

## Declaration of the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council on Combatting Homelessness

Avilés, September 13<sup>th</sup> 2023

As stated in the **Lisbon Declaration of 2021**, a key action of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, **homelessness is one of the most extreme forms of exclusion**, and one that negatively affects the physical and mental health of the people who experience it, impacts on their well-being and quality of life and obstructs their access to economic and social resources and services.

While the severity of the situation may vary from country to country, homelessness is **affecting all EU Member States**, and the data show us that there has been a worrying **increase in the number of homeless people over the past decade** in most Member States.

Although the causes of homelessness are numerous and are repeatedly analyzed and debated both within each Member State and at the EU level, **the search for solutions has revealed that the best formulas for tackling this issue are those focused on upstream prevention, access to affordable and decent housing, and on developing integrated and personalized social support processes**, in which each individual is empowered to choose the course of their own life.

Moreover, it is crucial to **establish inclusive community contexts** that provide opportunities for **de-institutionalization** and enable all persons affected by those processes, including homeless persons, to **pursue full lives of their own choosing in the community**.

With the Lisbon Declaration of 2021, the Member States agreed to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030. This is achieved by implementing specific policies and developing strategic national, regional and local frameworks in each member state, as well as launching the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness, together with the EU institutions and civil society organizations.

Two years after its creation, this Platform has taken decisive steps with respect to the key aspects defined back in 2021. Now, given the challenge that the persistence—and increase—of homelessness continues to represent for the EU and for the Member States, **it is necessary to promote and strengthen the work of the Platform and consolidate its position within the European Union**.

In the framework of the Platform, we need to develop and discuss on key instruments for policy-making, mutual learning, financing opportunities, the strengthening of empirical evidence, and the dissemination of good practices and formulas to eradicate the shortage of housing, while always placing the wishes and preferences of homeless people at the heart of our endeavours. We thank the European Commission, civil society and member state experts for the considerable progress achieved so far in developing the activities of the Platform.

On the occasion of the high-level meeting “Two years after Lisbon: European and national policy-making to fight homelessness” on 13 September 2023 in Aviles, Member States confirmed their commitment to combatting homelessness and to **promoting the achievement, by 2030, of the goals of the Lisbon Declaration of 2021**, subscribed previously by Ministers of all the EU Member States.

The Spanish Presidency, Member States and stakeholders draw the following **declaration** from the achievements of the Platform so far and invite all members to play their part in reinforcing its future work:

- Member States are expressing the will and the desire to be ambitious in the responses to homelessness, to promote strategic national, regional and local frameworks and to implement solutions that fully respect human rights, and that are focused on stable, secure and affordable housing and on personalized support. The Member States are also committed to promoting evidence-based policies. Moreover, the Member States believe that the fight against homelessness should be part of a wider comprehensive and integrated strategic plan against poverty and social exclusion.
- It is important to strengthen the commitment to the European Platform on Combating Homelessness as an essential instrument for moving forward together on this matter at the European level. This Platform must be a space for leadership, for promoting knowledge, for sharing good practices and learning, as well as for inspiring national policies. Specifically, this commitment includes:
  - o That the representatives of the EU Member States take action to disseminate the findings from the Platform to the various stakeholder groups in their countries, to align the National Strategies with European objectives
  - o Participation in the biennial high-level meetings of the European Platform, the next of which is scheduled during the Belgian Presidency in the first half of 2024
  - o An active participation in the activities of the European Platform and the mutual learning events by national delegations
  - o Development of a work program for the following period
- To sustain the work of the Platform, the European Commission is invited to continue in its supporting and promoting role, strengthening the work of the Platform in the context of the Action Plan to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights:
  - o The European Commission should facilitate the adoption of a new work programme for the following period, fully operational and supported by adequate funding and regular meetings.
  - o Ensure that the functioning of the Platform is included in the social, strategic agenda for the new European Commission



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