



FEANTSA

European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless
Press Release – 18th June 2014
For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

2014 Country Specific Recommendations: European Union Risks Leaving its Most Excluded Citizens Behind

On the 2nd June, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor presented proposals of 2014 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) in the social policy field. Ahead of the EPSCO Council Meeting of 19-20 June, FEANTSA shares its concern that these recommendations neglect homelessness.

12 Member States (MS) received CSRs on inequality, poverty and inclusion: BG, HR, HU, IE, IT, ES, LT, LV, PT, RO, SK, UK.¹ These focus on unemployment benefits; social assistance; transitions from income support to employment; child poverty and Roma inclusion. Ahead of the EPSCO, FEANTSA welcomes the Commission's efforts to promote social inclusion through CSRs. However, we also stress that the proposed CSRs reflect inadequate **ambition on tackling poverty** through **social investment**, particularly when it comes to **homelessness** - the most extreme form of poverty.

Almost halfway into the Europe 2020 Strategy, a fragile and uneven economic recovery is underway. The EU is a long way off meeting its poverty target. The number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion² increased from 114 million in 2009 to 124 million in 2012.³ It is now important to **take stock** and **renew** the EU's commitment to tackling poverty. In the context of the crisis and its aftermath, addressing extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness has become a **test of credibility** for the European Union.

Some of the 2014 CSRs have **potential** to support the fight against homelessness. For example, Spain should 'Implement the 2013-2016 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAPSI) and assess its effectiveness covering the full range of its objectives'.⁴ The NAPSI includes developing an **integrated national homelessness strategy**. EU-level monitoring in the context of the CSR could support progress. Recommendations to develop/implement integrated poverty and social exclusion strategies, enhance adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits, support those furthest from the labour market, address Roma exclusion, address child poverty, and improve social services are all steps in the right direction. However, if the Semester is to make a real impact on complex social challenges like homelessness, more **targeted** recommendations, based on the **Social Investment Package** (SIP) policy guidance are needed.⁵

In order to be credible, CSRs must be balanced and consistent. However, the social CSRs focus **disproportionally on cost-effectiveness** and not enough on investment to generate long term human, social and economic value. Furthermore, CSRs on poverty and social exclusion are addressed to Southern and Eastern MS, and some liberal welfare regimes in North-West Europe. Social-democratic or corporatist welfare regimes in Northern and Western MS are not targeted, despite the fact that some face great challenges in this area, including rising levels of homelessness. Such **inconsistencies** undermine the Semester as a credible means to make progress on poverty.

¹ EC press conference Country specific recommendations 2014, Ref: I-089987 Date: 02/06/2014 Duration: 08:13, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I089987>

² Measured in terms of people at risk of financial poverty, experiencing material deprivation or living in jobless households

³ COM(2014) 130 final/2

⁴ COM(2014) 428 final

⁵ COM/2013/083 final and SWD/2013/042 final



FEANTSA

In the SIP, the European Commission presented ***social investment*** as the means to tackle poverty and social exclusion in the EU. The SIP calls for smart investment in sustainable social protection; developing people's skills and capacities so as to promote social inclusion; and meeting needs throughout the life cycle. It identifies thematic priorities within the fight against poverty, including integrated strategies to combat ***homelessness***, comprehensive strategies to promote the ***inclusion of children***; and policies for ***active inclusion*** which integrate access to the labour market, access to quality services and access to adequate social protection. It calls on MS to '***confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on prevention, housing-led approaches and reviewing regulations and practices on eviction***'.⁶

The key challenge now is to ***build the social investment agenda into the Semester***, and use it to make real progress. FEANTSA considers that the 2014 CSRs do not reflect a true engagement with the agenda laid out in the SIP. The strong focus on activation is at odds with the balanced active inclusion approach advocated in the SIP. The overwhelming focus on employment and benefits does not address the complexity of some forms of exclusion, like homelessness. There are ***no CSRs on homelessness***, despite last year's Communication accompanying the CSRs calling on MS to do more on specific forms of poverty, including homelessness⁷.

The absence of homelessness is particularly striking as many MS highlight homelessness as a ***priority in their NRPs***,⁸ and ***homelessness levels continue to increase*** in many MS. Unless all dimensions of the social investment agenda are fully operationalised through the Semester, forms of poverty which are not easily captured by the Employment and Social Scoreboard risk being neglected. It is unacceptable for the EU to ***politically side-line extreme poverty*** because of ***statistical capacity***. What's more, the Commission has tools at its disposal – such as the ***National Social Reports***, which could be better used to analyse progress on homelessness and inform CSRs. The Commission's commitment to include homelessness in EUSILC in the future⁹ is an important one but homelessness cannot be ignored in the meantime.

To ensure that the ***most excluded*** are not left out of Europe's ambition to fight poverty, the European Commission must ***truly operationalise the Social Investment Package***¹⁰ and link this to the Semester. This requires strengthening the social reporting and analysis and using ***social investment as a basis*** for recommendations, ***including on homelessness*** – the ***most extreme form of poverty and social exclusion***. FEANTSA is available to help – at European and at national level – to ensure that homelessness is better included in the Semester in the future.

Find out more from www.feantsa.org or call 0032 2 538 66 69

----- ENDS -----

Notes for editors:

1. **FEANTSA** is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It 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 focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level.

For further details, please contact [Ruth Owen](#) FEANTSA Policy Coordinator

⁶ COM/2013/083 final

⁷ COM(2013) 350 final

⁸ FEANTSA Review of the National Reform Programmes, [2014 Member States Continue to Highlight Homelessness as a priority for delivering on Europe 2020](#)

⁹ See [Policy Roadmap for the 2014 Implementation of the Social Investment Package](#)

¹⁰ As called for by Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion (2014) in their [Assessment of progress towards the Europe 2020 social inclusion objectives](#)