



**European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless
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For Immediate Release**

PRESS RELEASE

Most EU Member States Fail to Ensure the Right to Housing

The Council of Europe's European Committee on Social Rights (ECSR) released its annual conclusions at the end of January. This year they looked at whether countries live up to their responsibilities to ensure the right to housing. Six of the eight EU Member States that are bound deliver on this fundamental right, failed to do so - France, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia. Only Finland and Sweden met the requirements.

Freek Spinnewijn, Director of FEANTSA, said "The example of Finland and Sweden shows that it is possible to respect the right to housing, which should be an encouragement for other countries to step up their ambition." Referring to the ECSR Conclusions, Spinnewijn went on to say: "While countries like France and Italy were severely criticized for their inadequate measures to address homelessness and to ensure the right to housing, Finland was congratulated on its successfully implemented strategy to reduce homelessness by half by 2011."

Regarding France, Spinnewijn stated that: "It is disappointing that despite passing an enforceable right to housing (DALO) in 2007, partly a response to FEANTSA's successful collective complaint against France, the country still fails to provide people with access to housing of an adequate standard (Article 31.1), has failed to significantly reduce the number of people who are homeless (Article 31.2) and fails to ensure that housing prices be accessible to those with limited resources (Article 31.3)."

The ECSR condemned France for its policy of forced evictions. Based on evidence provided by FEANTSA, the ECSR found it unacceptable that between 2007 and 2009, 91,000 families were threatened with eviction with no prospect of being re-housed and were no longer entitled to housing benefits. No follow-up is secured, be it of tenants who left of their own accord or tenants who were evicted by law enforcement agencies.

Spinnewijn added: "our Italian member organization, Fio.PSD, reports that in addition to Italy's absolute failure to deliver on the right to housing or meet any of the requirements of Article 31, the data in the government's report is questionable. Seemingly neither the Ministry of Welfare nor homeless service providers were consulted about statistics on homelessness and housing in Italy." The ECSR further condemned Italy's housing benefit policies which are highly discriminatory towards non-Italian born citizens.

Spinnewijn concluded that "These reports are damning evidence of the lack of political will and support for commitments that these countries have made at international level. National and local organizations fight on behalf of vulnerable people to access their rights to safe, decent and affordable housing. Countries who fail to ensure these rights condemn people to live in substandard accommodation, wait for years on social housing lists, and in some cases face increasing debt levels or even forced eviction."

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Find out more from www.feantsa.org or call 0032 2 538 66 69

Notes for editors:

1. [FEANTSA](http://www.feantsa.org) is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level.
2. The conclusions by country are available [here](#) and the reports are [here](#).
3. **Article 31 of the Revised Social Charter:**

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to housing, the Parties undertake to take measures designed:

1. to promote access to housing of an adequate standard;
2. to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination;
3. to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.

5. **Reporting Process to the Council of Europe on the Revised Social Charter:**

Every year, all countries who have ratified the Revised Social Charter must submit a report to the European Committee of Social Rights. National governments report on specific articles which are divided into four thematic groups. So, all countries report on all of the provisions of the Revised Social Charter every four years.

The reports submitted at the beginning of 2011 included Article 31, the Right to Housing. The governments of the countries that have signed up to Article 31 justified their laws and policies on the right to housing and the reduction of homelessness. The Council of Europe's European Committee on Social Rights reviewed the reports and in January 2012 published detailed conclusions which clearly state whether a country upholds the rights or not.

6. Not all countries have signed up to Article 31. In fact, amongst the EU Member States, only Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden have accepted Article 31.

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