



FEANTSA Flash
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FEANTSA News

- ▶ **Follow up of FEANTSA Conference and Information Day 2006 "The Right to Health is a Human Right – Ensuring Access to Health for people who are homeless."** [08/11/2006]

FEANTSA's two day event on its annual theme 2006 took place in Wroclaw in Poland on the 12th and 13th of October 2006. The events were co-organised with our leading Polish partner St Brother Albert aid association (which was also celebrating its 25th anniversary) and with the support of Polish member organisations the Pomeranian Forum in Aid of getting out of Homelessness, Caritas Kielce, Monar and the Barka Foundation, as well as with the support of the city of Wroclaw. FEANTSA would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those partners for their hard work and commitment.

In lieu of a conference report, FEANTSA is putting together resource pages on its website bringing together the presentations, summaries and conclusions, as well as photos from the Information Day and the Conference. These pages are still in the process of being updated and will be further developed in the coming days, but you can already access many of the elements at <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/theme.asp?ID=35>. If there are things that you would like to see added to these pages, do not hesitate to send them along to us so that we can include them.

You can also access FEANTSA's European Report on the annual theme "The Right to Health is a Human Right – Ensuring Access to Health for people who are homeless." on the same page as above. This report was launched at FEANTSA's conference in Wroclaw. It draws together the findings of the national reports submitted by FEANTSA's membership across the EU on issues related to health and homelessness. The national reports are also available on the same page.

For further information on health and homelessness, you can also visit FEANTSA's health and social protection resource page at <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/theme.asp?ID=2>.

- ▶ **Follow-up: FEANTSA National Seminar on Homelessness and housing exclusion in the EU – Policy responses and best practices, Ljubljana** [08/11/2006]

An international conference devoted to homelessness and housing exclusion was held on 28 September 2006 in Ljubljana (Slovenia). The event was co-organised by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana and FEANTSA. It gathered about 40 participants, including representatives of national Ministries, local authorities, NGOs and academics.

In the first session of the conference, the fight against homelessness was seen from a trans-national perspective. Presentations focused on research as a tool for effective homelessness policies, the role of trans-national cooperation at EU level, examples of good practices in terms of prevention and of local authorities' commitment.

The second part of the conference was devoted to the Slovenian context and to initiatives being carried out by different actors, both at national and local level. Participants discussed the impact of legislation, the profile of people who are homeless in the country, widespread attitudes towards vulnerable people as well as the role of the State, municipalities and NGOs in this field. Among the results of the debate was the feeling that there is scope for better understanding and further cooperation.

Pictures of the seminar will be available shortly on the seminar [webpage](#).

- ▶ **Multiple barriers, multiple efforts: Employment barriers and solutions for homeless individuals – new FEANTSA background document on employment** [08/11/2006]

This new background document points out existing barriers to employment for people who are homeless and presents ten recommendations on how to best address these obstacles in a holistic manner. Case-management, a sorrow assessment of needs and aspirations, flexibility, cooperation of services, ongoing support, the right policy framework as well as secure and long-term funding are some of the key factors for developing services that help people who are homeless to move towards employment.

The findings are based on the expertise of the FEANTSA employment working group as well as international research. The paper is written by Linda Butcher, Chief Executive of UK FEANTSA member [Off the Streets and Into Work \(OSW\)](#) who is also member of the FEANTSA employment working group. It is available in English, French and Spanish on the [FEANTSA website](#).

► **Sad news** [08/11/2006]

Henk Meert, one of the coordinators of the FEANTSA European Observatory on Homelessness, died unexpectedly on 20 October 2006. Henk was 43 years old and leaves behind a wife and two children. Henk contributed hugely to FEANTSA's European Observatory, both in terms of research output and strategic development. Henk was a committed colleague, whose creative approach to research inspired many of us. He will be much missed as a colleague and friend. There will be a church service to commemorate Henk on the 1st of December 2006 in the evening in Belgium. Those who would like to attend should contact Freek.Spinnewijn@feantsa.org.

News from the European Union

► **European Foundation Report: Social dimensions of housing** [08/11/2006]

This new report by the European Foundation, a European Union body, explores quality of life in the context of housing conditions. It reports about large differences in housing conditions across European countries, in particular, the basic divide running between the 'old' EU 15 Member States and the 10 new Member States, along with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

In Central and Eastern European countries housing policies were for a long time dominated by ideological considerations rather than the actual housing needs of the people. The report states that there is still a considerable degree of catching up to be done if citizens in eastern Europe are to experience living conditions at the same level as those in western Europe.

