



FEANTSA Flash
November/December 2007

**FEANTSA wishes all Flash readers a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year 2008!**

**We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your input and support
and look forward to working with you in 2008.**

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For upcoming events and conferences, do not forget to visit the [FEANTSA Calendar of events!](#)

FEANTSA News

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- ▶ **Social and Demographic Change and Homelessness: FEANTSA magazine online!** [12/14/2007]
The new edition of the FEANTSA magazine focuses on the impact of social and demographic change. The evolution of the composition of the European population and the changing social fabric across the EU are having a major impact on the phenomenon of homelessness. The present edition brings together the experience of service providers and public authorities on the ground, and the changes documented by researchers, in order to offer a picture of how the social and demographic context has evolved across the EU and how these changes have become visible in the experience of homelessness and the profiles of people experiencing homelessness in Europe.

You can access the magazine on the [FEANTSA website](#).

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- ▶ **FEANTSA 2007 reports on homelessness in Romania and Bulgaria** [12/13/2007]
FEANTSA commissioned national reports on homelessness in the two countries which joined the EU in January 2007: Romania and Bulgaria.

The aim of these reports was to carry out an initial stocktaking of homelessness to better understand the nature and extent of the problem in these two new EU countries. The reports look at the national scope and nature of homelessness, the political commitment to homelessness, the responsibilities for tackling homelessness, and the existing services for people who are homeless.

See reports on the [FEANTSA website](#).

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- ▶ **FEANTSA European Report 2007: Multiple Barriers, Multiple Solutions: Inclusion into and through employment for people who are homeless** [12/13/2007]

The final version of this year's FEANTA European Report on employment and homelessness is now available online. The report is based on national reports from 16 EU countries and aims to provide an overview about the employment situation of people experiencing homelessness as well as efforts to overcome their barriers to employment in the European Union as a whole.

You can access it on the [Annual Theme 2007 website](#).

News from the European Union

► **European Parliament: declaration on ending street homelessness available for MEP signature** [12/14/2007]

A cross-party written declaration on ending street homelessness in the European Union has been registered on 10 December 2007 and is now open for MEPs signature until March 2007.

The written declaration

- Calls on the Council to agree on an EU-wide commitment to end street homelessness by 2015;
- Calls on the Commission to develop a European framework definition of homelessness, gather comparable and reliable statistical data, and provide annual updates on action taken and progress made in EU Member States towards ending homelessness;
- Urges Member States to devise 'winter emergency plans' as part of a wider homelessness strategy;
- Instructs its President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council, Commission and the Member States.

A written declaration is a short text on a matter falling within the European Union's sphere of activities and can be used by MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) to launch or re-launch a debate on a subject, which comes within the EU's remit. In order to have the written declaration announced by the President of the European Parliament, it needs to be signed by at least half of the MEPs within a period of three months, otherwise it will simply lapse.

The five first signatories of the declaration are Mary Lou MacDonald (GUE/NGL, Ireland) Claude Moraes (PES, United Kingdom), Jacek Protasiewicz (EPP-ED, Poland), Gérard Onesta (Greens/EFA, France) and Jean-Marie Beaupuy (ALDE, France).

FEANTSA calls on all MEPs to sign the written declaration and commit themselves to ending an unacceptable though ongoing violation of fundamental rights in the European Union.

The original version of the declaration in English is available [here](#) (to access other languages, please click on the respective icon).

► **European Parliament: hearing on the housing crisis in the European Union** [12/14/2007]

The Socialist group in the European Parliament (EP) organised a hearing devoted to the "Housing crisis in the European Union – How do we tackle exclusion and homelessness?" on 6 December 2007 in Brussels.

The hearing gathered about 80 participants and focused on topics such as the scope and nature of homelessness in Europe, the role of social housing, the achievements of the EP Urban-Housing Intergroup, and housing as a component of the European social model. Speakers included Jan Ja•ab, Member of the cabinet of Commissioner Vladimír Špidla, João Ferrão (Secretary of State for Spatial Planning and Towns, Portugal), MEPs Alain Hutchinson, Jean-Marie Beaupuy, Pierre Pribetisch, Robert Goebbels as well as representatives from homeless and social housing organisations, including FEANTSA.

