

Statement

19 November 2021

FEANTSA calls for the new European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) to scale up access to safe housing: An efficient EU asylum system should ensure that no asylum seeker experiences homelessness in Europe

On the 16th of November, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) held its 11th edition of the EASO Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting in Malta to discuss the situation of asylum seekers in the EU and the EASO activities, particularly the added value of the new European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA), in the process of guaranteeing international protection.

As a member of the Consultative Forum, FEANTSA takes this opportunity to welcome the new Agency and to **raise awareness on the increasing number of individuals who experience homelessness while they are waiting for a result on their international protection request or after they have been granted the refugee status.**

Already in 2020, FEANTSA's 5th Housing Exclusion Overview report¹ showed that homelessness among people in exile increased in all countries where data were available²: in Greece, 51% of the almost 4000 unaccompanied minors were sleeping rough while in Germany families with children accounted for over 27% of homeless refugees. In England, 32% of the homeless individuals accommodated in the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) services were refugees while 25% of the homeless individuals in Brussels were asylum seekers. According to the latest EASO report published in February 2021, the COVID 19 pandemic has worsened the situation for asylum seekers and refugees, making it even more difficult for newly recognised refugees to find jobs or making them unemployed and so at risk of homelessness or unsafe housing.³ FEANTSA members who are homelessness service providers have also signalled the increasing presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the sector, as a result of overcrowding in the national asylum systems and lack of access to independent housing.

In the context of the reinforced mandate of EASO transformed in the European Union Asylum Agency, FEANTSA raises awareness on the need to monitor closely the access to housing for asylum seekers and for those individuals with acquired international protection. We call for a better data collection on the magnitude of this phenomenon across Europe and for developing measures to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have access to adequate housing at all times.

¹ <https://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2020/07/23/fifth-overview-of-housing-exclusion-in-europe-2020?bcParent=26>

² Including Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and France.

³ <https://easo.europa.eu/asylum-report-2021>

As part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the European Parliament and the Council have agreed in the summer of 2021 to transform the European Asylum Support Office into a European Union Agency of Asylum.⁴ The new EUAA agency should build on the expertise of the EASO and will aim at contributing to obtaining:

- **More efficient asylum systems** through greater operational and technical support to Member States, including training, preparedness, information analysis, and exchange of information.
- **Improved assistance on request:** A reserve of 500 experts including interpreters, case handlers or reception specialists will be ready to be deployed as part of asylum support teams at the request of Member States. Agency experts will have the mandate to prepare the entire administrative asylum procedure for decision by national authorities and offer assistance in the appeal stage.
- **Uniform, high-quality decision-making** by developing operational standards, indicators, guidelines and best practices for the implementation of Union law on asylum.
- **Better monitoring and reporting** on Member States' asylum and reception systems to ensure more consistent practices throughout Europe, fully in line with EU law. The Commission will be able to issue recommendations with assistance measures.
- **Capacity building in non-EU countries** to improve asylum and reception systems and support EU and Member State resettlement schemes, building on the existing cooperation with UN agencies.

As part of its operational and technical assistance, it is planned that the EUAA shall organise and coordinate, for a limited period of time several operational and technical measures, including f) *advise and coordinate the setting up or provision of reception facilities by the Member States, in particular emergency accommodation, transport and medical assistance.*⁵

FEANTSA welcomes the new Agency and looks forward to identifying possibilities of collaboration in what concerns the access to adequate housing within the European asylum system. We are committed to promote the right to housing for all, as we strongly believe that having a safe place to live in can constitute the gateway to integration and an essential factor of successful social inclusion.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3241

⁵ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ce773c1e-1689-11e6-ba9a-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF