



Fund for  
**European Aid**  
to the Most Deprived

**Tackling homelessness through FEAD support**  
13<sup>th</sup> FEAD Network Meeting

6-7 November 2018, Brussels

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This service is provided by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. It is financed by FEAD technical assistance, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

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# Acknowledgements

On behalf of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the organisers would like to thank all speakers, presenters, rapporteurs, panellists and delegates whose active participation, input and support made this event possible.

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# 13th FEAD Network Meeting on tackling homelessness through FEAD support

Hotel Bloom, Brussels, 6-7 November 2018

On 6 and 7 November 2018, the European Commission hosted the 13th FEAD Network Meeting in Brussels. The meeting brought together the EU-wide network of stakeholders to discuss the importance of tackling homelessness through FEAD support. The meeting was organised by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission and welcomed 88 delegates from 25 Member States<sup>1</sup>, representing a range of stakeholders, including Managing Authorities; partner organisations; other local, regional and national actors; European Commission representatives; EU-level partner organisations; and the wider EU community.

## Session 1 – Introduction and overview of the meeting

**Vicki Donlevy, Director of Policy and Research at Ecorys** opened the meeting by welcoming all the participants and announcing the two day programme. During the first day of the meeting, the participants were introduced to the homelessness situation in Europe (Session 3) and heard about three different approaches to combating homelessness in three Member States (Session 4). The afternoon continued with an interactive discussion on the different ways FEAD can support Europe's homeless population (Session 5). The first day of the meeting was concluded with the FEANTSA Ending Homelessness Awards 2018 where the three project winners were announced.

The second day of the meeting started with a presentation on a human rights based approach to homelessness (Session 6). During the panel discussion, the implementation of the Housing First approach was discussed drawing on examples from the Czech Republic, Finland and the Netherlands (Session 7). Participants also had the opportunity to engage in the interactive discussion on the changing profile of homelessness in Europe (Session 8). The final session allowed participants to suggest topics of interest for next year's series of Network Meetings (Session 9). Vicki concluded her brief introduction by encouraging all participants to join FEAD social media networks, and in particular the dedicated Facebook group.

## Session 2 – Welcome words from the European Commission



Next, **Jan Behrens, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission**, greeted the participants, and thanked Ecorys and FEANTSA for their joint work on establishing the agenda and organising the meeting. Jan highlighted the uniqueness of this meeting in that it combines the FEAD Network Meeting with the FEANTSA award ceremony, which, provides an opportunity to go beyond sharing best practices and emulate their take-up.

<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK

Jan stressed the complexity of the homelessness issue. The absence of a common European indicator makes it difficult to compare the situation across Europe. It is problematic that, while employment and social indicators are improving, homelessness is gradually worsening in all Member States except Finland. This meeting is hence crucial to share best practices and discuss how FEAD can contribute to tackle homelessness whether through OPI or OPIL.

Jan reminded participants that the future ESF+ is still under negotiation, together with the proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation. The current ESF+ proposal combines various funding instruments, including FEAD. The negotiations are still ongoing with the two co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council. Several rounds of negotiations are still to be expected. In particular, the European Parliament suggested a number of amendments which will be voted on at the end of November. Jan concluded by reminding the delegates of the key influencing role they can play in the negotiations process in order to shape the best possible social policies.

## Session 3 – Overview of the homelessness situation in Europe

**Frederik Spinnewijn, Director at FEANTSA**, introduced the structure and activities of FEANTSA. He stressed that the lack of a common definition for homelessness in Europe generates data collection issues. A narrow definition of homelessness fails to capture all groups of homeless people, for instance, those who stay temporarily with their family or friends. Therefore, the existing data fails to show comparisons and only provides general trends.

The typical profile of the homeless person has changed in the recent years. Frederik explained that a large amount of homeless people are men who are unemployed or disabled, and around a third are under 18 years old. There is a sharp increase in youth homelessness that might have been caused by austerity measures. Moreover, due to the recent migrant influx in Europe, the percentage of migrants living in the streets has grown. There are many pathways leading to homelessness including institutional release (for instance from prison), domestic violence, health problems and addiction, unaffordable housing, etc. Depending on individual circumstances, homelessness can be episodic, transitional or chronic.

