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HOMELESS *in Europe*

Autumn 2002



The national action plans – social inclusion are an important policy tool for the EU and for Member States.

The European strategy to combat poverty - bridging the gap:

The past two years have witnessed a dramatic shift in the European Union's policy agenda. Starting at the Lisbon Council of 2000, the EU finally launched a strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. For many NGOs, including **FEANTSA**, this was a victory in a long-fought battle.

The EU has tried to make the poverty strategy different and more accessible to all relevant parties. By using their 'Open Method of Coordination', which combines national action plans with community programmes; the EU and national governments have roles in the strategy. They are not the only 'actors' however; in order to meet the common objectives enshrined in the strategy, Member States must also involve local authorities, service providers and NGOs in the policy process.

The national action plans – social inclusion are an important policy tool for the EU and for Member States. These plans encourage the meeting of important objectives and call for the exchange of best practice across Europe. All countries can learn *something* from their neighbours; many countries have very valuable experiences to share. This newsletter is part of that process of exchange and brings you elements from both the European and national levels.

FEANTSA works with these policies on a daily basis and strives to ensure that the diverse nature of homelessness is remembered and respected. Understanding and affecting the social policy process at European level is a vital aspect of our work. But the same thing is true at national or local level. The **NAPsIncl** have tremendous potential as policy tools for improving anti-poverty policies and provide organisations with a framework for their own lobbying. That is why we have dedicated this issue of **Homeless in Europe** to the European Strategy to combat poverty and in particular to the **National Action Plans – Social Inclusion (NAPsIncl)**.

In this issue you will find articles that look at the broad aims of the strategy, as well as contributions that examine the impact of the national action plan process in the Member States (Ireland and Portugal). In

reviewing the strategy and its potential as a lobbying tool, **FEANTSA** has provided a list of key dates and decision-makers involved in the process. Professor Bent Greve of Roskilde University in Denmark offers an academic perspective on the social inclusion process in Europe.

Turning to **FEANTSA**'s own work on the **NAPs**, you will find two articles that outline our analysis of this first round of plans, as well as **FEANTSA**'s stance on how to proceed from here. **FEANTSA**'s policy recommendations are included in this issue to highlight some of the concrete changes that are necessary to improve the **NAPsIncl** before the next round is drafted over the course of the next year.

FEANTSA is not alone in its call for improvements and changes to the **NAPsIncl**. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has also taken the time to assess and analyse the **NAPsIncl** and make clear and coherent suggestions for making the plans better in the future.

Homelessness, poverty and social integration are also key issues for those countries preparing to join the EU in 2004. The candidate countries already participate in the European strategy against poverty, and are also responsible for submitting their own reports on the level of social inclusion policies in their countries. On page 12 you will find a brief introduction to how the process works in accession states.

Last but not least you will find two case studies of the **NAPsIncl** in action – in Portugal and Ireland. Donal McManus of the Irish Council for Social Housing writes about the integration of the Irish homeless strategy into his country's national action plan. In Portugal we gain an insight into how the **NAPsIncl** are coordinated at national level as well as an example of good practice.

The diversity of the articles complements the diverse nature of poverty and homelessness across the EU. We would like to thank all of the authors for taking the time to reflect on this issue, and hope that you will enjoy reading the fruits of their labour. ●



The social inclusion process in Europe

Despite economic growth and a reduction in the overall level of unemployment, many people in Europe are still not fully included in everyday life. Social exclusion will, in this article, be understood as applying to those people who in some way or another are not fully integrated into society. This can be due to the lack of a job, lack of a home, lack of capabilities, lack of access to and contact with other people, or the lack of daily amenities.

Therefore, it is of utmost relevance to start a process throughout the EU in which we try to describe and analyse how to ensure social cohesion by social inclusion in the development of European societies.

This has already been achieved with the national action plans on social inclusion (NAPsIncl) that were produced for the first time in 2001, the next round being in 2003. I will, in this short article, pay special attention to what could be helpful for the second round by making a short evaluation of the first.

The first round indicated that in many countries the national action plans were only indicative reports, and not really comprehensive analyses dealing with the many problems arising from societal development and policies employed to tackle social exclusion. Furthermore, in many countries the report was mainly a short description of what the actual current policy was and made no clear reference to and integration of thoughts for the future. The financing of programmes, including discussion of the social funds was not a real issue in the presentation, and many ideas, which are not financed will not have any real impact because they did not receive financial support.

Many social policy areas were included in the first round. This was a strength in the sense that their inclusion could help in identifying measures which could be employed to increase social cohesion and also an indication that social exclusion is a multidimensional problem. The inclusion of so many elements was at the same time a weakness as many measures included were something all could agree upon.

If this is the case then the open method of coordination, as this method has been labelled, will only have a very slight impact on the development of policies at both national and supra-national levels.

A clearer focus and a more strategic approach that includes targets set nationally concerning core areas would be an important element in the next round. Prioritising national elements could be an important strategy. These could, for example, be targets to reduce the number of people feeling lonely, the number of people who lack basic education, the lack of housing and so on.

The focus in the NAPsIncl should not be only, as it mainly was in the first round, on the traditional economic measures as indicators of social exclusion, but they should also examine individuals' integration in the wider society. Poverty measures are fine for example, but they do not tell the full story.

A clearer focus on individual and collective capabilities could be an interesting approach.

At the level of the individual this should deal with both the formal level of qualifications, including training and retraining, and informal qualifications such as social capabilities. Social capabilities can be even more important in the future if the present tendency towards a higher degree of individualisation continues. Increasing capabilities in areas of IT and communication will become increasingly important.

This is also the case for vulnerable groups, such as many people with disabilities or some elderly, who have difficulty in moving around physically. They would in this way be more able to keep and be in contact with others, and, thus have a better chance of raising their voice in the national and European debate.

On the collective level, raising capabilities includes enabling policies for local areas, for families to help each other.

It is, furthermore, important to stress that for many people a job on the traditional labour market is not the solution. Various forms of intermediate jobs and contact with the labour market need to be developed. Furthermore, inclusion must to a higher degree imply integration through contact with other people, abilities to exchange experience, enabling communication, which in turn can ensure that a reduction of social exclusion is possible. This would reflect the multidimensional nature of the problem of social exclusion to a higher degree. Labour market policy can thus help in certain areas, but certainly not in relation to all problems on social exclusion.

National action plans for social inclusion should thus be able to reach both further, and at the same time help to develop a more cohesive Europe by referring to good practice and learning by looking at examples.

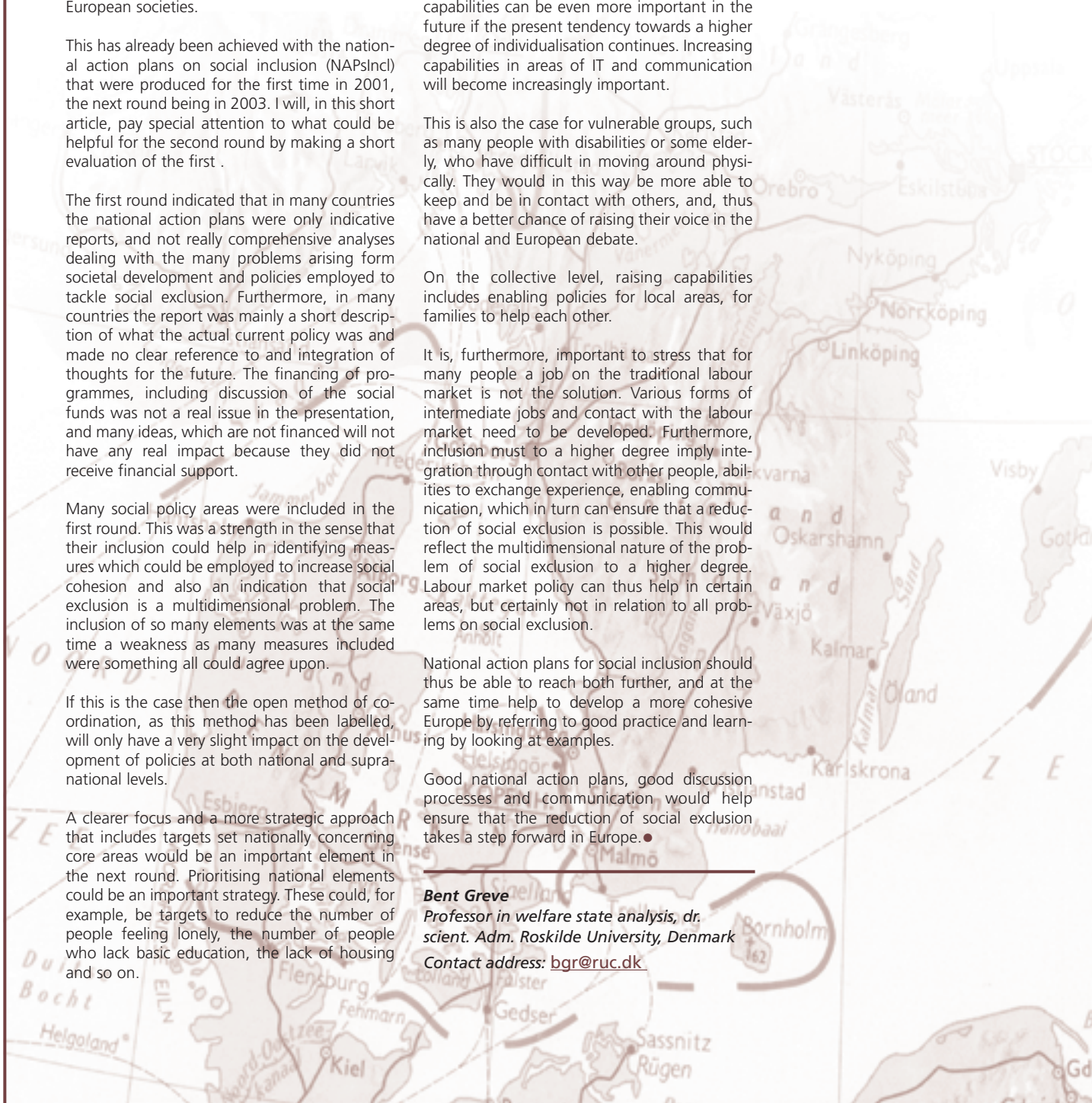
Good national action plans, good discussion processes and communication would help ensure that the reduction of social exclusion takes a step forward in Europe. ●

