



European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless
Press Release – 16th December 2013
For Immediate Release

FEANTSA Calls on European Council to Urgently Address EU Poverty Crisis

The European Council will meet this week to discuss the recently-launched European Semester 2014. With this in mind, FEANTSA urges the Council to ensure all European Union Member States have country-specific recommendations on poverty with specific reference to homelessness in 2014.

As part of the European Semester 2014, European Union (EU) Member States are to receive country-specific recommendations (CSRs) on various aspects of policies related to the Europe 2020 targets. So far only eight EU Member States have received a CSR on poverty. No mention has been made in these CSRs of the urgent problem of homelessness, despite growing numbers of homeless people in virtually all European countries and homelessness being an EU priority. FEANTSA thus calls for specific CSRs on poverty for each Member State which include a reference to homelessness for countries where urgent action is required. It is unacceptable to neglect the fight against poverty as an EU 2020 priority or to have only patchy or illogical coverage of the issue in the CSRs.

Figures on the progress Member States made (on the basis of the latest EU-SILC data on poverty available when the EU 2020 strategy was launched) show that just five Member States - Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Romania - managed to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is clear that the EU is very far from meeting the common target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.

The total of all the poverty commitments of the 26 Member States (Luxembourg decided not to take part in the common EU effort to tackle poverty) amounts to only 12 million people rather than the 20 million agreed, which is a scandal in itself. The fact that only a fraction of the EU Member States is making progress towards the diluted EU target should be an issue of serious concern for EU policy makers.

Only three Member States are just about on schedule to reach the target in 2020 – Latvia, Romania and Poland. All other Member States are further away from the target now than they were when the Strategy was launched in 2010. Some countries will have to double or triple the number of people they are currently lifting out of poverty to reach their national target in 2020, such as Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Spain. Several will have to do 50% better to perform as agreed on poverty - Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Several relatively well-off countries are among these.

It thus seems that the country specific recommendations take no account of regression or progress towards the poverty target because Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, who have been given CSRs on poverty, are amongst the ones making the quickest progress, while some of the worst performers such as Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, Malta and Slovenia have been given none.

FEANTSA is aware that the CSRs are intended to take account of the scope and seriousness of the problem of poverty and not only progress towards or regression away from the target - especially as the targets are ambitious for some countries and less so for others. It is a delicate exercise. However, it would make more sense and be fairer and more effective if all EU Member States were to be given CSRs on poverty and social exclusion. Not least because some of those performing better on the overall poverty and exclusion target (including households with very low work intensity and material deprivation), such as Poland and Romania, in fact had increasing rates of relative poverty.

It is known that homelessness has increased in almost all European countries and that it is an unacceptable and urgent problem in all EU Member States. Various EU institutions have called for more work on homelessness and the Social Investment Package (SIP) recommends addressing homelessness. The poverty and inclusion CSRs should therefore also include a call to address homelessness more effectively in all Member States.

----- ENDS -----

For comment, please contact Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org or +32 2 538 66 69

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. EU2020 Strategy http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm
3. European Semester <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/special-reports/european-semester> ; <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/>
4. Country-Specific Recommendations http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm
5. Social Investment Package (SIP)
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en&newsId=1807&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=news>
6. Communication on SIP <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0083:FIN:FR:PDF>
7. SIP Policy Guidance on Homelessness <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2013:0042:FIN:EN:PDF>
8. Homelessness urgent problem <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique160&lang=en>

■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL

Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri AISBL

194 Chaussée de Louvain ■ 1210 Brussels ■ Belgium ■ Tel.: +32 2 538 66 69 ■ Fax: +32 2 539 41 74 ■ office@feantsa.org ■ www.feantsa.org