



President Pöttering calls on European Parliament to address street homelessness in Europe

"We are determined to provide political impetus for other European institutions and governments of member states to treat this problem with the utmost seriousness." **European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering** declared at the opening of the photographic exhibition "Cris silencieux" in the European Parliament in Strasbourg last Tuesday. Following the launch of the cross-party **Written Declaration 111 on Ending Street Homelessness in Europe**, this exhibition offers an uncompromising look at street homelessness, through the lens of French photographer Philippe Gabel.

In his speech, **President Pöttering** emphasised that homelessness is a shared problem across the EU. "Homelessness is a sad - and unacceptable - reality. No man or woman chooses to live on the street." He highlighted the crucial role of the European Commission in providing reliable and comparable data at European level on homelessness. President Pöttering called on fellow MEPs to take action stating: "This is our obligation, as we - as the only European institution with a direct democratic mandate - are the voice of the people."

The five co-signatories of the written declaration also briefly took the floor to welcome the exhibition and initiative on street homelessness.

Mary Lou McDonald, GUE/NGL thanked photographer Philippe Gabel, who was present, for his "brutal honesty" and emphasised that homelessness is the "most visible and extreme form of poverty and exclusion and a violation of fundamental rights."

Jacek Protasiewicz EPP-ED recalled the role of the church, "which from the very beginning have been very involved in helping people without a home or a place where they could live safely."

Claude Moraes European Socialists emphasised the need for MEPs to take action on the problem rather than continue to "walk on by people who are homeless and in the street".



FEANTSA

European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless

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Gerard Onesta Les Verts/ALE encouraged his colleagues to make a difference by signing the declaration, a very simple action towards a large and shared problem. Recalling the declaration 111 he stated "one signature, one person, one roof."

Jean-Marie Beaupuy ALDE highlighted the unacceptable nature of street homelessness and the importance for the Parliament, as the democratically elected organ of the European Union, to place pressure for action on the European Commission.

FEANTSA and its UK member **Homeless Link** also took the floor to welcome European action to end Street Homelessness. **Jenny Edwards** from UK organisation Homeless Link emphasised that effective policy solutions do exist and that much progress has been made in the UK. Where there is political will, there is scope for progress. **Andre Gachet**, Vice-President of FEANTSA, welcomed the initiative and stated that for the organisations working on the ground with homeless people, political leadership and support and a robust political framework are absolutely vital.

The exhibition "Cris silencieux" has been organised by FEANTSA in co-operation with the five signatories of the Written Declaration. MEPs have the possibility to join their 260 colleagues and sign the declaration until March 26th.

For more information visit FEANTSA's website

<http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=963>

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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 27 European countries which provide a wide range of services to people experiencing homelessness, including housing, health and employment support. More information is available on: www.feantsa.org