

**Győri Péter – Gurály Zoltán – Fehér Boróka:**  
**A Guide to Counting Rough Sleepers 2007**

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## Guide to Counting

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OTTHONTALANUL... TÉGY AZ EMBERÉRT!

### Introduction

In the winter of 2006-2007 we have decided to do an experiment and propose a headcount of rough sleepers on a European level, to all agencies who would like to take part in this on a voluntary basis.

In Hungary, the February 3rd Team was set up to treat the gaping hole in the system of data collection. The independent research team is made up of sociologists and social workers, and conducts a wide-ranging survey on the clients of homeless services in Budapest on February 3rd every year since 1999. Interviewers and data administrators receive a small payment sponsored by non-governmental or local council service providers; other phases of the research (preparation, organisation, data processing) are done by the team members on a voluntary basis.

We have heard of many other European cities or regions (Dublin, Madrid, Paris, Prague and the region of Pomerania in Poland) where similar initiatives are held every once in a while, or on a regular basis. We thought it would be a good idea to share our experiences and maybe do something together.

Maybe our examples could spread and be used by other cities, regions, service-providers, authorities or research institutes to carry out similar counts in their own territory.

For the joint European headcount we propose February 2008, or if that is not possible, the winter of 2007-2008.

Much of this paper is based on *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, a methodological guide prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, downloadable from:

[http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/webcast101006/street\\_count\\_guide.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/webcast101006/street_count_guide.pdf)

When we refer to this material, we use the abbreviation HUD.

For more information, please visit: <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/TransnationalHSWG/>  
or contact: gyori\_peter@yahoo.com

### The background – measuring homelessness; ETHOS

In this paper we set out a guideline on how to count homeless people who are sleeping rough. We acknowledge the fact that homelessness is a very wide ranging problem and rough sleepers are only a small percentage of all those who are homeless or live in inadequate housing conditions. Yet in many countries there is a lack of official data on the most vulnerable of homeless people, rough sleepers. Services might collect data about their service users, but many rough sleepers do not use services. In other instances outreach teams collect data on the people they visit, but this data is often not compared to the statistics of other teams operating in the same town. There are also areas that outreach teams do not reach.

## ETHOS

## EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION

### What is ETHOS?

ETHOS is the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion. It was developed by FEANTSA as a transnational framework definition for policy and practice purposes. It provides a shared language for transnational exchange. It does not attempt to harmonise national definitions of homelessness in Europe.

ETHOS classifies living situations that constitute homelessness or housing exclusion. ETHOS identifies 4 main categories of living situation: Rooflessness, Houselessness, Insecure Housing and Inadequate Housing. These conceptual categories are divided into 13 operational categories that can be used for different policy purposes, such as mapping the problem of homelessness, as well as developing, monitoring and evaluating policies.

|                     | OPERATIONAL CATEGORY                                         | LIVING SITUATION                                         | GENERIC DEFINITION                                                                                              |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conceptual Category | 1 People Living Rough                                        | 1.1 Public space or external space                       | Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters                |
|                     |                                                              | 2.1 Night shelter                                        | People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter                |
|                     | 2 People in emergency accommodation                          | 3.1 Homeless hostel                                      | Where the period of stay is intended to be short term                                                           |
|                     |                                                              | 3.2 Temporary accommodation                              |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 3 People in accommodation for the homeless                   | 3.3 Transitional supported accommodation                 |                                                                                                                 |
|                     |                                                              | 4.1 Women's shelter accommodation                        | Women accommodated to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term |
|                     | 4 People in Women's Shelter                                  | 5.1 Temporary accommodation/reception centres            | Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status                               |
|                     |                                                              | 5.2 Migrant workers accommodation                        |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 5 People in accommodation for immigrants                     | 6.1 Penal institutions                                   | No housing available prior to release                                                                           |
|                     |                                                              | 6.2 Medical institutions (*)                             |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 6 People due to be released from institutions                | 6.3 Children's institutions/homes                        | Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing                                                                  |
|                     |                                                              | 7.1 Residential care for older homeless people           |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 7 People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness) | 7.2 Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people | No housing identified (e.g. by 18th birthday)                                                                   |
|                     |                                                              | 8.1 Temporarily with family/friends                      |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 8 People living in insecure accommodation                    | 8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy                                | Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)                    |
|                     |                                                              | 8.3 Illegal occupation of land                           |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 9 People living under threat of eviction                     | 9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented)                       | Living in conventional housing but not the usual place of residence due to lack of housing                      |
|                     |                                                              | 9.2 Re-possession orders (owned)                         |                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 10 People living under threat of violence                    | 10.1 Police recorded incidents                           | Where mortgage has legal order to re-possess                                                                    |
|                     |                                                              | 11.1 Mobile homes                                        | Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence                         |
|                     | 11 People living in temporary/non-conventional structures    | 11.2 Non-conventional building                           |                                                                                                                 |
|                     |                                                              | 11.3 Temporary structure                                 | Not intended as place of usual residence                                                                        |
|                     | 12 People living in unfit housing                            | 12.1 Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation             |                                                                                                                 |
|                     |                                                              | 13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding               | Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty                                                                              |
|                     | 13 People living in extreme over-crowding                    |                                                          |                                                                                                                 |
|                     |                                                              |                                                          | Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin                                                                           |
|                     |                                                              |                                                          | Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations                                 |
|                     |                                                              |                                                          | Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms                                 |

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year.

(\*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals etc.

We propose to work with the following categories of ETHOS, a typology developed by FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless), which is increasingly being used for policy, research and measurement debates on homelessness.:

In our count of rough sleepers we propose to merge a few of the ETHOS definitions and use count groups belonging to the following categories:

- 1.1 Rough sleeping, no abode MAINLY, but also
- 11.2 "non-standard building",
- 11.3 temporary structure
- 12.1 residing in places unfit for habitation.

The last three categories could be unheated garages, sheds, wooden temporary structures, tents, caves – any construction which cannot be called a home on a cold winter night.

### The aims of the headcount

As we have said earlier, in most there is not adequate information about the plight of rough sleepers, who are the most vulnerable group among homeless people. Gathering information about them can help in the following ways:

- Stir up public interest and debate throughout the preparation, the headcount itself and the publication of data
- Provide information to the planning and organizing of services for the homeless (where do we need more outreach workers? is there a need for more special night-time services for rough sleepers? is there any group who needs special attention: drug users, for example? are rough sleepers well equipped or do they need blankets, etc? how is their health? can they reach health services?)
- Strengthen local communities, neighbourhood patrols media – to form public opinion
- Put pressure government to develop policies and deal with the problem of rough sleeping
- Measure the effects of certain policies (especially if the headcount is carried out on a yearly basis - are there more or less rough people on the street after a policy targeting their inclusion into services?)
- Lobby on a European level – especially if the headcount is carried out simultaneously in several countries

### Methodological steps – questions and answers

This chapter describes the methodological issues for carrying out a rough sleeper count. It starts with a definition of who rough sleepers are, then we provide a guideline of where, when and how to do the headcount, propose a few ideas for documentation and finally, we look at the question of duplications. The headcount methodology proposed usually offers a range of issues to consider – this would enable it to be tailored to suit your needs, using your own combination of where, when and how, and your own data collection strategies.

Such issues are as follows:

- Whom to count (who is considered a rough sleeper) - **3.1**
- Where to focus the headcount (public places only or services for the homeless as well) - **3.2**
- When to conduct the count (time of the year, day of the week, day or night) and over how long a time period - **3.3**
- What method to choose and some tools to achieve it - **3.4** and **3.5**
- How to avoid counting the same person twice (which we call duplication) - **3.6**

### Who is a rough sleeper – whom should we count?

It is important to decide in advance whom should be included in the headcount. Enumerators should be given clear guidelines, to make sure that the headcount is carried out in the same way in all the areas.

By rough sleeper we mean a person who is not sleeping in a shelter or hostel, but spends his or her nights outdoors or in some kind of habitation not meant for permanent human use (during the

winter) at the time of the count, for example directly on the streets, in parks, abandoned buildings, at busy transportation centres, such as around train and metro stations, tents, shanty-type constructions, cars, or caravans, parking lots, in staircases of buildings, caves, forests. Rough sleepers are very likely to have one or more disabilities, they often struggle with serious mental or physical problems, drug and alcohol abuse, which could prevent them from entering shelters and mixing with other homeless people. According to our definition, rough sleepers are individuals who might live alone or in groups, or with family members. Every individual met should be counted, even children.

We recognize the fact that people might sleep outside on an irregular basis and spend some of their night in shelters, in the homes of friends, etc. By focusing the headcount on a cold winter night we try to avoid counting those who have other options.

There are also others who can be considered long-term homeless: people who spend some of their nights outdoors and some in services (whether homeless or other, such as health, prison, etc.). However, the headcount is only targeting those who are sleeping rough in the given period. To get a fuller picture we recommend repeating the headcount at regular intervals (maybe at different seasons), thus meeting a wider range of people, and interviewing people in service settings as well.

### Whom should enumerators mark during the headcount?

**1.1 *Individuals sleeping, in a lying position, or getting ready to sleep, or sitting in an environment that seems to be their home (are surrounded by objects suggesting they are at „home” - a sleeping bag, cardboard, objects not in a bag...)*** - In our experience, it is important to mark the position of the body. To avoid duplications and to get a clear picture of the situation, we would like every homeless individual to be counted only once and at the place where they spend their night. Enumerators, however, might meet homeless people who are not sleeping or lying down yet, but they still get the impression that they will spend the night in the given area – either we ask enumerators to revisit the spot later or we instruct them to count those homeless people who are sitting down and getting ready to sleep. We suggest that a person gets counted even if he does not look homeless but is lying on the ground – in countries where there is a cold winter it is unlikely that there would be a high number of non-homeless individuals sleeping outdoors on a cold winter night.

