Europe 2020 : Time for an EU Homelessness Strategy

FEANTSA response to the Europe 2020 strategy

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. It is the only major European network that focuses on homelessness at the European level. FEANTSA currently has more than 100 member organisations, working in close to 30 European countries, including 25 EU Member States. Most of FEANTSA's members are national or regional umbrella organisations of service providers that support homeless people with a wide range of services, including housing, health, employment and social support. They often work in close co-operation with public authorities, social housing providers and other relevant actors.

Homelessness is understood in the wider sense as part of a continuum of living situations whereby people are roofless, houseless, insecurely housed or inadequately housed – in accordance with the ETHOS typology (see Annex 1).

1

> ### *"Homelessness must be a top priority for the next decade"*
>
> Statement by Commissioner László Andor (Commissioner responsible for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion) at the European Commission conference "Mutual Learning on active inclusion and homelessness" in Brussels on 6 May 2010.

Homelessness in the "Europe 2020 Strategy"

On 3 March 2010, the European Commission published its proposals for the post 2010 Lisbon Strategy: Europe 2020. The inclusion of an EU poverty target ("*20 million less people should be at risk of poverty")* and a European Platform against Poverty was generally welcomed by Social NGOs, including FEANTSA, as important steps forward especially during this important European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion. FEANTSA is part of a coalition of European NGO networks who are working together on this year, and promoting joint messages[1], which include the call for a strong political legacy from the year, involving a commitment to ending street homelessness by 2015.

The European Council discussed the European Commission's Europe 2020 proposal on 25-26 March 2010 and agreed to have a headline target on '*the promotion of social inclusion through the reduction of poverty*'. The European Council also concluded that '*further work was needed on the appropriate indicator*' for this target and that '*the European Council will revert to this issue at its meeting in June 2010.*'

FEANTSA believes this target is a crucial step in the fight against all forms of poverty, including homelessness, and calls on the EU and Member States to translate the future EU headline target on poverty into concrete and achievable national targets on priority social inclusion issues, such as an end to street homelessness by 2015 in accordance with the European Parliament's Written Declaration 111/2007.[2] FEANTSA calls on the EPSCO Council to commit to ending street homelessness by 2015 as part of the overall poverty target of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

This new political context must enable Europe 2020 to support the conclusions of the 2010 Joint Report on social protection & social inclusion.[3] On 8 March 2010, the Commission and the Council jointly adopted this annual report, which reviews the main trends in social protection and social inclusion across the EU and at national level. The 2010 Joint Report calls upon Member States to develop integrated homelessness strategies, putting forward elements for effective strategies:
  - ➢ they have to have clear targets ;
  - ➢ they should be integrated covering all relevant policy fields ;
  - ➢ they have to be underpinned by proper governance ;
  - ➢ they have to be steered by proper data collection ;
  - ➢ they should have a strong housing dimension ;
  - ➢ they should take account of changing profiles of the homeless population, and more in particular the impact of migration.

FEANTSA believes that the Europe 2020 proposal to launch a European Platform against Poverty, which will *'transform the open method of coordination on social exclusion and social protection'* where national authorities will need to *'define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk such as…the homeless'* paves the way for a clear EU framework to monitor national strategies to tackle homelessness, the most extreme form of poverty and social exclusion.

---

[1] http://endpoverty.eu/IMG/pdf/4-page_doc_-_shared_messages_final_en.pdf
[2] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?reference=P6_TA(2008)0163&language=EN
[3] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=757&langId=en

Homelessness and the "European Platform against Poverty"

FEANTSA supports the Europe 2020 proposal to launch a European Platform against Poverty and looks forward to contributing to the planned European Commission Communication on "A European Platform to combat poverty" (strategic initiative 15 of the Commission work programme 2010).[4]

FEANTSA also supports the views of EAPN (European Anti-Poverty Network) that the Europe 2020 integrated guidelines must ensure that the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is given a strong, explicit place in the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy as well as maintaining its own autonomous process. [5]

The Platform is an opportunity to strengthen the Social OMC with more systematic monitoring and mutual learning on the emerging social inclusion priorities such as homelessness, child poverty, financial exclusion, and active inclusion. Action to reduce poverty must be reinforced in these different priority areas.

FEANTSA calls on the European Commission to develop an **EU Homelessness Strategy** in the framework of the European Platform against Poverty to support Member States in their efforts to develop effective homelessness strategies following the guidelines provided by the 2010 Joint Report on social protection & social inclusion. The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness[6], to be hosted by the Belgian Presidency and the European Commission on 9 and 10 December 2010, will aim to provide a good basis to launch an EU Homelessness Strategy.

The European Platform against Poverty must enable the European Union to further develop its role of monitoring progress on the development of effective homeless strategies.

➢ The Platform should enable EU Member States to translate the EU headline target on poverty into concrete and achievable national targets on priority social inclusion issues, such as homelessness. A number of national homelessness targets already exist[7]. FEANTSA supports the European Parliament call, on 29 April 2010, for quantifiable poverty reduction targets including an end to street homelessness by 2015.

➢ The national reporting on homelessness strategies could take place through the National Strategic Reports (NSRs) submitted in the framework of the Social OMC. The NSRs could have common structures with chapters on the different social inclusion priorities outlined above, including homelessness. National authorities could also have the option of submitting separate national homelessness strategies (as 10 EU countries have already adopted such strategies). There should be a clear framework to monitor national policy progress on homelessness within the Poverty Platform. FEANTSA's 'ending homelessness'[8] campaign sets out five goals towards ending homelessness, which would provide a framework for monitoring. FEANTSA has produced a Toolkit for developing an integrated homeless strategy and a handbook on good practice in efforts towards ending homelessness,[9] two useful resources for creating homelessness strategies.

