

Brussels, 2nd December 2011

Subject: Towards an EU Homelessness Strategy

Dear Commissioner Andor and Mr Richelle,

As you know, a large majority of MEPs recently adopted a Resolution calling for an EU homelessness strategy.

The European Parliament thus sent out a strong political message that homelessness is an urgent issue, on which the EU must step up its co-ordination and support of Member States' policies. The onus is now on the European Commission to take this on board and transform this message into concrete action.

Homelessness continues to affect people in all EU Member States and is an unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights and dignity. It is one of the clearest indicators of deepening poverty and social exclusion. It has far reaching implications, both for the individuals who experience it and for the society at large.

Concrete progress on homelessness can be made in the framework of an ambitious, integrated, European homelessness strategy. The Parliament Resolution calls for a strategy with a specific focus on innovative 'housing-led' approaches, for links to the structural funds and for a framework for monitoring and reporting on the development of national and regional homelessness strategies.

The European Parliament is the latest and loudest of a number of European institutions which have given their support to an EU homelessness strategy: the Committee of the Regions produced an Own Initiative Opinion on Homelessness in 2010 and the EESC will publish an Opinion on Homelessness later this month, which recommends that the EU tackle the issue of homelessness with a particular focus on building permanent housing.

Each institution calls on the European Commission to adopt an ambitious approach to ending homelessness in Europe, and calls specifically for the development of a strategy. This would support Member States in developing effective strategies to fight homelessness – in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and as part of overarching European and National Strategies for social inclusion, within the reinforced Social OMC (social protection and social inclusion); and in line with the recommendations of the Jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness and the guidelines of the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010.

An EU homelessness strategy would facilitate the collection of data on homelessness, the elaboration of priorities for action and appropriate targets to end homelessness in the long term, as well as the sharing of knowledge and expertise to reach such targets.

The time is right and there is enough momentum at EU-level for the European Commission once again to show political courage in favour of the respect and promotion of fundamental human rights across the EU. The Commission could come up with a proposal for a strategy in time for the 2012 Annual Convention.

FEANTSA¹, ATD Fourth World², EAPN³, Eurodiaconia⁴, SMES-Europa⁵, Eurochild⁶, ENAR⁷, Emmaüs Europe⁸, The Salvation Army⁹, the European Federation of Food Banks¹⁰, Red Cross/EU Office¹¹, AGE Platform Europe¹² and PICUM¹³ look forward to further co-operation with the European Commission in order to follow-up the Resolution. We hope that we can count on you to build on the EU's previous work and embrace this opportunity to make real progress on homelessness in the EU and to have a concrete impact on the fight against poverty and towards participative and active inclusion in the EU. We look forward to meeting you to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,



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President, FEANTSA




Ludo Horemans
President, EAPN



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EU Delegate, ATD Fourth World



Heather Roy
Secretary General, Eurodiaconia



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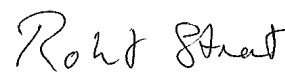
Jana Hainsworth
Secretary General, Eurochild



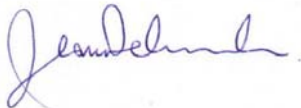
Michaël Privot
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Julio de la Granja
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International Secretary for Europe,
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¹ FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with 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.

² The International Movement ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that aims to eradicate persistent poverty and exclusion in the northern and southern hemispheres through partnerships between people in extreme poverty and other individuals and institutions.

³ The European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union, established in 1990.

⁴ Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe wide community of organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of solidarity, equality and justice.

⁵ SMES-EUROPA is a non-profit International Association (aisbl) operating at the intersection of mental health and social exclusion for improving mental, physical & social well-being, promoting human rights & access to social and health services, to citizenship and participation, to inclusion and solidarity in European Countries for people living in extreme social and health poverty conditions.

⁶ Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Its work is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have 109 Full Members and 36 Associate Members in 35 European countries.

⁷ The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of more than 700 NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and acts as the voice of the anti-racist movement in Europe. ENAR aims to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals.

⁸ Emmaüs Europe is a not-for-profit organisation bringing together all the Emmaüs structures in Europe and is one of the four continental regions of the Emmaüs Movement (Africa, America, Asia and Europe). It seeks to strengthen and preserve Emmaüs' identity in Europe with the aim of: fighting all forms of exclusion and social, racial, political, economic, religious, philosophical, ethnic and other kinds of discrimination; and working to ensure that the rights of the poorest members of society are recognised and used.

⁹ The Salvation Army is part of the universal Christian Church. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination. It works in 124 countries worldwide, including 32 countries in Europe.

¹⁰ Founded in 1986, the European Federation of FoodBanks (FEBA) brings together 240 food banks in Europe which fight daily against hunger and food waste. In 2010, the European Food Banks collected 359 960 tons of food, worth 992 M€, and distributed them to 4.9 million people in need, in partnership with 27 660 charities and social organisations.

¹¹ The Red Cross/EU Office represents the interests of National Red Cross Societies in the EU/EFTA and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). They are part of the global Red Cross Red Crescent movement and committed to provide humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of vulnerable people inside and outside the EU.

¹² AGE Platform Europe is a European network of around 165 organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most.

¹³ PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to promote respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe. PICUM also seeks dialogue with organisations and networks with similar concerns in other parts of the world.