

# IMPACT

# REPORT

2020

the european  
**end street homelessness**  
campaign

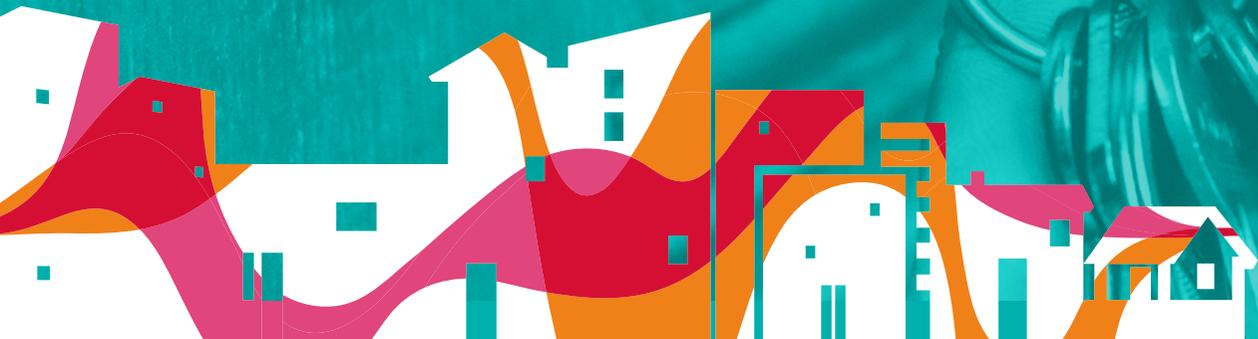


world  
habitat



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# FOREWORD

## A message from our Chief Executive

We believe that everyone has the right to a safe and secure home. This year, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world around us and brought about uncertainties and obstacles that none of us could have previously imagined. It has brought into sharp focus the importance of 'home' as the first line of defence against public health emergencies, and the foundation we all need for our communities to thrive. COVID-19 has pushed more people to the financial brink and into homelessness. For the people with nowhere to call home and those without the support they need to keep it, 2020 was a year that demanded urgent collective action.

As part of the European End Street Homelessness Campaign, we have worked with cities and partners across Europe responding to the immediate crisis but also taking important steps in our joint goal of ending street homelessness for good. Homelessness can happen when pressures of living in poverty – such as insecure work, high housing costs, and lack of access to financial support or health care – become unbearable. Street homelessness is the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness. Our campaign calls for both permanent housing solutions and the necessary support to relieve the pressures that push people into homelessness in the first place. We recognise that each of our partners is working in a unique local context, but we know that no matter where someone is, they have the right to a safe and secure home. By bringing people together through our campaign, we share ideas and challenges and test out new ways of working, providing the catalyst for change needed to end street homelessness in the diverse communities with which we work.

2020 began with big plans for the campaign. We intended to build on its success by working closely with local partners to deliver meaningful reductions in street homelessness. We were also taking active steps to develop our network across Europe by welcoming new cities into the campaign. Global events

meant our priorities quickly shifted as our network of partners reacted to the unfolding outbreak of COVID-19. We were proud to see our campaign partners reacting rapidly, many utilising partnerships created through the campaign to collectively respond to COVID-19. As highlighted in this report, these relationships were often crucial in creating a swift and effective response to the coronavirus outbreak, with many organisations working together to transform the services and support they offered – without doubt saving many lives.

Reacting to the needs of our partners, we began to record, learn from, and disseminate the best practice around homelessness responses to COVID-19. We gathered [case studies](#) from our campaign cities across Europe, shared effective emerging practice and helped our cities learn from this. We moved events online, including our Annual Gathering of Cities, and adapted our Innovation Fund – helping campaign partners plan for safe and permanent solutions beyond temporary COVID-19 interventions.

This year, our campaign has shown that, even whilst working across very different contexts, we can come together to find solidarity and make a difference, even in the most challenging of times. We know that a world without homelessness is possible – for a short period over the last year some of our cities were able to effectively end street homelessness in their communities.

We begin 2021 with a renewed commitment to bring people and ideas together to share what works and make tangible and sustainable changes towards ending street homelessness for good.

