her husband died, she is also getting his pension of 7,450 MKD.

- While he was alive, he didn't manage to get a pension, the documents were completed before he died - recounts B.V., saying that she sees herself as a homeless person in the future as well because she can't see an exit from her situation. Her response to the question of how she would solve the problem of homelessness is short:

A room. I don't need anything else. A room and a bathroom.

### ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to the questionnaire that analyzes the situation with persons living in insecure housing: temporary accommodation with relatives and close friends; housing without a (sub) lease contract and usurpation of land with a built home. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the persons, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between August 2015 and January 2016 in Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo. Two interviews were conducted by telephone. The interviewees come from Skopje, Gostivar, Kumanovo and Prilep. One person from Gostivar temporarily lives in Tetovo and the interview was conducted there.

<sup>44</sup> State Statistical Office: Illegally constructed buildings on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, 2014 [release] Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2015/6.1.15.47.pdf> [02.03.2016]

<sup>45</sup> State Statistical Office: Illegally constructed buildings on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, 2013 [release] Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2014/6.1.14.48.pdf> [02.03.2016]

<sup>46</sup> Reply from the Cadastre of the RM sent for the purposes of this research

<sup>47</sup> TELEGRAF: STATE-OWNED FLATS: Purchase or lease by March 2015 or eviction. Available at: <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/ns-newsarticle-227046-opstestveni-stanovi-otkup-ili-zakup-do-mart-2015-ili-prisilno-iseluvanje.nsp> [02.03.2016]

<sup>48</sup> Reply from the JS Company for Construction and Management of Residential and Commercial Properties of importance to the state, sent for the purposes of this research

The analysis of the responses focused on the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led to the loss of their home and the side effects of the insecure housing on their physical and mental health, their social relations with their families, friends and other homeless people, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem of homelessness.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

A total of 13 persons were interviewed as part of the category of people living in insecure housing. Of these, two women and three men are temporarily accommodated with relatives or friends. Two men and one woman usurp a residence without legal documents for lease. Three men and two women live in homes that are illegally built on a land, without ownership documents. The youngest interviewee was at the age of 17 and the oldest was 59. One person is in the early twenties, two persons are in their early thirties and one person is in the late thirties. Four persons are in their early forties and three persons are in their early fifties. By ethnicity, four are e-Macedonians, seven are e-Roma, one is e-Albanian and one is e-Serb. All but one person have birth certificate and citizenship of the Republic of Macedonia. One person declared that the personal documents thereof have been destroyed, and another declared having no ID.

Among the persons who are temporarily housed with relatives or friends, one person is married, but has been the victim of domestic violence and is not placed in a shelter centre, nor has she reported the case to the police and currently she is separated from her husband. Two persons are not married and live alone, one person is separated from his wife and children, and one person is widowed. One person has completed secondary education, one a vocational school and three persons have completed primary education. One person has a long-term accommodation with a relative who is a beneficiary of social aid for guardianship; one person has been using the holiday home of his friends for 12 years, which has no basic

infrastructure (water, electricity), while three persons are temporarily staying with their relatives and friends. Three persons have had a long-term insecure housing for as long as 20 years. Of these, one person was homeless together with her partner with whom she shared her everyday problems, but he died and now she is dealing with the situation alone. Three persons use the Friday services of the shelter for the homeless in Momin Potok.

Among the persons residing without a lease contract, two are divorced and one is a single mother of an underage daughter. Of these, two persons have completed higher education and one person has graduated from college. Two persons have been living in an usurped residence for a long period of time: six or seven years, and one person has been living in an usurped residence for about a year. According to the words of the single mother with a child, she had usurped an apartment of 40 m<sup>2</sup> in public ownership and she filed a request for its purchase. However, despite the unresolved situation, before the end of 2015, the power in the apartment was cut and she currently lives in substandard conditions. Another person is living in the unfinished buildings of the FIKOM Company in Kisela Voda. According to him, the police are also aware of that, but they don't cause him any trouble. He has no access to water, electricity and a toilet, and there is only a stove for heating and a bed, which he brought. The third person lives in a basement with no access to water, toilet or heating.

Among those who usurp land with an illegally built home, three are married and have children, one has an underage unmarried wife and a child, and one lives in a civil partnership. Two persons have not completed any education, while three have incomplete primary education and have learned a trade by themselves (car mechanic, house painter, etc.). All persons live in solid constructions, but in multi-member families. They have access to water and electricity, which are illegally installed, but they lack a toilet or use an improvised outdoor toilet.

All persons except one have health insurance and a health care card. One person, due

to termination of employment, has not managed to register as unemployed and failed to obtain health insurance. Most of the interviewees feel physically healthy and had underwent no medical examination during the past year. Some have chronic diseases due to poor and irregular diet, alcohol consumption, asthma, or hypertension. One person, who at a low temperature protested against the eviction decision, says that his health is beginning to deteriorate.

### REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS, PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION

Divorce, domestic violence, divorced or deceased parents and disrupted family relations are the main reasons why the persons leave their homes and ask for the help of their friends and relatives. *"I left so that the situation wouldn't worsen. I didn't want to cause a bigger problem"* - said a 41 year-old man who lives in the holiday home of his friends. One person, after the death of the parents, has been living with a relative and is not afraid of losing the home.

Divorce and leaving the home where they lived with their partner are the reasons why the persons decided to move in somewhere illegally. They are most heavily burdened by lack of funds and lack of home. *"I would be satisfied even with a cabin,"* - says a 35 year-old man who is temporarily living with his sisters. When it comes to food, they get by or receive help from their neighbours and the people they occasionally work for and who, instead of with money pay them in-kind. They point out that often there is no place in the community food centres and that in case of long-term health problems they are unable to cover their treatment costs. Only one person, who does not feel at risk of losing the home, did not mention any specific problems arising from the accommodation with a relative. One person who has illegally occupied a residence suggests that she is battling the state institutions in order to be able to buy the apartment, but for 11 months there has been no positive response to any of her requests or to the sent documentation. The persons who have illegally occupied

a residence and those living in illegal buildings suggest that their biggest problems are the substandard living conditions.

Among the persons who are temporarily housed with friends or relatives, one person is a beneficiary of financial welfare and one person receives pension. The other persons do not have a steady monthly income. Their occasional earnings are from collection of plastic bottles, digging, construction activities, and unloading, street sales of the Face to Face magazine. *"If you don't eat too much, you'll have enough"* - said a 35-year-old man living in the rented dwelling of his sisters. One woman who is a victim of domestic violence has no income and is unemployed. The relative of one of the persons receives remuneration for guardianship. Among those who have illegally occupied a residence, one person has permanent monthly income, while the other two persons occasionally earn from manual work and are not social aid beneficiaries. Among those living in an illegally built home, two persons use financial welfare, one woman has no income and one person earns by selling the Face to Face magazine. The family budget is rarely supplemented with financial support from relatives or occasional manual work. The beneficiaries of financial welfare agree that it is insufficient to cover all the necessities of life and they are often forced to make their children work.

None of the persons has been housed in a social institution. *"I've been to Cicino Selo, I've seen it, and I wouldn't go there. The conditions are horrible"* - said a 41-year-old man who lives in the holiday home of his friends.

Some women who were victims of domestic violence addressed the centres for social work and the NGOs several times, but they have not received any structural aid. Only few persons receive donations from friends and relatives.

Some of the persons feel homeless or think there is a risk for them to become homeless. *Homelessness means wandering the streets and having nowhere to stay* - said a 59 year-old who has been homeless for a long time and who is temporarily accommodated by a friend. Some said that sharing their accommodation with relatives is a burden and nuisance for them.

*"I feel uncomfortable because both in my sister's place and in the homes of other people I can hear: That's enough, now you should go!"* – said a 35 year-old man who lives with his sisters. Among the persons who live in an illegally built home, some feel homeless. *"I don't feel homeless in the worst sense of the word because I have a roof over my head. However, I feel unsafe"*– said a 39 year-old female who lives in an illegally built home. The fact that their homes are not legalized makes them uneasy. *"The state may decide to build something here and they can tell me to take my materials and the bricks and to go away. That is the reason for my unease"*– said a 43 year-old male who lives in an illegally built home. One person said that he believes in a brighter future. However, the interviewees also expressed lack of trust in the institutions, and even marginalization and discrimination on ethnic grounds.

Those who know each other from the homeless station in Momin Potok spend time together, but they emphasize that they are alone and that they feel lonely and isolated. They have a small circle of friends and only a few of their friends have a home in their ownership. The interviewees rarely contact their wider families: parents, children, relatives. The disrupted family relations that made them leave their homes have not changed even after the long period of their living separately in insecure housing.

*"I don't see my relatives. I have a sister, brother in law, nephews... but, what if I have them? No one asks me how I live... and whether I have what I need or not. Nothing"* – said a 41 year-old man who lives in the holiday home of his friends.

Only one person said that s/he has contacts with relatives who are helping with food and money. Those who live in an illegally built home do not feel homeless, but criticize the fact that in their home where they have lived for more than 25 years they live in substandard conditions, over-crowdedness and often without the basic infrastructure.

The interviewees do not have any contacts with the other state institutions or associations of citizens. One person who has illegally occupied a residence also pointed to the inconsistency of the national priorities.

*"The state is promoting giving birth to more children on the one hand, and on the other it is making them live on the street"* – said a 42 year-old female who has illegally occupied a residence.

The persons often said that they use the services of the Red Cross, the meal centres and the NGOs that provide meals ("Real Acts of Kindness" and "Retweet a Meal") and that they don't know where else they could turn for help. HOPS, HERA and the Day-care Centre for Street Children were mentioned as organizations that help the persons who live in Suto Orizari.

Some have received help in the form of money and food from their neighbours, friends and relatives. They are thankful for their solidarity. Some of the persons get the biggest support from their neighbours and the community.

*"I'm satisfied with my neighbors. People around me help me a lot. I wouldn't be able to do anything without them"* – said a 41 year-old man who lives in the holiday home of his friends.

*"People's support means a lot to me"* - said a 59 year-old woman who is temporarily staying with a friend.

The women who are victims of domestic violence or the single parents said that they are judged by the society and that they are often the most severe social cases in the state. One woman pointed out that her temporary home was provided by her friend who is a social welfare beneficiary herself. Some of them also expect assistance from the state institutions and the Ombudsman for the purposes of finding a solution for their situation and especially for obtaining information how to legalize their homes.

#### **USEFULL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

In the opinion of the interviewees, the useful services comprise the free legal assistance and the aid in the form of food, clothes and basic necessities for their children and babies. They need more information about the access to employment, the institutions that could help them get their social rights and the manner in which they could legalize their homes.

In their vision for the future, they all agreed that they need a home. "The most important thing is to have a roof over your head. It all starts with the roof over your head." -said a 41 year-old man who lives in the holiday home of his friends.

*"A room. I don't need anything else. Just a room and a bathroom"*– said a 59 year-old woman who is temporarily staying with a friend.

