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# Homelessness in the international context

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# Outline

- A right to housing? The view from abroad
- Examples from other countries: Ireland, Norway, France
- Progress in Scotland

# A 'right' to housing? 2012 viewed from abroad



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- COHRE (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions), Housing Rights Protector Award 2003
- High profile through research and practice networks, FEANTSA 2007 research
- National strategies & targets emerging in many other countries post-2002
- United Nations recognition in 2009

# Ireland

- The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013.
  - Increased focus on prevention, take action to tackle a wide range of causes to homelessness.
  - Eliminate long term use of temporary accommodation (6 months+).
  - Eliminate rough sleeping.

## Ireland (2)

- Housing led strategy
- Strengthens the emphasis on prevention and access to permanent housing.
- More responsibility put on local authorities and reducing the role of the voluntary sector (compared to former intervention schemes).



# Norway

- The pathway to a permanent home - Strategy to prevent and combat homelessness
- Reduce eviction notices by 50 per cent
- Reduce evictions by 30 per cent
- No one to spend time in temporary accommodation on release from prison or discharge from an institution.
- Improve the quality of overnight shelters, and implement a quality agreement for all admissions.
- No one shall stay more than 3 months in temporary accommodation.

## Norway (2)

- Multi-agency strategy, co-coordinated by state Housing Bank
- Aims to phase out hostels and other temporary low-quality accommodation provisions, and offer instead permanent housing with support when needed



# France

- Right to housing – 1947 Constitution
- Loi Besson 1990 – right to housing as a ‘duty of solidarity’, but no legal challenge in the courts
- Post-2000 campaigns for **DALO** - **D**roit **A**u **L**ogement **O**pposable
  - Legally enforceable right to housing



## France 2: DALO Measures

1. From Dec 2008 – DALO covers six highest priority groups
  - roofless
  - facing eviction
  - in temp accommodation
  - in sub-standard accommodation
  - children in non-decent housing
  - disabled person in non-decent housing

## France 3

From Jan 2012 – DALO extended to all other people who qualify for social housing and have been waiting for ‘an abnormally long time’.

All groups can

1. Take case to a mediation committee
2. Take case to a court – can order the state to house the applicant



# International comparisons

- Encouraging developments on policy and legislation
- Limited comparative evidence on implementation and outcomes
- If all nation states fully met current international housing rights frameworks (e.g. UN, Council of Europe, EU) homelessness would be largely avoided.

# Progress in Scotland?

- At 2006/7 – 77% of the way towards the target
- Expanding safety net at 5% per year would meet 100% 2012 target
  - But local variation between 54% and 90% progress
- 2008/9 Target was 80%, Achieved 83% overall
  - But only 14 of 32 local authorities reached or exceeded their target

# Progress issues

- ‘Permanent’ to ‘Settled’ accommodation?
- Role of PRS - 2008 Consultation on definition of discharge of duty
- Not just security of tenure, social housing carries a wider package of housing rights
- Affordability and sustainability
- Fairness

# Conclusions

- Economic downturn? Risk of increased homelessness

Need to revisit HTF consensus

- ‘Spirit’ of HTF report – all 59 recommendations
- ‘Letter’ of 2001 and 2003 Acts
- Defend long-term, secure, sustainable solutions
- Lead the world on choice, empowerment and rights for homeless people



## Resources

FEANTSA Research and *European Journal of Homelessness*

<http://www.feantsaresearch.org/code/en/hp.asp>

Fitzpatrick, S., Quilgars, D and Pleace, N. (eds) (2009)  
*Homelessness in the UK: problems and solutions.*  
Coventry: Chartered Institute of Housing. [Chapter  
7 on Scotland]