

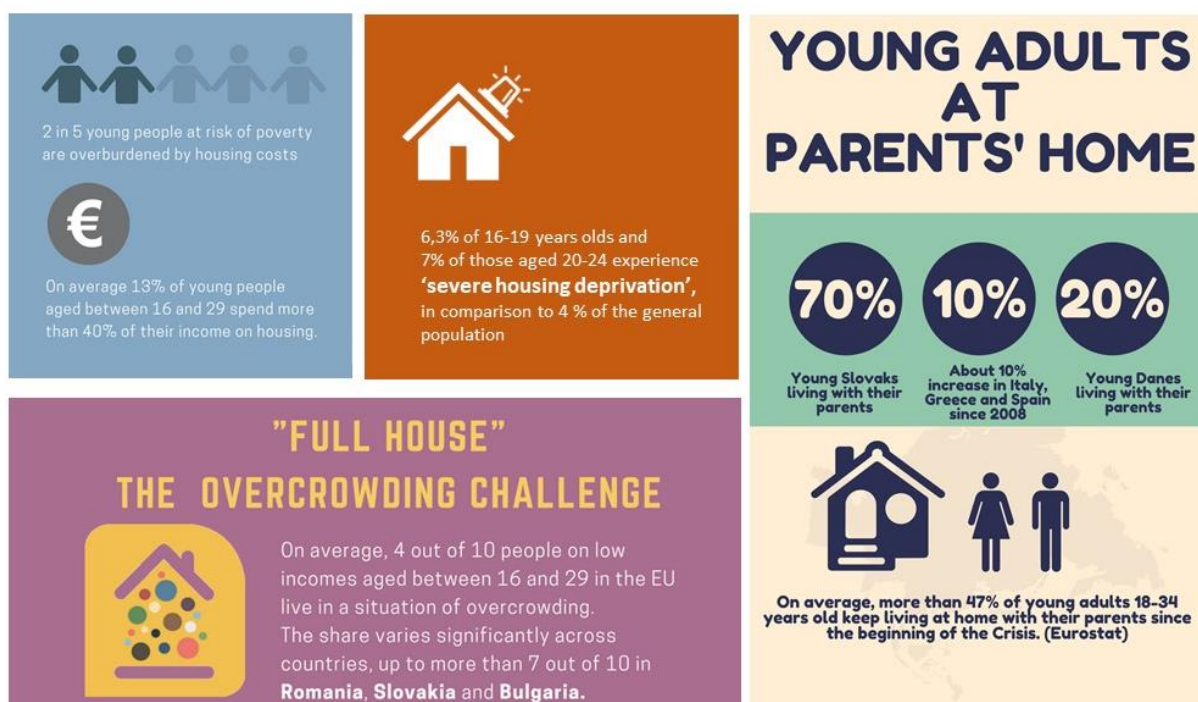


The youth encounter uncertainty not only in their transition into adulthood but also in finding and making a place a home. As their lives are often defined by frequent migration to secure jobs and education, young people face immense obstacles in securing adequate housing, either it being temporary or permanent. Consequently, a growing number of young adults are either exposed to precarious living arrangements or have to postpone leaving or return to their parents' home.

The crisis situation induced by the ongoing COVID-19 thread sheds light on the growing challenge of housing the youth. Young populations are more prone to live in overcrowded homes and to be priced out of the urban housing market. With homelessness among the youth on the rise EU-wide and younger age groups at a higher risk of poverty overall, existential fears and social fragility are further accelerated. Efficient policy responses and directed action are called for now more than ever. In times when home becomes the entirety of each person's world, we need to acknowledge it as a prime factor for socialization and autonomy - it shouldn't only be the luckiest of this generation who have the chance to create theirs. We take a look at the responses of public, social and affordable housing providers in addressing the needs of a diverse youth.

As housing markets increasingly fail to integrate the needs of young people, public policy and social economy actors intervene to address this gap by enabling social and residential mobility. The "youth" are neither one homogenous nor static group. One unifying characteristic however is that young people by definition experience a series of transition phases that call for responsive and flexible housing solutions. Public, social and affordable housing providers, fostering strong stakeholder cooperation, are main drivers of such innovation. We collected their responses to the challenges at hand.