For Western Europe the report identifies two tendencies among housing policies: the first relates to the necessity to regulate economic development and free market mechanisms; the second addresses the priorities related to the social functions of housing.

The report concludes that unsatisfactory accommodation is a source of an increasing number and variety of social problems. The main targets of improving quality of life, combating exclusion and discrimination, and strengthening social cohesion cannot be achieved without harmonising the housing conditions of Europeans.

The full version of the report is available on the [European Foundation website](#).

► **European Round Table on social inclusion – Tampere 2006** [08/11/2006]

A delegation of FEANTSA members was invited to take part in the EU Round Table on social inclusion 2006 organised by the Finnish Presidency and the European Commission in the city of Tampere on 16 and 17 October 2006.

The Round Table is a annual event that aims raise awareness on poverty and social inclusion on the occasion of the [International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#).

The FEANTSA delegation consisted of representatives from different countries (Finland, France, Scotland, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain) who were able to feed their expertise on homelessness in various workshop discussion mainly focusing on "Active Labour Market Inclusion – How to Reach Groups furthest from the Labour Market", "The Role of Social Services in Combating Social Exclusion", "Mainstreaming social inclusion", and "Social Rights and Minimum Social Standards".

For more information on the outcomes of the Round Table, please consult the following link: <http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/eng/subjt/inter/eu2006/round/round1.htx>

News from our Members

► **The European Charter for Human Rights in the City: The responsibility of local authorities in the area of social protection. A contribution to the Flash by Marc Uhry, Alpil, France [09/11/2006]**

The trend towards decentralisation that is sweeping across all European countries is creating a new landscape of public responsibility. An important aspect of this evolution is the shifting of responsibility for social protection to the local level. In most countries, local authorities are already entirely, or partially, responsible for schooling, child protection, minimum income, social housing policies, support for the elderly suffering a loss of independence due to aging, disability policies, services to people who are homeless etc.

Yet historically, the State was always the body responsible for ensuring the full enjoyment of rights for individuals and particularly for the pillars of social security: education, health insurance and pensions. This responsibility has been progressively more deeply entrenched through commitments made by all European countries in international agreements such as: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the revised European Social Charter, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union etc. The legal weight of these texts leads one to conclude that ensuring full enjoyment of human rights (including social rights) is not a political option, but rather a legal responsibility of the State.

However, the local authorities, to whom the implementation of policies to allow enjoyment of rights increasingly falls, actually have no direct responsibility as regards safeguarding human rights, rather they are made responsible through a dispersed range of internal laws, some of which set out positive obligations for local authorities and some of which set out elements of individual rights. Furthermore, those directly concerned by these texts are often unaware of them. Technically speaking, through decentralisation, fundamental rights are being transformed from a set of positive obligations placed on public authorities to a more voluntary approach at local policy level, which is by its very nature uncertain.

Whether or not one is concerned about this state of affairs, it is clear that, in the short term at least, this trend towards the decentralisation of social rights will continue. The most pressing question therefore is that of the means available to build a commitment of local authorities to the protection of human rights.

In this regard, it is worth taking note of an under-used and probably little known instrument: [The European Charter for Human Rights in the City](#). This is a text that commits the signatory cities to upholding human rights as defined in the different international legal texts. One vital characteristic of this charter is that it is a well drawn-up document: it proposes ambitious rights, which are clearly defined and which take further the texts currently in force (whether in relation to civil rights or social rights).

You can read the full article [here](#).

► **Anniversary of "La Hermandad del Refugio" [08/11/2006]**

On the 4th of October 2006, Spanish FEANTSA member «La Hermandad del Refugio » celebrated its 364th anniversary. On this occasion the charity organised a round table with invited speakers in order to raise awareness amongst policy makers and the general public about the current situation of people who are homeless in the city.

Speakers highlighted the importance of employment for people experiencing homelessness. Another important topic of discussion was the situation of homeless undocumented migrants that arrive in Spain from sub Sahara-Africa.

For the full report, [click here](#) (only in French).

► **French NGOs Secours Catholique, Emmaüs France and Droits d'Urgence publish the first « Code of Rights against Exclusion » in France** [08/11/2006]

Emmaüs France and Droits d'Urgence are publishing the first « Code of Rights against Exclusion » with the French publisher Dalloz. It is a collective work, which brings together for the first time the main legal provisions to protect the poorest and most excluded. This project was carried out by legal experts and by organisations working on the ground, who brought their expertise together under the direction of Martin Hirsch and of Denis Chemla, (who is a lawyer and President of the organisation Droit d'Urgence) in order to develop this code as a real instrument for combating exclusion. The work seeks to offer answers to concrete questions that people experiencing exclusion and homelessness, social workers and any individual who wishes to better understand his/her rights, might ask. Questions like: who is entitled to get social housing? What are one's rights if one is fired from a job? Can one get free legal aid? What are the sanctions against discrimination? What are the administrative procedures to get access to social benefit?

