



European Federation of National Organisations Working  
With the Homeless

Federatie Opvang

European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless  
Press Release – 4th July 2012  
For Immediate Release

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Dutch Government Policy on Local Connections Bars Homeless People from Emergency Shelters**

Several aspects of Dutch legislation, policy and practice, deny vulnerable groups their right to emergency shelter if they have not lived in the community for two to three years. By excluding homeless people, recovering addicts and migrants, who for a multitude of reasons cannot either prove or sustain residence over the required period, The Netherlands fails to comply with provisions of the Revised Social Charter of the Council of Europe, including the right to housing.

Freek Spinnewijn, Director of FEANTSA, said that, "The Netherlands has policies that severely and illegally limit access to services for very vulnerable groups, including homeless people, recovering drug addicts, homeless youth and migrants." Spinnewijn went on to say, "This is unacceptable and FEANTSA is therefore taking the case to the Council of Europe because The Netherlands are clearly in contravention of the European Social Charter. The Netherlands must implement policies that effectively address the failure to ensure access to emergency shelter and appropriate quality and availability of emergency shelter."

Rina Beers, President of FEANTSA and representing Federatie Opvang in The Netherlands, commented, "This collective complaint against The Netherlands demonstrates that six articles of the Revised Social Charter have been breached by Dutch policy. These local connection restrictions make it difficult for our members to provide services and are unacceptable. A clear decision from the Council of Europe should motivate a new government to take appropriate and decisive action to abolish these inhumane restrictions."

Find out more from [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org) or call 0032 2 538 66 69

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**Notes for editors:**

1. **FEANTSA** 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. More information at: [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)
2. The Council of Europe's Collective Complaint mechanism allows international non-governmental organizations to submit complaints against States Parties governments who fail to live up to their obligations under the European Social Charter. FEANTSA's collective complaint against The Netherlands was submitted to the Council of Europe on 2 July 2012 and outlined how The Netherlands' policy restricts access to emergency shelter for many vulnerable groups. More specifically, the complaint asserts that the Dutch government has breached the following Articles of the Revised European Social Charter.

Article 13 - the right to social and medical assistance;  
Article 16 - The right of the family to social, legal and economic protection;  
Article 17 - The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection;  
Article 19 - The right of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance;  
Article 30 - The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion;  
Article 31 - the right to housing;  
Alone or read in conjunction with Article E on non-discrimination.

Following the submission of the complaint, the European Committee on Social Rights will determine whether the complaint is admissible. Following this decision, the Committee can take up to a year to make and publish its final decision.

*For further details, please contact [Suzannah Young](#), FEANTSA Communications Officer*

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