



FEANTSA

FEANTSA Message to Commissioners-Designate

12/09/2014, Brussels

"Let's show citizens what Social Europe means by tackling homelessness together"

On Wednesday 10th September, President-elect Jean Claude Juncker unveiled his Commission, saying "What I present to you today is a political, dynamic and effective European Commission, geared to give Europe its new start". To convince citizens of this "new start", the future Commission will need to renew the EU's commitment to fighting poverty and social exclusion.

The President-elect's [Political Guidelines](#) state that "the fight against poverty must be priority". Going forward, the proposed Commission will need to show that it can use the tools at its disposal to have a real impact in this fight. FEANTSA hopes that the future Commission will play its role in supporting national, regional and local governments, NGOs, citizens and other actors in fighting homelessness - a serious violation of fundamental rights that has no place in the EU's future.

The Commissioners-designate face a tough context. The EU is off track on its poverty target for 2020. The number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion increased from 114 million in 2009 to 124 million in 2012. Reaching the target would require a fall to 96.4 million in 6 years. And the target is far from the whole story. Homelessness - arguably the most extreme form of poverty and exclusion - is not captured by the indicators for the target. The Commission estimates that 4 million people experience homelessness in the EU each year. In many Member States, homelessness has risen dramatically since 2008. This represents a major social challenge with huge human, societal and economic costs.

As Commissioner-designate for Employment & Social Affairs, Marianne Thyssen could play a key role in determining how the EU moves forward on poverty and social exclusion, including homelessness. FEANTSA hopes that she will work to tackle the social impact of the crisis and ensure that the most vulnerable and excluded are not left behind in the pursuit of jobs and growth. Other portfolios highly relevant to homelessness include upholding the Charter of Fundamental Rights, Migration and Home Affairs, Regional Policy, Health and Food Safety, and Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship.

Under the previous Commission, the EU took some steps to address homelessness, making homelessness a thematic priority in the context of [Europe 2020](#) and the [Social Investment Package](#) (SIP), which called on Member States to develop integrated homelessness strategies. The Commission committed to improving data on homelessness at EU level and developed a cohesion policy framework that offers new opportunities to fund programmes that address homelessness. The future Commission will have a historic opportunity to build on this work and support MS to make a decisive impact on homelessness.

In January 2014, the European Parliament adopted its second [Resolution calling for an EU homelessness strategy](#). The Parliament emphasised that the main responsibility for fighting homelessness lies with Member States but urged the Commission to develop a strategy that would support them through mutual learning, monitoring of progress, promoting social innovation, research and mobilisation of relevant EU funding instruments. In the context of strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the EU, FEANTSA sincerely hopes that the new Commission will be responsive to this request of the Parliament. Such an EU framework is urgently needed and would help to show that the EU institutions are serious about tackling poverty and social exclusion in the current challenging context.

As the Commissioners-designate prepare for their public hearings with the European Parliament, we hope they will bear in mind the unacceptable situation of homeless people throughout the EU, and the need for partnership to promote their rights, dignity and inclusion in society.

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. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level. Find out more from www.feantsa.org or call 0032 2 538 66 69

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