Housing Europe Manifesto for the European Elections 2019

« INVESTING IN SOCIAL, COOPERATIVE and PUBLIC HOUSING IS THE BEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR EUROPE »

I. <u>The scope of the challenge</u>

Although growth has returned to big parts of our continent, it is leaving many behind and our societies are increasingly unequal. Similarly, the recent 'recovery' in housing markets is far from benefitting everyone.

The current state of housing markets can be summarized as followed:

1. *Housing has become the highest expenditure for Europeans and overburden rates remain stable at high level, hitting disproportionally harder the poor. 4 out of 10 Europeans below the poverty line are overburdened by housing costs.*

2. *House prices are growing faster than income levels in most Member States, while inequality and housing exclusion are mutually reinforcing. Broad target groups lack the possibility to enter the housing market like young and migrants. Meanwhile mobility is limited due to high house prices, which effect the opportunity to move for workers and families.*

3. *Territorial divide is alarming, as finding adequate and affordable housing in places with job opportunities is increasingly hard. Shrinking cities and regions are quickly becoming a priority on the agenda of local and regional authorities.*

4. *As the level of housing construction is still low, especially major cities face a structural housing shortage reinforced by recent waves of migration.*

5. *Political response to Europe's housing challenge remains poor, a fact reflected in increasing levels of homelessness and overall housing exclusion.*

6. *Climate change is alarming. The housing sector is a major user of energy and materials. Penetration of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy in the housing sector should be facilitated while maintaining affordability for all. Building and construction materials make*

out a large proportion of Europe's waste: waste handling for recycling and circular business models is needed.

The state of housing in the European Union today remains critical and calls for an integrated approach bringing together political will from the governments, inclusive planning at local level and innovation from the construction and renovation sector. We cannot keep approaching housing policy with the tools of the past. In such a co-productive process, public, cooperative and social housing providers are the key to unlock the full potential of our cities.

II.   What we offer | Why social, cooperative and cooperative housing matters?

1/ **Growth for all**

Social, cooperative and public housing providers do promote a variety of housing options for various target groups and housing needs (Housing First, social, affordable housing, targeted offer for elderly, young, migrants, etc., social mix). Affordable housing favours labour mobility too, which has an impact on local unemployment rate.

2/ **Communities for all**

Social, cooperative and public housing providers are partners for cities, urban and rural communities that can help deal with the most pressing challenges like urban sprawl and socio-spatial segregation.

3/ **Not only a roof**

Social, cooperative and public housing organisations provide social innovation, employment services, health services, digital inclusion to the residents, in order to improve their quality of life

4/ **Leaders for a fair energy transition**

Social, cooperative and public housing providers build nearly zero energy homes, renovate existing dwellings and promote the production of renewable energy, thus contributing to reduce CO_2 emissions, energy bills and increase comfort and living conditions. Good handling of construction and renovation waste for recycling and circular business models is also on the agenda of housing providers. Thus, they contribute to achieve a fair energy transition and promote circular and decarbonised energy in the European Union.

III.   What is needed?

1/ **Stability for Evolution**

Social, cooperative and public housing organisations need public investment and supportive legislations to build affordable and decent homes for those whose housing needs cannot be met by market providers

2/ **Cohesion for Fairness**

EU funding programmes have to support social and territorial cohesion through better housing and adapted housing solutions, in particular by ensuring equal access to affordable housing between territories

3/ **Flexibility for Progress**

EU tax, competition and internal market rules have to be supportive of the investment efforts made by social, cooperative and public housing organisations

4/ **Action for Fair Energy Transition**

Climate objectives can only be achieved through a mix between energy savings and production of renewable energy (in particular in a decentralised approach) ; social, cooperative and public housing organisations should be further supported in leading the way forward

5/ **Support for Circular Economy**

Using recycled material as inputs for new construction and renovation, improve information regarding the health impact of building materials are essential to move towards a sustainable and decarbonised economy

IV.   Our proposals for 2019 – 2023

The European Union is important for housing and housing is an important matter for the EU.

Housing Europe is united in its vision of a Europe which helps to provide access to decent and affordable housing for all in communities which are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and where everyone is enabled to reach their full potential.

Public, cooperative or social housing organisations do not just provide affordable homes but also: domiciliary care and support services for residents with specific needs; additional services for tenants (kindergartens, community centres, employment and training services, financial advice); neighbourhood services; management of other types of 'sheltered' accommodation; urban development and urban regeneration.

Despite their differences, Housing Europe members share the values of democracy and work for economic, social and environmental cohesion, in a context marked by migration and climate change. The European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the European Union in 2017, reaffirms that in the 21st century European Welfare State, access to social housing is essential and shall be provided for those in need.

Housing Europe members already provide around 25 million homes and invest yearly around 7 billion € to renovate existing homes. By providing new homes, renovating existing ones and constantly investing in communities, social, cooperative and public housing organisations help to save costs for society.

Key recent EU housing policy documents:

Housing Europe 's contribution to UN Habitat III conference (2016) :
http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-808/we-call-governments-in-the-eu-and-beyond-to-put-social-housing-back-at-the-centre

EU Pillar of Social Rights (2017) : https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

Committee of the Regions' opinion on European Agenda for Housing (2017) : http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/edz/doku/adr/2017/cdr-2017-1529-en.pdf

European Parliament opinion on Social Housing in the European Union (2013) :
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0155+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

Although housing policies are primarily a matter of national and local governments, the European Union has a role to play.

To be able to further support affordable housing and liveable communities in the EU, Housing Europe members call for:

Stability	Cohesion	Flexibility	Action
1. The European Pillar of Social Rights, which proclaim the right to access social housing for those in need, should be the guideline for EU economic and fiscal policies	4. European Structural and Investment Funds should continue to support social and affordable housing, with the same financial amount as the current programming period	7. State aid rules for social housing should allow for more flexibility, i.e. adapting the mission of social housing providers to the local circumstances (for instance in tense housing markets where is no supply from the private market for low to middle income households)	10. Increase affordability by fostering innovation and harmonizing renovation services and building codes
2. The European Commission should encourage Member States to use (or if necessary, improve) flexibility mechanisms within the Stability and Growth Pact, in order to make useful investment in housing and social infrastructures	5. Use of EU funding programmes and regional funds to support capacity building, as well as housing organisations	8. The EU internal market tools in the field of procurement and standardization to support innovation and affordability for providers of social, cooperative and public housing	11. Support combination of energy efficiency with production of renewable energy in order to increase comfort and reduce CO_2 emissions within the building sector
3. More balanced analysis of the housing markets by the European Commission are needed and will be achieved through a strong involvement of the European Parliament and national parliaments	6. EU funds for migration and EIB should support meaningful integration through housing	9. Allow flexibility in setting reduced VAT rates while maintaining reduced VAT rates for social housing	12. Decrease the use of building materials which are hazardous to human health and enable both re-use and recycling of these resources, thus supporting circular economy in the building sector