

# HOMELESS PEOPLE – SATISFACTION OF BENEFICIARIES OF SERVICES

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**Abstract:** Study aimed at determining the extent to which the institutional environment in Timisoara, public and private, responds to the needs of service users, homeless adults, in terms of staff communication. At the same time, we analyzed and institutional infrastructure in terms of services offered at the moment. Such a study is a first, others have not been undertaken in Timisoara.

**Keywords:** Homeless, communication, social services, users satisfaction

## **Social context of the phenomenon**

Timișoara was previously of 1989 viewed as a cosmopolitan city, the vast cultural and ethnic diversity, correlated with the city's own tolerance have always attracted. After the Revolution, near the border with Yugoslavia, after with Serbia, the border with Hungary, in the public mind a true gateway to Western Europe, the economic development of the zone, the status as a university city attracted people from many parts of Romania, in search of a better living.

Without being able to make a precise dating, the streets, squares, in some places the people wearing modest clothing began to be observed, with a state of poor hygiene, bypassed or ignored by other citizens. It is the case of Market 700 where on the manhole covers "homeless" people were staying, teenagers lost from the child protection system, smoking, drinking alcohol or often inhaling the vapors of glue, feeding on food scraps or food offered from the market and small shops.

At the North Station, the central gate of the town, i.e. in front of it, at the transport station, the "praised tree" a number of citizens, dressed modestly was waiting their turn. That is to be taken to work with a journeyman status, citizens of the city and even county, which needed help in the household - gardening, cut-

splitting, cleaning, construction, and animal care. Some lucky managed to work for several days or even several months. They are itinerant workers, coming from the country's poor. Even today, the phenomenon continues to exist at low amplitude. A large part of them fall into the category of homelessness.

Hidden from public view, nestling besides the centralized heating system pipes or sewers, and in summer in the ruins or abandoned buildings, people carried their existence that life has brought them in the position of not having a shelter. Thus, to a visible welfare part of the community of Timișoara opposes an extreme social phenomena, the homeless, adult, extremely heterogeneous as part of the vulnerable group

According to the Procedure of Admittance in the Emergency Social Center with Social Canteen” (Local Council of Timisoara), recipients need to be in one of the following:

- persons residing in Timisoara or Timis county;
- persons / families with or without children who have lost their homes due to various reasons (not being able to pay maintenance costs, abuse, scams, frauds, robberies, burglaries, etc.), regardless of the time spent on the streets;
- persons or families recently in the street;
- young people from orphanages, which, after the age of 18 years do not have a housing solution;
- persons deprived of liberty that after serving the sentence are homeless;
- persons who are victims of trafficking or domestic violence during the emergency;
- elderly / disabled to transfer to specialized institutions.

The document itself is actually a classification of the vulnerable group of homeless people identified on the territory of Timisoara, the criteria stating their relative social realities for facilitating the access of the vulnerable group in question, to the available social services.

Some of these people arrive in Timisoara's care institutions where they interact with the staff. Some users remain within the institutions for more time, another part of them return to the street ... and the coming of winter and particularly harsh winter makes the phenomenon more visible. Local media reports homelessness issues, disseminate information to assist their efforts. Then, for some time silence spreads again. Nothing sensational, nothing said ... beneficiaries continue to exist with the problems and the whole social context of the phenomenon. However, the lifestyle of beneficiaries will influence not only the quality of life but also longevity (Gavrilă-Ardelean 2016). However, the risk of antisocial or criminal behavior is gradually increasing relative to the low degree of social integration (Tomiță-Goian 2009). Finally, the major risk of serious health problems, infections, diseases, increase in people or communities with socioeconomic and cultural low level (Gavrilă-Ardelean 2016).

That is why, in a succinct statement of reasons, we tried the approach in terms of quality communication of beneficiaries with staff beneficiaries of the

social protection institutions. However it was considered necessary to present these institutions that are serving beneficiaries, noting that along with specialized and exclusively dedicated for homeless, there is an institution with a major role in identifying and referring them but especially in identifying medical problems of homeless people.