They said that the shelter centers and the shelters for female victims of domestic violence should function better, and that daily services should be provided for the homeless persons (not just once a week) because they are especially important during the initial period after the abandoning of one's home. The employment is a solution for their homelessness or temporary insecure housing. If they are employed, they would be able to arrange their accommodation and have a better life.

*"I would give them cabins and a job"*– this is how a 35 year-old man, who temporarily re-

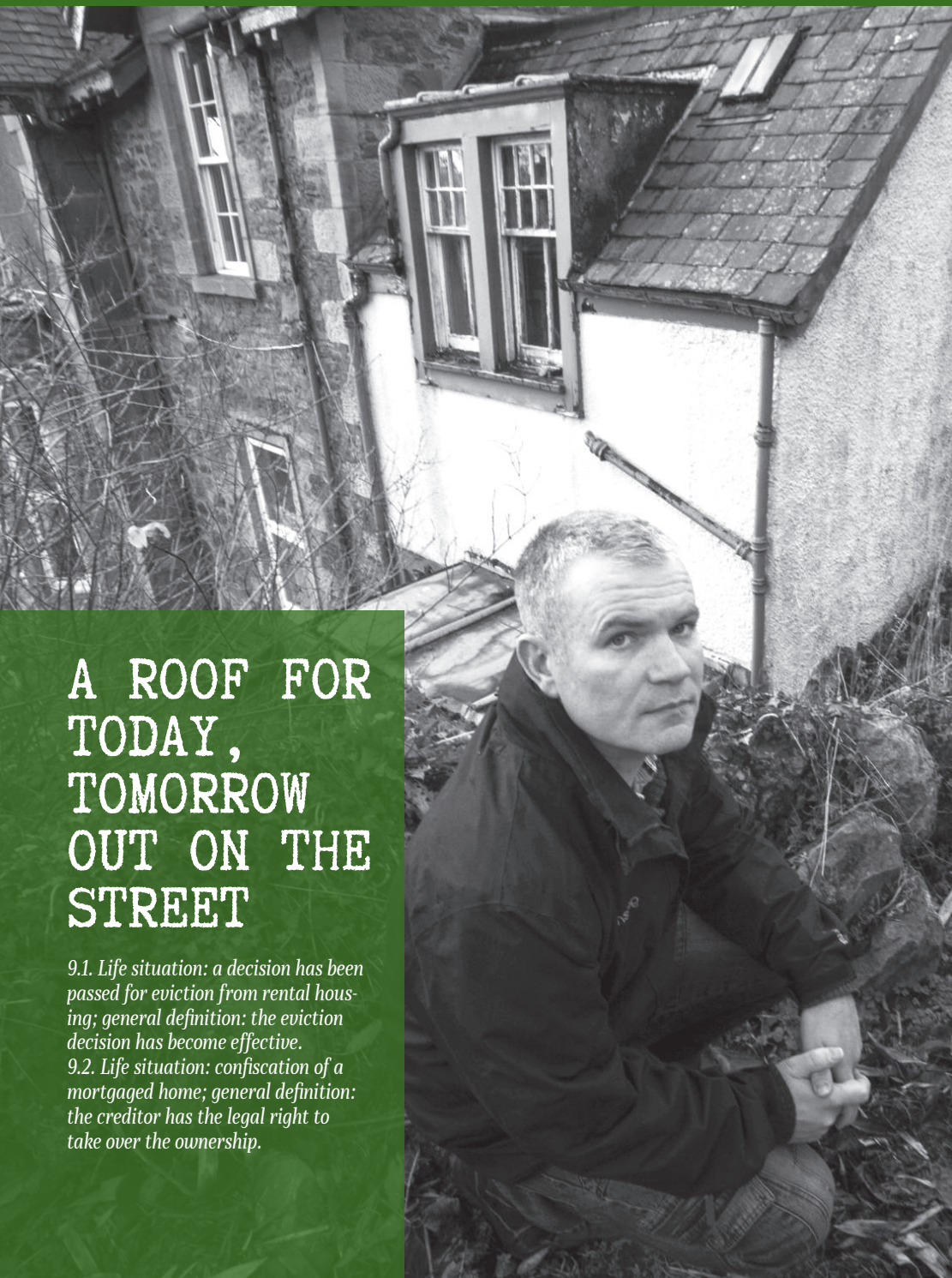
sides with relatives, thinks the homelessness could be solved. Construction and use of social flats for those who do not have their home is one of the suggestions. And while some see themselves as homeless in the future as well, others hope that the things can get better.

*"I believe that I will not end up living on the streets and that, if everything is implemented in accordance with the laws, and if the court is just – such thing will not happen"* – said a 42 year-old female who has illegally occupied a residence.

The interviewees had a neat appearance and showed readiness for cooperation. The linguistic communication went with slight difficulties with the persons with insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language. One person is a former alcohol addict, while another can be often seen under the influence of alcohol. Some of them were obviously nervous while talking about their families and about the reasons that led to their living their homes.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Securing home and employment are the direct needs of the persons who are temporarily staying with relatives and friends or who have illegally occupied a residence. The persons who live in illegally constructed buildings need assistance and advice how to legalize their constructions, as well as assistance for improvement of the quality of their homes (access to electricity, water supply, sewage). These target groups rarely use financial welfare, although it seems that in view of the fact that they are not able to provide financial means they are a typical profile of candidates for this type of social benefits. They lack information and assistance in order to exercise their social rights.



## A ROOF FOR TODAY, TOMORROW OUT ON THE STREET

9.1. Life situation: a decision has been passed for eviction from rental housing; general definition: the eviction decision has become effective.

9.2. Life situation: confiscation of a mortgaged home; general definition: the creditor has the legal right to take over the ownership.

Relations between tenants and owners are governed by the Law on Housing (Official Gazette of RM, 99/2009). According to article 81, the landlord (the owner of the residence) has the right to terminate the contract if the lessee (the person renting the place) does not pay the rent or the incurred utility bills, in addition to the rent, within a prescribed deadline, or if no deadline has been prescribed, within 30 days as of the receipt of the bills. According to article 80, the lessee has the right to terminate the lease agreement at any time without stating the reasons, with a notice period of 90 days. According to article 82, the lessor may terminate the agreement due to the circumstances stated in the lease agreement, however he/she has the responsibility to provide to the lessee an alternate apartment for a period of at least 90 days, which apartment would need to meet the minimal housing standards of the lessee and the accompanying persons. According to article 87, when a person moves into an apartment without a lease agreement or any other legal basis, the owner has the right to repossess the apartment with allowed self-help. In this case, the organ of interior affairs interferes upon request of the holder of the right to self-help. The right to protection of possession with allowed self-help may be exercised within 30 days of the day of acknowledging the violation of the possession and the violator, however not later than one year since the occurrence of the violation of the possession. The lessor may in any given time initiate a court proceedings before a respective organ, for eviction from the apartment. The eviction procedure is urgent. According to article 88, the lessor may cancel the agreement closed in an indefinite time, with a notice period no shorter than 90 days. The notice period of the lease agreement and the sublease agreement in a case of a dispute shall be determined in a procedure before the regular court. When the court determines an eviction deadline, it may not be shorter than 60 or longer than 90 days.

The manner, the conditions and the procedure for mortgaging a home as well as the actions taken in case of the mortgage activation are part of the Law on Contractual Lien

(Official Gazette of RM, 5/2003). According to article 2 of this Law, the mortgage of the home is a way of securing financial claims and claims which are convertible to money which the creditor has toward his debtor, from a certain contractual relation. If the claims secured by lien are not met by the deadline of their activation, the creditor may settle the claims from the value of the object of the lien.

## ON THE LOOKOUT FOR WORK, SO AS NOT TO LOSE THE RENTED HOME

S.G. is almost 50 and the insecurity of his life under someone else's roof for which he doesn't manage to secure means to pay for rent and bills complicates his life even further.

He has completed primary education and underlines that his employment options are exceptionally slim.

- I used to be self-employed, but I couldn't cash in on my services. Even now I'm constantly on the lookout for a job – he says.

The decision to be evicted from his place had been passed a week before our conversation, and he has been trying to resolve the problem he is facing in different ways.

- I've addressed the Social Welfare Centre and the JS Company for Management of Residential and Business Space, as well as to the Red Cross in Ohrid – explains S.G. who has been left without any regular income throughout the year.

In the past period he had mostly been supported by the Red Cross, mostly in food.

- There are also people who help me out but some are not able to, even if they want to.

The state is the one who should pay particular attention and provide social housing to people who need it. There is plenty of available housing – considers S.G.

## ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to the questionnaire which analyses the situation with persons living under the threat of eviction, i.e. under the threat of an active eviction decision against them. According to ETHOS, this category includes people living under the threat of requisition of a mortgaged home, but, due to the discretionary right of the executors of the decision and the Law on Personal Data Protection, which prevents issuance of information related to individual cases of eviction due to mortgage, the team was unable to identify such cases.

The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the persons, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews have been conducted in the period between November 2015 – February 2016, in Skopje and in Ohrid. Two interviews have been held via telephone.

The analysis of the responses focused on the needs of this focal group, the reasons for the eviction and the side effects of the insecure housing over their physical and mental health, social relations with their families, friends and other homeless people, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem of homelessness.

## REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In the category of people living under the threat of eviction, interviews have been conducted with three people, all of them men, at the age between 49 and 66. The ethnic cross-section comprises two e-Macedonians and one e-Albanian. They all are in possession of a birth certificate and citizenship of the Republic of Macedonia. Two are married, and one is a father of two daughters. One of the interviewees had separated from his wife and has no money to formally divorce, and lives with a partner.

One person has completed primary education and two have completed higher education. All of them have health insurance and a health care card. During the last year, two of

them have not undergone any medical check-up and do not face any particular health issues, apart from anxiousness and neurosis due to the situation they are in. One of them battles chronic bronchitis.

## REASONS FOR EVICTION, PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION

One person due to selling of the apartment had been forced to leave the rented place and had been fired with a notice period of three weeks, and he is currently staying with a friend wherefrom he is expected to move out in seven days. He fears that he will not be able to rent a new place given the low social benefits he receives and the price of the rent, although he had lived in rented places for almost 20 years. The other two, due to unpaid rents and utility bills are also to leave their place. The other two have a particular problem with high electricity bills during the winter months.

They are preoccupied with existential problems and securing food and money for themselves and for their families. "It is the only preoccupation I have as I got stuck with these credit cards. I can't take any money" – says one 49-year old man who is threatened by eviction.

One person has told his story on TV and had afterwards received help from the Red Cross. "I called the TV crew myself. I've been told to do it. I didn't want to at first, but if I'd have had another solution, I would've done it differently" - claims one 54-year old who is threatened by eviction. The others have addressed the state institutions, such as the Social Welfare Centre, the Company for Management of Residential and Business Space, but have not received appropriate directions for addressing the problem. They have also addressed the Red Cross, wherefrom they had been provided with food, clothes and hygiene packs.

