



## European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless

### Press Release – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013

### For Immediate Release

#### FEANTSA Welcomes Focus on Homelessness in European Commission Communication on Country-Specific Recommendations

Yesterday, the European Commission published Country-Specific Recommendations as part of the European Semester, the yearly cycle of policy coordination to implement the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. FEANTSA strongly welcomes the Commission's statement that "several Member States need to pay more attention to combating different forms of poverty," including homelessness.

This is an important reminder of the importance of tackling homelessness in order to meet the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and respond to the social impact of the crisis.

The European Commission has already provided policy guidance to European Member States (MS) on tackling homelessness in its Social Investment Package (SIP). Specifically, it called on MS to "confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on prevention and housing-led approaches". By reminding MS of their duty to pay more attention to homelessness in its Communication on Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs), the Commission has taken a first step in terms of ensuring that progress on tackling homelessness is monitored in the framework of the European semester.

FEANTSA underlines that the need for action is urgent as homelessness is increasing in the majority of MS, with some experiencing particularly steep rises and/or reversals in progress that had been made. A first review of the 2013 National Reform Programmes shows that eleven countries have reported targeted social investments to address homelessness (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and the UK). New, integrated homelessness strategies have been highlighted in three countries (Czech Republic, Greece and Luxembourg), which shows increasing awareness in EU countries of the need for specific strategies to complete general welfare and housing measures to mitigate the impact of austerity measures.

The European Commission stopped short of making explicit CSRs to individual MS on homelessness. This reflects the need to go further in monitoring the evolution of homelessness in the MS. The Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee have identified homelessness as a specific policy area to be monitored as part of the general social monitoring under Europe 2020. This now needs to be translated into practical methodologies for monitoring progress in the Member States. FEANTSA encourages the Commission to make specific recommendations on homelessness where required in the future.

FEANTSA welcomes the focus on poverty and housing markets in some CSRs and considers that they could support progress in the fight against homelessness. Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Romania and the UK received recommendations regarding poverty; most of them are making very slow progress on homelessness as part of their overall anti-poverty strategies. The Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK received recommendations regarding their housing markets. Key priorities are to promote rental housing and to target housing support to the most vulnerable.

FEANTSA acknowledges the Commission's call for more effective and efficient social and health services in several MS. Reforms must promote the quality and accessibility of services to people with support needs, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The call for efficiency should not be a license to cut but an opportunity to make smart social investments. There is the potential to improve value for money by improving outcomes for some target groups. FEANTSA considers that the emphasis on facilitating independent living creates opportunities to invest in housing-led approaches which support people to maintain a home and provide real alternatives to long periods of homelessness. Housing-led interventions such as the Housing First model demonstrate improved outcomes for users and can generate cost offsets, particularly in the health sector. Examples of countries that received CSRs in the area of social and health services are: Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Estonia, France, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain.

FEANTSA President, Rina Beers, said "*We welcome the mention of homelessness as a priority and the focus on poverty and housing in various countries in the CSRs. FEANTSA hopes that these elements can be built on in the next round of the European semester in order to support progress in the fight against homelessness in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy.*"

The European Commission calls on civil society to help develop and implement the right responses to challenges highlighted in the CSRs. FEANTSA is ready to play its role in defining measures to make progress on tackling homelessness, and calls upon the European Commission to work in close partnership to deliver concrete outcomes along the guidelines on homelessness in the recently adopted Social Investment Package.

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#### 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. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level.
2. The Country-Specific Recommendations can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/>
3. The European Commission's Communication on the CSRs is available here: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/2013eccomm\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/2013eccomm_en.pdf)
4. The FEANTSA report "On the Way Home": FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe" <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article854&lang=en>, and statistics by country <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article853&lang=en> can be found on the FEANTSA website

■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL

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5. Information on the Joint Assessment Framework to monitor the Employment Guidelines under Europe 2020 is available here  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=972&furtherNews=yes>  
The specific report is here  
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st16/st16984-ad01.en10.pdf>