

Input Housing Europe for Prague Declaration

Housing Europe is the European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing. Since 1988 it's a network of 43 national & regional federations gathering 43.000 housing providers in 23 countries. Together they manage over 26 million homes, about 11% of existing dwellings in Europe.

Key points:

- 1- Lower costs: construction, finance, land, better public support
- 2- Socially sustainable: inclusive communities, liveable areas, integrated service provision(Housing +)
- 3- Strengthen housing institutions: (local and national) bodies, actors and systems (LT-investments, management, governance, regulators, specialized financing intermediaries) for affordable housing.

We note the importance of promoting housing in liveable cities and urbanisation though:

Proposed amendments:

3. We note the importance of promoting:
i. Innovative, productive and **liveable cities**. Increasing attractiveness of cities with a focus on innovation, inclusiveness, **decent and affordable housing**, improvement of youth and gender perspectives, and job creation, through entrepreneurial-friendly conditions, while respecting the environment;

Justification: The goal of the Prague conference is to discuss 'challenges and opportunities of housing in liveable cities'. So it makes sense to include the key aspects of liveable cities and adequate housing in this first introductory statement. To focus only on the innovative and productive capacity of cities is only one part of the story. It is about combining both economic growth in sustainable urban environments.

3. We note the importance of promoting:
ii. Green compact and resilient cities. Increasing resource efficiency (on energy, water, waste, land use) Improving air quality and taking care of wastewater in cities together with making cities resilient to flood, heat waves and natural hazards, as well as **ensuring the transition towards energy efficiency in the built environment**, sustainable urban mobility, clean urban transport and improved access to transport services.

Justification: The goal of the Prague conference is to discuss 'challenges and opportunities of housing in liveable cities'. So it makes sense to mention not only transport but also the built environment which accounts for 40% of GHG emissions

3. We note the importance of promoting:
Iii Inclusive cities. Addressing the multiple aspects of gender and youth issues, urban poverty and exclusion **as well as segregation resulting from a lack of affordable housing and transport**.....

Justification: The goal of the Prague conference is to discuss 'challenges and opportunities of housing in liveable cities'. So it makes sense to mention one of the main challenges facing cities and accentuating inequalities ie. The lack of affordable and in the case of cities rental housing.

4. We stress that:

(d) There is a need, **to strengthen housing structures and institutions as well (local and national) bodies, actors and systems (LT-investments, management, governance, regulators, specialized financing intermediaries) for affordable housing**

Justification: All countries need professional and efficient housing providers which focus on social and affordable housing, a (regulatory) framework for the governance of such private, public or cooperative organisations, regulation and supervision of minimal housing quality (besides rent regulation), dedicated financial instruments/bodies, government support and supervision mechanisms.

4. We stress that:

(f) Social cohesion, better access to services (green areas, public transport, primary health, education and culture), urban safety and ensuring access of vulnerable **and low and middle income groups to decent and affordable housing** are prerequisites for the quality of living conditions in cities;

Justification: Important to stress that the achievement of social cohesion in cities, especially in marginalized communities, can be achieved by improving access to services but also by ensuring the access to affordable and social housing is not only accessible to vulnerable groups. Such policies can lead to more, not less, segregation within and between cities.

(h) **Long-term Investment by private, public, social and cooperative actors in affordable housing and urban development stimulate employment in cities and contribute to the stability of housing markets. Overheating of housing markets and over-indebtedness must be avoided through tenure neutral policies.**

Justification: Spain, Ireland – promotion of home ownership couples with lack of regulatory brakes on debt led to housing bubbles while in other countries with more balanced mix of tenures relative stability and affordability was maintained. In the latter, control over public budgets was not undermined by bailouts and austerity measures.

We stress that:

8. We consider **the supply of sufficient adequate housing for all** as a key factor in improving the quality of human life. Housing is also key **to face the challenges** of liveable **and sustainable** cities.

9. Planned urban development constructed and used in a way that minimizes environmental impact, can promote economic, social and environmental sustainability and prevent urban sprawl. Planned urban development is also a means to increase resiliency of cities against natural and man-made disasters, such as flooding. Therefore, governments at all levels need to debate on housing and urban development policies with emphasis on engaged and negotiated civic involvement, social inclusiveness, public health, transparency, and concern for ethical processes.