Frederik indicated that existing policies need to be amended to foster innovative pathways leading out of homelessness. One example is the Housing First approach that allows people to keep their house and limits their time in shelters. It also increases the target group's self-confidence and overall mood. Therefore, the focus needs to shift from providing more beds in shelters to providing proper housing. Frederik stressed that EU involvement is crucial for monitoring and sharing best practices, and providing the means to experiment new approaches in Europe. It is crucial for Member States to work hand in hand with the EU institutions to tackle homelessness.

**Olga Martinez de Briones, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**, provided an overview of the different policy instruments that exist at the EU level. The EU has set up a coordination mechanism at different levels of governance to support Member States in reaching the goals of social inclusion. Since 2010, it was agreed to use the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) definition of homelessness. This was used to collect statistics in 2016, however, data collection and statistical indicators remain a challenge. Olga explained that there are three overarching policies at the EU level that relate to homelessness: the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European 2020 Strategy and the Social Investment Package.

Homeless people face various challenges such as accessing affordable housing, accessing employment



or education, etc. Because it is so complex, an integrated approach needs to be adopted to tackle the issue of homelessness. Olga stressed that preventative policies with a focus on human rights should be prioritised. She shared a number of sources of information that are available to acquire further information or statistics on the topic.

## Session 4 – Panel discussion on ways to tackle homelessness

The meeting moderator, **Frederik Spinnewijn**, introduced the panellists who presented three different approaches to tackle homelessness.



**Lazaros Petromelidis, Board Member, Greek Housing Network**, started his presentation by providing a quick overview of the FEAD end recipients and the state of cooperation in Greece. FEAD material support is delivered through 57 partnerships between municipalities and local NGOs. Lazaros indicated that homeless people can benefit from FEAD food and material support, however, this access varies from a local government to another. Based on the Greek definition, only legally residing persons in Greece can be considered homeless. Until 2018, there was no comprehensive data on homelessness in Greece. Finally, Lazaros mentioned the pilot project initiated by the government to count homeless people in five major cities in Greece. The Ministry of Labour is planning to develop a

methodology to improve its data collection in the future.

Next, **Wayne Stanley, Research and Policy Analyst at Focus Ireland** presented a brief history of homelessness in Ireland and the preventative approach that Focus Ireland adopted to tackle the issue. Wayne emphasised that Ireland was one of the first countries in Europe to implement the Housing First approach. The lack of affordable housing is the biggest cause of homelessness in recent times, therefore, providing a house is the most suitable response. Once they have provided people in need with a house, support teams are available for the following 6 months to help people integrate to their community. It has proved particularly successful to tackle chronic homelessness. Furthermore, people at risk of homelessness are provided with information, advice and advocacy services.

**Hana Košan, Project Manager at Kralji Ulice, Slovenia**, presented the 'Kralji Ulice' (Kings of streets) activities to help homeless people. Their projects focus on the different needs of homeless people and provide them with an opportunity to participate. Thanks to various funding sources Kralji Ulice implement projects such as the 'Drop in centre', 'Street Paper', 'Resettlement' and 'Eviction prevention programme' that help homeless people to receive support services, advice, find a house and combat social exclusion. Hana indicated that the beneficiaries tend to become volunteers or consider employment possibilities within the organisation after their participation in the projects, helping others and strengthening the collaborative spirit within the organisation.

**Frederik Spinnewijn** facilitated the discussion with three introductory questions to the panellists:

What are the main reasons for the increased homelessness in your country?

Why are the positive increase of employment and economic recovery indicators not reflected in the homelessness population?

Since homelessness is a very complex issue, what would be the best possible policy to tackle it?



