

REPORT



# STUDY VISIT

MUNICH  
GERMANY

21-22 OCT.  
2025



Arbeitsgemeinschaft  
Wohnungsnotfallhilfe  
München und Oberbayern  
Koordination  
Wohnungslosenhilfe  
Südbayern

Federal Ministry  
for Housing, Urban Development  
and Building



Landeshauptstadt  
München  
Sozialreferat  
Amt für Wohnen  
und Migration



BAG Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V.

## Co-organised with

- The City of Munich's Office for Housing and Migration
- The Coordination of Homeless Assistance Southern Bavaria's Working Group for Emergency Housing Assistance in Munich and Upper Bavaria
- The Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)
- The Federal Association for Homeless Assistance (BAG W)

With great thanks to the kmfv and Diakonie for allowing us to visit their services.

## EPOCH Practice is funded by



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## Cover image

Night Shelter 'ÜBERNACHTUNGSSCHUTZ', Munich

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## **Introduction**

The EPOCH Practice study visit in Munich brought together 31 participants from across the EU to explore local homelessness services within Germany's federal system. Over two days, the visit combined policy discussions and field visits, fostering exchange between practitioners and policymakers at city, state and federal levels.

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## **Plenary Presentations**

The plenary sessions examined homelessness as a systemic issue shaped by housing markets, governance structures and socio-economic dynamics. Speakers from municipal, regional and federal levels highlighted prevention, permanent housing and the need to embed successful pilot projects into mainstream policy.

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## **Site Visits**

The site visits showcased a wide range of homelessness services in Munich, from low-threshold emergency shelters to therapeutic housing and permanent solutions. Together, they illustrated how diverse pathways are used to respond to different needs, while also revealing the constraints imposed by the city's tight housing market.

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## **Conclusion**

In summary, Jörn Scheuermann aptly concludes that social welfare provision -especially for the most vulnerable- is not a luxury, but a fundamental right, and the foundation of social cohesion.

# INTRODUCTION

## WILLKOMMEN IN MÜNCHEN

Over two days in late October, the EPOCH Practice team hosted 31 participants from across the EU in the Bavarian city of Munich for a study visit of the local homelessness services. This third and final study visit organised under the project allowed us to dive deep into the German model of social service provision – and the interplay of national, state and city competences within its federal system.

During the visit, we learned from the local, state, and federal homelessness strategies, policies, and services. Participants attended presentations on policy frameworks and funding mechanisms. Furthermore, facilitated visits to homelessness services in the city allowed participants to engage with practices in the field. The study visit provided insight into the city's functioning social system and also created space for participants to bring and share their own experiences and approaches to the conversation.

A heartfelt thank you must be extended to the local partners from the City of Munich's Office for Housing and Migration, and the Coordination of Homeless Assistance Southern Bavaria's Working Group for Emergency Housing Assistance in Munich and Upper Bavaria – for all their dedicated time, expertise and generosity. Thank you also to our longtime partners from the German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) and the Federal Association for Homeless Assistance (BAG W) for making this collaboration possible.



**Saoirse Browne**

EPOCH PRACTICE OFFICER  
FEANTSA



# PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

## SYSTEMIC DRIVERS OF HOMELESSNESS AND COORDINATED POLICY RESPONSES

The plenary provided an in-depth overview of the German and Bavarian homelessness framework, emphasising the complexity of shared responsibilities across multiple levels of governance. It was illustrated that the support options and entitlement to assistance for homeless people are based both on regulatory law and on differentiated social welfare laws. Presentations illustrated how rising housing costs, labour market pressures and fragmented institutional responsibilities contribute to growing housing emergencies, particularly in urban centres such as Munich. National strategies, data collection mechanisms and targeted funding instruments were presented alongside the role of civil society organisations, underlining the importance of coordinated, person-centred and prevention-focused responses to homelessness. Throughout the discussions, a strong consensus emerged on the need for long-term structural investment in affordable housing and early intervention systems.