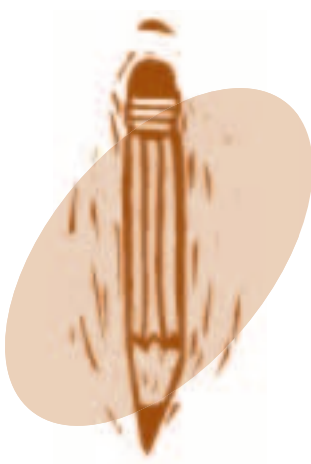
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A clearer focus and a more strategic approach that includes targets set nationally concerning core areas would be an important element in the next round.





Lobbying guide

A review of the European Strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion: Key dates and decision makers

The birth of a strategy:

March 2000

The year 2000 was a turning point for social policy in the European Union. After more than a decade of lobbying from the non-governmental organisations in the social field – including FEANTSA – the European Council finally announced a strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The heads of state and government met twice during the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2000. At the European Councils in Lisbon and Feira, the Member States took a major initiative and made the fight against poverty and social exclusion one of the central elements of the European social model. The Council decided that suitable objectives be set, and that social exclusion policies should be based on an open method of coordination that combines national action plans and an action programme administered by the Commission to encourage cooperation between the EU and Member States. The Social Protection Committee, comprised of representatives of national social affairs ministries, plays a key role in the Open Method of Coordination by serving as a link between the EU and the Member States.

December 2000

At the Nice European Council in December 2000, the Council agreed on the four key objectives that Member States must meet by setting their own targets and timetables.

1. To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services;
**including:* To implement policies which aim to provide access for all to decent and sanitary housing as well as the basic services necessary to live normally having regard to local circumstances (electricity, water, heating, etc.)
2. To prevent the risks of exclusion
**including:* To put in place policies which seek to prevent life crises which can lead to situations of social exclusion, such as indebtedness, exclusion from school and becoming homeless
3. To help the most vulnerable
4. To mobilise all relevant bodies

June 2001

All Member States submitted their first National Action Plans – Social Inclusion in June 2001. These Plans mapped the existing policies in place to fight social exclusion and poverty. Some plans specifically mentioned their policies to tackle homelessness, but many failed to clearly indicate whether such policies existed, and if so describe their nature.

October – December 2001

The Commission reviewed the NAPsIncl and drafted a report that was circulated to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions for comments. Once amended, the Joint-Report on Inclusion was published. The report does just that: it describes the contents of the NAPsIncl and lists examples of best practice, but fails to offer any kind of analysis or evaluation.

December 2001

The Social Protection Committee is also responsible for establishing European social inclusion indicators for use in the monitoring and evaluation of Member States' progress towards meeting the objectives set at Nice. In December 2001 at the Laeken European Council, 18 social inclusion indicators were accepted and approved by the Council. The Social Protection Committee's sub-group on indicators failed to come to a consensus on indicators for homelessness and housing, despite having several established lists of indicators at their disposal. The sub-group has yet to reach an agreement on these indicators, and will not likely make any announcements before the Council meeting set for December 2002.

March 2002

The annual Spring Social Summit was held in Barcelona in 2002. Though the Ministers failed to address social inclusion in any concrete terms, a declaration that the number of poor people be cut in half by 2010 was made. The Spring Summit is dedicated to the coordination of social and economic policies and should produce developments in both fields. The Spring Summit of 2002 disappointed those working in the social field by its almost absolute focus on employment issues. FEANTSA and its members will work to ensure that the Spring Summit of 2003 does not ignore the most excluded.



2002 – refining the process?

Member States submitted two-year NAPsIncl in 2001 and thus have until June 2003 before they must submit their next national action plan. All actors now have the opportunity to refine and improve the social inclusion process; this is the nature of the open method of coordination. FEANTSA has taken time over the past months to assess the NAPsIncl and offer concrete suggestions for their improvement in 2003. In the next few months most countries will start to gather government departments, NGOs, local authorities, and other actors to begin the process anew. This is the moment in which to call for improvement: to speak to the coordinators of the new NAPsIncl and help them to understand the potential value of including comprehensive policies to tackle homelessness (for example in the form of a homeless strategy) into their plans.

November 2002

The Commission will most likely issue a list of guidelines to the Member States to assist them in the drafting of the next round of NAPs.

Summer 2003

Member States will submit their second National Action Plans for the years 2003 to 2005.

March 2004

The European Commission will use the occasion of the Spring Social Summit to publish their Joint-Inclusion Report on the second round of NAPsIncl.

Key decision-makers in the Social Inclusion Process:

1. National Ministers of Social Affairs

The Social Affairs Council is the political body responsible for making decisions in the social inclusion process. Their departments coordinate the drafting of the national action plans, and political pressure from different member states can have a dramatic impact on the strategy as a whole. The Social Affairs Council will meet on October 8 in Brussels and in the beginning of December. In these meetings the Council will discuss the progress made on social inclusion in the framework of the NAPsIncl as well as in terms of the recent conferences on both Social Inclusion through Social Dialogue and Partnership (September 2002), as well as the first European Round Table on Social Inclusion (to be held in Aarhus on October 17 and 18, 2002).

2. NAPsIncl coordinators, ministry civil servants

Each national ministry of social affairs has a department or unit dedicated to anti-poverty policies. Many Member States have selected a coordinator to organise the drafting of the next national action plan for the summer of 2003. These people are key, as it is their task to arrange meetings and exchanges between the different government departments and ministries implicated in the NAPs process. It is also their responsibility to ensure that all relevant actors participate in the discussions and debates and in particular that NGOs are included in the drafting process.

3. Social Protection Committee (SPC)

The Social Protection Committee meets to prepare for all Council meetings. Members of the SPC represent their government's departments of social affairs, and work to hammer out policy decisions and amendments for their ministers. These meetings cover a range of topics, but often come back to the issue of social inclusion and of course the NAPsIncl. **The Sub-Group on Indicators** is comprised of members of the SPC and meets twelve to fifteen times per year to work to establish social inclusion as well as social protection indicators. The members of the SPC tend to be more accessible and approachable than the ministers themselves, and are often more willing to listen to what NGOs or sector representatives have to say.

4. Permanent Representatives to the European Union

Each Ministry of Social Affairs sends at least one delegate to Brussels to act as its permanent representative to the European Union. This representative is responsible for reporting to his or her government on developments at the EU level, as well as for protecting his or her country's interests. Following the developments in the SPC closely, the permanent representatives help to set the agenda for Council meetings and are key people in the social inclusion process.