Lazaros explained that in Greece, the labour market situation is very challenging. Low income individuals, in particular young people, struggle to afford housing, especially in Athens. Therefore, the shadow economy is widely popular. There are attempts from the national government to support rent payments for those who have a low income. However, the financial and policy frameworks are not prepared for this. At the moment there are new initiatives and policies that focus on homelessness issues. However, the results of the new approach will only be visible in the future.

Wayne indicated that despite the array of individual situations behind homelessness, the most prominent issue is the lack of affordable housing. Looking at statistical data in Ireland, both GDP and salary indicators are gradually increasing, however, the housing indicators remain stagnant. Such a highly competitive housing market calls for the government to invest more in public housing. It is also important to address hidden homelessness and reach out to those who do not have a permanent residence and bounce from one family member to a friend until they end up homeless.

Hana agreed with Wayne that hidden homelessness is increasing. Despite the economic recovery in Slovenia, the staff of the 'Kings of streets' project notice it first-hand. There is a limited number of affordable housing available, particularly in the capital. The growing number of precarious jobs worsen the situation. It is important that the services and programmes provided are based on the needs of homeless people to maximise their success.

The session ended with an interactive Q&A with the presenters, encompassing enquiries about how to reach out to homeless people, the identification of target groups and the problem of homeless children in Europe.

## **Session 5 – Interactive discussion: using FEAD to support Europe's homeless population**

The interactive session was facilitated by **Magda Tancau, Development Officer at the European Anti-Poverty Network**, who introduced the representatives of the Italian and German Managing Authorities. They presented two different approaches to support homeless people through FEAD: an OPI and an OPII perspective.

Funda Salomon, Advisor at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, stressed that Germany is one of four OPII European countries that provides FEAD support to improve the quality of the existing social inclusion services. FEAD partner organisations help the target groups by offering them long-term counselling and social assistance. They also act as a bridge between them and the existing support services. FEAD funds additional counsellors that help with outreach. Some FEAD projects focus on people at risk of homelessness. A close cooperation with landlords, social welfare departments and



district courts prevents evictions. However, Funda shared that it is difficult to receive personal information about the potential beneficiaries due to data protection laws.

Later, **Patrizia de Felici, Italian Managing Authority**, gave a brief introduction to the ESF, FEAD and other funds' synergy in tackling homelessness. Patrizia gave an overview of the development process of the Italian national strategy to tackle homelessness and how it was transformed into actions. The government consulted with key stakeholders to address the complexity of the issue and developed a more coherent framework. The newly adopted strategy focuses on the individual needs of target groups, reinforces the local services network and includes innovative approaches such as Housing First. Through FEAD (OPI) and ESF financing mechanisms, around 50 million euros were allocated to interventions to tackle severe adult deprivation and homelessness during the period 2016-2019. Synergies between the funds were created to address the needs of social inclusion (ESF) and material assistance (FEAD).

**Annamaria Nicolini, Project Coordinator at ASP City of Bologna**, presented various social projects in Bologna targeting the homeless. The profile of homelessness is changing in Italy and increasingly includes LGBT people, women affected by domestic violence, people released from institutions, young people and migrants. Therefore, innovative interventions were chosen to engage homeless persons



with the community, improve their interactions with other inhabitants in the city and increase their participation in decision-making processes through role playing games. Annamaria emphasised that their 'social labs' are person and community oriented. She also explained how FEAD funds basic materials such as fabrics and clothes to produce sport wear to enable homeless people to participate in sport activities. Due to FEAD food assistance, homeless persons can receive high nutritional value

products, are educated about the benefits of a balanced diet, and develop relationships through cooking activities.

Following these presentations, Magda invited the participants to split into six groups to discuss what approaches are being used in their countries and formulate two questions for the speakers. The groups shared their expertise and developed the following questions to be answered by the presenters:



### **1. How do you help people who do not want to be helped?**

Funda agreed that usually homeless persons do not want to be helped, therefore, a continuous effort is needed to initiate the contact and build trust. Reversely, people at risk of homelessness are very engaged and willing to receive support. Annamaria stressed the importance of being receptive to the aspirations of the target group, which helps build a relationship. Patrizia added that FEAD material assistance acts as a bridge to engage with beneficiaries and offer social support.

