Cities need increased funding and local housing to tackle youth homelessness

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As youth homelessness continues to rise across Europe, a new Eurocities report shows that cities need increased EU and national funding to invest in social measures aimed at ending youth homelessness. Cities also say they require greater investment in affordable and social housing to tackle the growing crisis.

> Throughout Europe, the number of young people experiencing homelessness is rising and is likely to continue to increase in the coming months," says André Sobczak, Secretary General of Eurocities. "Cities have a key role to play in the EU's goal to end youth homelessness by 2030, but they can't do it alone. The EU and Member States must give them the support and resources they need to make this ambition a reality.

The Ending youth homelessness in cities report from Eurocities – which gathered responses from 29 cities – shows that youth homelessness has been made significantly worse by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, unaffordable housing and the increased cost of living.

In Dublin, for example, the number of homeless young people increased by 50% in the past year, and in Madrid there has been a 10% increase since 2021. Cities also see signs of more young people 'sofa surfing', which often precedes other forms of homelessness.

The data provided by cities presents the main profiles of youth experiencing homelessness, with 96% of cities saying that foster care leavers are particularly at risk.

Among the drivers that push young people into homelessness, 92% of cities highlight the impact of unaffordable housing linked with insufficient income. Other factors include mental health difficulties and substance abuse.

To respond to the crisis, cities make it clear that they require increased funding from their national governments and better access to EU funds, particularly the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. This funding can be used for local integrated projects that boost young people's health, education and job opportunities, and provide supported housing.

Cities also state the need for the EU and national governments to invest in social and affordable housing and to remove restrictive state aid rules that are preventing them from implementing long-term Housing First responses.

At EU level, cities say their involvement in the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness should be reinforced. This platform has supported the adoption of national strategies, but local governments have had limited access to it.

The report also outlines the need to:

- Improve data collection on homelessness. While many cities have systems in place to collect data on homelessness, there is no unified EU-wide definition of homelessness or clear methodology for collecting data on it. This makes it difficult to compare data between cities and countries.

- Include a youth-focused approach in EU, national and local homelessness strategies, recognising that young people face unique vulnerabilities linked to homelessness, such as intergenerational trauma and poverty, and specific challenges related to their age, including mental health and difficulties accessing stable housing.

The data used to compile the Ending youth homelessness in cities report was provided by 29 cities from 15 European countries. The evidence was gathered directly from city authorities and their partner organisations. The responses were integrated into a comparative analysis to identify trends in youth homelessness across Europe and map inspiring practices. Eurocities wants to make cities places where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, is able to move around safely, access quality and inclusive public services and benefit from a healthy environment. We do this by networking more than 200 larger European cities, which together represent some 150 million people across 38 countries, and by gathering evidence of how policy making impacts on people to inspire other cities and EU decision makers.

Connect with us at https://eurocities.eu/ or by following our Housing First is a policy that offers unconditional, permanent housing as quickly as possible to homeless people, and other supportive services afterward.

The data used to compile the

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