



Feantsa Flash
September 2009

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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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- ▶ **FEANTSA Condemn online homelessness game** [29/09/2009]
FEANTSA have spoken out against an increasingly popular and widespread online game created by online games company Farbflut Entertainment GmbH. Players are invited to play a homeless character and progress from living on the streets to living in a castle. This can be achieved through various activities including stealing, gang fighting, begging and busking. Players must also maintain certain blood alcohol levels. The game has more than 2.2 million players with versions set in Hamburg, Berlin, London, Warsaw and Paris.
FEANTSA has issued a press release in reaction to the game's perpetuation of negative stereotypes about homeless people including those relating to alcohol, violence and criminal behaviour. The issue has been taken up by national press in a number of countries and FEANTSA have received wide-spread support for their position.
Read the full press release [here](#).

 - ▶ **FEANTSA issue joint policy statement with Mental Health Europe on mental health and homelessness** [29/09/2009]
FEANTSA have issued a joint policy statement with Mental Health Europe on the issue of mental health and homelessness. This has been distributed to relevant MEPs and FEANTSA welcome the support received from both re-elected and newly elected MEPs.
The statement is available on our website in [English](#) and [French](#).

 - ▶ **FEANTSA research conference documents available online!** [29/09/2009]
165 participants attended the European Observatory on Homelessness' 4th Annual Research Conference in Paris on the 18th September 2009. The event was organised in collaboration with the European Network of Housing Research Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion, with support from Paris' SciencePo. The theme was 'Homelessness and Poverty'. A wealth of research was presented and there were opportunities for knowledge-sharing and networking. Presentations from the conference are available from the website of the [European Observatory on Homelessness](#).

 - ▶ **FEANTSA, EAPN and CECODHAS support proposal of amendment to the European regional development fund regulation for marginalised communities** [29/09/2009]

FEANTSA sent a joint letter with the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and the European Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS) to the Swedish Presidency and the Rapporteur MEP Lambert Van Nistelrooij in support of the European Commission's proposal to amend the European regional development fund regulation regarding the eligibility of housing interventions for marginalised communities. The letter put forward 3 key demands: targeting interventions to the most marginalised and deprived communities such as homeless people; ensuring that the proposed measure strengthens social infrastructures (including the non-for-profit housing sector) and enlarging the scope of the proposal to the EU 27 Member States and not only to the 12 new Member States currently suggested. Read the [FEANTSA, EAPN and CECODHAS letter to the Swedish Presidency](#).

► **FEANTSA's 'Ending Homelessness' campaign** [29/09/2009]

As many of our readers know, FEANTSA is launching a campaign on 'Ending Homelessness' in 2010, which will run alongside the European Year on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The campaign will spread the message that ending homelessness is possible. FEANTSA members have been encouraged to organise events during 2010. Please let the FEANTSA office know of any events (seminars, exhibitions, sports) that you are organising in conjunction with the campaign. These will be posted on the Campaign Page of FEANTSA's website.

More information on the campaign is available on the members-only section of FEANTSA's website. For further information on the campaign, please contact Ruth Owen (ruth.owen@feantsa.org).

► **FEANTSA's European conference, 23 October, Copenhagen – Last chance to register!** [29/09/2009]

FEANTSA's European Conference, 'Sharing the Power – Working Together, Participation as a tool to solve homelessness' is fast approaching.

The conference is being co-organised by Danish FEANTSA member, projekt UDENFOR. Service users, service providers and others from the field of homelessness will discuss various forms of participation and how to make them work in practice. Key issues include why participation matters, the challenges to user participation and how they can be tackled, participatory ways of working, the role of service user organisations and how public authorities can create an effective framework for participation.

Two good reasons to come a day earlier and stay longer:

1. On the 22nd October, conference participants will have the opportunity to visit a wide range of interesting homelessness and participation projects throughout Copenhagen. The visits will be organised in small groups.
2. On the morning of the 24th October, the Danish service user organisation SAND invites all service users participating in the conference to take part in a service user meeting. The aim is to create a space for service users from Denmark and across Europe to meet and discuss.

See FEANTSA's website for the draft programme with speakers, and a registration form.

