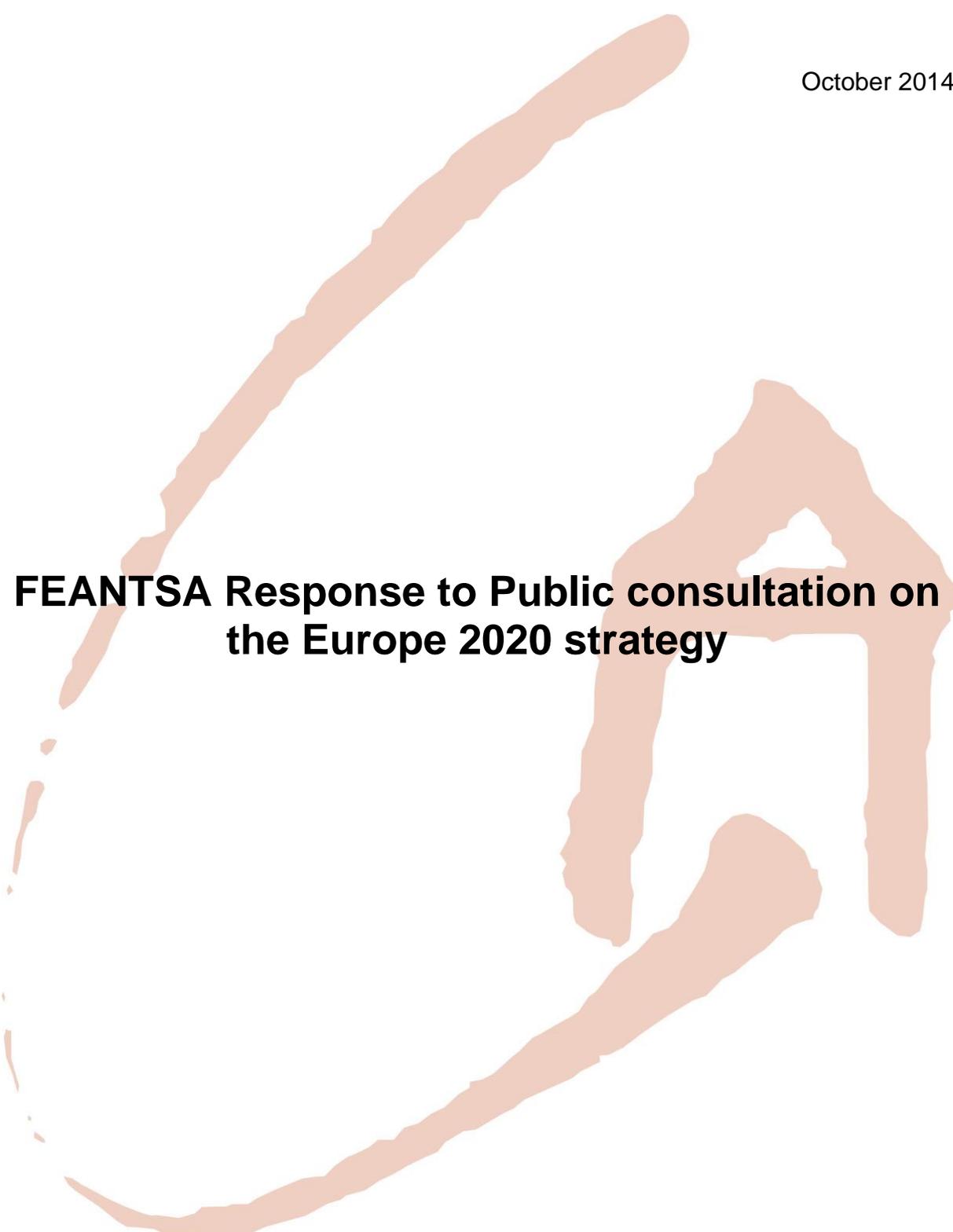




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FEANTSA Response to Public consultation on the Europe 2020  
strategy

October 2014



# FEANTSA Response to Public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy

■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL

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

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### **About FEANTSA**

FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless) was established in 1989 as a European non-governmental organisation to prevent and alleviate the poverty and social exclusion of people threatened by or living in homelessness. FEANTSA currently has more than 130 member organisations, working in close to 30 European countries, including 26 EU Member States. FEANTSA is supported by the PROGRESS programme in the framework of a partnership agreement with the European Commission.

