



FEANTSA
Flash Newsletter
March 2012

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Don't forget to check our [Events Calendar](#) for upcoming events on homelessness.

FEANTSA News

- ▶ [Call for Papers – 7th European Research Conference on Homelessness](#) [02/04/2012]
The 7th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe is entitled “Access to Housing for Homeless People in Europe”, and will take place in York, UK, on the 21st September 2012. The [Call for Papers](#) is now available.
- ▶ [Call for Papers – European Journal of Homelessness: Open Edition on Aspects of Homelessness in Europe](#) [02/04/2012]
The latest [call for papers](#) for the European Journal of Homelessness asks for contributions that analyse and

interpret homelessness policies and practices in Europe. Articles that explicitly address cross-national issues are particularly encouraged. To be considered for inclusion in this open edition of the Journal, papers must be submitted to Dr. Eoin O'Sullivan (tosullvn@tcd.ie) by the 7th of April 2012.

► **European Seminar on Local Homelessness Strategies 2012** [02/04/2012]

Registrations are open for this year's [seminar](#) (co-hosted with HABITACT and the EU Committee of the Regions) focusing on funding strategies and building the case for homelessness, taking place on the 8th June 2012 in Brussels. The [full programme](#) is now available.

► **European Workshop on Housing First** [02/04/2012]

On Friday 23rd March 2012, FEANTSA co-organised a workshop with the French Permanent Representation to the EU on "Housing First: A Key Element of European Homelessness Strategies".

Around 50 people took part in the day's discussions and exchanges. The participants were mostly policy-makers responsible for homelessness at national or regional level, who are involved in an informal ministries' forum co-ordinated by FEANTSA. This forum facilitates European-level mutual learning and transnational exchange on national and regional homelessness policies. A number of researchers, NGOs, EU-level policy-makers and other stakeholders also participated. The workshop addressed two issues: mutual learning and exchange on the Housing First model and its applicability in different EU contexts; the role of the EU in supporting Member States to fight homelessness.

The French government presented a non-paper calling for an EU homelessness strategy with a strong focus on housing-led approaches.

All of the workshop outcomes are available [online](#).

► **FEANTSA has an Updated Facebook Page** [02/04/2012]

FEANTSA has reorganized its Facebook page, which has a new web address: www.facebook.com/FEANTSA

► **Housing Rights Watch Conference – Registrations Open** [02/04/2012]

Housing Rights Watch invite you to [register](#) for the [Housing Rights Watch Conference](#), "Contemporary Housing Issues in a Changing Europe", which will be held in Galway, Ireland on the 20th and 21st April, 2012. Information is also available in [French](#). Readers are encouraged to circulate the conference information to their own networks.

News from the European Union

► **Annual Growth Survey 2012** [02/04/2012]

The European Commission has presented its 2012 [Annual Growth Survey](#), of which the key message is that Member States have not done enough to implement the measures they have committed to at EU level. The survey calls for the EU and Member States to focus on five priorities: pursuing differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation; restoring normal lending to the economy; promoting growth and competitiveness; tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; and modernising public administration. Homelessness is referred to under "protecting the vulnerable". In the Annex to the survey, the [Progress Report](#) on the Europe 2020 Strategy, strong reference is made to housing affordability.

► **Eurobarometer Report on the EU2020 Strategy** [02/04/2012]

The Autumn 2011 Standard [Eurobarometer](#) analyses public opinion of the Europe 2020 strategy, using four indicators. Firstly, Europeans are asked about the importance they give to the seven flagship initiatives set out by the European Commission. Secondly, they are asked how realistic they think the targets are. Then they are asked to identify priorities among 21 measures relating to the seven flagship initiatives. Finally, once aware of the Europe 2020 strategy targets and proposals, Europeans are asked to say whether they think that the European Union is taking the right or the wrong steps to emerge from the crisis and meet new global challenges.

► **European Commission Communication:** [02/04/2012]

The European Commission recently adopted a series of texts on services of general interest (SGI): a draft directive on concessions, the "Almunia package" on State Aid, a draft for new directives on public procurement and a Communication entitled "[A Quality Framework for Services of General Interest in Europe](#)". This Communication is presented as a coherence framework for all the other provisions. It reexamines the definition of European concepts (SGI, Services of General Economic Interest, Social Services of General Interest), then presents the modifications to the institutional framework brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, before defining the "quality framework" which is composed of three strands: clarity and enhanced legal certainty, the guarantee of access to essential services and the promotion of quality.

