



FEANTSA

Bergamo Declaration

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Poverty has been increasing since the launch of the Europe 2020 agenda. Indeed, since its adoption in 2010, 6 million more people are now living in poverty and social exclusion in the European Union (EU). The EU has drifted away from the target it set itself in 2010 of lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

Rising poverty has also led to a dramatic rise in homelessness and the number of people threatened by eviction in the majority of EU Member States.

Homelessness is a pressing social challenge throughout the EU. It denies people access to fundamental rights and incurs significant societal costs. In the context of its commitment to fighting poverty and social exclusion, the EU plays an important role in supporting Member States to develop and maintain strategies to combat homelessness.

FEANTSA gathered around 450 practitioners and activists on homelessness at its 2014 Policy Conference "Confronting homelessness in the EU" held in Bergamo, Italy. Conference participants discussed a wide range of challenges in the fight against homelessness at European level and beyond, as well as the solutions to homelessness that exist, some of them new and innovative.

With a new European Commission and European Parliament, the European Union is at a turning point. In her recent inaugural hearing, Commissioner-elect for Social Affairs, Employment and Inclusion, Marianne Thyssen said that homelessness was obviously a priority for her. FEANTSA welcomes this recognition of the importance of homelessness.

FEANTSA therefore urges the EU and its Member States (MS) to implement innovative and more effective approaches in the fight against homelessness:

1. The EU and MS should design integrated action plans on all policy levels to deal with the rise in homelessness and evictions.
2. They should tackle the rising proportion of EU-migrants among people who are homeless. While maintaining the right to free movement of EU citizens, migration policy must be renewed to provide greater security for EU citizens who have migrated to other Member States.
3. They should accept that poverty and homelessness are not lifestyle choices and that people should not be punished or criminalised for their destitution.
4. There should be more support for homeless people and those threatened by eviction in housing policy - including using eviction prevention schemes and access to housing, for example through the proven programme "Housing First", as keys to reducing homelessness.
5. The EU – through Eurostat – and MS should collect data on homelessness in order to inform effective homelessness strategies.
6. The EU and MS should take account of the legal and rights-based dimension of homelessness.
7. The EU and MS should make use of the Structural Funds in efforts to combat homelessness.

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