



## The right to adequate, decent and affordable housing

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting of 15-16 October 2024

Europe is facing a housing emergency. Too many people in Europe struggle to find adequate, decent and affordable accommodation. Rent and house prices have increased at a faster pace than wages and incomes, affecting disproportionately the budget of working people, pensioners and their families. The quality of accommodation is too often inadequate, with severe consequences for living conditions and health. The conditions of thousands of farm workers living in informal settlements without running water or electricity are extreme and inhumane.

At the same time, housing is a sector of staggering profits for speculation, very wealthy individuals, investment funds... The few get bigger and bigger profits out of the housing market, while the many struggle to find adequate accommodation and to make ends meet.

Commission President Ursula von Der Leyen included in her [political guidelines for the European Commission 2024-2029](#) a strong focus on housing, including the commitments to develop the “*first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan*”. This plan and the competences of the relevant Commissioner must not interfere with but rather support public national housing policies and their funding nor with the national systems of property ownership.

The right to adequate, decent and affordable housing is enshrined in EU, European and international human rights instruments (see overview in Annex I). The EU approach to housing must be rights-based. The upcoming EPSR Action Plan should include ambitious actions to ensure this right.

The mantra ‘private before public’ and the processes of privatisation, deregulation, financialization and speculation have had disastrous consequences in the housing sector. There must be a real change of direction. We stress that austerity policies are incompatible with the investment effort necessary to ensure the full respect of the right to adequate, decent and affordable housing everywhere in Europe.

We call on the European institutions to fully involve social partners in the development of the EU housing policy and initiatives. Housing policies – and the European Affordable Housing Plan – should include:

- Promoting quality and secure jobs, including the necessary wage increases through support for collective bargaining and higher statutory minimum wages, that take into consideration all related costs for working people, cost of housing allowances, transport costs to and from the workplace, cost of relocation;
- Ensuring higher wages and better working conditions in the construction sector, including through the regulation and limitation of subcontracting;



- Actions to tackle speculation by big financial players, increasing taxes on profits and wealth, ensuring fair and more progressive taxation for real estate, disincentivising non-use or hoarding, and enforcing and strengthening EU regulation on short-term rentals which has a strong impact on housing costs and availabilities in tourism hotspots, particularly for vulnerable households including many hospitality workers; tackling tax avoidance and evasion, as well as business models based on exploitation and bad working conditions, is also key;
- When it comes to making housing affordable, non-for-profit / limited profit / public / social housing plays a key role, as well as increasing construction;
- Increased investments in non-for-profit / limited profit / public / social affordable and adequate housing are needed, including through EU investment tools, flexibility in the application of the economic governance rules, focus in the Semester process; housing associations and their functioning should be supported and not hindered;
- Public funding, including state aid, for housing projects (including support by the EIB) should be linked with social conditionalities;
- Expanding the capacity of local authorities to act in land policy and housing market (for example by reinforcing the right of first refusal), tackling gentrification and displacement processes, including by supporting progressive spatial planning and reviving existing estate;
- Establishing ambitious targets on the number of non-for-profit / public / social housing in residential construction projects; properties that are already in public ownership should be used for subsidised housing; protected housing projects on public land should be safeguarded;
- Introducing minimum quality, health, accessibility and safety standards for accommodation, including in the private market;
- Introducing protective rent regulations and control over the rental market to protect renters against exploitation and abuses, to end no-fault evictions and protect vulnerable families, and to freeze/put the brakes on the increase of rent prices;
- Tackling the presence of shantytowns in Europe and ensuring that people residing in those informal settlements have access to decent accommodation with minimum quality standards guaranteed;
- Combating energy poverty, banning disconnections and ensuring aid for the most vulnerable households; ensuring that the costs of energy efficiency renovations and decarbonisation efforts are not passed on to the tenants and avoiding climate taxation that disproportionately burdens households unable to finance the upfront costs of renovations; increasing resources to support building refurbishments in line with climate targets, while prioritising projects that address social urgency;
- Adequate housing must be connected with public services of high-quality, including transport, healthcare, education, childcare. Reinforcing public services must be a priority, as well as improving working conditions for public sector workers, including in the public housing sector. Tackle the staffing issues in municipalities, including for the management and oversight of housing policies/schemes and for enforcement and fight against speculative sectors.

The ETUC calls on the Commission to guarantee that the upcoming revision of the state aid rules provide stronger support and investments in non-for-profit / limited profit / public / social affordable and adequate housing, including by deleting the restrictive definition of social housing and its limitation to a target group.

The ETUC highlights that housing policies must respond to the needs of all generations, including young generations and older people, and all genders.



A clear link exists between exploitation at work, and exploitation in the housing. The ETUC demands legally binding minimum standards on decent accommodation for mobile and migrant workers when provided by the employer [see [ETUC Resolution](#)]. In all cases, when accommodation is provided by the employers, the cost of housing should not be deducted from the minimum wage and workers should not lose their accommodation in the event they lose their job.

The ETUC reiterates its support for the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness and for the Lisbon Declaration and call on the EU to take the actions necessary to eliminate homelessness.