

Amendment 1

Guido Reil, Dominique Bilde, Elena Lizzi, Stefania Zambelli, Jaak Madison, France Jamet

on behalf of the ID Group

Report**A9-0247/2020**

Kim Van Sparrentak

Access to decent and affordable housing for all
(2019/2187(INI))

Motion for a resolution (Rule 181(3) of the Rules of Procedure) replacing non-legislative motion for a resolution A9-0247/2020

European Parliament resolution on access to decent and affordable housing for all

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas housing is a basic human need; whereas access to decent housing is a precondition and the basis for a life in human dignity;
- B. whereas housing is an exclusive competence of the Member States; whereas housing in the Member States is mainly provided by the market through the mechanism of supply and demand; whereas the market does not always provide access to decent housing to the lowest income groups, and whereas, in this regard, providing housing is an important task which demands suitable policies;
- C. whereas the housing markets of and in the Member States differ substantially as a result of differences in spatial planning, zoning regulations, tax legislation and financial regulations; whereas in some Member States there are, proportionally, many more renters than in other Member States; whereas in some Member States citizens have to invest more of their own capital than in other Member States, and sometimes much more; whereas Member States differ with regard to access to bank financing and mortgage interest deduction; whereas a majority of the population of each Member State lived in owner-occupied dwellings in 2018, with the proportion ranging from 51.4 % in Germany to 96.4 % in Romania¹;
- D. whereas housing expenses are the largest expense for households in the European Union; whereas in many regions and cities, people with a low income are finding it increasingly difficult to secure a home; whereas renting is more common among poor households and rising housing costs therefore have a disproportionate impact on renters;

¹ Eurostat, housing statistics.

- E. whereas according to Eurostat, a household is overburdened when the total housing costs represent more than 40 % of its disposable income; whereas in 2018, 9.6 % of the EU population spent 40 % or more of their household income on housing; whereas in 11 Member States, less than 6 % of the population lived in households overburdened by housing costs, while the housing cost overburden rate stood at 10 % or more in Romania (10.3 %), Germany (14.2 %), Denmark (14.7 %) and Bulgaria (17.9 %); whereas in Greece, 39.5 % of the population was overburdened by housing costs²;

- F. whereas the nature of the housing problem varies substantially across the Member States and across different regions within Member States; whereas foreign capital is mainly invested in the real estate market of big urban centres; whereas there is a growing demand for housing in big cities, especially among young and highly educated people; whereas high construction costs and complex and bureaucratic planning procedures lead to lengthy delays in constructing new buildings, which in turn results in an inability to keep up with the increased demand for housing; whereas this ultimately drives up prices; whereas inflated house prices and high rent costs in major cities are obstructing the employment prospects of millions of young workers³, while, at the same time, lower- and middle-income groups are being priced out of developing or gentrifying areas and are struggling with arrears in rent, mortgage repayments and utility bills; whereas immigration movements from less-developed regions to urban areas contribute to rising prices in urban centres;

- G. whereas the housing problem is not only present in very dynamic and growing urban centres, but also affects least-developed regions; whereas negative structural economic changes in certain regions lead to population movements and an older population, resulting in poor-quality housing and a high vacancy rate;

- H. whereas the phenomenon of slumlords is a persistent problem in many Member States, owing to the impoverishment of the population, the lack of an adequate political response in the field of housing and, most importantly, to illegal immigration; whereas this practice poses serious health and safety risks and requires an urgent political response;

- I. whereas, following the example of people smugglers, slumlords exploit human misery, taking advantage of the manifest failures of the immigration policies and systems of the different Member States;

- J. whereas most of those exploited by slumlords live in areas that are already impoverished; whereas slumlord activity fuels the continuous harmful development of these areas, with negative consequences for their inhabitants;

- K. whereas Member States manage affordable housing in different ways and whereas each Member State has its own housing system that is adapted to its own history, tradition and circumstances; whereas in Sweden there is officially no subsidised social housing sector and people with a lower income can turn to municipal housing companies for affordable housing; whereas in France the state finances the social rental sector and

² Eurostat, 'Housing costs a challenge to many households', 20 May 2020.

