



European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
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For Immediate Release

Sharp Rise in Homelessness in Many European Member States

The European Observatory on Homelessness, the research arm of the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, has published a statistical update capturing recent trends in homelessness numbers and the profile of homeless people in Europe. The statistics reveal worryingly sharp rises in homelessness and increases among particularly vulnerable groups such as young people. More must be done, including by the European Union, to curb these increases.

The European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH) has published a detailed look at available data on homelessness in most European Union (EU) Member States. Worrying trends such as a sharp rise in many countries (striking when compared with the slow increase of overall poverty levels measured by the EU) and increasing numbers of young people becoming homeless, including a higher representation of women among young homeless people.

In countries where reliable data are available (still with some caveats), the rise in homelessness numbers has reached double digit increases (16% in Denmark, 50% in France, 21% in Germany, 17% in the Netherlands, 29% in Sweden, 44% in Brno, Czech Republic) in recent years. This should trigger political reaction in the form of ambitious homelessness and housing policies based on evidence and an understanding of what homelessness is. Trends in homelessness are not necessarily captured by social trends measured through other EU indicators, such as relative poverty. This shows that homelessness has its own dynamics and specific measures are needed to tackle it.

Indeed, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased in all countries except Finland, where political will to end homelessness and effective, evidence-based and properly funded policies such as Housing First are to thank for the reduction in homeless numbers.

Factors such as the lack of affordable housing, increased barriers to accessing housing, more unemployment, the effects of the crisis, cuts in welfare benefits and barriers to health and social services are reported as having contributed to the sharp increases in homelessness.

The EOH study also looked into the changing profiles of homeless people in the EU. The increase in youth homelessness is a stark reflection of the situation in today's Europe, even in Finland. To combat this, the European Union must make sure the most excluded young people are targeted by its plans to address youth unemployment and reintegrate vulnerable young people. An increase in the number of homeless immigrants was reported among the homeless population, particularly in France and Spain.

Knowing the number and characteristics of homeless people in a country is paramount as the figures can be used to inform policy to combat homelessness. The European Commission should promote harmonised data collection practices on homelessness in EU Member States and support them to make sure policies are as relevant and evidence-based as possible.

This evidence of the rapidly growing numbers of homeless people in most EU Member States and the fact that more young people are finding themselves in this situation must be a wakeup call for the European Union, which should support ambitious, coordinated homelessness policies based on approaches that have been proven to be effective in reducing homelessness numbers.

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Notes for Editors:

1. FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. www.feantsa.org
2. The European Observatory on Homelessness carries out transnational research on homelessness and housing exclusion. www.feantsaresearch.org
3. EOH Comparative Studies N°4: "Extent and Profile of Homelessness in European Member States: A Statistical Update" <http://feantsaresearch.org/spip.php?article343&lang=en>
4. EU Measures to Tackle Youth Unemployment <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036>