

## **FEANTSA Reaction**

### **Youth Employment Support: A Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation**

Today FEANTSA welcomes the European Commission's announcement on the 'Youth Employment Support: A Bridge to Jobs' package, which extends the reach of the European Youth Guarantee to ensure young people have access to employment, training and education within four months of a request.

Young people at risk of homelessness have been hit hard by the economic impact of the public health crisis. Young people coming into homeless services are often in precarious employment with zero-hour contracts and are the first to have their jobs and incomes cut. Unable to pay rent and without a family or community to support them, the global pandemic has carved out a direct pathway into homelessness for more vulnerable young people.

This week's announcement of a renewed focus on supporting young people who are unemployed is particularly welcome given that it specifically targets vulnerable and marginalised youth. This is a welcome development considering that the EU Court of Auditors has found that the monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Guarantee lacked a robust system to ensure vulnerable youth could access European employment supports.

Across Europe homeless young people experience multiple barriers to accessing the labour market, apprenticeships, training, and education; a situation made no easier by their unintentional exclusion from European employment supports. To date the youth guarantee has failed to support the most vulnerable youth who are furthest removed from the labour market and are arguably the most in need of EU support. Reaching these young people requires specific systems with the capacity to actively engage vulnerable youth. FEANTSA urges the European Commission to ensure this new policy measure can be accessed by young people experiencing homelessness.

FEANTSA and our members are ready to support the uptake of the 'Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs' package. An estimated 30% of the homeless population are under the age of 30. Research shows that homelessness occurring in youth can often become episodic and repeat over a person's lifetime. The interventions included in this package are, therefore, critical to supporting young people to exit homelessness with the skills, education, and employment opportunities necessary to prevent a repeat later in life. In short, this policy intervention, if implemented effectively, has the capacity to both reduce youth unemployment and prevent homelessness in the future.

FEANTSA's members work every day with vulnerable young people and are skilled in working with some of the hardest to reach young people who often require more intense one-to-one supports. Homeless services provide motivational interviewing, career counselling, vocational training, coaching, and mentoring to support

homeless youth into the labour market and can contribute this expertise to the European Commission in designing the implementation of the Bridge to Jobs.

FEANTSA's members are in a position to partner with member states at national and local level to identify suitable young people experiencing homelessness who can benefit from this new scheme. The European Commission has stressed that no young person should enter the labour market without the skills for the digital era, however equally important is ensuring any young person going back to the labour market has access to housing. Homeless services are essential partners for ensuring the social inclusion and needs of a young person are met, needs which underpin their effective reintegration into the labour market.

FEANTSA is ready to share best practices for employment, vocational, training, and education programmes with the European Commission and Member States. These programmes can be piloted and scaled to support young people experiencing homelessness across Europe.

In the area of vocational training and apprenticeships, FEANTSA's expertise and membership can contribute to designing systems that prevent discrimination against young people and promote the active inclusion of youth who have, so far, typically been left behind, such as homeless youth.

FEANTSA's broadening membership now includes cities. Cities are well placed to support and facilitate the call for local catalysts for apprenticeships at city level. Meanwhile, our members delivering homeless services can actively engage in social dialogue to ensure policies aimed to assisting the Alliance for Apprenticeships do not leave young people behind, particularly those experiencing homelessness.

Regarding the role of the social economy in helping young people back to work, FEANTSA can play an active role in disseminating practices which demonstrate the value of social enterprises for the homeless sector while also supporting young people to exit homelessness.

Work on youth homelessness in has shifted in approach in recent years, from managing youth homelessness to preventing it. The expertise garnered in this area can also be fed back into the European Commission's plans to identify at risk youth and tackle issues faced by early school and education leavers, a system which is already in place with organisations working on youth homelessness.

The last economic crisis led to increases in youth homelessness across Europe. We have learnt what works and does not in preventing and ending youth homelessness and supporting young people back into the labour market. FEANTSA and our members are ready to support the European Commission and Member States in delivering the Youth Employment Support: A Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation to ensure homeless youth are not forgotten.