11th January 2017

To Deliver on the 2030 Agenda, Let's Leave Homelessness Behind, Not Homeless People!

Context

The UN 2030 Agenda is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide. It consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), broken down into 169 targets. These apply to developed and less developed countries alike.

The EU was instrumental in shaping the 2030 Agenda and has an important role to play in delivery, together with Member States (MS). On the 22nd November 2016, the European Commission published a Communication on 'Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability'. First Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated "we are making the SDGs and sustainability a guiding principle in all our work." The Commission will implement the 2030 Agenda through its 10 political priorities and the 2020 Strategy, as well as in its future 10 plan from 2020 – 2030.

At this juncture, FEANTSA calls for the EU and its Member States to ensure that they do not leave homeless people behind. Preventing and tackling homelessness must be a cornerstone of the EU's response to the sustainability challenge. At the heart of the 2030 Agenda is a pledge to **leave no-one behind**. This means delivering for everyone, making special efforts to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Individual MS and the EU as a whole should take this historic opportunity for positive action to prevent and tackle homelessness. How can we look forward to a future without poverty when hundreds of thousands of people within the EU face homelessness every day?

Homelessness and the SDGs

Homelessness is particularly relevant with regard to 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Reaching the following 3 goals is simply not possible without decisive action to end homelessness:

1. **SDG1 Eradicating poverty in all its forms**
    Addressing homelessness is essential to the first target of eradicating extreme poverty (SDG 1.1) The number of people in the EU who are living in extreme poverty as defined by an international monetary indicator is of course low in global terms[1]. But extreme poverty is a reality in Europe, manifest in persistent and increasing homelessness. Furthermore SDG1 includes the target of reducing by at least half the proportion of people living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions (SDG 1.2). Lacking a decent home is a dimension of poverty, and many Member States monitor it as such. Lastly, implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and achieving substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable (SDG1.3) necessitates plugging the gaps that allow people to slip into homelessness.

2. **SDG 3 Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages** Housing is a social determinant of health. Homelessness is associated with ill-health and dramatically lower than average life expectancy. Lack of decent housing is an important priority for tackling mortality related to non-communicable diseases and mental health issues (SDG 3.4) Homeless people are also more likely than most of the EU population to experience communicable diseases (SDG 3.3). Homeless people are a key target group for the

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[1] World Bank Measure of $1.90 a day

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European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless

Chaussée de Louvain, 194, 1210 Brussels - Belgium
Tel: +32 2 538 66 69 | information@feantsa.org
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prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol (SDG 3.5). Homeless people are 3 times more likely than the general population to die in road traffic accidents (SDG 3.6)[2] Those without an adequate home face barriers to healthcare, which need to be addressed to ensure access to coverage, health care services and   essential   medicine   for   all   (SDG   3.8).

3. **SDG11 Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**
   SDG11 includes ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing (SDG11.1). By definition, this includes preventing and addressing homelessness.

4 Points to address in order to stop leaving homeless people behind

Delivering on the 2030 Agenda within the EU and genuinely leaving no one behind requires the following 4 points to be addressed:

1. **Strategies to prevent and address homelessness**
   The Commission and MS must take positive action to urgently prevent and address homelessness. All MS should develop homelessness strategies and the EU should monitor and support progress. In a first instance, the SDGs are to be mainstreamed in the current EU policy framework. Homelessness should be maintained and strengthened as a thematic priority in EU social policy coordination, notably under the Social Rights Pillar, the European Semester and the Social OMC. The new EU Urban Agenda will be a particularly important framework for addressing sustainability challenges, including homelessness. Special efforts should be made to ensure those facing homelessness are reached by thematic social policy initiatives such as the Skills Agenda, the Migration Agenda, the Youth Guarantee, the Disability Strategy etc. Without such efforts, the EU will continue to leave people behind.

