



FEANTSA FLASH
March 2009

FEANTSA News

- ▶ **European Report 2008: The role of housing in pathways into and out of homelessness - final version now available!**
- ▶ **FEANTSA seminar : The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Tackling Homelessness at Local Level, 28 May 2009, Brussels**
- ▶ **FEANTSA's European Journal of Homelessness, Volume 3 – Reminder on Call for Papers**
- ▶ **FEANTSA's European Research Conference – Reminder on Call for Papers!**
- ▶ **New on FEANTSA's Members-Only site!**

News from the European Union

- ▶ **2009 EU peer review programme on social inclusion**
- ▶ **EPSCO Council messages to the Spring Council**
- ▶ **European Parliament adopts report on economic recovery plan**

News from our Members

- ▶ **St Mungos: New state-of-the-art hostel shortlisted for architectural award**

Homelessness in the Headlines

- ▶ **Austria: neunerHaus opens dental practice for homeless people**
- ▶ **Czech Republic: Difficulties for homeless people in Prague**
- ▶ **France: Coalition of French housing and homelessness organisations calls for moratorium on evictions**
- ▶ **Germany: Undercover journalist reveals situation of emergency shelters**
- ▶ **Hungary: Homeless figures rise**
- ▶ **Ireland: Labour proposes amendment to give vote to homeless people**
- ▶ **Italy: Survey of homeless people in Milan**
- ▶ **Portugal: Launch of National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People**
- ▶ **UK: Figures show a 68% jump in the number of homes repossessed during 2008**

- ▶ **Scotland: Scottish Government releases statistics on the Operation of Homelessness Persons Legislation 2007-08.**
- ▶ **The Netherlands: Facing an increasing number of destitute Poles**

News from the United Nations

- ▶ **Message of High Commissioner for Human Rights speaks on International Women's Day**

Announcements

- ▶ **European Charter for the development of social initiatives in stations**
- ▶ **Homeless Link announces 2 Awards open for entries**

Publications

- ▶ **Belgium: Results and Conclusions of Count of Homeless People**
- ▶ **INSEE Publication – 5% of people in France have found themselves without housing at some point in their lives**
- ▶ **Social questions: anglo-saxon analyses. Socially incorrect?**
- ▶ **Sweden: Plan for continuous monitoring of the extent and character of homelessness – a strategy for disseminating knowledge and information**
- ▶ **UK – 'Your Passport to Renting a Private Home'**

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

FEANTSA News

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- ▶ **European Report 2008: The role of housing in pathways into and out of homelessness - final version now available!** [30/03/2009]

The final version of the FEANTSA European Report 2008 is now available online. With this report FEANTSA wanted to explore the importance of housing policies in the fight against homelessness. While for some observers, the link between housing and homelessness is an obvious one. For others, this link is significantly subordinate to socio-economic issues such as employment, relationship breakdowns, mental health and addictions.

The European report presents the main findings from the national reports of 18 EU countries on this topic. It highlights the areas of substantial agreement across Europe as well as setting out areas of disagreement or difference in perception and approach between countries.

Download the European Report 2008 in [English](#) and [French](#). A Spanish version will be available soon.

Download the [18 National Reports](#)

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- ▶ **FEANTSA seminar : The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Tackling Homelessness at Local Level, 28 May 2009, Brussels** [30/03/2009]

FEANTSA, in collaboration with the European Committee of the Regions, has organized this seminar to look at the impact of the economic crisis on the profiles of homelessness, and the impact on budgets and strategies. Join local authorities, homeless service providers, researchers and speakers from all over Europe to exchange information and to network!

The [draft programme](#) is now available. It includes speakers from the European Commission, the municipalities of Cologne, Utrecht and Gdynia, Poland as well as speakers from organizations such as Crisis UK and Caritas Spain and local government representatives from Ireland and France.

The working languages of the seminar are French, English and Spanish.

Registration is open till the 20th of April and a limited number of hotel rooms have been reserved in central Brussels. In order to secure a room, please register as soon as possible. For more information, please visit [FEANTSA's](#) website.

