

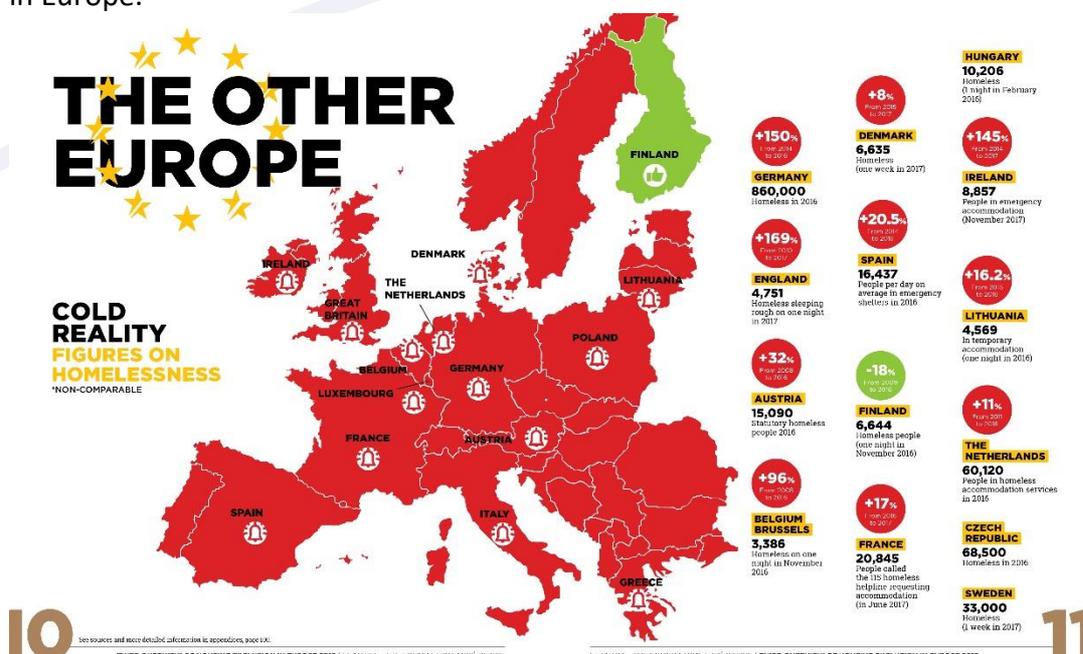
27TH MARCH 2018

THE JOINT EMPLOYMENT REPORT IGNORES #THEOTHEREUROPE

Last week, on 15th March 2018, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) adopted the Joint Employment Report 2018 (JER). The JER is part of the European employment strategy and European Semester process. FEANTSA challenges the social situation as depicted by this report for being truly incomplete. The narrow social situation assessment presented by the JER fails to reflect the reality of #TheOtherEurope, a Europe not merely ignored but also misunderstood; not just despised but also forgotten. FEANTSA particularly notes the absence of any reference to homelessness and the lack of precision in representing the reality of the housing urgency for the poorest in Europe.

Homelessness increasing steadily in almost all EU countries

Despite the increase of homelessness in almost all EU countries, the JER does not even mention homelessness because it was not featured in the employment guidelines. Therefore, the rising phenomenon estimated to affect up to 4 million people every year in the EU, is ignored. Yet with e.g. a 150% increase in Germany from 2014 to 2016, a 20% rise in the number of people in emergency shelters in Spain over the same period and an 8% increase in Denmark between 2015 and 2017, homelessness should be appearing as clear political priority in Europe.



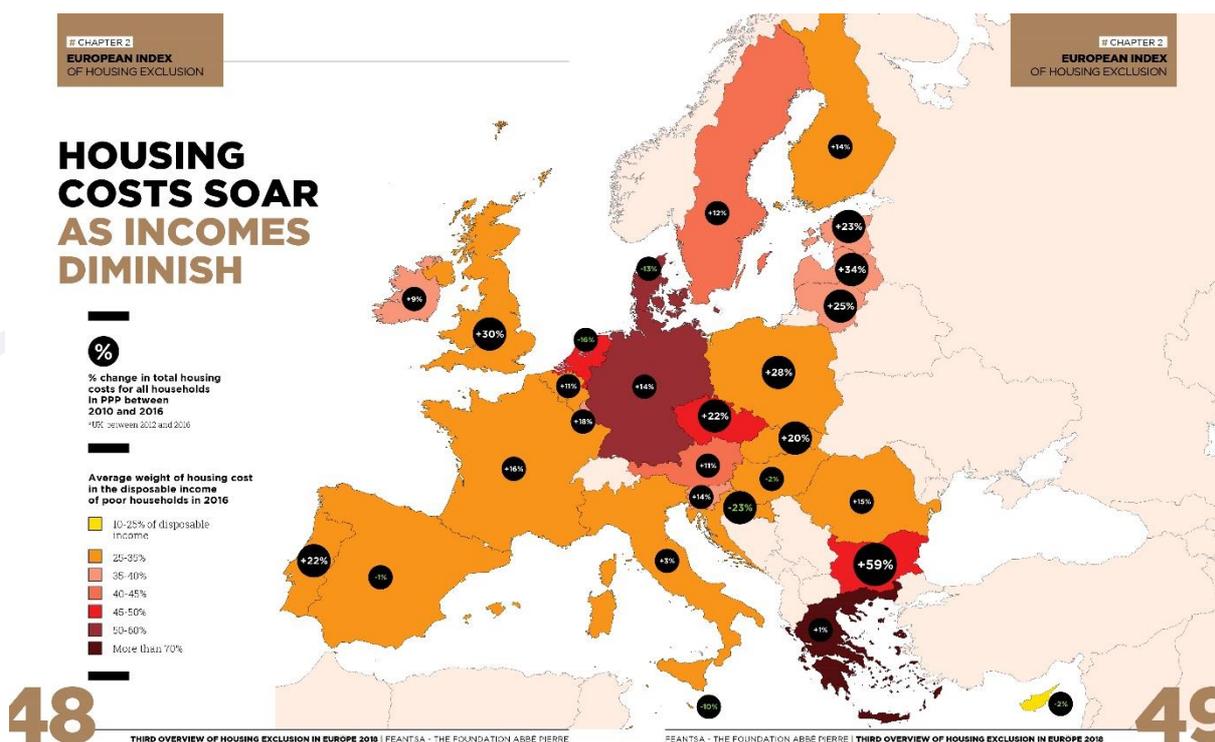
The profiles of homeless people are changing, with children becoming the largest group of people in emergency shelters because of a deterioration in the living conditions of extremely vulnerable families. Women, young people, people with a migration background, the working poor, are also becoming increasingly numerous among the homeless population.