# Plenary presentations

## Warmly Welcomed by the City and the State

The event commenced with two important addresses from the city and state leadership. Firstly, Munich City Councillor **Barbara Likus**; and secondly from **Dr Dorothea Gaudernack**, the Head of Department with responsibility for homelessness in the Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Affairs. Both speakers addressed the importance of prevention strategies. Dr Gaudernack stressed the necessity of 'invest[ing] in early interventions and housing led solutions'. It was clear from the outset that the Munich and Bavarian officials were as keen to share their practices, as they were to learn from the experiences of the participants attending. Throughout, the event would go on to focus on the building of collective knowledge and the discussion and exchange (both critical and complimentary) of practices.

**[There are] more than 11,000 people experiencing homelessness in Munich. Every person has a story, and every story matters.**

**Barbara Likus**  
Munich City Councillor

**Pilot projects are important, but we must work to embed successful models.**

**Dr Dorothea Gaudernack**  
Head of Department, Bavarian State  
Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Affairs



# Bavaria: Responsibilities Of Emergency Housing Assistance - Challenges And Solutions In Practice

## 'How We Create Homelessness by Ourselves as Such a Thing Called Society'

**Mr Jörn Scheuermann**, *Managing Director of the Working Group on Emergency Housing Assistance, Munich and Upper Bavaria, Coordination of Homeless Assistance Southern Bavaria*

The Coordination of Homeless Assistance Southern Bavaria works, alongside its counterpart(s) in the rest of Bavaria, to build coordination structures through the federal state (*Länder*) between all relevant systems.

In a system as large and detailed as Germany's states, this is a complex exercise. Under the regulatory law, every municipality in Germany must offer emergency shelter to all people regardless of legal residency. There is no requirement for any further assistance.

The dedicated **Specialist Centre for Housing Emergency Assistance** supports local systems by focusing on prevention, outreach work, social work in independent living, Housing First, and housing acquisition.

### IN NUMBERS

On 31 January 2025 there were **44,855** people registered in emergency accommodation in Bavaria.

In 2022 this number was **17,910**.

An increase of **150%** in those 3 years.

The presentation explored how housing emergencies in Bavaria—and Germany more broadly—are shaped by economic, political, and systemic factors, arguing that **homelessness is a societal creation rather than an unavoidable outcome**. Munich demonstrates an escalating housing crisis driven by structural pressures rather than individual failings.

Several interconnected forces contribute to unaffordable housing and homelessness in Bavaria:

- **Economic growth and prosperity**, which bring rising land values and housing demand.
- **Migration patterns**, combined with social tensions and the rise of far-right political narratives. **Migration to Germany has put further stress on preexisting structural issues, rather than acting as a root cause.**
- **ECB interest rate policy**, where historically low rates contributed to significant property price inflation.
- **Wages falling behind housing costs**, making “homelessness despite full-time work” an increasingly common reality.

Long-term data shows steep increases in rents and property prices, outpacing income growth by a wide margin. Between 2009 and 2016, purchase prices in Germany rose by more than 200% in some cases, while wages grew far more slowly. The result: housing “eats up wages,” squeezing households into precarious conditions.

Federal and regional spending on rent subsidies and housing benefits reached €30 billion in 2024, underscoring how much public money is used to offset a failing housing market. Meanwhile, investment in construction remains comparatively low. Issues such as the lack of land value taxation further distort the market and limit state capacity to respond effectively.

## explainer

### **The German Social Code (Sozialgesetzbuch)**

In Germany, the Social Code (SGB) is a collection of laws that regulate social welfare, social insurance, and social support. It is divided into 12 Books (SGB I–XII).

- If people's particular living circumstances are linked to social difficulties, assistance must be provided in accordance with Sections 67 ff. of **SGB XII**.
- People who are of working age and able to work are also entitled to benefits under **SGB II**.
- Assistance ends only when there is no further need for support.
- However, in rural areas, services are not always available.
- The entitlement to social benefits is preconditioned on legal residency.

**The Southern Bavarian system of responsibilities** is highly fragmented, involving:

- Several state ministries (social affairs, interior, health, housing),
- Three regional districts as supra-local providers,
- 39 counties and 10 cities as local providers,
- Around 1,200 municipalities acting under police and public-order law.

This creates “maximum interfaces,” complicating coordination but also defining the field in which homelessness services operate.