For more information, please contact Silke Paasche silke.paasche@feantsa.org

To register, please contact Christine Lambert christine.lambert@feantsa.org

► **Latest edition of ENHW newsletter available online!** [29/09/2009]

The latest edition of the European Network of Health Workers' newsletter is now available online! Read it on the [ENHW newsletter page](#).

► **Upcoming HABITACT meeting and project visit** [29/09/2009]

Following HABITACT's successful first meeting in May of this year, HABITACT cities will meet in Copenhagen on the 23rd October to discuss next steps including defining the role and specific identity of the HABITACT group.

HABITACT is a forum of exchange on local homeless strategies. It was established in response to growing interest and demand for information on homelessness from local authorities across Europe and aims to build capacity of local policy-makers to reduce homelessness in their communities through trans-national exchange, peer-learning, and potential policy transfer. The expertise gathered within these exchanges will be disseminated through HABITACT toolkits, publications and web-tools.

As well as taking part in this meeting, HABITACT city delegates will have their own tailor-made project visit looking at local authority approaches to tackling homelessness in Copenhagen. The aim of HABITACT is to promote this type of exchange of ideas on a regular basis.

There is still time to join HABITACT before the October meeting and there are spaces available for delegates to attend the meeting and the project visit. HABITACT is open to all local practitioners in EU/EEA countries who are working on homelessness. If you have any questions about HABITACT or you know of any cities who could be interested in joining, then please contact Liz Gosme or Suzannah Young (info@habitact.eu).

News from the European Union

► **EU Justice Commissioner criticises asylum procedures** [29/09/2009]

The European Union's Justice Commissioner has criticized EU member states for failing to improve asylum procedures, a day after riot police rounded up migrants at the "Jungle" camp in northern France. EU Justice Commissioner Jacques Barrot said that problems posed by would-be immigrants to Britain in the camp near Calais needed to be addressed at a European level, not by inadequate measures taken by single states. He stated that "The time for purely national responses is gone. This kind of phenomena requires a European answer, so that all the different practices can be brought into line." He said his services had proposed allowing migrants to apply for asylum in any EU country where their families already live, rather than only at the point of first entry, as is currently the case.

▶ **Final MPHASIS conference takes place in Paris** [29/09/2009]

The final conference of MPHASIS, a project to improve the capacity for monitoring information on homelessness and housing exclusion in 20 European countries had its final conference on the 17th September in Paris. MPHASIS was the first European partnership on homelessness monitoring systems. The research findings were presented as were national experiences in developing homeless data collection and ways forward. The presentations, exhibition and workshop material from the conference are available at the [MPHASIS website](#).

▶ **MEPs elect Barroso to a second term as Commission President** [29/09/2009]

At the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the 16th September, MEPs voted to approve the nomination of Jose Manuel Barroso as President of the European Commission for a second term. The vote had been postponed from the first Plenary of the new European Parliament in July and in the intervening time Barroso had published details of his [political priorities](#) for the next five years. Barroso's second term had already been unanimously endorsed by the EU heads of state and heads of government at the European Council meeting in June. See the [European Parliament website](#) for further details.

▶ **Preparations continue for the European year on combating poverty and social exclusion** [29/09/2009]

Preparation for the European Year on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion are well under way. 25 member states have now submitted their national programmes. There are still opportunities to access support in the framework of the year. Contact your NIB about accessing media support for your events, for example. Or see whether there are opportunities for co-operation around activities detailed in your country's national programme. Calls for proposals for 2010 activities have already been launched for Austria, Belgium, France and Luxembourg. For national programmes and calls for proposals, see the [FEANTSA website](#).

News from the Council of Europe

▶ **Commissioner Hammurburg: "Europe must respect the rights of migrants"** [29/09/2009]

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights has issued a statement calling for Europe to respect the rights of migrants. He has criticised policies that put human lives at risk and set out a number of priorities for ensuring the protection of migrants' rights. Read the statement [here](#).

News from our Members

▶ **Shelter Cymru reveal pressing need for social housing in Wales** [29/09/2009]

Shelter Cymru have warned that high housing costs and an unstable job market could trap young people in Wales in a cycle of homelessness and unemployment. They have announced the results of a survey of people aged 16 – 30, revealing that three quarters of respondents said the cost of buying or renting a home was a "major concern" to them. Nearly one in ten said they had experienced some form of homelessness over the past eighteen months. Director John Puzey said "This is further evidence of the need for the Assembly Government to make a significant investment in affordable homes".

