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THE POLISH WOMAN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**Abstract**

It might seem that tackling the issue of persons experiencing homelessness in the 21st century, economically well-developed country such as Poland, seems to be of little importance. However, statistics, reports, and academic research results show that the issue of homelessness is neither becoming less prevalent, nor is it marginal. Moreover, the issue is still there, only its face is changing. The subject-matter literature clearly shows that anyone can become homeless, regardless of their social status. The right to housing is indicated among the basic human rights that secure comprehensive development. The difficult housing situation means that more and more people, especially young people, are faced with the difficulty of providing themselves a roof over their heads.

Despite the fact that the legislator in Poland takes into account the principles that allow for securing the basic rights of people in the homelessness crisis, due to the complexity of the phenomenon itself, there are still areas that do not fully secure the needs of the homeless. The homelessness of women, who are culturally perceived as bearers of life and the keepers of the hearth and home, is particularly poignant. The situation of women experiencing homelessness stands in stark contrast to those perceptions. The aim of these considerations is to outline the problems of the people experiencing homelessness, to indicate the specificity of women's homelessness in order to notice the differences in their situation, their rights, and the effective systemic solutions in this area.

Key words: issue of homelessness, the homeless, women experiencing homelessness

1. Introduction

Homelessness is a phenomenon that has accompanied the mankind since its inception. The first references to homelessness in Poland date back to the Middle Ages, although homelessness itself was understood in a much broader sense then, i.e. all those who did not belong to a particular estate of the realm were perceived as homeless. However, the vast majority of those persons did not live on the fringes of the society.¹ It is important to note that both in the Middle Ages and nowadays the homeless were and are offered various forms of support by a variety of organisations or institutions.

Among the definitions of homelessness and the homeless, one must point to the definition presented in the Polish Act of 12 March 2004 on social assistance, whereby homelessness is understood not only as the experience of having no place to live in or deprivation of a person of the right to register their residence, but also as living in such housing conditions that, according to the applicable regulations, are considered unworthy of housing.²

The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) has prepared a typology of homelessness based on three dimensions that constitute having a home: physical – providing safe shelter; social – providing intimacy or building personal relationships; legal – ensuring the right to a place to live. When any of the above occur, the situation may be considered as an entry into homelessness.³

Homelessness is undoubtedly a social phenomenon that generates specific problems: violence, addiction, disability, unemployment, poverty, stereotyping, severance of the social and institutional ties, and, finally, marginalisation. By the same token, those effects themselves are frequently causes of homelessness. In the psychological dimension, homelessness is perceived as the experience of an existential crisis by a person whose basic need of having a place to live is not met, thus depriving

¹ J. Strączyński, *Job first w streetworkingu*, Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Pomocy Wzajemnej “Agape” 2021, pp. 35–136.

² Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 roku o pomocy społecznej (t.j.: Dz.U. 2023, poz. 901) [Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance (consolidated text: Journal of Laws 2023, item 901).

³ J. Strączyński, *Job First w streetworkingu*, pp. 143–144.

the affected person of the sense of security. Over time, a homeless person adopts a social role imposed on them, losing their self-esteem and experiencing alienation from the community. Not only are the housing needs not met but, most importantly, neither are all other needs that are essential for personal development.

Given the complexity of the issue of homelessness and of problems experienced by the homeless, it is almost impossible to name specific causes of falling into homelessness (illness, environment, nervous breakdown, loss of job, living in a dysfunctional family resulting in failure to acquire the coping skills for everyday life, including interpersonal communication). Therefore, the support mechanism for homeless people and the process of getting out of homelessness itself constitute a major challenge for the social welfare system. The longer a person experiences homelessness, the lower their chances to overcome the predicament.

2. A brief description of homelessness in Poland

There is no doubt that homelessness, regardless of its causes or consequences, is a burning issue that affects all areas of human life: welfare and economic conditions, professional, family, social and political as well as mental condition. In a situation of deprivation of personal resources, a homeless person manifests diverse, often contrasting behaviours amounting to a lack of faith in actions, including actions that could enable the homeless person to change their predicament for the better.