**1.2 *Individuals sleeping, in a lying position, or getting ready to sleep in a hut, tent or such a structure that is clearly not fit for human habitation (during the winter – for a list of such locations see above). Individuals sitting in the above environment.*** - Every area or city is different, homeless people might use different solutions to survive the winter. You should try to think about what temporary structures might be used and whether to include them in your count or not.

**1.3 *Homeless looking individuals on their way „home”*** - to ensure that everybody gets counted you might choose to ask homeless looking individuals on the move where they plan to sleep that night. This should only be done when most shelters are closed. We do not advise you to count moving people, as there is also the danger of counting individuals twice: once while they are moving, once they have settled down.

We strongly advise that enumerators only count those people that they have seen with their own eyes. There is a possibility to mark homeless individuals whom they have not actually seen but have a strong reason to believe to be living in an area (an empty home, that locals say is inhabited, or someone at „home” responding that there are additional people who are absent momentarily...), but

in these cases the fact of not having seen them personally should be indicated. Those seen will form a minimum factual data, while those suspected to be living on the premises will be added to the number of those estimated.

This list is just a suggestion. You might decide to define rough sleeping slightly differently – if you do so, please write down your definition. In certain countries, for example, there might be additional questions that need to be asked from rough sleepers before they get counted. In countries with a colder climate enumerators can count any person sleeping or lying down outdoors – it is unlikely that anyone who has a home would choose to do that. In other countries, enumerators might have to ask the person whether he is homeless. In others still, only those who have spent at least three consecutive nights outdoors are to be counted. In New York City enumerators had to ask a set of screening questions:

*Enumerators **asked all people who were awake if they had a place to live or a place they considered home and, if so, what type of place the “home” was.** To avoid double counting, enumerators also asked each person **whether anyone else had asked them the same questions that night.** Enumerators then used their judgment to fill out information about the person’s gender, approximate age, race, and to record any distinguishing identifiers such as unusual facial hair, scars, tattoos, or clothing. This information was used to help ensure that the same person **was not counted twice.** At the end of the screening interview, **if a person was determined to be homeless, enumerators were instructed to offer transportation to a shelter.** ... Enumerators also recorded people **believed to be homeless but who did not answer the screening questions because they were sleeping.** Other communities require enumerators to ask screener questions to find out where the person **slept the previous night and whether it is the place they regularly stay.***

*From HUD*

### Where should we count?

According to our definitions, rough sleepers are homeless people sleeping/living in non-service locations – outdoors, in streets, doorways, parks, public buildings, metro stations, vehicles, etc.

These locations are not as easily accessible as shelters or day centres, yet we have reasons to believe that many of the rough sleepers do not use services for the homeless. The issue of where should go hand in hand with the issue of when: rough sleepers just like citizens living in houses tend to move around during their day and some of them only go „home” for the night. They also move around during the year - we could get a very different number of rough sleepers depending on what time of the year we carry out our count (summer as opposed to winter), and in some countries it could even vary within a month (depending on when people run out of benefits and cannot afford to pay a rent until the next payment arrives...)

In our proposal the count should be carried out systematically, covering a given area as thoroughly as possible.

What about homeless people who cannot be seen? People squatting in abandoned buildings? People living in habitation not considered fit for humans (garages, unheatable summer homes during the winter)? What about those who are using establishments, open all night, such as pubs or laundromats or train stations? What about people sleeping in cars, or on a bus or train? You will have to establish your own rules about what to do in each of these situations so that enumerators will know what to

do. You should also try to identify other situations that could be typical in your region, and think of a response to ensure that your headcount proceeds smoothly, efficiently, and safely. In any case, you should document fully what you have decided about the different locations.

To identify the locations that should be covered, you should get the opinion of people who know the area well, and maybe even know the population you are going to count. In getting to know their ideas you will also start to get to know them, as they could be ideal helpers in the headcount, whether as enumerators or think tanks.

### Some ideas of whom you should contact:

- people working directly with the target population (outreach workers, staff of shelters and other services)
- people working indirectly with the target population (forest rangers, for example)
- homeless people themselves (whether previously or currently homeless),
- police, neighbourhood patrols,
- human services departments of municipalities,
- community groups.

Once you have gathered enough information, you must finalize the list of locations, taking into consideration concerns about issues of safety and resource feasibility.

You will need to agree on whether to allow enumerators to enter abandoned buildings, for example.

If your count is to be successful and accurate it is vital that such decisions are implemented in a consistent manner all through the headcount, from the training for enumerators to the description of your methodology in a final report or grant application.

*In Philadelphia, enumerators cover public transportation stations, but do not include subway tunnels because of serious safety concerns. Teams only cover underground public transportation areas where radios or cell phones function.*

**(from HUD)**

In the Methodology Section (3.4) we propose a variety of methods in connection to the location: it would be ideal if whole areas or neighbourhoods could be covered by the count (every street in the given area would be visited), however, in certain cases (for. ex big cities) this could prove to be an impossible task, so we offer alternatives. However, it is important to keep in mind, that whatever area you choose, you will have to clearly indicate it and explain why you have chosen it. It is best to use natural boundaries – railway tracks, a river, etc.

### *Examples of Locations Covered in Public Places Counts*

- *In Tallahassee, enumerators cover known locations on the street and encampments in the woods, but not abandoned buildings due to safety concerns. Enumerators ask each interviewed person to identify additional locations where homeless people may be living or sleeping, as well as names of potential interviewees (known as the “snowball” technique).*
- *The Pasadena CoC tries to count every known location where homeless people live or congregate, including a street, park, car, abandoned building, all-night commercial*

*establishment, other private property, or freeway overpass. Pasadena's outreach team updates the map of known locations as needed and prior to the count.*

- *In Seattle/King County, the count focuses **on publicly accessible areas and includes those people sleeping on the street or in alleys, doorways, cars, and makeshift shelters.** Enumerators perform the count **on foot**, but **do not canvass abandoned buildings or private property.** Enumerators do count people living in densely vegetated areas under freeways and bridges. Enumerators also **try to encourage youth squatting in abandoned houses or buildings** to come forward and complete a special survey, but do not actually enter the abandoned structures.*

- *The Washington Balance of State CoC is composed mainly of **rural counties.** Each county organizes and performs its own count **during a selected 24-hour period** based on the instructions and technical assistance provided by the CoC. The CoC requests that counties enumerate in known locations and emphasizes safety concerns. Counties can determine which locations or encampments are included in the count. Enumerators in some counties cover locations in state parks, public and private forests, and other rural areas with tent encampments.*

- *In rural McHenry County (IL), **homeless individuals assisted in identifying tent encampments for the purposes of the count, but requested that the revealed locations be kept confidential.***

*(from HUD)*

### About private property

What about those territories that seem to belong to a private (or semiprivate) landlord? These could be industrial areas, construction sights, railway areas. We suggest that if the area can be entered legally (there is no guard, no fence, no sign prohibiting trespassing, etc.) the area should be covered. If enumerators cannot enter legally, the area should not be marked as to be covered, even if we suspect to find many rough sleepers sleeping there. Enumerators might still find a way to enter those areas, for example they might find the guard eager to help the count and aware of homeless people staying on the facilities, and they should be at liberty to do so.

### About abandoned buildings

According to our understanding of rough sleeping, a person spending his nights in an abandoned building is a rough sleeper. Yet getting people in these locations counted poses a number of difficulties, especially concerns for the safety of the enumerators. Here are some approaches to the problem:

- *Prior to the count, Atlanta, GA identifies dangerous areas, particularly those with abandoned buildings or encampments known to be centers for drug or other illegal activities. These areas are assigned to trained, formerly homeless employees who are sometimes accompanied by police officers.*
- *A study conducted in Houston, TX used a sampling method to determine how many homeless people were living in abandoned buildings. The City of Houston maintained a roster of "habitable abandoned buildings." Using this list, researchers were able to develop a sample of such buildings and send enumerators to these structures to complete interviews. The study determined that approximately one-fourth of all sampled abandoned buildings served as a "home" for at least one person, many of whom were part of particularly vulnerable populations, such as unaccompanied youth or the seriously mentally ill. **(From HUD)***

### About empty locations

You will have to think of what enumerators should do if they come across an empty location: a place that seems to be the “home” of a rough sleeper (there is a tent, a sleeping bag or blankets, for example) yet there is nobody there at the time. These locations could be marked, but in a separate register – the number of beds seen can be added to the estimated number, for example, but not to the data actually observed. If enumerators have the time, they could return to these locations before they finish the count and add any person who might have arrived in the meantime. If this is not possible, we suggest you indicate that it was an empty location.

### When should we count? Selecting a Date and Time

#### Selecting the date

We propose that the headcounts happen during the winter of 2007/2008, preferably within a 24 hour period.

We think the winter is ideal for such a count for a number of different reasons. Firstly, this may lead to a more realistic picture of chronically unsheltered homeless people: others who might camp outside for fun are probably not going to be doing so when temperatures drop below 0°C. Secondly, it is during winter that the public is most concerned about homeless people and whether they survive the cold – the headcount can be an effective tool in raising public awareness of the challenges faced by homeless people without shelter. During the cold winter shelters tend to be filled up – adding the numbers of those sleeping outside to that of those having used the night shelters could give a more accurate estimation of homeless people in the area.

In Budapest, Hungary, we have carried out our research the same night for a period of 8 years: February 3rd. Many years of experience has shown that the first week of February is usually one of the coldest ones in the year, so the shelters are filled up as much as possible. We measure and note down the temperature as well – it can help when comparing the data from year to year. In addition to counting homeless people on the street we also visit the shelters and use the survey method there.