### **About this document**

This document is FEANTSA's response to the European Commission's Public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy. The first section is a list of 5 short recommendations.. The second consists of FEANTSA's answers to the consultation questionnaire. The document was drafted by the FEANTSA secretariat in collaboration with members. For any questions or comments, please contact Ruth Owen, Policy Coordinator at [ruth.owen@feantsa.org](mailto:ruth.owen@feantsa.org)

## **Part 1: 5 FEANTSA Recommendations**

- 1) The poverty target must be maintained. It is essential that the political commitment to the fight against poverty is sustained in response to the lack of progress at the mid-term point of Europe 2020. The impact of the crisis is a reason to redouble efforts rather than to abandon the target. Member States and EU institutions should explore a full range of options to support progress, including introducing interim targets and sub targets on thematic priorities such as homelessness.
- 2) Concrete action must be taken at national and EU level to address the risk of creaming in relation to the poverty target. In this context, Member States and EU Institutions should pay particular attention to homelessness as part of efforts to make progress towards the poverty target.
- 3) EU-level analytical capacity on poverty and social exclusion must be re-enforced, including in relation to thematic priorities such as homelessness. This would contribute to a fuller analysis of the social situation of Member States as a basis for supporting progress towards the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.
- 4) Member States and the European Commission should ensure full use of all available instruments, and particularly of the European Structural and Investment Funds, to urgently enhance progress in the fight against poverty, including homelessness.
- 5) The Social Investment Package should urgently be operationalized in order to support better progress in the fight against poverty. In this context, Member States should develop and implement active inclusion policies and integrated strategies to tackle homelessness. The European Commission should re-enforce thematic policy support and coordination at EU level to monitor and support this.

## **Part 2: FEANTSA Response to Consultation Questionnaire**

### **1) Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014**

#### ***Content and implementation***

- **For you, what does the Europe 2020 strategy mean? What are the main elements that you associate with the strategy?**

Europe 2020 is an overarching political framework setting out the goals and ambitions of the EU from 2010-2020. A key feature of the strategy has been its integrated approach, which sought to promote

economic growth, social inclusion, sustainability and knowledge/innovation on an equal footing. From the perspective of FEANTSA's membership (not-for-profit services working with homeless people), the poverty target is a centrally important element of the strategy. At the time of the strategy's launch, it represented an unprecedented political commitment to strengthening the EU's efforts to fight poverty and promote social inclusion.

- **Overall, do you think that the Europe 2020 strategy has made a difference? Please explain.**

Europe 2020 had the potential to make a significant difference. At its outset, it provided a re-enforced political commitment to smart, sustainable, inclusive growth. Despite being limited in scope, the poverty target was an important milestone because it was the first ever politically binding target on poverty. From the perspective of FEANTSA's membership, it created an opportunity to strengthen the EU's focus on tackling poverty and social exclusion in line with the Lisbon Strategy.

Nonetheless, implementation at EU and Member State level has been too weak to deliver on the poverty target. The total of national targets agreed by MS in 2010 amounted to only 12 million people rather than the 20 million agreed. Since the adoption of Europe 2020 in 2010, 6.6 million more people now live in poverty or social exclusion (an increase in more than 1/3 of MS). Some Member States are approximately on schedule to reach the target in 2020 e.g. Latvia, Romania and Poland. However, most are further away from the target now than at the outset. Some will have to double or triple the number of people they are currently lifting out of poverty to reach their national target in 2020 (e.g. Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Spain). Several will have to do 50% better to perform as agreed on poverty (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary)<sup>1</sup>. The context of the economic and financial crisis has undoubtedly made meeting the target more challenging. Implementation of Europe 2020 depends on partnership between the EU institutions and the Member States. This partnership has been put under pressure as the macroeconomic imperatives of the Semester and/or the Troika have been at odds with social inclusion and the poverty target in some Member States.