One of the persons is a social welfare beneficiary and works additionally so to be able to cover the existential expenses with the wife. The other person has been left without any regular finances for a year and the third person is a beneficiary of the retirement fund.

None of the people have been housed in any institution for social protection. "I was offered

once a place in Cicino Selo, but I refused. It is very far away and there are no conditions for medical treatment of my wife" – claims one 54-year old man who is threatened by eviction. The same person also claims to have submitted documents for acquiring social housing, but has been refused.

Their biggest problem is their home. "I have no home, nowhere to keep myself warm, to have a bath, to sleep, to rest, to get myself cleaned up, get shaved" – claims one 66-year old man, who is threatened by eviction. The insecurity and the suspense makes them anxious. They feel that they had been left alone. "Everybody calls in, ask about me, to promise that they would help me, but they never do" – claims one 54-year old man, who is threatened by eviction. They claim to not having received any significant support from the Social Welfare Centres or from the NGOs, apart from the Red Cross.

People feel homeless. "So, as of the first of this month, since I don't have a roof over my head – that makes me a homeless person" – claims one 66-year old man, who is threatened by

eviction. "A homeless person – he is nobody and nothing" – describes his feelings one 49-year old man who is threatened by eviction.

## USEFUL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Useful services are considered the support in food, clothes, and hygienic means, given as a donation. They require more information for access to employment, institutions that could help them exercise their social rights but also the tenancy rights, information about the ways on how to acquire social apartment or accommodation in institutions for elderly people. In their vision for the future they all agree that they need home. "I feel like living. I want to live" – claims one 66-year old man who is threatened by eviction. They feel that the state institutions and the social policy need to pay particular attention to this potential category of people who are threatened by homelessness.

The interviewees have shown readiness for cooperation, and are aware of their situation.

## CONCLUSION

: Securing a home and employment are a direct need of the people threatened by eviction. Particularly given that under risk of homelessness are the entire families and children. These people require support and counseling on provision of social support, how to apply for social housing or to be housed in retirement homes. But also, these people need professional counseling on tenancy rights and often even a free legal aid in cases of representation of their rights in court. The inclusion of the local self-governance is of great importance in the securing and quick detection and crisis support to these people, particularly in the first few months since the eviction.



## WHO IS PROTECTED BY THE POLICE – THE VICTIM OR THE ABUSER?

*(Operational category: people under threat of violence; situation: incidents registered by the police; general definition: police acts to provide secure place for the domestic violence victim)*

The reporting of domestic violence to the police is one of the most frequent forms of reaction. An entire 64 percent of women view the police assistance as the primary form of protection from violence. The accommodation in shelter is recognized by 59,70 percent of the women, the appropriate health care protection is identified by 40,80 percent and the legal aid and representation before the judicial organs is identified by 38,10 percent of the women. A mere 20,50 percent of the women recognize the need of psychological counseling, appropriate psycho-sociological intervention and request for pronouncing temporary measures for protection by the court as possible protective measures for domestic violence<sup>49</sup>. In cases when the temporary measures for protection<sup>50</sup> are insufficiently applied and the abusers are punished mildly, it is not a surprising fact that the focus of the policy and of the public awareness refers to those types of protection which are necessary in acute cases of violence and even more drastically, which do not involve preventive measures and measures for overcoming of consequences of this type of violence.

According to the Joint Protocol for Actions in case of domestic violence<sup>51</sup>, the role of the police is to protect the victim of domestic violence. In case of reporting of domestic violence, or, in case of request for providing assistance to a person subject to any type of domestic violence, the police official is obligated to record the circumstances in which the violence occurred, to assess the gravity, severity and the urgency of the case, as re-

quired, to attend to the scene of the incident, in the presence of at least two or more police officials (if possible, of different gender). When attending to the scene of the incident, the police officials are required to take measures for protection of the victims of domestic violence and for preventing the abuser from further infliction of violence. The police officials are required to conduct, possible, a separate interview with the perpetrator and the victim. In case of a need for sheltering and accommodation of the victim, the police officials establish contact with the national SOS line or with the respective social welfare centre and provide transport to there. If the victim is afraid to remain in the home, the professional team of the social welfare centre conducts an interview with the victim in order to establish his/her needs while advising the victim on the measures of protection, in accordance with the Law on Family, and with the potential resources for accommodation of the victim - relatives, friends, national SOS line, shelter and other available resources.

People in this category have reported domestic violence cases to the police. The actions of the police have not always led to removal of the abuser from the home or to securing safe shelter. In the new home also, which is not institutionally supported, but is shared with relatives or friends, people are often victims of harassment or violence. And so, they continue to live under the threat of violence.

<sup>49</sup> The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women of Republic of Macedonia – ECE and Action Zdruzenska: Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Available at: <http://zdruzenska.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/izvestaj-vo-senka.pdf> [02.03.2016]

<sup>50</sup> Such as: restrictions on threats, harassment, disturbance or restrictions on approaching the place of residence, school, work place or removal from the home, regardless of ownership, until the adoption of a final court decision, a court order for the abuser to undergo appropriate counseling, mandatory health care etc.

<sup>51</sup> Available at: [http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/Protocol\\_MKD.pdf](http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/Protocol_MKD.pdf)

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTED, BUT WITHOUT ANY EFFECT

D.B. has been forced out from the home of the partner with whom she had a child when she did not accept the request to put the child in an adoption facility. For five years, she and the child live in the house of her mother, who recently died. She shares her place with her brother and his family from whom, both she and her son, suffer domestic violence. Previously she had been beaten by her partner.

D. B. recounts that her brother and her sister-in-law have, for some time now, been trying to place her in a psychiatric institution, after which, as she says, had the intention to place her son in a children's facility.

- I am being insulted and beaten. Two or three times, and I fought back – she explains furiously.

She had reported the domestic violence on several occasions to the police, but, as she says, there had been no reaction on their side.

- I reported the sister-in-law and the brother on several occasions. The police say that they will act upon it, but nothing ever happens. Everything is the same. My mother died a week ago. I fear worse days are coming - says D.B. who, as she explains, had wanted to be sheltered in the Social Welfare Centre, but was informed that they are not able to help her.

She says that she had received the greatest support from her sisters, as, according to her, she can barely go through the month solely relying on the social benefits of 3.600 MKD.

- I rely on my sisters. They help me out. But I know that I cannot live with them, they have their own families – says D.B.

### ANALYSIS

The following analysis refers to the questionnaire which analyses the situation of the domestic violence victims, who had been re-

porting the violence to the police, but despite the assistance of the police, they still live under threat of violence. The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the interviewees, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in the period between September 2015 – February 2016. The interviewees come from Tetovo and Skopje.

The analysis of the responses focused on the needs of this focal group, the reasons that have led them to leave their home and its impact on their potential homelessness, the side effects of the new situation and the constant threat of violence over their physical and mental health, the social relations with the families and the friends, the treatment by the community and the institutions as well as their vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem of homelessness.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

A total of five interviews have been conducted with the category of people – female victims of domestic violence, who, despite the reported violence, continue to live under its threat. The youngest interviewee was at the age of 43 години, and the oldest was 68. One interviewee is in the early forties, one in late fifties and one in her late sixties. The ethnic cross-section comprises two e-Macedonians, one e-Albanian, one e-Roma, and one e-Turk. Only one woman has no birth certificate and citizenship of Republic of Macedonia. The interviews were conducted in Skopje, in the premises of Female Forum in Tetovo, which provides services to domestic violence victims. One woman is a widow since young age and lives with her adult children and a son, who is an alcohol addict. One woman has lived in a civil partnership community, but after the delivery, along with the baby, she had been forced out and currently lives in her family house together with her parents, her brother, and his family. One of the women is currently going through a divorce procedure, and the other one is divorced. The last of the interviewed women is separated from her partner and lives with her

adult children. All of the women are victims of domestic violence and live under the threat of violence by their children and/or their closest family. One woman has no education, two have completed primary education and two have completed higher vocational education. One of the women lives in a social housing in Skopje, two other women live in the home of members of a close family and two women live with their children and their families. All of the women have health insurance and during the last year have often underwent medical checkups. Among them there is a woman with chronic illnesses (asthma, diabetes, allergies, hypertension), and some complain on problems in their chest. One of the women has physical disabilities.

### REASONS FOR LEAVING THE HOME AND LOCATING ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION

One of the women is initially a victim of domestic violence inflicted by her son, whereas another woman is a victim of violence caused by her son-in-law. The others are victims of violence inflicted by the husband / partner. That has been the only reason due to which the four interlocutors had left their home or are intending to do so. They have all reported the violence to the police and have many different experiences with the institutions in charge of helping the victims of domestic violence. So, two of them still live in the same home with the perpetrator, while one woman is a new victim of domestic violence caused by a relative in the newly shared place. Only one woman is with her son and lives a life without violence, but filled with stress and anxiousness due to unresolved family relations and divorce procedures.

Two of the women are in close contact with their relatives, who are their strong support in their lives. Another woman points out that the only support she had received is from the church in the form of a donation of food products, while only one of them is a member of an association of citizens which offers assistance to victims of domestic violence and had used donations and their counseling, thus managing to face and overcome the domestic situa-

tion. *“They helped me out the most to overcome the chaos at home”* – points one of the interlocutors. The isolation is a dominant feeling, with the woman with physical disabilities. Her physical and health condition prevents her from finding a more suitable housing opportunities than sharing a home with an abuser. *“I don't know anyone”. People get away from people like me”* - points out the interviewee.

### PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND INSTITUTIONAL LACK OF COORDINATION

The domestic violence has fully violated the domestic relations and the relations within the extended family and the children. Women still perceive as a threat the former partners or children standing in defense of their father. *“He still persecutes us, he even tried twice to run us over with a car, together with the son”* – claims one 43-year old interviewee. One woman claims that her return in the family house has worsened the relations with the brother and his family, and so, they are now a new source of violence, for her and her son.

One of the women is without a home for nine years and has been accommodated with friends and relatives. Forcefully and with the support from the police she had left her partner's home, where her children remained. Another woman had lived for five years in the family home with her brother and his family, where she doesn't feel welcome and, together with her son, are victims of physical and psychological violence. The third interviewee has lived with her son for 18 months, in a complicated family atmosphere, following violence, which lasted for more than 30 years. The last of the interviewees have used the services of the shelter-centre for victims of domestic violence in a period of three months, after which she had been placed in a retirement home. She had hoped to be placed in an institution for people with physical disabilities, but she didn't managed to receive life support. So, she had been forced to live with the abuser, and she had lost her home four years ago.

Only one woman is employed and one is a beneficiary of a pension for people with disabilities. Three of the women are beneficiaries

of financial support, in the amount of 1.300 or 3.600 MKD, and one of the interviewees is a beneficiary of a benefit for permanent care.