► **European Commission Proposes One Programming Tool for All Structural Funds** [02/04/2012]

In order to help Member States with their preparations for the next Structural Funds programming period the European Commission has decided on a "[Common Strategic Framework](#)" intended to help in setting clear investment priorities for the next financial planning period from 2014 until 2020 in Member States and their regions. The Framework will make it easier to combine various funds to maximise the impact of EU investment. FEANTSA has prepared a [statement](#) on the new framework.

► **European Commission: Employment and Social Policies "Key to Europe's Job-Rich Recovery"** [02/04/2012]

The first annual review of Employment and Social Developments in Europe [published](#) by the European Commission [underlines](#) that a mix of employment and social policies is necessary to ensure a long-term job-rich recovery in the current climate of fiscal consolidation and bleak economic outlook.

► **Finland Launches Phase Two of Programme to Eliminate Long-Term Homelessness** [02/04/2012]

Finland is launching the second phase of its programme to eliminate long-term homelessness. The first phase, that ran from 2008-2011 brought positive results: quantitative targets set for the programme are about to be met, and the goal of halving homelessness will be achieved in seven of the programme cities. A background [memorandum](#) and a [summary](#) of the proposal for the next phase of the programme exist in English.

► **Food Aid Programme Temporarily Extended** [02/04/2012]

The EU "Food for the needy" programme will continue to supply food to the EU's most deprived citizens for two more years, thanks to a European Parliament [rescue plan](#). The programme, on which 18 million of the EU's poorest people in 20 Member States rely, will run until the end of 2013.

► **HABITACT Peer Review in Ghent** [02/04/2012]

The 2012 HABITACT Peer Review took place in the City of Ghent (Belgium) on 8th-9th March 2012. The Peer Review included a presentation of Ghent's homeless policy, with a special focus on the housing dimensions of the policy. This was supported by site visits to see the policy in practice and a panel discussion about social

rental agencies with the presence of a landlord, a tenant, and a housing advisor. As well as the peer participation of local policy-makers in 14 different cities, the European discussions included a closer look at the work of the Fondazione Casa in Lucca (Italy) with the private rental market, the homelessness prevention work of Dudley local council (UK), the legal work of the AIRE centre (London) on access to social and housing assistance for EU migrants, a reflection from Esch-sur-Alzette local council (Luxembourg) on de-institutionalisation of homelessness services, homelessness mapping methods in Gothenburg city (Sweden), and the potential of reconvertng empty housing estates into social housing for vulnerable groups in Ireland.

All meeting documents, including podcasts of the presentations, are available in the members' area of the HABITACT website. Hard copies of the Ghent Peer Review discussion paper can be ordered, as can the other discussion papers in the HABITACT [peer review series](#).

► **Housing First Europe Experimentation Project Website Online** [02/04/2012]

Housing First Europe is a Social Experimentation project funded in the framework of the PROGRESS programme of the European Commission. It aims at evaluation and mutual learning of local Housing First projects in ten European cities. The projects provide homeless people with complex needs immediate access to long-term, self-contained housing and intensive support. The [website](#) has just been launched.

► **SPC 2012 Work Programme** [02/04/2012]

The Social Protection Committee, the vehicle for cooperative exchange between Member States and the European Commission on social inclusion, health care and long-term care, has published its 2012 Work Programme. 2012 will be the first year in which the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) is used in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. Tackling homelessness and housing exclusion is included in the [work programme](#). It is stated that "the SPC will consider how the OMC can best contribute to a step-up in the attention given to this issue".

News from our Members

► **Denmark: Evaluation of Poverty Walks** [02/04/2012]

Projekt Udenfor has produced a [report](#) evaluating the "Poverty Walks", a scheme that employs homeless people as tour guides, specifically focusing on the practical work, ethical considerations and challenges in relation to the remuneration of the guides.