Justification: The coherence of this text can be improved by clarifying and dividing in two parts and stressing the role of decent and affordable housing.

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9. Our countries **and cities** face multiple challenges: (new point)

Steady and sustainable housing finance from the private and the public sector is key to achieve the housing challenges in cities. Since the outset of the 2008 financial crisis, repossessions have become a critical issue in many cities. Furthermore the bailout cost of banks involved in speculative short-term housing finance has put much pressure on public budgets and diminished their capacity to help provide affordable and social housing. This trend generates serious threats to the financial position of households, cities and countries. It can also result in a bias towards unsustainable debts and home-ownership levels while other housing tenure types should be encouraged. These should reflect the various needs and preferences of different groups, including leaseholds, condominiums, social housing, cooperatives, shared leaseholds and various forms of rental housing.

Justification: from HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS 20 on HOUSING, New York, 31 May 2015:

Private sector engagement has been weak and markets have been ineffective in serving the lower-end. Governments, in their role of facilitators, have faced challenges to induce private entrepreneurs and finance institutions to invest in, construct and lend for the poor and community-based initiatives. Developers have focused on the high-end housing. Banks are averse to risking loans for people that cannot be classified as conventionally good risk. Housing finance has been essentially promoted through mortgages, restricted to those with formal titles, and access to finance for the poor majority is limited and expensive. Communitybased financial institutions such as financial cooperatives, credit unions and micro-finance institutions have not reached scale.

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9. Our countries face multiple challenges:

(a) **Urban poverty:** (...) This approach is particularly relevant for the marginalized communities, whose effective integration requires investments in employment, education, healthcare, **decent and affordable** housing and social integration. Regarding housing interventions, local integrated housing approaches should be facilitated with special attention to public utility, social service and education infrastructures and **a mixed housing supply**. For housing investments envisaged within segregated neighbourhoods, they should aim at tackling the spatial and social isolation of the marginalised community, and interventions should follow the principles of non-segregation, **and** desegregation, **active integration and the fight against poverty.**

Justification: from HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS 20 on HOUSING, New York, 31 May 2015:

Stronger nexus between housing and urban planning practice in particular through improving the linkages between housing, accessibility and livelihood in cities. A continuous, participatory and inclusive urban planning process should be the starting point and framework for improving access to adequate housing. Mixed land-use, planned city extensions or urban in-fills combined with better transport infrastructure should be promoted to improve access to housing in well-located areas and livelihood opportunities for low-income groups, as well as to mitigating urban hazards and health risks.

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10. We shall address the above challenges, in particular by: (New point)

Developing national and local long-term financial instruments, bodies and housing institutions that can ensure steady investment into decent and affordable housing for all, and in priority for the poorest segments of the population. National and local authorities should reassume a leading role in responding to housing needs and affordability constraints by formulating, regulating, implementing and monitoring the financial means, expertise and personal capacity needed to strengthen and create the institutional settings, including public private cooperation, that can generate sustainable housing provision for all. This will demand coordinated efforts with the financial, real estate and construction sectors to generate innovative and more cost-efficient solutions.

Justification: from HABITAT III POLICY PAPER:

This Policy Framework are structured along four outcome dimensions: accessibility to services, habitability, affordability, and security of tenure. These outcomes are the result of an enabling housing policy environment that promotes private sector, third sector and self-help community driven housing interventions. This environment is defined as "the set of government interventions that have a critical and measurable effect on the performance of the housing sector". (...)

Key actions: (...) Systemic reforms, strong states and long-term policy and finance are needed to enable access to adequate housing for all. National and local authorities should reassume a leading role in responding to housing needs and affordability constraints especially of the poorest segments of the population, being at the helm of formulating, regulating, implementing and monitoring policies. Finance for housing should be established and increased.

Source: HABITAT III POLICY PAPER FRAMEWORK, 10 – HOUSING POLICIES, 31 December 2015

(k) Promoting inclusive cities: addressing the multiple aspects of urban poverty and exclusion. Cities are places where disparities and inequalities are concentrated and they are also places where different cultures may co-exist, **where social tensions and poverty may arise , while** ethnic diversity may **also** become a source of innovation and renewal, and where social mobility is possible;

Justification: Many reports show the inclusiveness and social cohesion within and between many European cities are under pressure. These disparities and diversity can be a threat but has the potential to be a strength if given enough attention through active policies and interventions.