For any queries, please contact Ruth Owen, ruth.owen@feantsa.org

► **FEANTSA's European Journal of Homelessness, Volume 3 – Reminder on Call for Papers** [30/03/2009]

Papers are now being accepted for the next volume of the European Journal of Homelessness. The theme for Volume 3 (2009) is 'Governance and Homelessness'. The Editors welcome the submission of articles that explore dimensions of governance and homelessness, in particular articles that consider issues such as collaborative governance, good governance, the enabling state, policy implementation, evidence-based policy, participatory democracy, accountability, meta-governance and regulation. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather is indicative of the range of issues that are pertinent to the theme of the Journal.

Manuscripts should be submitted as a word file email attachment to Dr Eoin O'Sullivan (tosullvn@tcd.ie) by the 30th of April, 2009.

Please see [here](#) for more information on the call for papers and details for submission.

If you would like to order a copy of Volumes 1 or 2 of the European Journal of Homelessness, please write to Charlotta Odling, charlotta.odling@feantsa.org

► **FEANTSA's European Research Conference – Reminder on Call for Papers!** [30/03/2009]

FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness in collaboration with the European Network of Housing Research Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion are pleased to announce the 4th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe. The theme for this year's Conference is 'Homelessness and Poverty' and will take place in Paris on September 18th 2009.

Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words and submitted by the 18th of April 2009. Submissions and further enquiries should be directed to feantsaconference@busch-geertsema.eu.

See here for more information on the conference and the call for papers. [FEANTSA's European Research Conference – Reminder on Call for Papers!](#)

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See here for more information on the conference and the [call for papers](#).

► **New on FEANTSA's Members-Only site!** [30/03/2009]

A number of updates have been made on the members-only website, including news on the Ending Homelessness campaign and FEANTSA's membership bulletin, important lobbying information and FEANTSA's toolkit for the European elections.

The list of the newly appointed National Implementation Bodies which will distribute funding for the European Year 2010 has been uploaded onto the Campaign webpage, along with a two-page summary of what the Ending Homelessness campaign will entail. Furthermore, the latest edition of FEANTSA's membership bulletin, the LINK has been uploaded, as has important information on how to lobby around the European 'light year' on homelessness and housing exclusion. Finally, the FEANTSA toolkit for the European Parliament elections taking place from the 4-7 June this year is also available.

If you have forgotten your password to the members-only section, please contact Ruth Owen, ruth.owen@feantsa.org

News from the European Union

► **2009 EU peer review programme on social inclusion** [30/03/2009]

The European Commission has launched its [2009 peer review programme](#) on social inclusion. This year, the programme will look at 10 policies/practices related to social inclusion. Among these, there will be a peer review examining the Vienna homelessness monitoring system: "Counting the homeless – improving the basis for planning assistance".

This peer review will take place on 12-13 November in Vienna and will involve the following peer countries: Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden.

For more information, see the peer review programme website:
<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/>

► **EPSCO Council messages to the Spring Council** [30/03/2009]

The Council of Social Affairs ministers (EPSCO Council) met in Brussels on 9 March 2009 to prepare their key messages to the Spring European Council which took place on 19 and 20 March. The Social Affairs ministers of the 27 EU countries agreed to strengthen their commitment to the EU social inclusion and social protection objectives: "Sustained efforts should also tackle homelessness as an extremely serious form of exclusion". After agreeing in 2005 that homelessness is a key social inclusion priority, the EPSCO Council has renewed its call for concerted EU action on homelessness.

See full press release [here](#)

► **European Parliament adopts report on economic recovery plan** [30/03/2009]

On Wednesday the 11th March, the European Parliament adopted a report on the economic recovery plan. The report contained two items relating specifically to employment and social inclusion.

It calls on Member States to adapt new provisions of the regulations of the European Social Fund, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. It recommends the simplification of procedures and the broadening of eligible costs in order to reach employment and social inclusion goals. The report says that countries should continue to support employment in key economic sectors, whilst ensuring that when providing such assistance, the strengthening of European cohesion is prioritised to avoid uneven development within the EU.

The report is in favour of speeding up the release of funding targeted at employment support. It also emphasises that EU support programmes should be geared towards helping the most vulnerable groups in society. It supports programmes that guarantee decent living conditions and access to high-quality services of general interest.