5. The European Commission

The Commission plays a coordinating role in the strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. It is responsible for administering the Community Action Programme (under which FEANTSA is funded), and following the work of the SPC. Unit 5E in the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs follows the developments closely and works to ensure that the process moves forward. The Commission is in the process of drawing up a common EU guideline for the NAPs, which will hopefully prevent the kind of discrepancy in quality and content in the first round of NAPsIncl. The Commission is likely to publish these guidelines in November of 2002 for use in the preparation of the NAPsIncl to be submitted in the summer of 2003.

6. Other European institutions:

Though the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions do not have an official role in the Open Method of Coordination, theirs are voices that are listened to by European decision-makers. These EU bodies should not hesitate to make their opinions heard; NGOs should not hesitate to approach these institutions with their suggestions for improvements to the NAPsIncl. ●

Links

For more information about the social inclusion process:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/diamantopoulou/main11_en.html

To contact members of the SPC

http://www.feantsa.org/key_docs/eu_docs/mems_spc.htm

To contact permanent representatives in Brussels:

http://europa.eu.int/idea/bin/dispent.pl?lang=en&entity_id=3540

http://europa.eu.int/idea/bin/dispent.pl?lang=en&entity_id=3780

Link to Council Meetings and Presidency Conclusions:

<http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/loadBook.asp?BID=76&LANG=1>



The National Action Plans for social inclusion:

Baseline for an integrated approach to homelessness?

The Lisbon (March 2000) and Nice (December 2000) European Councils gave a major impetus to European social policy on poverty and social exclusion. The objectives set in Nice laid the foundations for a European initiative for closer social cohesion, and marked out the areas in which the 15 EU Member States were asked to take concrete measures. These had to be reported on in National Action Plans for social inclusion, which each country had to submit by June 2001.

With the plans on public record, FEANTSA thought it time to consider, digest and analyse them to produce a scoreboard of states' achievements and failings. FEANTSA's member organizations gave input to this evaluation by putting their expertise on homelessness and social exclusion to work for a report intended to get right to grips with the essentials.

The analysis of the NAPs exactly mirrored the structure of FEANTSA's October 2001 policy document entitled "*Promoting social inclusion through access to housing*", and the template for both is the structure and order of the common objectives agreed in Nice.

Housing (*facilitating access to resources, rights, goods and services for all*) is where the Member States most focused on action to improve the housing situation of vulnerable groups and help give the most excluded access to decent, affordable housing. Quite a few countries mention the importance of social housing, rental housing and the role of local authorities in this area.

But none mention the homeless community by name, let alone try and address their specific needs. The big failing of the Plans when it comes to housing is their failure to recognize the importance of emergency accommodation and supported housing for "houseless" people. Also, most countries focus on housing supply, but fail to do anything specific to guarantee access to housing for the most excluded.

The Plans more or less skate around other goods and services (like health care, social protection, education and justice). Only health (physical and mental) gets a passing mention among the policy measures in this section, with a handful of countries making provision like street services and telephone hotlines for the most excluded groups. But very few countries make specific provision to help homeless people get better access to these services.

Jobs (*facilitate participation in employment*) are key to putting those confronted by exclusion back in touch with society, and restoring their sense of self-worth and self-confidence. The Member States understand this, but still put too big a focus on people who are employable in the "ordinary" labour market. Homeless people are not recognized as a target group, and very few countries give credit to the social economy as a source of jobs for disadvantaged groups. That said, FEANTSA welcomes the attempts by some countries to promote cooperation and partnership between the social services and employment services. Still, only a minority of countries touch on the issues of insecure, underpaid jobs and the need for sheltered, supported jobs for those suffering long-term exclusion.

Homelessness is an issue that must be addressed both proactively and reactively. So prevention is as vital as a cure to an integrated approach to tackling homelessness (*prevent the risks of exclusion*). Some countries - like the United Kingdom (Scotland), Finland and Ireland - underline the need for an integrated approach to homelessness, which embraces multiple aspects, including prevention, emergency accommodation and help to reclaim a place in society. FEANTSA regrets that most of the measures to prevent homelessness stop short at improved housing security and fail to recognize the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness.

Quite a few of the NAPsIncl stress that the homeless community are among the most excluded from society (*help the most vulnerable*). Regrettably, none recognize them as a target group on their own basis with specific needs and requirements. Also, the policies framed to address this are not properly joined-up: they are either too targeted - and so miss out some groups - or not targeted enough, and so fail to accommodate the specific needs of each group.

Finally -and importantly- most of our member organizations (*mobilize all relevant bodies*) were not told about the preparation and writing of the Plans by their respective governments. This meant that few were able to get involved at any stage of drawing up the NAPsIncl, still less have any effective say in framing and/or guiding policy on measures to tackle homelessness. FEANTSA regrets that the expertise of these many organizations in combating homelessness went unrecognised. That said, this first round of Plans did enable member organizations to

Homelessness is an issue that must be addressed both proactively and reactively.

step up cooperation at national level to boost their own political leverage.

On face value, then, and broadly speaking, the NAPsIncl have not totally failed to carry out their brief of moving towards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. But they have not advanced very far, either. Many fail to address homelessness and its attendant issues in any specific, hands-on or joined-up way.

The Plans are too non-specific, in stopping short at vague, sweeping expressions of policy intent, with little in the way of measurable outcomes and deadlines. They are not really hands-on, because the policy measures are too seldom backed up by concrete measures to put schemes into practice. Neither are they joined-up, in that many persist in seeing homelessness as a purely "housing" issue, and tackle only that aspect.

But, getting effectively to grips with homelessness demands a holistic, integrated approach to the problem which cuts across all the different levels (prevention, emergency response, reintegration), spheres (housing, jobs, mental, physical and psychological health, etc.), groups (young people, women, men, immigrants, drug and alcohol abusers, etc.) and their respective needs.

FEANTSA's role, therefore, will be to leverage its lobbying activities to ensure that the next round of NAPs attach proper importance to the needs of the homeless community. We firmly believe that, if the National Action Plans for social inclusion, and especially the overarching European strategy to combat poverty and exclusion, can help deliver an overall policy approach on tackling homelessness, they will prove to be a relevant policy instrument which will in the long term help to defeat poverty. ●



FEANTSA's expertise is vital for the strengthening of the NAPs

In the first half of 2001, each of the EU Member States produced a National Action Plan (NAP) in the framework of the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion. FEANTSA conducted a detailed analysis of the NAPs and assessed their impact on the fight against homelessness.

Homelessness is the most severe manifestation of deprivation and poverty in the EU area. The eradication of homelessness should therefore be an important objective of any genuine and serious anti-poverty strategy.

The common objectives of the EU strategy do not explicitly include the eradication of homelessness. But it is clear that the most excluded people, and hence the homeless, are a key target group of the EU strategy. All common objectives are relevant for the fight against homelessness, but two objectives in particular - access to housing for all, and the prevention of homelessness - are critical elements of every homelessness strategy.

FEANTSA found, however, that the NAPs do not adequately address the problem of homelessness. Most policy measures presented in the NAPs do not take sufficient account of the particular problems and needs of the homelessness. There are probably many reasons for this weakness, but we believe that three factors in particular played an important role:

The lack of interest in homelessness.

Many policy-makers underestimate the scope and severity of homelessness. Very few Member States see the fight against homelessness as a political priority. Addressing homelessness is not very attractive from a political point of view. In order to achieve visible results, lasting commitments in terms of resources and time will be needed. Ignoring the problem, on the other hand will not have serious political repercussions in the short term.

The lack of respect and/or confidence in the role of the EU in the fight against homelessness.

We have found that the policy measures addressing homelessness presented in the NAPs do not reflect the actual situation in the Member States. Most Member States have a better approach to homelessness in place than emerges in their NAPs. We believe that several Member States do not want the EU to interfere with their homelessness policies or do not see the added value of the role of the EU in the area of homelessness.

The lack of understanding of the problem of homelessness amongst policy-makers.

Homelessness is an extremely complex problem. Homeless people suffer from exclusion in many different areas, such as housing,

health, employment, social and cultural life, etc. Policy-makers often do not recognise this complexity and develop policies that are ineffective.

We are convinced that FEANTSA can and must play an important role to address the above three problems.

