

16 good practices to support mobile EU citizens in homelessness

Mobile EU citizens are overrepresented in the homeless populations in numerous cities in Europe, a situation FEANTSA has monitored over the last decade. As part of our work in this area, FEANTSA launched a [booklet of 16 good practices](#) for supporting mobile EU citizens in homelessness. These initiatives cover a wide range of areas, from housing and employment to healthcare, access to welfare benefits, legal counselling, or advocacy for the rights of destitute mobile EU citizens.

On the **18th of November 2021**, an online event was hosted by FEANTSA with the participation of three guest speakers - **Wayne Stanley (Head of Policy at Simon Community in Ireland and FEANTSA vice president)**, **Nikita Sanaullah (Policy Advisor – Social Affairs at Eurocities)** and **Slavka Eley (Head of the Governance Unit, the European Labour Authority)** and 13 of the 16 organisations featured in the good practices booklet:

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Spain), Norway Bymission (Norway), NOAH (UK), Vvary (Finland), Kompasset Kirkens Korshaer (Denmark), Frostschutzengel (Germany), Hope Housing (UK), Médecins du Monde (Sweden), Public Interest Law Centre (UK), neunerhaus (Austria), Bischof-Hermann-Stiftung (Germany) and DIOGENES (Belgium) and Stockholms Stadsmission (Sweden).

The event was opened by FEANTSA team who explained the objective of the booklet and of the meeting: to scale-up existing good practices of services for destitute mobile EU citizens, and to involve local authorities to a higher extent in supporting those mobile EU citizens in need. The meeting was a first step in disseminating information about the good practices and encouraging other organisations to implement activities aimed at supporting homeless mobile EU citizens.

The plenary session was opened with a keynote speech from **Wayne Stanley** (who also acted as chair of this session), describing the history of FEANTSA's work in relation to free movement. He explained this issue started to gain relevance within FEANTSA after the 2008 financial crisis, when many homelessness organisations in Western Europe saw a significant increase of mobile EU citizens requesting their services. He mentioned as well that in many European cities, migrants – including from other EU countries – continue to be disproportionately represented in the homeless population, compared to the overall percentage of migrants in that same country or city. This could be explained by the vulnerabilities faced by many migrants in their journeys, which can lead to a crisis and ultimately to homelessness. After that, he underlined the important role of FEANTSA's migration cluster both in providing mutual learning and in advocating for the rights of EU citizens who exercise their right to free movement.

The second speaker of this session was **Nikita Sanaullah** who introduced the participants to the work implemented by Eurocities in the area of homelessness, with a specific focus on mobile EU citizens. Cities consider destitute mobile EU citizens as one of the most vulnerable groups among Roma communities, and they make a point of always including Roma mobile EU citizens in the discussion regarding their needs. Cities also cited discrimination as the number one factor leading to lack of access to housing, followed by economic reasons. Nikita described two projects implemented by the cities of Toulouse and Lyon with a focus on mobile EU citizens, where the authorities worked to moving mobile EU citizens out of informal living places and into adequate housing.

Mrs. **Slavka Eley** from the European Labour Authority (ELA) has presented the mandate of ELA and their recent activities. ELA was established in 2019 and has recently set its base in Bratislava, Slovakia. The mission of this agency is to help ensure that EU rules on labour mobility and social security coordination are enforced in a fair, simple, and effective way, so it is easier for citizens and businesses to reap the benefits of the internal market. Mrs. Slavka also mentioned ELA recent activities on labour inspections, the directive on posting workers, the Action plan on Seasonal Workers or a Mapping exercise on impacts of COVID 19 on labour mobility.



Following the introductory plenary session, the participants at the event split into two breakout rooms where they heard from the organisations featured in the good practices booklet.