As a result, each subsequent action is a struggle for survival rather than a conscious effort to improve one's well-being, which frequently ends in another withdrawal.⁴

Other researchers on the subject think the opposite: withdrawal attitudes are a sort of defence mechanism and result from negative reactions to homeless people.⁵

Homeless people's attitudes towards the family home are a salient aspect of the issue of homelessness. For some homeless persons, the family home appears as a haven,

⁴ M. Oliwa-Ciesielska, *Piętno nieprzypisania. Studium o wyizolowaniu społecznym bezdomnych*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2006, pp. 59–60.

⁵ K. Pilarz, T. Huzarek, S. Tykarski, *Tożsamość zagubiona. Oblicza bezdomności XXI wieku*, Pelplin: Bernardinum 2019, pp. 33–34.

for others the memories of the family home cause them pain, evoking the hurt they have suffered. This is why numerous homeless persons repress the concept of home as a value.⁶

Every two years, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland conducts a study aimed at specifying the number of homeless people. The last count of people experiencing the homelessness crisis took place on the night of February 28–29, 2024. The results of the studies from 2019 and from 2024 showed that the homeless population slightly increased from 30,330 to 31,042 people, of which men constituted 83.6% and 80.15%, while women 16.4% and 19.85%, respectively. Compared to 2019, the number of homeless women shows an upward trend. Persons experiencing homelessness were most likely to be staying in:

- night-shelters;
- homeless shelters;
- homeless shelters with care services;
- warming-up facilities;
- homes for mothers with under-age children and for pregnant women;
- crisis intervention centres;
- specialist support centres for victims of domestic violence;
- hospitals, hospices, chronic medical conditions care homes, other healthcare facilities;
- penitentiaries, remand prisons;
- drunk tanks, social emergency intervention facilities;
- vacant buildings, allotment garden cottages, allotment garden sheds;
- non-housing settings: on the streets, in staircases, train and bus stations, bin shelters, etc.⁷

For the first time, the 2024 study identified sheltered, supported and training housing categories, which were used by approximately 3% of the people experiencing homelessness. The voivodeships with the largest numbers of homeless people include Mazovia, Pomerania and Silesia, while the smallest number of the homeless people was recorded in the Podlasie, Opole and Lublin regions. 78% of people living in the

⁶ A. Kinal, *Bezdomność jako wyzwanie dla społeczności lokalnej*, “Rocznik Lubuski” 2003, vol. 29, Part I, p. 199.

⁷ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/edycja-2019-i> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

homelessness crisis, on the night of the study, were staying in institutional facilities, and 21% in non-residential places and public spaces. Similarly to the previous years, homeless people most often took shelter in lodgings (2,843), warming houses (1,116) and shelters (9,690). The high rate of living in non-residential places such as: vacant buildings, allotment houses and gazebos, streets, staircases (6,648) is still maintained. The main cause of becoming homeless was the alcohol addiction (18%), family conflicts (11.94%) and relationship breakups (8.86%).⁸

The majority (41%) of persons have vocational education background, and primary education background (29%); aged 41–60 (42%), of whom 1,770 are women and 12,031 are men. The episodes of homelessness are getting shorter. Currently, the largest group includes the people who have been in the crisis of homelessness for up to 2 years – 31%. The people who have been in the crisis of homelessness for over 20 years constitute 6% of the surveyed population.

The primary source of income for people experiencing homelessness was social welfare benefits (36%), followed by pensions or disability benefits (18%). Alarming, a relatively high rate of 13% of individuals had no source of income at all.⁹

At this point, the question arises whether the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in the studies reflected the actual state of affairs. The answer may be “no”, not only because it is practically impossible to “count” the homeless due to difficulties with reaching all the non-housing locations in which the homeless may be present. Other reasons involve the facts that the residential premises which do not meet the minimum standard for housing were excluded from the study, and the increasing number of homeless immigrants to Poland.¹⁰

This number notably increased after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the massive influx of war refugees, not only of Ukrainian nationality. The vast majority of them have either become independent or have left Poland, but there are also those

⁸ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wyniki-ogolnopolskiego-badania-liczby-osob-bezdomnych---edycja-2024> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

⁹ <https://caritas.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/album-bezdomnosc24-vmmajew.pdf> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

¹⁰ B. Moraczewska, *Bezdomność. Definicja, problemy, rozwiązania obecne oraz historyczne odwołanie do ludzi luźnych*, “Studia Gdańskie. Wizje i Rzeczywistość” 2013, vol. 10, p. 127.

