Key messages from the Focus Ireland – FEANTSA event '1 million Homeless People Calling for Action', 24th November 2026

Focus Ireland and FEANTSA issue the following messages to the Informal meeting of Housing Ministers, Ministerial meeting on Combatting Homelessness and Meeting of the members of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH) that will be taking place in Dublin this week.

These messages come from a pre-event bringing together policymakers, experts, NGOs and people with experience of homelessness in Dublin on the morning of the 24th of November.

At the core of this event was three experts with lived experience of homelessness who conveyed their frustrations with the complicated EU political and funding processes and the need for the European policy developments to begin to have real impact the over 1 million people homeless across Europe. Martinho, the expert from Portugal, questioned where is the political accountability for all the promises that have never become reality?

Headline messages

1. More than 1 million people experience homelessness across Europe every day, and the numbers are rising in most countries. Europe's Affordable Housing Plan must deliver for them first and foremost. This is a matter of dignity and fairness.
2. Our sector stands ready to play its part in delivering the Affordable Housing Plan and ensuring that homeless people benefit from it. We will not lend our support to a Plan that invokes homelessness to justify measures that offer nothing for them.
3. Scaling up Housing First and housing-led solutions, in line with the Council Recommendation on Tackling Housing Exclusion & Homelessness, is our top priority for investment.
4. We strongly welcome the Council Recommendation. To deliver on it, we need to step up European cooperation by strengthening the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.

Investment in Affordable and Social Housing

1. FEANTSA would like to know how much of the billions of planned investments in housing will benefit homeless people or those at risk.
2. For secure tenancies at genuinely affordable rents for people on the lowest incomes, public investment is essential. All three of the experts by experience at our event agreed that making housing affordable and accessible to homeless people and those at risk was essential.
3. Public investment decisions should be guided by long-term value for money and quality of outcomes.
    - Vast sums of money are spent managing homelessness through temporary solutions. This is expensive and can be a lucrative business.
    - Governments should invest more in housing homeless people compared to short-term fixes.

4. Private investment has a role to play, but attracting capital cannot become the overriding policy objective.
    - Financial returns must not come at the expense of social purpose, affordability, security of tenure, or outcomes.
    - Public money should not be wasted de-risking investments that don't serve clear policy goals.
5. We strongly welcome the promise that the Pan-European Investment Platform will have a dedicated homelessness workstream. The PEIP must help channel public, private, repayable and non-repayable investment where it's most needed. Low rents and strong social obligations are unappealing to investors. Yet they offer high social impact and long-term sustainability. The added value of the EU should be to channel investment where markets alone will not deliver.
6. We appreciate the work of the European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank in deploying technical assistance for housing projects that address homelessness. This should be scaled up in the years ahead.
7. Grants matter as well as loans and equity. We strongly support the European Parliament's proposal to earmark 5% of the future ESF+ for tackling homelessness.
8. It is nonetheless important to keep the role of European money in proportion. Most of the investment needed to tackle homelessness will have to come from the national, regional and local level. EU funding and finance can be especially valuable for demonstrating innovative approaches, supporting reforms, building capacity, and helping improve policies and services.
9. The establishment of France's first national investment hub for affordable and social housing, which includes DIHAL, the public authority responsible for homelessness policy, is an encouraging development. Integrating homelessness stakeholders into housing investment structures should become standard practice across Europe.
10. Success should ultimately be measured not by the volume of investment mobilised, but by extent of homelessness and housing exclusion.

Increasing Social and Affordable Housing Supply:

1. Building 650,000 additional homes each year will mean little if those in the greatest need cannot access them. We therefore welcome the Council Recommendation's call for increasing the supply of social and affordable housing and for person-centred, housing led approaches to homelessness, including Housing First.
2. Housing First is a very effective model for tackling homelessness. We know it works. We know that we need a lot more of it. The Affordable Housing Plan can and should help scale up Housing First. This would show that the European Commission is serious about reaching the 'most affected' by the housing crisis.
3. We welcome the Commission's intention to establish a working group on Housing First in the Housing Alliance. At our Dublin event yesterday, Matthew Baldwin, head of the EU Commission's Taskforce on Housing, acknowledged the importance of Housing First as a proven game changer and for its cost effectiveness. In the future, we would like the