Youth housing challenges in the EU at a glance



Young populations are affected by housing insecurity in multi-fold ways:

1. From an emergency perspective, a growing number of young adults are at the brink of homelessness, thus tackling both the structural inequalities and the distress individuals are enduring in this process, makes the pillars of Housing First principles indispensable.
2. Although student housing is organised in various ways in different EU countries, governmental support in construction has decreased and the interest of private investors therein grown, with most students having to depend on privately-owned rental apartments.
3. In many cases this leaves them and other young people with low incomes stranded in a cycle of short-term lets, being moved within a month's notice, landlord discrimination and sub-standard housing.
4. Long time education, high student costs and labour market insecurity result in the inability to save money for a deposit and hence limits them in becoming home owners. This further fuels the imbalance between those who can afford to rely on parents' sponsoring and those who cannot.

Although young people in Europe are having a harder time finding jobs, with a general increase of youth unemployment in the EU, they also promise high civic engagement, being more involved in voluntary organisations, more educated and connected. The following best practice projects also make use of these potentials.

Offering affordable housing solutions to students

Co-habitation programmes for students and young people in employment living together, facilitate both an exchange of lifeworlds and optimise the use of available dwellings. These can be managed directly by the social housing provider as is the case in this cross-regional project in France, by [Espacil Habitat](#). As part of a **wider local public housing campaign** like in [Troyes, France](#), renovated blocks are dedicated to students to increase offer and develop the education sector hand in hand.

Encouraging the **mobilisation of vacant building stock**, like the repurposing of empty offices to social housing for students in Amsterdam (NL) by [Rochdale](#) shows how successful partnership between a social housing cooperation and student housing organizations can look like.

In Reggio Emilia, Italy **new student residences** have been combined with **training programmes for young people all over the EU**. The [Palazzo del Carbone project's](#) efforts contribute to the revitalization of historical centres and **inclusive urban regeneration**, increased the offer of affordable accommodation for students and led to **a general decrease in rents also in the private market**. The initiative has also managed to work with small local businesses that cater to students in particular.

In a city where the overall living costs are among the highest in the world, let alone the average monthly rent, this **cooperative student housing** project by [La Ciguë](#) in Coulouvrenière, Switzerland was developed in a **participatory process** and allows students to buy one share of the cooperative for a price no greater than that of a rent deposit.

Creating social mix and solidarity at local level

Fostered by a **community-based approach**, the intention of the following initiatives is to extend the impact of the young individual's live to the social fabric of their immediate living surroundings.

In Milan, a university city with a cost of living higher than the Italian average that affects both students and young workers alike, creating **local sustainability lies at the heart** of these two projects. [Ospitalità Solidale](#) is located within two public housing complexes in suburban areas with a high number of empty flats and vulnerable residents. Throughout the renovation of small low-rent flats the young inhabitants were involved and **organise inter-generational activities** in a neighbourhood characterized by a high presence of the elderly. Along the same lines, [Foyer di Cenni](#) combines an opportunity to **share personal skills among young tenants and the broader neighbourhood**. Following this approach, [Porto 15](#) in Bologna is the first public housing in project in Italy dedicated to people under 35 and one of the first to be realized by **initiative of the public administration** only.

Supportive cohousing as in the case of [ATC del Piemonte centrale](#) in Turin, Italy intends to **build up a real social network**. Young volunteers move to public housing neighbourhoods and receive **rent reductions in exchange for volunteer work** according to an action plan dedicated to the tenants as well as the surrounding areas. A working group made up of social service workers, ATC, local police, organizations and associations manage and evaluate the supportive cohousing project. In France **subletting through associations/registered organizations working with the youth** is also common. The **solidarity co-housing scheme** by [Archipel Habitat](#) makes students share a home but also work together on a project benefitting the local community. [Denbigh Youth Hub](#) consists of self-contained flats for 16-25 year olds and a range of youth and community services.

Helping the youth getting into work

The prospect of a self-sustained future starts with the basis of a home. The **preventive approach** of the Dutch nationwide [Rooms with a future](#) programme tries to help disadvantaged youth. It's based on the four pillars: **housing, learning, working and coaching**. prone to dropping out of school, long-term joblessness and social exclusion. [JobbEtt](#) in Halmstad, SE seeks out young unemployed individuals and provides them both with **counselling and support**, and short-term rental offers that can be **transformed into standard rental contracts** later on. [Homma Himaan](#) in Helsinki, FI is a service

that supports young people in finding both home and work hand in hand, partially compensating their rent by tailored work.

