



FEANTSA Policy Statement

*No place for homeless citizens in the
new « one-size-fits-all » Lisbon Strategy:
FEANTSA calls for a European partnership against homelessness*

Just think what Europe could be...

Growth and Jobs

FEANTSA (European Federation of national organisations working with the homeless) understands the initiative of the European Commission to put forward new methods and policy instruments in order to achieve the Lisbon 2000 objectives.

The Communication refers to the importance of social and environmental objectives, and the importance of growth and jobs as a means of achieving these objectives: “We need a dynamic economy to fuel our wider social and environmental ambitions”. However, FEANTSA is skeptical about the presumed causal link between growth and jobs and achieving the social and environmental objectives - certainly for excluded people.

It is important to explain just HOW growth and jobs will contribute to greater social justice – what pathways will lead to the new Lisbon strategy objectives of social justice and equal opportunities for all. There are examples of EU countries with full employment and high growth rates, yet this has not eradicated poverty and has not led to social justice.

The Commission Communication refers to reducing the risks of social exclusion by making sure that “people remain in work and education throughout their lives”. All official Commission documents refer to the “multi-dimensional” nature of poverty – yet this Communication only refers to education and work as a means of integration. Given the extensive research on the phenomenon of poverty, it is difficult to understand the focus on work and education *only* (excluding housing and health, for example). Moreover, the research and experience built up over the last decades demonstrates clearly that **homelessness cannot be solved solely through employment and education**.

The Commission Communication refers to social and environmental objectives only in vague terms, and does not outline these objectives. In line with the Commission’s intention to “keep existing promises”, it would be logical to outline the objectives agreed at the 2000 Lisbon European Council: combating social exclusion and achieving social cohesion are among these objectives.¹ The Commission has a very clear political mandate from the Lisbon European

¹ See 2000 Lisbon European Council Conclusions [link](#)

Council in these two areas – this has been stated again in the recent PROGRESS proposal to establish a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity², and in the 2004 Report on progress of the Lisbon agenda.³ The need to revise the procedures and instruments of the Lisbon Agenda should not prevent the European Commission from stating clearly the original social and environmental objectives of the Lisbon.

The EU structural funds are for promotion of economic AND social cohesion (as stated in the EU Treaties). Social cohesion is a multi-dimensional problem. It is therefore completely unacceptable to reduce the areas eligible for funding to employment and economic growth. The EU risks forcing the wrong priorities upon the Member States: certain countries already have high rates of growth and employment; certain countries are facing dramatic housing crises. If the aim is to promote interest and involvement of all stakeholders in the Lisbon process (especially at national and local level to ensure implementation), then surely Member States should be given scope to set their own priorities in accordance with their evolving economic, social and environmental situation at national level.

Growth and Jobs...and Homelessness

“Growth and jobs go hand in hand with promotion of social objectives”. This is not true regarding social objectives aimed at homeless people. The reality is that economic growth makes housing more expensive and less accessible for low-income groups (as is currently the case in countries like Ireland and the UK). The mutually reinforcing relation between growth and social progress, which pervades the Commission Communication, is simply non-existent for homeless people.

As the European representative of more than 100 homeless service providers in 29 European countries, FEANTSA finds it hard to relate to the new Lisbon strategy and the emphasis on growth and employment as the solution to Europe’s problems. Growth is fundamental for all European citizens, and employment is also crucial **but they are not the only means of integration.**

Homeless service providers work on the reintegration of homeless people into the mainstream labour market, but also provide opportunities for « meaningful employment » for individuals with multiple problems who will require much support to have any chance of integrating the labour market. If social justice and opportunities for all are indeed the ultimate goals of the new Lisbon strategy, it is important to have appropriate instruments/objectives to provide opportunities for these European citizens – who have been failed by society – to find their place in this new enlarged Europe.

Promoting “socially inclusive *economies*” seems to be the general objective of the new Lisbon strategy. If this is indeed the case, then the exclusive focus on growth and jobs is probably logical. However, FEANTSA’s understanding is that the EU is trying to promote “socially inclusive *societies*”, and therefore would expect the Lisbon strategy to have much broader aims.

² See PROGRESS Proposal [link](#)

³ See 2004 Progress Report [link](#)

The Social Pillar of the Lisbon Process

The Commission Communication refers to the “widening gap of Europe’s growth potential compared to other economic partners”. FEANTSA would call upon the European Commission not only to compare **productivity** but other aspects - such as the social situation - where Europe has achieved much better results.