Their experience with the institutions is not satisfactory. The women complain on the relations with the police, which is often lenient towards the abusers, and even bribable in situations of domestic violence. They feel that the police is often on the side of the violent man. *"He used to bribe the police and the court"* – claims one 44-year old interviewee. *"The police said that they would act upon it, but nothing ever happened. Everything was the same"* – claims one 43-year old interviewee. The situation was more complicated in the home of the wife of a person employed in the police who had received tacit support by his colleagues despite the charges on domestic violence. *"They're aware that he's violent, he's never been convicted. He was called for an interview, and I was offered some protection"* – explains with bitterness the interviewee.

All of the women claim that they have stayed with the violent person because of the children and the wish for them to be brought up in a family environment, with two parents. *"I tolerate it because of the children"* – claims one of the interviewees. *"While I had the nerves and the reason to live for the children, we managed somehow. When the children grew up a little, then bigger problems started. Then I went to file for divorce. When he found out, he rolled all over the place, he hit his head on the floor, and yelled out: I'll do anything you say, only not to get a divorce... and nothing changed"* – explains one of the interviewees.

The lack of a home in their ownership and the low financial income are the biggest problems faced by the women under threat of domestic violence. Thus, they fall into a vicious cycle of poverty and violence, which prevent them to become independent and to continue their life without violence. The stress and the fear are part of their daily life. *"I'm still afraid. After I moved with my son, whenever I stay late at work, even my son is in fear. My husband has started harassing him too, for allowing me to move in with him"* – claims the interviewee. The judgment and the violence by the fam-

ily and by the wider environment are an additional trauma in their life. *"They've been calling my son a bastard and he has no one to play with. I take him in a kindergarten yard to play for a while as we have only traumas at home"* – recounts another interviewee. Unresolved family relations, particularly with the children, cause pain, but they are aware that the leaving of the abuser would be the only solution for them. *"It's all the same for me now, not that I find it easy though". The story I am now telling you, if I had told you the same story a year ago, you would have to calm me down, but now I tell it more calmly"* – recounts bitterly one of the interviewees. An appropriate care for the children, including appropriate health care for the violent children, a stable employment, a home and personal security are their direct needs.

The interviewees see themselves as people without a home. *"I used to have a home, but now I don't"* – says one of the interviewees while describing homelessness. But the fact that at the moment they have roof over their heads, although a temporary one, makes them feel reluctant to identify themselves with the homeless people. *"They are to be pitied, those who beg on the street"* – one interviewee describes the homeless people. They are aware that they may lose their current home anytime and that causes an additional stress and suspense.

#### USEFUL SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The victims of domestic violence are in contact with the state institutions and with NGOs which provide counseling and support. Only one person had been a direct beneficiary of the institutional forms of protection of domestic violence victims, shelter-centre in a period of three months, and later on in a retirement home. Still, the use of these services had not led to later permanent housing solution. On the contrary, after the institutional support was over, the victim had been forced to return to the home of the violent person. Another person claims to have requested institutional care, but the social welfare centres had not been able to help him.

As useful are considered the psychologi-

cal and the social support they receive from NGOs, the financial support from the parents or the financial support and the donations by the church. Still, they claim that the social welfare is not sufficient for them to live with their children in their own home. They feel it is necessary to have a more effective system of punishment of the abusers and protection of the women who leave the home of the abuser. *"It's not a problem only the sleepover. I, for instance, if I go to the shelter centre and stay there for a month, where will I go when I go out from there? I would need to come back (with my husband) or stay on the street. I would die out of hunger there, њхилст there I would die not only of hunger but of violence as well"* – claims one of the interviewees.

In their vision for the future they wish to have a safe home, employment, or stable finances with which they would be able to look after themselves and their children. In the approach to solving the problems of the domestic violence victims, they consider it necessary to provide them work in order to start

thinking about a new home, to guarantee them personal security, respect of the judicial decisions and pronouncement of more effective measures for the abusers. *"He should be pronounced some бeпs xapcx measure, that if he meets me he should turn on the other side or pass by me as if he doesn't know me, otherwise, he should know the consequences"* – states one interviewee. They feel that human solidarity would help them more in the communication with the police. That is why they feel that there should be more employed women in the police and particularly women who had been through a bespoke training to work on these cases. However, they are critical that the family violence is not done only by men. They feel that there are also men who are in need of institutional support.

The interviewees had a neat physical appearance and showed readiness for цoопepaтиoн, have tried to show the essence of the problems and give their directions for their solution.

#### CONCLUSION

Raising awareness of the general population for the services and the manners of institutional support in situations of domestic violence are necessary for the initial encouragement of the victims to leave the abuser. Necessary are an official reaction and urgency of the institutions, primarily of the police and the state organs working on social protection in the cases of domestic violence. The domestic violence is not and it should not be considered a private problem of the family or of the partners. More effective institutional solutions for prevention and timely and swift response in crisis are necessary, particularly in the first days of leaving the home, as well as a longer-term solutions for the homelessness. The situation of these people requires activities for affirmation of the temporary measures for domestic violence protection, particularly at a lower level. More effective responses for re-socialization of the abuser, as well as programmes that would reinstall the self-confidence and the feeling of safety with the victims are also necessary. Programmes for psychological and social support and individual work with the people-victims of domestic violence would help them in facing the feeling of guilt that they leave their children or that they haven't done enough to protect the family. The unemployed victims require assistance in finding employment in order to have the possibility for independent life.

## WHEN WATER AND ELECTRICITY ARE LUXURY AND THE ROOF LEAKS...

*Operational category: people living in temporary, unconventional objects; living situation*

*11.2 Living situation: unconventional buildings; general definition: shelter or substandard cabin*

*11.3 Life situation: temporary structures; general definition: a tent or a cabin*



The following analysis refers to a questionnaire which analyzes the situation of people living in unconventional and temporary objects. According to ETHOS, unconventional objects are considered ruinous houses and buildings, incompletely secured homes with infrastructure connections, whereas temporary structures include: garages, cabins, pre-fabs (containers), etc. It also includes people living in mobile homes such as: automobile, trailer, horse carts with trailers, which are not usually considered housing places, but the research team did not manage to record such cases. It is important to underline that this category often matches persons who live in usurped places (category 8.3 in this research and according to ETHOS). In the classification, the research team was guided by the primary characteristic of the home, namely whether it is on an occupied land in order to be classified in category 8.3, and whether the living conditions are substandard in order to be classified in category 11.

According to the State Statistical Office, in Macedonia, in 2012, 14,1 percent of the households had problems with leaking roof, damp walls and foundations, broken and decayed windows. Of note is that the percentage of the families in the rural areas which face these problems is bigger than in the urban areas (16,3 percent and 12,8 percent respectively). As for the access to bath tub or shower and an in-door toilet, in 2012, 90,4 percent of the total number of households had access to a shower or a bath-tub (95,5 percent of the households in the urban areas and 82,4 percent of the households in the rural areas) whereas 86,9 percent of the total number of households had access to in-door toilet (94,3 percent of the households in urban areas and 75,3 percent of rural areas). Still, the percentages point out that in Macedonia there is some 100 substandard settlements which house some 274.000 inhabitants (World Bank, 2005:

46) and they make up 12 percent of the total number of housing in the country (Centre for Regional Research and Cooperation 2004). It is a common knowledge that the number of such settlements and families living in substandard conditions is much higher (Kostov, 2010).

According to a 2006 World Bank Report on the current substandard settlements in 14 largest cities in Macedonia<sup>52</sup> it is alleged that the physical housing conditions in these areas are often inappropriate (densely populated, with unstable materials, unprotected from water or dangerous locations). Also such areas are characterized by a high rate of unemployment, irregular income and depend on informal activities. These are populated mainly by ethnic Albanian and e-Roma families. The largest part of the inhabitants pay property tax and utility bills whereas the most burning issues are the infrastructure with a lack of sanitary management of the sewage and insufficient collection of the solid waste.

## DIRT FLOOR AND OUTDOOR TOILET NEARBY THE RIVER

Thirty-four year old N.A. lives with her two children in a prefab cabin, with no electricity or water. Since always, having water and electricity in her home is a luxury for her.

Her spouse is in prison, for theft of copper. -He didn't want to steal, but he had to - she says.

Her son is 14-years old and goes to school, and she keeps her 10-year old daughter away from school as, as she explains, someone tried to steal her once.

N.A. has also never been part of the school-

<sup>52</sup> World Bank (2006) Questions related to the urban and municipal development: Note on policies. Report no: 37278-MK. Available at: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2007/08/08/000310607\\_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MACEDON1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2007/08/08/000310607_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MACEDON1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.04.2015).

ing system.

- I didn't go to school as I was told that I could be raped in school. I need to send my daughter as far away as Brakja Ramiz (primary school in Shuto Orizari) and that is far away. She has long hair and it was full of lice. Dirty people go there. We live in difficult conditions, but everything is clean here – says N.A.

She is aware that they live below any human dignity, but for now, while her husband is in prison, she doesn't see a way out.

It is worse when it rains. Then the water comes in the cabin and the wardrobe is filled with water. The floor is underground. I'm very much afraid about the health of the children because of the conditions we live in. And I want to have a clean and neat home. I wish I had a bath. I'd groom myself up, I'd put makeup on – she says with a smiley expression on the face and adds that many of her acquaintances have left Macedonia and now live much better.

- I want to work as well. I can clean and earn at least 10.000 MKD. It'll be enough. It's nice when you have work, when you don't you just sit around. I like to sing, to talk, to work. I don't want to steal - says N.A.

She explains that she feels insecure in her cabin as it is easily penetrable.

- Once I was attacked at home because the attacker had known that my husband is in prison - she explains angrily.

She had lived a hard life even before getting married, previously in her grandfather's house, and afterwards, in her husband's family house, which also did not have the basic living requirements.

- We got married within a day. In Miladonovci, we lived in a cabin. His mother used to say that she would beat me if we were to continue living there. Once we did get into a fight. One or two slaps and she hit the floor. When I'm anxious, I get reckless. Then we left the place, although we had a room of our own. We bought ourselves a little cabin – recounts N.A. and adds that the room (a wooden and plywood cabin) has some 15 square meters.

She says that she receives social welfare

benefits of 2.300 MKD, and that an additional income is likely only if she manages to collect and sell plastic bottles.

- I manage to earn some 200 MKD a day. I'm not out on the street, thank God, I don't beg. I sometimes sell shoes or sneakers. But, still, having a regular job is better – she explains.

### ANALYSIS

The questionnaire aims to provide insight into the self-evaluation and self-perception of the persons, and is designed for the purposes of this research. The interviews with the interviewees from Category 11 were conducted in the period between August – October 2015, in Skopje and in Kumanovo. Part of the interviews were held in the centre for homeless children in Suto Orizari, which some of the persons frequented to obtain food or shelter for their children.