➢ Until now, only a few local homelessness stakeholders have been involved in the Social OMC. FEANTSA calls on the European Commission to reach out to all relevant stakeholders in the framework of the new Poverty Platform, especially in the priority areas of the Social OMC, including homelessness. An informal forum of civil servants on homelessness already meets on a regular basis in the framework of EU peer reviews and FEANTSA conferences. The European Observatory on homelessness brings together the world of research on

---

[4] http://www.eapn.eu/images/docs/guidelines-2010-04-14-letter-to-barroso-en.pdf
[5] EAPN Letter of 30 April 2010 to President Barroso:
http://www.eapn.eu/images/docs/guidelines-2010-04-14-letter-to-barroso-en.pdf
[6] http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Consensus_Conference/Leaflets/FEA%20014-09_EN.pdf
[7] Edgar, W (2009), European Review of Statistics on Homelessness, FEANTSA
[8] http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=1252
[9] http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=1105

homelessness. HABITACT (European exchange forum on local homeless strategies) aims to bring together local authorities which want to make progress on homelessness. A virtual European health and homelessness network brings together health professionals from inside and outside the homelessness sector. A virtual European employability network exists, with employment professionals from inside and outside the homelessness sector. A network of lawyers and human rights professionals called Housing Rights Watch has recently been set up. An informal network of statisticians and data collection experts was actively involved in the EU-sponsored mutual learning programme MPHASIS. FEANTSA believes the European Commission should try to further strengthen these platforms of cooperation through the new European Platform against Poverty.

➢ The Social OMC requires EU statistical data beyond monetary indicators on situations of extreme poverty such as homelessness which are currently not covered by EU-SILC. An EU Homelessness Strategy within the new Poverty Platform would promote targeted research and analysis to fill such gaps. FEANTSA calls on the European Commission to continue its efforts towards developing a European framework definition of homelessness and provide annual updates on action taken and progress made in EU Member States towards ending homelessness; and calls on Eurostat to gather comparable and reliable statistical data on homelessness.

Conclusion

Finally, we would like to highlight that progress has been made during the last 10 years on the issue of homelessness at EU level. When the Lisbon strategy was launched in 2000, homelessness was not a major concern for social policy makers at EU level. Homelessness gradually rose on the EU agenda through the National Action Plans (now National Strategic Reports) submitted in the framework of the Social OMC.

The 2005 Joint Report on social protecion & social inclusion mentioned homelessness for the first time as a priority issue. In the 2007 Joint Report, homelessness was listed as one of the few key priorities of the new "active inclusion" objective. In the 2009 Joint Report, there was a first call to address homelessness more actively. The 2010 report takes into account the results of the thematic "light year" on homelessness in 2009 and calls upon member states to develop national homelessness strategies. It is now crucial to define what action needs to be taken to ensure proper follow-up of the 2010 Joint Report at EU level.

We hope that the leaders of the EU anti-poverty strategy, and in the first place the European Commission, will use the political momentum on homelessness in the EU and most of the EU member states to develop an **EU Homelessness Strategy** as part of the European Platform against Poverty, thereby building on the achievements of the Social OMC so far and on the interest and motivation of a variety of stakeholders ready to play an important role in such a strategy.

Annex 1: ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion

			Operational Category		Living Situation		Generic Definition
Conceptual Category	ROOFLESS	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public space or external space		Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2	People in emergency accommodation	2.1	Night shelter		People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel		Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
				3.2	Temporary Accommodation		
				3.3	Transitional supported accommodation		
		4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation		Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation / reception centres		Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
				5.2	Migrant workers accommodation		
		6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions		No housing available prior to release
				6.2	Medical institutions (*)		Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
				6.3	Children's institutions / homes		No housing identified (e.g by 18th birthday)
		7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for older homeless people		Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
				7.2	Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people		
	INSECURE	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1	Temporarily with family/friends		Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing
				8.2	No legal (sub)tenancy		Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy illegal occupation of a dwelling
				8.3	Illegal occupation of land		Occupation of land with no legal rights
		9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1	Legal orders enforced (rented)		Where orders for eviction are operative
				9.2	Re-possession orders (owned)		Where mortagee has legal order to re-possess
		10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents		Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
	INADEQUATE	11	People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1	Mobile homes		Not intended as place of usual residence
				11.2	Non-conventional building		Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty
				11.3	Temporary structure		Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin
		12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation		Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations
		13	People living in extreme over-crowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding		Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year.
This definition is compatible with Census definitions as recommended by the UNECE/EUROSTAT report (2006)

(*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals etc.

Flagship Initiative: "European Platform against Poverty"

The aim is to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion, building on the current European year for combating poverty and social exclusion so as to raise awareness and recognise the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, enabling them to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

At **EU** level, the Commission will work:

– To transform the open method of coordination on social exclusion and social protection into a platform for cooperation, peer-review and exchange of good practice, and into an instrument to foster commitment by public and private players to reduce social exclusion, and take concrete action, including through targeted support from the structural funds, notably the ESF;

– To design and implement programmes to promote social innovation for the most vulnerable, in particular by providing innovative education, training, and employment opportunities for deprived communities, to fight discrimination (e.g. disabled), and to develop a new agenda for migrants' integration to enable them to take full advantage of their potential;

– To undertake an assessment of the adequacy and sustainability of social protection and pension systems, and identify ways to ensure better access to health care systems.

At **national** level, Member States will need:

– To promote shared collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion;

– To define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk (such as one-parent families, elderly women, minorities, Roma, people with a disability and the homeless);

– To fully deploy their social security and pension systems to ensure adequate income support and access to health care.