



■ European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL

Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri AISBL

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FEANTSA's response to the Commission Communication

« Concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market »

FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. Our members represent almost 100 non-governmental organisations in more than 30 countries, including all 25 EU member states, which provide a wide range of services for people experiencing homelessness. In addition to accommodation and social support, these services include job search, job-placements and in-work support as well as training and capacity-building schemes aimed for improving the employability of people experiencing homelessness that are often very far away from the mainstream labour market.

Through regular exchange, in particular in the context of the FEANTSA expert group on employment, FEANTSA members have been able to develop their understanding of the obstacles to employment for people experiencing homelessness as well as innovative and effective approaches to promote the inclusion and re-integration of people belonging to this vulnerable group.ⁱ

FEANTSA is a member of EAPN and the Social Platform and supports the recommendations laid out in the organisations' responses to the Commission Communication. The FEANTSA response aims to complement these recommendations. It is based on our long-term expertise in the field of homelessness and focuses on concrete examples of effective active inclusion policies for people who are homeless.

Introduction

FEANTSA welcomes the publication of this Commission Communication and the special attention it draws on promoting the inclusion of people furthest from the labour market. FEANTSA believes that the consultation process launched is a timely initiative in order to further developing EU action in this field.

With this paper FEANTSA points out a number of principles as well as recommendations in order to ensure that EU action is effective in reaching its objective to promote the inclusion of people experiencing homelessness, as one group of the people furthest from the labour market.

Basic principles of effective active inclusion policies

Effective inclusion should be based on a holistic approach

People experiencing homelessness face various structural as well as personal barriers to employment and social inclusion.ⁱⁱ Improving the employability of people who are homeless is an important tool in their pathway out of homelessness. FEANTSA stresses, however, that effective inclusion policies must be based on a holistic approach that takes the multiple dimensions of social exclusion into account. Promoting the inclusion into the labour market



therefore has to go hand in hand with other requirements enabling people to fully participate in society. For people experiencing homelessness securing access to adequate and affordable housing is a key element. In addition, access to education, physical and mental health care, substance misuse treatment as well as the promotion of social networks may be necessary.

People furthest from the labour market need quality support services in order to take up and hold a job

Many people who are homeless need extra time and support to get back to work, due to the multiple barriers to employment they face. Access to quality support services that properly address the specific life context of the individual therefore is crucial, if active inclusion policies are to be effective. A comprehensive package of services for people experiencing homelessness would include such different elements as:

- advice and guidance
- training and skills development, including basic and life skills
- work placement, in-work support and follow-up
- supported employment, social enterprise
- meaningful activity
- 'non-work' support and guidance (access to housing, health/mental health, abuse treatment, promotion of social networks etc.)

A case management approach is needed to help individuals navigating through the system of services

Multiple pathways out of homelessness are possible. While for some, access to housing is the central element for taking up a job, for others more assistance and guidance will be necessary, even after a job has been found. Services have to be flexible. There also has to be the possibility to change track if a first job placement has failed. Many studies produced on homelessness have highlighted the need for such a case management approach that puts the individuals' needs and aspirations in the centre of the planning and delivery of services. A single case manager will help identifying the different options of an individual and help him/her navigating through the system of services. On the basis of this initial as well as ongoing assessment, a personal plan can be developed across housing, employment and personal domains.

Supported employment can be a first step into the labour market

For some people taking up a job on the mainstream labour market is not a viable option. This does not mean, however, that people are or should be 'unemployed'. Supported employment can be a useful first step on the pathway out of homelessness and into the labour market.

Good practice examples from all over Europe show the positive results of personalised and flexible schemes that not only adapt the employee to the employment but the employment to the employee. The Danish government, for instance, has allocated money to pay workplaces for people who are homeless. This money is also used to cover the costs for a replacement if the employed person is absent.

Meaningful occupation is an important tool to develop skills and self-confidence

There are individuals that will - also in the long-term - not being able to even take up supported employment. Pushing individuals with long-term illness or mental health difficulties towards employment, for instance, would be counter productive to their positive progression. For this group of people, meaningful activities or volunteering are important tools to enable the individual to develop personal and social skills as well as self-confidence



and self-esteem. These are important requirements to bring people closer to re-integration and employment.

Active inclusion requires more than integration into the labour market

FEANTSA highlights that the fact of having a job is not sufficient to reach the objective of social inclusion. The growing number of so-called 'working poor' demonstrates that you can be working and still not be able to afford an adequate accommodation which enables you to fully participate in society.ⁱⁱⁱ A better understanding of the housing dimension of employment is necessary to establish effective inclusion policies for people experiencing homelessness. Employment policies therefore have to be linked to other policies such as social policies and housing policies.

