



**European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless**  
**Press Release – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014**  
**For Immediate Release**

**Violence Against Women Leads to Homelessness and Continues During Homelessness**

The main reason women become homeless is violence. This is a fact, yet there is little awareness of this widespread and growing problem across Europe. Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. To mark the occasion, FEANTSA wishes to draw attention to the increasing number of women who find themselves in homelessness because of violence and call for improved responses to the problem at all levels.

It is concern for her safety that drives a woman to leave an abusive partner when the violence intensifies and when her and her children's lives are at risk. The impact of violence on women, however, is much broader than this. It affects their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. For many women, violence results in isolation from society and limits their participation in the labour market, which negatively affects their ability to obtain an independent income. As a result, women escaping violence often face economic loss and poverty, plus loss of their homes and are often driven into homelessness as a result.

90 percent of homeless women experience some form of violence while they are homeless and one in two homeless women have experienced violence as children and during adulthood. Many are survivors of intimate partner violence, often from more than one partner. Every second homeless woman was subjected to sexual abuse as a child.

Violence and cumulating trauma is recurrent in the lives of homeless women and yet the support needs of women, coloured by experience of violence, are not appropriately addressed by homelessness services that have been traditionally modelled to meet the needs of homeless men as standard. Women often fall through the cracks of policy and service provision that are ill-equipped to respond to the specific gender dimension of their experience of homelessness. As a result, though they become homeless because they are escaping violence, homelessness exposes women to continuing violence and fear. Therefore, while violence is a major cause of women's homelessness, women often experience violence during homelessness as well.

Homeless services could and must be significantly improved to meet the needs of women who are homeless. This requires a significant shift in policy and practice. The violence women experience before and during homelessness requires responses that address the trauma of these experiences as well as providing safe and secure housing with long-term support that is tailored to individual women's needs and circumstances.

Violence against women is a breach of a great number of fundamental human rights that in turn leads to further cycles of violation. There is a strong and comprehensive human rights treaty in Europe to address violence against women. The EU has a clear role in supporting Member States to sign and ratify this treaty, the Istanbul Convention, and ensure a strong implementation of their obligation to prevent violence, to protect women and to invest in the future of survivors. As part of these duties, EU Member States and the European Commission should ensure that protection from violence and support for victims also reaches women who are homeless, who are often hidden and hard to reach and are one of the most marginalised groups of people in Europe today.

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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. [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)
2. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women <http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/>
3. Statistics on violence against women and homelessness from Simon Communities of Ireland <http://www.simon.ie/MediaCentre/MediaReleases/TabId/206/ArtMID/851/ArticleID/65/Simon-Communities-say-vulnerable-women-are-falling-through-the-cracks-into-homelessness-.aspx> and St Mungo's Broadway Rebuilding Shattered Lives Campaign <http://rebuildingshatteredlives.org/>
4. Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/>