### **Systemic Change and Person-Centred Support**

- Housing emergencies are the product of wider political, economic, and systemic dynamics.
- Effective solutions require coordinated governance, investment, and a shift towards accessible, person-centred social work.
- Providing care and meeting support needs is not a sign of failure but a success of a functioning social safety system.

**The goal is to adapt services to the individual—not force individuals to fit rigid system criteria**

*affirms* **Jörn Scheuermann**





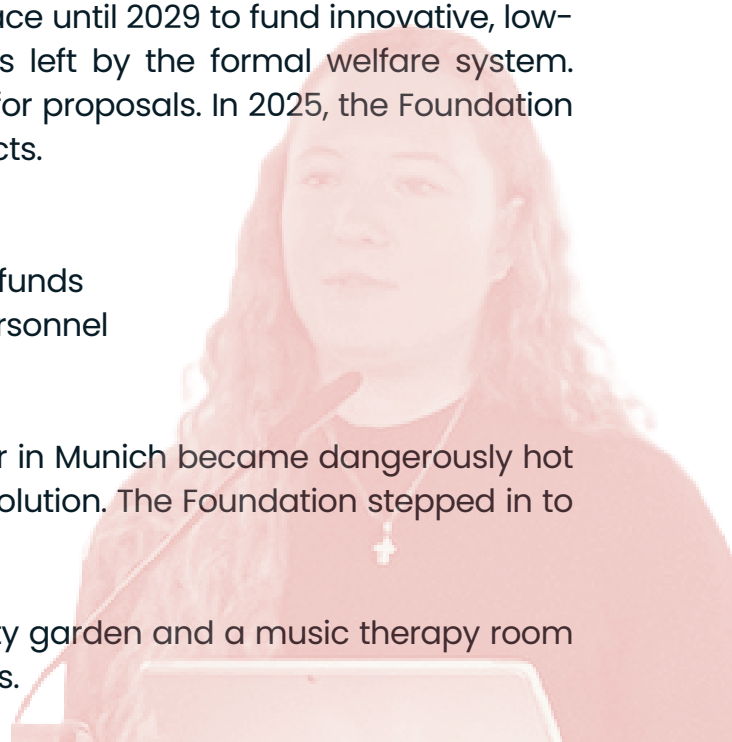
# Bavarian Homeless Assistance Foundation (Sabrina Link, Managing Director)

This public-law foundation began with a one-time endowment of five million euros from the Bavarian social budget. In addition, it receives about 10,000 euros in donations each year. The Foundation is in place until 2029 to fund innovative, low-threshold, transferable projects that fill gaps left by the formal welfare system. Grants are provided through an annual call for proposals. In 2025, the Foundation received 71 applications and funded 43 projects.

- Grants range from €1,000–50,000
- Projects must contribute at least 10% own funds
- Funding typically covers materials, not personnel
- Annual budget: approx. €400,000


Example project: Rooms in a women's shelter in Munich became dangerously hot in summer, but social law could not fund a solution. The Foundation stepped in to provide air conditioning in each unit.

The foundation has also funded a community garden and a music therapy room for other emergency accommodation centres.



## German National Strategy, Policy and Assistance

### **The German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) – Dr Domenico Ferragina**

Germany has embedded the goal of ending homelessness into two consecutive federal coalition agreements, including the goal to end homelessness by 2030. In 2024, the first federal strategy on homelessness was published - [‘Together for a Home: National Action Plan to Tackle Homelessness’](#) 

#### **German Homelessness Counts**

- The Homelessness Reporting Act (2020) provides the legal basis for annual reporting.
- Official annual data covers only accommodated homeless persons (ETHOS 2 & 3).
- Numbers for rough sleepers (ETHOS 1), hidden homelessness (ETHOS 6) and those in non-conventional dwellings (ETHOS 5) are estimated every two years.

The Data as of January 2025 shows:

- 474,700 people accommodated due to homelessness (+8% compared to 2024).
- 86% foreign nationals; 29% from Ukraine.
- 41% under 25.
- 34% families with children and 34% single adults.
- Eastern Germany (excluding Berlin) records far fewer homeless people.
- Between 1 – 7 February 2024 there were, according to projections, 47,270 people rough sleeping and 60,435 people in hidden homelessness.
- 80% of rough sleepers recorded were men, and 2/3 of rough sleepers were EU citizens. The majority of this population live in big cities (75%).

