

FEANTSA STATEMENT

04 March 2021

EU's "social rulebook" confirms launch of European Platform on Combating Homelessness but misses opportunity to set homelessness target

FEANTSA's reaction to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

ABOUT FEANTSA

FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. We are the only European NGO focusing exclusively on the fight against homelessness. Our goal is an end to homelessness in Europe. We have over 120 member organisations from 28 countries. Our members are predominantly NGOs working with homeless people, but also include other stakeholders involved in the fight against homelessness such as public authorities, social housing providers, foundations, and research entities.

FEANTSA's reaction to the Action Plan

On the 4th of March, the European Commission published the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. The Action Plan is the much-anticipated follow-up to the 2017 proclamation in Gothenburg where the EU institutions committed to deliver on the Pillar of Social Rights. The Action Plan, also referred to as the "new social rulebook", sets 3 major political targets and a handful of sub-targets for the period up until 2030, and includes a list of concrete actions to help Member States deliver on the Pillar's 20 Principles.

FEANTSA **welcomes the announced launch of the European Platform on Combating Homelessness in the second quarter of this year.** It is a clear affirmation of the European Commission's commitment to put the fight against homelessness, in line with the original *principle 19 on Housing and assistance for the homeless*, high on the social agenda.

As the economic impact of the pandemic-induced crisis gathers pace, there is a risk of a substantial increase in homelessness, which had already been rising in the majority of EU Member States preceding the crisis.

Strengthened EU-level cooperation could help Member States to address homelessness effectively. Moreover, the proposed European Platform could become a motor for progress in tackling homelessness in the EU Member States. To this end, however, the Platform needs to

ensure that efficient and innovative approaches are not only identified and shared but also promoted, scaled, and implemented. It should aim to build the knowledge base for effective, integrated and rights-based homeless policies and services and improve comparative monitoring.

In the Communication, the Commission strongly appeals to stakeholders to support the implementation of the Action Plan. FEANTSA is ready to meet the Commission in its ambition and to play its part to support implementation, particularly in the framework of the upcoming European Platform on Combating Homelessness and in close cooperation with the EU institutions and other key stakeholders.

The Commission rightly considers homelessness an urgent social problem and expresses concern about the 700,000 people who sleep rough or in a homeless shelter on any given night in the EU area – 70% more than 10 years ago. The Commission even refers to the call of many stakeholders for a European target to end homelessness in the EU by 2030. One of these ‘stakeholders’, actually an important EU decision-making body, is the European Parliament which has called repeatedly for such a target. **It is therefore regrettable that no political commitment or target related to homelessness has been included in the Action Plan** as a sub-target under the headline target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 15 million by 2030.

If homeless people are not to be overlooked in the implementation of the Action Plan, a clear target on ending homelessness is required. It is the only way to make the EU and the Member States live up to their commitments in the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals, to “leave no one behind”, including the most vulnerable. We count on the Member States and the Portuguese Presidency of the EU to show courage and commit to ending homelessness by 2030 at the Social Summit in Porto.