The analyses of the answers is focused on the needs of this target group, the reasons that have led them to temporary, unconventional housing and its side effects on their physical and mental care, the social relations with their families and friends, the treatment by the community and the institutions, as well as the vision for the future and the personal perspective on how to overcome the problem of homelessness or temporary, unconventional housing.

### REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

In the category of people with temporary, unconventional housing, interviews were conducted with a total of eight interviewees. Of them, three women and two men live in cabins, in substandard conditions, whereas three men live in temporary structures, or ruined cabins. The youngest interviewee was at the age of 18, while the oldest one was 61. Two persons are in their early twenties, one in their early thirties, one in late forties and two in early fifties. The ethnic cross-section comprises five Roma who live in substandard cabins and two e-Macedonians and one e-Roma who live in ruined cabins. They all have in their possession a

birth certificate and citizenship of Republic of Macedonia

Among the persons living in substandard conditions, one person is single, four are in marital relationship or in a civil partnership with multiple underage children, of which the youngest one has only few months. Several underage children do not attend school despite the mandatory primary and high education and the harsh punishments for noncompliance. Some are considered phantom children, i.e. they have no documents or personal identification numbers. Among the people who live in ruined barracks one is a single person, one is divorced, whereas one is married, one is separated from his wife and for 11 years now lives in a partnership with another woman. Two of them have adult children who have moved out.

Two persons have no education whatsoever, three have uncompleted primary education, one person has completed primary education and two persons have uncompleted high school. The people living in a cabin, in substandard conditions are located in Shuto Orizari or in Kumanovo.

All of the interviewees have health insurance and a health care card. One person underlines that despite the health insurance they do not use the health care services as they are not able to cover for the required participation. Part of the interviewees feel healthy and have not had any medical check in the last year. Some face chronic illnesses or dental problems caused by poor or irregular nutrition or suffer from anxiousness caused by stress and fear. Only one of the interviewees claims to have had a gynecological examination during the last year.

### INSECURE HOUSING, PROBLEMS, NEEDS AND SOCIALIZATION

Persons living in substandard cabins describe their home as an improvised place, with one or two rooms, shared by at least four-member families. Sometimes a cabin houses several families. The cabins are mostly made of plywood, have no basic infrastructure, electricity or water sockets or use these services illegally. They supply water from public pumps

and use improvised outdoor toilets. "It's a small room, 12-15 square meters, and there is five of us there. We have no electricity or water. I fill water in bottles from a pump" – describes her home one 22-year old interviewee. Only one person has no documents for the home built on a land in his ownership. He has submitted documents for legalization and the procedure is underway. They do not consider their place a home, but "this is what you get" - says one 61-year old interviewee.

Among the people using temporary housing facilities, one person lives in a deserted cabin in Sredrek, Kumanovo, whereas the previous 8 years he used to occasionally live out in the street, sometimes with relatives or friends, "under someone else's roof" – says one 54-year old interviewee. Another person for 20 years now lives in a place which remains from cabin in Shuto Orizari, in one room without sewerage, and uses the Friday services of the reception shelter in Momin Potok. The third person almost 10 years is without a home and lives in a ruined cabin in Kisela Voda and also uses the Friday services of the reception shelter for homeless in Momin Potok.

Unresolved family relations were the reason for changing their place of residence several times, to rent or share a place with other relatives or simply live out on the street. People living in substandard conditions for their current residence say: "At the moment I live in an improvised home, with no water or electricity, but I feel much safer than before, when we moved and lived in rented place because now the cabin is ours" – says one 22-year old interviewee. For those who reside in temporary building structures, reasons for loss of home were divorce, family poverty, death of a breadwinner parent in the family or demolition of illegally built houses. "With the parents we lived in a rental place. We had no money. My father stopped paying for the rent, fell ill and died, so we were left homeless. I didn't manage quite well and I've been without a home since" – recounts one 47-year old interviewee.

All, but one person, are beneficiaries of financial support, child support benefits or benefits for single mothers (because of that,

one person will continue living in an extra-marital partnership). They have monthly funds of somewhere between 1.200 and 5.000 MKD. They earn insignificant additional income through collection of plastic bottles, occasional support on the market, cleaning and selling of the Face Magazine. "With my husband, we also collect plastic bottles. We earn 100 to 150 for a sackful, and we collect it for two or three week" – claims one 22-year old interlocutor. They consider social support insufficient for coverage of the life needs of multiple member families. One person, due to a fee for temporary work – cleaning, has lost the right to financial benefits from the state and claims that the "toiling" is his only financial income and the most he earns per month is 3.000 MKD.

The greatest benefits for the people living in substandard conditions are the lack of financial means and stable monthly finances in order for them to be able to improve their home and live a more dignified life. "It's nice when you have work, but when you don't – you just sit around like a fool. I don't want to steal" – says one 34-year old interlocutor. "I need a job so that we can provide for our needs" – explains one 22-year old interlocutor. Some find it difficult to provide regular food. "We have one meal per day, it rarely happens to have more than one" – claims another 22-year old interlocutor. Although they are content of having their own home, they still need electricity sockets, water and sewerage. Without electricity and water, life is hard" – recounts one 22-year old interlocutor.

Additionally, people living in temporary buildings, apart from the poor housing conditions, face the inability to provide daily meal. "The food is my biggest problem, I don't even have a stove" – claims one 53-year old interlocutor. They mostly collect food in the garbage containers and help out occasionally, clean for a certain fee, whereas for keeping the personal hygiene they use the reception point in Momin Potok, where they take a bath and take clean clothes. They had been offered a place for sleepover with friends, but, still they decide to live in a ruined home. "They can tell

me any time: Go away! We are many people and overnight I was chased out on the street. I want to be calm" – says one 54-year old interlocutor.

The people living in substandard conditions with their families claim that they rarely leave the place to visit the city. They mostly hang around with neighbors and relatives. People living in temporary buildings are also socially excluded and live a lonely life. They claim that they rarely hang around with other homeless people, although they know many homeless people or people at social risk. "The hardest for me is the loneliness. I want to talk to somebody. To find some consolation" – claims one 54-year old interlocutor.

Life in substandard conditions is burdened with uncertainty, stress and fear. Some believe that the ghettoization in substandard settlements prevents them to accomplish their potentials. That's the vicious cycle of poverty. "I don't want to live like this anymore. Everyone's left. Once my husband is out of prison we will leave too" – claims one 34-year old interlocutor. Her biggest fear is the health of her children. "I think that the water is not good. It affects our health. The baby has kidney trouble" – claims one 22-year old interlocutor. The same is said by one 34-year old interlocutor: "I'm very much afraid for the health of the children because of the conditions we live in". And the people who live in temporary buildings share similar problems. "I'm on the pills. I get very anxious. One day you have food, the next day – nothing" – claims one 53-year old interlocutor.

Their needs are simple. Improvement of the physical conditions, employment and stable finances. "If only I could find a job" – says one 34-year old interlocutor. "I don't have a chance for a big house, but at least some more rooms for this big family" – claims one 61-year old interlocutor.

None of the persons had been placed in an institution for social protection. Only few of them receive donations and support from friends, relatives from the Red Cross, the Centre for sheltering children on the street in Shuto Orizari, Megjasi, the Catholic Church in

Skopje and the St. Spas Church.

People living in substandard conditions do not feel like homeless. "We live poorly. We have no basic conditions in the houses where we live" – claims one 22-year old interlocutor. They feel that the roof over their head is the difference between them and the homeless people, otherwise we are the same. We have no jobs, water, electricity, food". Those who live in ruined places feel homeless more often, and even "worse than homeless". As if you are out in the street. It's not being called home" – claims one 53-year old interlocutor.

The interviewees rarely have contact with the state institutions or with associations of citizens. They sometimes receive help in food or clothes from relatives or citizens. One person claims that one of his sisters had financed him in order to get roof over the head, but it's a temporary support. They feel that the community doesn't respect them, nor they show any solidarity to help. "People don't help us. No one says: There, have one smoke! If I don't manage, nobody would help me" – claims one 53-year old interlocutor.

#### USEFUL SERVICES, DECISIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Useful are considered the support in food, clothes, firewood, basic means for their kids and babies. They need more information on access to jobs, access to micro crediting or donations for refurbishment of their homes, access to infrastructure - water, electricity

and sewerage sockets. They mention the Red Cross, the Centre for sheltering street children from Shuto Orizari, Megjasi, Catholic Church and the Church St. Spas, which give them donations in food and services.

In their vision for the future they agree that they need better home. Some are ready to improve their current home, whereas others want to leave the ghettoized substandard environment. "We need to refurbish the place, make it livable. It's cold in winter" – claims one 53-year old interlocutor. "We want to leave that environment, but have no money. Nobody's working, except for my dad, occasionally. My brother works, "checking out the garbage", collecting iron, anything that can be sold" – claims one 18-year old interlocutor. Some see a better life only in emigration abroad. "There's no life here" – claims one 22-year old interlocutor. The same is said by another 22-year old interlocutor. "We all want something better, but I don't believe that it'll happen. Get your kids and hit the road, never come back to Shutka again. It will never be better here" – says angrily one 34-year old interlocutor. The solution for the conditions in which they live they feel is – better place and employment. "A home and a job. The roof is the most important" – says one 54-year old interlocutor.

The interviewees had a neat physical appearance and showed readiness for cooperation. It is noticeable that the living conditions had left traces on their physical appearance.



## VII

### MAIN BENEFITS FROM THE RESEARCH

#### CONCLUSION

Employment and advancement of the physical living conditions are a direct need of the people living in unconventional facilities, in substandard conditions and in temporary structures. The persons - owners of land and/or home in substandard conditions require donations and micro-crediting, as in the case of Habitat Macedonia, which with the savings bank Possibilities have imitated a credit line which provides small loans for reconstruction and renovation of substandard homes. These people also have a need of non-financial services in the form of counseling on how to most effectively and sustainably renovate their homes. The local self-government has an important role in providing subsidized approach to electricity, water and sewerage to the homes of these persons and thus improve the quality of life. The persons living in temporary structures require information and assistance on the way the institutions may assist them in the exercising of their social rights, such as temporary institutional housing, one-off financial support etc. Also, inclusion of the business sector, civil organizations, and church institutions is necessary to provide for coordinated actions in this area, particularly during winter time.

1. DEFINITION + CATEGORIZATION
2. INSTRUMENT FOR MEASURING THE SEVERITY OF HOMELESSNESS
3. SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE
4. PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTION FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH HOMELESS
5. DEVELOPMENT OF A PLATFORM WHICH MARRIES THEORY AND PRACTICE

[www.bezdomnistvo.mk](http://www.bezdomnistvo.mk)

## 7.1 DEFINITION + CATEGORIZATION

The homelessness is a process which refers to people with limited inclusion in the social life, homeless people, and people with personal identity problems, people living in insecure or inappropriate conditions and/or people temporarily housed in shelters or institutions.

