

“We all have a responsibility” - Commissioner László Andor discusses how the EU can effectively contribute to the fight against homelessness at the launch of FEANTSA’s ‘Ending Homelessness’ Campaign at the European Parliament

14th April 2010:

László Andor, Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, today presented opportunities for ambitious EU-level action on homelessness to an audience of NGOs, public authorities, MEPs, policy makers and people with experience of homelessness. Commissioner Andor called on Member States to show “commitment” and create “targeted policies” to end homelessness and offered them the European Commission’s support to do so, commenting that homelessness was “one of the most important issues” for those working on employment and social affairs in the European Commission. The Commissioner welcomed the Belgian Presidency’s goal to combat homelessness.

The occasion was the launch of FEANTSA’s Ending Homelessness campaign. The event, ‘Ending homelessness is possible! How can the EU effectively contribute to the fight against homelessness?’ was co-organised by FEANTSA and MEPs Liz Lynne, Karima Delli, Britta Thomsen, Jacek Protasiewicz and Ilda Figueiredo. Commissioner Andor predicted that the conference would have a “real impact on public policy and debate.”

The MEPs reacted to the Commissioner’s comments, referring to action that the European Parliament has taken on homelessness, including a Written Declaration on Ending Street Homelessness adopted in 2008, which calls on the European Council to agree on an EU-wide commitment to end street homelessness by 2015. Commissioner Andor called for action to reach the goals set down in the Written Declaration from Member States and for recognition from the European Commission. The MEPs signed a cross-party declaration in support of targets towards combating homelessness.

Other speakers included Eric Marlier, who presented recommendations from the recent report on homelessness and housing exclusion by the Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, FEANTSA president René Kneip and Peter Juul, Head of Division at the Danish Ministry of Interior and Social Affairs.

Carlos García de Cortazar, Coordinator on Employment and Social Affairs in the Spanish Permanent Representation to the European Parliament, presented the Spanish Presidency’s priorities on homelessness and housing exclusion. Philippe Courard, Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration and the Fight against Poverty, discussed how the Belgian Presidency would facilitate progress on the issue of homelessness. He presented the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness that will take place under the Belgian presidency in December and which seeks to provide a basis for future policy progress on homelessness.

FEANTSA’s campaign was officially launched at today’s event. The campaign message is that homelessness in Europe can and should be ended. The campaign sets out five goals that should become part of integrated strategies to combat homelessness in order to achieve this:

- No one sleeping rough
- No one living in emergency accommodation for longer than is an ‘emergency’
- No one living in transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on
- No one leaving an institution without housing options
- No young people becoming homeless as a result of the transition to independent living

The publication *Ending Homelessness: A Handbook for Policy Makers* accompanies the campaign. It draws together examples of good practice in tackling homelessness from around Europe.

Commissioner Andor’s message comes at a key moment. Tackling homelessness is a priority in the EU strategy for social inclusion and social protection and the 2010 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion calls on Member States to develop integrated strategies to tackle homelessness. 2010 is also the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is thus a potential turning point for policy progress on homelessness – a unique opportunity for EU level action to facilitate effective policies to end homelessness.

The launch event was followed by the opening of an exhibition of life-size sculptures of homeless people by the Danish artist Jens Galschiøt, presented by FEANTSA member Projekt UDENFOR.

For further details, please contact FEANTSA’s Communications Officer, Suzannah Young, at suzannah.young@feantsa.org

Notes for editors: FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. Established in 1989, FEANTSA represents today more than 100 organisations working with people experiencing homelessness in about 30 European countries which provide a wide range of services to people experiencing homelessness, including housing, health and employment support. More information is available at: www.feantsa.org