**David Ireland, Chief Executive, World Habitat**

# 2020 AT A GLANCE



994

people moved into permanent accommodation



534

surveys with people experiencing street homelessness



990

volunteers took part in 2 Connections Weeks



5

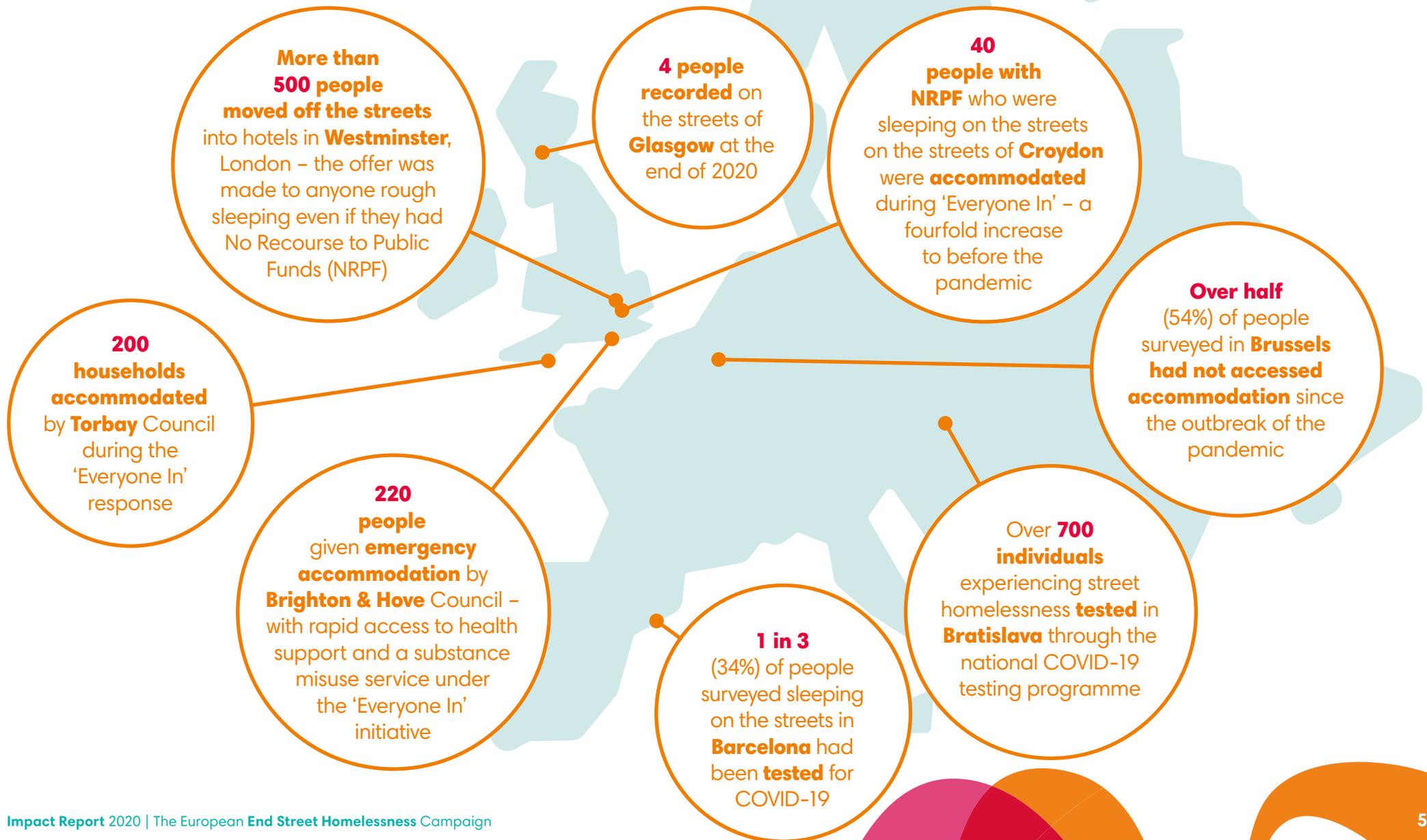
independent Innovation Grants provided by World Habitat

1 million+

people reached through our #EveryoneDeservesAHome social media campaign during the week of World Homeless Day 2020



# COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



# CASE STUDIES FROM OUR CAMPAIGN CITIES



# A global call for housing from the streets of Brussels

“ The COVID-19 crisis has shown us that solidarity has no borders. We were able to count on many donations from citizens and at the political level, funds were made available to open hotels (in addition to emergency centres) to house people experiencing homelessness, who had no ‘home’ to isolate in.”