who find it difficult to “stand on their own feet” and they remain under the institutional support (residential and nursing homes, single mother’s homes). However, there are also those who find it difficult to find their way in a new environment. It is them that become homeless. A substantial number of refugees from Ukraine live in private houses without being provided with tenant rights, which is defined as housing exclusion, and can pose a risk of falling into homelessness. The released statistics confirm an increase in the number of homeless people in 2022, which leads to the conclusion that this trend would also continue the following year.¹¹

Contemporary homelessness encompasses a broad spectrum of homeless people, thus significantly differing from the previously known homelessness of which, however, few are aware. This state of affairs is conducive to further stereotyping of the persons experiencing homelessness. Street homelessness persists, particularly noticeable in warmer months, when one can come across the homeless who neglect their personal hygiene and engage in begging or gathering. Simultaneously, there is an increase in the numbers of homeless people who are undistinguished by their outward appearance, trying to maintain a semblance of normality, to participate in social life by taking on casual work, often offered with accommodation. Concealing their homelessness, for example by claiming a fictitious place of residence, constitutes part of their safeguarding against dishonest employers hiring homeless seasonal workers.

The profile of those falling into homelessness is also changing. People from dysfunctional families, ex-convicts, former residents of orphanages, addicts or those affected by mental disorders are not the only ones at risk of homelessness.¹² There is an increasing number of white- blue- or pink-collar workers who are homeless.¹³ The increasing pressure to behave in a fully professional manner and to be always available generates high levels of stress among employees, businesspeople, managers, which translates into the higher incidence of alcohol, drug and intoxicant

¹¹ R. Szarfenberg, *Poverty watch. Monitoring ubóstwa i polityki społecznej przeciw ubóstwu w Polsce 2022–2023*, EAPN Polska 2023, p. 25.

¹² <https://noizz.pl/big-stories/bezdomnosc-w-polsce-jak-wyglada-zycie-na-ulicy-i-jak-wyjsc-z-bezdomnosci/ev1x2r2> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

¹³ These terms were first used in American sociology to describe people in non-manual professions (white collars), lower-level manual, production and administrative workers (blue collars), and professions practiced mostly by women (pink collars), https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bia%C5%82e_ko%C5%82nierzyki (accessed: 1.10.2025).

abuse, and which causes uncontrolled aggressive behaviour, frequent bouts of anxiety and depression, which ultimately develop into mental disorders. All this, coupled with the lack of understanding by family members, can trigger a nervous breakdown which, unless addressed quickly and effectively, may influence a decision to abandon the current way of living. Decreasing financial resources, coupled with inability to keep a job, may result in the loss of housing and cause the affected person to fall into homelessness.

One must mention a significant homelessness risk factor, namely the growing pauperisation of a large part of the society, ultimately causing those affected to live on the edge of poverty. The range of those affected is relatively wide: single mothers, elderly and lonely people, families with persons with disabilities or long-term illness, relatively well-to-do persons who have taken bank loans, especially the clients of shadow banking. The latter are at a particularly high risk of losing the rights to their house or flat if requested to pay off the mortgage or if they fall into the vicious spiral of debt.

Polish homelessness also has a young person's face. The 2019 census of persons experiencing homelessness, cited earlier, showed that more than 800 of them were aged 18 to 25. However, institutions that provide support to the homeless believe that this figure was heavily underestimated. They usually use very mobile solutions: "today I am taking a night bus, tomorrow I will sleep in a stairway, the day after tomorrow at a friend's, another day I will squat". Secondly, such young people often do not appear to be homeless at all. They wear fashionable clothes, neat make-up, earrings, have tattoos and, often, headphones. They spend time in coffee shops or in shopping malls, appearing to be care-free young people".¹⁴

Child homelessness is particularly poignant and must be mentioned here. The terms *homeless children* or *street children* are used to describe children experiencing homelessness. The Council of Europe defines street children as "children under the age of 18 who live for a shorter or longer period of time in a street environment. They

¹⁴ D. Tworek, *Młodzi bezdomni są w Polsce niewidzialni. Śpią na klatkach, w autobusach, pomocy nie ma*, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/2240633,1,młodzi-bez-domni-sa-w-polsce-niewidzialni-spia-na-klatkach-w-autobusach-pomocy-nie-ma.read> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

move from place to place and have their own peer groups and other contacts. They are registered at the address of their parents or some social institution. Characteristically, they have little or no contact with their parents, school representatives and the aid and social services that have responsibility for them”.¹⁵