The **PUBLIC HOMELESSNESS** refers to roofless people, who are deprived of any support in securing housing.

The **HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS** refers to people with or without institutionally supported housing, which they are expected to leave within a legally prescribed deadline: women accommodated in shelters for domestic violence victims, immigrants sheltered in centres / reception centres/ subsidized housing, people who are about to leave the prison, health or other institutions, and have no available housing.

**POTENTIAL HOMELESSNESS** refers to people who live in insecure places (with relatives or friends, in an usurped place or in a home built on usurped land), people under the threat of eviction (due to mortgage or unsettled expenses in a rented place, and the eviction decision is active), people living under the threat of violence and people with temporary, unconventional housing.

## 7.2 MEASURING THE SEVERITY OF HOMELESSNESS

The homelessness is a process which goes through phases of different levels of risk for the individual. The threshold or the level of the risk denotes the degree of the negative elements or impact by the direct environment to the individual. The syndromes which reflect homelessness have different indicators.

The arithmetic mean of all syndromes will provide the specific classification of the homeless person:

boarding (borderline) threshold / over 3,5

worrying threshold / 2,5 - 3,5

and critical threshold / less than 2,5 / of endangerment to their condition

SYNDROM	SCALED INDICATORS
Material conditions	5 – permanently employed 4 – seasonal work* 3 – social support, in-kind support from NGO, religious organizations and the business sector 2 – one-off employment 1 – no employment
* The sales of the Face to Face street magazine is also considered a seasonal work	
Housing	5 - substandard 4 - under threat for eviction or housed with relatives or friends 3 - housed in a shelter/centre 2 - lives on the street and makes use of the Red Cross reception point services 1 - lives on the street and makes no use of the Red Cross reception point services
Health	5 - with health insurance 4 - uses Red Cross health services 3 - uses health services only in urgent situations 2 - independent healthcare 1 - no healthcare
Vices	5 – does not use alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances 4 – heavy smoker 3 – occasional use of alcohol/drugs 2 – frequent use of alcohol/drugs 1 – regular use of alcohol/drugs
Physical Appearance	5 – modest, clean 4 – modest clothing, dirty 3 – clean, inappropriate clothing 2 – dirty, inappropriate clothing, neglected 1 – extremely unhygienic, shabby appearance
Contacts	5 – regularly visits and is visited by relatives and friends and supporting institutions 4 – relatives and friends visit the person, but the person doesn't regularly visit the supporting institutions 3 – occasional contact with relatives, friends and institutions 2 – contact with others only in exceptional cases 1 – no contacts

Example: In the Social Welfare Centre a homeless person calls in, a beneficiary of a social welfare (3), uses the services of the Red Cross reception point (2), no health care (1), incidentally uses alcohol/drugs (3), dirty, inappropriately dressed, neglected (2), contact with others in exceptional cases (2). Result:  $13 : 6 = 2,1$  which denotes a critical threshold



#### 4. MEASURES DEPENDING ON THE THRESHOLD OF SEVERITY OF THE HOMELESSNESS

Borderline (boarding) threshold 1- The preventive forms of actions towards the homeless persons refer to the labour market and to the housing. People with symptoms for becoming homeless, need to be immediately offered some type of work. Particular attention is to be placed to the families who live in substandard conditions, in illegal place of residence, or to families with a risk of losing their rented home.

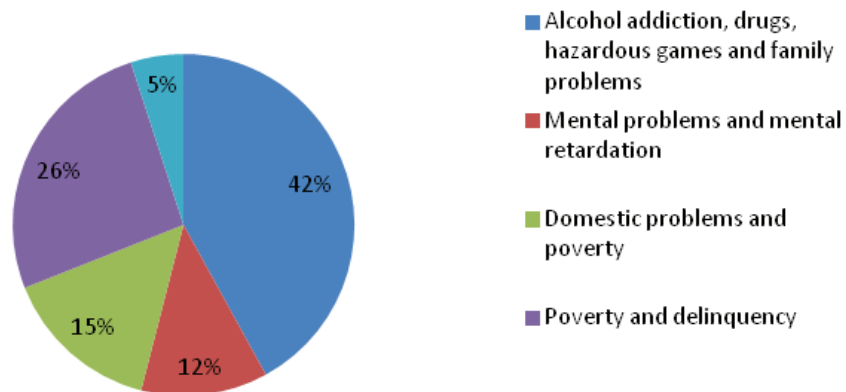
Worrying threshold – identification of risky groups of people and undertaking of all possible measures in cases where symptoms for entry into homelessness are observed. Particular role here have the Social Welfare Centres, the visiting service, the visiting social workers of the city of Skopje and the religious communities. (The main activities refer to detailed review of the income, housing, property situa-

tion, work, family, and health insurance).

Critical threshold – securing housing (Centre for homeless people with a new concept or training – supported housing – therapeutic community)

- Securing food, clothing and health care
- It is mandatory that the institutions for homeless organize education – with professional and psychological dimension.
- For the residents in the centres and in the training-residences there needs to be provided work engagement (courses, workshops, trainings), trainings that will improve their work habits which will enable them to become more competitive on the labor market.
- According to the practice in the other countries, a personal assistant may be provided for the homeless, who from a position of a friend and assistant reimmerses the homeless into the societal life.

#### LEADING PROBLEMS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE WHO VISIT THE CENTRE FOR HOMELESS CAUSING THEM TO LIVE ON THE STREET



### 7.3. PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH HOMELESS

#### 1. First interview with the homeless person

During the first contact an introduction is made, an attempt to establish the background (often, during the first contact it is not always realistic) and intervention, if there is a crisis situation (for instance, the person is noticeably ill).

#### PRINCIPLES OF WORK:

- do not deny any statement,
- listen more,
- talk less, no promises,
- explain why you want to help the person

#### Interview

The introductory questions applicable to all profiles of homeless people (roofless people, homeless people, insecure and inappropriate housing,) are the same – name, surname (nick name), gender, age, nationality, citizenship, personal documents, education.

The questions below are related to the current state of the person.

1.1 People living out in the open/ approximate place of stay, place of improvised housing, alone or collective / how long does the person live on the street / reasons for the situation in which the person is in / vision for the future

3.2. People accommodated in reception points for temporary accommodation of homeless persons/ time of stay in the reception centre/ whether resides alone or with a family, activities of the person in the reception centre / reasons for the situation in which the person is in / vision for the future

4.1. Women accommodated in reception

centres or in shelter centres / previous support/ the most burning issue for the person / reasons for the situation the person is in / vision for the future

5.1 People accommodated in emigrant reception centres / the background of the person, whether the person is in the country alone or with a family, reasons for leaving the home country, conditions of stay in Macedonia / vision for the future.

6.1. People with current stay in a penitentiary or correctional institutions, without a secured home prior to leaving the institutions / reasons for the prison sentence, the life of the person prior to incarceration / vision for the future after leaving the institution

6.2. Homeless people with current (prolonged) stay in healthcare institutions/ time of stay, previous stay in an institution, type of health issues, reasons for the situation in which the persons is in / conditions for return to the own environment, vision for the future.

6.3. People housed in children's institutions / homes, who after leaving the institution have faced the problem of homelessness / how long the person is without a home / reasons due to which the person has lost the home / problems, vision for the future

8.1. People temporarily housed with relatives and close friends / how long the person stays in the home of relatives / friends, where did the person live previously / relatives/ reasons for the situation /vision for the future

8.2. People – tenants without a rental agreement / how long does the person live in the place without lease/ sublease documents / what does the person live in / problems / reasons for the situation / vision for the future

8.3. People who built a home on usurped land / how long has the person lived there / why did the person decide to build a home there / has the person submitted a request for

legalization/ reasons for the situation / vision for the future

9.1. People who live in a rented residence under a threat of eviction / what are the reasons for the eviction / how and where did the person live previously / reasons for the situation / vision for the future

9.2 People threatened with repossession of ownership by the owner due to unsettled mortgage/ why has the home been mortgaged / vision for the future

10.1. People living under the threat of violence, and the police acts with the aim of ensuring safe housing of the domestic violence victim / how many times has the person reported domestic violence and where/ what has the police done to protect the person / reasons for the situation / vision for the future

11.2 People living in unconventional facilities (shelters, substandard cabins) /how long has the person lived in substandard conditions (description of the conditions) / reasons for the situation / vision for the future

11.3. People living in temporary structures (tents, shacks) / how long has the person lived in substandard conditions (description of the conditions) / reasons for the situation / vision for the future

The ensuing questions refer to issues which refer to health insurance, medical checks (steadiness), diseases, contact with the environment, monthly income, experience with previous housing in social welfare institutions, as well as what is the person's vision for the future.

The interviewer will need to assess the psychophysical status of the person (physical appearance, hygiene, nonverbal communication, linguistic communication, readiness for cooperation)

## 2. THE ROLE OF VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN THE WORK WITH THE HOMELESS

(abridged and modified version of the work of the Bureau for Social Activities, professional and methodological instruction and manuals; Book 1, Skopje 2007 p. 26-28)

### SOCIAL WORKER

*In the initial assessment phase* (anamnesis) the social worker establishes the social and economic status of the beneficiary, monitors and converses with the person, collects and analyses information of different sources, describes the risk.

*In the diagnostic phase*, the social worker is involved in preparation of individual and of a collective assessment of the professional team (findings and opinion).

*In the planning phase* (social prognosis), the social worker participates in:

Preparation of measures for support and protection for individual work with the beneficiary

Analysis of the resources of the closer and the wider social environment.

*In the phase of treatment*, the social worker is involved in all of the activities prescribed by the individual plan of work, depending on the beneficiary's perception of the problem and the likely possibilities for overcoming the problem.

*In the phase of evaluation and revision* the social worker is involved in: revision of the achieved results from the activities implemented as part of the treatment of the beneficiary.

### PSYCHOLOGIST

In the diagnostic phase of the work with the users, the role of the psychologist is to:

- Verify the psychological and physical status of the beneficiary in relation to:

◆ intellectual standing (level of functioning of general and specific capacities)

◆ emotional standing (level and functioning of the mental health)

◆ social standing (assessment of the adaptation and of the use of capacities)

- Verifies the status of relations at the level

of functioning of the family group in relation to:

◆ relations of a member of the family / household with the social environment

◆ the dynamics of the relations as part of the family group

◆ the quality of relations and their impact for occurrence and addressing of problems

- Develops individual and collective assessment as part of the professional team (findings and opinion)

*In the planning phase* (social prognosis), the psychologist participates in:

◆ development of measures for support and protection for the individual work with the beneficiary

◆ defining the potentials, possibilities, weaknesses and the threats in relation to the beneficiary

◆ planning therapeutic techniques and functioning of the mental health

*In the phase of the treatment*, the psychologist is involved in:

◆ all of the activities prescribed in line with the individual work plan depending on the beneficiary's perception of the problem and potential for overcoming the problem

*In the evaluation and revision phase*, the psychologist is involved in:

◆ revision of the results from the activities conducted as part of the treatment of the beneficiary.