Romane Devresse, Project Manager, Infirmiers de Rue

**Two-thirds** of people sleeping on the streets have **not had access to housing** for more than a year

**Nearly one-in-three** (30.5%) are currently **unable to meet** all of their **basic needs**

**Almost half** (44%) of people reported having been **attacked or beaten** since they became homeless

**Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity, which means having access to decent housing. Brussels Campaign 400Toits is a collective of organisations that have united to change the structures – including high rents and reduced welfare provision – that make certain individuals at risk of being pushed into homelessness.**

400Toits' 2020 research shows that over half (54%) of the people sleeping on the streets have not had any access to accommodation since March – the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown – making their work more important than ever.

Despite the challenges presented by the global pandemic, 400Toits were still able to organise their Connections Week (Face-à-face pour un logement). For three nights, volunteers and outreach workers went out to speak with people sleeping on the streets – to find out who they are and understand their needs. Evidence from the annual surveys over the last three years has shown that homelessness is both a result and cause of multiple and complex needs, including mental and physical health conditions, substance misuse, unemployment, and family breakdown. For many forced to live on the streets with physical and mental health issues and drug/alcohol-dependency, the systems and services that exist do not offer people the support needed to access and keep a home. 400Toits' understanding of who is on the streets, and what pressures have caused them to be there, is crucial to creating the right solutions, redesigned to meet everyone's needs.

In early 2020, when the citizens of Brussels were told to stay at home, the member associations of 400Toits knew that this would be impossible for the hundreds of people sleeping on the streets. They swiftly adapted their work plans – Rolling



Douche worked with Medecin du Monde to provide showers, whilst Infirmiers de Rue (IDR) continued to work intensively to offer medical provision to those on the streets and protect them from the virus. IDR also provided health services in one of the hotels, opened to shelter people experiencing homelessness. As one of the city's main medical outreach providers, they were in a unique position to understand and respond to a range of complex medical needs – existing evidence demonstrated that underlying health conditions of many experiencing homelessness made them particularly exposed to the virus.

Infirmiers de Rue understand that street homelessness is not solely a local issue. They showed leadership through launching a global advocacy call for the protection of people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, under the banner 'Protect the Unhoused'. The call received backing from over 100 organisations from 14 countries around the world – including campaign partners – demonstrating solidarity across the network and beyond. Their actions highlighted the need for specific measures for people sleeping on the streets who are more exposed to the virus.



# Leicester: working together for sustainable solutions

**“ 2020 has proved to be a challenging year for everyone, protecting the health of people facing homelessness has never been more important and potentially more difficult to achieve. Without our multiagency partnerships working together to plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to access services, many of our most exposed people would have been left at increased risk from COVID-19.”**

*Wayne Henderson, Specialist Nurse & Director, Inclusion Health Care CIC*

**By working together, we know that we can end homelessness. Leicester's Homelessness Charter brings together members of the community, charities, the City Council, healthcare providers and other public services, faith groups, and businesses. It mobilises different sectors from across the city to come up with solutions to the most challenging issues around homelessness.**

The COVID-19 pandemic is not a crisis isolated to one sector and has required a city-wide response. Leicester – which has experienced the longest-running restrictions of any city in the UK since the start of the pandemic – has a solid foundation of cross-sector collaboration. This led to over 545 people experiencing homelessness being swiftly housed in emergency accommodation between March and October, to protect them from the virus. The rapid response meant very few cases of COVID-19 among those experiencing homelessness – and the Charter provides the perfect space for working closely with health partners across the region.

The Charter created workstreams to look at how the impacts of COVID-19 would increase pressure on people – through financial insecurity, job losses, and evictions – and cause whole new groups of people to be forced onto the streets. Focusing on preventing homelessness is key to creating sustainable solutions to the housing crisis.

Stable housing is a crucial part of the solution to street homelessness. Campaign lead, Action Homeless, took a big step towards creating access to long-term



housing and support for people who have been sleeping on the streets for a long period of time. Their new Housing First project will house 18 people and give them the flexible support they need to thrive in their homes and city.

Permanent housing solutions – such as Housing First – are a key principle of the European End Street Homelessness Campaign. This is an exciting opportunity to learn from other campaign cities where Housing First is already in operation (such as Torbay, Barcelona and Glasgow), and to share experiences as they begin their own project.



