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FEANTSA and its members strongly denounce the proposed amendments to the Hungarian Constitution which will forbid living in a public space

We have been drawing attention to the Hungarian government's campaign to punish homeless people over the past eight years. This latest proposed constitutional amendment clearly violates the spirit of the many international human rights treaties to which Hungary is a signatory, including the Revised European Social Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights, the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and of course the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Hungary, along with all EU Member States, has also endorsed the European Pillar of Social Rights which enshrines the right to housing.

Homelessness is an unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights and dignity. Nobody should have to live on the streets, but to outlaw those who have no options for a place to live is a clear violation of human rights. If passed, the Constitution of Hungary will enshrine a human rights violation. This is an alarming development that triggers concerns among homelessness service providers across Europe.

While the constitutional amendment appears to guarantee access to accommodation and shelter, service providers in Hungary have data to prove that not all homeless people will have a place to live. There is a lack of high quality services and support adapted to the needs and the aspirations of the individual.

Criminalisation is not a solution to homelessness. It simply aims to move a visible problem of homelessness out of public view, rather than offering any real solution to the problem.

So, what can Hungary do instead? Follow the European trends and address homelessness through positive measures. Countless examples from Europe and beyond demonstrate that concrete progress on homelessness can be made by implementing integrated, housing-led, preventative homelessness policies. Some illustrations on good practices can also be found in Central Europe such as the new Homeless Strategy launched by the Czech Republic and Poland introducing service standards for homeless services.

Homelessness is not a choice and certainly not a crime and it is possible to end homelessness. Some European countries are working to achieve this by adopting a Housing First model, ensuring homeless people have access to affordable, permanent housing with unconditional support tailored to their needs as soon as they become homeless.

The European Union provides funding for Member States to address homelessness from the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which are available to support innovative ways to tackle homelessness.

FEANTSA can provide expertise and support to Hungary to develop and to implement human rights-based homelessness and housing policies. FEANTSA has an important experience of evidence-based policies across Europe and beyond on improving housing outcomes and supporting the integration of homeless people.

For more information, have a look at our website: www.feantsa.org and our recent campaign inviting all European cities to endorse the Homeless Bill of Rights to uphold the rights of people who experience homelessness.