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## No One Left Behind by the European Youth Strategy... Except Homeless Youth?

The European Commission has published its plans this week for a European Youth Strategy from 2019-2026. FEANTSA is deeply concerned that the Commission's proposal offers no framework to ensure that homeless youth and young people facing housing exclusion and housing deprivation will not be left behind.

In recent weeks, FEANTSA has raised concerns that the European Commission is actively ignoring the needs of a growing population of young people experiencing or facing homelessness. The Commission has deleted 'homelessness, housing and poverty' as a priority issue from the current European Youth Strategy website, and their recent Communication on a future European Youth Strategy lacks any clear direction around how to support vulnerable youth.

With homelessness continuing to rise in every EU Member State except for Finland, it is a crisis that is increasingly affecting young people. In France, 33% of people in homeless accommodation are under the age of 18, in Ireland there has been a 78% increase in homelessness among 18-24 year olds, and in Denmark there has been an 85% increase in the same age category. Between 2010-2016, and under the current European Youth Strategy, housing costs for young people have increased by 10% across the EU but larger increases have been reported in Bulgaria (+360%), Luxembourg (+120%) and Portugal (+100%), according to the 2018 Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe.

It is astounding that at a time of crisis for young people across Europe, the European Commission has ignored the needs of some of the most marginalised, excluded and vulnerable among them. Additionally, the recently proclaimed European Pillar of Social Rights recognises the right to shelter and housing assistance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for an end to poverty and guarantee access to affordable housing for all and the European Urban Agenda Urban Poverty Partnership has called for an end to homelessness in Europe by 2030. Despite all of this, we still see housing and homelessness being removed from the European Youth Strategy.

The new proposals from the European Commission make several references to supporting 'all young people' and ensuring 'no one is left behind' but offers no framework as to how this will be achieved. This is a real concern, not only for the homeless sector but all sectors working with marginalised or vulnerable groups. We've seen in recent years these all-encompassing phrases rarely deliver for marginalised groups with specific needs. Last year the European

Court of Auditors called the Youth Guarantee out for not reaching out to more vulnerable groups, noting that without a specific strategy to specifically recognise and respond to the needs of vulnerable youth they will continue to remain outside the reach of the Youth Guarantee.

It is staggering that the European Commission's own survey on the youth strategy noted that 79% of respondents felt 'improving the social situation of young people at risk of poverty or exclusion' should be a high priority, along with 73% who wish to keep 'preventing marginalisation or violent radicalisation among young' and nothing has been included on housing and homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

FEANTSA is calling on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the wider social sector and NGOs to carefully re-consider the proposals put forth by the European Commission and ask if this is the best we can do for vulnerable youth at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. Recognising and vindicating a young person's human right to housing should be a basic principle of any future European Youth Strategy. Securing housing that is affordable and safe is imperative to ensuring young people can access employment, education and healthcare services and is essential to integrating them into the community.

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#### 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

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<sup>1</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth\\_swd\\_168\\_1\\_en\\_autre\\_document\\_travail\\_service\\_part1\\_v6.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_swd_168_1_en_autre_document_travail_service_part1_v6.pdf)