# Barcelona: housing as a human right

“ Being in a shelter can have its ups and downs. You can stay for a while but then what? To the street again. So, how do they help me?... I [now] have a flat thanks to my family, which is Arrels.”

*Davide Andreoli lived on the streets for more than eight years. Read his full interview [here](#).*

More than **four-in-five** (83%) people experiencing homelessness have **not accessed any type of emergency accommodation** through the City Council since the start of the lockdown and state of emergency in March

Almost **half** of people sleeping on the streets say their **situation has gotten worse** since the outbreak of COVID-19

**One-fifth** of people sleeping on the streets have **become homeless since the start of the COVID-19** pandemic in March

**Everyone has the right to a safe home – but over a thousand people are living on the streets of Barcelona. We can do better to meet and protect this essential human need. Since joining the European campaign in 2015, lead partner Arrels Fundació has carried out survey research with people experiencing homelessness every year. This year, they knew it was vital to get a true picture of the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

However, with a national lockdown and a state of emergency, they had to do things differently. In May, Arrels organised a count to find out how many people continued to sleep on the streets during the lockdown. Despite the added challenges of social distancing, over 600 community members volunteered, locating a total of 1,239 people. In November they went out again – this time with the goal of understanding the experiences of people sleeping on the streets. They heard the stories of 367 people – four out of every five of whom said that their situation had stayed the same, or gotten worse, during the pandemic.

Their detailed evidence showed that during the COVID-19 state of emergency, people experiencing street homelessness in Barcelona felt more alone and insecure than ever, as there were few members of the public on the streets, police presence increased, and the information on where to eat, rest, and shower changed rapidly. Arrels Fundació used their insight not only to provide life-saving support directly to those on the streets, but also to present four fundamental COVID-19 specific recommendations to local and regional government. These were to: open small, accessible services in every neighbourhood; increase and



strengthen street outreach teams; offer more co-ordination and training for police services; and to provide support services to people where they live.

Shockingly, one-in-ten people experiencing homelessness in Barcelona say that they have been sleeping on the streets for over ten years, and half for longer than a year. Over the past five years, Arrels has been working on analysing all the data that they have collected to make real changes to policy. Their evidence draws the conclusion that six months sleeping on the streets is far too long. Just one day is an unacceptable injustice, and violation of human rights, but after six months, a person's mental and physical health deteriorates dramatically. This shows clearly that traditional solutions – such as emergency night shelters – are not working. Arrels' data-driven proposals to end homelessness start with housing as a human right – focused on sustainable solutions tailored to the needs of the individual, and an emphasis on prevention to reduce the dramatic scale of homelessness in the city.

# Westminster Homelessness Partnership: A vehicle for joint working and systems change

**“ These extraordinary times will shape our work for years to come. During the pandemic, our partnership has been driven forward by the shared sense of urgency to save lives from the dreadful virus. New practical partnerships to deliver food and to support those in hotels have sat alongside our strategic work as leaders to influence and support ‘Everyone In’ locally. There is much still to do, but we can reflect proudly and build on our work over the last year as WHP. The pandemic was just one more reason for us all to realise that only by working in partnership can we effectively end homelessness.”**

*Roger Clark, Chief Executive Officer, West London Mission*

**We all depend on public services for support and during the COVID-19 pandemic this has been more important than ever. The joint working of partners across Westminster during the early stages of the pandemic response reduced rough sleeping numbers in the borough to record lows.**

As part of the UK's 'Everyone In' initiative, the Westminster Homelessness Partnership (WHP) – including St Mungo's, The Connections at St Martins, The Passage, West London Mission and Westminster City Council – successfully helped over 500 people off the streets and into a range of hotel and other temporary accommodation. The swift action undoubtedly saved lives for some of those who previously had nowhere to safely self-isolate, including many who are traditionally denied access to accommodation support due to their immigration status.

Accommodation was only one element of the emergency response – a critical part of supporting people during this time was providing food. Two of the WHP organisations – The Connection at St Martin's and The Passage – worked together with volunteers to provide over 60,000 meals and a lifeline to those staying in hotels. With such rapid adaptation to the way services were run, following the emergency response phase, World Habitat supported the partnership to capture and reflect on the learnings during this unprecedented time. WHP provided a bedrock for the flexibility, collaboration, and formal and informal communications needed as local agencies responded to a major global health emergency.