Breakout session number one heard from the organisations **Norway Bymission (Norway)**, **Frostschutzengel (Germany)**, **Médécins du Monde (Sweden)**, **Public Interest Law Centre (UK)**, **neunerhaus (Austria)**, **Bischof-Hermann-Stiftung (Germany)** and **Vvary (Finland)**. The main issues raised were the following ones:

- **The importance of accompaniment and counselling from independent NGOs** was underlined, which are better placed than municipalities to provide individualised support. It is also essential for mobile EU citizens to access emergency shelter and basic services (education, healthcare, etc.) from the very start of their stay in another Member State. Additionally, it was agreed that when working with people in destitution, there is a need for a **human rights approach**, acknowledging how resourceful are mobile EU citizens and that they take their decisions based on their own rationality.
- In the case of the UK, **Benjamin Morgan from PILC** explained that **the situation for destitute mobile EU citizens was already dire even before Brexit**. This was the result of several changes in the social security laws, made to restrict the access for mobile EU citizens (most of them coming from Central and Eastern European countries) to welfare benefits. Brexit only exacerbated this situation and the exploitation of vulnerable EU migrants in the labour market. Also, the many failures of the Settlement Scheme (the programme to regularise EU migrants in the UK after Brexit) pushed many destitute mobile EU citizens into being undocumented.
- Regarding access to healthcare for mobile EU citizens in homelessness, **Paula Reid from neunerhaus (Austria)** and **Eliot Wieslander from Médécins du Monde (Sweden)** stressed that **health systems should not exclude anyone on the basis of their residency or insurance status**. Paula Reid also shared how useful was to have remote video interpretation and low-threshold social work in their health setting, which helps people navigating complex welfare and health systems.

In *breakout session number two* the organisations who presented their work were **Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Spain)**, **NOAH (UK)**, **Kompasset Kirkens Korshaer (Denmark)**, **Hope Housing (UK)**, **DIOGENES (Belgium)** and **Stockholms Stadsmission (Sweden)**. After each organisation presented their activities and the focus of their work, an exchange with the attendees took place. The main topics of discussion and issues raised by the attendees in the second breakout room were related to:

- The **situation of Roma communities** and their specific challenges; why is there a focus on Roma among mobile EU citizens and what type of support measures are needed. **Inés Cedrón at FSG** explained that in their work with Roma communities from Spain as well as mobile EU citizens, what made a difference was to be flexible in their approach and to establish a relation of trust between the organisation and the beneficiaries. The issue of discrimination of Roma in relation to the poverty these communities experience was also discussed.
- **Access to shelter and working in collaboration with the public authorities in the cities**. The pros and cons of the collaboration with the cities have been discussed. **Helen Syrup at Hope Housing** explained about their collaboration with the authorities in implementing the “Everyone in Scheme” in Bradford (UK).
- **Counselling for accessing jobs** has been another topic of discussion. Paul Prosser from NOAH Enterprise described their work in this area and mentioned a new recruitment procedure that will be implemented under the name of “Rainbow recruitment” in Luton (UK). Rainbow Recruitment offers an inclusive and diverse service that is committed to creating a bridge between proven talent and socially responsible employers – more information can be found on the webpage of NOAH: <https://noahenterprise.org/rainbow-recruitment/>
- **There is a need to advocate for increasing accountability of representatives of sending countries abroad**. The issue of difficulties in identifying partners from sending countries or among their official representatives in host MS was raised. It was said it is difficult to get support even in cases where people need help for obtaining basic official documents, especially with hard-to-reach embassies like the Romanian one in several Member States/cities. There is also a lack of connection with organisations from countries where people might wish to return, to ensure their safe arrival and take over at destination. The idea of organising visits between social workers from different countries was explored in order to improve this type of collaboration.

After the conversations in separate groups, all participants went back to the plenary room, where final remarks and further possibilities of collaboration were agreed.



Useful links shared during the call:

- [“The Fiscal Impact of Immigration on The UK”](#)
- [“Is migration good for the economy?”](#)
- [“CITY GUIDELINES: Moving Roma people out of camps: From planning and evacuation to preventing the formation of a new camp”](#)
- [Public Interest Law Centre Reports](#)

This event is part of the ongoing work by [FEANTSA](#) on the link between EU migration and homelessness, which is currently undertaken within the framework of the [PRODEC](#) project (Protecting the Rights of Destitute Mobile EU citizens). This project is supported financially by [EPIM](#), the European Programme for Integration and Migration.