

20 MARCH 2018

## 'The Other Europe' Exposed in New FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe

The Third Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2018, which uses EU data to analyse the situation of housing exclusion across the continent, will be published tomorrow. It reveals that over 24 million households in Europe are overburdened by housing costs, nearly 37 million households live in overcrowded conditions and nearly 34 million live in damp conditions. It is the only report of its kind and is co-produced by FEANTSA and the Abbé Pierre Foundation.

The past year has resolutely confirmed that another Europe exists: a Europe not merely ignored but also misunderstood, not just despised but also forgotten – a Europe of the homeless. Children now make up the largest group of people in emergency shelters. Women, young adults, people with a migration background and the working poor are also increasingly numerous among the homeless population.

Between 2010 and 2016, the **cost of housing for poor** households increased in **three quarters** of EU countries. The increase was higher than **20%** in almost **half** of all countries and reached very high levels in **Bulgaria (+54%)**, the **United Kingdom (+45%)** and **Portugal (+40%)**. Only **six** countries report a drop in housing costs for poor households. The five EU countries where poor households spend the largest proportion of their disposable income on housing are **Greece (75%** of income spent on housing costs), **Denmark (58%)**, **Germany (51%)**, **Czech Republic (48%)**, and **Bulgaria (48%)**.

Between 2010 and 2016, 19 countries saw inequality between poor and non-poor worsen with regard to housing costs. On average, **one** EU household in **ten** spent more than **40%** of its disposable income on housing in 2016, compared to **four** poor households out of **ten**.

**Age** and **nationality** are two major factors in relation to housing exclusion, with young people between 16 and 24 years old and non-EU citizens far more likely to experience housing cost overburden and overcrowding than the rest of the population. Young Europeans are increasingly being squeezed out of the housing market. Among EU citizens aged between 18 and 24 living below the poverty line, **43%** were overburdened by housing costs in Europe in 2016 – **four** times the population as a whole. The countries where this level is more than 50% are **Austria (50%)**, the **United Kingdom (50%)**, **Bulgaria (52%)**, the **Czech Republic (54%)**, **Sweden (54%)**, **Germany (57%)**, the **Netherlands (70%)**, **Denmark (87%)** and **Greece** where **90%** of young people in poverty are overburdened by housing costs.

It has been a year since the publication of the Second Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2017 and the systematic change we have been calling for has not materialised. Housing

exclusion is still a fast-growing problem, leading to increasingly severe saturation of support systems, increased pressure on emergency services and ultimately, homelessness.

A large part of the problem is the confusion policy makers seem to face in distinguishing between ‘accommodation’ and ‘housing,’ taking the latter to be a sensible temporary solution, when in fact it perpetuates precarious living situations and does not offer privacy or inclusion. Long-term housing is a prerequisite for well-being, recovery and social integration. It is a means - and not an end - to the protection of all social rights and personal development of an individual.

A consensus has been building for several years across Europe on a housing-led approach, which puts housing back in its rightful place, namely a fundamental right guaranteed by international and European treaties. Although this change has taken root in local and voluntary bodies, a systemic transformation – driven by real political will to reverse homelessness, and finally implement the international obligations of Member States regarding the right to housing – is nonetheless still missing. EU institutions also have a key role to play in facilitating and supporting this transition.

This report, in addition to being a repeated call for local, national and European authorities to act, is also a basis for action, recommending strategies to be adopted and pitfalls to be avoided for the implementation of integrated strategies to reduce and eradicate homelessness.

As a European-level organisation, we are calling on the EU institutions to work with Member States, regions, municipalities and stakeholders on the ground to:

- 1) Set a goal of eradicating homelessness in Europe by 2030**
- 2) Support homeless people across all relevant sectors**
- 3) Monitor progress in homelessness and housing exclusion at Member State level**
- 4) Defend the rights of homeless people**
- 5) Invest EU funds into eradicating homelessness**

It is through the mobilisation of a strong legal basis, political will and strategic planning that the objective of ending homelessness and successfully fighting housing exclusion will stop being a fantasy and become an imperative to protect human dignity and proof of the European social project’s credibility.

----- ENDS -----

For comment, please contact Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director  
| [freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org](mailto:freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org) | +32 (0)2 230 48 86

**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.