

KEY REQUESTS – MAYORS FOR HOUSING

PRESS STATEMENT 20/02/25

BARCELONA:

We, the Mayors of twelve European cities representing almost 15 million people, different political families and different geographical realities, come together today to demand urgent action on housing.

We need solutions and we need them now.

This is why we believe the European Affordable Housing Plan is urgent.

This is also why we announce, today, that we will present a Housing Emergency Plan in the coming months.

A plan designed by our cities, together with Eurocities and C40, that details what we should do and how we should do it in the short term.

Across Europe, cities are facing a growing shortage of housing options for low- and middle-income households, essential workers and young people.

Housing prices have increased at a significantly higher pace than salaries, causing a substantial impact on our citizens.

A growing number of citizens are therefore forced to leave our cities. This is unacceptable. The very legitimacy of our democracies and of the European project is at stake.

This is why today, we want to send a strong message to the EU institutions and to all Europeans: cities are the first line of defence in the fight for the right to a decent and affordable place to live.

This is why today we have put forward key requests to the EU institutions with two clear messages in mind:

Firstly, that bold action, at European level, is needed.

Secondly, that cities must be key partners of the EU institutions.

We note that the EU lives at crucial times. The world is more unstable geopolitically and Europeans face unprecedented threats. However, we shall not forget to address issues that impact the daily lives of Europeans. Housing is on top of them.

The decision by the European Commission not to include the European Affordable Housing Plan as part of the 2025 Working Program is not good news.

Still, we want to offer our collaboration and our knowledge in favour of all Europeans. We want to do so through the **creation of a stable policy development and monitoring platform with cities**, that allows us to work directly with the European Commission on the design and unfolding of European initiatives in housing.

To begin this collaboration, the group of Mayors present here today want to share some of the actions we would like the European Commission to consider:

ROME

Europe needs to increase housing investment opportunities for cities.

We need more money and more directly to cities.

This is why we call for a substantial **increase in affordable housing financing available to cities through the EU budget and European Investment Bank, in order to complement and leverage national, local and private resources.**

The European affordable housing plan should be comprehensive and address all the components of housing market: public housing, social housing, rental market, short term rents, homelessness.

We need a Plan for the next MFF but also an emergency plan in 2026.

In order to identify resources for both Plans, we should work on: EU budget, national resources, and a reform in the Growth and Stability Pact. Also, on redeployment of unspent EU cohesion and NGEU funds, EIB loans, grants and guarantees.

We believe the EIB should play a crucial role accelerating the deployment of public as well as private investment in affordable housing.

The pan-European investment platform should rely on Europe's common borrowing capacity, following the experience of the Next Generation EU fund.

The European Union's capacity for joint action is proving essential in the current geopolitical context. In the face of the external threat, we understand the need to make the Union's fiscal rules more flexible for defence spending.

But we also face internal threats. The denial of the right to housing for large sections of the population is currently a major challenge, generating social unrest and putting the European welfare model at risk.

This is why we propose a revision of **EU fiscal and debt rules to exclude investments in affordable housing from the deficit and debt ceilings** set by the Growth and Stability Pact.

Exceptional times require exceptional measures.

PARIS:

Financing should be coupled with effective and efficient access to funding.

We note the European Commission's commitment to doubling Cohesion policy allocations to housing in the 2021-2027 period. And its recognition of the need for an "**ambitious EU agenda for cities**", as mandated to the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms.

We believe that Cohesion policy post-2027 should work hand in hand with the forthcoming agenda for cities, and be structured around macro challenges, one of which should be housing.

Part of the EU Cohesion Funds should be directly channelled to local governments and its local partners.

We propose to set up such an initiative by drawing lessons from the EU Mission: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, **articulating a fast track for cities in the granting of EU funds for social and affordable housing**, ensuring sufficient financial support and scaling up/scalability.

The legal European framework of the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities initiative was interesting. However, this program was designed to support experimental initiatives, and the amount of funding was far below the cities' needs. Cities have already implemented their experimental programs and now urgently need to scale up, especially in terms of social housing.

We need to do more, and we need to do it now.

We also call for the **revision of state aid rules**.

We need to enable broader investments in social and affordable housing from public institutions at all levels. This is entirely up to the European Commission.

We know how to invest in affordable housing, but we need more and better regulatory tools.

