



PRESS RELEASE

The second Corona-winter – big challenge for homeless people and the homeless sector

Berlin, 14 December 2021. People impacted by housing emergency and homelessness have to meet big challenges during the second winter of the Corona-pandemic. The National Federation for the Homeless in Germany (BAG W) has conducted a survey among their members, the institutions and service providers of the homeless sector which came to the following result.

The service providers and institutions in the homeless sector try with greatest personal and financial efforts to maintain the support for homeless people. However, 20 per cent of those participating in the survey have to reduce their offers. This particularly refers to low threshold day centres (scarcely 50 per cent), but the offers of cold emergency aid cannot work with full load: 15 per cent of these institutions report a reduced offer. The reasons are, first of all, requirements of health protection and hygiene. With similar personal and spatial capacities nowadays less people may be let in than during pre-corona-times. Few institutions were able to rent additional premises for this winter to equalize the occupancy.

The shelters and temporary accommodations organized by the local authorities is considered critically, too. Only 18 per cent of the institutions hold the view that its local authority provided well enough for the fourth wave of pandemic and have sufficient pandemic save temporary accommodations and shelters for the winter. More than one third of the institutions do not consider their local authorities adequately prepared. Some local authorities report very positive developments with regard to 24/7 – housing facilities and the single room accommodation. But the BAG W could not register that the local authorities really extended the nationwide offers for cold emergency aid and temporary accommodation and shelters. In many places there are no offers for quarantine facilities.

Susanne Hahmann, BAG W Chairwoman: “The situation for all those involved in the institutions is an extreme burden. Due to the cold it is urgently necessary to implement a low threshold care for people seeking help. This means: save accommodations with additional single rooms, day centres with extended offers and concepts for handling cases of quarantine.”

Many homeless have been vaccinated, but now they need to be boosted

Due to the daily confidence and motivation work of the local staff it was possible to convince a large part of those seeking help, despite their fear of vaccination, of getting the little spade. Most effective was the work of mobile vaccination teams which went to meet the people living in institutions and at public places in order to do the low-threshold vaccination, without appointments and waiting times (and without showing the ID). This kind of offer is, at present, the most target-oriented one to booster the persons concerned.

Werena Rosenke, Chief Executive of BAG W: “A severe problem for the homeless people are very often the missing vaccine certificates. Therefore, we urgently need to develop concepts how to uncomplicatedly provide evidence of existing vaccinations and recover missing documents with the help of the homeless sector, vaccination centres and public health authorities. Otherwise, in case of vaccination checks these people will be segregated in public space. In the worst case, they are

threatened by penalty charges which can lead, in the long term, to imprisonment if they stay in public transport, at stations or underground stops.”

In the second Corona-winter the homeless sector with their staff work up to their load limit. The staff faces high risks of infection with its effort of to guarantee a low-threshold care of those who seek help. The service providers and institutions need to be relieved receiving support with FFP2 masks, aeration devices, test kits, unbureaucratic access to PCR tests. Additionally, the service providers and institutions in the homeless sector compensate with their work what local authorities do not do because they can be addressed only on a digital way.

“New tasks come up. There is a growing demand of consultancy services, the homeless sector answers with online, video and telephone consulting. An improved digital infrastructure and technical equipment is becoming more important for the institutions. But those seeking help need digital devices and access to them, too.” This is the view of Werena Rosenke. “As a matter of fact, the additional costs of digitalization, the tests, the measures of protection and hygiene and the missing income caused by not allocable accommodation places, etc. have to be self-financed by donations. The public authorities only take the third part of the share.”

It is necessary to act now!

The BAG W demands to take urgent measures:

- A stock of accommodation possibilities which are fit for human habitation and suitable for pandemic, possibly decentralized; additional premises have to be acquired and hired by the local authorities, e.g. pension and hotel rooms and holiday apartments
- 24/7 shelters where a daytime stay is possible
- Local authorities have to provide additional accommodation possibilities which are pandemically suitable for homeless people to avoid that they displaced from the public space
- To ensure and finance low-threshold tests in homeless shelters and in the public space, done by mobile test teams, to make sure that the homeless can prove their tests
- Low threshold vaccinations and boosters in the homeless sector by mobile vaccination teams
- Unbureaucratic arrangements have to be made for missing vaccination certificates. A close cooperation between the local health authorities and homeless sector is necessary.
- The public authorities have to participate in the additional costs caused by the pandemic.

Werena Rosenke: “With regard to all protection and support measures we have to be very clear: The best protection will always be within your four walls. Therefore, evictions have to be bindingly suspended. People must not be vacated from their flat and committed to emergency shelters which are overloaded. Efforts and measures to give homeless people their own flat have to appear on the agenda.”

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact:

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