▶ **Simon Communities celebrate 40 years** [29/09/2009]

Irish FEANTSA member, Simon Communities has celebrated their 40th year. Amid the festivities, Simon Communities reflected on the increasing number of rough sleepers in Dublin and the challenges that lie ahead. The number of new rough sleepers in Dublin is increasing and the number of homeless drug-users has trebled in the last four months, according to the chief executive of the Dublin Simon Community, Sam McGuinness. McGuinness highlighted a sharp rise in demand for Simon's services and recent funding cuts, saying "these are worrying times and big challenges lie ahead as we go into winter". Musician and global anti-poverty campaigner Bob Geldof, who volunteered with Simon in his youth, spoke in praise of the organisation at the anniversary celebrations.

Homelessness in the Headlines

▶ **Czech Republic: City of Karlovy seeks to close city's shelters** [29/09/2009]

Deputy Mayor Tomas Hybner is hoping to gradually close shelters in the city of Karlovy as part of a plan to encourage homeless people to look for their own solutions. Raising the price of hostel accommodation has been proposed as one way to encourage homeless people to look for alternative housing. An exception to the policy of gradual closure will be accommodation for families with children. The city council has approved first steps in the process but has yet to approve the whole plan.

▶ **England: European Investment Bank supports development of Social Housing** [29/09/2009]

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is in the process of signing a GBP 95 million loan to Triathlon Homes LLP for the development of an Olympic Village for the London 2010 Olympic Games, with the aim of converting 1300 flats into social housing after the Games have finished.

Simon Brooks, EIB Vice President responsible for lending operations in the UK, said, "The creation of sustainable communities is a key lending objective for the EIB. The Bank is particularly encouraged by the high environmental standards in place in the Athletes' Village development and we are confident that this project will have a significant positive impact on the quality of life of the families and individuals who will live there following the Games in 2012." The project will create over 1300 dual-purpose flats and surrounding community infrastructure, including transport and healthcare services. The flats for the athletes at the 2012 Games will be retrofitted after the Games to make them suitable as social and affordable housing units.

► **England: Homelessness figures down 32%** [29/09/2009]

National statistics released on the 11th September show that the number of households being accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty in England is down by 32% from the same time last year. The number of households in temporary accommodation is 19% lower than the same time last year. Homelessness Minister Ian Austin said "Backed by unprecedented Government investment, local authorities and their partners have made huge strides in reducing homelessness...But we will not stop here, we want these sustained reductions to continue, which is why we are investing £220million over three years in local authorities and the voluntary sector to prevent homelessness".

► **France: Secretary of state for housing outlines plans to protect homeless people from H1N1** [29/09/2009]

Benoist Apparu, the French Secretary of State for Housing and Urbanism has outlined plans to protect homeless people from the H1N1 virus. He has asked local authorities to ensure that contingency plans, including sufficient staff, are in place to ensure that ambulatory services, shelters and other service providers can continue working in the case of a pandemic. He promised that government would bear additional costs to service-providers and that protective masks would be provided. He asked local authorities to provide specialised 24 hour treatment centres for people with the H1N1 virus. Apparu stated that mobile teams, such as those of the Red Cross or the Samu Social were well placed to offer vaccinations to homeless people. He has encouraged citizens to be vigilant and call the homeless service helpline if they see homeless people with symptoms. Christophe Louis, of the organisation Les Morts de la Rue has criticised the plans as being too little too late. He argues that the government is trying to evade criticism that they have not done anything to protect homeless people. He points out that Apparu has failed to go beyond broad statements and to outline financial mechanisms to support organisations in tackling H1N1. Louis emphasised that the dormitory-style rooms of most shelters are totally ill-equipped to deal with a highly contagious virus, especially as most shelters do not even have an isolation room.

