



**European Federation of National Organisations Working
With the Homeless
Press Release – 3rd October 2013
For Immediate Release**

People with Experience of Homelessness Have the Right to Have Their Opinions and Perspectives Heard

Participation is a way of working that empowers homeless people to participate in decisions and actions that affect their lives. It is based on the evidence that actively involving homeless people in their own recovery contributes to better care and support and improves their quality of life.

FEANTSA and Niccolò Rinaldi MEP (ALDE – Italy) co-hosted a public hearing today to raise awareness about how homeless people can participate in the development of homeless services and decision-making with regard to homelessness.

Presenting at the hearing were people with experience of homelessness and representatives of homeless service providers from across Europe, including Casa Ioana from Romania, No Fixed Abode from Finland, *Arrels Fundació* from Spain and Glasgow Homeless Network.

"Participation helps improve not only the lives of homeless people but also how homeless services work" said Ian Tilling, chair of the FEANTSA participation working group. "Remember: all the help in the world is no good unless you want to help yourself" said Michael Mackey who, before becoming a board member of the Galway Simon Community, had been homeless for almost 20 years, and added: "We are ordinary people, we weren't always homeless. We have an experience that is vital if services are to meet homeless people's needs".

Mr Rinaldi, MEP said "It is not just the way to help people in difficulties but it is also the way to get inspiration from people with direct experience. If we really want to build up this type of Europe we need to have this bottom up approach. For this reason the participation toolkit is certainly useful. In a sense it is sad that all these have not come out from the Commission or other Institutions".

FEANTSA believes that is important that participation be a way of working that empowers people to participate in decisions and actions that affect their lives. Indeed, actively involving homeless people in their own recovery contributes to better care and support and improves their quality of life. People have the right to have a say in the way that services they use are set up and run, and FEANTSA calls for the elimination of barriers that people with social, psychic, mental or economic disadvantage often face to influence or participate in decision-making.

In relation to homelessness, participation can be defined as the effective involvement of people experiencing homelessness in service provision, in decision making processes affecting these services as well as in their own recovery process. FEANTSA highlights that participation is about: recognising that people affected by homelessness have the right to have their opinions and perspectives heard; creating the structures and policies to allow this perspective to be heard; acting on what is being said; and feeding back to people on the impact that their participation has had.

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- Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director: +32 (0) 478 439 039;
- Mauro Striano, FEANTSA Policy Officer: +32 (0)2 538 62 65
- Ian Tilling, Director of Casa Ioana (Bucharest) and Chair of FEANTSA Participation Working Group: +40 21 332 6390

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. Housing Rights Watch is a European network of activists, academics, NGOs and lawyers from across the EU who are committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to housing to all <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article166&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