Violence and abuse are cited as the main causes of child homelessness. It is difficult to determine the scale of this issue in Poland. A picture of children living on the streets is outlined in a 2009 report based on the sociological research commissioned by the “Dzieci ulicy” City Crime Prevention Programme in Cracow. As many as 1.2 million children of the 9 million population were found to be *street children*. Most often, these children were staying at housing estates, in the vicinity of supermarkets, train stations, on streets and squares associated with male and female prostitution.¹⁶ Obviously, the claim that these children should be described as homeless is not entirely justified, but it does provide an idea of the scale of the issue faced by children from dysfunctional families, including those affected by domestic violence.

Polish homelessness is ageing, just as the society as a whole. Loneliness, deteriorating health, helplessness and a worsening financial situation (the rising costs of living) coupled with the increasing waiting times for a place in 24-hour care facilities, make the elderly face the risk of experiencing homelessness as they lose their liquidity. In the last census, 32% of the homeless were people over the age of 61.¹⁷

3. Homelessness of women

The issue of homeless women, historically, especially in Poland, has been researched and described only to a small extent. Meanwhile, especially in Europe, women experiencing the homelessness crisis are written about, among others, from a historical perspective, involving the reasons for entering homelessness, the importance of home and family, the shaping of social policies or the health situation. Regardless of the

¹⁵ E. Szczygieł, *Bezdomność dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce jako efekt przemocy i nadużyć*, “Problemy Dzieci” 2013, no. 2, p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 9.

¹⁷ <https://noizz.pl/big-stories/bezdomnosc-w-polsce-jak-wyglada-zycie-na-ulicy-i-jak-wyjsc-z-bezdomnosci/ev1x2r2> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

state of research and its extensiveness, women experiencing homelessness are in a worse situation than homeless men from the very beginning – burdened with the existing negative stereotype of irresponsible people, they experience secondary discrimination.¹⁸

While the majority of persons experiencing homelessness are men, the proportion of women is high (an estimated 1/5th of the homeless population). We pass by homeless people on the streets every day. They are somehow invisible to us as we are more concerned with our daily issues and the ongoing war in Ukraine. This “transparency”, so to speak, applies especially to women as the society demands from them a constant readiness to be a good wife and mother, a housewife, a professional at work, an appropriately presentable participant of family functions and work events. Yet, the fact that there are fewer homeless women than men does not mean that their lot is better or similar to that of men. Based on the literature on the subject, M. Piechowicz-Bogaczyk, identifies three groups of the determinants of women’s falling into homelessness:

- generational dysfunctionality of the family,
- housing issues,
- addictions and psychopathological traits.¹⁹

The above reasons correspond to the results of the nationwide studies on homelessness from both 2019 and 2024, as well as to the experiences of non-governmental organisations working for people in the homelessness crisis.

Based on the analysis of the research conducted by experts in the field, we can try to outline the image of a modern homeless woman, taking into account her own resources before becoming homeless, its causes and the current situation in which they live.²⁰

¹⁸ More broadly: K. Dębska, *On Intersectionality in Research on Women’s Homelessness in Europe*, “Culture and Society” 2017, no. 4, pp. 233–235.

¹⁹ M. Piechowicz-Bogaczyk, *Narracje bezdomnych kobiet na temat ich przyszłości. Doniesienie z badań jakościowych*, “Rozprawy Społeczne” 2021, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 63.

²⁰ The analysis was based on the description of the research by M. Piechowicz-Bogaczyk, *Narratives of Homeless Women about Their Future. Report from Qualitative Research*, “Social dissertation” 2021, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 60–73; S. Bokuniewicz, *The Role of Social Spaces of the Wrocław Metropolis in the Functioning of Homeless Women*, “Gardens of Science

Two main groups of homeless women can be distinguished: mothers with children, and lonely women. This division usually translates into the possible ways of experiencing homelessness. It should be noted here that in a situation when women are separated from their children, they are classified in statistics as single homeless people. Mothers seek institutional support, trying to provide shelter (e.g. in single mother's homes) and food for themselves and for their children. On the other hand, lonely women are more likely to stay in non-residential settings, occasionally using support facilities, mainly due to the adverse weather conditions. Women with children in their care are in a way privileged in their efforts to obtain shelter, in contrast to their single colleagues. Alcoholism is a common problem faced by homeless women. It is identified either as a cause or as the effect of their adverse living circumstances.