### **2. Could you provide more details about the way you work with landlords in Germany?**

Funda explained that landlords can contact FEAD organisations themselves. Rent can be paid through various FEAD projects. Sometimes, rent is partly covered by the municipalities.

### **3. Are there any projects for homeless people with serious health issues and addictions?**

Annamaria mentioned a popular gym project that helps people with alcohol addictions. It is important to engage them and give them an opportunity to reach their goals. In Germany, FEAD projects target everyone and do not focus on particular groups. However, some projects are not suitable for special groups such as people with disabilities.

### **4. Due to the strict distinction between ESF and FEAD support, how do you make sure the transition is smooth between FEAD and ESF projects in Germany?**

Funda stressed that a lot of stakeholders consider it important to integrate FEAD clients into the job market after the initial support. In the second funding period, this transition has been made easier and this should contribute to further success in the future. Information sharing has also been encouraged between FEAD and ESF projects to increase the linkages and help FEAD beneficiaries further.

### **5. Who initiated the Italian national strategy for a cohesive approach to tackle homelessness and what type of approach was chosen?**

Patrizia explained that the negotiation process to tackle poverty began at the ministry level. The homelessness strategy is part of the poverty framework. The government initiated consultations with key stakeholders to agree on the main principles of the strategy. It was a collaboration between all levels of governance and key stakeholders.

## 6. How many social services are provided to homeless people outside of special assistance?

Patrizia and Funda agreed that the current efforts are not enough and it is necessary to reinforce local services and increase cooperation among different service providers.

Vicki closed the first day of the meeting, reminding the participants about the FEANTSA Ending Homelessness Awards 2018 which followed.

## Session 6 – Adopting a human-rights based approach to homelessness

The second day of the meeting started with a presentation from **Maria J. Aldanas, Housing Rights Watch Coordinator at FEANTSA**, who provided an overview of the existing human rights policy instruments at EU and UN level. Maria emphasised that housing rights are considered as human rights. Thus, it is important that all actors involved are highly committed to ensure their implementation. There is a need for more housing indicators in the social score board. In 2017, FEANTSA launched a 'Homeless Bill of Rights' campaign to raise awareness on housing rights. Maria concluded that FEAD should include more inclusion elements and should not be restricted to emergency aid.

## Session 7 – Panel discussion on the use of a Housing First approach

The panel discussion was moderated by Vicki Donlevy, who invited panellists to introduce their respective approach. **Štěpán Ripka, Chairman at Czech Platform for Social Housing, Czech Republic**, began the discussion by providing a short overview of Housing First origins, reminding the participants that it is not a new phenomenon. The method was introduced in the US and successfully provided housing to chronic homeless people with complex needs, such as homeless veterans. Based on this success, the Czech Platform for Social Housing works with cities to create integrated systems and combine existing resources to end homelessness. The success of the programme is measured by the lowered frequency of homelessness, lower reoccurrences and shorter durations of homelessness. Štěpán stressed that the results of an evaluation showed that the programme improved family health. Around 96% of families kept their housing. However, more research is needed to understand the Housing First impact on financial and food stability.



**'Housing is becoming a scarce resource' –  
Štěpán Ripka**

Next, **Juha Kaliha, Project Coordinator at Y-Foundation, Finland**, introduced Y-Foundation and its activities to help homeless people. Y-Foundation consists of in-house research teams and housing

experts who give advisory support to homeless. They also implement the Housing First approach, provide expertise and necessary help to strengthen the cooperation between cities and NGOs. Juha explained that in 2008 there was a strong government commitment to combating homelessness in Finland which resulted in the adoption of a national programme. As a result, Finland managed to almost eliminate homelessness. Since 2016, the programme focuses on prevention measures.