It is not easy to choose the right date, especially as the weather is a factor we cannot predict much in advance. We suggest you discuss the issue with local stakeholders and experts (outreach workers) at an early stage and find the date that suits you best. We suggest it to be during the winter of 2007/2008, preferably February 2008, for the simple reason that this would allow us to compare and publish all our results in a more efficient way.

In 2007, HUD in the USA decided that headcount should be carried out during the last seven days of January. By carrying out the count during the end of the month, they are able to count those people who rent a room when they can afford to, and when their benefit runs out they move back to the street. Another reason HUD in the USA selected the last seven days of January for the point-in-time count is because this allows them to include the first rough data in their annual newsletter, which they not only use in order to raise awareness but also to raise financial support for their work.

In addition to seasonal variations, there can be differences within one month, and even depending on what day of the week one may choose.

***The time of the month.*** The number of rough sleepers could be affected by when the local authorities pay financial benefits. „For example, in Philadelphia in 2003, the quarterly street counts took place on the third Wednesday of the month in order to identify persons who may have been temporarily housed at the beginning of the month (due to some type of public assistance income) but spent the rest of the month on the street.”

**The day of the week.** If there is a considerable difference between pedestrian traffic, we suggest you pick a day when there are less pedestrians on the street – in many cities weekdays would be preferred as the city tends to fall asleep earlier and enumerators can work without less interruption. You should also be careful not to choose a night when there is some kind of a festival or event that draws many people in the area of the headcount – or draws homeless people away, like in the case of the Christmas holidays, where local food distributions might cause a major dislocation in the homeless population.

Some places might even choose to carry out more than one headcount during a year to get a better overall understanding of seasonal variations. In the USA, Philadelphia, for example, does four counts and McHenry County (IL) conducts two.

**The hours.** We suggest the counts to take place late **at night** (from 10 PM until 4:00 AM) or start very early in the morning (often beginning before 4:00 am). Factors that should be taken into consideration when selecting the time:

- what time do shelters open and close? It is best not to start the count before those who will sleep in shelters go there, and finish it before they leave in the morning.
- what time do pubs close? It is best not to start the count before the pubs in the area close for the night.
- what time does public transport stop? Until then people might be sleeping on buses or trams or could be on their way „home”.

Ideally, the count should finish during the small hours and not last until the next day. We suggest that each team of enumerators is given an area that can be covered within the time frame. Running into a different day could cause serious problems, especially by duplicating certain people, so we strongly advise you against it.

It is also possible to allow teams of enumerators to carry out the counts at slightly different hours: those counting homeless people in the outskirts of town, where public transport might stop earlier, can start earlier, while those counting people on busy roads should not start before pedestrians go home and homeless people settle down.

Ideally, the headcount should happen during one night (with an option to do a following day count, see among Methodology). In case of a shortage of enumerators, we suggest to do a partial coverage headcount instead of allowing it to carry on for several nights.

If for some reason the one-night option does not work, we suggest you do a complete/partial coverage of the city centre one night and a partial coverage of the outskirts the following night. This can only be applied in countries where homeless people are not reluctant to give their names (or initials), otherwise it is impossible to avoid duplication. Apart from the name of the person enumerators should also ask where they had spent the previous night.

### How should we count? Methodology

In this chapter we give an introduction of the methods proposed by the working group. The first two options provide the base, the fourth is an optional element to go with either number one or two, while the third one is an additional strategy, that helps to make a more precise estimation. The first two are descriptions of street counts, the third one is approaching people in services. Surveys or interviews can be used both on the street and in the services.

- Headcount on the street with a complete coverage
- Headcount on the street with a partial coverage (sampling and estimation)
- Next day count in (basic) services
- An optional element: surveys or interviews

### A. Headcount on the street – a complete coverage

**Complete coverage** means that the enumerators visit the whole area that the headcount is targeting: visiting every street, every square, looking for homeless people and putting down the coordinates of everybody found.

*Advantages:* easy to understand, relatively easy to organize (especially after the first one), and the results are easy to summarize.

*Disadvantages:* If the geographic area to be covered is large, there could be not enough people to cover each street systematically. Enumerators might miss some homeless people, which could tempt the organizers to “estimate” the population missed without a reliable basis to make that estimate. Another criticism is that they do not provide in-depth information: they tend to be done quickly with almost no interaction with the people counted, they are generally limited to collecting numbers and locations of unsheltered homeless people, although in some cases information on gender, race, and (estimated) age may be collected.

We especially advocate this type of coverage in cases where the area to be covered is not too big, and where there is a sufficient number of enumerators to carry out the count.

Complete coverage allows researchers to get a full picture: it gives a good base number – partial coverage only allows for estimation.

It is best to do a complete coverage in city centres and in areas with a higher density of homeless population. It is always important to explain what was the area covered and how it was chosen.

### Some important things to consider:

- In order to avoid as much duplication as possible, it is important that enumerators are given precise areas to cover. We suggest the cutting up of a map of the city/area into small parts: each pair of enumerators should be given a small piece of map with the area they should cover. For simplicity, we suggest that the areas do not always follow official boundaries: a busy square, for example, could be the border of 2-4 districts, but asking 4 different teams to visit small segments of it would raise the issue of duplication. We suggest that streets and squares should not be cut up.
- It is important to make the segments to be visited approximately the same size, so teams can do the same amount of work in the same amount of time. Of course, it is not only the size of the area that is important, but also the size of the homeless population. To get a good prior estimation about which areas are the most densely populated by rough sleepers, we suggest you consult with some experts before establishing the geographic boundaries.
- In some cases, especially when working with volunteers as enumerators, you might not know in advance how many people are going to help in the headcount. Therefore we suggest the preparation of a back-up plan: you might wish to do a complete coverage headcount, but

during the evening of the headcount might be forced to reduce it to a partial coverage one – we strongly suggest that you have a well developed back-up plan just in case.

*Boston's annual count covers the entire city, while Philadelphia enumerators canvass every block of the city's downtown area and go to known locations in the outlying parts of the city.*

*(from HUD)*

### Headcount: sampling and estimation – a partial coverage

In the case of big cities it might be impossible to aim for complete coverage. In smaller areas it also might happen that we do not have enough enumerators to visit every street and every block, so it becomes essential to draw up a sample of areas that are to be covered.

Areas should be divided into high- and low-density sectors (to get a good estimation of how many homeless people live in certain areas. You should try to cover high-density areas (such as the city centre, underpasses) completely. Low-density areas could be partially covered: the more area you can visit, the more accurate your estimation shall be. When making your estimation, try to make sure that you extrapolate data based on similar locations: if you visited neighbourhoods with small houses and gardens, use their data to estimate the number of rough sleepers in similar neighbourhoods.

Beware of differences between daytime and night time users of public spaces: as the headcount is carried out at night you should be careful to point this out when consulting with experts! If possible, all high-density sectors should be covered, while in the case of low-density ones you should draw a statistically valid sample and only visit a small portion of these. In this case you will have a measured data for the high-density areas, while extrapolating the data from the low-density areas you can estimate the overall number of rough sleepers in the city. If not even this is possible, you can still take a sample of the city centre/heavily populated areas as well as the outskirts – however, you should be aware that this only enables you to make estimations and the actual numbers you have **measured** might be low.

It is always very important to communicate the findings correctly: you will have to state what are the **exact data** (the number of people actually seen during the night of the count) and what is an **estimation based on the actual data**. You can then point out that surely there is at least a certain number of homeless people (the exact data), while based on your findings there could even be more – the estimated number.

***Extrapolation** is a technique for estimating the total number of unsheltered persons in your community based on the number of unsheltered persons that you have been able to observe and/or interview from your statistically reliable sample.*

*(From HUD)*

### Telephone Volunteers – activists from the neighbourhood

You might want to ask for the help of locals who do not wish to walk around counting rough sleepers at night, but who would be happy to help by reporting homeless people who live in their building, closed yard – and who otherwise would remain uncounted, as enumerators could not access these buildings. If you choose this you should make sure that it is advertised clearly, and people know when and whom to call. There will need to be an organizer answering the phone and registering the same information as enumerators would. You might want to make the sheets enumerators use available online, so people interested can see what type of information will be needed. It is important

that the callers know that this is purely a research, and nothing will happen to the homeless person afterwards – he will not be picked up and taken away, he will not be reported to the police, etc.

In Budapest, we advertise this option the week before the headcount – locals are encouraged to report rough sleepers in their area. If the location is accessible, we add it to the list of locations and an enumerator will visit the place. On the actual night of the headcount we ask people to report on rough sleepers in non-accessible locations (in closed buildings or yards, for example). We then keep this data separate from the data of the enumerators and communicate it separately as well (our enumerators have seen x rough sleepers, private people reported an additional y.)

### Next day counts (an alternative way of making estimations)

No matter how thorough our enumerators are, they are still likely to not find every rough sleeper. If the headcount is carried out at night, there is reduced visibility, homeless people could be hiding, or they could be staying in non-heated buildings, in the staircase of apartment buildings, that enumerators cannot access. Even though many rough sleepers do not use any services, others do go to certain basic services, such as drop-in or day centres, soup kitchens, health services for the homeless, etc.

In this method one asks homeless individuals visiting the services where they had spent their previous night (if on the street, where exactly).

This method is ideal after both a complete coverage and a partial coverage headcount on the street: it can provide an (alternative) way of estimating the number of rough sleepers in areas not covered, by comparing the ratio of those using the services from the areas visited with those not visited. We can suppose that the ratio of service users is the same from both the measured and unmeasured areas – provided we manage to cover the services of the whole city.

To find out more about this method, read chapter 6 in HUD.

### Headcounts accompanied by a survey/interview

The headcount in itself (both the complete and partial coverage) does not allow for a deep understanding of the population counted, therefore we recommend the inclusion of a survey element wherever possible.