Most women experiencing homelessness have vocational education background and professional experience. However, an increasing number of homeless women have secondary education background or a university degree. Their population corresponds to that of people with home. This contradicts the stereotype that it is mainly uneducated people, from dysfunctional environments, who are at risk of homelessness. The same pertains to homeless men. In case of women, duration of experiencing homelessness matters. The longer they stay homeless, avoiding assistance offered by support programmes through which they can strive to overcome their predicament, the more difficult it is for them to break away from homelessness. Women with children are more likely to try to break away from homelessness, for the sake of their children's future. It is more difficult for women to overcome addiction, rejection or humiliation, which challenges another stereotype claiming that women are mentally stronger than men.

In case of women's homelessness gender matters. Homeless women struggle with a stronger sense of guilt, exacerbated by negative social attitudes towards them.

and Art" 2018, no. 8, 48–58; B. Szluz, Homeless Women in the Opinion of Homeless Women, "Seminare" 2011, vol. 30, pp. 105–117; A. Zaborowska, *Homelessness of Women on the Example of the City of Radom*, <https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/5799> (accessed: 1.10.2025); S. Góra, *Women Who Are Not There. Homelessness of Women in Poland*, <https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/5799> (accessed: 1.10.2025); and the experiences of supporting institutions found in the Internet resources: <https://noizz.pl/spoleczenstwo/bezdomnosc-kobiet-jest-inna-to-je-najczesciej-dotyka-przemoc-seksualna/eexyl3c>; <https://zwierciadlo.pl/lifestyle/522242,1,ukryta-kobiecosc--kobiety-w-kryzysie-bezdomnosci.read> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

Many of them try to conceal their gender under men's clothing, thereby protecting themselves from sexual abuse (rape) by making themselves look like men. Women experiencing homelessness rarely talk about having been raped and hardly ever report it. On the one hand, they do not trust the justice system; on the other hand, through their appearance or odour, they deter public officials from taking up the conversation with them, thus losing the chance to be listened to. This leaves them alone with their problems. Women expecting a child conceived from rape are in an even more dire situation. There is no clear procedure in place for such situations, which does not relieve those women from liability for abandoning their new-born child, thus endangering their child's life.

NGO representatives clearly point to violence as the main cause of falling into homelessness, but also of remaining homeless. Thus, both young girls and adult women become homeless, leaving their homes when brought to the brink of nervous exhaustion. Rising incidence of violence against the elderly is bringing increasingly older women into homelessness. Homeless women, more often than homeless men, struggle with loneliness. They are usually affected by fear, powerlessness, and humiliation. They feel rejected, not accepted by others, treated in an instrumental manner.

Data regarding homeless women's perceptions of other women experiencing homelessness are remarkably interesting. They indicate traits such as jealousy, quarrelsomeness, aggressiveness or hot-temperedness. Homeless women describe other homeless women in a pejorative way, but also see them as "companions in misery" or even treat them as their only family. Owing to diverse support programmes, homeless women staying in shelters or in single mother's homes have a better chance of getting out of homelessness, finding a job and, in time, obtaining independent housing. Not all homeless women want to stay in shelters as they do not want to comply with the rules in place there, including alcohol drinking prohibition, restraint from violence, obligation to perform daily chores, attention to hygiene or prohibition of contacts with men. Homeless women living in non-shelter settings mainly acquire material resources through gathering, begging, extortion, theft or prostitution.

However, it must be noted that women who undertake to break away from their homelessness find it easier to find and keep a job, compared to men. It is much easier for them to accept jobs that do not align with their educational background or aspirations they had had before they became homeless.