Thematic coordination under Europe 2020 presented various opportunities to make a real difference in the area of poverty and social exclusion. The creation of a flagship initiative - the European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) provided a potential framework to support joint delivery between national governments, EU Institutions and key stakeholders in the fight against poverty and social inclusion<sup>2</sup>. In 2013, the Social Investment Package (SIP) was published<sup>3</sup>. Social investment can be an extremely useful policy concept for addressing social challenges, including homelessness. At its core is the notion that smart investment in social policy generates human, economic and societal value. The SIP promotes targeted social investment to tackle homelessness, calling on MS to 'confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on prevention, housing-led approaches and reviewing regulations and practices on eviction'<sup>4</sup>. The operationalization and implementation of both the EPAP and the SIP has been overall limited so far. Nonetheless, Europe 2020 has supported the mobilization of policymakers and stakeholders in a growing EU dynamic on homelessness as a key issue in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In the future, thematic coordination should be strengthened in order to build on this mobilization with a view to delivering better progress on poverty. The mid term point is a critical moment to re-dynamise the inclusion dimension of the strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> See FEANTSA Press Release, 16th December 2013 'FEANTSA Calls on European Council to Urgently Address EU Poverty Crisis' <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article1368&lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=961>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044>

<sup>4</sup> COM(2013) 83 final

- **Has the knowledge of what other EU countries are doing in Europe 2020 areas impacted on the approach followed in your country?**

The experience of FEANTSA is that knowledge of what other EU countries are doing in the area of combatting poverty and promoting social inclusion can be extremely powerful and support concrete progress in policy development and implementation. It is however difficult to judge to what extent Europe 2020 has boosted this dynamic in relation to the fight against poverty and homelessness. An important positive development is that a growing number of countries are developing integrated national strategies to fight homelessness and reporting on these developments in the framework of the European Semester (e.g. Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Spain). This reflects a growing European dynamic on tackling homelessness in the framework of the poverty target. Instruments to support mutual learning and transnational exchange are helpful in terms of capitalizing on knowledge and experience from different Member States. The Peer Reviews in the framework of the Social OMC continue to help build knowledge and understanding about tackling homelessness in line with social investment e.g. Danish peer review end of 2013 on Housing First strategy<sup>5</sup>. Transnational research projects such as Housing First Europe (PROGRESS) have also been extremely useful in this context<sup>6</sup>. The Irish Presidency organized a Roundtable of Ministers with responsibility for homelessness, which agreed on the key elements for successful strategies to tackle homelessness<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, social reporting within the Semester and the range of practical instruments available to support progress in the fight against poverty as part of Europe 2020 remain highly fragmented, which limits the extent to which knowledge across EU countries can really be used to maximum effect. There is thus a need for a more coordinated, strategic approach to addressing specific policy priorities from a thematic perspective. This would enable more effective use of knowledge of what is happening in different Member States to support policy development and implementation.

- **Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the Europe 2020 strategy? Are you involved in the Europe 2020 strategy? Would you like to be more involved? If yes, how?**

As a key stakeholder in the EU's anti-poverty strategy, FEANTSA is an active stakeholder in the social dimension of Europe 2020 – both at European level and (sub) national level.

At European level, the involvement of social NGOs in the Europe 2020 strategy could be improved. The flagship initiative, the European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) is a useful framework but has not delivered as hoped for in terms of facilitating partnership with stakeholders. It would be helpful to review the structure of the EPAP and consider how to make it more dynamic and impactful through more joint working with key EU organizations. In this context, it would be helpful for the European Commission to look at developing thematic work programmes on particular social investment priorities such as homelessness and housing exclusion, as called for by the Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion in their Assessment of progress towards the Europe 2020 social inclusion objectives<sup>8</sup>. This would allow for a true operationalization of the social investment package and support better progress on the social dimension of Europe 2020. It could also provide a means to enhance analytical capacity at EU level in the area of poverty and social exclusion. This would be especially useful as regards social realities such as homelessness where EU-level indicators are currently underdeveloped and where the Commission requires support to capture the full social reality.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=1884&furtherNews=yes>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.socialstyrelsen.dk/housingfirsteurope>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://eu2013.ie/news/news-items/20130301post-homelessnessroundtablepr/>