*Advantages:* This would allow obtaining vital information about the problems rough sleepers are facing as well as a general description of this population. It would also help in screening for duplications. The survey does not replace the original enumeration, it is an additional feature that could accompany all the above mentioned methods: both a direct streetcount with complete or partial coverage and the next day count in services. The survey can be all-inclusive, where everybody counted gets asked – however, this could slow down the headcount considerably. It can also be asked from only a sample of the population – say every fifth or tenth person encountered. (To determine what the interval should be, you will need to make some estimates in advance about the number of people you are likely to meet, how many interviews you need, and what are your resources for the interviews). If you want to get a statistically relevant sample of people to ask you will need to acquire some basic data about the demographics of the rough sleepers in your area, for example by cooperating with outreach teams.

*Disadvantages:* It is also true that surveys pose an additional demand on your resources, both financially and resource-wise: a survey sheet must be developed, interviewers need to be trained,

and ground rules should be established to identify whom to approach. It might also slow down the headcount considerably. When the headcount takes place late at night or early in the morning, homeless people might be asleep and it would be disrespectful to wake them up. (For this reason some organizers prefer to do surveys/interviews in services only, for example during the Next Day Counts, and encourage people during the streetcount to visit a service the following day.)

### How many interviews?

*To understand the general characteristics of the unsheltered homeless people in your community, choose a sample size based on the known or estimated size of the population:*

- *If your community has a small population of unsheltered homeless people (200 people or fewer) you should conduct interviews with at least half of those you encounter.*
- *If your community's unsheltered homeless population is larger than 200 people, you should complete at least 100 interviews.*

*If you want to better understand the characteristics of a subpopulation, you need to conduct interviews with enough individuals to be able to generalize the results. At minimum, you should interview 30 to 50 individuals categorized in the subpopulation you are curious about. If the subpopulation is fewer than 30 people, you should interview each individual. There is no standard rule of thumb for determining the appropriate sample size for a survey. The more complicated or detailed your questions become, the greater the likelihood that you will need to consult an expert who knows about sampling.*

#### **From HUD**

We suggest you put together a survey not longer than two pages that can be printed on one sheet of paper, involving a range of questions that you are seeking answers to. It should be able to contain some important demographic data (age, gender, race if applicable) as well as any other questions you find useful (health, income, activities, what kind of services the person knows and uses, etc). For some examples on surveys, see Appendix 1.

We think the survey is a good element even in areas where there is a strong outreach team present. The headcount could find people with whom the outreach team has no contact, and we might want to obtain information the outreach teams do not provide.

The survey does not have to be repeated every time you carry out a headcount, however, it is worth considering the benefits of doing it annually. This might allow you to see changes in the rough sleeping population (especially if you use a method which enables you to identify people in an anonymous way, see 3.4) as well as choose different topics to gather information about from year to year. The Budapest team, for example, uses this opportunity to gather information on a range of issues every year: in 2005, it was health, another year it was income, or employment, etc.

The survey does not need to take place at the same time as the headcount. Some services might find that it is not feasible (or desirable) to attempt to interview people during a one-night count. In Budapest, on the other hand, the headcount and survey is carried out simultaneously with a survey of homeless hostel and shelter users.

#### **Repeated Counts – A New Variation on Public Places Counts**

*In its 2005 count, Houston/Harris County used a new approach to counting unsheltered homeless people. The County hired a local university to design the count; university staff recruited a team of enumerators **from formerly homeless veterans** and paid them to conduct the count five times. Until the final time, each successive attempt increased the count of*

*homeless people as the team learned from experience and got better at finding people. Only when two successive counts came up with roughly the same numbers did they stop and declare the final number the right one.*

**From HUD**

### How to choose which method to use?

What you decide on should depend on a variety of factors, such as the size and characteristics of the geographic area to be covered, the resources available for the headcount (number of enumerators, finances) and the type of information you want to obtain. We strongly suggest you use the survey method together with an A- or B-type headcount, at least the first time you do such a count.

#### **HUD STANDARD Statistically Valid Methodology**

*New York City's approach is recommended because it is based on a statistically valid methodology. HUD does not want CoCs using adjustment or inflation factors that do not have any statistical basis. If the New York approach is beyond the capabilities of your CoC, a straight count of known locations, even if it does not cover every place that unsheltered homeless people might stay, is perfectly acceptable. In the absence of a statistically valid methodology for extrapolating to non-covered areas, HUD wants CoCs to report on only those people actually seen on the night of the count.*

**From HUD**

**Carrying out a headcount is a very complicated task.** We would like to advocate getting the local outreach teams involved (if they exist) - after all, they know the rough sleeper population most, they know where to find people and how to communicate with them if needed. In Budapest, we heavily rely on outreach workers in our annual headcount – we try to bring in additional help as well whenever it is possible. These additional helpers can be volunteers (as in the case of the Budapest count, ex-service users, staff from social services. Volunteers can be unpaid or paid, depending on your budget.

#### **Conducting the Count in “Waves” to Cover a Large Terrain with Limited Resources**

*In order to cover two counties plus the City of Atlanta in a single night with a limited number of experienced enumerators, the Metro Atlanta Tri-Jurisdictional CoC conducted its public places count in two waves. Atlanta's homeless shelters begin releasing clients as early as 4:00 am, so it was imperative to complete the count of unsheltered homeless people in areas around the shelters early in the night. As a result, the first wave of the count began at 1:00 am and was focused on parts of the jurisdiction with the highest concentration of homeless people and a significant number of homeless shelters. The enumeration teams were then redeployed around 4:45 am to cover less dense, outlying areas.*

**From HUD**

### Tools for the Headcount

What are some of the essential tools for carrying out a headcount?

- sheets
- maps
- other tools

- reliable backup team

### Sheets

In order to make sure enumerators know what data to collect and how to put it down you will have to draw up a data sheet. We suggest you use written paper sheets as opposed to video or voice recording, as these could cause confidence issues as well as break down.

The simplest sheet on which you can record data is the *data sheet*. Data sheets are simple sheets which do not require contact with the rough sleeper (the enumerator does not need to ask anyone any questions), only observations. Some points to observe and write down are:

- the time of the observation: day, hour, minute
- the place of the observation: town, district, street, number and any other important landmark<sup>1</sup>
- sex of the homeless person (male, female, cannot be decided, empty location)
- estimated age of the person (between ...-... years of age)
- any other remarks: for example do they live alone, in a couple, or in a group? do they have a dog? Do they have a sleeping bag or blanket? A tent? Are they lying on the ground or on a mattress? Do they seem “well”?

A more complex sheet is what we call a *registration sheet* – enumerators have to engage rough sleepers in a conversation and find out more detailed information about them. The conversation, however, is very limited in both topic and duration. Some information we suggest:

- name and code of enumerator
- time (day, hour, minute)
- sex of the homeless person (male, female, cannot be decided, empty location)
- birth date of the person (year, month, day)
- monogram of the person – first two initials
- when did they become homeless?
- when did they last sleep in an apartment/house?
- where did they sleep the previous night?
- where did they sleep one year earlier?

This type of sheet can help to

- find out more about rough sleepers
- eliminate duplications

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<sup>1</sup>

If the homeless person asks the enumerator not to write down the details of his dwelling place, we have to oblige and leave the house number unmarked. In this case enumerators have to note on why they left this information out.

- compare data from year to year: you can create id numbers with the help of the initials and the birth date: Jack Smith born on 1945.05.28 would be JS450528
- compare data with what we know from outreach teams.

### Data protection

Any data collected IS confidential. The organizers are responsible that no personal data will be transmitted to anyone, neither police, nor any authorities, nor the press. Only congregated data and analysis of data can be published. You also have to be aware of the relevant legislation in your country regarding data protection, scientific research, etc. For example in Hungary we always have “Replying to the questions is on a voluntary basis” printed on the sheets – this way enumerators, who in many cases are not professional researchers, are always aware of the rights of homeless people targeted. Data protection issues naturally apply to enumerators as well: you surely have to inform them of what they cannot do (for example take pictures, take addresses or data sheets home, etc.), and you might even choose to ask them to sign a form of consent as to what they can do with the data acquired.

If you are interested in more in-depth information, and you have more resources (both time-wise, personnel-wise and financially), you might choose to carry out a survey alongside the simple act of registration. For more information on the survey method, please see Chapter 3.4, Section D.

Some of the questions from the Budapest 2005 February 3<sup>rd</sup> survey are:

- What is your highest level of schooling?
- Do you have any health problems that prevent your from working?
- Whom do you live with?
- Why did you become homeless?
- How much money did you spend today?
- Where did you receive money from last month?
- Do you have savings?
- Do you have winter shoes/a winter coat/gloves/a pet/ a photo of your family/furniture/a watch ...?

### Maps

To carry out the headcount efficiently it is essential that enumerators are given clear boundaries of where to go and where to count. We suggest that each pair of enumerators is given a very detailed map (important landmarks such as public buildings, statues, fences train tracks, etc. well marked), with indication of what route they should follow. For practical reasons, the map should be covered by plastic to if it rains or snows or falls in a puddle it does not get ruined. It should also be made in a way that it can be read under dim street or headlights. We also suggest that enumerators mark the way they go – this can be helpful if they do not have time to cover their whole area or if another team happens to cross over to another pair's territory. It can also help when you want to present the headcount visually – you can put the sections of the maps together and see which parts of the city were covered. It can also be a handful tool when it comes to making scientific estimations of areas

not covered: you can compare the number of rough sleepers seen and the size of the area covered with uncovered areas.