► **UK: Preventing Elderly Homelessness** [02/04/2012]

Older people affected by housing issues during the crisis can now get help from Shelter Cymru, FEANTSA member in Wales. It has launched a project aimed to help improve the lives of the over-50s. Shelter Cymru's "Cyngor 50+ Advice" project aims to prevent homelessness in the older generation, through a new volunteer advice scheme. A key part of the project will involve training volunteers to be peer advisors.

► **UK: Homeless People in Scotland Encouraged to Vote** [02/04/2012]

Housing and homeless charity Shelter Scotland and the Scottish Electoral Commission has launched a campaign urging homeless people to register to vote, and encouraging those living in temporary accommodation and people who are renting properties to put their names on the electoral roll. Research last year found that only 56% of those living in rented accommodation in Scotland were registered to vote, compared to 88% of owner-occupiers. People with no fixed address are still entitled to vote in the elections, as long as they are aged over 18 and a UK Commonwealth or European Union citizen. Homeless people can register using a temporary address, such as a hostel, or can alternatively make a "declaration of a local connection" – a statement to their local electoral office stating where they spend most of their time.

Homelessness in the Headlines

► **Austria: Banning Begging – Unconstitutional?** [02/04/2012]

The Austrian Constitutional Court is to decide whether or not the prohibition of begging is against the Austrian constitution. This follows a ban on begging in Vienna and Upper Austria. The Austrian [Beggars' Rights Lobby](#) organised demonstrations to raise awareness about the complexity of begging and to call for the withdrawal of all anti-begging legislations. The demonstrators used the slogans "I don't want to beg, but I have to risk it" and "Fight poverty instead of criminalising begging".

► **Belgium: Closure of Emergency Winter Shelters; Minister Recognises Lack of Coordination** [02/04/2012]

The emergency shelters opened for the winter in Belgium are to close again at the end of March. The Secretary of State for Social Integration and the Fight Against Poverty has recognised that the winter plan, which included opening extra shelters in the larger cities (at the Minister's request), lacked coordination, and expressed a wish that a series of measures be put in place so that provision can be put in place faster during subsequent winters.

► **Denmark: Shortage of Affordable Housing Could Hinder Homelessness Strategy** [02/04/2012]

"Homelessness in Denmark 2011", a [study](#) carried out by the Danish National Centre for Social Research, warns that the national homelessness strategy faces serious challenges in the major Danish municipalities where there are housing shortages.

The report also gave statistics on homelessness: it states that the number of homeless persons has risen by 292 since 2009. The Social Research Centre registered 5,290 homeless people in a count carried out during week 6 of 2011. The census also shows that in 2009 there were 633 homeless people aged between 18 and 24 years, while in 2011, 1,002 homeless people were in this age group. Thus, nearly one in five homeless people are between 18 and 24 years old.

Most homeless people stay in hostels and care homes or with family and friends. Others rely on night-time drop-in centres or sleep rough.

► **Finland: More and More Homeless Families** [02/04/2012]

A study carried out by the Finnish Finance and Development Centre, ARA, shows that the number of homeless families in Finland increased by a fifth last year, compared with 2010, leading to a total of more than 400 homeless families. 40% of homeless families are migrant families, numbers of which have increased in recent years. The same study also shows that the number of single homeless migrants is over 1,000 for the first time.

A slightly higher proportion of homeless people than before are women - now close to a fifth.

Despite the disturbing trends in some groups, the total number of homeless people decreased. There were 7606 people homeless in Finland at the end of last year. Of those, 60% were in Helsinki, Espoo or Vantaa.

► **France: Emergency Shelters to Stay Open Until June** [02/04/2012]

Every year, extra emergency shelters are opened in Paris during the winter months (when temperatures

reach 0°C) and closed again at the end of March. This year, however, half of the extra shelters will stay open until the end of May and the other half until the end of June. This follows pressure from NGOs working with homeless people who said that the closure was unacceptable because other provisions were insufficient – the closure of the shelters effectively put people back on the street.

► **Poland: Municipalities to Receive Funds for Constructing Social Housing** [02/04/2012]

The Polish government's 2012 programme of support for social housing will reserve make available 60 million zlotys for the provision of shelter or housing, to be used by municipalities, inter-district associations, counties and public interest organisations. The funds can be used for the construction, renovation, and purchase of buildings and dwellings. Under the 2007 - 2011 funding regime, a total of 7 623 subsidised social housing units were constructed, 85 sheltered housing places and 816 homeless hostels.

► **Portugal: Free Movement and Homelessness** [02/04/2012]

Reports from various EU countries [document](#) increasing numbers of Portuguese nationals, who have left Portugal in search of work – the crisis has led to a very difficult economic situation in the country – ending up homeless because of a lack of opportunities in the countries they arrive in and often a lack of preparation before leaving.

► **Portugal: Rough Sleeping Strategy Behind Schedule in Lisbon** [02/04/2012]

Launched three years ago, the Portuguese National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People is very behind schedule, say the organisations working on the ground, who also say they are receiving increasing numbers of requests for help. Launched in March 2009, the Strategy envisages the creation of measures to help two thousand rough sleepers off the streets by 2015.

► **Serbia: ETHOS in Serbian Strategy on Social Housing** [02/04/2012]

The government of the Republic of Serbia has recently adopted a National Strategy on Social Housing (NSSH), as a broad and adaptable strategic framework for finding appropriate solutions to housing problems. NSSH recommends using the ETHOS typology to monitor homelessness and housing exclusion in Serbia. In Serbia, ETHOS is applicable to families in unfit housing settlements and collective centres for refugees and internally displaced persons, families who have been living for years in inadequate, temporary shelters without a legal tenure, households in overcrowded dwellings, etc. Because of the extent and seriousness of this problem, one of the specific objectives in the NSSH is to establish instruments for the prevention and reduction of homelessness. Under this objective are two groups of measures: capacity building for the prevention and reduction of homelessness and the construction of accommodation for homeless people and victims of natural disasters. The NSSH also contains other objectives and measures relating to the prevention and reduction of housing exclusion, such as improving the living conditions of inhabitants in sub-standard settlements, which are mostly slums lived in by Roma people, increasing the affordability of housing costs for low- and medium-income households, supporting different alternative housing programs, and others. The NSSH will soon be available in Serbian and English on the official website of the Serbian Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning.

► **Spain: "Worst Ever" Poverty Levels Leave 30,000 People Homeless** [02/04/2012]

A study written by FEANTSA member Caritas Spain warns that the crisis is widening the gap between rich and poor and the differences between autonomous communities. Instruments measuring social progress in Spain have recorded a dramatic decrease in prosperity and say that poverty is "worse than ever, more widespread and reaching chronic levels more than ever before". The Caritas study, carried out in cooperation with the Fundación de Estudios Sociales y de Sociología Aplicada (Foundation for Social Studies and Applied Sociology) is called "Social Exclusion and Social Progress". It indicates that 21.8% of the Spanish population was living below the poverty line in 2011. The same measure was 19.7% in 2005 and 19.5% in 2009. What is more, the number of homeless people in the country is recorded to have increased to 30,000.

A Caritas member, Cáritas Diocesana de Barcelona, has called on the government to create a fund to help workless families pay their rent and mortgage payments, so that they do not risk eviction.

► **UK: Homelessness Charities to Target Migrants** [02/04/2012]

A campaign has been launched to advise migrants moving to the UK about the risk they run of ending up sleeping rough. "Before You Go", run by homelessness charities, aims to reach people from Central and Eastern Europe before they leave. The campaign plans to make people aware of the dangers of moving country without appropriate support in place. The campaign comes in the wake of recent statistics which show that 52% of rough sleepers on London's streets are not UK nationals.

► **UK: Payment by Results Model to Tackle Rough Sleeping** [02/04/2012]

The UK government has introduced a 'payment by results' funding model for London-based rough-sleeper charities. Under the £5 million scheme, charities will receive funding for rough sleeping work, but the amount will depend on the success of their projects. This will be assessed by the reduction in the number of rough sleepers returning to the streets, reduced admissions to accident and emergency units, and any increase in rough sleepers moving into settled accommodation and employment. The UK Housing Minister said the bonds would 'make sure the best charities are rewarded for success in securing stable homes and jobs'.

► **UK: Squatting Ban to Go Ahead** [02/04/2012]

UK government plans to criminalise squatting are set to go ahead. Amendments were proposed that would have meant that squatting would not be illegal if a property had been empty for 12 months or more and was not subject to a current planning application but these were withdrawn.