### LAWYER

1. Verification of the material and the local jurisdiction over the beneficiary

2. Verification of the legal status of the beneficiary: personal and domestic legal status, working status, tenancy status, property status, health status (health insurance and an assessment of the need of protection, contingent on the health condition)

3. Verification of features for the specific liv-

ing condition (including the material condition)

4. Development of individual and collective assessment as part of the professional team (findings and opinion) with the use of the following procedures: insight into documents – public and private, forensic expertise, cooperation with individuals, with experts and forensics, inspection (at the housing place)

### PROFESSIONAL RECEPTIONIST

1. Reception of a social case at the Social Welfare Centre

- receipt of the submission

◆ receipt of a telephone call, while making notes

◆ or a personal contact with a person who reported the case

2. Support in compilation of an appropriate submission

3. Providing necessary information for the submitter in relation to the case procedure

4. Filling in the initial sheet

5. Referral to the respective sections

6. Referral to other institutions, contingent on the jurisdiction

7. Undertaking urgent intervention in specific situations which endanger the beneficiary

8. Primary referral to the degree of action priorities (immediate, urgent, regular)

### SOCIOLOGIST

Participates in the record keeping activities on homeless people in the field and organizes preventive activities for raising public awareness on homelessness.

Monitors the phenomenon and regularly briefs the professional team.

Organizes accommodation for the homeless people in appropriate institutions (centre for homeless people, health institutions, retirement homes)

Cooperates with other institutions and organizations which deal with the homelessness.

## 7.4. SYSTEM FOR SUPPORT OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

It is advisable that support system for homeless people comprises 4 (four) types of activities:

- 1 - Prevention
- 2- Early intervention
- 3 – Intervention in crisis
- 4 – Social and professional integration

Prevention - early intervention - intervention in crisis - integration

The support needs to be implemented in cooperation with the governmental, non-governmental and the business sector. The religious communities could also give their contribution here.

1. The preventive forms of action towards the homeless focus on employment and housing. People with symptoms of entering homelessness should be immediately offered an employment. In particular, attention should be brought to families who live in substandard conditions, illegal housing and families facing a risk of losing their home or rented housing.

2. Early intervention is implemented through identification of different at-risk groups and undertaking all possible measures for the people or families displaying symptoms of homelessness. Particular role in this type of activities have the Social Welfare Centres, the visiting services, visiting social workers of the city of Skopje and the religious communities. (The main activities refer to a detailed overview of the income, housing, property situation, work, family, and health insurance)

3. Intervention in crisis refers to people who have entered homelessness.

The activities focus on:

- Providing housing (centre/ reception centre for homeless with a new concept or supported training-housing- therapeutic community)
  - Provision of food, clothes, and health care
- Necessary activities:
- activities of the visiting social workers
  - sleepover reception points

-reception for urgent assistance (reception points for care and health care, community food centres, reception points for personal hygiene, information reception points)

### 4. Social and professional integration

The social integration refers to people with a homeless status. It aims at enabling reintegration into the society and securing independence. The social integration has different dimensions (economic, psychological, social, and legal)

Due to the wide diversity of the homeless people, a corresponding diversity in the institutions dealing with homeless people is necessary, where the level of support and assistance will be adapted to the level of motivation of the people for overcoming homelessness.

Enabling inclusion (work, sport, cultural, education activities) and independence may also occur in the institutions which house homeless people.

The shelters or the training-residences seem to be most conducive for the accomplishment of the above goal, due to their size and a smaller number of residents. According to the Macedonian Law on Social Protection, the training-residence may resemble a therapeutic community.

Law on Social Protection, Article 147-a /09.2015

The therapeutic community provides temporary housing of people who use/abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors, conducts re-socialization through psychological and social treatment during a certain time-period, through programme and method of self-respect and active inclusion of the beneficiary in the therapeutic programme; provides services related to nutrition, stay, housing, hygienic maintenance and cultural or social activities. The detailed conditions for the manner of implementation of the re-socialization programme in the therapeutic community shall be prescribed by the minister.

Generally, the homeless people must participate in the coverage of the fee for the therapeutic communities. It is one of the ways for practicing independence and instilling responsibility.

In the institutions for homeless people it is mandatory to organize education – with professional and psychological dimension. The psychological support is to be organized by professionals, with the participation of the homeless themselves, who, in the therapeutic community apply the group method of therapy and form the so-called mutual help groups. 1. In the therapeutic community the homeless people need to participate in the group as equal partners.

The residents in the centres and in the training-residences need to be provided with a possibility of employment (workshops, courses, trainings), and improvement of their work habits, to be able to be more competitive on the labour market.

According to the practice in other countries, the homeless people may be provided with a personal assistant, who will help support the process of their reintegration.

- Mutual help groups – groups for mutual support with the participation of a therapist. People with similar problems are organized together, give mutual support in addressing the problems (single mothers, parents of sick children)

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO HOMELESS PEOPLE FROM THE GROUP WORK AT THE CONFERENCE - HOMELESSNESS AROUND US – PUBLIC, HIDDEN, POTENTIAL

#### 1. PUBLIC HOMELESSNESS

Recommendations for the public institutions, the civil sector and the business community:

Provision of housing: use of public-private partnership for securing housing; opening of sleep-over places and day-centres; improvement of the conditions in the subsidized collective housing; de-centralization of the housing services in other cities in the country; use of state property for the housing needs of this

target group.

Enabling employments: development of professional training programmes and programmes for re-qualification, possibilities for subsidized employment or direct access to employment in state-owned and private companies.

Development of health care and mental care counseling services: programmes for coping with addiction; programmes for change of lifestyles; systemic solutions for secondary and tertiary health care; enabling daily work at the homeless centre.

Institutional changes: complete staffing of professional services in the Social Welfare Centres who would deal with this problematic; development of a policy based on evidence through establishing the number of homeless who sleep on the street and measuring the severity of the homelessness; legal amendments to facilitate obtaining of documents; facilitation of the procedure for accommodation in the centre for homeless in Cicino Selo; greater adaptability in the use of community food centres; development of a clearly defined system for social and professional integration, through cooperation and coordination of various involved parties (institutions, civil sector, business community, homeless people).

Intersectoral collaboration and coherence between the governmental and the civil sector: social agreements between the governmental and non-governmental sector; more structured inclusion of the religious and the business communities; support to the active socially-engaged association of citizens; creation of teams of association of citizens, institutions and other concerned parties for field work; encouraging citizen organizations in other cities in the country that would work on this subject-matter; greater participation of the municipalities.

#### 2. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

Recommendations for the public institutions, the civil sector and the business community:

Improvement of the information-sharing and the conditions in the non-institutionally supported collective accommodation: dissemination

ination of information for the services and the options of non-institutional support; development of packages of social welfare and services available to the users of non-institutional housing; completion of professional staffing of non-institutional housing, permanently available for the beneficiaries; development of programmes for psychological and social support and individual work with people - victims of domestic violence or addicts; initiatives for liaison with the local environment and development of a sense of belonging to the community

Facilitating employments: development of programmes for professional skills development or re-qualification, possibilities for subsidized employment or direct access (employment) to state-owned and private companies; development of alternative measures for employment; stimulus for continuing education through scholarships and subsidized use of services in the student campuses.

Development of programmes for strengthening capacities of independent life and reintegration: providing possibilities for independent or shared housing to be fully or partially subsidized by state/local funds; additional care in the daily life and gradual increase of the capacities for administration of the household; monitoring of the manner in which people face challenges in the new situation (professional and social integration).

Institutional changes: for the persons who had left the institution for children without parents and parental care; there is a need for increased adaptability of the record-keeping system for unemployed persons, as well as in relation to the location for the use of subsidized housing; development of control mechanisms for pronounced measures, particularly in cases of domestic violence; free legal aid.

Intersectoral cooperation and coherence between the governmental and the civil sector: decentralization of services; greater inclusion of the local self-government in the system for social protection and social housing; development of measures for more effective prevention and timely and swift reaction in crisis through the system of visiting services and social workers.

### 3. POTENTIAL HOMELESSNESS

Recommendations for the public institutions, civil sector and the business community:

Dissemination of information on who/what/how can they be supported: counseling on legalization of buildings / housing; assistance on the matters of use of their social rights (such as: social financial support, application for social housing); obtaining personal documents; professional advice for the rights of the tenants, free legal aid in case of representation of their rights in court.

Improvement of the physical living conditions: subsidized /credit support for improvement of the quality of the home (construction materials, access to electricity, water, sewerage); social packages for subsidized use of electricity, water and sewerage services.

Facilitating employments: development of professional training programmes or programmes for re-qualification, possibilities for subsidized employment or direct access to employment in state-owned and private companies.

Development of programmes for social prevention and early intervention by the multidisciplinary teams, focusing on issues such as: life skills for addressing day-to-day problems, financial literacy, development of work habits, combating family violence and addiction; marking / identification of at-risk groups and provision of timely assistance through a system of visiting social workers.

Intersectoral cooperation and coordination between the public and the civil sector: greater inclusion of the local self-government in the system of social protection of these people and development of local support programmes based on partnership with the civil sector and the business-community; increased coordination between the civil sector and the local self-government; more structured inclusion in the business-sector and the religious communities; organization of humanitarian actions (furniture, construction materials) for improvement of housing conditions.

*Basic principles:*

\*Inclusion of a target group with their proposals.

\*Development of an informal network – platform which will lobby for increased visibility and prioritization of the homelessness in the public

social agenda.

\*More frequent discussions and forums between the various stakeholders.

## 7.5. DEVELOPMENT OF A PLATFORM WHICH MARRIES THEORY AND PRACTICE

The webpage “Homelessness.mk“ (Bezdomnistvo.mk) provides an interactive presentation of the state of homelessness in Macedonia, in accordance with the findings of the research conducted by Public.

■ The definition on homelessness developed as part of this research, along with the basic theoretical aspects presented on the web-page, have the purpose of expanding the public perception of homelessness

■ The naming and the description of the categories of homeless people identified in Macedonia in line with the European (ETHOS) categorization of homelessness, create a joint “language” for all the stakeholders dealing with this social phenomenon in our country. On the other side, the nomenclature and the agreement by the stakeholders to use the ETHOS classification, place Macedonia on the map of European countries which approach this problem in a coordinated manner.

■ The reporting of the mapped institutional or non-institutional initiatives which more or

less symptomatically address this problem in Macedonia, testifies for the real capacity of the country to address this problem. It also points to eventual partnerships which may pave the way forward in addressing homelessness in Macedonia.

■ The guidelines – specific recommendations, a methodological package for work with homeless people start an initiative for creation of a resource of invaluable use for the institutions and the organizations that work with this vulnerable category of people.

■ The aim of the platform Homelessness is to update itself with inputs by the institutions and the organizations who work with homeless people and by representatives of the Academia.