The last panellist, **Melanie Schmit, Housing First Manager at Limor, the Netherlands**, explained to participants that the Housing First approach was founded by a social psychologist who asked homeless people 'what would be a solution to your problem?', to which everyone answered that they need a home. Therefore, in the Netherlands, housing is provided to homeless people without any conditions because housing is a human right. Thus, housing is a starting point and not the end goal in the Housing First approach. Melanie explained that the previous 'staircase' approach has changed to further focus on the clients' needs. There are 30 000 homeless people in the Netherlands, half of them are young people who are mostly concentrated in large cities. Considering the changing profile of homelessness, a new housing programme for young people was developed. Melanie concluded that there is a higher demand than houses available, therefore, a waiting list was created.



**'The Housing First approach is not just an intervention, but a social movement that tries to stretch the boundaries of the current system' -**

Melanie Schmit, Housing First Manager, the Netherlands

Vicki thanked the panellists and launched the discussion with three questions:

**What makes the Housing First such an effective approach?**

**What are the challenges when implementing it?**

**If FEAD funding was available, how would you use it?**

Melanie mentioned two features of the approach. First, the accommodation that is provided to homeless people is not just temporary. Thus, the clients can build their future, maintain their confidence and develop a long-term relationship within their community. Second, the Housing First approach is based on human contact with the clients and on trust. The biggest challenge to Housing First is the lack of houses available. It is important to adopt a national housing strategy for the homeless. Moreover, FEAD support could help increase information about the Housing First in the Netherlands.

Juha agreed that Housing First is a long-term solution that helps tackle the recurring aspect of homelessness. Homeless people are considered as citizens, therefore, a close relationship is established between them and the social workers. There are various housing options available that homeless people can choose from. Listening to their needs increases success. Juha stressed that the lack of information available hinders the implementation process. It is important to increase the cooperation among relevant support services and combat prejudices which still exist in Finland. FEAD funding could help these efforts.

According to Štěpán, housing is what people want. It is important to give people a second or a third chance in life. We do not consider our clients as failures but work with them to provide solutions. The Housing First approach can still be improved to promote social integration, health recovery and employment. Since housing is scarce, we need to prioritise people who receive housing based on their motivation. However, there is no way to predict if a person will maintain the house. There is a lack of housing assistance when a person moves in to their new house. FEAD funding could address this issue.

The session ended with a Q&A with the presenters, encompassing questions about the different support measures available to youth, finance options for Housing First and integrated services.

## Session 8 – Interactive discussion on understanding the changing profile of homelessness in Europe

The interactive session was moderated by **Alessandra Cancedda, Senior Consultant at Ecorys**, and began with two presentations emphasising the current changes in homelessness in Europe.

**Wayne Stanley, Research and Policy Analyst at Focus Ireland** stressed that there is an increase in family homelessness in Ireland, particularly in the Dublin region. To better understand the phenomena, Focus Ireland conducted a qualitative questionnaire based on a telephone survey. The survey focused on the size, gender and self-reported reasons for entering homelessness. It also collected information on the individuals' previous four places of accommodation. The results showed that homelessness is a new experience for most families, who formerly lived in private rental housing. There is a high increase in single parent homeless families and female homelessness. The survey revealed that people are usually forced out of their home because of rent increases or on the landlord's request. Their first response is to stay with their family or friends which can result in a family breakdown and eventually homelessness.

**Caterina Cortese, Social Policy and Research Officer at fio.PSD, Italy**,

provided an overview of fio.PSD, a federation that works together to find solutions and improve policies to tackle homelessness. She explained that the data collected on homelessness is based on the National Institute of Statistics, which has conducted two surveys so far. Caritas and fio.PSD members collect data from participants in their services. According to different data sources, homeless people in Italy include migrants (mostly undocumented), young people, families, low-educated workers, women, people with disabilities, LGBT, people in transitions who are waiting for social benefits, etc.



Caterina noted the high importance of collecting homogenous data on a continuous basis. Furthermore, to combat stereotypes, photographic workshops were promoted. Various real-life pictures were used in a communication campaign. In particular, various pictures of their clients were taken at home to promote the Housing First model.