We should cover every section of the city we consider to be densely populated by homeless people (the inner city, underpasses), for other parts of the city a sample can be taken and visited. Each section should be as big as physically feasible: each pair of enumerators should be able to cover their territory within the time frame of the headcount. It is best if enumerators cover their area walking, especially in the city center and the underpasses. In the areas where we suspect to find less rough sleepers, driving can be permitted, but you should keep it in mind that this increases the chances of missing certain people.

It is important to mark the area to be covered by one team carefully and in details. There are certain boundaries or meeting points where several sections of the map meet (big squares, train and bus stations, marketplaces, squats): in order to avoid duplication it is important to divide the area in such a way that is clear to everyone, maybe even mark these points and draw special attention to all neighbouring teams as to who will cover certain areas.

We suggest, for example, that big streets on the border of two territories be divided between the two neighbouring teams, the middle of the road acting as the boundary. If someone is found in the middle of the road, both teams can mark him, but they should also write down where (and when) the person was seen – this way duplication can be avoided. If the road is elevated and there are people sleeping underneath, the same rule can apply: enumerators should mark people sleeping under their side of the road, and mark down the location (and time) carefully.

You might also choose to send a pair of enumerators to all the inner city underpasses, for example, or any special location where you suspect to find many people and which borders several territories. They you can establish, for example, that any person on the steps leading to an underpass or in the underpass itself is to be counted by the special team, while the enumerators on street level can ignore them and focus on the streets.

If you manage to cooperate with outreach teams operating in the areas you want to cover you might ask for their advice on where to look for rough sleepers. These locations could be marked on the map: enumerators should cover the whole area allocated to them, but they should pay special attention to the marks of the outreach teams – these could be difficult to reach or see locations.

If you suspect that enumerators might not be able to cover their area in the given time, you might want to mark those areas that are the priority. Enumerators should start with those and if there is time left, they could cover the rest of the map.

### Other tools

Other tools you want to arrange prior to the actual headcount:

- enough pens and sheets
- hard folder (on which enumerators can write while walking)
- flashlights
- mobile phones (and an emergency number that can be reached during the headcount – in Budapest we had 3 phone numbers available: one landline and two mobile numbers from two different companies)
- official letter to authorities (should enumerators be stopped by police or other authorities, it might come handy to have an official document explaining what is happening and who are in charge)

- you might choose to have small gifts to homeless people such as hot tea, chocolate, cigarettes, or even warm clothes or blankets
- you might choose to have hot tea and warm things for the enumerators as well

### Reliable backup team

It is very important to have a reliable backup team operating throughout the headcount. The backup team ideally should consist of the following:

- a phone helpdesk – with someone capable of handling any situation, both related to problems with homeless people and enumerators
- at least one mobile help unit (with a car, preferably one that can transport people as well) – with professional staff and helping equipment (equipment used by outreach teams, such as thermometer, hot drinks, blankets, clothes, etc, but also tools to help the enumerators: extra anything they might run out of, etc.)
- someone to answer calls and questions coming from the press (should be available on phone during (and after) the count)

### Dealing with Duplications

If we are to get an accurate measurement or estimation about the number of rough sleepers in any given area, we have to make sure that people do not get counted more than once (but they do get counted at least once!). Both underestimation and overestimation will provide a false picture of the homeless population, so we will give you some tips on how to screen duplications.

It is particularly difficult to avoid duplications in the count is carried out over a period of several nights, therefore we strongly advise you try to conduct in on one night only. It also helps if you are counting people during the time shelters are closed, so after shelter-dwellers have left the streets and before they leave the shelter in the morning.

You should make sure that enumerators are given clear instructions about the area they have to cover: they should understand, for example, to only count people they see in their own area. It helps if they are given maps where their boundaries are clearly marked – it also helps if the boundaries are some natural divide and easy to stick to (for example busy squares should not be cut into sections, even if different points belong to different districts, while railway tracks are easy to follow).

However, even during a one-night streetcount we can run into duplications: homeless people might move around during the night and be counted several times. In certain cities enumerators ask a few simple questions,

*For example, in New York City enumerators asked each person encountered (assuming the person was not asleep) whether he or she had been surveyed already that night, and recorded the person's gender, approximate age, and ethnicity, as well as the location and time of the encounter and any unusual physical characteristics. If a person reported more than one interview, analysts reviewed the other tally sheets to see if anyone matching that person's description was counted. In 2003, only 10 unsheltered people were interviewed twice out of the 594 individuals interviewed.*

**From HUD**

### Organizational steps – questions and answers

Counting rough sleepers is not a very easy task, there are many things to keep in mind from the very beginning throughout the organization and the actual night of the count. It gets easier if you get into the routine – the second one will already be much more simple!

We have put this guide together to help with planning a count in your own town. At the end you will find references to other headcounts carried out before.

We would like to highlight the fact that such a headcount cannot happen nor reach its original goals efficiently without the cooperation of a variety of actors,

Who are the main actors in the count?

- Organizers
- Think-tank - experts
- Homeless services, representation groups
- Media

To begin with, it is vital to have a good team of organizers to work on the project together. In Hungary, the organization is carried out by an NGO: there is a main person who is in charge of the organizing, and he is helped by a group of experts (sociologists, outreach workers, social workers) through the whole process, both on the organizational and the theoretical stages of planning. In other countries it might be local governments who wish to carry out the headcount and be in charge, while involving a group of independent experts.

Even after having chosen the location, time and method, the basics of your headcount, there is still considerable organizing to do, including:

- Attracting and handling the attention of the media;
- Recruiting and training people to conduct the count;
- Planning for the logistics of the actual night of the count;
- Gaining the cooperation of participating agencies;
- Preparation of a timeline for the headcount;
- Biases, feasibility and cost.

### Preparing the count – the Media

Getting the media involved at most stages of the count is essential: not only can they help you in the organizing and getting the word out, they also play a vital role in getting and keeping the public interested about the problems of homeless people.

*During the preparation:* The media can help in the recruitment of the enumerators, as well as stirring up interest in the public towards rough sleepers. You might send announcements to newspapers (both on paper and electronic ones) explaining about recruitment: what you need people for, when, how to apply and whom to turn to if there are questions. It is useful to organize a press conference as well, inviting representatives of the press to a meeting where you explain to them the purpose of your headcount, the problems homeless people, and especially rough sleepers face. This would be an opportunity where they can ask questions. You might consider asking for the help of media workers as volunteers – of course they would not be expected to be enumerators (you probably do

not want the cameras to distract people from the actual work), but they can help in keeping the public interested, in asking thoughtful questions and maybe getting decision-makers involved by encouraging them to think about the problem of homelessness. It is vital that the press has access to the phone number and email address of the main organizer or a press contact, who can answer any questions throughout the preparation and the night of the actual count. You could also consider putting useful information (for example the call for volunteers) on the website of your organization. You might try to involve other partners (not only the press, but homeless services and advocacy group as well) in this campaign and ask them to either place the announcements on their website or to provide a link to the main website that you use for communication.

*During the actual count:* We do not recommend that cameras are allowed to go with the enumerators – it would scare people and make the research resemble a reality show. However, we do think that it is good to keep the media interested in the night of the count – they could announce to the public that they too can volunteer from their homes and count those homeless people who live in their building (in the staircase, or in the closed yard) and whom enumerators cannot approach.

*After the count:* While you process the data you would like to ensure that there is still a public interest in society. It is good if the media talks about the problem of homeless people and rough sleepers. You will have the responsibility to communicate your results with the press, as well as talking about what is happening in other countries and cities. Once everybody has delivered their rough data you can use those numbers in your communication as well, and lobby for changes in your governments policy using the results.

### **Recruiting and training people to conduct the count** **Using Volunteers in the headcount**

In most headcounts unpaid volunteers are involved alongside the paid staff during the actual enumeration. This could be due to lack of resources, both in the number of paid staff available and the finances – especially so in the case of big cities. Bringing in citizens as volunteers also helps to raise awareness of homelessness and the problems rough sleepers face, and it could influence the way a community reacts to the phenomenon of homelessness.

**For safety reasons we suggest that enumerators work in team of at least two people – it could be an additional suggestion to pair up people from a variety of background: let outreach workers and (ex)homeless people or volunteers go out together.**

### **Involving Homeless and ex-Homeless People**

It is a widespread tendency in some cities of the USA to involve formerly or actually homeless people through all stages of the headcount. After all, they have the most knowledge about rough sleepers and how to find them. We suggest their presence during both the preparation (identifying locations where rough sleepers spend their night) and the actual night of the headcount, where they could be enumerators.

#### **Some good practice about the involvement of homeless people**

- *Long Beach, CA – During the 2003 count, formerly or currently homeless individuals were included on each of 63 teams covering the city. After the public places count, formerly homeless individuals were hired and trained to conduct comprehensive surveys with a subset of the sheltered and unsheltered people counted during the enumeration.*
- *Atlanta, GA – Local service providers recommended currently and formerly homeless individuals to work on the public places count. Recruits frequently originated from the Veterans*

*Affairs Compensated Work Therapy program. Individuals were paid \$10 per hour to participate in a “dry run” of the public places count, work on teams during the enumeration, and conduct surveys of a sample of homeless individuals following the count. The count incorporated about 100 formerly homeless persons, each paired with a community or service provider volunteer on the night of the count.*

▪ *McHenry County, IL – The outreach worker in charge of enumerating unsheltered homeless individuals in this rural area enlisted the help of two previously homeless individuals to assist in identifying known locations and to help count and interview people during visits to the tent communities. The locations were kept confidential. **From HUD***

### Involving outreach workers

We definitely suggest to involve outreach workers during the preparation: they know best where to find homeless people, both geographically speaking and location-wise (abandoned buildings, summer house area, etc.). However, using them during the night of the count raises a few issues. Firstly, as it might be a very cold night they might have their normal work to do and have no free time to systematically comb a given area. In addition, there are more people on the street than usual and homeless emergency lines might be more busy, giving more work to the outreach teams. Secondly, if they cover their own work area they might ignore certain location where they do not normally go or do not normally look – an outsider might notice rough sleepers they do not know about. Thirdly, if they cover their own area they might include people they do not see but who is sometimes there, or might add others to improve statistics. However, their help might come in very handy especially when there is a shortage of other volunteers.