The report also stresses the need to guarantee adequate living standards for all citizens of the Union and calls for adequate emergency measures to be taken to combat the effects of the downturn. It calls for social policies to be adapted to cope with the recession. Such policies should support an active labour market and social inclusion, paying special attention to the most vulnerable members of society.

Download [economic recovery plan report](#).

News from our Members

► **St Mungos: New state-of-the-art hostel shortlisted for architectural award** [30/03/2009]

St Mungo's Endell Street hostel for the homeless in Camden (London) has been shortlisted for the prestigious 2009 Civic Trust architectural awards. The hostel was opened in December 2008 following a £3.2 million renovation scheme to make it up to-date, and now provides a place of shelter for 53 homeless men and women as well as being a place that offers health, employment and educational programmes. The hostel has its own IT suite as well as a recording studio.

St Mungos worked in partnership with Camden local council to refurbish the hostel with a grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government's Hostels Capital Improvement Programme. Charles Fraser, Chief Executive of St Mungos, said: "Our new Endell Street hostel is an inspirational place. It is also a model of how homeless people should get the support they need to make permanent life changes. It is great news that the Civic Trust Award judges have recognised this as an excellent project, both for its architectural merits and its value to the local community."

The hostel is short listed after being judged socially beneficial, while making a positive contribution to the appearance of the local environment.

Homelessness in the Headlines

► **Austria: neunerHaus opens dental practice for homeless people** [30/03/2009]

The homeless service neunerHAUS in Vienna recently opened a dental practice. This new initiative aims to offer quality dental treatment to people experiencing homelessness. In addition to normal dental care, the practice offers services that are targeted to people who are homeless. There is a shower available, people have the possibility to receive new clothes and they can even bring their dogs along. In addition, the practice will provide dental treatment to people who do not have a health insurance card and social workers will inform patients about their rights and entitlements.

For more information, visit the [neunerHaus](#) website

► **Czech Republic: Difficulties for homeless people in Prague** [30/03/2009]

The Czech Republic, which took over the EU Presidency in January of this year, is keen to keep its homeless population out of sight. Says Jiri Janecek, vice-mayor of the city of Prague who is in charge with social affairs, 'we've made it illegal to beg in the town centre, and we're making sure that they (homeless people) don't hang around on the public transport system. In some respects, we're more advanced than other EU countries.'

An article which recently appeared in the French paper, Le Figaro, quoted the Mayor of Prague as saying that there are 2,000-3,000 homeless people in the city. Local associations say that the reality is closer to double this number. However, the city currently only offers 700 places in shelters, the main shelter being a river boat. Only 74 metres long, dating from 1960, the boat offers 250 beds in very basic conditions. Being on the river, it is not only out of sight for most of Prague's inhabitants; it also is not linked to any neighbourhood and therefore ensures that no one commune in Prague has to take responsibility for its running. Most of the users of the shelter are retired people, those in debt and those working in the informal economy.

The City of Prague has recently launched a free telephone help service for homeless people. According to the Figaro article, Janecek has claimed 'I think we are really doing our best for the homeless. If we promised everyone a bed, then we would be inundated with requests. We can't give anything away without some form of return – that would be demotivating to homeless people. Now, the question is no longer 'what can Prague do for the homeless' but rather 'what can the homeless do for Prague.'

► **France: Coalition of French housing and homelessness organisations calls for moratorium on evictions** [30/03/2009]

The call comes at the end of the "trêve hivernale" (an annual winter period during which no evictions can take place) and in the wake of new measures brought in by Housing Minister, Christine Boutin.

Boutin's new legislation means that state officials (préfets) will no longer be able to pass a judgement of eviction without proposing alternative accommodation for evictees. Regional commissions for the prevention of evictions have been made compulsory throughout France. Boutin also plans to introduce a system whereby third-party social organisations can take on the debt of people unable to pay their rent, allowing them to stay in their home.

Social housing organisations Droits au Logement (Dal) and the Confédération nationale du logement (CNL) have judged the measures as insufficient, fearing that they favour short-term accommodation solutions, such as hotels and shelters over long-term, stable re-housing.

