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FEANTSA Calls Attention to Women's Homelessness on International Women's Day

Women's homelessness is on the rise in multiple European countries¹²³ with particularly striking increases in France, where there has been a 22% rise in women requesting emergency accommodation,⁴ and Ireland, where there was a 28% rise in women accessing homeless services between January 2016 and January 2017.⁵

Research suggests that in the case of women, there is a gender-specific dimension to their experiences with high levels of childhood trauma, violence and sexual violence. Most studies highlight the complex nature of women's homelessness and the overlap between women's homelessness and other support needs – for example, mental health issues, domestic violence, drug use and trauma. Women who are homeless have a number of severe, interrelated and exceptionally complex problems, which contribute to their homelessness and make recovery challenging.

This intersection between homelessness and other support needs highlights the importance of coordinated responses to homelessness that are sensitised to gender differences associated with the process of becoming homeless and the experience of homelessness itself.

There are many encouraging signs that the homeless sector is currently shifting away from reactive approaches such as providing shelter, food and clothes towards more longer-term solutions such as permanent housing and support around the individual's needs.

Two new approaches have arisen to address homelessness. Evaluations across Europe show that Housing First provides the best model of resolving homelessness for around 80% of

¹ *Lithuania CFsh oct 2016 final*, <http://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/18/country-profile-lithuania?bcParent=27>

² *Netherlands CFsh jan 2017 final*, <http://www.feantsa.org/en/country-profile/2016/10/19/country-profile-the-netherlands?bcParent=27>

³ *ARA Homelessness Report 1/2017 - Homelessness in Finland in 2016*, [http://www.ara.fi/en-US/Materials/Homelessness_reports/Homelessness_in_Finland_2016\(42274\)](http://www.ara.fi/en-US/Materials/Homelessness_reports/Homelessness_in_Finland_2016(42274))

⁴ *FNARS, Baromètre 115 de février 2016 - Alerte au 115 sur l'absence d'hébergement pour les femmes et les familles*, <http://www.federationsolidarite.org/publications-fnars/barometre-115/barometre-archives-menu/6549-cp-fnars-barom%C3%A8tre-115-f%C3%A9vrier-2017>

⁵ *DHPCLG, Homelessness Report January 2016, Homelessness Report January 2017*, <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>

homeless people with complex needs. It is a model that initially provides a relatively secure tenancy, and then combines that with supportive treatment services in the areas of mental and physical health, substance abuse, education and employment. Housing First evaluations in Europe show that projects have had a high success rate in keeping people in housing.⁶⁷

Another example of effective intervention is the use of Psychologically Informed Environments (PIEs), an approach that involves remodelling services in order to address identified emotional and psychological issues amongst homeless people. PIEs have also achieved significant positive change for people experiencing multiple exclusion/deprivation and with histories of compound trauma in terms of improved housing outcomes, improved behaviours, improved use of services, and improved mental health. This approach has so far primarily been applied in the UK and Ireland.

Both the above mentioned innovative models have been implemented largely without a gender lens.

Why is it important to have gendered approach?

FEANTSA Director Freek Spinnewijn states that “It is time to make specific plans to end women’s homelessness and to adopt a gendered approach to ending homelessness. We need to move from stating problems to taking action, integrating research into practice and policy. We also need a better understanding the routes and transition points in and out of women’s homelessness in order to prevent and to end homelessness. It is imperative to break the cycle of violence, trauma, mental health problems and homelessness that so many women face.”

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Notes for editors:

1. [FEANTSA](http://www.feantsa.org) 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. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at the European level.

⁶ <http://www.housingfirstbelgium.be/en/pages/evaluation/>

⁷ https://www.raisfundacion.org/es/informate/noticias_y_eventos/housing-first-una-solucion-eficaz-para-las-personas-sin-hogar