



The ESC Rights Initiative
Dedicated to Strengthening
Constitutional Protection of Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights

Aiden Lloyd, Chair– 22nd of March 2017

The ESC Rights Initiative was formed on foot of the announcement of the formation of the Convention on the Constitution in 2012 and the opportunities which that body presented for constitutional change.

Strengthening the protection of economic, social and cultural rights was not listed among the items to be addressed by the Convention, but after much effort it was included for full examination. The subsequent report recommended (by 85% of members) the strengthening of ESC rights protection in the constitution

Unfortunately, there matters ended. In January 2016 Government referred the recommendations to an Oireachtas committee on housing and homelessness. There was no mention of ESC Rights, including housing rights, in the subsequent report of the Oireachtas committee.

It is important that citizen consultative processes, such as the Constitutional Convention are followed through on, if we are to retain the confidence of the electorate in the democratic process, and we call on all parties, and individual members, to support measures to progress the recommendations of the Convention.

The ESC Rights Initiative welcomes Thomas Pringle's Bill. The Bill aims to give effect to the Convention's recommendation and will be debated in the Dáil this evening.

The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were always meant to be indivisible and complimentary. We take for granted the right to bodily integrity, to due process, to organize politically and to vote.

We have not shown the same resolve to address poverty, exclusion and inequality. We have the means, for we are a wealthy nation, but are either unable or unwilling to do so.

Incorporating ESC rights into domestic law would provide a strong impetus to government to develop effective legislation and robust implementation mechanisms to address housing needs, health inequalities and endemic poverty among other issues.

Ireland has an ambition to develop a dynamic and innovative presence at the European and global level, but that will not be achieved if we remain a nation riven by poverty, disadvantage and inequality.

It's not good enough to set targets on social inclusion, Traveller accommodation, social housing and access to healthcare that are consistently not being met. Making ESC rights enforceable would provide the necessary leverage to make targets real and achievable.