32 housing and homelessness organisations (including Fnars, Emmaüs, les Enfants de Don Quichotte and La Fondation Abbé Pierre) call for a moratorium to avoid spiralling eviction rates in the context of rising rent and unemployment combined with declines in funding for housing assistance and social housing. According to Emmaüs 500,000 households are in a position where they cannot pay their rent and 221,000 are living in precarious situations without secure rights following an eviction verdict.

Several events took place to publicise the call for a moratorium; Emmaüs deposited a mountain of mattresses in the Place de la République in Paris and Dal organised protests. Les Enfants de Don Quichotte launched a tour, which will involve solidarity camps of tents travelling around France to draw attention to homelessness and poor housing.

► **Germany: Undercover journalist reveals situation of emergency shelters** [30/03/2009]

An undercover story about the experiences of rough sleepers in Germany has drawn an unflattering picture of some emergency shelters in Germany. For several months a well-known undercover journalist, Günter Wallraff, disguised himself as a homeless person and shared the living conditions of people who slept on the streets and used emergency shelters during winter time. Wallraff's testimony, which was published in the weekly newspaper "Die Zeit", has received a lot of public attention in Germany.

Wallraff describes the real problems of homeless people surviving on the street and within an emergency shelter system which is not adapted to their needs, often governed by unclear rules and procedures. He particularly criticised two emergency shelters in Hannover and Frankfurt. In Hannover, Wallraff found himself locked into a bunker which serves as emergency accommodation and was unable to escape after being aggressed by one of the residents. In Frankfurt, he slept in a container park; an experience that Wallraff describes as "sleeping in a drawer". Both cities have responded to the criticism. The City of Hannover promised to investigate the situation of the bunker. Daniela Birkenfeld, head of the social affairs department of Frankfurt, highlighted that the container park has to be seen as a low-threshold service that is part of a much broader service provision for homeless people in the city.

► **Hungary: Homeless figures rise** [30/03/2009]

The number of homeless people registered in Hungary now stands at over 7.000 people, that's up by 843 people on last year. The data shows that Budapest has more homelessness than the provinces, but most of these people stay in shelters and receive services, while Hungary's other major cities – Pecs, Debrecen and Győr – registered a rise in rough sleepers. The highest ratio of homeless in proportion to the population was in Esztergom and Miskolc.

Peter Györi, chairman of the Hungarian Shelter Foundation, said finding work is much more difficult in the provinces. He added that the effects of the economic crisis have shown up a rise in the number of people who report recently losing a job or their home, which are the primary reasons for becoming homeless.

► **Ireland: Labour proposes amendment to give vote to homeless people** [30/03/2009]

Earlier this month, Labour proposed an amendment to the Electoral Amendment Bill 2009, to remedy the disenfranchisement of homeless people by allowing them to register to vote.

The bar on giving a vote to homeless people is the last vestige of the situation where only property owners were allowed to vote. Says Ciaran Lynch, Spokesperson on Housing and Local Government 'There is no good reason for denying people who are homeless, the right to vote. They have as much of a stake in society as anybody else, and are as entitled to have their views and interests taken on board by policy makers and public representatives'.

The amendment will create a provision whereby a homeless person may be registered to vote at the address of a statutory or voluntary body providing services to homeless people in the area.

► **Italy: Survey of homeless people in Milan** [30/03/2009]

A survey of homeless people was carried out in the city of Milan, Italy by Michela Braga and Lucia Corno from the Bocconi University. The study findings show that the typical perception of homeless people as "clochard" (i.e. tramps who choose a street lifestyle) is very far from reality. The results of this first survey show that among the 4.000 homeless people surveyed, 30% said they had a higher education, and 7% of the homeless population are university graduates. The people surveyed are on average 40 years old, have an education, and do not choose to sleep in the streets but rather are forced to do so due to social and family breakdown. A third are married, and approximately a third are in work (although many have temporary jobs or work in the informal economy). The homeless population is made up of both Italians and immigrants. Only 5% of the people surveyed were women.