FEANTSA regrets that homelessness has been completely left out of the JER and underlines the need to address homelessness at every step of the European Semester, in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including principle 19 on housing and assistance for the homeless.

A bleak housing situation as housing costs soar and incomes diminish

The Joint Employment Report 2018 presents a wrongly positive picture of the housing situation in Europe, failing to describe appropriately the urgency of housing exclusion. The JER states that “access to affordable, high-quality accommodation has been improving since 2008 in a large majority of the Member States” and then points to a limited number of examples.

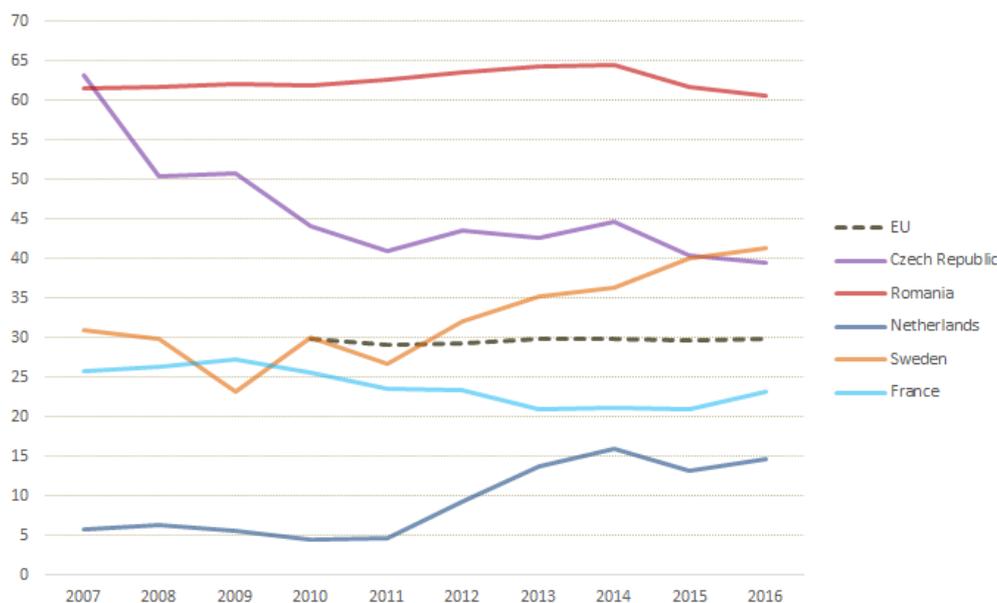
This limited description hides a much more complex and darker reality. The data from FEANTSA’s 2018 report on Housing exclusion in Europe¹ shows housing costs soaring faster than incomes in a large majority of EU countries, and that poor households spend on average 42% of their income in housing costs in EU.



¹ Third Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018

Poor households are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis in Europe. They are, on average, all in housing cost overburden, meaning that their well-being is put at risk by excessive housing costs. For instance, between 2010 and 2016, 19 countries saw inequality worsen regarding housing costs, including seven to a significant degree (Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary). This should have prevented the JER from such an inadequate representation of the housing situation in Europe. There again, the Joint Employment Report did not align its analysis in view of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) which clearly states that “access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.”

The Joint Employment Report totally overlooked many other aspect of the housing situation, despite the direct impact of housing on employment opportunities and living situation. For instance, overcrowding rates are still very high amongst poor households in Eastern European countries (61% in RO, 59% in PL, 56% in SK, 55% in HU, 51% in BG...), and if this phenomenon has been decreasing in some countries between 2010 & 2016 (e.g. CZ, Estonia, LT, LV...), we see a backward step in some Western & Northern EU countries, for instance NL & SE (see graph below & housing exclusion report 2018).



FEANTSA regrets this missed opportunity for the JER to adopt a more holistic view of the social situation, presenting the reality experienced by #TheOtherEurope. A more exhaustive description of the housing reality in Europe, presenting the need to address homelessness, would have been the sign of a genuine political will to work for a true social Europe. FEANTSA is looking forward to see the next JER including better data and analysis on homelessness since the Employment Guidelines have been changed and should be approved by the Council. This change should give ground to a better representation of the social situation in Europe, including the need to address the homelessness increase and the housing crisis for poorest households.