### Implementation of the National Action Plan

- Annual work programmes.
- Organised forums take up the annual goals, propose interim goals and measures, implement and evaluate them.
- A steering board, which unites all stakeholders including the associations of German municipalities.
- Public consultations, including with people with lived experience of homelessness.
- Annual review meetings.

### Mainstreaming Homelessness in Housing Policy

Integrating homelessness into broader housing policy requires cooperation with federal states' housing ministries and consistent raising of the issue of homelessness in Bundestag committees. Measures have included:

- **Establishing a national working group** on housing provision for homeless people.
- **Anchoring homelessness** in the federal alliance for affordable housing.
- **Extension** of housing allowances.

Future targets include working to ensure that funds for affordable housing are also used for housing the homeless, and seeking to mobilise additional resources, such as EU funds.

# Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe (BAG W)



## Germany's National Federation of Organisations Working with People in Housing Emergencies – Mr Martin Kositzka

The BAG W is a non-profit association of members who provide social assistance to people experiencing homelessness or acute housing crises. It is composed of expert committees and working groups producing recommendations, position papers, and guidance. Topics include: social law, migration, health, documentation & statistics, and participation (among others). The BAG W maintains the Documentation System on Homelessness, collecting client data from service providers and producing biennial national homelessness estimates.

The BAG W contributes to the national action plan to end homelessness through projects, guidance and advocacy, such as position papers, good practice publications, and practical guidelines. A recent project of the BAG W, 'Social Media Streetwork', offers first-line multilingual advice and referrals directly to vulnerable people through online tools.

## WHAT IS MOST NEEDED TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS IN GERMANY?

According to BAG W data, over 600,000 people are currently homeless in Germany.

According to the BAG W, strong emphasis must be placed on prevention, including:

- **Expanding advisory centres** and support services nationwide.
- **Strengthening early intervention** to avoid rent arrears, tenancy termination, and evictions.

Central specialist units ("Fachstellen") are effective hubs combining financial assistance, emergency accommodation responsibilities, and personal support to sustain tenancies. This model is proven to work effectively. However, these centres are currently only existing in an overall average of **19%** of the country (**38%** of cities and urban districts).

The increased provision of housing for homeless people must be made concrete through:

- **More social housing construction** – long term and permanent.
- **A social rent and social housing policy.**
- **Fixed housing quotas** for homeless people.



# SITE VISITS

## FROM EMERGENCY SHELTER TO PERMANENT HOUSING: PRACTICES ON THE GROUND

Participants visited multiple services demonstrating Munich's continuum of care, including emergency accommodation, outpatient housing support, therapeutic residential communities and permanent housing for women. The visits highlighted strong professional social work, integrated health and counselling services, and innovative models. At the same time, service providers consistently pointed to the limited availability of affordable housing as the main barrier to successful move-on, with many residents remaining in services longer than intended. Overall, the visits grounded policy discussions in lived practice, offering concrete insights into both the strengths and structural limits of the local homelessness system.

# SITE VISITS

## HOUSE AT PILGERSHEIMER STRASSE (kmfv)

One of the oldest shelters for people experiencing homelessness in Germany, the Haus an der Pilgersheimer Strasse offers low-threshold, one-stop-shop services, including accommodation in shared rooms, social work, a day shelter and in-house health services. The emergency shelter is part of Munich's accommodation system and is funded by the City of Munich.

Key rules include no violence, no alcohol or illegal drugs (with a largely accepting, harm-reduction approach in practice), mandatory counselling, daytime vacancy of rooms, and fixed check-in and closing times.

Beds are limited to adult men, while services are open to all adults. Service users must have their own income or benefit entitlement, demonstrate homelessness and social difficulties, and have German or English language skills. The cost per bed in a shared room is 7 euros per night. Rooms cannot be locked (lockers are available), and cooking is not possible.