### Involving the Police

Although police departments and similar organizations (such as neighbourhood patrols) can provide valuable information about locations where homeless people live and sleep, and some people might find the presence of uniformed policemen reassuring, especially in unsafe environment, we in Budapest consciously do not get the police involved as enumerators – we would like both the enumerators and rough sleepers to know that this is a voluntary action on all sides. There is often a tension between the police and the homeless population, thus we prefer not to get the police involved. Homeless people may have criminal records, be engaged in illegal activities – the act of sleeping rough itself could be a delinquency! They might have had negative experiences with the police, so they may avoid being counted or might not want to speak to the enumerators if they know that the police are involved in the count. Therefore we suggest their involvement in choosing locations (where they can give information about where homeless people live), but not in the actual count itself.

### How to recruit volunteers?

- Getting in touch with services for the homeless – they might already be working with a number of volunteers who could be enthusiastic about a change of activity, and they are probably in touch with homeless people who might want to participate;
- Placing advertisements in local papers for all interested to see;
- Mailing or e-mailing invitations to key individuals and agencies, social services;

- Getting in touch with university bodies (especially social science departments) or high schools with a social science course – we should target teachers and professors who might recruit their students as a result;
- Getting in touch with youth activists who might be very enthusiastic about participating in something useful.
- Approaching NGOs whom are working around social issues, human right and social exclusion.
- In some countries, civil servants or big companies might like to join a project helping homeless people. In other countries there are doubts about the level of obligation vs. volunteerism in such cases.

### Involving parties or churches

We do not approach parties or churches directly, because we do not want the count to be used to propagate the private cause of any group. Individuals belonging to a church or party are naturally not excluded, as this is not a question we ask potential volunteers.

In all the above, you should keep in mind to give as full of a picture as possible: your notice should contain the necessity of and the duration of training, the time of the actual count, and let them know they can turn to you with any questions they might have – and then be prepared to answer them! You should also try to provide the bigger picture: what is the use of a headcount, why do we gather information about rough sleepers, etc.

- *Boston - After twenty years of conducting annual street counts, the City of Boston has a base of approximately 150 volunteers who participate regularly. Six weeks prior to the count, organizers send a mailing to all homeless services providers and past volunteers and email all city employees to recruit for the upcoming enumeration. Several weeks are spent gathering responses and organizing volunteers into teams with team leaders. Team leaders are individuals who have experience working with homeless populations, while other members of the team are a mix of inexperienced and seasoned volunteers.*
- *Seattle/King County - The Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless begins recruiting volunteers two months prior to the public places count by sending out a general announcement for volunteers through its member agencies. The Coalition also creates a halfpage flyer that provides the date and time, describes the training session, and asks volunteers to organize themselves into teams of three to four people with a designated team leader. About a month before the count, the Coalition also sends personal letters inviting the governor, the mayor, city council members, county representatives, and other elected officials to participate. These letters request a response by a specific date (about a week before the count), which gives count organizers enough time to train and place these officials on appropriate enumeration teams.*

**From HUD**

### When should you start the recruitment?

It can vary from headcount to headcount. The following factors should be taken into consideration:

- the length of the training (which depends on the method you use, for. ex. if there is a survey accompanying the headcount, the training will have to be longer...)
- the method of recruitment (some may take longer than others)
- your experience – if you have done it before, it probably takes less time

### What about the training of volunteers?

You cannot carry out a reliable headcount without prior training to all enumerators – outreach workers as well, as volunteers! They all have to be aware of the rules of conduct, the background of the research, how and what to record, how to ask questions if any, whom to call in an emergency – what is an emergency, etc. For more efficiency you can also pair people with more experience with new volunteers, but the training has to involve all enumerators, even the ones with experience. There can be changes in the methods from one year to another, there could be different questions asked, you could come up with new rules of conduct based on previous experience, so even people who have been involved in the headcount before should participate in the training.

During the training, you should present and review the protocol for the count: who should be counted (see definition of rough sleeper earlier), what is the procedure in various locations, such as parks, alleys, parking ramps, and abandoned buildings, what to do if you find a home but no one is at home, if you find one person and he says his friend also lives there only is out that time...

These guidelines should be distributed to the enumerators and should be with them during the night of the headcount for reference – if they have forgotten something, they can always go and check on their printed sheets.

The length and intensity of the training depends on the method chosen (if there is a survey accompanying the headcount the training had to be longer) and the experience of the enumerators. If you work with a mixture of new enumerators and ones who have done it before, it might be wise to brief them separately: the „old ones” might need less training than the new ones, while it could be essential to draw their attention to any changes in procedure. In some places they might only train team leaders, who then train their own team themselves. In Hungary, they train volunteers from Budapest and from the countryside on different days as surveys as well as instruction may differ slightly in the countryside and in the capital. In some cases the training is brief and takes time in the immediate hours before the count, in other cases, especially when there is a bigger geographical area to cover, it can happen a few days beforehand.

*When training volunteers it is important to be clear about who will and will not be counted. Be sure to include these procedures in any report or grant application you prepare about your enumeration. **From HUD***

### Some examples of the training are as following:

- *Philadelphia: Most volunteers that assist with Philadelphia’s quarterly street enumerations are affiliated with homeless service providers, social service agencies, or other government departments. When the count first began in 1998, organizers ran hour-long trainings prior to the street count. Enumerators have since become very experienced and Philadelphia no longer conducts formal training sessions. Volunteers are sent out in groups of two or three, with experienced enumerators paired with new volunteers.*
- *Washington Balance of State: Due to the decentralized nature of this CoC’s public places count, CoC staff provide technical assistance to counties in the form of paper instructions, regional and on-site training, and telephone consultation and support.*
- *Broward County: Prior to the count, all volunteers participate in a half-day training. The session includes guidance on how to use the survey instrument, safety protocols, emergency contacts, and instructions on the locations that volunteers should visit during the count.*

**From HUD**

### **What if there are not as many volunteers as needed for all areas to be covered?**

There might be fewer volunteers than the number needed to cover all the areas you have planned. In Hungary, although volunteers are advised to sign up prior to the night of the count, it is difficult to predict how many people will actually turn up. It is therefore important to have a back-up plan: you might choose to focus on the most heavily populated areas first, and when all those areas have been distributed, take a random sample of the less heavily populated zones. You might also want to send people to areas where there is no outreach work or it is not too developed – there might be data available already about areas with a strong outreach history. If there are outreach workers who are willing to participate they could be given priority at the allocation of areas.

### **What if there are more volunteers than areas?**

It also might happen that the recruitment is so successful that there are more volunteers than geographic areas. In these instances we suggest to divide up the areas into smaller segments – this might help in making the count more accurate, as enumerators can explore their territory at a more leisurely pace.

### **What about those we do not trust fully?**

Working with volunteers of course requires a degree of trust. However, you might find that for some reason you do not completely trust one of your volunteers (they look a bit crazy, they have cameras around their neck, they are well-known figures out for publicity, etc.). Some suggestions on how to deal with the situation are:

- Send a shadow enumerator to the same area to check on the work of the person.
- Send these volunteers to an area you have prior knowledge about or where there are fewer homeless people.
- Give them a small area to cover.

### **Organizing the Count**

There are many practical details to be prepared for the night of the count, such as:

- You will have to divide up the locations into sections – one section should not be bigger than what a team of enumerators can cover during the night.
- If you rely on volunteers, you will have to prioritize the sections and decide what should be counted in any case and what the lower density areas are (where you could draw a sample of if needed).
- You should distribute the sections to be covered in form of a map: it is best if only those streets are included on each map that have to be visited by that person. You might want to ask outreach teams working in the area if they can mark places where they know there are homeless people living – this could help inexperienced enumerators notice places that could be slightly hidden. You also should draw their attention to locations typically inhabited by homeless people – this will also help them notice rough sleepers sleeping in a less obvious place.

## Guide to Counting

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- You should decide if every section is considered safe: you might decide not to send enumerators into areas that are thought to be too dangerous by experts, or to send them in bigger teams.
- You should decide if enumerators are to walk or if they can use a car (do they have to bring their own?).
- You should prepare a written summary of all procedures that you would discuss during the briefing but what enumerators would have with them for reference throughout the night. These sheets should contain the phone number of the coordinator who can be called if any question arises.
- There should be at least one person available for the enumerators on telephone the whole time (if there are many volunteers, there could be two or contact people). This person should be familiar with the procedures as well as with the structure of homeless services. We suggest that enumerators do not contact outreach teams directly if they encounter a homeless person who needs help but call their coordinator. (In Budapest this person is sitting in the same room with the 24-hour homeless emergency hotline, so they can report any event immediately.)
- You might want to have a number of organizers available the whole night. The main coordinator who is receiving all the phone calls from the enumerators might need to ask others to help.
- You should decide on what to do with dangerous locations. We advise that you send outreach workers or enumerators with experience to the more dangerous locations, and that they receive clear instructions about what to do if anything goes wrong.
- You should make sure that the enumerators have all necessary equipment for the count: they should have enough registration sheets, pens, and a mobile phone or walkie-talkie to keep in touch with the coordinator, flashlights, replacement batteries. They could also have some useful addresses of services with them, and information about the opening hours, etc.
- You should decide if enumerators should take some hot tea and sandwiches with them – this might help in communicating with rough sleepers.
- You should have hot tea, coffee and sandwiches for the enumerators so they have the energy to count people for several hours.