Commission to go further and establish a Housing First Academy, like the NEB Academy for the construction sector, to train and support the housing, homelessness and local government workforce to implement Housing First at scale

4. Increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is necessary, but it is not sufficient to end homelessness. We must ensure that the homes that are genuinely affordable, accessible, and suitable for people experiencing or threatened by homelessness. At our Dublin event yesterday, our policy experts reflected on the need for not just building social housing, but to examine how it's allocated, how affordable it is, how accessible it is.
5. Social housing remains Europe's most proven tool for meeting unmet housing need. We need more of it, and no country can afford a net loss of social housing stock. Non-profit, public and social housing must be at the heart of the Affordable Housing Plan. So far, it has not been given the prominence it deserves. The uncomfortable truth is that much of what is labelled "affordable housing" is simply unaffordable and inaccessible for poor and vulnerable households – amongst whom housing exclusion and homelessness are overwhelmingly concentrated.
6. Further work is needed to remove the barriers that prevent people experiencing homelessness from accessing social housing. These can include restrictive allocation systems and eligibility criteria, long waiting times, lack of right-size and right-location units, and a lack of supportive social services.
7. The private sector has a role to play. It's where most poor people live, and many people enter homelessness from there. Public policy should create the conditions that enable this sector to contribute to meeting housing needs.
8. No sector should receive a blank cheque simply for producing more housing units. Housing supply is a means to an end: ensuring that everyone has access to adequate housing.
9. Housing production targets should be based on assessment of housing needs, including the number of homeless households.
10. Housing supply must be complemented by other essential policy levers, including income support, fair allocation systems, tenancy regulation, and support services. These are the foundations of public housing policy. It would be a mistake to reduce housing policy to enabling supply.

European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH)

1. Since its launch in 2021, EPOCH has successfully contributed to a shared European agenda on homelessness. It is remarkable and impressive that European institutions, MS and stakeholders have come to a consensus about the need to fight homelessness through person-centred, housing-led policies. The adoption of the Council Recommendation marks a huge step forward in this journey.
2. We need to acknowledge that we are way off track on ending homelessness. Doing so by 2030 in any EU country looks unrealistic at this stage. Faced with that reality, the immediate priority must be to turn the tide on rising homelessness, and to get on the right trajectory to end it.

3. Whilst EPOCH has been successful in setting priorities and generating knowledge, it has yet to become a real motor of progress. That is the next challenge. We must turn the Recommendation into an implementation agenda built around monitoring, funding, learning and mainstreaming. This requires a robust, well-resourced EPOCH. It is not enough to say to MS – you agreed on a recommendation now get on and deliver. We need to work on implementation together and ensure that EU cooperation serves progress.
4. Looking forward, we see two potential pitfalls for implementing the recommendation:
    - Homelessness must not get lost in the wider issue of housing exclusion. We must be vigilant about this because we know the most excluded often get left behind.
    - We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. The Recommendation should not be used to re-enforce a staircase whereby temporary accommodation is an obligatory stop on the way to housing.
5. At the EPOCH plenary meeting, the European Commission will present a work plan until 2030. We are hoping for a practical, realistic set of activities that support better policies and services in the MS. Such a work plan will need to be properly resourced.
6. A regular European monitoring report on what Member States are doing and how homelessness is evolving is an essential next step. We call for a baseline study in 2027 to initiate this
7. A biennial EPOCH Ministerial Meeting is important to maintain political momentum. The initiative of the Irish Presidency to link this to an Informal Housing Ministers meeting is very positive and could become a model to follow in the future.
8. A key priority for EPOCH in the year ahead should be to promote the effective use of EU funding opportunities under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, enabling Member States to programme homelessness-related investments and reforms in their National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs*)*
9. The EU should have a more joined up approach to homelessness – ensuring that all relevant EU policies contribute to the goals of the Recommendation. A regular meeting of all relevant Commissioners would help ensure this.
10. Homeless people should have a stronger voice in EPOCH in the future – not tokenistic consultation but informed, supported, sustainable participation