Empowering young residents through training and services

[Peabody housing association](#) provides a range of **support services** to young people across London, from employment training and project development to social enterprises and starting-a-business workshops. Along the same lines, the [Money House training in financial resilience](#) is a five-day course for youth living in Hyde social housing estates in London. The [London Peer Landlord Scheme](#) provides supported accommodation for homeless young people. A **'lead tenant'** is trained to act as landlord with the aim to equip them with 'soft' skills that will aid them in future careers. – many have stated aspirations in social care and support. **Childcare in cooperative housing communities** like the Dublin project of [Co-operative Childcare Ireland](#) responds to affordable housing needs and caters in particular to young parents.

Assisting the highly mobile youth

French social housing companies (HLM) offer a variety of solutions for young people on the move. ['Apprentoit'](#) guarantees **housing for young apprentices in rural areas** by designing cost-double accommodation – close to work and close to where training is located. The [Izidom concept](#) let units on the basis of **simplified administrative procedures**, with **flexible arrangements** and at an **affordable rent**. Tenants are also eligible for public support schemes. The [All-Inclusive Rent](#) project is directed to young people under 30, living alone or in couple, that are looking for a first home. The initiative also financially supports tenants' projects and actions.

Affordable housing for young professionals in tight housing market

Over 80% of people aged 20-17 in Sweden still living at home with their parents. [Riksbyggen's cooperative solution to youth housing](#) incorporates 500 young people from the local rental housing waiting lists into city centre housing in Gothenburg via a **co-productive procedure**. The offer targets young adults who cannot afford such a lifestyle despite having a stable job and income. Both the city of Poznań, PL and its local social housing association introduced [Apartments for Graduates](#) to meet the **needs of university graduates and retain young talent in the city**.

Innovative thinking to create living space for youth

[Juphaas Wonen](#) in the Netherlands transformed former office buildings into **sustainable energy-efficient** housing for the youth, involving the future tenants both in the design process and talks with contractors from the start. [Y:Cube Housing](#) (London, UK) are **self-contained**, both **eco-friendly** and **adaptable** units, that arrive on site with all services already incorporated. They are let as temporary/emergency housing to young people who are struggling to get onto the housing market.

Tackle barriers to home ownership

Opportunities for young adults to obtain their own housing are severely limited in most parts of Europe, creating a clear economic difference between the older and younger generations. In Sweden, Riksbyggen has launched a model called [Hyrköp](#) allowing people under 35 to first rent and later have the **option to buy their home** within five years. Furthermore the cooperative has proposed the introduction of a **governmental start-up youth loan**.

Keeping in mind, that there is no one-size-fits all recipe but it is important to rather implement a range of options, we attempt to summarise the most pressing ones in a list:

- Investment in building affordable housing overall, especially in high-demand urban areas
- Partnerships between local authorities and housing providers to identify local need and gaps in stock
- Security guarantee of rental lease in private rentals with some form of rent level control
- 'Independence-supporting approach' (rent deposit guarantee schemes, access to housing allowances) for low income youth
- Cooperative housing, community land trust and other collaborative initiatives provide a good step on the 'housing ladder' being affordable, collectively owned and managed
- Different types of subsidised housing to simplify the lives of the mobile youth (more flexible contractual arrangements, furnished rental accommodation, fair all-inclusive contracts)
- Options for home sharing to encourage collective use of common areas and involvement in the local community, support own initiatives, opinion sharing and self-defined participation
- Empower youth by providing access to financial counselling, training, volunteering opportunities and job placements
- Combat and prevent youth homelessness with a focus on Housing First measures through social housing with support
- The EU can help by: reviewing the links between housing, educational attainment, mobility and access to jobs, investing in social inclusion measures such as long-term housing provision and related social & care services

Project-based approaches as the ones introduced here need to become a new standard, rather than an exception. This requires a setting of cause-driven coordination across scales and stakeholders, facilitating both innovative actions and a commitment to making 'housing the youth' itself a strategic part of housing policies. We need to rethink both the mechanisms behind housing exclusion for the youth and more generally the reality of precarious contemporary young lives.