The European End Street Homelessness Campaign believes that by improving local systems through cross-sector co-ordination, services can be easy



to access and simple to navigate. From alliance-working in Torbay, to the Leicester Homelessness Charter, and our Glasgow partners' participation in the Everyone Home Collective for homelessness to be at the centre of Scotland's national response to COVID-19 – all our campaign cities have shown, during the emergency response to COVID-19, that positive relationships are crucial to targeting resources swiftly and effectively.



# Bratislava: Protecting the rights of those left out during the pandemic

“ Sometimes there’s a client who you’ve worked hard with, and you persisted in walking with them, yet not interfering too much, and then you see how their life turned out. Now they have money, a job, and they’re happy...They have that warmth, a home to come back to. And that feels amazing.”

*Martina Pisárová, Deputy Director, OZ STOPA Slovensko*

## Homelessness takes a heavy toll, and our support systems should work for the benefit of all in society – to ensure that everyone is protected. 2020 has been a transformational year for our lead campaign partner in Bratislava, OZ STOPA Slovensko.

As the city went into lockdown and members of the public were asked to stay indoors, most of the few traditional homelessness services that exist – including day centres and outreach services – closed down, as many workers isolated at home. OZ STOPA, and partners OZ Prima, continued to deliver vital resources to those with no home to go to, including protective equipment, sanitising gel, and food.

World Habitat worked with OZ STOPA to amplify and promote their life-saving work through a series of public awareness-raising resources, including photographs and videos through their 'Invisible Visibility' campaign. This public awareness campaign galvanised public support, donations and increased volunteers. It also led to a national award from the Public Defender in Human Rights in Slovakia, recognising OZ STOPA's role in protecting the human rights of people experiencing homelessness.

Despite a challenging year in the face of a global pandemic, OZ STOPA finished 2020 with a growing supporter base and new staff for their homelessness work in Bratislava, as well as two new housing projects – providing essential accommodation services for people moving away from a life on the streets.

The context of each of our European End Street Homelessness Campaign cities is unique and this remained true during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Whilst some areas, such as those in the UK, saw national programmes to temporarily house everyone sleeping outside, others, including Bratislava, had very little national funding or centralised strategic direction. Nevertheless, all cities were united against COVID-19 and demonstrated solidarity and a shared will to make sure everyone, no matter where they are, is protected.

# Everyone Home in Glasgow: A framework to end rough sleeping

**46 people**  
moved into  
**Housing First**  
tenancies in 2020,  
bringing the city's  
total to **148**

**4 people visibly  
sleeping rough** at  
the end of 2020

**2,005**  
households  
moved into  
**settled homes** –  
from emergency  
accommodation and  
other forms of  
homelessness

**Ensuring that everyone has a safe, stable home benefits us all – creating a stronger society. Homeless Network Scotland know that we can end street homelessness through sustainable solutions, like rapid rehousing and preventing people from being forced into homelessness in the first place.**

At the start of 2020, before the outbreak of COVID-19, their national approach to Housing First was already working towards closing temporary shelters and transitioning to permanent homes with open-ended support for those who need it. Despite the unfolding pandemic, their Housing First Tracker has shown that 46 individuals in Glasgow moved into permanent homes in 2020.

In March, the urgency of COVID-19 required strong cross-sector working which, in Glasgow, ensured that emergency actions happened in a matter of days. With funding from the Scottish Government and local authorities, hotels were quickly opened, and no more than 30 individuals remained on the streets across the country. Nineteen NGOs came together to form the Everyone Home Collective – a united voice to ensure that there was ‘no going back’ and that everyone should get their own home as the next step. Their framework to prevent people going back onto the streets, and others from becoming homeless, is based on three main priorities: more homes for good health, no return to rough sleeping, and no evictions into homelessness.

By the end of the year, 478 people continued to be accommodated in hotels, a reduction from a high of 618 in October, and only four people were visibly sleeping on the streets of Glasgow. The city has shown that – with the right commitment, funding, and support – by working together towards a united goal, ending street homelessness is possible.



# WHAT WE FUNDED

## Innovation Fund and bespoke support

The Homelessness Programme team provided strategic advice, in-kind resources and funding to help innovative ideas develop. Our Innovation Fund helps to kickstart specific new initiatives and drive local action in our campaign cities.