The basis for this study was „... *structuring a coherent language in social work*” (Goian 2010). From those stated, we started this research approach of some methodological issues and interpersonal communication of staff with beneficiaries in the institutional context.

### **Study on satisfaction of service users, homeless people**

Considering the need for services certain to homeless persons, I have found it necessary to initiate a study to determine the extent to which the institutional environment in Timisoara, public and private responds to the needs of service users, homeless people, in terms of staff communication

#### **Objectives:**

1. Determine the perceptions of beneficiaries of the communication patterns used by the staff of welfare institutions
2. Determine perception of beneficiaries on institutional staff
3. Identification of social protection measures perceived by beneficiaries

#### **Hypotheses:**

1. The more the staff is connoted as having the ability to better communicate with beneficiaries, the better the degree of their satisfaction about service staff.
2. The longer the length of stay on the street (including improper shelter), the attitude towards institutional staff is worse.
3. The more empathy perceived from the staff the more tolerant are beneficiaries.

### **Sampling**

The sample consists of 50 homeless people in Timisoara, random beneficiaries or former beneficiaries of social services for homeless people.

### **Instrument**

The instrument is a mixed questionnaire, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaire included a total of 25 questions. To measure quality a Likert scale was used in order to quantify attitude beneficiaries.

### **Quantifying results**

Among the beneficiaries of respondents, 42% did not receive a decent home or stood on the street in sewer, coaches, dismantled buildings or with no utility - cumulative: electricity, heating, connection of gas, cold running water, for more than 6 years old, 12% between 4 and 5 years old, 22% between 1 and 3 years, and 24% less than a year.

Regarding the period of time in which the respondents were assisted in/by an institution, the situation is as follows: 52% of respondents state benefits assistance for more than a year, 16% between six months and one year and the remaining 32% less than six months.

All respondents said they received shelter.

Regarding food, 92% say they received food during the period in which they were assisted, while 8% say they have not received food.

A 78% of respondents say they have received clothing, during the period of assistance, while 22% say they have not received clothing.

Referring to drugs-medication, 56% of respondents say they have received drugs, while 44% did not benefit.

When asked whether they received information during the period, 66% of respondents say they have received information.

Regarding the current situation (when answering the questionnaire) in terms of benefiting from shelter, 44% of the interviewed stated that they have shelter in a public institution and 46% are provided with accommodation by a non-governmental organization (including churches) while 10% say they are not provided with accommodation and live either with friends / acquaintances, or in unfit shelters.

When asked "Do you think social protection measures for the homeless in Romania, meet their needs" 42% of respondents believe that the measures respond fully to the needs of beneficiaries and 22% believe that largely respond, 18% think that the services respond in a sufficient way while 12% are of the opinion that they fall short and 6% to a very small extent. The possible answer "no" was not marked by any respondent.

Regarding the right to information/making information easily accessible and enforcing it in institutions of social protection, 54% of the interviewed believe that this right is fully respected while 30% believe that right is respected greatly. Only 16% believe that the right to information is respected to some extent.

The staff in institutions of social protection of homeless people is perceived by 66% of respondents as extremely friendly, while 44% think that the staff is friendly with beneficiaries.

The communication skills of staff are connoted as follows - a 52% of respondents believe that the staff is extremely communicative with beneficiaries while 44% consider it to be communicative. 4% of respondents believe that staff is not very communicative with the beneficiaries. The possible answer "totally uncommunicative with beneficiaries" was not selected by any of the respondents.

Participation in activities organized by the staff of institutions is perceived as very pleasant by 38% of the beneficiaries, while 54% consider enjoyable participation in activities. 8% of respondents are indifferent to these activities

Regarding the group structure of the respondents, 56% have worked legally for more than 10 years, 36% between 1 and 9 years and only 4% say they worked

legally in one year while 4 % state they have not worked legally at all.