<sup>8</sup> Fraser, H and Marlier, E (2013) *Assessment of progress towards the Europe 2020 social inclusion objectives: Main findings and suggestions on the way forward: A Study of National Policies*, Social Europe, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1025&langId=en&newsId=2050&furtherNews=yes>

At national level the situation is extremely diverse. Some organisations working on homelessness have been able to participate in the Semester in a meaningful way, whilst others remain largely outside the process. In Austria FEANTSA members have been involved in developing a 'registered homeless' indicator in the context of the poverty target. FEANTSA analysis has overall demonstrated that homelessness is fairly well-integrated into the European Semester. Approximately half the Member States include measures to address homelessness in their National Reform Programme (NRP), in part as a result of active stakeholder engagement in the process<sup>9</sup>. It is often easier for social NGOs to contribute to the National Social Reports (NSRs) than the NRPs, especially when coordinated governance regarding the latter is not in place. However, the NSRs have so far been poorly integrated into the overall Semester process in terms of the Commission's analysis and recommendations.

### **Tools**

- **Do the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs? [Targets: to have at least 75% of people aged 20-64 in employment; to invest 3% of GDP in research and development; to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%, increase the share of renewables to 20% and improve energy efficiency by 20%; to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10% and increase the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%; to ensure at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion].**

Yes – the targets respond to the strategy's objectives. It is important to remember that the strategy aims at inclusive growth. The poverty target is the most relevant for organizations working with homeless people, so is focused on here. Despite its importance and usefulness, the poverty target does have some significant limitations. The combined poverty indicator includes joblessness, material deprivation and at-risk of poverty at the household level. This means that the reality of homelessness, arguably the most extreme form of poverty, is not included. The danger of "creaming" has been highlighted by a range of social inclusion experts<sup>10</sup>. Creaming means focusing policy interventions and services on the people experiencing poverty and social exclusion who are closest to the poverty line and/or labour market in order to make progress whilst leaving the more vulnerable behind.

Given the risk of creaming, it is necessary to improve EU-level analysis of social situations in the Member States so as to go beyond the target and take account of specific forms of poverty such as homelessness. This is challenging because homelessness is not captured in the Social Protection Performance Monitor<sup>11</sup> or the "social scoreboard" used in the framework of the Joint Employment Report<sup>12</sup>. One useful step to address this situation would be to ensure homelessness is included in the revised EUSILC. The European Commission included this objective in its 2014 SIP Implementation Roadmap<sup>13</sup> and Eurostat is working on proposals. However, this alone will not suffice – especially as it is unlikely to be implemented before 2020 and will not give insight into current levels of homelessness. There is a more general need to reinforce qualitative reporting and use of national data on measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion, including homelessness, as part of the overall evaluation of progress towards the objectives of Europe 2020 strategy. The Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC)

<sup>9</sup> FEANTSA Review of the National Reform Programmes (2014) , available at <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article3324&lang=en>

<sup>10</sup> Walker, R. (2010), *The potential of Eurotargets: reflecting on French experience*, in Marlier, E., Natali, D. with Van Dam, R. (2010/eds.), *Europe 2020: Towards a more Social EU?*, Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang.

