
Homelessness: EU Platform to give a home. The testimony of Elda Jesus Coimbra, “no one sleeping on the streets actually wants it”.

700,000 people in Europe are homeless and sleep on the streets, a number that has increased by 70% in the last decade. Today, the European institutions and Member States have officially decided to end what is “the most extreme form of social exclusion” in the words of Commissioner Nicholas Schmidt. To help implement Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights – about assisting and housing the homeless –, a European Platform on Combatting Homelessness was launched in Lisbon during the high-level conference organized by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. It will help Member States to share “experiences” to end homelessness in Europe by 2030. “No one sleeping on the streets actually wants it”, said Elda Jesus Coimbra, one of the guest speakers who gave her testimony at the conference. “I left the street”, Elda said, “when someone gave me a set of keys and told me that that was my home”. Later in the day, awards were also conferred to projects that help remove people from the streets in Europe: the first prize went to the #HousingFirst project in the Moravian-Silesian region, Czech Republic, aimed at combating the social exclusion of Roma people; the second prize went to the Portuguese project “É Uma Mesa” run by the “Crescer” association, which works for the reintegration of the homeless through work, particularly in a restaurant. Caritas Trieste won the third prize with the Social Housing project. “Providing to everyone a roof is not charity. It is social justice. And social justice is the task of public authorities and governments”, said Commissioner Schmidt.

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