The issue of homelessness is primarily the domain of social sciences, but its ethical and legal dimension cannot be forgotten. A person deprived of housing, with a sense of unimaginable humiliation, loses the meaning of further existence. They are stripped of their dignity and humanity. They are perceived through the prism not of who they are, but of how much they have. Thus, a person should act in a manner befitting their dignity, and on the other hand, this same dignity imposes on each of us the obligation to respect others.²¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Poland guards the rights belonging to every person, in which the provisions of articles 75, 76 and 78 guarantee the housing needs of citizens, and in particular the prevention of homelessness.²²

Other legal acts that should be cited as directly referring to people living in a homelessness crisis include the aforementioned Act on Social Assistance (Journal of Laws of 2003, item 901), the Act on Social Employment (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 176) or the Act amending the Act on Financial Support for the Creation of Social Housing, Sheltered Housing, Lodgings and Homes for the Homeless, the Act on the Protection of Tenants' Rights, Municipal Housing Resources (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 756).

Unfortunately, although both the homeless themselves and the decision-makers of the state's social policy assess the existing legislation towards those living in the homelessness crisis as good, the application of its provisions is not. This is due to many conditions, some of which are caused by the homeless themselves. The internal diversity of the homeless community, their life situations, significantly limits the use of their rights. The proposed legislative solutions, especially in relation to homeless women, only deepen this state of affairs. The examples cited above characterising female homelessness confirm the fact of numerous discriminations in the support system, such as the care for a pregnant women experiencing homelessness; many forms of support in fact refer to homeless men.²³

²¹ M. Duda, *The Homeless Is My Brother. On Polish Homelessness at the Turn of the Century in the Light of the Social Teaching of the Church*, Kraków 2011, pp. 170–171.

²² *Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, "Journal of Laws" 1997, no. 78 item. 483, as amended, art. 75, 76, 78.

²³ K. Dębska, *On Intersectionality in Research on Women's Homelessness in Europe*, "Culture and Society" 2017, no. 4, pp. 233–235.

4. Summary

Persons experiencing homelessness, both women and men, constitute a heterogeneous community, which this article endeavours to outline. “They not only feel stigmatised and excluded, but often also struggle with loneliness, abandonment, lack of hope, broken family ties, interrupted professional careers and personal development paths, and loss of health. However, this group is highly heterogeneous: there are working homeless persons and those who are not lonely”.²⁴

Some homeless persons can name the causes of their homelessness, which helps them to take actions to overcome their limitations. Others, despite being beneficiaries of various support programmes, do not feel the need for any change. Experiences shared by academics – experts in the subject-matter, and volunteers working with homeless persons – show that the issue of homelessness must not be underestimated, as it is destructive in nature, threatening the essence of humanity and degrading the homeless as a person.

One article is not enough to fully discuss the complexity of the issue of homelessness and to portray people experiencing it. Therefore, the author treats this article as just another voice addressed to the state social policy makers, but also as a voice calling for social sensitivity and responsibility for one another.

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²⁴ <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Tyle-osob-w-Polsce-jest-bezdomnych-Nadchodzi-dla-nich-najgorszy-okres-8657882.html> (accessed: 1.10.2025).

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► SUMMARY

The Polish Woman Experiencing Homelessness

Thinking about contemporary homelessness in terms of people living on the margins of the society is a significant oversimplification. The changes occurring in the society are multidimensional, spanning various areas, and for many of us, intangible. Life in the context of homelessness has also taken on a different shape and, along with the evolving reality, continues to undergo internal transformations. Today, homelessness affects both the poor and those who until recently were wealthy: managers, businesspeople, directors; unskilled workers, as well as individuals with higher education. What remains unchanged is the fact that a homeless person is still a human being, a PERSON! They therefore demand respect for their humanity, equal access to their entitled rights, and assistance in living their situation with dignity. After all, no one deserves to live without a home.

The author seeks to draw particular attention to the trauma experienced by homeless women. In many cultures, a woman is identified as the guardian of the home. Homelessness strips her of gentleness, love, tenderness, and beauty. She stands alongside men, fighting for each day, for life, for survival. Poland has established a relatively coherent legal system to safeguard the basic rights of homeless individuals; however, the implementation of these provisions falls short of the ideal. Undoubtedly, this

stems, among other factors, from the complexity of homelessness itself, as well as from the diminished sensitivity to human suffering. By outlining the issue of homelessness with a particular focus on the plight of homeless women, the author seeks to express a firm protest against attempts to marginalise this phenomenon, reducing the issue and homeless individuals themselves to a substitute topic” at the onset of the calendar winter and the Christmas season.