**Medical Care:** In 2024, the medical services provided treatments in the medical office and through the **street ambulance**, reaching around 1,000 patients. Services included 1,300 wound care treatments. Psychiatric care is also available on site. In 2026 the service is introducing two innovative health services – **digital wound care**, and a **dental ambulance**.

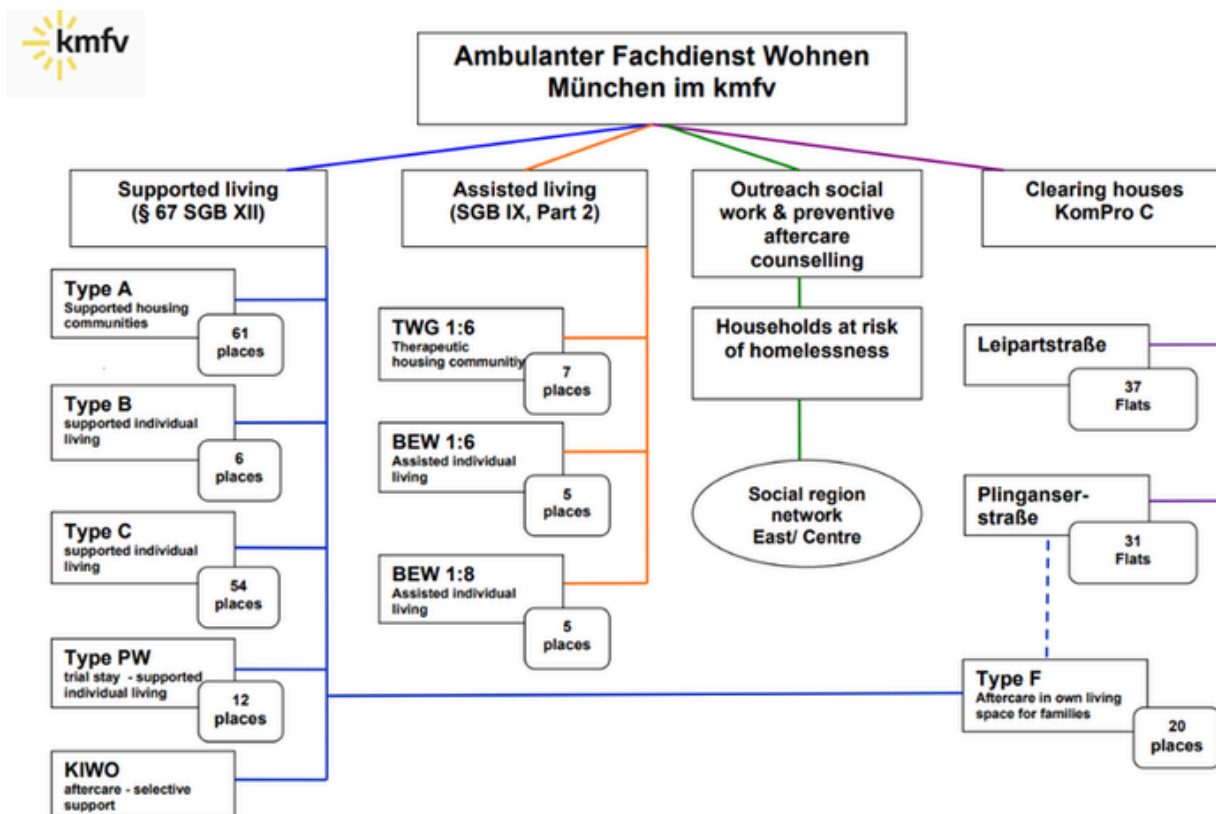


## AMBULATORY HOUSING SERVICES (kmfv)

The Ambulante Fachdienst Wohnen München (AFWM) offers outpatient support for people in Munich who are affected by imminent, acute or past homelessness. The service provides many different types of living places, including community, supported housing, individual assisted living and therapeutic communities. The **therapeutic communities** are designed for men with alcohol additions, and/or mental health difficulties.

The AFMW also provides services such as outreach social work for people threatened with loss of housing, and preventative aftercare counselling for when the living arrangement has been sustained or new housing found, in order to stabilise and sustain the tenancy. The AFMW operates emergency shelters called 'Clearing Houses' for homeless people. The clearing house stay is limited to six months maximum, though limited prolongation is possible under certain circumstances. For people who were previously homeless, and now move into their own independent housing, social work support can be provided in their own living space.

