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New FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre report reveals homelessness and housing exclusion have reached crisis levels in majority of EU countries

On 21 March 2017, FEANTSA and the Fondation Abbé Pierre will publish the **Second Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2017** which reveals alarming evidence of rising homelessness across the majority of the European Union, as well as a dramatic picture of severe housing deprivation in almost all EU countries. Now, more than ever, is the time for Juncker's Commission to bridge the disconnect with its most vulnerable citizens and make full effective use of the policy instruments at its disposal.

Within a European Union that is struggling to reinvent itself, housing exclusion and homelessness are emerging as **huge challenges**. Using the latest available Eurostat/EU-SILC data, the Second Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2017 highlights a **housing exclusion state of emergency in Europe**.

This is an issue which affects all European countries, not just the ones struggling due to the financial crisis. Countries such as the UK and the Netherlands are among those whose situation has worsened since the First Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe. Indeed, the UK now ranks **20th out of 28**, with a broken housing market out of reach for poor and middle-class people. In Germany, 16% of people spend more than 40% of their income on housing (known as housing cost overburden) – **a situation second only to Greece**. In Romania, 1 out of 2 people live in overcrowded conditions and in Greece **all indicators are set to red** with 95% of poor Greeks¹ in housing cost overburden.

In all EU countries, young people are **more vulnerable** to prohibitive housing costs, overcrowding and severe housing deprivation than the rest of the population. For poor young people across Europe, the situation is becoming **unbearable**, with 65% in Germany, 78% in Denmark and 58% in the UK spending more than 40% of their disposable income on housing. **The average in the EU is 48%.**

In general, people living below the poverty threshold are **increasingly marginalised** by a private rental market that feeds off a systemic lack of affordable housing. The number of

¹ Poor categorised here as earning less than 60% of median income.

evictions has **increased dramatically** in the aftermath of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis with an apocalyptic situation in Greece. In all European countries, non-EU nationals are **far more likely** to face housing cost overburden and overcrowding than EU nationals.

Homelessness is rising in all countries, except Finland, and major cities such as London, Paris, Brussels, Dublin, Vienna, Athens, Warsaw and Barcelona are under strain. In London, the number of families in temporary accommodation has increased by 50% since 2010, and in Copenhagen, youth homelessness has increased by 75% since 2009. Since 2013, Warsaw saw an increase of 37% of people sleeping rough or in emergency shelters, and perhaps most shockingly of all, 1 in 70 people in Athens are now homeless, most have become so since 2011.

What can be done at the European level?

The tools required to deal with the challenges of housing exclusion and homelessness in Europe already exist. At European level, networks bringing together various entities – local, regional, and national governments, NGOs, civil society collectives, research bodies and European financial institutions – are actively committed to partnerships aiming to promote accessible housing for all that is sustainable for the future. Instruments established by the European Commission, such as the **Urban Agenda for the EU** or the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, can act as protectors for the implementation of the right to housing.

There is no shortage of inspiration, and good practice abounds: in Finland, long-term programmes for reducing homelessness (ongoing for 20 years) have proven their value, by focusing on the provision of permanent, affordable housing, and providing specialised support for the most vulnerable people. While other Member States have committed to this path, **clear European incentives** would give greater momentum to these **proven solutions** that deserve to be prioritised.

As the EU's post-2020 Agenda is drafted, **it is time for the Juncker Commission to prove it is not just all talk and no action.**

The EU and Member States should place the elimination of homelessness in the core of their social policy agendas. Responses to homelessness should be mainstreamed into the design and implementation of relevant sectoral policies including youth, gender, migration, and Roma inclusion. The EU and the Member States can and should act to enforce social rights.

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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.