



FEANTSA

FEANTSA Statement

European Federation of National Organisations working
with the Homeless

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The Devil is in the Detail! Housing Exclusion Passes Under the Radar at EPSCO Discussion on the European Semester

Yesterday, as part of the European Semester, the EPSCO (Employment, Social Policy, Health & Consumer Affairs Council) endorsed main messages on the EU's social situation and priorities for social policy reform.¹ Ministers also endorsed the Social Protection Committee's report on key social challenges,² based on its analysis of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM). The main messages highlight a deterioration in the relative poverty situation as well as in quasi-jobless households. The messages make one reference to housing:

"Household incomes are increasing again in many MS, leading to a reduction in severe material deprivation rates and in the burden of housing costs in several countries".

FEANTSA is alarmed by this brief, optimistic assessment. It neatly glosses over the EU's current housing crisis. Deeply worrying trends appear to have passed under the radar. These messages are backed up by the SPC's report on key challenges. This, in turn, is supported by annexes. Detailed analysis therein reveals a worrying picture, with little for EPSCO members to celebrate on housing.³

Housing cost overburden rates in 2014 were higher in 12 MS than in 2008 (EE, IE, EL, ES, CY, LT, LU, HU, NL, PO, SI, SK). People living below the poverty line have been worst hit, with increases of around 10% or more in DE, EE, IE, LU, PT & SK. In EL, the increase amongst the poor was 29.4%. Mortgage or rent arrears increased in 12 MS between 2013 & 2014 (BE, BG, CY, CZ, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PT). Arrears on utility bills increased in 16 MS (BE, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK). Amongst people living in poverty, severe housing deprivation increased from 12.6% to 12.9% in the EU28, with the most noticeable rises (1% or more) in DE, PT, SK & the UK. Close to one in four people at risk of poverty cannot keep their homes adequately warm, while in CY, EL & PT it is around 50% and in BG 66%. Significant increases in homelessness have taken place in much of Europe.

Housing is both a driver of and a lever out of poverty. It is a human right upon which many others are conditional. If it is serious about tackling poverty, pursuing social fairness and ensuring social rights, the EU must get to grips with MS' performance ensuring the right to adequate housing for all. It is shocking that available data and analysis carried out by the SPC is not translated into concern at Council level about the current housing exclusion

¹ 12606/16

² 12607/16

³ 12607/16 ADD 1



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crisis. FEANTSA is not naive about the challenges of prioritising and synthesising complex social realities in 28 MS. Nonetheless, practical steps could be taken to better address the reality of housing exclusion in the Semester.

FEANTSA recommends using a composite housing exclusion index, based on existing EU SILC indicators in future Semesters.⁴ We encourage the Commission to take full account of housing exclusion and homelessness in relevant country reports and country-specific recommendations in 2017, drawing on all relevant EU statistics, and filling gaps on issues such as homelessness with evidence provided by experts and stakeholders.

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Find out more from www.feantsa.org or call 0032 2 538 66 69

Notes for editors:

1. [FEANTSA](http://www.feantsa.org) 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. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level.

⁴ FEANTSA & the Fondation Abbé Pierre are currently testing such an indicator.