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What's happening at  
the European  
Parliament in Strasbourg  
**BY JESSIE MAGEE**



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## EU commitment to end homelessness?

■ FOLLOWING the first snowfall of the winter in Dublin last week, attention is turning afresh to the 2,000 or so people sleeping rough of the streets of the capital.

The growing numbers of people with little more than blankets and cardboard for shelter seems to call into question a promise made by the Government this summer that within two years, no person will have to sleep rough or remain longer than six months in emergency accommodation.

And at EU level, a commitment was made in April of this year to end street homelessness across Europe by 2015.

The pledge was adopted as part of European Parliament policy after a majority of MEPs signed a Written Declaration supporting the target.

Meanwhile, back in Dublin, the Simon Community said in early October that its centres are unable to meet the rising demand for help.

The group said requests for the services of its 'rough sleeper' team, which encourages homeless people to access accommodation, rose by almost half during the first six months of 2008.

Sinn Féin MEP Mary Lou McDonald, a driving force behind the EU campaign to end homelessness, is applying pressure on the European Parliament to keep its word.

"The Written Declaration is not simply an aspiration, it's a policy objective that must be achieved," she said.

She called for an update on what action each member state has taken to begin the process of ending homelessness.

"The EU Parliament can ask the European Council, Commission and each country to explain their failure to act," she said, "should it appear at any stage that the date of 2015 is in jeopardy."

Ms McDonald claimed the EU was "more than capable" of meeting the challenge to end homelessness, if member states and EU institutions showed that they had 'the political will to make it happen.'