### Pre-count Advertising

We suggest that you inform homeless people and the general public before the count about what is going to take place. The media will help you reach the general public, but we also feel it important that homeless people know about what is going to happen, especially as the count is very likely to take place while they sleep and so are especially vulnerable. If there are outreach teams operating in the area of the count, it might be best to ask them to participate by informing rough sleepers in their area about what is going to happen, why it happens, that it is anonymous and confidential, that the police is not involved in any way and if there are any benefits for them (if there is going to be tea or coffee, if the report will try to influence decision makers to do something to help the problem of homelessness, etc.). If there are no active outreach teams in the area, information could be passed on by other services for the homeless (soup kitchens, drop-in-centres, etc.) or by the organizers, visiting some places frequented by rough sleepers.

- *Tallahassee: A few days before the count, the organizers visit known locations (streets and wooded areas) and introduce themselves to any homeless people living in the area. The purpose of the visit is two-fold: to inform homeless people about the rationale behind the count and to ensure that enumerators are able to locate the sites during the count.*
- *Pasadena: Outreach workers distribute a handout to the homeless people in shelters and soup kitchens to provide advance warning. The handout explains why it is important for homeless people to participate in the count.*
- *Washington Balance of State: Service providers talk to homeless people about the count in advance. In several counties, newspaper articles inform the public about the enumerations.*

### **From HUD**

#### Pre-screening and pre-testing locations

You might want to visit certain locations well before the night of the count and test if the boundaries are valid, if homeless people can be seen, if the environment is safe, how much time is needed for the section to be covered, etc. You might also consult outreach teams about these issues. It is important that in case you decide to use a survey as well you test it well in advance, leaving enough time to make any adjustments if there is any issue arising.

***Pre-screening** involves visiting each study area to better understand the site and identify any special characteristics that enumerators should consider on the night of the count. **Pre-testing** is a “dry-run” of a point-in-time count in a sample of study areas. A pre-test can help organizers identify and resolve procedural issues or other problems prior to the count.*

***Conducting a Pre-test in Atlanta** A few weeks prior to its first count, the metropolitan Atlanta CoC conducted a pre-test in a sample of census block groups to ensure the methods, training, and materials were appropriate and sufficient to generate an accurate count. As a result of problems encountered during the pre-test, organizers decided to release enumerators in two waves, one at 1:00 am and the second at approximately 4:45 am. The purpose of the change was two-fold: to avoid double counting individuals who had stayed in shelters the night before, but were released to the streets very early in the morning; and to ensure the coverage of all the study areas with a limited number of enumerators.*

### **From HUD**

#### Gaining the Cooperation of Participating Agencies

It is crucial to use homeless services as partners throughout the organization of the count.

***During the preparation:** You should approach homeless services and explain to them what you are planning to do. They could help in recruiting volunteers to be enumerators – whether from their own clientele, group of volunteers or local contacts. They could participate by placing the announcements on their website, or by helping in a Next Day Count in their services for the homeless. They might also know of homeless people living in the area around their services and help in preparing the maps and deciding if an area is low- or high-density. See also pre-advertising in 4.3 – outreach workers could be helpful in informing rough sleepers about the count and by explaining what is going to happen, etc.*

***During the actual count:** They could welcome enumerators working in areas close to them for a brief time of warming/using the bathrooms. They can take part in the Next Day Count: they can invite volunteers into their premises to register information or they can ask their staff to do the registration. (Note: if it is staff filling out registration forms during the next day count you should make sure that the people involved had received some training before – they understand the task, the registration*

sheet and the purpose of the research. It might also happen that staff fill in the sheets without asking homeless people – you should make sure that the task is understood. It also helps if the leadership of the participating agency supports the research. You might still want to send a few volunteers to various services to make sure everything is going well.) If there are service users living in hostels who volunteer as enumerators, you should make sure that their participation is understood by the service and they will not get sent away if they do not spend that night in the hostel.

*After the count:* Every service should have access to the data collected in their premises (anonymously, of course!). This could help them get to know their users more. They can be a part of the media campaign afterwards: send data and results to their media contacts and take part in the lobbying for a change.

### Preparation timeline for the headcount

If this is the first time you do a headcount you should start well in advance – six, or maybe even eight months prior to the planned date of the count. As you get more experienced, less and less time might be needed.

Here are some examples of timelines:

#### Budapest Headcount: 2008.02.03

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2007. December: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Team of experts to put together questions for the survey</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2008. January:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Recruitment of volunteers</li><li>▪ Media campaign: recruiting volunteers as well as informing the public</li><li>▪ Dividing the city into areas/locations to cover during the night of the headcount – asking for the opinion of outreach teams; marking of maps</li><li>▪ Purchasing tools (pens, flashlights, paper, maps), printing of sheets</li><li>▪ Training of volunteers</li></ul> |
| Headcount       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ From 6 PM on 02.02 (a Saturday) until 6 PM on 02.03 (Sunday)</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**For more details see Appendix 2.**

#### ***City of Boston (more than 20 years of experience!)***

##### ***Six weeks prior to the count:***

- Recruit a “high profile” person or group to participate in the street count. This might be an elected official, such as the mayor, the CEO of an important local business, a major philanthropist, or a celebrity. Gaining the commitment of such a person to participate in the count can help with recruiting volunteers (e.g., the recruitment letter can be signed by the person) and gaining the attention of the media.

- Begin recruiting volunteers. Send out a mailing to homeless service providers and past volunteers to recruit for the upcoming count; send out a mass e-mail to city employees; spend the next few weeks gathering responses from this effort and organizing teams of volunteers.

- Contact all places that house homeless people. Update bed inventory data, contact information, and inform providers of the public places count, which happens on the same night as the sheltered count.

### **Two to three weeks prior to the count:**

- Assemble the packets that go out with the team leaders. The city is divided into 38 areas – each covered by a team of 5-15 people, including the team leader. Packets contain: tally sheets, directions on how to use the radio that is given to each team, a map of the assigned neighborhood with all intersections and boundaries clearly marked, and, if known, special advice about where homeless people are known to live in that section.
- Send a letter to all state agencies, hospitals, police, the transportation authority, and park rangers to inform them about the date and time of the count. The transportation authority is particularly important because enumerators will need access to subway platforms without having to pay the fare.
- Set-up extra outreach vans for the night of the count. Typically, there are two outreach vans on any given night, but for the 2003 count, five vans were available.
- Contact neighborhood representatives from the Office of Neighborhood Services and the police to ask about any new or unusual information about where to find homeless people in different neighborhoods (e.g., special places to look). As noted above, this information is included in the team leader's packet.
- Divide the volunteers into teams of 5 to 15 people. Organizers try to ensure that team leaders are people with experience in working with homeless populations, either as service providers or outreach workers. The teams have a mix of new and experienced volunteers.

### **One week prior to the count:**

- Meet with the team leaders to explain the logistics of the count, as well as how to manage the volunteers on their team.

### **Metropolitan Atlanta (City of Atlanta, Fulton County, DeKalb County)**

#### **November 2001 (sixteen months prior to the count)**

- Tri-jurisdictional Collaborative confirmed its joint sponsorship of the point-in-time homeless census.

#### **February 2002 (thirteen months prior to the count)**

- Developed preliminary budget estimates.
- Began discussions of count methodology and procedures; decided to issue an RFP for professional consultant with census experience.

#### **March, April, May 2002 (ten to twelve months prior to the count)**

- Tri-jurisdictional Collaborative decided on Pathways Community Network, Inc. (PCNI), the trijurisdictional HMIS, as the census project manager.
- Homeward, Inc., a private non-profit organization working on homeless issues, raised funds for the count from private donors.

#### **June 2002 (nine months prior to the count)**

- HUD granted approval for PCNI to use the remainder of its technical assistance grant for the count.

#### **July 2002 (eight months prior to the count)**

- PCNI formed nine-member Advisory Council to guide the process.

#### **August 2002 (seven months prior to the count)**

- RFP issued to qualified consultant organizations.

#### **September 2002 (six months prior to the count)**

- RFP responses received; Advisory Council began evaluating proposals.

#### **October 2002 (five months prior to the count)**

- Applied Survey Resource (ASR) selected as the consultant; began contract development.

#### **November 2002 (four months prior to the count)**

- Identified known locations where unsheltered homeless were likely to be located.
- Updated statewide Homeless Advisory Council on progress with the count.

#### **December 2002 (three months prior to the count)**

- ASR contract executed; ASR visited Atlanta and presented to service providers and other interested parties.
- PCNI partnered with United Way's 211 HelpLine for real-time reporting of census data.
- Solicited participation of police departments and jails.

#### **January 2003 (two months prior to the count)**

- Produced initial list of known locations; conducted a day-long mapping session to identify known locations and discuss the characteristics of each area.

## Guide to Counting

- Began phone calls to recruit volunteers and solicit cooperation from community groups and other organizations.
- Identified deployment sites for teams on the night of the count.
- Developed the survey instrument.

### **February 2003 (one month prior to the count)**

- Sent mailings with information about the count to service provider agencies and other appropriate groups.
- Confirmed the participation of Hands On Atlanta (a volunteer organization).
- Continued recruiting deployment captains, volunteer enumerators, and currently or formerly homeless employees.
- Finalized survey instrument.
- Held two-hour training session for those participating in the pre-test or “dry-run,” including deployment captains and employees from the Veterans Administration’s Compensated Work Therapy program.
- February 25, 2003: Conducted “dry-run” in downtown Atlanta and outlying areas; adjusted procedures as necessary.