For each organisation we work with, we also fund consultancy support to help them tackle some of the most challenging issues in their local context – whether that's local strategy planning, alliance building, communications support or fundraising development. Here's some of the work we funded in 2020.



Human rights abuses monitoring project in Barcelona



Westminster COVID-19 emergency response: cross-sector learning session



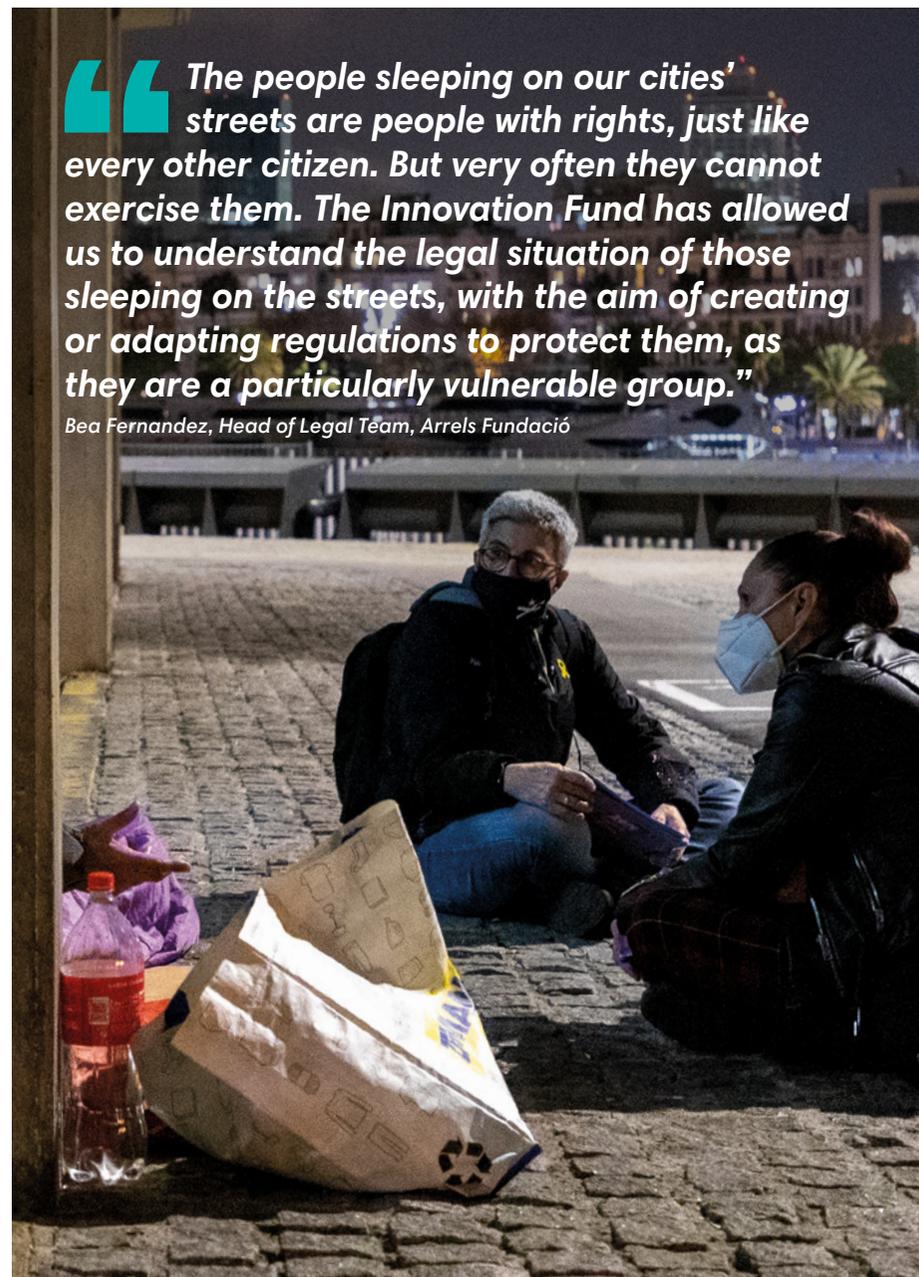
Leicester Homelessness Charter communications and messaging workshop

