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Stakeholders Unite in Call for EU to be Fair and Stand Up for Homeless People

Friday 19 May 2017 - Today over 350 people from the homeless sector and beyond gathered in the historic European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk, Poland for the FEANTSA Annual Policy Conference, co-organised with St Brother Albert's Aid Society and the City of Gdańsk, to discuss how to end the current homelessness crisis in the European Union.

The diversity of the participants, from frontline service providers, academics and advocates to local, national and European policy-makers, was reflected in a packed programme, where participants debated topics as diverse as migration, housing, youth, rights, employment, health, EU funds, addiction, disability and gender.

“Juncker’s Commission has promised us a more social and fair European Union and yet it is struggling to convince citizens that it has a genuine social agenda, particularly since the 2008 crisis. By standing up for homeless people, the EU can change that. The European Commission has just launched a European Pillar of Social Rights with a strong focus on this issue. Now is the time for EU policymakers to work in partnership with national governments, regions and cities to put an end to homelessness,” said Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director.

Inadequate policies to tackle homelessness at the local, national and European level have left millions of people behind. A recent report published by FEANTSA and the Fondation Abbé Pierre has revealed rising homelessness across the majority of the European Union, as well as a dramatic picture of housing deprivation in almost all EU countries.

The tools required to deal with these challenges already exist. The EU has a key role to play in delivering. Instruments like the European Pillar of Social Rights, which highlights the right to housing and shelter as basic human and social rights to which all citizens are entitled, the Urban Agenda’s Working Group on Homelessness, which emphasises the potential of cities in the fight to end homelessness, and structural funds can deliver much more.

“As the EU draws up its 2030 strategy, it must match the ambition of the UN 2030 Agenda and use the instruments at its disposal to reach out to homeless people in order to fulfil its pledge to “leave no one behind,” said Ian Tilling, FEANTSA Vice-President.

FEANTSA’s new campaign: ‘Be Fair Europe – Stand Up for Homeless People’, calls upon EU policy-makers to work with national governments, regions, cities and stakeholders to put an end to homelessness by making more effective use of policy instruments; supporting homeless people in all relevant sectoral policies; monitoring homelessness and benchmarking progress at Member State level; defending the rights of homeless people and investing EU funds in ending homelessness. We hope today’s conference will provide inspiration and good practices for both the actors in the social policy field and for the EU and Member States.

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