SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY:

THE IRISH PRESIDENCY EU MINISTERIAL ON COMBATTING HOMELESSNESS

Depaul Ireland & Depaul International

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As Ministers with responsibility for housing and homelessness convene in Dublin, Ireland, for the EU Ministerial meeting on Combatting Homelessness under the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Depaul Ireland and Depaul International call on Ministers to seize this unique opportunity to accelerate efforts to tackle the escalating homelessness crisis across Europe. While the recent increased political attention for the issue of homelessness in Ireland and at EU level is welcome, it comes in response to homelessness rising to record levels across almost every Member State, including Ireland.

Urgent action and investment is required.

HOMELESSNESS IN IRELAND AND ACROSS THE EU

The European Affordable Housing Plan highlights that **more than one million people, including 400,000 children, are homeless in the EU**, as well as about 80,000 sleeping rough.[1] This is in spite of the Lisbon Declaration of 2021, in which all Member States committed to a shared goal of working towards ending homelessness in Europe by 2030.

Throughout 2025 and 2026, **Ireland** has seen significant increases in homelessness. The latest figures for August 2026, which continue to climb, reveal that **17,885 individuals, including 5,830 children**, are experiencing the intense trauma and hardship of living in temporary accommodation services around Ireland.[2] Families and individuals trapped in the cycle of homelessness feel they are losing agency and voice. The environment for people who are experiencing homelessness, those in direct provision, and those who sleep rough is fraught.

The situation is similarly dire in other EU countries. While definitions and methodologies vary, credible estimates in the countries where Depaul works suggest:

- **333,000 individuals** experience homelessness in **France**.[3]
- At least **2,000** people meet the legal definition of homelessness in **Croatia**, while the Croatian Homeless Network estimates several times more people – at least **10,000** – live without access to water, sanitation, electricity or heating, i.e. in inadequate and unsafe housing conditions.[4]
- **71,076 individuals** in **Slovakia** experience homelessness.[5]
- While the scale of homelessness in EU candidate country **Ukraine** is hard to accurately quantify because reliable data is not collected during the ongoing conflict, Depaul Ukraine's 2026 research indicates that the number of homeless people in Ukraine may range from **57,000 to 121,000 individuals**, with many more at high risk of homelessness after being displaced or as soldiers return from the front lines.

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THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE COURSE

The Irish Presidency's leadership and the EU Ministerial meeting on Combatting Homelessness presents a vital opportunity to turn the tide on homelessness. Aligned with the mid-term review of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH), this meeting must take a fresh look at what is and is not working and **make commitments to new action and enhanced investment.**

The recent adoption of the European Council Recommendation on Fighting Housing Exclusion, including Homelessness, sets out a clear roadmap for Member States with a strong emphasis on prevention, housing-led approaches, including Housing First, and access to permanent housing.

As negotiations on the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034 progress, the proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) could provide an important opportunity to strengthen investment in homelessness prevention, social housing and long-term housing solutions.

The next MFF should support implementation of the European Affordable Housing Plan, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Council Recommendation on Fighting Housing Exclusion, consistent with the Lisbon Declaration and EPOCH.

Drawing on our frontline experience across Europe, Depaul International and our members in Croatia, France, Ireland and Slovakia recommend:

1. Member States and EU institutions translate the EU's focus on tackling the housing and homelessness crisis into dedicated investment to prevent and end homelessness through national investment plans and the next MFF's funding mechanisms.

- **Prioritise social housing investment:** Ring-fence investment in social housing, distinguishing it from broader definitions of affordable housing, and prioritise access for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- **Plan for the scale-up of Housing First:** Support sustainable, housing-led approaches that enable rapid access to permanent accommodation, rather than relying on temporary or staircase models.
- **Invest in homelessness prevention:** Fund early intervention, tenancy sustainment, eviction prevention, housing advice and targeted financial support.
- **Strengthen integration of supportive housing and health and social care:** Invest in supportive housing alongside coordinated health and social care services, ensuring people experiencing homelessness can access the ongoing support they need to maintain stable, permanent housing.
- **Prioritise people experiencing severe exclusion**: Ensure funding reaches groups whose needs are often not met by mainstream services.