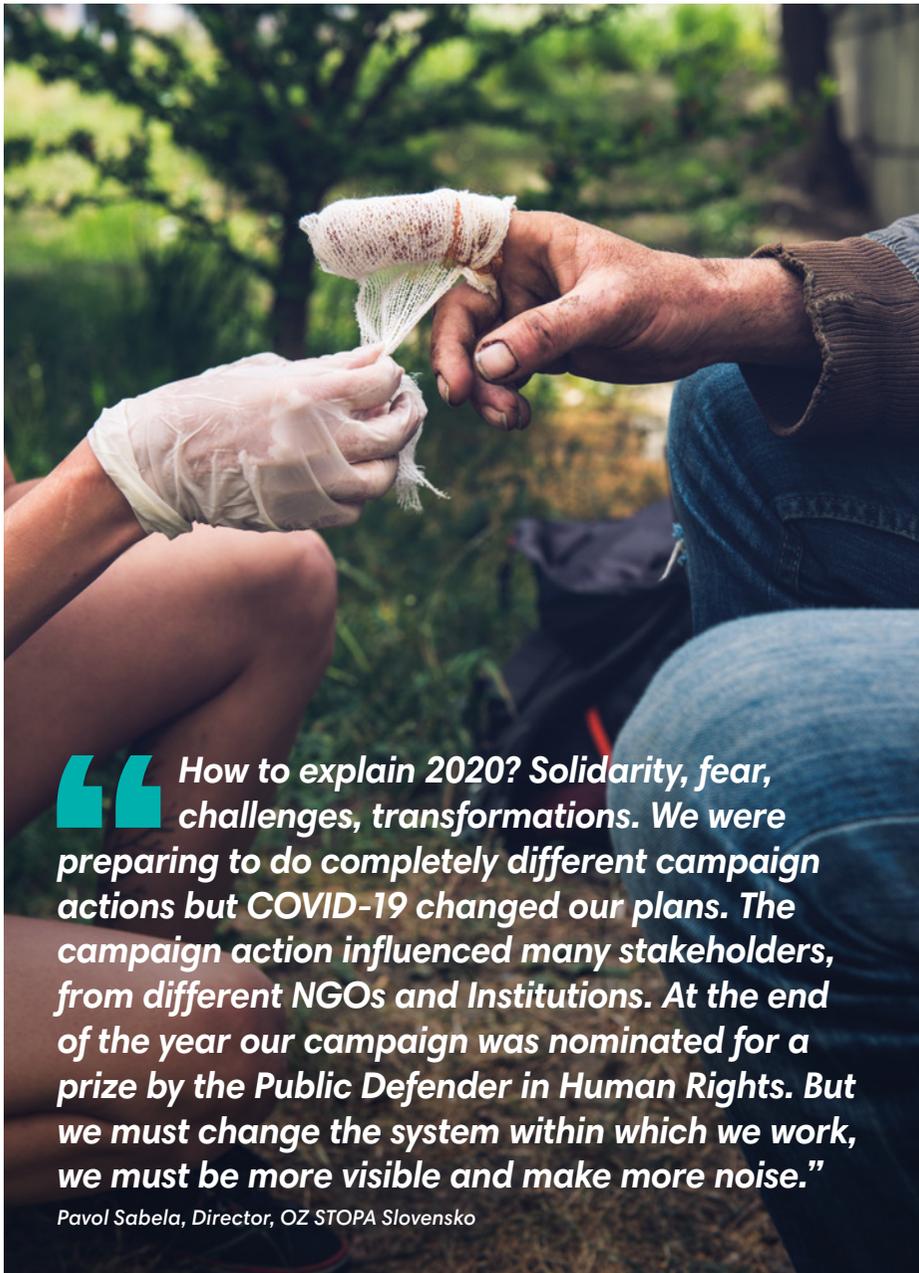
**“Leicester Homelessness Charter is an inclusive, compassionate partnership of organisations, working together to galvanise action for homeless people, and act as a catalyst for positive change. We aim to provide leadership for the sector, giving a unified voice and channelling energy to counter frustration and confusion, with a clear commitment to making a difference in our city.”**

*Charter narrative created by workshop participants*

**“The people sleeping on our cities’ streets are people with rights, just like every other citizen. But very often they cannot exercise them. The Innovation Fund has allowed us to understand the legal situation of those sleeping on the streets, with the aim of creating or adapting regulations to protect them, as they are a particularly vulnerable group.”**

*Bea Fernandez, Head of Legal Team, Arrels Fundació*





“ How to explain 2020? Solidarity, fear, challenges, transformations. We were preparing to do completely different campaign actions but COVID-19 changed our plans. The campaign action influenced many stakeholders, from different NGOs and Institutions. At the end of the year our campaign was nominated for a prize by the Public Defender in Human Rights. But we must change the system within which we work, we must be more visible and make more noise.”

