

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000161/26
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(15 January 2026)**

Subject: Cold weather emergency and the homeless in Sicily — EU initiatives under the EPOCH and ESF+ instruments

Winter weather exacerbates health risks for the homeless, and especially for those living on the streets and not using emergency shelter facilities. It is therefore essential to have cold weather plans and community-based services available for use in order to prevent serious and avoidable consequences for their health.

The Commission supports Member States in tackling homelessness, within the framework of EU competencies, through the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH), including the Lisbon Declaration, and via the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The ESF+ Regulation also provides for food and/or basic material assistance interventions for people experiencing severe material deprivation.

Can the Commission indicate:

1. What initiatives it will promote, within the framework of EPOCH, to support cold weather plans, including guidelines on minimum standards for emergency shelter and continuity of services?
2. What types of eligible measures and opportunities exist, under ESF+ and EU technical assistance, including food and/or basic material assistance, that can offer solutions in cold weather periods and social inclusion pathways for the homeless, including in regions like Sicily?
3. Whether it will enhance the monitoring and comparability of EU statistics on homelessness and cold weather services, including any relevant indicators and tools for assessing measures financed through EU instruments?

Submitted: 15.1.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Minzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(6 March 2026)**

In the context of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness ⁽¹⁾, the Commission already supports the development of integrated policy responses to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including adequate and timely provision of emergency accommodation.

Through strengthening evidence on homelessness, mutual learning activities for policy-makers and practitioners and promoting funding possibilities, the Platform facilitates implementation of effective approaches in outreach, emergency accommodation and provision of services, in line with the objectives of the Lisbon Declaration.

Under the European Social Fund + (ESF+), eligible measures to support homeless people in regions like Sicily combine food and basic material assistance, shelter services, and integrated social inclusion pathways.

A concrete example includes the call for proposals ‘Integra’ ⁽²⁾, co-financed by the national ESF+ programme ‘Social inclusion 2021-2027’, while several projects addressing homelessness in Sicily were also supported under the operational programme ‘Metropolitan cities 2014-2020’ ⁽³⁾ and further opportunities will continue under the national programme ‘Metropolitan cities plus 2021-2027’ ⁽⁴⁾.

Finally, a dedicated work strand of the Platform ⁽⁵⁾ focuses on strengthening the evidence base and monitoring of homelessness across Member States.

⁽¹⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/homelessness_en.

⁽²⁾ https://trasparenza.lavoro.gov.it/archivio105_delibera-anac-n-6012023-procedure_0_94_984_1.html.

⁽³⁾ Relevant ESF projects include, for example, the following ones : ‘Poli diurni e notturni’ in Palermo (<https://www.pnmetroplus.it/progetto/?codice=PA3.2.2.a>), ‘Accompagnamento all’abitare’ in Messina (<https://www.pnmetroplus.it/progetto/?codice=ME3.1.1.a>), and ‘Habitato — React’ in Catania (<https://ponmetro.comune.catania.it/habito-react/>).

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.pnmetroplus.it/home-2/pon-metro-plus-21-27/pn-metro-21-27-2/>.

⁽⁵⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/homelessness/strengthen-evidence-homelessness_en.

Within this work strand the Commission financially supports multiple projects which aim to improve data comparability through common methodologies and analytical tools ⁽⁶⁾, including the Monitoring Framework on Homelessness Data and Measurement ⁽⁷⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ https://www.kuleuven.be/lucas/en/eu_homelessness_counts.

⁽⁷⁾ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-monitoring-framework-to-measure-homelessness_3e98455b-en.html.