³ World Bank, 'EU faces affordable housing crisis excluding young people from top-quality job opportunities', 8 November 2018.

determines who can live where and at what rent; whereas in the Netherlands almost one in three houses is a social housing unit, while the social rental sector is much smaller in other Member States; whereas in several Member States the stock of social housing has remained much too low or has gone down dramatically, resulting in long waiting lists;

- L. whereas it is estimated that there are now three million people in the EU without a home⁴; whereas the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) estimated in 2019 that at least 700 000 homeless people are sleeping rough or in emergency or temporary accommodation on any one night in the EU and that this amounts to an increase of 70 % in a decade⁵;
 - M. whereas homelessness and the rising rate thereof have both personal and individual causes such as mental health problems, alcohol abuse, unemployment, divorce and domestic violence, and structural causes such as developments on the housing market, both legal and illegal migration from third countries and poverty migration within the EU;
 - N. whereas the lockdowns imposed by governments during the COVID-19 crisis have caused rising unemployment and rising rates of bankruptcy among small enterprises, which in turn will lead to an increase in the demand for social and affordable housing;
 - O. whereas the right to property is a fundamental right and principle which must be fully respected and enforced;
1. Emphasises that housing is an exclusive competence of the Member States; calls on the Member States to design housing policies to ensure decent and affordable housing for their citizens, thereby supporting a rise in living standards and securing a safe and healthy living environment;
 2. Notes that various EU policies have a strong impact on the development of the housing markets of the Member States;
 3. Notes that the low interest rate policy of the European Central Bank has led to more competition in the real estate market in different countries, resulting in higher prices;
 4. Points out that EU climate policy and legislation in this field have a strong impact on housing and housing affordability; notes that, for example, the EU's Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive 2012/27/EU) imposes a very high level of energy efficiency, particularly for new construction projects and public buildings; notes that in Germany, for example, the average construction costs for housing increased by 49 % in the period from 2000 to 2016 and that 15 % of this results from energy efficiency implementation; considers that the specific requirements of this legislation place an especially heavy burden on many less-developed regions in the EU;
 5. Considers that EU energy efficiency legislation has led to the phenomenon of green, environmental and low-carbon gentrification; notes in particular that the expanding requirements for housing have led to rent increases in different housing areas, and that

⁴ Jerome Hughes, 'Homelessness in EU reaches record high of 3 million', Press TV, 16 January 2020.

⁵ FEANTSA, Homeless in Europe Magazine, Spring 2019, p. 2.

these climate policy costs place an additional burden on predominantly lower-income tenants, many of whom are then forced to leave these areas;

6. Considers that migration also has a strong negative impact on housing affordability in urban areas; points out that the growing number of immigrants is putting pressure on the demand side of the housing market, increasing rent and house prices and making housing less affordable for low- and middle-income households; considers, therefore, that the fight against illegal immigration should and must be part of any housing strategy;
7. Supports the Member States that want to provide their own citizens and their households with privileged access to social housing;
8. Notes that many young people cannot afford to live in very productive locations with high employment opportunities and that this is obstructing productivity and economic growth; encourages the Member States to earmark unused public land for housing development, speed up approval processes for building permits, create more transport links to the centre and create public registries to improve the transparency of house sale prices in order to foster competition between areas;
9. Points out that many small property owners provide affordable housing and that small-scale rental properties, often older and with higher maintenance costs, are more likely to be rented by lower-income people and groups than newer corporate-run apartments; is of the opinion that the overprotection of tenants and long and complicated eviction procedures deter many owners from putting rental accommodation on the housing market; calls, therefore, on the Member States to ensure that the balance of tenant-owner relations is not disproportionately tilted in favour of either party and that both parties are protected; is of the opinion that easing tenant-owner regulations can improve the supply of rental housing;
10. Notes that in many Member States owners are exposed to the risk of squatters illegally occupying their property; points out that many of these owners need rental income to supplement their income and that the financial losses can be substantial; encourages the Member States, therefore, to put in place the necessary legal provisions to allow rapid eviction of squatters;
11. Notes that the data on homelessness are old or fragmented in most Member States and that in many cases official figures give an incomplete picture; points to the fact that in several Member States, homeless people are almost invisible; considers that successfully combating homelessness is only possible if the problem is quantified on the basis of official, credible statistics that encompass and relate to the various social groups affected; calls on the Member States to compile official and reliable data on homeless people;
12. Considers that developments on the housing market are one of the most important structural causes of homelessness; is therefore of the opinion that a policy to tackle homelessness requires the construction of social housing and affordable apartments and measures that ensure homeless people have access to these forms of housing; calls on Member States, moreover, to design preventive policies with early warning measures to prevent people from becoming homeless;

13. Is of the opinion that both poverty migration from Eastern Europe to Western European Member States and illegal migration from third countries are a very important structural driver of homelessness; calls on the EU, therefore, to stop the accession process of the countries of the Western Balkans and encourages the Member States to pursue a strict and robust migration and asylum policy;
14. Considers that the fight against homelessness also requires a good labour market policy and measures aimed at reducing poverty; considers that domestic violence against women is a very important cause of female homelessness and calls on the Member States to provide for accommodation centres which are specifically adapted to the needs of homeless women;
15. Considers that the Finnish example has demonstrated that a Housing First policy and strategy is the most suitable tool to help reintegrate long-term homeless people with complex personal situations, alcohol and drug problems, and mental illnesses;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

Or. en