<sup>11</sup> Social protection performance monitor (SPPM) – methodological report by the Indicators Sub-group of the Social Protection Committee, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=758>

<sup>12</sup> COM(2013) 801 final

<sup>13</sup> DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2014) *Policy Roadmap for the 2014 Implementation of the Social Investment Package*, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044>



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for tracking progress and monitoring the Employment Guidelines under Europe 2020 includes 'Policy Area 12: Social inclusion of groups at special risk and antidiscrimination', whereby an assessment should be made of to what extent Member States have specific social inclusion and anti-discrimination measures in place to reduce poverty among groups most at risk from social exclusion, including homeless people<sup>14</sup>. More progress is urgently needed on implementing this in order to analyse and give recommendations on Member States' efforts to tackle poverty within the European Semester. The 2014 National Social Reports, which included reporting on homelessness, were a useful first step in this direction. The European Parliament has called for homelessness indicators to be developed in the framework of the Semester and for homelessness to be included in the "social scoreboard"<sup>15</sup>. In the future, the Commission might wish to consider how to re-enforce EU-level analytical capacity in the social area and investigate how to work more effectively with relevant social NGOs to support this work.

The poverty target and the level of ambition that it represents should be maintained. However, given the poor progress towards it, it might also be relevant to consider tools such as interim targets and sub targets. These should take account of homelessness as far as possible in order to avoid "creaming". Member States such as Denmark have already developed national targets on homelessness.

Clearly the employment and education targets are also of central importance to social inclusion and relevant to preventing and tackling homelessness.

- **Among current targets, do you consider that some are more important than others? Please explain.**

The poverty target is the most important from the perspective of organisations working with homeless people. It is essential in terms of protecting the European Union's role in promoting social inclusion and fundamental rights, as well as acting as a "convergence machine". Making progress on the fight against poverty has arguably become a credibility test for "Social Europe" in the aftermath of the crisis.

- **Do you find it useful that EU-level targets are broken down into national targets? If so, what is, in your view, the best way to set national targets? So far, have the national targets been set appropriately/too ambitiously/not ambitiously enough?**

It is useful that the EU-level targets are broken down into national targets. However, it is a serious problem that the total of national targets agreed in 2010 amounted to only 12 million people rather than the 20 million agreed. Some Member States set very unambitious targets for a 20 year period - Germany and Romania had already reached their national targets by 2011. Furthermore, Member States have not always focused on the most relevant dimension(s) of the target (relative income poverty, material deprivation and jobless households). This has been a major weakness<sup>16</sup>. Some Member States, such as Denmark have developed specific sub targets on homelessness in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy. Such thematic target setting based on the social needs in the Member States should be encouraged, especially in relation to priorities laid out in the Social Investment Package. Austria has also developed a new indicator on 'registered homeless' in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.

- **What has been the added value of the seven action programmes for growth? Do you have concrete examples of the impact of such programmes? ["Flagship initiatives": "Digital agenda for Europe", "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient**

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<sup>14</sup> 16984/10 ADD 1

<sup>15</sup> P8\_TA(2014)0038

<sup>16</sup> Frazer, H et al *Putting the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the heart of the EU agenda: A contribution to the Mid-Term Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy*, European Social Observatory N° 15 / October 2014

**Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "Agenda for new skills and jobs", "European platform against poverty"]].**

Organisations working on poverty strongly welcomed the European Platform Against Poverty. At the current juncture, it would be helpful to review the structure of the EPAP and consider how to increase its visibility and impact. Developing thematic work programmes on particular social investment priorities such as homelessness and housing exclusion (see above) could be helpful in this respect. This would allow for a true operationalization of the social investment package and support better progress on the social dimension of Europe 2020.

## **2) Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe**

### ***Content and implementation***

- **Does the EU need a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years?**

Europe needs a strategy with a strong social dimension, as set out in Europe 2020.

- **What are the most important and relevant areas to be addressed in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?**

Strengthening social inclusion and the fight against poverty is a critical priority. In this context, an active inclusion approach is central, with a strong role for social services.

Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion has emerged as an important and relevant area and must be further pursued. It is a crucial test of the EU's credibility that it take a firm stance on poverty and social exclusion, including extreme forms such as homelessness.

Employment is of course central to achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. One challenge in this respect is to avoid creaming and ensure that policies to increase employment reach also those furthest from the labour market.