► **Portugal: Launch of National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People** [30/03/2009]

In the middle of March, the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People was launched in Portugal. It was prepared by the Institute for Social Security (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity) which co-ordinated an inter-institutional group of public and private entities for over a year.

The group, consisting of statutory bodies (housing, social security, employment, immigration etc) and non-governmental representatives, discussed and proposed a concept of homelessness to be adopted by agencies working with homeless people, based on the ETHOS Typology. The concept finally adopted is a narrow one, embracing only the roofless and the houseless categories of the ETHOS framework. Nevertheless, the strategy comprises objectives and measures addressing both the risk situations leading to homelessness and the continuity of support related to integration and resettlement.

The strategy is seen as a good starting point in a country where, until now, there have been no homelessness policies in place. It is hoped that it will constitute an important strategic tool for the implementation of co-ordinated action in this field, and will provide important guidelines for intervention at the local level.

The strategy should shortly be available on our website (in Portuguese.)

► **UK: Figures show a 68% jump in the number of homes repossessed during 2008** [30/03/2009]

Current trends suggest that the UK will soon have 1 million empty homes. This is due to both rising repossessions and the fact that empty properties were bought up by developers who have been unable to raise funds to refurbish them for occupation.

46,750 properties were taken over by lenders in 2008, up from 27,900 in 2007. The Financial Services Authority (FSA) reports a sharp increase in the number of homeowners in mortgage arrears, suggesting that repossessions will continue to rise.

Adam Sampson, chief executive of Shelter, said that the figures "underline the scale of the crisis facing Britain's homeowners". He emphasized that the increase in arrears and repossessions was "fuelled by irresponsible lending..., which saw some lenders giving out loans of more than 100% and up to seven times people's salaries". He added that The FSA and the Government have a responsibility to regulate lending.

There was a slight fall in the number of repossessions during the final quarter of 2008, although the figure was still 60% higher than a year earlier. The fall may be due to the Government's pre-action protocol, introduced in November, under which courts can grant repossession orders only as a last resort.

► **Scotland: Scottish Government releases statistics on the Operation of Homelessness Persons Legislation 2007-08.** [30/03/2009]

Figures released by the Scottish government show a 2% increase in the number of homeless households between April and September compared to the same quarter the previous year. More people are being made homeless due to mortgage default and rent arrears. 392 households were made homeless due to mortgage defaults between April and September - compared to 699 for the whole of the previous 12 months. The number of individuals or families living in temporary accommodation at the end of December had risen by 7% from the previous December.

Single people and single parents accounted for 85% of homeless applicants for assistance from local authorities. Between April and September 2008 60% of applicants were single people and 25% were single parents.

Shelter Scotland's Graeme Brown responded, saying that Scotland needs to build new homes quickly to tackle a deepening housing crisis. Andy Young, policy manager for the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, said the figures underline the need for government funding to build 10,000 affordable homes for rent. He stressed that higher homelessness rates, coupled with greater demand for affordable rented housing would make meeting Scotland's 2012 homelessness targets "extremely challenging".

► **The Netherlands: Facing an increasing number of destitute Poles** [30/03/2009]

In The Hague, there are approximately 200 Poles without roofs over their heads. Other cities of similar size report similar figures.

A significant proportion of homeless Polish people in the Netherlands have alcohol addiction problems, and the number seeking support to deal with such problems has increased dramatically. Amsterdam and Rotterdam have even introduced Polish Alcoholics Anonymous services.

The increase in the Polish homeless population in the Netherlands has been linked to the collapse of the pound in the UK and the associated economic crisis. Poles have left the UK for mainland Europe looking for work, and agricultural jobs in the Netherlands have attracted many. However, the crisis has now hit the Netherlands, and although the Euro remains strong, the effects are leading to increased homelessness amongst Polish immigrants. Many have difficulty accessing services because they are unfamiliar with the system or are uninsured.

News from the United Nations

► **Message of High Commissioner for Human Rights speaks on International Women's Day** [30/03/2009]

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay made a speech declaring that 'the current global economic crisis is likely to have a disproportionate impact on millions of women who already formed the majority of the poor and disenfranchised before the crisis developed....to an even greater extent than usual, women are being forced to accept more marginal and ill-paid employment and forego basic rights and services, including education and health, in order to secure food and shelter.'