FEANTSA and its member organisations, representing a substantial part of the organised 'homelessness sector' in Europe, dispose of a wealth of knowledge and expertise. We should make this knowledge and expertise available to policy-makers at both national and EU levels to promote a more comprehensive and effective approach to homelessness. FEANTSA should make better use of its transnational nature to provide policy-makers with new ideas and best practices from all over Europe.

We need to continue promoting public awareness on the issue of homelessness at EU and national levels. We must convince policy-makers that homelessness is a serious problem, in many Member States even a growing problem, which requires a specific and well-developed policy approach.

We need to continue to promote the role of the EU in the fight against homelessness while respecting the jurisdictions and right to legislate of the different EU Member States. We must lobby the EU to make better use of its jurisdiction in the area of poverty to strengthen the fight against homelessness. Actions, such as peer review and other forms of policy evaluation and the exchange of best practices and experience, can be strong policy instruments in the area of homelessness and should be reinforced at EU level.

FEANTSA needs to continue conducting transnational research on homelessness. The research produced during the last ten years provides interesting information about the complexity and changing nature of homelessness and the different policy approaches. FEANTSA must strengthen the transnational character of the research to promote a better understanding of homelessness and hence more effective policy approaches.

FEANTSA believe strongly in the potential of the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion and its possible implications on the fight against homelessness. We are convinced, however, that FEANTSA and its member organisations need to be much closer involved in the further development, implementation and evaluation both at national and EU levels. Otherwise the strategy will fail to improve the situation of the most excluded and remain unsustainable.

The evaluation report of the NAPs and our policy recommendation for strengthening the EU strategy can be consulted on FEANTSA's website <http://www.feantsa.org>. •

We need to continue promoting public awareness on the issue of homelessness at EU and national levels.



FEANTSA POLICY STATEMENT

The fight against homelessness must be a priority for EU policies addressing poverty

Recommendations for strong and coherent homelessness policies in the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2000, the European Council of Lisbon launched the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion. According to this strategy the EU should promote and facilitate the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

The EU strategy could be a very useful instrument to strengthen national, regional and local policies against poverty. We believe that, in the longer term, the strategy could have an important impact on the eradication of poverty.

The strategy also addresses the problems of homelessness and severe housing exclusion, which make it all the more relevant for FEANTSA.

Since its creation in 1989, FEANTSA has argued for a clear role for the EU in the fight against homelessness. The launch of the EU strategy is an important step in this regard.

In the first half of 2002, FEANTSA's member organisations analysed the National Action Plans (NAPsIncl), which form the basis of the EU strategy. These analyses proved that the EU strategy is a welcome policy instrument, but that in its current form it does not promote a comprehensive policy approach against homelessness.

In this document we would like to present some recommendations that would help to make the EU strategy stronger and more relevant with regard to the fight against homelessness.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

COHERENT POLICY MEASURES AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

All Member States should develop an integrated and comprehensive homelessness strategy in the framework of the NAPsIncl.

Homelessness is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon. Homeless people are not only deprived from decent housing, but often also suffer from serious exclusion in areas such as health, employment, education and culture. Any policy that addresses only one dimension of homelessness is doomed to failure.

Most Member States have nonetheless developed a very partial strategy against homelessness in their NAPsIncl. Some Member States did not even develop a partial strategy and only included a few isolated measures addressing homelessness.

All common objectives of the EU strategy are relevant for a comprehensive and effective approach to homelessness. Most Member States, however, failed to take due account of the specific needs and requirements of homeless people when they elaborated policy proposals under each of the common objectives. Most of the NAPsIncl in their current form will have little effect on the eradication of homelessness.

FEANTSA believes that the common objectives of the EU strategy provide a good framework for a comprehensive approach against homelessness. A major shortcoming is that the Member States are not encouraged to address the problems of homeless people under each of the objectives.

A European strategy against poverty that excludes the poorest and most excluded of our society is not a worthy or credible strategy. The EU should ensure that homeless people receive priority attention and that Member States address the integration of the homeless in all important areas covered by the common objectives, such as housing, employment, health, education, social protection and prevention.

We believe that a **comprehensive homelessness strategy** in the framework of the NAPsIncl is necessary. Homelessness should be a priority issue in all policies addressing poverty and social exclusion. Such an approach will have some immediate positive effects.

We have noticed that several Member States (e.g. Denmark, Scotland, and Finland) have developed a comprehensive strategy against homelessness, but did not integrate it in their NAPsIncl. An obligation to address homelessness in a comprehensive way in the framework of the NAPsIncl will ensure that Member States include existing policy measures at least. This will help to strengthen the fight against homelessness as part of the EU strategy.

An important added value of the EU strategy is that it allows transnational comparisons. In their current form, however, the NAPsIncl do not allow an effective comparison with regard to homelessness policies. A comprehensive strategy, which addresses homelessness under each of the common objectives of the EU strategy, would increase the usefulness and potential of transnational comparison and will promote mutual learning between the Member States.

In 2001 FEANTSA produced a major policy document '*Promoting social inclusion through access to housing*' (available in 11 EU languages on FEANTSA's website). This document presented in detail the fundamental elements of an effective and comprehensive strategy against homelessness. Because most of the current NAPsIncl are very poor on the issue of homelessness, we decided it was pointless at this stage to produce a follow-up document with more precise recommendations. We would like to refer to the above policy document for interesting ideas on how to strengthen the fight against homelessness in the next round of NAPsIncl.

All Member States should draft a provisional budget for their NAPsIncl and for the policy measures against homelessness in particular.

The fight against homelessness will only be successful if there is a substantial and sustained financial commitment by the public authorities.

We believe that Member States include too many general policy measures against poverty without assessing thoroughly the financial implications. The lack of adequate funding limits the scope of general policy measures and the most excluded risk being over-looked. From a financial point of view, integrating the most excluded part of the population carries the heaviest burden and is therefore the least attractive option for policy-makers.

We would like Member States to better target their policy measures and include only financially viable proposals.

INVOLVEMENT OF ALL PARTNERS

In order to strengthen the policies addressing homelessness in the next round of NAPsIncl, the Member States must co-operate much closer with NGOs and voluntary organisations in the drafting, implementation and evaluation of the NAPsIncl.

In all EU Member States, NGOs rather than public authorities are the most important and sometimes the only providers of services to homeless people (shelter, social support etc.). As a consequence, NGOs are often the most useful and sometimes even the only source of information and expertise on homelessness. Through their daily work with homeless people NGOs have a good understanding of the effect of public policies and can provide valuable ideas to strengthen and improve these policies.

For example, in both Finland and Scotland, public authorities and NGOs co-operated closely together to develop a strategy against homelessness. The result is that both countries have two of the most comprehensive and effective strategies in the EU.

The expertise of NGOs is very valuable and in some Member States even essential for the development and evaluation of public policies addressing homelessness. We believe that the weakness of homelessness policies in the NAPsIncl is caused to some extent by the lack of co-operation with NGOs in the drafting process.

NGOs need to be closely involved in the implementation of homelessness policies, also in the framework the NAPsIncl. Therefore, the public authorities should provide NGOs with adequate financial means to enable them to take part in the implementation of public policies. Many Member States refer in their NAPsIncl to the important work of NGOs in the fight against homelessness. They forget to mention however that the work of NGOs is often not adequately funded. Public authorities are responsible for guaranteeing access to decent and affordable housing for every person. Closer co-operation with NGOs is necessary, but it requires a firm financial commitment from the public authorities.

The different competent public authorities must work closely together to produce and implement a good homelessness strategy as part of the NAPsIncl.

The policies addressing homelessness are underdeveloped and weak in most of the NAPsIncl. This is often due to the fact that one single Ministry drafted the NAPsIncl and did not adequately involve other relevant Ministries. Developing a policy against homelessness should be shared responsibility of the different Ministries such as the Ministries of Social Welfare, Housing, Health and Employment. When these Ministries are not adequately involved in the drafting of the NAPsIncl, the result will inevitably be a partial or inadequate strategy against homelessness. The EU should promote this co-operation and set the example.

The authors of the NAPsIncl did often not take into account that the responsibilities for fighting homelessness are shared between different levels of public administration. For the next round of NAPsIncl, the EU must ensure that national as well as regional and local authorities are involved. In particular the involvement of the local authorities is essential. In most countries there is a tendency to increase the role and responsibility of the local authorities, because they are considered to be in the best position to assess and address homelessness.

SOCIAL INCLUSION INDICATORS

The Member States need to develop indicators, which monitor the effects of their policy measures on the living condition of homeless people.

