Scottish Parliament Information Centre
Ionad Fiosrachaidh Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliament Academic Fellowship Scheme 2026/27

Right to adequate housing and the proposed Human Rights Bill – experience of other countries in Europe

The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2026 to 2031 states that its aim is to develop a Human Rights Bill with the aim of introducing this in Year 2 of the Parliament. This builds on work by previous administrations, most recently summarised in the Scottish Government's "A Human Rights Bill for Scotland: Discussion Paper" from July 2025 which states that one of the aims of the Bill is to incorporate the core economic, social and cultural rights in the UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) such as:

> "the rights to an adequate standard of living (including adequate housing, food and water), health, social security, education, and culture."

The project is aimed at providing an initial comparative overview of the experience of certain other (European) countries where the right to adequate housing in ICESCR directly applies in domestic law or where ICESCR has recently been incorporated into domestic law in a similar way as is proposed in Scotland. The goal is to assess objectively what the practical consequences of incorporating the right to adequate housing might be including both advantages and disadvantages of the approach taken.

As explained below, the project could potentially be carried out by one fellow, but, depending on candidates' experience, could also be carried out jointly by more than one fellow (a maximum of no more than three people would be our preference).

What will the work involve?

Whilst we are happy to discuss approaches, and indeed scope, we envisage that the work could involve:

- **A brief overview of how ICESCR and the right to adequate housing apply in a small number of countries**.
    - Our initial view is that the experiences of a small selection of countries in Europe (perhaps 3-4 countries) may provide better comparators than examples from further afield. We are however open to arguments that the experiences of other non-European countries could also be considered.
    - Our preference would be to include countries with a range of different approaches to the right to adequate housing in ICESCR, ideally also including countries which have incorporated UN rights in a similar way

to that proposed in Scotland. In that respect we are particularly interested in experiences in Norway given that it relatively recently incorporated ICESCR into Norwegian law.

- **A literature review providing an objective summary of the overall impact of the right to adequate housing under ICESCR in the selected countries**. We are particularly interested on the impact in relation to areas such as:
    - Government housing budgets.
    - The social housing sector (including accommodation for people who are homeless).
    - The private rented sector.
    - The extent to which the right to adequate housing has led to any changes in culture or procedures in the public sector and/or social housing sectors.
    - The extent to which the rights can be used to bring cases in national courts (justiciability).

  If there is any research in relation to the lived experience of renters, individuals and landlords etc. this would also be useful.

- The above is an initial overview of potential options. We are open to discussing other approaches which might fulfil the same general aims.

We are aware that national housing law can be very different and that this is something which will need to be taken into account in the research. However, it is important to stress that this is not the focus of the project and that SPICe has a good understanding of existing Scottish housing law and can provide input in this regard.

Outputs and ways of working for this fellowship

SPICe expects that a briefing and/or a blog post/series of blog posts will be published on the Parliament's website setting out the findings of this research. We expect that this is likely to be a short joint briefing involving input from SPICe researchers and the academic fellow.

The fellow may also have the opportunity to present findings to a committee, most likely the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.

SPICe also hosts a series of breakfast seminars which are designed to be of interest to all Members of the Scottish Parliament and Parliamentary staff. The outputs from this project may be presented at a breakfast seminar.

Experience needed

- An understanding of the Scottish Government's proposals in this area and the background to the proposed Human Rights Bill.

- Strong research skills and the ability to summarise information for a political audience.
- Strong experience in carrying out research into economic, social and cultural rights (particularly UN rights) with, ideally, an additional background in housing law/policy and housing rights.
- A good understanding of the housing law/policy and human rights regimes in some or all of the countries proposed and/or links to academics and other contacts in the countries proposed who would be able to input and potentially peer review research outputs.
- Note that we are also open to joint fellowships where each fellow has experience of a different country. Such applications will, however, need to explain each applicant's role and experience and how the project will be managed jointly. Applicants must also have the right to work in the UK.
- An understanding of the political sensitivities around this area and the importance of political impartiality. In that regard it should be noted that we are looking for a candidate or candidates who can provide an objective overview of the practical consequences of incorporating the right to adequate housing including both advantages and disadvantages of the approach taken.

Timescale and working pattern

We anticipate at this stage that the work could begin in February 2027 with the aim of being completed by the end of June 2027, with final outputs being published in September 2027.

Our initial expectation is that this work would potentially involve on average around 1 day per week. The work can, however, be carried out in a single block or blocks within the proposed start and end date. The work can also take place in Parliament or remotely, with the presentation of final outputs to take place in person.

Funding

It is up to the prospective fellow and their academic institution to set out the basis on which their costs are determined and the sources of their funding.

Although funding cannot be guaranteed, the Parliament does have a limited budget which it can potentially use to fund or part-fund fellows (previously, funding provided has typically been between £3-4,000). We can discuss funding in more detail with applicants once applications have been submitted and assessed.

Further information

Please contact Angus Evans in SPICe if you wish to discuss further (angus.evans@parliament.scot).