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Press release

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The corona crisis highlighted an existing issue: harsh conditions for homeless and unregistered migrants in Denmark

Today, the Council for Socially Marginalised People is publishing the results of a new report, the first study on the health situation among unregistered migrants living on the streets of Danish cities. Through interviews with migrants, healthcare professionals and employees/volunteers in social organisations, the report shows how homeless and unregistered migrants in Denmark experience substantial social and health-related issues and how the system provides very few possibilities for assistance.

The corona crisis has made it clear that the lack of access to necessary healthcare for unregistered migrants in Denmark is a substantial issue. With insufficient access to healthcare and places to isolate, unregistered migrants have posed a risk to society, but especially to themselves, since many are suffering from chronic illnesses, including diseases of the respiratory system. Yet the issue is not isolated to the current crisis.

- The severe deterioration of their health is worrisome. Without the right to social and health related assistance and treatment, except for emergency care, the migrants are extremely vulnerable. Suffering from an array of health issues, they have constituted a risk group during the corona crisis. Still, as shown in the new study, life-threatening circumstances are part of their day-to-day reality. With their conditions being so poor, they are trapped in a marginalized position in Denmark. It is difficult to take the decision of returning to the country of origin when battling substance addiction, severe mental illness as well as physical illness, says Vibe Klarup, Director of the Council for the Socially Marginalised.

Changes to the Danish Health Act necessary

The Council for the Socially Marginalised find that among other things a change to the Danish Health Act is needed, introducing the right to necessary healthcare instead of solely emergency healthcare. It must be possible to provide non-emergency, but necessary, diagnosing and treatment of an individual when a risk for deterioration of their condition in the case of no treatment is identified.

- The study paints a picture of an extremely marginalised group of people in need of assistance at the most basic level. It is necessary that the government among other things carry out changes to the Danish Health Act in order to make it possible to provide these people with necessary assistance while they are in Denmark – that is a prerequisite to helping them towards a dignified and permanent return to their country of origin, says Vibe Klarup.

It is the hope of the Council for the Socially Marginalised that this study may contribute to a more nuanced debate about unregistered migrants and subsequently to identify solutions to a health issue that affects society as a whole.

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