Very few Member States have included specific indicators related to the fight against homelessness in their NAPsIncl. Most NAPsIncl include the traditional poverty indicators, which often exclude homeless people. The proposed indicators on employment, health and education will not provide reliable data on the situation of the homeless in these fields.

Member States should make concrete efforts to develop more targeted indicators and alternative methodologies to gather reliable data on homelessness. FEANTSA urges the Member States to include outcome-based indicators rather than activity-based indicators.

The issue of homelessness indicators is very complex, and therefore FEANTSA has set up a special working group consisting of experts on homelessness statistics. The working group has developed some proposals for homelessness indicators, which will be available soon.

CONCLUSION

FEANTSA believes that the EU strategy is a valuable policy instrument to strengthen the fight against poverty in all Member States of the EU. However, important changes and adjustments are necessary in order to ensure that the strategy also addresses the precarious situation of homeless people.

Since the European Council of Lisbon, FEANTSA has worked hard to make our member organisations understand the added value and the potential of the EU strategy against poverty and social exclusion. We believe that the EU strategy, which is based on the open method of co-ordination, offers the right policy framework. It is now the responsibility of EU policy makers to ensure that within this framework homelessness, which is the most serious form of social exclusion, is adequately addressed. FEANTSA's member organisations, which cover a substantial part of the homelessness sector in the EU, are ready to play their role in the open method of co-ordination and to contribute to the fight against homelessness in the framework of the EU strategy. ●

Policy statement adopted by the Administrative Council of FEANTSA on 15 June 2002.

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FEANTSA wants the EU Strategy and the NAPsIncl to become more useful tools to fight homelessness and severe housing exclusion

The Council of Ministers of Social Affairs is currently reviewing the common objectives of the EU strategy. There seems to be a general agreement to maintain the existing common objectives. It is very likely that the gender mainstreaming of anti-poverty policies will become an additional common objective. The new NAPsIncl will also need to include measurable national targets, as was agreed at the Spring Summit of Barcelona in March 2002.

The European Commission will produce a document in the coming months with some guidelines for the Member States for the next round of NAPsIncl (2003-2005). The above elements will be included in this document. Other important elements that are likely to be part of the guidelines include the need for stronger co-operation with all relevant stakeholders - including NGOs, the importance of raising awareness about the EU strategy, and the need for new policy measures to be included in the NAPsIncl.

FEANTSA fears that other important elements for the improvement of the NAPsIncl will not be addressed in the Commission document.

Over the past year, FEANTSA conducted a detailed analysis of the NAPsIncl and found among other things the following:

- The housing dimension of anti-poverty policies remained underdeveloped in all NAPsIncl.
- The existing national/regional measures and strategies to address homelessness are often not or very partially included in the NAPsIncl

As a result the current NAPsIncl are not (yet) relevant policy instruments for the fight against homelessness. FEANTSA believes strongly in the potential of the EU strategy, on the condition that homelessness is adequately addressed as a key issue in all of the NAPsIncl in the future. We believe that policy makers cannot ignore homeless people, who are suffering from the most severe forms of poverty and social exclusion, in their anti-poverty policies.

FEANTSA believes raising awareness, especially amongst policy makers, is important to improve the NAPsIncl in the short term. We do not want, however, the lack of knowledge and understanding of the EU strategy amongst stakeholders to be an argument for refraining from taking necessary initiatives. Good policy

and raising awareness are mutually reinforcing. The better the policy the easier it is to get all stakeholders involved and to make them understand the importance and added value of EU policy initiatives. FEANTSA works hard to inform its membership about the EU strategy. Unless the NAPsIncl become more relevant, these efforts of FEANTSA will be in vain.

FEANTSA certainly hopes that the Member States work harder this year to meet the common objectives set at Nice, as well as the new guidelines to be established by the Commission. We are looking forward to NAPsIncl that clearly and concretely address the problem of poverty and homelessness.

We simply want to stress, again, the crucial importance of housing in addressing poverty and homelessness. Policy makers cannot ignore the housing dimension of poverty. The EU strategy will not be effective, especially for the most excluded, if housing continues to be a side issue in the NAPsIncl. We therefore call upon the European Commission to include in the guidelines for the next round of NAPsIncl a strong reference to the importance of policy measures in the area of housing for both the prevention and alleviation of poverty. ●

For more information on FEANTSA policy proposals visit FEANTSA's website www.feantsa.org

HORIZONTAL VERSUS VERTICAL APPROACH

FEANTSA wonders why so many policy-makers insist on thinking only in terms of the vertical nature of anti-poverty policies. Taking this approach, society is divided into categories such as: women, older people, disabled people, immigrants, etc. While insisting on the importance of considering age, gender and residence status, FEANTSA feels that the overriding issues are ignored when society is divided in this manner. By focusing on a vertical group such as women, it becomes extremely difficult to design and implement policies that promote social inclusion. Women as such are not socially excluded; many poor women do find themselves in poverty, but not solely by factor of their being female.

When poverty is approached from a horizontal perspective, the categories cut across such vertical groupings and address the most excluded. For example, policies and programmes that target the very poor will be clearly aimed at very poor women,

older people and immigrants. Using this horizontal approach policy-makers and service providers can seek out those who suffer from the most severe forms of social exclusion, and are not bound by regulations stipulating the gender, age, etc. of the individual involved.

By creating policies that seek to improve the lives of those living in poverty, those without decent housing and with very few resources, policy-makers will be better able to reach those in real need. Such a horizontal approach better respects the inherent diversity of the excluded population. This is not to say that homeless women, homeless people who are disabled or older, or homeless immigrants should not be targeted. What is key, however, is to understand that being homeless is the most severe form of poverty and social exclusion, and must be addressed first and foremost. FEANTSA encourages policies and projects that respect the diversity and specificity of homeless people.



Where is the European Parliament in the EU Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion?

The European Parliament is the voice of European citizens in the complex structure of decision-making in Brussels and Strasbourg. With 626 Members of Parliament, the EP has enormous potential to make this voice heard across the EU. While the European Commission has a monopoly on launching policy proposals, the European Parliament has a duty to try to improve these initiatives.

The European Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion relies on what is called the 'Open Method of Coordination', a kind of 'soft-law' that encourages Member States to establish targets and thus live up to the European objectives set at Nice in 2000. While the European Parliament has no official role in this Open Method of Coordination, there is ample opportunity for Members of Parliament to challenge both the Commission and their national governments to work harder to meet the Nice objectives. Clearly the European Parliament has reservations about the Open Method of Coordination, and is concerned about the questions raised when a policy method is transferred directly from one policy area to another; in this case from Employment to Social Inclusion. However, the European Parliament appears to have waited rather too long to take the initiative on this issue, and is only now meeting to discuss how to become more involved in the Social Inclusion process.

Over the course of the National Action Plans process, the European Commission drafted a Joint Report on the NAPs that was passed by the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions in October 2001. The role of the Parliament in the Joint Report seems to be rather vague; the Parliament failed to take the opportunity to evaluate the NAPs and include valuable constructive criticism in the Joint Report. Instead, the Parliament appears to be waiting for the Commission's invitation to consult on the mid-term evaluation in 2003; a point at which it will be rather too late to make important suggestions for the improvement of the next round of NAPs, which will be completed in 2003.

FEANTSA wonders why the European Parliament does not take a more active role in the European Strategy? The political spectrum of the Parliament has shifted to the right, along with many national governments, but this fact does not render it impossible for the Social Affairs Committee to be more assertive in implementing and improving the EU strategy. The Member States should understand the value of the National Action Plans as a tool to create appropriate and effective strategies to combat poverty and homelessness. However, while FEANTSA and its members work to convince national governments of the importance of coordinating policies that address social inclusion, and in particular homelessness, the European Parliament seems content to wait on the sidelines until invited to join the game. Perhaps the invitation will come too late for the Parliament to have any affect.

FEANTSA encourages the European Parliament to use its voice, the voice of European citizens, in the EU Strategy. The European Parliament's members come from across Europe and are thus very well placed to take up the debate on both national and European levels. There are opportunities to influence policy making in the social-field that simply should not be missed. ●

The role of the Parliament in the Joint Report seems to be rather vague; the Parliament failed to take the opportunity to evaluate the NAPs and include valuable constructive criticism in the Joint Report.





Social inclusion in an enlarged Europe

Enlargement is certainly the greatest political, economic and social challenge currently facing the European Union. Instead of the current 15 Member States we will soon become 27 countries sharing the same basic democratic and social values, which lay the foundations of the European construction. Soon, we will be 550 million people instead of the current 375 million inhabitants with similar expectations in terms of social and economic living standards in this Europe considered to be an area of prosperity and solidarity.