Another service, the **'ProWohnen'** offers single people and couples the opportunity to move into an apartment rented by the kmfv, along with supportive counselling. The aim is for the inhabitants take over the apartment through their own lease. The AFMV services are funded by the Social Department of the City of Munich and the District of Upper Bavaria.



## HOUSE AT PISTORINI STRASSE (kmfv)

The house is divided into three target groups for accommodation - a therapeutic residential community, the 'Isar-Up' programme for young adults, and a general men's hostel. All rooms are individual, with a private bathroom and access to shared kitchens. All residents must be able to manage daily life independently and are required to actively participate in counselling sessions. A monthly user fee of €383 is charged, and shared facilities include a laundry room, gym, and computer room. Unique services offered include art therapy and leisure activities.

Funding for the main hostel comes from the City of Munich, **there are 52 places available, and accommodation can be provided for up to 2 years.** The Therapeutic Residential Community is for men with psychological or mental health issues. The 18 places are funded by the District of Upper Bavaria, and accommodation is limited to 3 years.

YOUTH

**'Isar Up'** is a residential programme for young men aged 18 to 27 with a focus on reintegration into permanent housing and employment, or into education and training. The 16 places are funded by the City of Munich and accommodation is limited to 2 years. The main causes of homelessness among this cohort are: leaving care, leaving prison, family conflict, and loss of housing e.g. eviction.

The Isar Up programme is intended as a bridge to housing readiness. With that in mind, the programme has a **60% success rate**, meaning the cohort moving on to independent living. **The programme staff believe this rate would be higher if more affordable apartments were available to rent in Munich.** The other 40% of young men from Isar Up usually move to other homelessness services.



## NIGHT SHELTER **'ÜBERNACHTUNGSSCHUTZ'** ✨ (Diakonie)

The large, newly opened shelter at the outskirts of Munich replaces a previous shelter and expands capacity. The low-threshold night shelter is for all individuals who need short-term emergency accommodation, provided for free. **Importantly, this includes foreign individuals who are not legally entitled to social benefits in Germany** – the only such offering in Munich. Whilst access to much of the welfare and social service system is conditional on legal residency, local authorities must provide basic assistance to all homeless households in need, regardless of their administrative situation. This shelter is an example of Munich's commitment to deliver on this duty.

Legally, this duty comes from public safety laws, not the social codes (SGB). There are a total of 730 beds, mostly made up of four beds to a room – a reduction from the prior 12 beds to a room at the previous shelter. The shelter is funded by the City of Munich and operated by Diakonie.

The shelter includes a family section and is accessible to wheelchair users and people with pets. As check-in and check-out times are mandatory, a day shelter is available on site when the night shelter is closed. People experiencing homelessness can receive public transport passes to reach the shelter by bus. Security staff check belongings on entry to remove weapons, drugs, and alcohol.

Shelter staff say that a significant number of the shelter occupants come from Romania and Bulgaria to earn money through work. They often find jobs in the low-wage sector, but **no apartment that they can finance with their salary**. Others have been lured to Munich on false promises of well paid work, or find themselves out of work for periods.



## Lebensplätze für Frauen (Diakonie)

'Living Spaces for Women' offers permanent living in own apartments for older, formerly homeless women. The target group for this service are women who have experienced homelessness for many years, usually moving between various services, who are older (usually 50+) and have high care needs, which may include mental, physical or addiction issues.

There are 26 self-contained apartments under this service, two of which are wheelchair accessible. Inhabitants have their own rental contracts and low-threshold, multi-professional counselling is available in the building, which the women can use voluntarily. This **voluntariness** is a keystone of the service, in preserving the autonomy of the inhabitants. The rental contract and the support services are thus separated, with one not depending on the other. Lebensplätze für Frauen operates according to the **Housing First** model in offering **individual living** and **permanency**, alongside optional support services.

Funding comes from the City of Munich, with Diakonie renting the apartments and leasing them directly to the inhabitants. In 2026, an additional 67 places will come on-stream in Munich under the Lebensplätze für Frauen operated by Diakonie.



