

The EU at the housing crossroads

Why Brussels has a key role to play in addressing Europe's housing crisis

Seeing a [debate entitled 'Housing: Urgent action needed to address homelessness in Europe'](#) on the agenda of the first European Parliament session for 2020 would have been a major surprise some years ago. However, today it seems as the necessary thing to do, a debate we cannot avoid having anymore.

Both Commissioner Schmit and MEPs from across the political spectrum highlighted during the plenary session in Strasbourg the housing crisis Europe is confronted with, echoing Housing Europe that has provided solid proof of through its '[State of Housing in the EU](#)' reports in 2015, 2017 and 2019. Not much has changed over the course of the years. The most alarming trend of all is that [an estimated 700.000 people were homeless in the EU in 2019](#), with numbers rising across Europe, except in Finland, which reported a decrease of 45%.

Housing Europe shares a number of views expressed by MEPs on Monday, January 13th in the Parliament hemicycle, including Commissioner Schmit's strong commitment for action aiming at boosting housing supply as an essential contribution to fighting homelessness and MEP Leila Chaibi's statement that "compared to the private sector that keeps becoming more and more expensive, social housing is a solution".

"One has to acknowledge that the debate around housing has shifted at EU level. It has taken a long time for the EU institutions to look behind their "lack of competence" but now everyone understands, as proven also last night, that the EU has a role to play in the fight against the housing crisis. The already positive steps taken with the European Pillar of Social Rights are a good start but there is plenty of room for improvement", commented Housing Europe President, Cédric Van Styvendael.

Why does the EU need to mobilise further? Because its coordinating role is vital in pushing Member States to promote policies that deliver affordable and decent housing. The European Pillar of Social Rights can indeed be a driver for change if :

1. The full range of existing Eurostat housing indicators is used in particular in the field of affordability.
2. The analysis of the housing markets and housing policies by the European Commission services within the European Semester gets even more balanced.
3. If funding at the appropriate levels support the provision of social, cooperative and public housing

Housing Europe for over 30 years in Brussels and its member organisations for over a century in many cases, have been committed to securing access to decent and affordable housing to all, in particular to those in need. As the housing markets in Europe today keep failing to deliver a balanced provision, it's high time for coordinated action at EU, national and local level. The 2020 milestone is one of the last alarm bells before we fail to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).