



FEANTSA

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

300 Experts Connect Communities to Europe and Combat Homelessness

Today, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) held a policy conference in Paris. Taking place at the City Hall, it brought together 300 practitioners from across Europe and the world to discuss how to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The conference, “Homelessness, A Local Phenomenon with a European Dimension—Key Steps to Connect Communities to Europe” brought together a wide range of experts: NGOs, researchers, Ministries, local government, elected representatives, people with experience of homelessness, foundations, and housing and health sector representatives.

Participants discussed good practice and explored the role of Europe in fighting homelessness. The key question addressed was how to connect different levels - local, regional, national and European – in order to make a decisive impact on homelessness.

As in much of the EU, homelessness is a major challenge in France. Approximately 3.6 million people face homelessness or housing exclusion. The number of homeless people has increased by 50% since 2001. Stakeholders at all levels are working to address this situation. Paris has made “*Grande Exclusion*” a major priority and launched a new five-year action plan this year. A national social experimentation called ‘*Un Chez Soi d’Abord*’ is achieving impressive results in tackling homelessness for those with the most complex health and support needs, using a model called Housing First. This conference provided an opportunity to consider the French situation from a European perspective and to reflect jointly on challenges and commitments for the future.

Key themes included: free movement and homelessness; national homelessness strategies; making use of the EU’s structural and investment funds; public financing models; international legal instruments; youth homelessness; domestic violence; data; housing markets; rough sleeping; healthcare and Housing First.

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, told conference participants that ‘a triple A social rating’ was a ‘very clear priority’ for the European Commission. It is ‘an ambition, indeed a commitment, that the economic strengthening of our Union goes hand in hand with improving people’s lives,’ said the Commissioner.

‘At a time when the Commission is considering its future social policy orientation, this conference showed how vital it is to ensure that ‘Social Europe’ reaches the most vulnerable - people who are homeless’ said Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director.

Pre-conference visits allowed participants to get familiar with the realities of tackling homelessness in Paris yesterday. A range of side meetings and networking opportunities were organized around the conference.

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For comment, please contact Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org or +32 2 538 66 69

Notes for Editors:

1. FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. www.feantsa.org
2. Paris Conference Page <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article4102&lang=en>