



FEANTSA

European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless

**Press release – 28th November 2013
For Immediate Release**

FEANTSA Opposes UK Prime Minister's Threat to Expel EU Migrant Rough Sleepers

On the 26th of November, UK Prime Minister David Cameron wrote an article in the Financial Times announcing a "crackdown" on EU immigration, vowing to restrict access to benefits and tighten the rules on free movement, as well as threatening the deportation of people sleeping rough or begging. FEANTSA opposes arbitrary and unlawful expulsions, calls for the respect of procedural safeguards acknowledged by the EU acquis on free movement and asks the EU and its Member States to urgently set clearer rules which would ensure that no EU citizen exercising the right to free movement be left destitute due to lack of adequate support services.

For a small number of EU citizens who have made use of their right to free movement, the journey into an imagined better life abroad has not been successful. In a number of European cities, such as London, Paris or Copenhagen, there is a significant proportion of EU migrants amongst the homeless population. Where access to basic support is denied by law, they are obliged to rely on relatives, to live in inadequate housing or to sleep rough.

Free movement is not only one of the founding pillars of the EU but also one of its most important achievements. Prime Minister David Cameron in his article seems to forget that there is evidence showing that EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 have had a positive impact on Member States' economies and have not led to serious disturbances in their labour markets. Moreover, according to a recent study on the impact of mobile EU citizens on national social security systems, EU citizens from other Member States use welfare benefits no more intensively than the host country's nationals.

David Cameron stated that *"if people are not here to work – if they are begging or sleeping rough – they will be removed. They will then be barred from re-entry for 12 months"*. We want to remind the UK Government that according to EU law, Union citizens can only be expelled if they become an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system or on grounds of public policy or public security. An expulsion measure should not be the automatic consequence of recourse to the social assistance system and the host Member State should first examine whether it is a case of temporary difficulties and take into account the duration of residence, the personal circumstances and the amount of aid granted in order to consider whether the beneficiary has become an unreasonable burden on its social assistance system and proceed with his or her expulsion. Moreover, before making an expulsion decision on the grounds of public policy or public security, the host Member State should take account of considerations such as how long the individual concerned has been residing on its territory, his/her age, state of health, family and economic situation, social and cultural integration into the host Member State and the extent of his/her links with the country of origin. Therefore, expelling people because they sleep rough or beg would be unlawful since they are not a burden on the social assistance system nor they are a threat to public security. Mr Cameron also fails to realise that some people who sleep rough do have work, but are unable to find accommodation because of the difficulty of accessing affordable housing, and suggests that people choose to come to the country in order to sleep rough. Homelessness is very rarely a choice and if migrants become homeless it is usually because of a failing in migration policy to provide them with adequate opportunities and remove barriers to their full integration into society.

FEANTSA opposes arbitrary expulsions and calls on the EU and its Member States to guarantee access to basic services and facilities, without imposing a threat of expulsion to those who are destitute and in need for emergency support. These basic services should include food, healthcare, accommodation and other homeless services, such as hygiene facilities, laundry and storage. FEANTSA also believes that a long-term solution can only be achieved through adequate social policies which include access to services that would help people experiencing a personal crisis to get back on the right track. This can only happen through collaboration between Member States and with the support of the EU.

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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. Established in 1989, FEANTSA represents today more than 150 organisations working with people experiencing homelessness in about 30 European countries which provide a wide range of services to people experiencing homelessness, including housing, health, employment support, social protection, rights and participation. It is the only major European network that focuses exclusively on homelessness at the European level. More information is available at: www.feantsa.org
2. Study on the impact of non-active EU mobile citizens on social security, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=10972&langId=en>
3. Study on Social security coverage of non-active persons moving to another Member State, http://www.tress-network.org/TRESSNEW/PUBLIC/EUROPEANREPORT/TRESS_AnalyticalReport-NonActives_FINAL.pdf
4. Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004L0038:en:NOT>
5. Communication from the Commission - Free movement of EU citizens and their families: Five actions to make a difference <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11152&langId=en>

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