Brussels, 23 April 2021

Open letter concerning European commitment to end homelessness at the Porto Social Summit

Dear President of the European Council Michel,

Dear Prime Minister Costa,

Dear Members of the European Council,

Dear Members of the Employment and Social Affairs Council,

In its Communication on the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Commission rightly states that the number of homeless people has risen sharply and is currently unacceptably high. The European Commission also refers to the fact that the European Parliament and stakeholders want the EU to set an objective to end homelessness by 2030, which was most recently called for in the report on 'Access to Decent and Affordable Housing'.

As Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Ana Mendes Godinho, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security in Portugal, and Yves Leterme, Goodwill Ambassador for the Fight against Homelessness in Europe, jointly stated in June 2020[1]:

"Though complex, homelessness is not insurmountable and can be overcome. Ending homelessness requires resolute action addressing its root causes, and investing in prevention and empowerment strategies. The European Union also has an important role to play: **it can rally all interested stakeholders around a shared goal,** galvanise the political commitment of Member States, facilitate exchange of best practice and support the scale-up of evidence-based policies via the EU budget."

While we welcome the proposal for an EU Platform on Combatting Homelessness and the High Level Conference on it as important steps for putting homelessness on the European agenda and supporting Member States' actions, we regret that the European Commission did not include a shared European goal to reduce and ultimately end homelessness as a sub-target of the poverty reduction target in the action plan.

We believe that the Porto Social Summit is the perfect occasion to not only endorse the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, but to raise the bar even further when it comes to strengthening the social dimension of the Union. In the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, reducing poverty and social inequality has become the number one issue the EU should focus on for EU citizens according to a recent Eurobarometer[2]. Furthermore, the temporary moratorium on mortgage loans repayment that many member states have implemented in the coronavirus context are likely to start phasing-out. This will have a severe impact in distressed households and can lead to an unprecedented peak of homelessness in Europe.

That is why we are calling for a commitment to end homelessness by 2030 in both the Porto Social Summit Commitment of 7 May as the political declaration of the informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government on 8 May.

Homelessness is an extreme form of poverty and a violation of human rights that we simply cannot tolerate or ignore in the EU. Without specifically targeting homelessness under the poverty reduction target, we fear homeless people will be left by the wayside, at a time of increasing precarity.

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[1] In the article "Homelessness cannot be just another fact of life in the EU" https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/homelessness-cannot-be-just-another-fact-of-life-in-the-eu/

[2] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2020/parlemeter-2020/en-key-findings.pdf

Tackling homelessness should also be fully incorporated in the architecture of the economic and social policy coordination of the EU and followed up through the Social Scoreboard of the Semester process. If a reduction of homelessness will not be visible in the results for the poverty reduction target in the Social Scoreboard, because not measured, it would risk being irrelevant for this category of people living in extreme poverty. The EU Platform on Combatting Homelessness can also only reach its full potential if it's underpinned by solid data.

The European Union will not solve homelessness alone. Much of the work needs to be done at national, regional and local level. However, an unequivocal European commitment, together with concrete support, can strengthen the work done by all actors. That's why we, from the European to the local level are calling on you to be bold and give real political impetus to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan by adopting an EU goal to end homelessness by 2030.

We urge you to consider these issues in the preparation of the Porto Social Summit 7-8 May.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the European Parliament

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