In light of the serious economic difficulties candidate countries find themselves in the aftermath of the radical economical and societal reforms they went through, the concept of **social cohesion** and the **fight against poverty and**

social exclusion gain an ever-greater dimension for the Union.

Candidate countries have been asked to transpose the community social acquis (the body of common rights and obligations binding all the Member States within the EU) into their national legislations in the chapters 2, 13 and 21 of the accession negotiations covering the areas of social policy, free movement of workers, and economic and social cohesion. Cooperation on employment, social inclusion and social protection was not included in the chapters subjected to negotiations, but cooperation in these areas is equally crucial to prepare the candidate countries for their full participation in the **Lisbon strategy** following their accession. In June 2001, the candidate countries were officially asked at the Gothenburg European Council to incorporate the European Union's economic, social and environmental objectives into their national policies. Cooperation in these areas supplements the actions already undertaken by the candidate countries and is made through the **open method of coordination**, which respects the particularities of each Member State while working for a common European goal.

Participation of candidate countries in the European Strategy against Poverty and Social Exclusion

Prior to accession, candidate countries are not obliged to take part in the strategy. The European Commission can only strongly encourage their participation, but it remains within the jurisdiction of each applicant country to decide whether they will join the European inclusion strategy and the community programme. In order to encourage this participation, the Commission has organised bilateral meetings with the Ministries of Social Affairs in the applicant countries, leading to the organisation of national seminars on social inclusion that took place during the summer of 2002. These seminars provided an opportunity to describe the

social situation in the candidate countries and to identify the key challenges regarding social inclusion. It further provided an opportunity for the Commission representatives to present the **Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM)**—a document of up to 30 pages to be drafted by the Commission together with each candidate country that should be signed by the end of 2003 and before accession takes place. Rather than descriptive documents, the JIMs are expected to be concise and focused on policy issues.

The Joint Inclusion Memoranda represent extremely valuable instruments to put the fight against social exclusion on the political agendas of decision-makers in the candidate countries. Among other objectives, they clearly aim at **"increasing candidate countries' awareness of the common broad objectives agreed in the European Council of Nice as well as the working methods that have been implemented at the Union level"** as well as **"developing, on the basis of existing elements, a national integrated strategy to fight effectively poverty and social exclusion, taking into account the EU agreed objectives"**. Equally important, they will contribute to the development of social statistics systems and promote the adoption of EU commonly agreed indicators on social inclusion.

In the course of 2002, the Commission has commissioned national studies to be undertaken in the candidate countries on social protection (covering the issues of health, pensions and social exclusion). The studies should be finalised by November 2003 and a European Conference gathering all the different actors is expected to take place in Brussels at the end of 2003 where the main developments in the field of cooperation on social inclusion will be discussed.

Feedback from some FEANTSA members in the applicant countries has revealed a positive involvement of our members in the process of consultation within the framework of drafting the JIM's. This was the case in Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic where our members were invited to attend the national seminars and are in contact with their respective governments with the view to contributing to the definition of their countries' future policies on social inclusion.

As regards candidate countries' participation in the Social Exclusion Programme, they were allowed to join from 2002 - independently of their full participation in the overall social inclusion strategy, negotiations are run bilaterally with the countries interested. The candidate countries participating in the programme will be invited to the annual Round Table involving all the relevant actors.

The involvement of candidate countries in the social inclusion strategy at an early stage will be decisive to reduce poverty and social exclusion in an enlarged Europe and thus limit the impact of some social and economic adjustments resulting from enlargement. ●

Soon, we will be 550 million people instead of the current 375 million inhabitants with similar expectations in terms of social and economic living standards in this Europe considered to be an area of prosperity and solidarity.



Taking stock of the European strategy on social inclusion: a mixed picture...

Very few people are aware that the European Council meeting in Lisbon under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU in March 2000 launched a European strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion; a strategy that the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) had been demanding for years.

People should know what the EU Member States have pledged to do about poverty and social exclusion so that the fight against them becomes everybody's concern. In the past few months, EAPN has taken stock of the European strategy. It is a mixed picture: NGOs welcome the joint pledges given by the EU Member States, especially in setting ambitious goals, but the first wave of National Action Plans on Social Inclusion 2001-2003 (NAPs/incl) have added little that is new, and have fallen down badly when it comes to involving all relevant bodies.

EAPN believes that it is crucial to the success of the second round of NAPs/incl that more emphasis is put on the participation of all actors in the NAP/incl process, in particular of NGOs representing the interests of those experiencing poverty, exclusion, and inequalities, as well as those people who are themselves experiencing poverty and social exclusion or inequalities. EAPN feels that more support and adequate mechanisms for consultation are needed, particularly at national level, to facilitate this participation.

Make clearer the articulation between the national and the sub-national level

Member States should also be asked to make clearer the articulation of policy formulation and delivery between the national and the sub-national level. In view of the importance of the sub-national level in combating poverty and social exclusion, we feel that support should be given to the Member States to develop local pacts against poverty and social exclusion.

In the next round of NAPs/incl, Member States should be asked to indicate clear budget commitments for the various measures described. EAPN recognizes that this is not easy, as a two-year NAP will usually cover three budget years. More clarity is needed as to the contribution of Structural Funds, and in particular the European Social Funds and not just the Equal Programme.

EAPN would like to draw attention to the failure to implement the required gender mainstreaming in the first round of the National Action Plans and to ensure that this is addressed in the second round of National Action Plans. Equally the Network would like to draw attention to the inadequate addressing of the situation of people from ethnic minorities in the first set of action plans and we hope that this neglect will be highlighted and addressed in the preparation of the second round of plans.

Access to all fundamental rights!

While the National Action Plans should aim to ensure that all people have access to all fundamental rights including, housing, health, education and training and decent income, the National Action Plans should also identify those groups who are most likely to experience poverty and exclusion, this may include people with disabilities, children, older people, offenders and ex-offenders, etc. and the plans should identify how the needs of those groups vulnerable to poverty and exclusion will be addressed.

EAPN welcomes the fact that all of the candidate countries (except for Czech Republic and Turkey) will commence their participation in the Programme this year. For the moment they do not participate in the networking element of the Programme which prevents the sharing of knowledge and experience between the civil society actors in the present and future member states. We hope that their participation in this element of the Programme will commence in the coming year.

The awareness level about the EU strategy is very low, even among those in public administration, who are involved in implementing policies related to combating poverty and social exclusion.

EAPN would also like to draw attention to outstanding issues with regards to indicators. Following the adoption of primary and secondary indicators at the Laeken European Council, the sub-committee on indicators of the Social Protection Committee recognized that there was still work to be done in the areas of housing (including homelessness), education, health and living conditions (including social participation). Whatever progress has been done in these areas will need to be reflected in the guidelines to Member States for the second round of NAPs.

Finally EAPN is concerned that the awareness level about the EU strategy is very low, even among those in public administration, who are involved in implementing policies related to combating poverty and social exclusion. We are concerned that this lack of visibility may be a sign that the NAP/incl process is not yet considered as part and parcel of each Member State policies in the field of combating poverty and social exclusion. We call for initiatives to be taken to ensure the strategy is fully integrated into the domestic policy agendas of each Member State. ●

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In the past few months, EAPN has taken stock of the European strategy.



Irish NAP and inclusion of the Irish Strategy on Homelessness.

The Irish NAP which was adopted in 2001, emphasizes the Irish Governments' Homelessness Strategy which was initiated in 2000. The Irish NAP, specifically in relation to housing and homelessness restates a number of existing policies, initiatives and programmes, many of which have been commenced over the past 2 years. Therefore, there are no new and separate policies to deal with housing and homelessness in the Irish NAP. What is interesting is the changing economic context in which the Irish NAP was developed. High economic growth rate of 11% in 2000 is now replaced by more modest estimated growth of under 5% in 2002. There are also tighter government budgetary constraints in place in 2002 that were not present 12 months ago. This may have a significant impact on the implementation of the objectives of the Irish NAP.

