



**European Federation of National Organisations Working With the
Homeless
Press Release – 20th June 2013
For Immediate Release**

Homeless People Die in the Summer Too! Integrated Homelessness Strategies are Needed to Tackle Homelessness, Not Seasonal Responses

Tomorrow, the 21st June, is the first day of summer, and many homeless people, especially rough sleepers, will be stranded without services and suffering in the heat. FEANTSA wants to use this occasion to highlight the fact that homeless people are vulnerable and need attention throughout the year, not just in winter.

It is often assumed that winter is the worst period for homeless people. Greater media and political coverage is given to the issue and more services are opened because it is commonly thought that the cold is the worst thing homeless people have to contend with and that they are safe in the summer. However, homeless people, especially those sleeping rough, are still vulnerable in the summer, for the same reasons as in the winter and for other reasons related to the heat.

Indeed, according to the *Collectif Morts de la Rue* in France, as many homeless people die in the summer as they do in the winter. December and February, followed by March and July are believed to be the months where the highest number of deaths is recorded.

In the warmer months, fewer homeless services are open because it is assumed they are not needed. It is common for shelter places to be opened in the winter and closed when the summer begins. This means, though, that homeless people have nowhere to shelter from the heat and thus risk sunstroke, heatstroke and sunburn and can even die of exposure to extreme temperatures, heat exhaustion and dehydration. Not having enough to drink is a problem: homeless people are unfortunately often unwelcome in cafés and bars, especially for long periods, and bottled water is expensive. The removal of public water fountains is problematic as homeless people and other people desperately in need of water cannot drink for free. What is more, having to survive on the street is already exhausting; having to carry out activities necessary to survival in scorching temperatures can cause increased fatigue.

The effect the summer can have on homeless people's health is thus devastating, and often goes untreated. Indeed, despite the health problems they have, homeless people often face barriers when trying to access health care. It is a scandal that many homeless people die from treatable diseases because their access to health care is so limited.

The risk of becoming homeless through eviction also increases in the summer: countries that have a ban on evictions during the cold months lift this ban in the summer and landlords are reportedly less hesitant to evict tenants when it is warmer.

The lack of shelter leaves homeless people vulnerable to violence. A Spanish study, carried out by *Fundació Mambré*, showed that 27% of homeless people's deaths were caused by violence between 2006 and 2012 (compared to 8% that died of hypothermia), and a report by the Spanish National Statistics Institute, INE, showed that 51% of homeless people have been subjected to crime or violence, most frequently insults, threats, theft and assault.

FEANTSA argues for recognition of homeless people's vulnerability and their right to health, year-round homeless services and especially housing-led policies that take people off the streets permanently. Making real progress on homelessness requires an integrated strategy. The European Commission has asked Member States to develop such strategies in its Social Investment Package. It's now time for policymakers at local, regional and national to deliver and for the Commission to define a coherent action plan to support them. Homeless people cannot wait until temperatures drop. They need solutions now.

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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. www.feantsa.org
2. FEANTSA Health and Social Protection Working Group <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique24&lang=en>
3. FEANTSA Statements on Health and Social Protection, including "Health and Well-being for All – Holistic Health Services for People Who Are Homeless " <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article385&lang=en>
4. FEANTSA magazine on Homelessness and Health <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article133&lang=en>
5. FEANTSA magazine on Perceptions of Homelessness (info about *les Morts de la Rue*) <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article505&lang=en>
6. *Collectif Les Morts de la Rue* <http://www.mortsdelarue.org/>
7. INE report <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np761.pdf>
8. *Fundació Mambré* report http://www.fundaciomambre.org/pubdocs/informes_estudis_1_LANG1.pdf
9. See the FEANTSA Toolkits on Housing for information on Housing-Led Services <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article620&lang=en>

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