At the end of the hearing, a call for decent and affordable housing was launched. The 6 December call asks for the development of a coordinated and coherent strategy between the European Union and Member States in order to guarantee access to decent housing at an affordable price for all and to fight actively against housing exclusion and homelessness. Also, it calls Member States to take urgent measures aimed at the significant reduction of the number of people who are homeless and faced with inadequate housing conditions in Europe.

► **Housing rights: CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues viewpoint** [12/14/2007]

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, whose mandate is to promote awareness and respect for human rights in the 47 Council of Europe Member States (including all EU Member States), has issued a viewpoint on the right to adequate housing on 29 October 2007.

Mr. Thomas Hammarberg said that homelessness, which appears to be a shared reality across Europe, is a proof of the failure of social policies. While street homelessness is the most visible and extreme form of housing exclusion, other vulnerable groups of society live in substandard, inadequate or insecure housing. Access to adequate housing is becoming of concern for a broader part of the population, as social housing is declining and the availability of affordable housing decreasing.

Commissioner Hammarberg said that the time has come to recognise that adequate housing is indeed a universal human right, that international Treaties such as the revised European Social Charter define the scope of governments' obligations in this respect and that these should recognise that their general economic and social policies do impact on the right to housing. The viewpoint sets out a minimum programme for a rights-based housing strategy.

The viewpoint is available [here](#).

► **2010 to be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** [12/13/2007]

The European Commission has designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The € 17 million campaign aims to reaffirm the EU's commitment to making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010.

Its four specific objectives are:

- Recognition of the right of people in poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to play a full part in society;
- An increase in the public ownership of social inclusion policies, emphasising everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation;
- A more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
- Commitment of all actors, because real progress requires a long-term effort that involves all levels of governance.

Recent Eurobarometer data show that Europeans see poverty as a widespread problem. Across the EU, citizens feel that around 1 in 3 people (29%) in their area live in poverty and that 1 in 10 suffers extreme poverty. In all Member States, part of the population is subject to exclusion and deprivation, often facing limited access to basic services. 19% of children are at risk of poverty across the EU and 1 in 10 live in households where nobody works.

The 2010 European Year will coincide with the conclusion of the EU's ten year strategy for growth and jobs.

See full press release [here](#).

► **Charter of Fundamental Right proclaimed in Strasbourg** [12/13/2007]

The Presidents of the Commission, European Parliament and the Council signed and proclaimed the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in Strasbourg. The Charter will give European citizens a catalogue of rights legally binding on the institutions and bodies of the European Union and on the Member States when they are implementing EU law.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was initially proclaimed by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000, but this was merely a political commitment carrying no binding legal effect. In the context of the work on the European Convention and the 2003-2004 Intergovernmental Conference, the Charter was adapted - in particular as regards its general provisions - with a view to making it legally binding.

The Charter will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union. Article 51 stipulates that "The provisions of this Charter are addressed to the institutions, bodies and organs of the Union with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and to the Member States only when they are implementing Union law".

More information about the Charter is available [here](#).

► **EU Employment and Social Affairs Council adopts conclusions on the active inclusion of people furthest away from the labour market** [12/13/2007]

Following a recently published Commission Communication on active inclusion (see [FEANTSA Flash October 2007](#)), EU Employment and Social Affairs Ministers have adopted common conclusions on the active inclusion of people furthest away from the labour market.

In the conclusions the Council acknowledges

- the approach of active inclusion as a holistic and balanced framework for fighting poverty and social exclusion, based on the principles of protection, empowerment and user influence;
- that the social inclusion of the people who are furthest from the labour market is not only a goal in itself, but is also an important condition for fully achieving the Lisbon objectives;
- that active inclusion policies should be implemented in a co-ordinated way through the active participation of all relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local levels;
- that active inclusion and flexicurity are complementary and mutually reinforcing approaches;
- the role of education, preventive labour market policies and individualised or tailored services for those at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

The Council further invites Member States to cooperate actively in the second-phase consultation launched by the Commission and to adequately involve the social partners and relevant stakeholders at the various levels in the debate.