► **Hungary: Cuts in Government Support for Homeless Services** [29/09/2009]

On the 11th of September, during debates over next year's budget, the Hungarian Government announced proposals to cut normative state support for homeless services. While fuel prices and other costs have risen, the government is planning to reduce funding; increasing stress on services. Street outreach services, day centres, rehabilitation services, temporary family centres and night shelters are all facing probable cuts. For the majority of services, normative state support represents 90% of their budget. Service providers are extremely concerned that these cuts are not matched by investment in supported housing or the prevention of homelessness. This news follows several years of successive cuts. The budget has not yet been approved.

► **Rome is the Italian city with the highest number of homeless people** [29/09/2009]

Estimates show that in Italy there are about 17,000 homeless people. About 6000 people live in Rome, 5000 in Milan, 2000 in Torino and fewer in Napoli, Florence and Bologna. These figures were published in a report by Comunità di S. Egidio, based on surveys conducted by Caritas.

In Rome, 4000 people sleep rough, while 1000 people are in sheltered accommodation and 1000 live in inadequate housing, such as makeshift shelters or very old buildings. 60% of Rome's homeless population are of foreign origin. 37% of the homeless people who had applied for an Italian language course at the Comunità di S. Egidio possessed a university degree. Among them Alla, a Russian engineer who left her country for economic reasons and whose diploma is not recognized. While living in makeshift dwellings, she managed to work and obtain an Italian degree. 50% of homeless Italians said that they had been living on the streets for more than 4 years. 18.7% of them mentioned family dispute as the cause of homelessness. 20% have alcohol problems, 15% drug addiction issues and 15% mental health problems.

► **Scotland: The minister for housing and communities hails progress on targets to abolish homelessness by 2012** [29/09/2009]

Alex Neil, Scotland's Minister for Housing and Communities said "significant inroads" were being made as official figures demonstrated that 14 out of 32 Scottish local authorities hit their targets as part of Scotland's landmark housing and homelessness legislation to end homelessness by 2012.

Local authorities have been set the ultimate goal of giving equal priority to all homeless applicants – ending the current system of "priority need". They were expected to be halfway towards this target by March 2009. The new figures, published by the Scottish Government, showed there were 57,304 applicants for homelessness status in 2008/2009, up by 0.2% on the previous year. 83% of those assessed as homeless in 2008/2009 were assessed as priority. There has been a 50% increase on the 12,000 households given new homes in 2002/2003. Use of temporary housing has risen 160% over 10 years but the number of people in temporary housing deemed "unsuitable" has fallen by more than half. Housing charity Shelter has welcomed the progress. Director Graeme Brown said "Scottish councils should be congratulated for the good progress they have made towards the 2012 commitment to give everyone in Scotland a home". However, Shelter also drew attention to the thousands still stuck in temporary accommodation. They reminded ministers of the need to build 10,000 new affordable homes for rent, requesting that next year's budget be a "budget for homes".

The figures were released alongside the announcement of a new housing bill to be introduced in early 2010. The bill ends the "Right to Buy" policy that allowed social housing tenants to buy their properties. It will also separate standard setting and regulation of social housing and provide the Scottish Housing Regulator with a statutory objective of safeguarding and promoting the interests of current and future tenants. Measures are also planned to protect households facing repossession.

► **Spain: Divorced parents request positive discrimination in allocation of social housing** [29/09/2009]

The organisation Mothers and Fathers For Joint Custody (Padres y Madres en Accion por la Custodia Compartida - PAMACC) recently presented proposals to the Madrid government to positively discriminate in favour of divorced parents when allocating social housing. The aim is to avoid extreme situations of social exclusion and reduce the number of divorced parents ending up in shelters or on the streets.

An estimated 13% of people living in Madrid are separated or divorced. Francisco Rodriguez, President of PAMACC explains that making ends meet is very difficult for divorced parents with joint custody, as they have to find a new home, pay half of the mortgage on their previous property, and pay child support until their children reach the age of 27. Their main alternatives are to go back to living with their parents, take on shared accommodation, or in the worst case scenario end up living on the street. Rodriguez said "we're not asking to be given social housing for nothing, we are just recommending that flats be rented (to divorced parents) for a limited time, to give us the chance to rebuild our lives".

A spokesman of the Madrid government stated that since 2005, the city has already been helping this vulnerable group, providing 288 homes to separated or divorced mothers and fathers with space for visiting children.