The "Code of Rights against Exclusion" is divided into twelve themes: citizenship, employment and unemployment, housing, discrimination, banking and consumers, family and children, social welfare minimums, health, justice, non-nationals, public services and fundamental rights.

The "Code of Rights against Exclusion" is available in bookshops in France and can be bought on the internet for 24€.

► **MakeRoom Campaign: Ireland may become one of the first nations to end homelessness** [08/11/2006]

can make global history by becoming one of the first nations to end homelessness, according to a new campaign by four of its main housing and homelessness NGOs.

The MakeRoom Campaign - which is being spearheaded by Focus Ireland, the Simon Communities of Ireland, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and Threshold - said that with strong political leadership, a responsive policy agenda and adequate resources, homelessness could be ended.

The target of 2010 for ending rough sleeping and long-term homelessness has been set by the Government, and will be highlighted throughout this campaign.

By ending homelessness, MakeRoom want to arrive at a situation where nobody will sleep rough; nobody will stay in emergency accommodation for longer than is absolutely necessary and nobody will become homeless because of a lack of appropriate services.

As part of the MakeRoom Campaign, a website was unveiled: www.makeroom.ie offers detailed information on the policy areas that can provide a sustainable solution to homelessness.

For the full version of the press release, [click here](#).

Homelessness in the Headlines

► **Czech Republic: A ship for people who are homeless** [08/11/2006]

The city of Prague announced in the beginning of October that it will ask the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for a ship to house people who are homeless. The ship on Vltava river could accommodate about 250 roofless people and would contain toilets, showers, a dining room and a store for clothes. In 28 cabins 14 rooms with twelve beds and 14 rooms with six beds will be created.

The municipality argues that it is hard finding other places to house people who are homeless as shelters are not welcome in the neighborhoods.

The costs of the ship could reach 21 million Czech crowns. Three thirds of the amount may come from a grant of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. When or where the first inhabitants of the ship will be boarding is not clear yet.

More shelter facilities for the estimated 6,000 homeless people are needed in the Czech capital. During the cold weather period earlier this year, the city hall had a tent camp erected in Prague's Letna plain, where more than 200 homeless people used to spend the night every day.

► **France: Sarkozy proposes the justiciable right to housing** [08/11/2006]

Nicolas Sarkozy, French Minister of Interior who is most likely to become the UMP candidate for the French presidential elections next year, has launched the idea of introducing a justiciable right to housing in France.

In his proposal the Minister stated that within two years, local authorities should create sufficient accommodation in order to house all roofless people. Within five to ten years the right to housing should become enforceable.

Sarkozy's proposal is strongly inspired by the latest report of the High Committee for Housing for the most vulnerable (Haut Comité pour le logement des personnes défavorisées) which recommended this measure in its latest report in December 2005. However, Sarkozy seems to restrict this right to certain categories such as people who work or who have been working throughout their lives.

The idea of a justiciable right to housing comes from Scotland which decided to expand this right to the whole population until 2012. The justiciable right to housing means that every citizen can take legal action against the state or against the responsible authorities for failing to provide an adequate housing solution.

In France, municipalities have currently only the obligation to register the demands for social housing. In Paris, the waiting list is over 10 years.

So far, French politicians have been reluctant to affirm a justiciable right to housing since it creates obligations that cannot be fulfilled due to the large number of housing needed. According to French NGOs working in the area of housing rights, an estimated number of one million social housing needs to be constructed in France.

However, the French government made a first step towards implementing the justiciable right to housing. In May 2006, it called on local authorities to develop and experiment with the justiciable right to housing at local level. After a period of consultation with local administrations, the High Committee is now supposed to submit recommendations for further action.

► **German city plans to house single homeless men in containers** [08/11/2006]

The city of Müllheim plans to house homeless men in containers placed on the outskirts of the city. The City Council recently decided to add five containers to the already existing five. The latter were initially placed there to house "difficult cases" of single homeless men on a short term basis, i.e. men who cannot pay their rent anymore and have caused public disturbance due to alcohol abuse.

According to the German Social Code it is not allowed to house women with children and families in containers. The city provides social housing for these groups of homeless people.