96% of the interviewed stated that they have an identity card and only 4% say they do not have an ID. The percentage of those who say that they have a birth certificate is 80% while 20% say they do not have this document.

Only 46% of respondents argue that they still own study documents or qualifications while 54% say they are no longer in their possession.

4% of respondents say they do not have any papers.

Regarding the age of the respondents, 14% are between 20 and 30 years old, 12% between 31 and 40 years old, 16% between 41 and 50 years old, 20% between 51 and 60 years, 24% over 60 years while 14% refuse to give their age.

Gender affiliation is as follows - 80% of respondents are men, 20% are women. This imbalance can be explained by the fact that many people do not find females to be included in the study by meeting the target group characteristics.

As the level of schooling, 8% have between 1 and 4 years of study, 36% between 5 and 8 years, 42% between 9 and 12 years, 6% have college while the other 6% have university studies and 2 % of respondents refused to provide information about their studies.

The ethnic structure of the group is comprised of Romanian majority proportion - 86%, 10% are ethnic Serbs and 4% did not answer the question on ethnicity.

## **Conclusions**

To calculate the predictability of assessing the communication skills of staff in institutions of social protection of homeless people with their beneficiaries, we performed multiple linear regression test. Based on the analysis a significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 48) = 13.008, p = .001; p > 0.5$ ) with  $R^2 = .213$ . Thus, respect for the right to information / easily obtaining information of homeless people is a significant predictor in assessing the abilities of staff to communication with them.

To calculate the predictability of unfavorable attitudes towards staff in institutions of social protection of homeless people according to the period of time during which people have received shelter (including improper shelter), we performed multiple linear regression test. After the analysis no significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 48) = .158, p = .692; p > 0.5$ ) with  $R^2 = .003$ . Thus, unfavorable attitude towards staff is not influenced by the period during which people have received shelter (including improper shelter).

To calculate the predictability of tolerant behavior from homeless people to staff in social protection institutions, we performed multiple linear regression test. The analysis of the regression equation found a significant regression equation ( $F(1, 48) = 4.149, p = .000$ ) with  $R^2 = .370$ . Thus, the perception of empathic behavior influences the tolerance of the homeless towards the staff of the social protection institution.

Regarding communication between institutional staff and recipients of services – homeless people in Timisoara, we see after an analysis a significant regression equation ( $F(1, 48) = 13,008$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $p > 0.5$ ) a  $R^2 = 213$ . Thus, respect for the right to information / easily obtaining information is an important predictor of assessment the communication skills of staff. So if the staff is communicative and willing to provide information, this is connoted as positively by beneficiaries, as the staff is appreciated.

The staff in institutions of social protection of homeless people is predominantly perceived positively by beneficiaries. The staff is seen as friendly and communicative. Activities are connoted positively by most respondents. However, we should not overlook the fact that 8% of respondents are indifferent to participate in activities in general. Better adaptation of activities related to a better assessment of needs would decrease this percentage. A 18% of the beneficiaries believe that social protection measures fall short of the needs of homeless. Although the percentage does not seems significant, however it can not be overlooked. Almost a fifth of respondents do not perceive the social protection measures aimed at them as adequate.

Some social economy activities that provide the possibility of carrying out business activities of beneficiaries, persons in difficulty would be extremely useful and would increase the self-esteem of the beneficiaries and their insertion on the labour market. (Goian, Vasiliuță Stefanescu, 2013).

A previous study, conducted in 2016 at the Emergency Center for Homeless People from Timișoara analyzed 12 case studies with focus on education, employment and interactions with specialists, among other topics; regarding education, 10 of the 12 cases only completed lower secondary education, for all the 12 cases, the respondents showed insincerity when asked about job experience (answers like „many years”, „I do not remember”); on interaction with specialists, the respondents claimed good relations with the staff, especially the social workers and negative interactions with the police. (Goian, Vlaicu, Cojan, 2016 )

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