2. **Homelessness as a priority for the EU post 2020**
   Tackling homelessness should be a priority for the EU's post 2020 strategy. The Commission will soon launch a reflection on how to address the Sustainable Development Agenda through its next 10 year plan. It is vital that the EU makes a serious commitment to addressing poverty in this context. Progress towards the current poverty target has been frustrated by the crisis and its aftermath. Nevertheless, it remains a historic precedent and the EU cannot afford to give up on its political commitment to fighting poverty. One challenge is that the current poverty target has not fully engaged with the reality of extreme poverty in the EU. To be credible on fundamental rights, social fairness and improving the living conditions of citizens, as well as to implement the SDGs, the Commission should actively address this gap and commit to helping Member States end the scandal of homelessness. This could start with a commitment to ensuring that no-one need to sleep rough by 2030.

3. **The   homeless   sector   as   a   key   stakeholder**
   Homeless people and organisations working to tackle must be included in the multi-stakeholder Platform that the Commission proposes to bring together in order to follow-up and exchange best practices on SDG implementation across sectors. This will help to ensure that no-one is left behind. If the Commission overlooks these stakeholders and focuses only on broader sustainability perspectives, the most vulnerable will continue to be left out.

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[2] Crisis (2011) *Homelessness: A silent killer: A research briefing on mortality amongst homeless people, available at:*http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20-%20a%20silent%20killer.pdf

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4. **Indicators on homelessness and housing exclusion**
Indicators on homelessness and housing exclusion must be part of the Commission's reporting of the EU's progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission will start reporting in 2017, and further develop its role in view of the post-2020 context.

Worryingly, Eurostat's first overview of where the EU and its MS stand in view of the SDGs, published alongside the Commission Communication, leaves people facing homelessness and extreme poverty completely out of the picture[3] In relation to SDG1, extreme poverty is treated as a non issue in the EU. Whilst the global definition of $1.90 a day is not appropriate in this context, it would be misleading and wrong for the EU to focus exclusively on relative poverty, which is what the "at risk of poverty indicator" predominantly captures. This is especially true in a context of dramatic increases in homelessness in many MS, a trend that is often at odds with evolutions in relative poverty. In relation to SDG11, no housing indicators whatsoever are included, despite the fact that this goal includes ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing (SDG11.1).

The problem of missing populations in poverty counts is widely acknowledged by experts, as is the need to address it. The Report of the Commission on Global Poverty, prepared for the World Bank in 2016, looked at how to measure SDG1.1. It called for action to address the fact that some groups, including the homeless are "missing" from the global poverty count, stating:

"As the total living in extreme poverty falls over time, the missing population will become proportionately more significant. Second, the circumstances of the missing groups in a number of cases differ qualitatively from those of the general population: there is a categorical as well as a consumption difference. And a number of the groups—such as refugees, the homeless, and those living in war zones—have a particular claim on our compassion"[4] .

From 2017 onwards, the Commission will carry out more detailed regular monitoring, developing a reference indicator framework for the SDGs. As a matter of urgency, Eurostat and other Commission services need to develop a strategy for measuring extreme poverty and housing exclusion. EUSILC provides a range of indicators on housing affordability, housing deprivation, overcrowding and satisfaction with housing[5]. These should be used for monitoring progress on SDG11.1. The European Social Progress Index developed by DG Regio[6] has made use of these and provides an excellent starting point for a reference indicator for the SDGs. It includes a "shelter score" comprised of EU SILC indicators on the burdensome cost of housing, satisfaction with housing, overcrowding and lack of adequate heating. On homelessness, national data is available in most Member States. Whilst this is non-comparable, it provides a good indication of progress and could be better used at EU level.

[3] Eurostat (2016) *Sustainable development in the European Union — A statistical glance from the viewpoint of the UN Sustainable Development Goals,* available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-02-16-996
[4] World Bank. 2016. *Monitoring global poverty : report of the commission on global poverty. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group*, pg 33, available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/353781479304286720/Monitoring-global-poverty-report-of-the-commission-on-global-poverty
[5] See http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics explained/index.php/Housing_conditions#Data_sources_and_availability
[6] See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/social_progress