Despite the reference to growth and employment as a means of **preventing social exclusion**, there is no mention in the Communication of any policy instruments or objectives to prevent further social exclusion, and certainly no reference to the upcoming 2006 streamlined strategy on social protection and social inclusion which will coordinate the health, pensions and social inclusion policies of all 25 EU member states.

The current EU social inclusion strategy, which represents an important part of the social pillar of EU policy-making and has developed over the past few years into a solid framework for transnational exchange, has been completely overlooked - and yet it is firmly rooted in EU policy-making.

It is implemented through the constant dialogue between actors all involved in promoting social inclusion in Europe - the European Commission, the national ministries, regional and local authorities, homeless service providers, European and national parliaments and other organisations representing the interests of excluded European citizens in the EU political arena.

The consultation and participation of civil society in the framework of the EU social inclusion strategy - and within the wider Lisbon process - is a key element in promoting full employment in Europe given that many of these organisations offer services for the integration of excluded people in the labour market. Yet the Communication refers mainly to the “social partners” as the main promoters of full employment, forgetting that:

- Social partners are do not necessarily target the homeless or other excluded populations, but rather serve the needs of their members (mainly people at work) first and foremost.
- Counting on the social partners for promoting inclusive labour markets is an approach that fails to acknowledge the wide range of employment services offered by homeless service providers to help vulnerable persons reintegrate the labour market

If the aim is to achieve **full employment** and pursue “employment policies which help people into work and provide incentives for them to remain there”, then it is important to acknowledge the role of other actors - not only the “social partners”. The only way for this new Lisbon strategy to take into account of all actors contributing to promoting full employment is by reinforcing the role of actors under the EU social inclusion strategy.

Governance of the Lisbon Strategy

The Lisbon process is perceived as complex, with too many priorities and lacking focus. FEANTSA agrees that the *process* is complex - but the *aims* and *objectives* are extremely clear. It is unacceptable to call into question the objectives of the Lisbon process because it has become too bureaucratic - this is a procedural problem. If the Lisbon procedures become more flexible and open to other actors, then the objectives will more likely be met.

FEANTSA agrees with the need “to simplify and streamline Lisbon” by simplifying the reporting and having a national minister responsible for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy objectives at national level. Simplifying and streamlining Lisbon also means clarifying the roles of the different actors within the EU policy-making process. This would be a good opportunity to give European and national NGOs a place in the Open Method of Coordination and the Lisbon Strategy – not just as voices of civil society, but as real actors.

The OMC social inclusion process is about mutual learning and soft policy-making – not about harmonization of national social inclusion policies (given the existing diversity of national practices/cultures). OMC flexibility has allowed the European Commission to reinforce certain objectives over others in accordance with evolving situations and emerging priorities in the EU Member States. Homelessness is a concrete example. With EU enlargement, homelessness has become an increasingly important issue for EU Member States and this has transpired throughout the various policy instruments of the EU social inclusion strategy – the peer review programmes 2004 and 2005, the Dutch Presidency Round Table on Social Inclusion, the inclusion of more initiatives to combat homelessness in the NAPs, etc.

Building a European Partnership to Combat Homelessness: the OMC in Practice

The Communication states that “the challenge is to define a strategy that addresses areas where Europe is not performing well”. One of these areas is clearly the lack of results in achieving the EU objective of **promoting access to housing for all and the prevention of homelessness** (see objectives of the EU Social Inclusion Strategy).

FEANTSA would like to make a concrete contribution to the Lisbon strategy by setting up a European partnership to combat homelessness.

The reasons for this are the following:

- Ending homelessness is an EU objective
- There is strong interest from the Member States in the issue of homelessness and housing exclusion
- Homelessness is a growing problem in the EU
- Homelessness has been identified as a key issue by the European Commission for the social inclusion agenda – especially in the new Member States

Role of FEANTSA:

- The national member organisations of FEANTSA – all homeless service providers – can provide real expertise, ensure the implementation of EU objectives at local level, and deliver on making such a partnership a reality.
- FEANTSA has taken big steps to reinforce the OMC process
- FEANTSA can play the role of facilitator of the OMC on issues related to homelessness by involving all relevant partners.