Making work pay is about creating real incentives

Minimum income schemes have to be an integral part of active inclusion policies, securing a decent living in dignity for everyone. Although governments may indeed force social recipients to take up a job by reducing benefits, the positive effect of this strategy will be poor. Many people will be forced to take up jobs that will only reduce their living standard. For instance, to have a job that is paid the minimum hourly wage often leads to a reduction of the overall income due to the loss of certain social benefits. This is in conflict with the aim of promoting social inclusion and social cohesion. Taking up work has to pay in real term. Maintaining entitlements for social benefits for an initial period may therefore be essential for job retention. Reducing the taxes on low income groups may be another instrument of opening up the labour market for disadvantaged groups such as people experiencing homelessness. Active inclusion policies should focus on creating real incentives to take up a job, while providing the necessary income security for those who are – for various reasons – not able to do so.

Using employment for promoting the inclusion of people experiencing homelessness requires sufficient financial resources

Effective active inclusion policies need to be backed up by sufficient financial resources. There are plenty of schemes across Europe that could be held up as examples of good practice. However, all are very small scale due to the lack of financial resources. To successfully use employment to help promoting the inclusion of people experiencing homelessness will often require a long-term investment in order to secure and further develop the necessary quality support services, such as training, counselling and social support. Well conceived inclusion policies can even be less costly than ad-hoc measures that do not address the multiple dimensions of social exclusion experienced by people who are homeless. For instance, the health costs associated with treating an individual on an ongoing basis can – in the long-term – be more expensive than developing a personalised plan that takes the specific life context of the respective person into account.

Recommendations for EU action in the field of active inclusion

On the basis of these principles, FEANTSA makes the following recommendations for EU action in the field of active inclusion.

The EU should develop its action in the field of active inclusion by:

- **Establishing common European Guidelines for effective inclusion policies, specifying measures according to the different disadvantaged groups:** These guidelines should be



- based on the 1992 Council Recommendations as well as on the expertise of all relevant stakeholders on all levels, including NGOs and vulnerable groups themselves.
- **Developing a set of common indicators for inclusion:** The Commission should further develop existing indicators, such as the indicators for the Employment Guideline No. 19^{iv}, on the impact of services and social inclusion policies to improve access to employment for vulnerable groups. Member States should be evaluated on the ground of these indicators in order to avoid countries to pick and choose those they prefer. Such a set of common indicators would contribute to comparing policies in different countries and identify good practice.
 - **Promoting the exchange of good practice and mutual learning:** Many innovative and effective approaches exist regarding improving the employability of people experiencing homelessness as well as other excluded groups. The EU plays a particularly important role in assessing services and disseminating information about what actually works.

European Guidelines in the field of active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market should include the following points:

1. Active inclusion policies should be based on a **holistic approach** which links support in relation to housing, employment and training, physical and mental health, social networks/family, substance misuse and other related issues. This requires a better coordination of services, within agencies, across agencies, and across sectors.
2. Active inclusion policies should focus on a **personalised approach**/case management. This includes an initial as well as ongoing assessment of the needs and aspirations of the person and ongoing support after a job has been taken up or if a first job placement has failed.
3. Active inclusion policies should integrate **supported employment, meaningful occupation schemes or volunteering** as important tools for promoting the inclusion of people furthest from the labour market who are temporary or will not be able to take up a job on the mainstream labour market.
4. Active inclusion policies have to **secure an adequate level of minimum income** in order to ensure that everyone can live a life in dignity.
5. Active inclusion policies must be **framed by well-designed labour market and social policies**. There is a close relationship between employment and housing policies as access to adequate and affordable housing often is a prerequisite for taking up a job.
6. Active inclusion policies have to be backed up by **sufficient and long-term funding** in order to secure the effectiveness of services and prevent even more expensive ad-hoc interventions due to the lack of resources to guarantee quality services in the first place.
7. Active inclusion policies should ensure that every individual has **access to clear and consistent information** on services, rights and entitlements.



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ⁱ The recommendations laid out in this response are to a large extent based on the draft background paper “Barriers to employment for homeless individuals and recommendations for future action”, prepared by Linda Butcher, Chief Executive, Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) and member of the FEANTSA expert group on employment. The final version of the paper will be available on the FEANTSA website in June 2006.

ⁱⁱ [‘No home, No job – moving on from transitional spaces’, Peter Singh, OSW, March 2005.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Recently, the French press reported that employees of the municipality of Paris had to sleep rough because they could not afford any housing. AFP: Agents de Paris SDF: la CFTC fait plusieurs propositions à M. Delanoë, 12/12/2005.

^{iv} [Indicators to monitor guideline 19, in: Indicators to monitor the Employment Guidelines \(2005-2008\) – endorsed by EMCO, October 2005, p. 6.](#)

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