



FEANTSA Key recommendations for taking forward the social inclusion pillar of the streamlined strategy on social protection and social inclusion

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FEANTSA has followed the EU social inclusion strategy since the beginning (2001-2006) and has seen **the emergence of tackling homelessness and improving access to decent housing as key priorities** for anti-poverty policy at EU level. The increased importance attached to homelessness under the EU social inclusion strategy was confirmed by the EPSCO Council in March 2005. In the conclusions of the Council meeting, all EU25 Employment and Social Affairs Ministers agreed on key social inclusion priorities for the future (see http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/lsa/84176.pdf):

p. 8 "Social inclusion measures must essentially aim at combating the deep causes of poverty and exclusion, and priority actions must include:

- the prevention of child poverty;
- supporting the caring capacity of families;
- promoting the equality of men and women and reconciling work and family life;
- the improvement of social services;
- treatment of the phenomenon of homelessness;
- the development of new approaches to the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants."

FEANTSA urges the EPSCO Council of 22 February 2007 to take stock of progress made on these 6 priorities.

In terms of priority 5 on "the treatment of the phenomenon of homelessness", the recently submitted National Reports on Strategies for social protection and social inclusion of the 27 EU countries confirm the following:

- Homelessness and access to decent housing are still key priorities for the EU member states;
- The need for **urgent action** in providing access to decent and affordable housing, and the need to prevent different forms of homelessness and housing exclusion from increasing in Europe namely rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing (see [ETHOS](#));
- The **huge potential** for learning on policies tackling homelessness and housing exclusion given that many EU countries are in the process of developing or revising policies in this area;
- **Housing has emerged as an important pillar** of the EU social inclusion and social protection strategy. National reports on social inclusion demonstrate that housing should indeed be an essential element of social welfare in any country;

In order to preserve the value of the EU social inclusion pillar of the new streamlined strategy and prevent loss of interest in the process, FEANTSA would suggest the following action:

- The social inclusion strategy has greatly contributed to **raising awareness on different forms of poverty and exclusion** including homelessness, housing exclusion, labour market exclusion, child poverty, poverty experienced by immigrants and ethnic minorities, family poverty, gender inequality, discrimination and others. Now that these different societal problems have been identified as key aspects of social inclusion policy, there is a need for **urgent action** to tackle these different problems under PROGRESS;
- In order to take the EU Social Inclusion process forward under PROGRESS, it is important to **create clear mutual learning processes** around the societal problems covered under the strategy (see above) if the EU is to have a genuine impact on alleviating poverty. The EU offers a number of governance tools which enable actors in the social sector (ministries, local authorities, service providers, people experiencing poverty) to benefit from transnational exchanges. It is now time to use the full potential of these specific tools by coming together around the specific themes outlined as priorities in EU anti-poverty policy;
- Given that homeless policy is often developed through cooperation between different ministries (social affairs, housing, health, justice and home affairs, employment), it is crucial to **involve all relevant ministries in the EU social inclusion process** in order to optimise the value of the OMC in the area of homelessness policy-making;
- **FEANTSA proposes to facilitate transnational exchanges** between different actors on one of the societal problems dealt with under the Social Inclusion process - homelessness and housing exclusion - by using its expertise and contacts to foster cooperation between different levels of government (from local to international) and different partners involved in the fight against homelessness. FEANTSA calls on other thematic networks to follow suit.