Youth unemployment is a central priority, as demonstrated by the launch of the Youth Guarantee, the implementation of which is just starting. Eurofound has reported that one of the weaknesses of youth guarantees is their capacity to reach out to the most excluded<sup>17</sup>. In this context, it will be important to develop measures to ensure that the guarantee reaches out to all NEETS, including those who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Promoting the growth potential of the social services sector would also be a useful contribution to the employment target. In this respect, the need for increasingly person-centred and empowering services is critical.

Child poverty, including family and child homelessness has also emerged as an important priority issue.

- **What new challenges should be taken into account in the future?**

Poverty and social exclusion, and in particular the situation of the most vulnerable must become a more central issue within and beyond Europe 2020. In this context, homelessness should remain a

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<sup>17</sup> Mascherini, M (2012) *Youth Guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden*, Eurofound



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thematic priority. Increased homelessness is one of the most extreme social impacts of the crisis. It is a costly social problem in both human and economic terms. And yet, progress is possible. The SIP showed that investment in integrated policies and services that focus on prevention and facilitating rapid exits from homelessness can be more effective than “managing” homelessness. To support a shift in this direction, concrete follow-up is required in terms of monitoring, capacity building, evidence building, transnational exchange, support for social innovation and mutual learning. Such follow-up should support the proper use of the European Social and Investment Funds to promote social inclusion, including of homeless people. Supporting MS to take decisive action on homelessness could re-enforce the credibility of the social dimension of the EU in a relatively short time frame and help mitigate the impact of the crisis. Furthermore, paying more strategic attention to homelessness and housing exclusion would complement the focus on housing markets which is currently part of the macroeconomic governance of the Semester.

- **How could the strategy best be linked to other EU policies?**

The social element of Europe 2020 should be re-enforced by an EU-level work plan for operationalization of the Social Investment Package. This could include thematic streams on priority issues such as homelessness. Addressing thematic priorities such as homelessness in this way would also encourage linkages with relevant policy areas such as research, migration, health, fundamental rights etc.

- **What would improve stakeholder involvement in a post-crisis growth strategy for Europe? What could be done to increase awareness, support and better implementation of this strategy in your country?**

It would be helpful to review the structure of the European Platform Against Poverty and consider how to increase its visibility and impact. Developing thematic work programmes would be helpful in this respect. This would allow for a true operationalization of the SIP and support better progress on the social dimension of Europe 2020.

### ***Tools***

- **What type of instruments do you think would be more appropriate to use to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?**

Practical work programmes to support SIP implementation, including on homelessness, through mutual learning, transnational exchange, developing knowledge and understanding, monitoring of progress etc. The European Social and Investment Funds can play an important role in achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and particularly making a decisive impact in the area of social inclusion.

- **What would best be done at EU level to ensure that the strategy delivers results? What would best be done at Member State level?**

In the area of poverty and social exclusion and particularly homelessness, policies are clearly to be defined at local and national level. However, the EU could provide much greater added value through strategic policy monitoring, support and coordination in the context of a coherent work package on the issue and in the framework of the European Semester. The development of new national homelessness strategies in a number of countries (Luxemburg, Czech Republic, Spain) has clearly been supported by an EU dynamic and there is much scope to build on this.

- **How can the strategy encourage Member States to put a stronger policy focus on growth?**

From the perspective of organisations working with homeless people, it would be useful to promote the employment potential of the social services sector and of investment in affordable, accessible, adequate rental housing.

- **Are targets useful? Please explain.**

Yes because they are a visible commitment and create some scope for accountability. They have provided a focal point for mobilization of stakeholders.

- **Would you recommend adding or removing certain targets, or the targets in general? Please explain.**

All targets should be kept because they represent a politically binding commitment and they are part of an integrated, mutually re-enforcing approach. Given the lack of progress, it might be useful to consider how to make better use of interim and sub-targets on poverty.

- **What are the most fruitful areas for joint EU-Member State action? What would be the added value?**

There is much scope for added value from joint working in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The lack of progress towards the poverty target should not be seen as a reason to abandon efforts but to redouble them and to reflect about the use of available instruments to pursue them.



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This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/progress/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html)

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