■ In this manner, the platform becomes a channel of communication between the theoretical findings and the good global practices and the realistic perception of the homelessness in Macedonia with all of the existing challenges and problems specific to the local context, regarding the issue of homelessness.

## VIII

### INITIATIVES FOR SUPPORT OF THE HOMELESS PERSONS IN MACEDONIA

#### ✓ RED CROSS OF THE CITY OF SKOPJE

The Red Cross of the City of Skopje makes use of two active programmes to provide assistance to homeless people. The first programme is focused on homeless people and their needs, and the other one focuses on a wider group of vulnerable categories of people, including the homeless.

#### ✓ RECEPTION POINT FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

The reception point for homeless people in Momin Potok is open on Fridays. On Mondays, it is open only for hygienic services of its users.

It is regularly visited by 65 homeless people, of which 45 people come on Fridays. Since its opening, in 2008, some 170 homeless people have been registered to use its services.

##### ● Hygienic Services

Prior to receiving any other services, the homeless people may take a bath and get clean clothes. They can collect their laundry the following Friday.

##### ● Primary Health Care

The people in the reception point receive free primary health care and medicine. In case of a need of further medical care, alternative solutions are sought after for coverage of the expenses and provision of state-subsidized accommodation.

At this level, no systemic solutions have been developed for provision of medical treatment to persons lacking health insurance and personal documentation.

##### ● Psychological Assistance

The goal of the psychological assistance is to strengthen the personal responsibility, the decision-making processes and the activities of the homeless people, in order to ensure a positive build-up of their personality.

##### ● Social Work

The social worker prepares social anamnesis of the new homeless persons, updates the existing files, provides counseling, facilitates the obtaining of personal identification documents, issues certifications for all users, assists and supports the illiterate in filling in the papers, facilitates provision of free dental

and legal services and provides employment support, as well as organizes regular sales of the Face to Face Street Magazine, and, when necessary, accompanies the persons to the respective institutions.

##### ● Temporary Shelter

The temporary shelter is regularly open for homeless people with deteriorated health. The shelter is also active during winter times, when the temperature drops below 10 degrees, and is supported by on-call, motorized Red Cross teams, deployed in the field, available for 24 hours per day.

##### Visiting Social Services

The Red Cross of the City of Skopje engages three visiting social workers who detect people and families at risk, including the category of homeless people. Their role is to identify the problems of the people at risk and refer them to all available resources, in the community and the city.

The citizens may support actions of the Red Cross targeting homeless people through donation of clothes, food, hygienic needs and blankets. Donations may be brought at the storehouse of the Skopje City Red Cross, in Momin Potok.

**The citizens may report homeless people on the tel. 02/3139 578.**

##### Clothes reception points for homeless people and other socially vulnerable categories of citizens

– In June 2014, the Red Cross of the City of Skopje opened up a second-hand clothes reception point in Momin Potok, aimed for the socially vulnerable groups of people, where they can get clothes, by using Red Cross vouchers.

Additionally, eight containers for donation of clothes have been set up in Skopje, Bitola, Ohrid and Struga. The clothes-donation project is supported by the Skopje Alfa Bank.

✓ FACE TO FACE STREET MAGAZINE – The magazine was first launched in September 2012 and it promotes the social entrepreneurship model. Its vendors are drawn from the most vulnerable groups of the society, includ-

ing the homeless people. Half of the sales goes directly to the vendors, whereas the other half is used for printing purposes as well as other activities of the Face to Face programme.

The vendors also go through an educational programme for improvement of their communication and selling skills, boosting their self-confidence and motivation, as well as direct meetings with representatives of companies where organized sales of the Face to Face magazine take place.

Some of the companies offer employment to the magazine vendors who have the necessary qualifications. Three such magazine vendors have secured employment through the programme.

The Face to Face magazine regularly raises awareness on the issue of homelessness.

**Action – a day with a homeless person** – A promotional action was carried out with the homeless people, as part of which artists spend an entire day with a homeless person, and then go on to produce a themed work of art (short story, song, photography, drawing). These were later on published in the Face to Face magazine.

✓ **RE-TWEET A MEAL AND TRUE ACTS OF KINDNESS**

Hot meal, rice and meat is most often shared by this initiative. Each Saturday, at noon, before the Mother Teresa Memorial House, homeless people come to have a hot meal provided by the True Acts of Kindness and the Twitter-supported initiative. There is also an open Facebook group, which invites everyone who is willing to help to give an idea, suggestion, provide logistics, and other products.

The True Acts of Humanity has started its activities in 2013 and, in cooperation with the citizens, donates food, clothes, sheets, and other necessities for the homeless.

Every Saturday a regular food-sharing event takes place in front of the Mother Theresa Memorial House, supported by the True Acts of Kindness and the Twitter initiative. The first such event was organized on 29 December 2013.

✓ **FRESHIS**

Freshis is the first restaurant with social responsibility in the country, which donates 34 percent of its profit to social aims. It opened in May 2015 and it cooperates with the NGO True Acts of Kindness where it donates food on a weekly basis. It also cooperates with the NGO Re-Tweet a Meal where on Saturdays they manage to provide food for some 150 people. Food from Freshis is also donated to the community food service in the Gjorce Petrov Church of Ss. Peter and Paul.

✓ **COMMUNITY FOOD SERVICES**

MLSP – The Community Food Services is a project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which started in 2007. According to the data, some 49 community food services operate in the country, catering to some 4000 people.

**Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church**

Community food services have been opened in Skopje, by the Macedonian Orthodox Church Ss. Peter and Paul as part of the Gjakonia humanitarian organization. A community food service is also available under the auspices of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in Veles.

The Catholic Church in Skopje also offers services to the homeless people.

✓ **FOOD BANK MACEDONIA**

This NGO collects food prior to its expiry deadline and distributes it through the community food services or through organizations that work with vulnerable groups.

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## *About PUBLIC...*

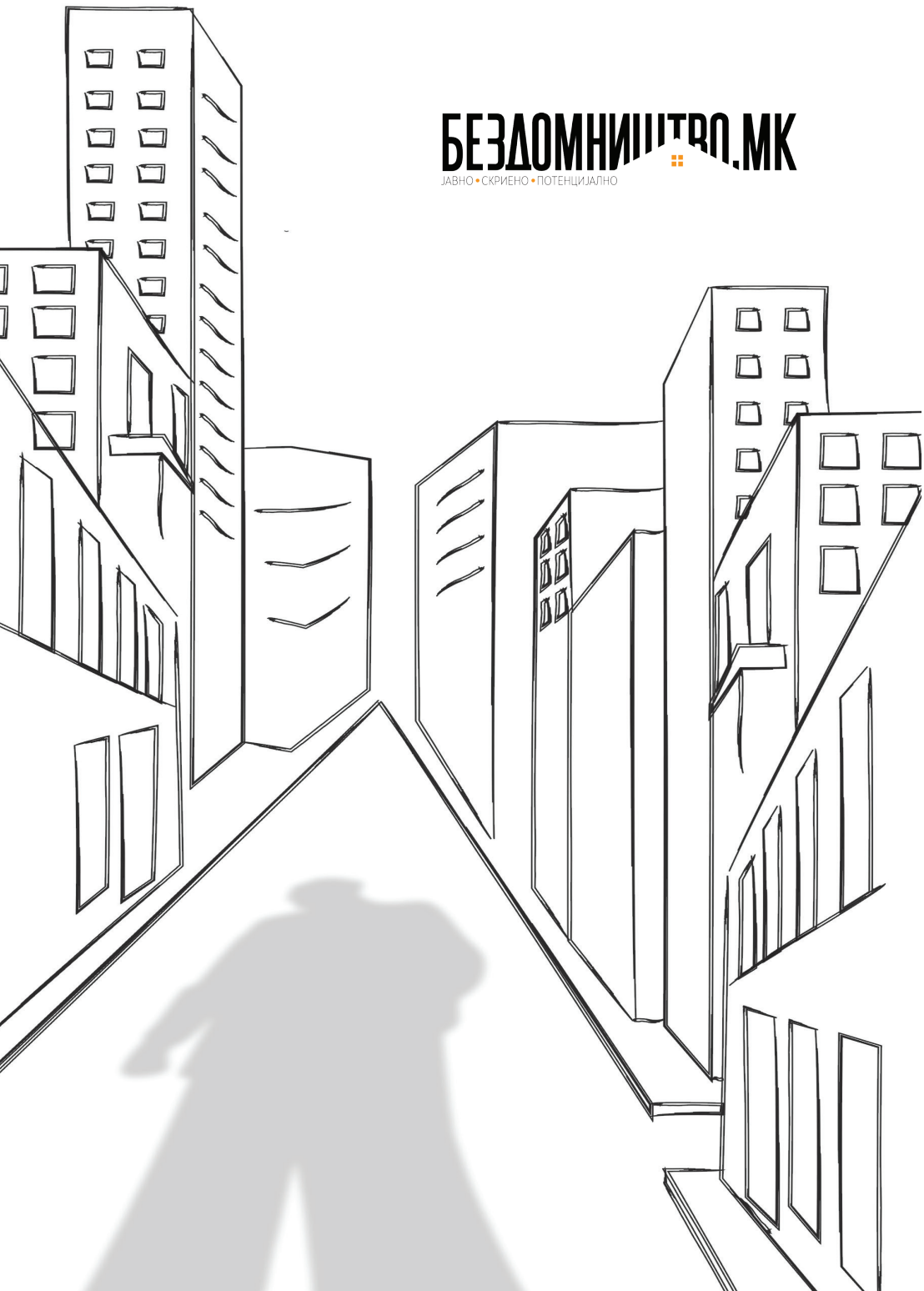
PUBLIC is an independent association for research, communications and development which takes particular interest in issues of social inclusion, social entrepreneurship and social innovation, social impact as well as media and the media culture, with a specific focus on the democratization processes in the society.

With the first issue of the FACE to FACE Magazine out of print in September 2012, PUBLIC was able to develop a thorough insight into the realities of the marginalized groups in Macedonia and further explore their needs through an in-depth academic research. Today, each of the focus groups of the FACE to FACE Magazine (homeless people, socially disadvantaged individuals, people with special needs, women-victims of violence, refugees) have defined the focus of our research and have prompted our interest in their actual problems and its underlying reasons.

Currently underway PUBLIC has a number of projects, namely the regional projects - Challenges and Opportunities for Employment of Marginalized People in the Social Entrepreneurship, Social Services and Migration: Stakeholder Integration and Coordination for Improved Service to Emigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia and The Media Circle - Citizen Response on Corruption and Clientelism in the Media, as well as one national project - The Civil Society - Active or Passive Factor of the Societal Changes.

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**The homelessness is a process which refers to people with limited inclusion in the social life, homeless people, and people with personal identity problems, people living in insecure or inappropriate conditions and/or people temporarily housed in shelters or institutions.**