► **USA: Violence against homeless people at highest level since 2001** [29/09/2009]

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has revealed that 106 homeless people were assaulted in the USA in 2008, 27 of whom who died. The figure is the highest since 2001. The coalition has cited the increase of degrading online video sites as a possible cause. Such sites allow viewers to download videos of homeless people fighting for a few dollars. Download the full report [here](#).

News from the United Nations

► **The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty approaches** [29/09/2009]

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty will take place on the 17th October 2009. The day aims to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. It was initiated by the organisation ATD Fourth World and became a UN day in 1992. The theme for this year's day is 'Working Together out of Poverty'. Various activities and events will take place around the world and there will be a specific UN event in New York. Please see <http://www.un.org/events/poverty/2006/index.html> for further information.

Announcements

► **Architectural research on tackling homelessness** [29/09/2009]

Architect Zeila Tesoriere has presented a paper on her on-going research which uses critical design theory to examine the emergence of new strategies for supportive housing. Her paper 'Architecture for homeless: shifting paradigm in a domestic borderscape' focuses on the activity of Common Ground, an American NGO that provides accommodation for people who have experienced street homelessness. Zeila Tesoriere is an Associate Professor in Architectural Practice at the Università degli Studi di Palermo and an Associate Researcher for the Laboratoire Infrastructure Architecture Territoire (ENSA Paris- Malaquais).

Read the paper [here](#)

Contact the author at zeilatesoriere@unipa.it

► **Housing fund improving housing amongst Roma in Macedonia** [29/09/2009]

In 2007, Habitat for Humanity Macedonia launched a pilot project called the Roma Housing Fund aimed at improving substandard housing for Roma communities in Macedonia. The project set up a credit line for reconstructions and renovations of inadequate homes in the municipality of Shuto Orizari, the largest Roma community in Europe. The project is implemented in partnership with the local microfinance institution Horizonti. Roma families borrow \$1,000 to \$2,500 for 3 years for construction and repair work. To date, the project has supported 129 families.

A recent evaluation revealed positive results. Average return rates in the first year of implementation were higher than expected – more than 90 percent. Improvements could be seen in individual families; in many overcrowded homes extensions meant children finally had separate beds. Rooms have become much cleaner, brighter and warmer in winter. The overall sanitary conditions in the community have been improving, reducing instances of contagious diseases, while installed water pipes help improve hygiene in the area. It is too early to say how the project has affected the overall poverty level in the area, as impact studies can only be conducted in a few years' time.

Meanwhile, on the basis of the positive evaluation, the project is scaling up to double the number of supported families. Habitat and Horizonti are also planning to expand the number of Roma communities eligible for the credit line.

Publications

► **Comparative report on youth homelessness in the Czech Republic, UK the Netherlands and Portugal** [29/09/2009]

The European research project 'Combating Social Exclusion among Young Homeless People (CSEYHP)' has published a preliminary study entitled 'A comparative Report on Youth Homelessness and Social Exclusion in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK'.

Download the [full report](#).

► **Germany: New book about homeless people** [29/09/2009]

'Wohnungslose Menschen - Ausgrenzung und Stigmatisierung' (Homeless people – exclusion and stigmatisation) is a new book about homelessness in Germany. The authors, Klaus Störch and Jürgen Malyssek have worked in the sector for many years. The book includes portraits of people and their pathways into homelessness; an experience which is presented as one of the "most brutal" forms of poverty and exclusion. The book also examines the structural factors leading to homelessness. The authors argue that values such as solidarity, tolerance and human dignity are increasingly put into question in a society focused on profit. More and more people are depending on support in order to cater for basic needs. At the same time, people who are unemployed or depending on social welfare payments are viewed as "parasites" and are confronted with stigmatisation and social exclusion.

'Wohnungslose Menschen - Ausgrenzung und Stigmatisierung' is available in German from the Lambertus Verlag for 22 euros.

Click [here](#) to see the book at Amazon.de

► **UK: Fawcett Society report 'Ethnic Minority Women's Livelihoods'** [29/09/2009]

The Fawcett Society has published a new report on the intersection of gender, ethnicity and poverty in the UK.

Download the [full report](#).



**The FEANTSA Flash is supported by
the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).**

This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
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relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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