The conclusions are available [here](#).

► **EU leaders sign new treaty for the European Union** [12/13/2007]

EU leaders have signed the new treaty for the European Union on 13th of December 2007 in Lisbon (Treaty of Lisbon). Its most visible innovations include a permanent president of the EU, an EU foreign minister, greater powers to the European Parliament and a legally binding citizens rights charter.

In addition, it reduces the size of the European Commission, allows for easier decision-making by changing voting rules - both from 2014 - and curbs the power of single member states to veto legislation. The treaty is designed to make the EU more effective on the world stage both by giving it a more coherent foreign policy and by allowing it to take decisions quickly.

All member states have to ratify the treaty for it to come into force, with several states, including France, aiming to have the process completed early in 2008. Ireland is the only country likely to have a referendum on the document, which is supposed to come into place by early 2009.

More information about the new treaty is available on this [website](#).

► **Good Practices for Combating Social Exclusion of People with Mental Health Problems - A collection from ten EU Member States** [12/13/2007]

Mental Health Europe (MHE), together with project partners from 10 different EU Member States carried out the EU-funded project "Good Practices for Combating Social Exclusion of People with Mental Health Problems".

One of the central outcomes of the project is its website (www.mentalhealth-socialinclusion.org), which includes an online database of good practices combating social exclusion of people with mental health problems.

In addition, MHE has now developed a publication in the form of a directory of all the collected good practices. The directory is intended to serve as a source of inspiration for anybody who wants to learn about small, local initiatives that help supporting the social inclusion of people with mental health problems: <http://www.mentalhealth-socialinclusion.org/publications.html>

► **New EU webpage on decent housing and homelessness** [12/13/2007]

The European Commission has revamped its Social Protection and Social Inclusion website. One section is entirely dedicated to the European Commission's activities in the area of decent housing and homelessness.

Other sections include:

- Poverty and social exclusion of children
- Active inclusion
- Inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Financial Exclusion and overindebtedness

To view the Decent Housing and Homelessness section, [click here](#).

► **Update on European Commission social realities stocktaking 2007** [12/13/2007]

The European social realities stocktaking launched earlier on this year by the European Commission is in full swing. The deadline for the consultation of all stakeholders has now been extended to mid-February 2008. The original aim of this Commission consultation was to stimulate a debate on what constitutes Europe's social reality today in order to be able to address better in its policy initiatives the fact that society is changing perhaps faster than ever before and that the associated benefits and risks are not evenly shared. Some parts of the population have difficulty adapting and run the risk of unemployment and exclusion.

An important aspect of the social reality stocktaking has indeed been to trigger a debate at national and EU level with contributions from the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, FEANTSA and other European NGOs (see [August FEANTSA Flash](#)).

In November 2007, the European Commission published a Communication proposing a "social vision". This paper aims to enrich the on-going social realities consultation, paving the way for a renewed Social Agenda in mid-2008 by broadening the discussion from analysis to response, highlighting possible areas for action such as poverty, access to housing, access to healthcare, active inclusion of the most disadvantaged - all themes of importance for tackling homelessness as a European social reality.

Reactions to the [consultation](#) and to this [social vision](#) will feed into the preparation of a renewed Social Agenda, which the Commission will present in mid-2008.

For more information, contact Liz Gosme liz.gosme@feantsa.org

News from our Members

► **"Por una salud digna para todos" – FEANTSA members organise Homelessness Day in Spain** [12/13/2007]

"Por una salud digna para todos" ("For a worthy health for all") is the slogan of this year's campaign of Spanish FEANTSA members around the national Homelessness Day (25 November 2007) in Spain. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the difficulties of people experiencing homelessness in accessing adequate health care.