'Numerous studies have shown that, in times of hardship, women and girls are exposed to a greater risk of violence as a result of the frustrations and despair affecting families and communities. Clear links have – to give just a few examples – been traced between homelessness and violence, inadequate housing and violence, and unemployment and violence. So, in addition to gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory economic measures, policies will need to accommodate women's demands for justice and for remedial action.'

See here for the [full speech](#)

Announcements

► **European Charter for the development of social initiatives in stations** [30/03/2009]

A European Charter was recently signed by the railway companies operating in Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and France, on the fundamental principles for the development of social initiatives in railway stations.

[Download the Charter in English](#)

[Download the Charter in French](#)

► **Homeless Link announces 2 Awards open for entries** [30/03/2009]

Homeless Link are pleased to announce that this year's Michael Whippman Award and the John Laing Award are now open for entries!

The Michael Whippman award focuses on finding the best examples of service user involvement in the UK. This year Homeless Link are looking for groups to submit a multi-media entry that displays innovative and positive good practice. Deadline: 29th May

The John Laing Charitable Trust Day Centre of the Year Award focuses on nominations that demonstrate how day centres in the UK, in partnership with their communities and service users, are working to end rough sleeping in their area. Deadline: 1st May

Top prize for each award is £500 plus two free places at the annual conference in July and a piece in Homeless Link's magazine, Connect.

For more information, visit: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/events>

Publications

► **Belgium: Results and Conclusions of Count of Homeless People** [30/03/2009]

As reported in the February Flash, a count of homeless people was organised in Brussels on the 19th of November, 2008. The results of this count, and the conclusions from it, can be downloaded here, in both French and Dutch.

[Results and Conclusions \(FR\)](#)

[Results and Conclusions \(NL\)](#)

► **INSEE Publication – 5% of people in France have found themselves without housing at some point in their lives** [30/03/2009]

2 500 000 people in France who were in private housing in 2006, stated that at some point in their lives they had been without housing. 78% stated that they were housed by a third party, 14% were housed by a housing provider, and 11% had slept in a place not foreseen for habitation. Amongst the 540 000 people who had experienced life on the streets, or in shelters, there are many who are still in a difficult situation today. Their standard of living is lower than the national average, and they have difficulty in keeping their housing, due to financial difficulties.

Download the [INSEE report](#) here (in French only.)

► **Social questions: anglo-saxon analyses. Socially incorrect?** [30/03/2009]

This book published by the French University Press and authored by Julien Damon looks at anglo-saxon perspectives on social issues, from exclusion and racial discrimination, to family, happiness and insecurity. Written in French, it gives readers access to major current works written in English which are rarely ever translated into other languages.

The book looks at unusual and sometimes surprising theories – some articles plead for the restoration of marriage, others the liberalization of carrying weapons, the dismantling of the French social model or the introduction of a universal income. This book is aimed at professionals and experts who wish to have an original perspective on social issues and a better understanding of possible alternatives.

See here to [buy the book](#) (in French).

► **Sweden: Plan for continuous monitoring of the extent and character of homelessness – a strategy for disseminating knowledge and information** [30/03/2009]

In February 2007, the Swedish government presented a national strategy for counteracting homelessness, called 'Homelessness – multiple faces, multiple responsibilities'. As part of this strategy, the government commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to present a proposal for a plan on how the extent and character of homelessness can be monitored continuously. This report is a proposal for how homelessness in Sweden can systematically be monitored, to better design measures for supporting homeless people.

[Download the Report here \(in English.\)](#)

► **UK – 'Your Passport to Renting a Private Home'** [30/03/2009]

FEANTSA members, the London Housing Foundation and Off the Streets and Into Work, have worked together to produce the publication, 'Your Passport to Renting a Private Home'. The publication is a guide aimed at those who are making the transition from homelessness or hostel accommodation to renting a flat in the private rental sector.

Download ['Your Passport to Renting a Private Home'](#).



**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
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

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

FEANTSA is supported financially by the European Commission. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.