## HANS SCHERER HAUS (kmfv)

The Hans Scherer House is a service of the kmfv for men whose living situation is characterised by homelessness, unemployment and the lack of sustainable social ties. The offer of help is aimed in particular at men who struggle with alcohol and/or drug addiction or mental health difficulties.

The Haus is unique in its offer due to the provision of **four workshops for occupational therapy and work training (bicycle, metal, carpentry and furniture restoration)**. In addition, work areas such as kitchen, housekeeping, garden, painting and craft group as well as creative work are available.

The Haus is a **'dry facility'** meaning neither drugs nor alcohol are permitted. When inhabitants relapse, social counselling is provided to help them return to sobriety. If inhabitants do not wish to remain 'dry', they need to move to a different service or living arrangement.

**The service has around 60 residents, with another 30 people coming during the day.** It is funded by the District of Upper Bavaria. Residents spend most of their week in the workshops. They receive social security, medical insurance and a small contribution for hours worked. External medical and psychological treatment is provided. The service operates a bio farm shop on premises, staffed by residents, where produce and crafts are sold to the public.

The service aims to rehabilitate residents for a return to independent living. The average stay is 1 – 3 years, though much longer stays are possible. A difficulty of facilitating the move-on of residents to independent living is the lack of availability of independent apartments on the market.



There are no safe consumption rooms in Munich. The general approach of the homelessness services in Munich focuses on abstinence and rehabilitation. Some few services allow the consumption of alcohol on premises.



## Mittenheim Development (kmfv)

Weather conditions on the day made the visit to the new Mittenheim development of the Kmfv impossible, but the group received a quick overview of the project, which is the first of its kind in Munich – a social provider building affordable housing. 50% of the 420 apartments will be subsidised and rent controlled. The first tenants are scheduled to move in in mid-2026.

For more information, visit the [project website](#).



# CONCLUSION

## SOCIAL RIGHTS STRENGTHEN SOCIAL COHESION

At a time when international cooperation is being called into question, the Study Visit created a counterpoint: **committed people with different interests and backgrounds from all over Europe met in Munich to learn** about national, regional, and municipal approaches to tackling homelessness in Germany, Bavaria, and Munich.

In an exchange that enriched all participants, through controversial and exciting discussions, it became clear, above all, that the approach in Germany differs from arbitrary charity and is characterised primarily by rights for affected people that are enshrined in law and enforceable—even if the realisation of these rights can be a long process.

The former Social Affairs Officer of Munich, Friedrich Graffe, once coined the phrase: “Security comes from social security.” In recent years, we have seen very clearly that increasing social inequality destabilises democracy and thus also economic success. In Germany and Bavaria, this is also closely linked to the rise of right-wing populist parties. Some politicians repeatedly proclaim that social spending must first be generated—but this statement, from a macroeconomic, historical, and developmental-psychological perspective, is simply marked by undercomplexity: **before young people can earn anything at all, they must first be born, loved, raised, and—if we may put it this way—educated. And for that, young people first need a safe home and a roof over their heads.**

The principle of the welfare state in Germany, based on the concept of human dignity, active poverty reduction, and the provision of housing—especially for those sections of the population who are unable to support themselves in the market economy—is not the consequence nor by-product of economic activity, but rather the basis for social peace and thus also for economic success.

Perceived injustice and fear of social decline, on the other hand, create unease in society, which provides nationalist movements and their scapegoat theories with a red carpet to parliament. We are convinced that placing greater emphasis on the common good will strengthen democracy and thus take the wind out of the sails of tendencies that divide society.



## Jörn M. Scheuermann

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EMERGENCY HOUSING ASSISTANCE, MUNICH AND UPPER BAVARIA, COORDINATION OF HOMELESS ASSISTANCE SOUTHERN BAVARIA



REPORT



# STUDY VISIT

MUNICH  
GERMANY

## EPOCH PRACTICE

EPOCH Practice is a mutual learning project delivered by FEANTSA to build knowledge and capacity in support of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH).

This programme started in January 2024 and will conclude on 31 March 2026.

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## OUR FUNDERS



Co-funded by  
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