Paris - on behalf of the European cities - underlines the need for this major investment in social and affordable housing to be in line with the Paris Agreement goals, particularly regarding low-carbon construction processes and technologies, reducing the carbon footprint of concrete use, and promoting low-emission and net-zero buildings.

EU regulations should empower, not curtail, cities' and countries' ability to work towards a common goal.

LISBON

We need to build new housing and we need to improve the existing housing stock.

Mobilizing vacant buildings and available plots is an opportunity to provide housing in central locations, close to jobs and services. **We should aim at providing long-term fixed rate loans to the affordable housing cooperatives.**

Public administrations have a responsibility to lead this process. The EU energy transition agenda is an opportunity to accelerate this process. It should encourage cities to regenerate our urban environment, fight energy poverty, and prepare for the future. We need to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

We need continued EU support to make the necessary investments for the energy transition. We should do it for the many, not for the few.

ATHENS

Equity and social cohesion should be a cornerstone of European programmes.

This should come on top of increasing investment in the energy transition.

Allocation of funds should enable equal access and participation in the energy transition for the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged households.

We also advocate for **incorporating affordability performance indicators into EU energy transition programs**, such as the Social Climate Fund, as well as in national energy and climate plans.

We need bold action that ensures that the European project is up to the expectations of our fellow citizens. And we want to be key actors on these initiatives.

BOLOGNA

The European Union underwent an unprecedented financial effort in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cities, regions and countries are still using funds from the Next Generation EU to build a more sustainable economy.

However, there is still money on the table.

We **encourage Member States to reallocate unspent resources from their National Recovery and Resilience Plans** to housing.

This would allow using RRF investments on housing to go beyond 2026.

We also propose that **future unclaimed Recovery and Resilience Facility resources be repurposed and directly allocated** to local governments to invest in social and affordable housing.

We cannot give up on any RRF resources, particularly in the current context of the housing crisis.

BUDAPEST

We also know that not all cities and Member States are the same, despite facing similar challenges.

Some of our cities are dealing with this crisis with one hand tied behind our back. This is because our National political context hinders our ability to access available European funds.

That is why we advocate for the **direct allocation to local governments of decommitted funds not available to Member State governments due to rule of law conditionality deficits.**

Our citizens should not be made responsible for the wrongdoings of Member States.

WARSAW

The European Commission should see cities as direct partners for the implementation of EU policies on the ground.

In a world where authoritarianisms do not cease to grow, the European project and cities should be key allies. We believe in the same values.

This is why we propose to articulate a fast track for cities in the granting of EU funds for social and affordable housing.

And this is why we demand a prominent role in the decision-making process where funds and policies will be decided.

It is essential for cities to actively participate in both the design and implementation of these initiatives, ensuring that they are not only impactful but also truly effective.

By working together with the Commission and other levels of government we can maximize the benefits for our communities.

LYON

We ask that all available resources are mobilised in order to secure housing affordability for our population.

And we should leave no one behind.

We need to provide affordable housing for low-income households, key workers, youth and seniors.

To migrants and refugees, coupled with the necessary supportive services for their full integration.

And also for those of us who currently lack a place to call home.

That is why we defend that enabling broader investment in affordable housing should **not come at the expense of funding available for the fight against homelessness.**

On the contrary, a specific European fund should be set for this purpose as part of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, and a portion should be directly managed by local authorities and its social partners.

Another element harming our cities is the impact of short term rentals.

We congratulate the EU Institutions for making possible the short term rentals regulation on data collection and data-sharing obligations.

We urge that EU Institutions actively encourage all Member States to **implement the EU Short Term Rental regulation**, as this is crucial to enforce local regulations and to stop illegal practices.

And we also advocate for the improvement of cross border enforcement when short term rental platforms do not comply.

It should be the start, not the end, of ambitious EU action in this regard.

LEIPZIG:

The proposals that my fellow Mayors have listed are an explicit offer to EU Institutions.

We, the cities, want ambitious action and we want to be part of the solution.

Our offer and our commitment are strong. Now it is time to get to work. There is no time to lose.

We need to be ambitious and for words to become facts, we need stable governance mechanisms.

This is why we want to stress the need to develop a constant, coherent working instrument with the EU institutions.

Today's meeting is the first and should not be the last. Let's get to work and let's do it now.

Thank you.