Homelessness charities were 'disappointed' that the government was going ahead with the plans to criminalise squatting, but welcomed the increased recognition of the link between homelessness and squatting that emerged during the debate.

► **USA: Controversy Over Homeless Wi-Fi Hotspots** [02/04/2012]

A company in Texas, USA, sparked controversy by launching a scheme that would turn homeless people into "wi-fi hotspots" – allowing people to use a unique code on the t-shirt worn by the homeless person to access the internet. Payment for the service would go to the homeless person. Various commentators, including FEANTSA, argued that the slogans worn by the people "I'm a hotspot" instead of "I'm running a hotspot" dehumanised the homeless people involved. Others claimed that it would raise awareness about homelessness and equated the position of the homeless people to that of street newspaper vendors, despite the fact that it did not include any opportunity for homeless people to contribute as street papers can do. In a [statement](#), FEANTSA asked why the company could not think of a employing the homeless people to take part in a stable and more meaningful occupation and warned against such schemes that invite onlookers to consider homeless people to be a commodity, arguing rather that it is better to look for ways to help them

get off the streets.

Publications

- ▶ **Accommodation for Ex-Offenders: Third Sector Housing Advice and Provision** [02/04/2012]
Offenders and ex-offenders face numerous challenges when trying to secure accommodation. Criteria for assessing homelessness, allocation policies and the presence of a criminal record are all factors which can delay or prevent the provision of housing for ex-offenders. A qualitative [study](#) carried out in eight prisons and one probation area examines the role of the social sector in assisting offenders and ex-offenders to find suitable accommodation in the UK. The results show that there have been several positive developments in the last ten years, with many prisons now having a dedicated housing advisor and important links with housing providers. There remain, however, numerous barriers to effective housing advice and provision.

- ▶ **Innovative City Practices to Promote Social Inclusion** [02/04/2012]
EUROCITIES Cities for Active Inclusion has [published](#) a collection of innovative strategies and projects used in cities to promote social inclusion. This collection features input from each of the network members – Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Metropole, Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm.

- ▶ **Preparation for Independent Living: Housing and Young People Leaving Care** [02/04/2012]
A [report](#) by SOS Children's Villages explores the difficulties experienced by young people leaving state care in accessing independent housing in Austria, CEE/CIS/Baltic countries, England, Kazakstan and Latvia.

- ▶ **The Impact of "Intentional Homelessness"** [02/04/2012]
This [study](#) aimed to examine the impact of being assessed as intentionally homeless (IH) on households in Wales. IH is one of the statutory homelessness tests that establish what kind of duty is owed to a household presenting as homeless. The legal definition of IH is complex: broadly speaking, it aims to limit individuals' rights to accommodation when their behaviour has been deemed to have deliberately caused the loss of their accommodation.

- ▶ **Tuberculosis Retreating in Europe but Concerns Remain** [02/04/2012]
To mark World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, the 24th March 2012, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and WHO/Europe [released](#) a joint report, "Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2012". Despite mainly encouraging results, the report highlights that key populations like people who inject drugs, homeless people and migrants are still disproportionately affected by TB, which means that exchanging best practices from across Europe is very important.

- ▶ **Women's Experience of Violence in Homelessness Shelters** [02/04/2012]
Projekt Udenfor hosted an [evening](#) where a doctoral thesis on sexual assaults on women in homeless shelters was discussed. The conclusions of the [thesis](#) (in Danish with a summary in English) emphasise that the culture in homeless shelters is characterised by significant masculine behaviour, remote bedrooms with poor lighting and a lack of active "protectors", that the female users are vulnerable in mental health terms and that both victim and offender are influenced by drugs or alcohol. The recommendations include: 1. Homeless hostels exclusively for women – and more options; 2. Necessary initiatives in the existing hostels for both sexes, including staff awareness of the problem; building improvements in order to avoid remote bedrooms without protection; equality should be part of the basic values; change and improvement of the culture and the atmosphere at the shelter.
In related news, SamuSocial in France has launched a [campaign](#) against the closure of the only emergency shelter for homeless women in Paris.



**The FEANTSA Flash is supported by
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This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

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