2. In addition Member States should:

- **Explicitly include homelessness in future national funding plans:** Include dedicated measures for prevention, social housing, Housing First and integrated support.
- **Address housing vulnerability in crisis and recovery:** Support climate-resilient housing and responses to displacement and housing loss, drawing on learning from Ukraine and other emergency contexts.
- **Adopt consistent definitions:** Promote the use of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) Light to improve the consistency and comparability of homelessness data across Member States, and ensure consistency with the proposed global definition currently before the United Nations Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All.
- **Strengthen national data collection:** Improve reporting on homelessness, evictions, pathways into homelessness and outcomes following rehousing.

3. At EU level, strengthen coordination and accountability:

- **Monitor progress through EPOCH:** Establish regular EU-level reporting and monitoring, including progress towards preventing homelessness and increasing access to permanent housing.
- **Implement the Council Recommendation on Fighting Housing Exclusion:** Ensure Member States translate the Recommendation, adopted October 2026, into national policies and investment priorities.
- **Align EU funding and policy:** Ensure the next MFF supports implementation of the European Affordable Housing Plan and EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, with dedicated investment in homelessness prevention and permanent housing.
- **Lived experience leadership:** Ensure people with lived experience are not merely consulted but actively participate in and influence decision-making, programme design, delivery and evaluation.

The next MFF provides an opportunity to shift European investment towards preventing homelessness and enabling access to decent and genuinely affordable permanent housing. Member States should translate these priorities into investment plans, supported by clear funding commitments, improved data and alignment between EU housing and homelessness policy.

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SOURCES

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[2] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2026) Monthly Homelessness Report. Report on the Number of Individuals, Families and Children accessing State Funded Local Authority Homeless Emergency Accommodation. August 2026. https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/ee1afe56/Homeless_Report_August_2026.pdf

[3] OECD (2022) Country note: Date on homelessness in France. https://webfs.oecd.org/Els-com/Affordable_Housing_Database/Country%20notes/Homelessness-FRA.pdf

[4] Office of the Ombudswoman / Hina / Mladenka Tomić (2025) Croatia Still Fails to "See" Homeless People and Their Problems. https://www.ombudsman.hr/en/croatia-still-fails-to-see-homeless-people-and-their-problems/

[5] OECD (2021) Country note: Date on homelessness in the Slovak Republic. https://webfs.oecd.org/Els-com/Affordable_Housing_Database/Country%20notes/Homelessness-SVK.pdf

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ABOUT DEPAUL INTERNATIONAL

Depaul International oversees a group of leading homelessness charities, working across the world with a mission to end homelessness, supporting the most marginalised and improving the lives of those affected by homelessness. Set up in 1989, Depaul charities include Croatia, France, Ireland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the UK and the USA. Since 1989, the Depaul family has worked with over 549,500 people experiencing homelessness. We exist because we believe everyone deserves the dignity and security of a place to call home. We are locally governed and locally run and committed to ending homelessness and improving the lives of people affected by it.

The Depaul Group also has a key strategic relationship with the Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH), which focuses on ending homelessness globally by engaging with the UN and bridging research, policy and practice, and oversees the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA), which mobilises the Vincentian Family across the world to develop new housing and other projects. Our local-to-global structure enables us to connect evidence and innovation, identify emerging trends, analyse best practice and share knowledge internationally.

If you have any enquiries for Depaul International please email **Dan.Jones@depaulinternational.org.**

ABOUT DEPAUL IRELAND

Established in 2002 in Ireland and 2005 in Northern Ireland, Depaul Ireland is now a leading cross-border organisation. Across its 44 services, Depaul supported more than 8,200 people in 2025 and delivered record-breaking results in moving people out of emergency accommodation and into long-term homes, with 914 households and 1,452 individuals moving out of homelessness. However, the scale of the ongoing housing and cost-of-living crisis placed unprecedented pressure on our frontline services. Our focus is on those experiencing homelessness and marginalisation, who need vital support and the opportunity to realise their true potential. Our mission is to end homelessness and change lives, and over the next three years, we aim to transform the lives of 3,500 individuals by moving them out of homelessness or out of homeless services. We offer support and guidance to break the cycle of homelessness and assist our service users in making positive choices for their future. Depaul believes homelessness has no place.

If you have any enquiries for Depaul Ireland please email **colette.campbell@depaulcharity.net.**

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