### **March 2003 (month of the count)**

- March 4-5, 2003: Conducted six two-hour training sessions for enumerators.
- Completed GIS mapping; finalized boundaries of geographic areas and assignments of teams.
- Confirmed jail, police, and health center participation; coordinated with police departments to determine which areas required a police escort and which sections should solely be covered by police.
- Notified every participant about location assignments, and the date and time for the enumeration.
- March 11, 2003: Point-in-time count occurred. Enumerators released in two waves at 1:00 am and 4:45 am. Counts tallied on survey sheets and called in to the United Way call center.
- Previously homeless employees and outreach workers conducted surveys for two to three weeks after the count. Held a Saturday afternoon meal event; meal tickets distributed and redeemed upon completion of the interview. Homeless people that participated in the survey were given pre-paid phone cards as an incentive.

### **April 2003 (one month after the count)**

- Data entry, cleaning, and analysis of enumeration and survey data.

### **May 2003 (two months after the count)**

- ASR’s draft report reviewed by the Advisory Board.

### **June 2003 (three months after the count)**

- ASR produced the final report and presented results to interested parties.

**From HUD**

## Biases, Feasibility, and Cost

### Biases

Here are some biases and issues to consider when organizing a headcount:

- You and all participants have to constantly be aware that the purpose of organizing a headcount should be to help homeless people, and not to cause them any harm. Therefore you should make sure homeless people can trust enumerators and that they are well informed of what is happening and why.
- You have to keep the relevant parts of data protection in focus and make sure all participants are aware of the rules.
- You have to emphasize that all participants, even the volunteers are part of the same team and should share the same values.
- You have to be realistic: do not try to achieve something you do not have to resources from.

- Always communicate the truth: make sure you explain the difference between your findings and your estimations.
- Do not let the media take part in the enumeration itself: it would create the wrong type of sensation. The role of the media is to disseminate results and to inform people and authorities of what kind of problems exist in society, and not to make the work of enumerators and life of homeless people difficult.
- There should be a clear organization and/or person in charge of the headcount that authorities, the press or volunteers can turn to with their questions. Having more than one central person can cause confusion.

### Feasibility and Cost

The cost of a headcount varies widely: it depends on the resources, the number of staff available, the size of the area to be covered...

Here are some figures of the cost of the headcount in Budapest, a city of 2 million inhabitants:

- *For the preparation:* 1 part-time organizer for 2 months + 2 part-time organizers for the month prior to the count (one of them in charge of volunteers the other one in communicating with the press and authorities); 160 hours (usually a 3-6 people team of experts) to put together the schedule, the questions for the registration form/survey, explanations to the enumerators, maps
- *During the month of the count:* 1 full-time organizer and 2 part-time helpers + 20 hours of training the enumerators (in groups); cost of communication – mobile phones
- *For the night of the count itself:* paper (the sheets in duplicates), pens, smaller tools (flashlights, maps); mobile back-up unit, cost of phonecalls; our enumerators were volunteers so we did not have to pay them.
- *After the count:* putting the data in a computer (usually per sheet/survey or character), analysing the data – 80 working hours for 2000 registration sheets.

In Budapest, we accompany the headcount with a survey in the shelters and hostels for homeless people, which brings the costs up considerably.

*The public places counts conducted by communities contacted for this guide were either coordinated by CoC staff or outside consultants, and range from very expensive (\$150,000) to less expensive efforts (\$500). It is feasible to conduct a fairly reliable public places count with a limited budget by making significant use of volunteers. Unquestionably, staff time and energy will be necessary to design, plan, and implement the public places count. The payoff is having better information with which to target limited resources for service planning purposes and to document local needs in funding applications. Communities fund and implement counts using multiple approaches, including:*

- *Several large CoCs do not have a separate budget for the count, **relying solely on staff and volunteer efforts**. The two staff members from New York's Department of Homeless Services who organized New York City's 2003 street count estimate that they spent 100 percent of their time preparing for the count in the month leading up to it. One staff member worked full-time the month after the count to complete the data analysis.*
- *In 2003, the Director of Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission devoted 35 to 40 percent of her time on the count for two weeks in advance, and 100 percent of her time the week of the count. In addition, the count required the equivalent of one full-time staff person for a full six weeks.*

- *In its multi-jurisdictional count, the Washington Balance of State CoC spent approximately \$4,500 on a technical assistance consultant and used staff time from the CoC lead agency valued at approximately \$5,000 for its 2003 count.*

- *Atlanta conducted its first count and survey of sheltered and unsheltered populations in 2003. Pathways Community Network, Inc. (PCNI), the census project manager for the Tri-Jurisdictional CoC, chose to hire a research consulting company to help develop the methodology, manage the logistics of the count, and write the report. PCNI directly supervised the consultant, while a nine-member Advisory Board made up of subject matter experts and one homeless service provider was actively involved in project oversight and the setting of policies and procedures. The total cost for the*

*study was approximately \$120,000. This included: \$48,000 in consultant fees; \$32,000 in direct expenses (e.g., paying for homeless enumerators and surveyors, supplies for the night of the count, and printing); and \$40,000 in in-kind contributions from CoC agencies and other contributors.*

- *Long Beach, CA conducted its first count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in 2003. The CoC hired a consulting firm to assist in designing and managing the count with a final cost of approximately \$150,000 (which also included an indepth assessment and 10-year planning process).*

**From HUD**

## Evaluation

### Evaluating the count

Some questions that help us evaluate our headcount are the following:

- What have we learnt?
- What haven't we learnt?
- How many locations did we cover?

### What have we learnt?

- The minimal number of rough sleepers in the given town – the number of people registered
- The ratio of men/women – with a good level of confidence
- Their age – with a fair level of confidence
- Typical locations where homeless people sleep: what parts of the city? what type of locations?
- Locations unknown before
- How many rough sleepers sleep alone/in a couple/in a group/with pets
- What locations couples/singles/groups seem to prefer; is there a difference between groups of young or old people? Between groups of men and mixed groups?
- The number of potential rough sleepers – the number of people registered + number of empty locations
- We can compare our data with that of the outreach teams (if there are any operating in the given location): if we counted much more people than they are aware of, there needs to be more emphasis on outreach work in the area; if we counted much less, we have to find who is wrong
- Is there any difference between the various ethnic groups? Or people of different skin colour?

- How many of the rough sleepers are ill-equipped? How many sleep on the ground/in tents/in caves/in squats, etc?
- How many times did enumerators have to call for help (were the rough sleepers in such a bad state that immediate intervention was needed)?

### What haven't we learnt?

- Exactly how many rough sleepers there are in the given town (we do not know numbers from areas we could not cover)
- How many rough sleepers there are in other seasons (for example the summer)
- How many people sleep rough throughout the year?
- All the locations
- The reason why people sleep rough
- How long they have slept rough/how long they have been homeless?
- Do they have any other place they could sleep at?
- How many people sleep in areas excluded from the headcount (such as enclosed spaces, private areas, dangerous squats, etc)
- How many homeless people there are – we only have data about rough sleepers!

If you think there are too many unanswered questions, you might want to try to accompany the headcount with a survey element – it could provide with much more valuable information! You can even think of other questions you want to find answers to: in Hungary one year we asked questions about work and income, another year about health issues, etc.

When can we think a headcount was a success?

If we manage to carry out a headcount, we will know the minimal number of rough sleepers in the area – this is surely a success. In order to make a valid estimation, it is better to cover as much of the given area as possible in one night – and make an estimation for the smaller part. In Budapest, we are satisfied if we can cover at least 50% of the area fully, and we make estimation for the rest.

Everyone should decide what a success is for them. What surely should not be a marker of success or failure is the number of rough sleepers encountered. If you managed to cover the whole town and only counted a few homeless people, that is a great success!

Other markers of success:

- if the public is made more aware of the problems rough sleepers face
- if there are many volunteers involved
- if the media manages to communicate a positive message (not just a great sensation)
- if we manage to draw the attention of the public to the wider problem of homelessness and inadequate housing

### Who can benefit from the results of the headcount?

The headcount can be useful to a variety of people and organizations:

- plan and organize services for the homeless (where do we need more outreach workers? is there a need for more special night-time services for rough sleepers? is there any group who

needs special attention: drug users, for example? are rough sleepers well equipped or do they need blankets, etc? how is their health? can they reach health services?)

- strengthen local communities, neighbourhood patrols – getting them involved and mobilized
- media – to form public opinion
- the public – to pressure government to act
- politicians – to make responsible decisions, directly and indirectly linked with homelessness (for example regarding prevention, evictions, etc.)
- charity organizations – to develop their own strategy to help disadvantaged groups
- if the headcount is carried out on a yearly basis, it can be used to measure the effects of certain policies (are there more or less rough people on the street after a policy targeting their inclusion into services?)

Data is even more helpful if there is a survey accompanying the headcount. It allows you to compare finer information (such as what are the personal and social routes into homelessness? what kind of special problems do people face on the streets, relationships, health, long and short term homelessness, etc.). It allows you to ask questions that you think relevant and ask the people who know the answers best. These results can be more helpful when drawing up strategies and policies to help rough sleepers, homeless people or people with housing problems. And it gets the homeless person active: this is one way to measure how efficient the services targeting them are, how satisfied they are with them, what their expectations are, what they would like to see different, etc.

When the headcount (whether with or without survey) is carried out on a transnational basis – it happens more or less in the same time in different cities and countries, it helps to compare data between countries. It also helps to challenge politicians not only on the local and national, but the European level.

### Dissemination and the media

Within 24 hours after the count:

- The first results should be published as fast as possible after the count, while the public is still interested: how many volunteers were involved, how many areas were covered, how many rough sleepers were counted
- You should never say more than the actual truth: stick to the real numbers (of areas, or rough sleepers, etc.). Make sure that you separate the facts from the estimations. Estimations should always be scientifically sound and statistically deductible.
- You should communicate as simply as possible: do not use complicated words or expressions.
- Always draw attention to the wider context of homelessness and inadequate housing.
- Emphasize the role of volunteers and solidarity.