



## FEANTSA Press Release

Rotterdam, 18-19 October 2004

### **The fight against homelessness becomes a key priority for the EU Social Inclusion Agenda**

*Third European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion: Tackling Homelessness emerges as a key priority in the Enlarged Europe. One of the eight final recommendations of the Round Table called for "the development and implementation of integrated strategies to combat homelessness" in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion of the 25 Member States. The flexibility of the Open Method of Coordination enables the EU to prioritise urgent social problems under the EU Social Inclusion Strategy - in this case homelessness - in accordance with emerging developments in the Member States.*

The Third European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion took place in Rotterdam on 18 and 19 October under the Dutch Presidency. This annual conference reviews progress towards the social objectives of the Lisbon Agenda and looks for ways of strengthening and developing the EU strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. To this end, it brings together all relevant actors in the area of social inclusion (national ministries, local and regional authorities, national service providers, European NGOs, representatives from the EU institutions) to work together and make recommendations. The conclusions are fed back into the European Social Council to become part of the EU Strategy priorities.

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the homeless, is one of the main European NGO stakeholders in the field of social inclusion, and was present at the Round Table Conference as facilitator of the Workshop entitled "Accessibility for the most vulnerable - Strategies for the Prevention of Homelessness." The European Commission highlighted pressing problems that emerged in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion 2004-2006 of the ten new member states. The need to combat homelessness and provide access to decent housing emerged across all of the EU10. The European Commission identified this as one of six key priorities for social inclusion policies in an enlarged EU.

The will to make concrete progress in the area of homelessness was reflected in the conclusion put forward by the Workshop on the prevention of homelessness to the final plenary session. **It called for the inclusion of "the development and implementation of integrated strategies to combat homelessness" in the NAPs of all 25 EU member states.**

FEANTSA strongly supports this recommendation. It welcomes the exploitation of the huge learning potential offered by the NAPs and the EU Social Inclusion Strategy. At a time when most of the 25 EU member states are grappling with major problems related to housing and homelessness, policy exchange in this area across the EU could not be **more timely**. The preparation of targeted homeless strategies to combat and prevent homelessness in the NAPs will facilitate the development of creative approaches and stronger policies. Strategies to tackle and prevent homelessness are, by their very nature, multi-dimensional, embracing the sectors of social protection, housing, health and employment. The inclusion of such integrated strategies will help to ensure that a multi-dimensional approach to combating poverty becomes a feature of the NAPs. Finally, strategies to combat and prevent homelessness have the advantage of being very targeted which will allow the Open Method of Coordination maximum scope for positive impact, as targeted strategies have great potential for comparison and transferability to other national contexts in the framework of the OMC.

In closing the conference, Dutch State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, Mr H. Van Hoof, expressed his commitment to working towards the prevention of homelessness and to helping homeless people towards reintegration. He also stated his determination to bring the conclusions of the Round Table to the European Social Council. **FEANTSA calls on the Council to take action on this basis and to make strategies to tackle and prevent homelessness an integral part of the NAPs in 2006.**

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