Dora Pfeiffer-Suger, a regional representative as well as homelessness organisations have criticised this form of emergency housing for homeless men as being inadequate for human beings. As the containers are placed outside the city, there is no public transport available and people have to walk for an hour in order to reach the city centre. This is in contradiction with the legal obligation that people at risk of homelessness must have access to social services.

The City Council defends its decision by referring to its obligation to provide housing for homeless people. The issue will be discussed in an open debate on 22 November 2006.

► **Neuroimaging research finds that people often consider homeless people to be sub-human** [08/11/2006]

According to a new study out of Princeton University, people tend to subconsciously categorise “social outcasts” such as people with drug related problems or people experiencing homelessness as someone less than human.

Social research has shown that people evaluate people unlike them according to two scales: how nice, or warm, they appear and how smart, or competent, they seem. Some social groups are commonly viewed as being low in competence and high in warmth (the elderly), while others are stereotyped as being high in competence but low in warmth (the wealthy). Social groups that are stereotyped as having neither warmth nor competence - like people with addiction problems - are often judged to be both hostile and stupid.

To determine whether neurological reactions would reinforce the behavioural research, two researchers at Princeton University, Harris and Fiske, gave study participants pictures of different social groups. While showing the pictures, the researchers monitored the activity of the brain region involved in social processing that is activated when someone thinks about a person. Results show that participants' brain activity increased from a baseline level when viewing pictures from social groups associated with either warmth or competence or both. But when people saw photos of groups that are often stereotyped as being low in both warmth and competence, such as people who are homeless, there was very little activity in that particular brain region.

According to Fiske, the finding suggests that the subjects' brains were processing such “outcasts” as something other than human. The pattern of brain activity induced by pictures of homeless people matched the pattern of brain activity resulting from photos of objects designed to provoke disgust, such as an overflowing toilet.

Nick Haslam, a psychologist who studies dehumanization at Australia's University of Melbourne, called Harris's and Fiske's research innovative and noted their research is the first to explore this phenomenon with the tools of modern neuroscience. When people are dehumanized, Haslam argues, they no longer seem to evoke compassion from others. Further, dehumanization may play a role in more overt discrimination. But, according to Haslam, it is too early to say how the brain activity Fiske and Harris observed could correlate with conscious prejudice or actual behaviour.

The full details of the research are to be published in the October issue of [Psychological Science](#)

News from the United Nations

► **UN-ECE publishes Guidelines on Social Housing** [08/11/2006]

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe ([UN-ECE](#)) recently published Guidelines on Social Housing. The guidelines address the institutional, legal and economic frameworks for social housing and experiences with social housing design, in the ECE region. The guidelines give the history of social housing in Western Europe and the development of social housing in countries in transition, and the privatisation processes. The guidelines further describe the role of social housing in social cohesion. Each chapter contains conclusions and recommendations.

UN-ECE Guidelines on Social Housing are available on the [International Union of Tenants website](#) or by writing to info.ece@unece.org.

► **Follow-up: Housing in an expanding Europe, European Network for Housing Research Conference, Ljubljana, July 2006 – All papers available online!** [08/11/2006]

The Conference of the European Network for Housing Research in Ljubljana in July 2006 discussed the issue of housing in an expanding Europe from various perspectives, including:

- The Residential Context of Health
- Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Housing Exclusion
- Housing issues in the EU: Do they Matter?
- EU Integration: Social and economic implications for housing
- Shifting populations: Demography, mobility and housing
- Migration, Residential Mobility, and Housing Policy

All papers presented at the Conference are now available on the [ENHR website](#).

► **France: Issue of INSEE review « Economics and Statistics » on homelessness** [08/11/2006]

The French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has dedicated an entire issue of its review "Economics and Statistics" to homelessness. Instead of trying to give a new estimation of the number of people experiencing homelessness, which was placed at 93 000 in 2002, the document rather illustrates the diverse profiles of the population experiencing homelessness. INSEE studied the profiles of people experiencing homelessness in contact with public or NGO services.

The study highlighted five main groups: single people who are unemployed (45%); a younger and more highly qualified group living without a partner or child, who are employed (22%); a group of mainly women with young children (18%); young couples (13%) and a group of people who are over fifty, who have never lived with a partner and who are unemployed. In total, more than a quarter (28%) of people experiencing homelessness using services have a job, (of whom 7% have a permanent position), "the majority of these are manual jobs or jobs for which no qualification is required." Half of the homeless people in the study have no diploma, but 7% follow higher education and 3% of them studied at the highest level. In total, only 9% have never worked. It is clear that homeless people are not a very different group to poor people in general. Almost all people who are homeless have friends and family and three quarters are in frequent contact with them.

You can read the full review (available in French only) [here](#).

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