After these presentations, Alessandra invited the participants to discuss in groups how FEAD could better support countries in their efforts to tackle homelessness. The following suggestions were made:

- More budget is needed for accompanying measures; more focus on accompanying measures for homeless people to increase community outreach; less administrative requirements for homeless to access FEAD support;
- More flexibility to better meet the needs of target groups; more community outreach;
- FEAD could support the acquisition of house supplies that a house needs to function, such as cooking utensils;
- FEAD needs to be used for people to access social rights that they are entitled to;
- FEAD cannot be used to replace the national social protection mechanism, but can complement it;
- Prevention is important; active inclusion and private–public partnerships should be encouraged.
- Political will is key to developing integrated policies.

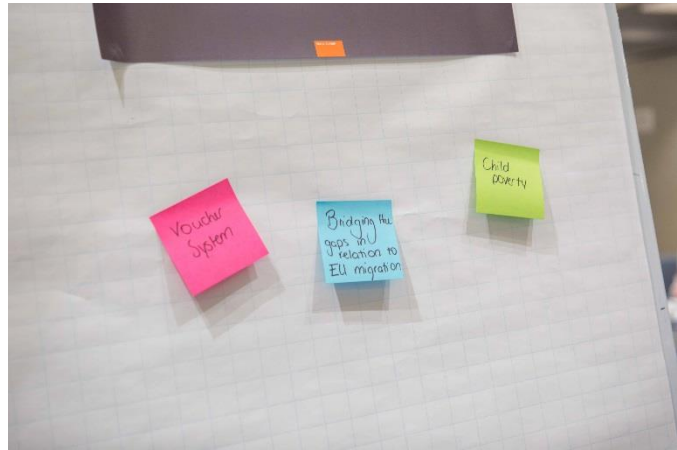


## Session 9 – Closing session

The closing plenary session brought all participants together to discuss potential future topics of interest for the Network Meetings in 2019, and to reflect on the presentations and discussions that took place over the two days. Suggestions included:

- Sharing best practices in designing FEAD programmes at the national level (How can cooperation between project implementers and policymakers be ensured? Which top-down or bottom-up strategy should be employed to reflect the needs of the clients?);
- Tackling prevention measures (rather than emergency assistance);
- Promoting the integration of health, housing and education policies that could improve social inclusion;

- Child poverty and young people;
- Active ageing and activities to address the specific needs of the elderly;
- Sharing best practices on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in Europe;
- The technical side of FEAD support: managing control and voucher systems, logistics, public procurement, food storage, etc.;
- More opportunities for the end recipients and volunteers to share their experiences in the FEAD Network Meetings;
- Bridging the gap in relation to EU migration policy: to address individual needs of migrants without discrimination;
- Sustainability of FEAD projects after FEAD funding ends;
- Exchange of ideas about the design of a new FEAD programme and its link to the new ESF+.



# Keep in touch! - Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an active community of practice with lively exchange of experiences and shared learning. It allows the sharing of tools, ideas and resources that can help deliver the fund successfully.

The Network discusses all aspects of planning, managing and delivering activities across Europe. Conversations within the FEAD Network can cover any theme related to the role of FEAD in the fight against poverty, for example food aid, child poverty, issues relating to migration, access to social services or assistance for older people.

By joining the Network, you'll be able to interact with people who do similar work to you in different European countries – wherever you are. You will also have the opportunity to continue the discussions arising in the Network Meetings online.

To join the online network and stay up to date with news, sign up by visiting: <http://eepurl.com/cfKkV9>.

Visit our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>

## Join the FEAD Network Facebook Group!

The Facebook Community Group is ideal for sharing content and referring colleagues to the group. Keep an eye out for new content including Facebook Live, vlogs and prizes as well as reports, presentations and photos from our FEAD Network events.

[Facebook.com/groups/FEADNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FEADNetwork)



## Contact us

Visit our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>

Or email us with your questions: [FEAD.Network@ecorys.com](mailto:FEAD.Network@ecorys.com)

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

This service is provided by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. It is financed by FEAD technical assistance, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.