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## FEANTSA Forum 2025 Convenes in Athens to Drive Progress on Ending Homelessness Across Europe

**Athens, Greece - 13-14 May 2025** – More than 400 practitioners, advocates, policymakers, people with experience of homelessness, researchers and other stakeholders from across Europe gathered in Athens in May for the FEANTSA Forum 2025, the continent's leading annual conference dedicated to tackling homelessness. Organised by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, in collaboration with Emfasis and support from the City of Athens and Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, the Forum provided a space for in-depth reflection, peer learning, and shared strategy at a moment of growing urgency for the homelessness sector across Europe.

In Greece, the effects of prolonged economic crisis, austerity policies, and underinvestment in social services have created persistent challenges for people experiencing homelessness. While recent years have seen promising developments, access to affordable, stable housing remains extremely limited, especially for migrants, Roma communities, and those with irregular legal status. Civil society organisations play a crucial role in filling gaps left by fragmented public services, often operating under intense financial and political pressure. Hosting the FEANTSA Forum in Athens highlights both the urgent need for systemic change in Greece and the resilience and innovation of those working to address homelessness.

The Forum opened with a powerful plenary exploring the role of emergency shelters in responding to homelessness. Mike Allen, Director of Advocacy at Focus Ireland, challenged the sector to reflect on the dilemmas posed by temporary accommodation. "By opening the shelter, the shelter provider has taken ownership of the problem, but has no access to the solution," he said. His words underscored a key theme of the event: while shelters provide critical emergency support, only access to adequate housing can end homelessness.

The opening plenary laid the groundwork for the panel discussion in which experts from public authorities, civil society and experts by experience discussed key questions around the purpose, function and future direction of shelter. A shared emphasis was placed on the importance of leading with dignity in all aspects of shelter provision and offering adapted services designed for and with the people accessing the accommodation.

Over 2 days, the Forum offered participants the opportunity to attend site visits and 40 different sessions. It brought together leading voices from across Europe and beyond, including

policymakers, academics, service providers, and advocates. These voices included, but are not limited to, representatives from the European Commission, public authorities and agencies as well as experts by experience who brought lived perspectives on migration, exclusion, and homelessness to the forefront.

Throughout the Forum, a wide range of topics were covered. Participants explored how homelessness intersects with violence, migration, age, racial injustice, gender, sex work and other issues. A new issue on the agenda was how to tackle homelessness under populist, right wing governments. From anti-NGO narratives, to the criminalisation of homelessness; from hostile migration policies to the ongoing housing crisis, the Forum made clear that many frontline homelessness organisations are working in increasingly challenging environments. Nonetheless, the energy and joint commitment to ending homelessness amongst participants made the Forum an inspiring occasion.

The role of the EU in the fight against homelessness was a recurring theme, with various new European projects and initiatives on the agenda, as well sessions on EU funding and legislation as well as the growing gap between housing costs and incomes across Europe. Speakers and panellists returned repeatedly to the widening affordability crisis, energy poverty, and the failure of housing markets to deliver for low-income households. Discussions also focused on the importance of scaling Housing First.

The event closed with a keynote address from Professor Margot Kushel, Director of the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative at the University of California, San Francisco. Drawing on her research in the United States, and especially California, she shared lessons on effective policies and services. She also spoke about the importance of evidence-based policy and the need to defend it. She closed her presentation with a clear message: 'the solution to homelessness is housing, and bridging the gap between housing costs and income is essential.'

The FEANTSA Forum 2025 confirmed once again that homelessness is not inevitable. It is the result of policy decisions and can be ended through political will, sustained investment, and rights-based solutions. As the Forum came to a close, participants left with renewed determination to continue working, often against the odds, to deliver on the shared European goal of ending homelessness.

**FEANTSA** is the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. We are the only European NGO focusing exclusively on the fight against homelessness. Working with over 130 member organisations from 27 countries, our goal is to end to homelessness in Europe. FEANTSA's members are predominantly NGOs working with homeless people, but also other stakeholders involved in the fight against homelessness such as public authorities, social housing providers, foundations, and research entities.

**Emfasis** Foundation, based in Athens, is a Greek non-profit organisation providing support to people experiencing homelessness and social exclusion. Through streetwork, psychosocial support, and

*emergency relief, Emfasis empowers vulnerable individuals and advocates for systemic change.*

The FEANTSA Forum 2025 attracted strong media attention, underscoring the urgency of the housing and homelessness crisis in Greece and across Europe. Coverage appeared in prominent local outlets, including [Pressenza](#), [Flash](#), [Fortune Greece](#), [EFSYN](#), [Insider](#), [Athina 984](#), [iNews.gr](#), [Transform Community](#), and [Kathimerini](#).