The main features of homelessness in Ireland are similar to some other EU member states. In Ireland, at the last official 3 year count in 1999, (results of the 2002 count are to be published in Autumn 2002) there were around 5000 homeless households. The majority of these were located in the larger cities, particularly Dublin. Traditionally most of the housing responses to homelessness were focused on emergency accommodation through the provision of hostels and shelters. The system was also characterised by poor co-ordination of response by statutory authorities in the form of housing authorities (municipalities) and health authorities, both of whom have separate housing and health responsibilities. The majority of services for the homeless are currently provided by the voluntary sector (NGO's) and certainly in recent years, the shortage of affordable housing has become a major issue in tackling homelessness. The Irish NAP does state that it will be necessary to provide over 500,000 additional new dwellings in Ireland over the next 10 years and it also indicates the extent of a number of government programmes to assist those people who cannot afford to house themselves.

However, the Irish government *Homelessness Strategy*¹ which is a targeted approach, forms the basis of present policies which seek to prevent social exclusion in the form of people becoming homeless. This is a specific objective under the EU NAPincl programme. The Irish Integrated Strategy on

Homelessness was produced in May 2000. It was produced by the government under a Cross-Departmental Team of officials from 7 Government Departments, lead by the Ministry responsible for housing. The other Government Departments included Health and Children, Finance, Education and Science, Social & Community & Family Affairs, Justice Equality & Law Reform and Sport and Recreation. The terms of reference for the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness were:

"To develop an integrated response to the many issues which affect homeless people including emergency, transitional and long-term responses as well as issues relating to health, education, employment and homemaking".

The report, *Homelessness-An Integrated Strategy* contained proposals in 7 major areas. These proposals included delivery of services to homeless persons, clarification of statutory responsibility, provision of accommodation, health and welfare needs, work, education and training, funding and strategies for prevention of homelessness. The central mechanism for implementing these proposals were the production of 3 year Homeless Action Plans which were to be adopted jointly by each local housing authority and health board in Ireland.

In addition, a homeless forum was to be established in each local authority area for the delivery of services to the Homeless. These homeless fora would be comprised of representatives from the relevant statutory and voluntary (NGO's) sector organisations working with the homeless. The Irish Homelessness Strategy was also committed to increasing the supply of different types of accommodation as well as settlement and outreach programmes to assist homeless people return to integrated living. In order to achieve these objectives, significant increases in capital and revenue funding were promised.

In February 2002, the Irish Government published a specific preventative strategy² for homelessness which was promised in *Homelessness-An Integrated Strategy* in 2000. Key target groups in the preventative strategy were identified and these included patients leaving hospital and mental health care, adult and young offenders leaving cus-

tody and young people leaving care. In order to ensure that these target groups do not encounter exclusion through homelessness, a number of specific actions are identified and which have to be implemented by statutory authorities. The preventative strategy also emphasized the positive role schools can play in the prevention of homelessness.

Progress on implementing the proposals of Homelessness-An Integrated Strategy.

Two years after the publication of the Irish Government strategy on Homelessness, it is a useful time to analyse the extent of progress. The main administrative mechanism for implementing these proposals were the 3 year joint local authority and health board homeless action plans. Although, a significant number of these action plans have been adopted, some have been very slow and indeed in a few cases have not yet been adopted by statutory authorities after 2 years. The absence of a target date for adoption of these action plans allowed initial momentum to be lost.

In some areas, Dublin and Cork in particular, where there was a history of joint working arrangements between statutory and voluntary agencies in relation to homelessness, homeless action plans were adopted fairly quickly and after lengthy consultation. Targets were both identified and set for actions to improve services to homeless people, depending on the priorities of homeless people in each area. Evidence does suggest that the introduction of various new health and social services in Dublin has benefited homeless people. Many of these services can be provided relatively quickly through the employment of new staff and better co-ordination of existing services when resources are made available.

However, one of the major problems which still needs to be resolved in the majority of urban areas is the lack of supply of suitable move-on and long-term accommodation. Ireland in general, due to the recent economic boom and increased immigration has encountered a huge shortage of affordable accommodation particularly for those at the bottom end of the housing market. Many of the hostel providers in Dublin have occupants who have been residing there over a

¹ Homelessness - An Integrated Strategy. (2002) Department of the Environment and Local Government.

² Homeless Preventative Strategy. (2002) Government of Ireland.

³ Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act (1998)

long-period. Their subsequent move to independent living has been curtailed by the lack of long-term accommodation options. This will be one of the key solutions to homelessness and it will be important that the 3-year Homeless Action Plans would prioritise this early on, as there is a greater 'lead-in time' in developing and completing new housing projects than the majority of other proposals (which are mostly service orientated) in the Homeless Action Plans. In the short term, allocation of existing properties by local housing authorities and housing associations is the most likely, but limited opportunity, for a homeless person to be housed.

As part of the 3-year Homeless Actions plans, it is important that the progress is closely monitored and analysed by Central Government who can report to the Minister and the Irish Government Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, which comprises the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and other senior government Ministers. One way of doing this is for the Government to reconvene the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness who were originally involved in producing *Homelessness An-Integrated Strategy* in 2000. Some concern has been expressed by voluntary organisations (NGO's) that three year Homeless Action plans without committed 3-year funding for homeless services severely mitigates against being able to strategically plan services and recruit staff over a period of time.

It is important to understand that the drawing up of 3-year Action Plans and the establishment of homeless fora throughout the country will not result in themselves in alleviating homelessness. A number of important activities are underway and resources have been put in place by the Government, but it is crucial that these inputs are measured to establish what are the

outcomes. The 3-year Homeless Action Plans do not in themselves have a statutory basis which is in contrast to situation for travellers³ in Ireland who have legislative backing. Having a legislative basis can provide a discipline on statutory authorities in terms of timescales and allocation of resources and can also improve the level of responsibility and public accountability.

What was disappointing in the Irish NAP report was the absence of any good practice examples from Ireland in relation to homelessness of which there are many. This may be reflective of how objective 4 (of the NAPincl)-*To mobilize all relevant bodies* was achieved. It is not clear how NGO representative bodies involved in housing and homelessness were involved or consulted on the relevant parts of the Irish NAP and certainly this should be remedied in the review of the Irish NAP in 2003.

Certainly it is useful that an external audience will be able to monitor the progress in the Irish NAP of actions in relation to homelessness. FEANTSA could also have a key role in influencing the setting of appropriate indicators in measuring homelessness. However, in order to do this it would be important that the Irish NAP moves beyond its purely descriptive nature of discussing programmes and strategies to measuring actual outcomes in relation to homelessness. ●

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The promotion of inclusion has been a priority of the Portuguese Government since 1995

Portuguese Experience with the NAPIncl



(i) The impact of the inclusion process on policy making

The European social model and the distinctively broad and deep commitments that guide it have determined, from a perspective of development, the adoption of a new strategy of cooperation in the promotion of inclusive policies and in tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The Lisbon Summit defined a strategic objective for European Union to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". The imperative need to take measures with decisive impact regarding the eradication of poverty, through the establishment of appropriate goals, based on an open method of coordination capable of combining national action plans with Commission initiatives aimed at cooperation in this domain, has become a distinctive mark.

The Portuguese participation in the European process of open coordination for social inclusion is, simultaneously, an opportunity and a challenge. An opportunity for consolidation of policies to strengthen cohesion, for strategic reflection and definition of the pathways for development, but, above all, a challenge of modernity with firm and determined commitment to the collective capacity to build a fairer, more supportive and cohesive society.

For this very reason, the Portuguese National Action Plan for Inclusion (NAPIncl) has to be understood as a privileged instrument to develop choices that help to confront and prevent the vulnerabilities we still face. Strengthening the responsibilities given to communities and citizens in a framework of effective and committed participation is the only possible path for the success of the ambitious objectives that Portugal has decisively helped to establish.

This integrated and integrating interpretation implies that the Plan should be seen not only to represent an explicit commitment to objectives of cohesion and social justice, but also provide the possibility of association with other instruments, namely the National Employment Plan and the Integrated Programme of Support for Innovation, constituting with these measures the so-called "strategic triangle of Lisbon", of which it is an essential part.

The promotion of inclusion as one of the priorities of the Portuguese Government since 1995, has been achieved through a new generation of active social policies, of which Minimum Income is the most emblematic measure, that conceive inclusion as a double process of transforming social, economic, political and cultural structures and institutions so that they can welcome everyone, according to their specific needs, and enable people's rights to be attained, creating the necessary opportunities and conditions for empowerment aimed at full assumption of their duties and responsibilities towards themselves, their families, and the community to which they belong.

The Portuguese NAPIncl thus finds a stimulating environment, to which it in turn adds systematisation and a capacity for coordination of policies, greater ambition regarding objectives, responsibility for all the concerned sectors and agents and learning from the best experiences in Europe.

The NAPIncl is therefore an instrument aimed at increasing capacity to act on the causes of problems and not only on their symptoms, intervening both on institutional structures and on individual attitudes, from a perspective of development of the country in relation to which it is both a factor and a result, involving all relevant actors, from different sectors of central administration, local administration and civil society. The main priorities in tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion are of a general nature and are based on six strategic aims: economic development, social cohesion, equal opportunities, social protection, integration, and a network of social services and facilities.

The principal objectives of the NAPIncl are thus as follows:

- activation of people excluded from the labour market, and lifelong learning in a context of competitive economic development consistent with cohesion needs;
- development of social protection systems as specific tools for tackling poverty;
- reintegration of individuals and families in exclusion situations into society and work;
- integrated programmes and social integration contracts;
- integrated development of regions affected by exclusion;
- creation of a network of social services and facilities, with the participation of civil society;
- promotion of equality between women and men with a view to the implementation of a "gender contract".

The general long-term strategic approach is based on economic development, which is compatible with the improvement of social cohesion and the elimination of the structural factors, which generate exclusion processes. The NAPIncl makes provision for the mainstreaming of social inclusion in all relevant policies, modernisation of social protection systems, and integrated initiatives targeting particularly vulnerable groups and regions. The partnership approach and mobilisation of stakeholders at national and local levels is also a central feature of the strategy.

The main challenges to be faced concern combining the preventive and remedial dimensions of social policies: direct action to combat serious exclusion situations, early intervention and activation to facilitate reintegration into work, and the long-term prevention of possible exclusion risks by improving education and skills levels. The role of social protection is to ensure a more intensive supply of social services and facilities, which are geared to the needs of the most deprived, and to improve access to health care, housing, justice, etc.

(ii) The monitoring of the implementation of the NAPincl at a national level

The process of promotion and development of the Plan required a concerted strategy and an assumption of responsibility shared by the State and the Economic and Social Partners. On the part of the public authorities, taking into account the transversal character of the Plan, several ministries are involved in its organisation through a Follow-up Commission, created by Resolution of the Council of Ministers. On an interministerial level, this Commission is responsible for monitoring the whole process. At the Ministry for Labour and Solidarity, a Working Group was established to prepare the Plan and to ensure close coordination with economic, social and welfare partners, as well as with the governmental sectors responsible for the Plan. Considering the special importance of the involvement of economic and social partners in this process, the Plan provides, at the different stages of development of the work, for consultation with the Standing Council for Social Dialogue and the partners that have subscribed to the Pact of Cooperation for Social Solidarity. The Plan also promoted the establishment of a dialogue with the people living in poverty and the associations representing them.

Assessment of the Plan shall be ensured by the Follow-up Commission, which will present regular reports on the implementation of the Plan. Once a year and therefore for the first time in end of 2002, a progress report will be written evaluate the state of advancement of the execution of the plan and which will formulate recommendations for the future.

In order to monitor fulfilment of the targets presented, the Plan adopts: structural indicators of social cohesion comparable with other Member-States, results indicators relative to each of the objectives and targets established in the Plan and policy or follow-up indicators used to measure progress in the implementation and fulfilment of the political measures.

The way the follow up of the plan will be achieved is essential to enable the implementation of efficient and effective policies in the area of social inclusion. All the participants' will be united in a participative process that should accompany the follow up.

(iii) Good Practice: National Social Emergency Phone Line

Among the national policy approaches to homelessness in the Portuguese NAPincl we can stress the new National Social Emergency Phone Line.

The National Social Emergency Phone Line (LNEs) started on the 30th September 2001 in the framework of the promotion of specific measures to help the most vulnerable groups, and is one of the commitments and priorities of the Portuguese NAPincl.

The emergency concept, until now restricted to health issues, is, with this measure, extended to the most extreme forms of social exclusion, and enables innovative practices and immediate responses to social emergencies, specially directed to the homeless, children at risk, victims of violence and abandoned elders.

In this way, the LNEs provides primary care and referring to these emergency situations in order to ensure a more sustained corrective intervention, which should also initiate a contractualization process aiming social inclusion.

In order to fulfil these principles the LNEs has the following objectives:

- identify and provide immediate help to anyone in an emergency situation;
- direct the emergency situations which present danger to the physical, psychological or social integrity of the individuals, namely homeless, children at risk, victims of violence and abandoned elders, to services of primary care and shelter;
- assure protection in situations of vulnerability and associated risks;
- provide follow up to situations of serious social exclusion.

The LNEs operates 24 hours per day. The calls are received at the LNEs call centre by technical staff which sorts the situations and directs them to the district emergency teams, or other institutions or services, according to the specific nature and location of the emergency.

Since LNEs started in September 2001 more than 7,000 people have benefited from this service, of which 37.5% were homeless, 21.6% victims of violence, 20.8% abandoned and dependent people. The majority of the situations occurred in Lisbon (30.0%), Porto (26.6%), Setúbal (8.2%) and Coimbra and Faro (7.3%). The measures provided were mainly psychosocial support and orientation through district teams (30.0%), temporary shelter (40.0%) and financial support for food or transport (15.0%).

This is a key service that promotes innovative answers to social problems that demand urgent, tailored and effective actions, providing also the pointing out and routing of social urgency situations. In fact, the information collected via this line makes it now possible for Portugal to pinpoint the needs and problems of the most excluded, and better target their service provision. ●

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FEANTSA would like to thank all those who contributed to this edition of the newsletter, and to encourage others to do so in the future. If you have information or articles on this subject that might interest other readers, please do not hesitate to send it to FEANTSA. Comments and additional items on the NAPs can be found on the FEANTSA website (www.feantsa.org). We look forward to your feedback.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

FEANTSA is already accepting contributions for the next edition of **Homeless in Europe**, which will be published immediately following the conference on Immigration and Homelessness in Berlin on November 8, 2002.

The main theme of FEANTSA's work programme for 2002 is the relationship between immigration and homelessness. Immigration is currently an issue of major political importance both at EU level and in all 15 Member States. Immigrants represent a highly vulnerable group facing multiple problems in terms of access to housing. The situation has reached particularly worrying levels with hostels for homeless people reporting a considerable increase of immigrants who make use of their services – in particular, undocumented immigrants are especially exposed to this situation.

The conference in Berlin will bring together different experts and perspectives on this issue; the next issue of **Homeless in Europe** will do the same. If you are interested in this topic and would like to make a short (two to three page) contribution, please contact samara.jones@feantsa.org for more information about the deadline for submissions.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.



FEANTSA is supported by the European Commission



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Calendar of events

October 10-12 2002. Lisbon, Portugal

7th European Seminar SMES-Europa (SMES – Mental Health – Social Exclusion)

Organised by to promote and work to improve the exchange of ideas and knowledge, experiences and know-how between practitioners, researchers, administrators, politicians, media representatives and civic society. The seminar will focus on "outreach", "networks" and "empowerment".

For more information, please contact: Luigi LEONORI, tel. & fax (+) 32.2.5385887, smeseu@skynet.be

October 17-18 2002. Aarhus, Denmark

First European Round Table on Social Inclusion

Co-coordinated by the European Commission and the Danish Presidency

For more information contact: Freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org

October 24-25 2002. Prague, Czech Republic

"First European Social Economy Conference in the Central and Eastern Europe"

For more information please contact: Antonina GUARRELLA: praha@cecop.org
www.cecop.org/praha2002

October 29-31 2002. Zaragoza, Spain

International Congress on Social Action and Immigration

Organised by FEANTSA member FILOS

For more information please contact: refugio.secretaria@telefonica.net or refugio.hmayor@ferr.net

November 7-8 2002. Berlin, Germany

FEANTSA Conference on Migration

For more information, please go to the FEANTSA website: www.feantsa.org

November 14-15, 2002. Malta

Council of Europe Conference: Access to Social Rights

Visit www.coe.int/T/E//Social_cohesion/Activities_for_Social_Cohesion/ or www.accesstosocialrights.com.mt for more information or contact: rozalind.collins@coe.int

November 20-21 2002. Rendsburg, Germany

"Poverty and Homelessness in the Baltic Sea States"

Organised by Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein, member organisation of BAGW (FEANTSA member).

For more information please contact: Volker Busch-Geertsema at giss-bremen@t-online.de

November 21-22 2002. Grenoble, France

From Exclusion to Employment – opening up the economy.

For more information please contact: communication@fnars.org