



Joint Press Release

24th January 2025

Czech Housing Policy Violates European Social Charter, Rules European Committee of Social Rights

In a landmark decision, the European Committee of Social Rights has unequivocally condemned the Czech Republic for its deficient housing policy, which violates the European Social Charter. The ruling, delivered in September 2024, follows a collective complaint submitted by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) in 2020. The Committee's findings reveal serious shortcomings in the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to evictions, the provision of social housing and systemic discrimination against the Roma community.

The Complaint

FEANTSA's collective complaint against the Czech Republic in 2020 highlighted a failure to respect the right of families to social, legal and economic protection (Article 16 of the Charter), which includes the right to housing:

- ongoing threats to the security of tenure and risk of eviction for poor households, in particular from the Roma minority;
- the inadequate supply of social housing, the ineffectiveness of judicial remedies in this regard and disproportionate reductions in housing supplements;
- intensification of social and racial discrimination, including territorial segregation of Roma;

A 2024 report on housing exclusion by the Housing Initiative, *Iniciativa Za bydlení*, highlights the severity of the housing crisis in Czechia, revealing that some 161,000 people, including 62,000 children, are directly affected by housing shortages. It also finds that 1.6 million inhabitants of the Czech Republic face serious housing problems.¹

¹ Czech Republic at the Crossroads. Housing Exclusion Report 2024 https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5ef4ac1cc5dd69384a10c66e/67051b21b2774f44ad64218a_zprava2024_compr.pdf

The report highlights how the housing shortage, combined with inadequate preventive measures and a lack of legal safeguards, creates opportunities for exploitation by so-called 'poverty traders'.

An ERGO network survey showed that Roma living in segregated localities and hostels often face eviction without adequate notice or provision of alternative housing. 54% of respondents reported being forced to leave their homes without any form of compensation.²

In this critical situation, the government has failed to adopt a law on housing for vulnerable groups and to recognise the right to housing. Thus, without legal recognition of the right to housing in national law, and despite the persistence of dangerous housing conditions, there is no effective legal protection of the right to adequate housing in the Czech Republic.

The Decision on the merits

In its September 2024 decision, the European Committee of Social Rights concluded that the Czech Republic had indeed committed a violation of Article 16 due to:

- Legislation on evictions that fails to provide necessary safeguards for vulnerable groups, including the absence of a requirement to offer alternative accommodation or consult with those affected.
- A severely inadequate supply of social housing and the lack of effective measures to address housing shortages, including the failure to recognise the right to housing in domestic legislation.
- Existing barriers to accessing housing benefits for low-income and disadvantaged groups in socially excluded areas.

The Impact on Roma Communities

The Committee found that these failures disproportionately affect Roma families:

- Evictions: Roma families face a higher risk of eviction due to inadequate legal safeguards and the absence of alternative housing options.
- Social Housing Access: Insufficient measures to ensure Roma access to social housing exacerbate their exclusion.
- Barriers to Housing Benefits: Discriminatory practices, such as restrictions on housing benefits for those living in hostels, disproportionately affect Roma families.

FEANTSA's Policy Officer, Maria Jose Aldanas, emphasised the wider significance of this decision: *"It sends a clear message that housing policies must prioritise the needs of vulnerable groups and eliminate discriminatory practices across Europe. This decision addresses long-standing concerns raised by international bodies about the treatment of Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups"*.

A way forward

² Roma access to quality and affordable housing in the Czech Republic 2023: <https://ergonetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CZECH-REPUBLIC-Roma-access-to-quality-and-affordable-housing-final.pdf>

This decision provides an opportunity for the Czech Republic to reform its social and housing policies to ensure compliance with European human rights standards. FEANTSA Director Freek Spinnewijn expressed hope for meaningful change: *"We welcome the decision of the European Committee of Social Rights and look forward to the steps the Czech government will take to address these serious concerns, in particular, the adoption of measures that specifically addresses the housing needs of vulnerable people and prevents homelessness."*

Barbora Bírová, Director of the Platform for Social Housing, stressed the importance of adopting the draft bill on housing assistance currently under discussion in the country: *"In the Czech Republic we lack comprehensive legislation to prevent and end homelessness. However, there are effective tools that have been tested in our context and proven to work. What we need now is to embed these tools at a systemic level. And the time for action is now. There is no time for political or social experimentation. Our government and parliamentarians need to listen to the experts and act accordingly. They must either close the legislative gap and support 62,000 children or continue to support businesses that profit from poverty."*

ERRC Legal Director Senada Sali stated: *"This decision marks a critical step forward in addressing systemic discrimination against Roma families in the Czech Republic. It highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to ensure Roma communities are not excluded from basic housing rights. The European Committee of Social Rights has sent a powerful message that governments must uphold their human rights obligations and eliminate barriers that perpetuate racial segregation and housing inequality. We congratulate FEANTSA for their unwavering commitment and leadership in bringing this case forward, which serves as an inspiration for all organizations working to protect the rights of marginalised communities."*

Maroš Matiaško, senior legal counsel at FORUM, noted: *"It is especially crucial for domestic human rights protection that the Committee recognised the absence of legal recognition of the right to housing in national law as an impediment to adequate protection of social rights and thus a violation of the European Social Charter. Indeed, failure to recognise the right to housing in domestic legislation leaves various groups in vulnerable situations in the Czech Republic without a possibility to seek effective judicial remedy despite the ongoing housing crisis. This decision highlights an urgent need for the government to enact laws that affirm and safeguard the right to adequate housing for all and, importantly, to recognise expressly in law that everyone has a right to housing."*

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For more details or comments, please contact:

- **Maria Jose Aldanas**, Policy Officer at FEANTSA: maria.jose.aldanas@feantsa.org +32485328305.
- **Senada Sali**, Legal Director at ERRC: senada.sali@errc.org or +32497676012
- **Maros Matiasako**, senior legal counsel and co-founder of the Forum for Human Rights: matiasako@forumhr.eu +420608130205
- **Petr Schovanek**, Communication Coordinator at Platform for Social Housing, petr.schovanek@socialnibydeni.org +420 776 466 682

Notes for Editors:

1. [FEANTSA](#), the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, is the only European non-governmental organisation focusing exclusively on homelessness at a European level.
2. [Platforma pro sociální bydlení](#) – Platform for social housing is a member of FEANTSA and currently operates as a research, advocacy, and advisory team focused on housing issues and ending homelessness in the Czech Republic.
3. [The European Roma Rights Centre](#) (ERRC) is a Roma-led international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education.
4. [FORUM](#) is a Central European legal non-governmental organisation focusing on international human rights litigation and advocacy in Central Europe.
5. The documents pertaining to the collective case are available [here](#).