*Pavol Sabela, Director, OZ STOPA Slovensko*



Bratislava 'Invisible Visibility' public campaigning work



Strategic planning workshop with 400Toits campaign



Brussels Connections Week report design support



Communications support and web development for the Westminster Homelessness Partnership website

“ The website is an excellent resource for our partnership. We can signpost people to this to explain our work, for example potential new partners and key individuals – including [a local] social enterprise and new executive directors in the council, including the cabinet member in Westminster responsible for homelessness.”

*WHP partner*

# WHAT WE'VE LEARNT AND WHAT'S NEXT

**2020 has been a year of immense change and even greater learning. We worked flexibly with our partners across Europe to support them to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19.**

From swiftly accommodating over 500 people in Westminster – the area with the highest levels of street homelessness in the UK – to gathering robust data on people's experiences of homelessness throughout the pandemic in Brussels and Barcelona, our campaign cities have shown that the ability to come together across sectors, to move quickly, and to adapt services, are crucial.

We continue to work with organisations responding to the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic – one of the greatest challenges we have faced together – but ending street homelessness is still possible. COVID-19 confronted housing organisations across Europe with very stark challenges. How do we protect the lives of individuals who are experiencing homelessness – when having a place to call home is the best line of defence?

Organisations across the campaign have answered this question, and the work we have presented in this report is testament to that. We thank them for their commitment, innovation, flexibility and passion for finding solutions to homelessness during this ongoing pandemic. Although unable to connect in-person, COVID-19 has brought our network of partners together in new ways, reinforcing the mission, vision and values we all share. COVID-19 has strengthened our belief that #EveryoneDeservesAHome, and that housing is crucial to protecting everyone from the virus. Waiting for a place to shelter can be life threatening. We must continue to seize this momentum – and carry it forward as we move into 2021.

This year we are really excited to bring new activity and new partners on board. We will build on the incredible progress that has taken place in response to COVID-19 and focus on three key areas.

1. **Delivering a wide range of support options to new and existing city campaigns to increase their local impact**
2. **Evaluating, learning and sharing what works through our new series of Homelessness exChange events**
3. **Advocating for changes in policy and practice**

The Homelessness Programme team are dedicated to working in more challenging – and often hostile – housing contexts. Over the next year we will welcome new cities from Central and Eastern Europe to join the campaign, who will work with us to make a real difference in their communities. We are also excited to launch our new European EESH Homelessness exChange events, which will bring together a growing network of people committed to learning and sharing good practice. These will be delivered in partnership with leading experts from across a range of housing and homelessness organisations.

***With strong partnership working, and the right resources and commitment, we can end street homelessness together.***

Our successful Innovation Fund has provided vital funding for cities to harness learning from their COVID-19 response, raise the profile of homelessness through local campaigning, and to protect the rights of those who are abused while on the streets. Building on these successes, we will deliver the Fund again in 2021, to maximise World Habitat's impact in the areas that need it most.

At local and national governmental level, where resources and commitment are often low, the barriers to ending street homelessness are high. In these places, we have nevertheless seen huge progress, especially where our partner organisations have supported individuals to protect themselves from COVID-19 and access vital testing for the virus. We will continue to support local campaigns to collect the necessary data and evidence of current needs to ensure changes to policy reflect the experiences of those on the streets.

At World Habitat we know that something can – and must – be done. We have seen that with strong partnership working, and the right resources and commitment, we can end street homelessness together.

## Our partners

Our partner organisations, who work tirelessly to support people forced to sleep on the streets and take the often-difficult steps to create genuine, sustainable change, are what make the European End Street Homelessness Campaign have a real impact. From World Habitat, we would like to extend a huge thank you to all the individuals and volunteers who make up those organisations – and who have worked so incredibly hard to protect and save lives during an unprecedented year.



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## Our vision is a world where everyone has a safe and secure home in a successful community.

We are:

- an agent for change
- globally minded
- independent
- innovative
- caring
- well connected.

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