Homelessness organisation across Spain have organised press conferences and information events on this issue. The comprehensive campaigning material includes information about the definition of the Right to Health and homelessness as well as the health situation of people experiencing homelessness in Spain and across Europe.

More information about the campaign, including campaigning material, is available in Spanish on the [Caritas website](#)

► **Focus Ireland TV campaign: Without Your Home Your Life Develops Differently** [12/13/2007]

Focus Ireland launched a national TV and radio campaign in November 2007 which aims to raise awareness and help breakdown stereotypes around homelessness.

Focus Ireland hopes the campaign will support our efforts to galvanise greater public and political support for long-term solution to combat and prevent homelessness. It also aims to raise awareness of Focus Ireland and build support for our work as one of the leading homeless and housing charities in Ireland.

To view and listen to the TV and radio ads, [click here](#).

► **One year later: Association Emmaüs publishes homelessness survey** [12/13/2007]

Almost one year after the adoption of the justiciable right to housing in France and the Reinforced Action Plan for People experiencing Homelessness (PARSA – Plan d’action renforcée pour les personnes sans-abri), French FEANTSA member Association Emmaüs has published a survey on homelessness.

It shows that despite improvements in relation to the quality of homeless accommodation, there is a general feeling amongst service users as well as the general public that not much has changed over the year.

Key findings include:

- 60% of people experiencing homelessness declared that the situation has not changed or has even become worse; 75% of the general population share this opinion;
- 2 out of 3 service users have had difficulties when looking for a place in a homeless shelter;
- 60% of people who are homeless said that they do not receive adequate housing support; and 53% gave the same answer in relation to employment support.
- One out of two French people still fear to become homeless one day (47%)

The survey is the third annual survey of this kind and is based on interviews with 730 people experiencing homelessness and 1000 French citizens. It includes ten key recommendations for decision makers.

For the full survey in French, [click here](#).

Homelessness in the Headlines

► **Germany: Veterinary service for homeless people’s dogs** [12/13/2007]

Dogs belonging to people experiencing homelessness receive veterinary treatment free of charge at the organisation “Fiftyfifty” in Düsseldorf. Once a month, the organisation organises this service for the approximately 200 people experiencing homelessness in the city, which includes immunisation and deworming treatment for the dogs.

Dog owners have very much welcomed this initiative. While they might have enough means to provide the dog with food, it is much more difficult to finance veterinary treatment.

According to Fiftyfifty, the veterinary consultation also has a positive side effect. “If you help their dogs, service users will also be more open towards you,” highlights Ila Glazari who works in the project.

In the future, the organisation aims to become mobile with the “Underdog project” in order to make it available at the typical meeting points of people who are homeless in the city. 70 % of the funding will be provided by the regional government of North-Rhine Westphalia.

More information about the project is available [here](#).

► **Ireland: Results of rough sleeping survey in Dublin** [12/13/2007]

At least 104 people were sleeping rough on the streets of Dublin last month, according to an official count organised by the [Homeless Agency](#) on the 20th of November.

The overall figure appears to represent a significant drop on previous counts, which recorded 185 people sleeping rough in 2005 and 275 in 1999. However, officials from the Homeless Agency say it is difficult to compare figures due to changes in methodology. It says the 104 people identified as sleeping rough represent a "confirmed minimum".

For more information, [click here](#).

► **Scotland: Citizen Survey reveals mixed attitudes towards homelessness** [12/13/2007]

Results from the 2006 Scottish Social Attitudes survey, conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research, on public attitudes to homelessness show that a variety of opinions exist about homeless people themselves, the causes of homelessness and how the problem should be dealt with.

While many Scots think homeless people have been unlucky in their lives, a majority still associates homelessness with sleeping rough, with about a fifth of respondents linking homelessness to drink or drug abuse. However, only a small proportion blames homeless people for anti-social behaviour and a clear majority thinks homeless people should sometimes be prioritised on housing waiting lists.

The key findings include that 48% agree that 'most homeless people have just been unlucky in their lives', but 28% disagree and 22% neither agree nor disagree. At the same time, 45% agree with the more 'critical' statement that 'most homeless people could find somewhere to live if they really tried', while 33% disagree.

