

ProHabitatge publishes Spanish version of Padraic Kenna's book on housing rights and human rights

The Association ProHabitatge (Terrassa-Catalunya) has translated and published Padraic Kenna's book on housing rights and human rights into Spanish (Spanish title: "*Los derechos a la vivienda y los derechos humanos*"). This has been able due to the good cooperation with FEANTSA, which published the English version of the book.

One thousand copies of the first edition of the Spanish book have been printed with Prohabitatge's own resources. This publication launches a new area of work for ProHabitatge. Under the trademark "ProHabitatge Editions", the Association intends to publish books and reports to provide new arguments opposing the dominant neo-liberal discourse on the housing market.

On Wednesday 21 of June, the book was presented in the Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona. More than forty representatives from public administrations, social movements and NGO's attended the event.

The author, Padraic Kenna, was accompanied by Mr. Josep Castanye (President of ProHabitatge Association) and Mr. Juli Ponce (Teacher for law studies at Barcelona University) who wrote the editorial of the book.

Mr Josep Castanye was the first one to take the floor. He spoke about the role NGO's can play in order to guarantee housing rights. However, many NGO's underestimate the impact that legislative change at international level may have on national legislation. Mr. Castanye encouraged NGO's to concentrate more efforts on promoting housing rights.

Padraic Kenna thanked the Habitatge association for publishing his book in Spanish and added that "it was an honour for him to be with Mr. Castanye, Mr. Ponce, from the University of Barcelona and all those who work with homeless people and seek housing rights". Mr Kenna closed his intervention with the following words: "Human rights approaches arising from internationally agreed instruments can influence the way in which States assist homeless people, in the face of other competing influences. Indeed, there are many pressures within the decision-making environment of State bodies. The advancement of human and housing rights competes with pressures for efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the neo-liberal climate. However, the human rights approach allows those working in State and public service roles to measure their work in the context of human rights standards, and thus resist neo-liberal pressures to reduce State roles in public welfare. Equally, rights can act as a means of empowerment, to complement social movements advancing the rights of those suffer exclusion and discrimination".

Mr. Ponce stressed the importance of publications that promote a rights-based approach as they represent a valuable alternative to the dominance of estate agents and finance experts in the housing debate.

Mr. Ponce also underlined the existing difference between the *common law* and the *continental legal system*. While the first refers to the concept of 'housing rights' (in plural), the latter only refers to the "right to housing" (in singular). The difference is that, in the first case, several remedies are possible to provide adequate housing for people in need. Consequently, there are different *housing rights*.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

PADRAIC KENNA

Padraic Kenna is a lecturer at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Ireland (Galway), and has been involved in housing organisations for many years in developmental and advocacy roles. He has considerable expertise in socio-economic rights, especially housing rights at international and national level. Dr. Kenna is currently chairperson of the FEANTSA Expert Group on Housing Rights and a Board Member of the Irish Council for Social Housing. He has just published the book *Housing Law and Policy in Ireland*.

JULI PONCE

Juli Ponce is a lecturer at the Faculty of Laws of the University of Barcelona, and Professor of law, Master of Arts by the Academy of European Public Law. In addition, he has followed the 31st Program of Instruction for Lawyers of the Harvard Law School. Juli Ponce has received different awards and taught at Catalan, Spanish, other European and US-American universities. He worked as a researcher at the Universities of Harvard and Denver and is member of the European Network for Housing Research and the European Group of Public Law. He has published different books and articles on housing, public and urban-development law.

JOSEP CASTANYE

Josep Castanye is president of the ProHabitatge Association, specialist on European programs and on housing, employment and social integration issues. Since 1984, he has worked in partnership with public administrations or the private sector in order to implement social and economic development programs. He was policy officer in the Worker's National Commission of Catalonia and town city councilor of Terrassa (Barcelona).