The full results of the survey are available [here](#).

► **Vatican: First international conference on the pastoral needs of people who are homeless** [12/13/2007]

For the first time the Vatican organised an international conference on addressing the pastoral needs of people who are homeless. About 50 participants from all over the world came together at the Vatican in Rome on 26 – 27 November to share ways the church could continue to provide basic material assistance for people on the street and find new ways that promote their dignity and value.

The pastoral and spiritual needs of homeless individuals are vast and varied, Archbishop Marchetto said, because homelessness does not just mean a lack of permanent shelter; "it is the collapse of a world, of security, personal relationships and of dignity. It is the loss of the ability to lead a life truly human."

It was highlighted that each homeless person needs to be seen as an individual with specific needs and "not a problem to be sent elsewhere." A careful balance must be struck between offering help and respecting the person's freedom, including the freedom to refuse aid and pastoral care.

The faithful must also address the causes of homelessness and poverty, he said, by being advocates on such public issues as "housing policy, employment, welfare, health care and state support for the homeless."

Publications

► **Access to Health Care for Undocumented Migrants in Europe: New PICUM report** [12/14/2007]

The result of an intensive two-year project co-funded by the European Commission, the new PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) report identifies the legal and practical barriers encountered by undocumented migrants when trying to access health care within eleven EU Member states.

It gives visibility to the problems arising from inadequate access to health care. The situation facing undocumented migrants in terms of law and practice is provided through the country profiles; each providing an overview of the most common problems and obstacles preventing a realization of the right to health.

Good policies and practices within each of the eleven countries are highlighted to provide inspiration for new health care strategies and actions which can continue to address the problems facing undocumented migrants in Europe.

The information contained in this publication will be useful in convincing the governments of EU member states to speak more, to do more, and to take on their responsibilities and comply with international human rights obligations instead of continuing to rely upon civil society as an alternative provider of health care for undocumented migrants.

Making a strong case for action, this report may be used as a tool of influence, pressure, empowerment and innovation.

Ten practical recommendations are provided to help national and European policy-makers to better address the problems arising from a lack of or an insufficient access to health care for undocumented migrants in the EU.

For more information about the report, [click here](#).

► **Homelessness in America - Americans' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Knowledge** [12/13/2007]

The report "Homelessness in America - Americans' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Knowledge" provides findings from a national opinion poll conducted by Gallup on the issue of homelessness in the U.S. and in eight cities: Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

Key findings include:

- Drug and alcohol abuse tops the list among the general public as a major factor why some people might be homeless.
- 48% of Americans indicate lack of affordable housing is a major cause contributing to homelessness, and 45% believe home foreclosures are a major factor.
- A majority (58%) say the nation is doing a poor job in addressing homelessness and much more effort is needed.
- More than three in every four (77%) adults perceive homeless people as being adult individuals. Sixteen percent believe that homeless people are mainly families.
- One in very two adults surveyed (51%) completely agree that "communities are safer when people don't have to live on the streets."
- Close to three in ten (28%) of the general public surveyed report that there has been a time when they, themselves, were worried that they may not have a place to live.

[The full report is available here](#)

► **Lives in Crisis: Homeless Young People in Dublin** [12/13/2007]

"Lives in Crisis" by Paula Maycock and Eoin O'Sullivan reports on the findings of a study of 40 homeless young people in Dublin city. It documents their journeys "into" homelessness and traces the life experiences and events subsequent to them becoming homeless.

Among other issues the book deals with the experience of being homeless; the challenge of surviving on the street; relationships and friendships; drug use and criminal activity; experience of bullying, violence and victimisation; health and health related behaviour; help-seeking and coping strategies; and service use and service utilisation.

Lives in Crisis provides a detailed overview of the prevalence of youth homelessness in Ireland and outlines the services and interventions designed to meet the needs of homeless youth in an Irish context. In their own words, these young people give us a better understanding of the experience of homelessness based on their living "out of home", that is, on the street, in hostels or in other unstable living situations.

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