



European Parliament

[Index](#)
[< Previous](#)
[Next >](#)
[Full text](#)

Procedure : 2012/2293(INI)

[Document stages in plenary](#)

Document selected : [A7-0155/2013](#)

Texts tabled :
A7-0155/2013

Debates :
[PV 10/06/2013 - 23](#)
[CRE 10/06/2013 - 23](#)

Votes :
[PV 11/06/2013 - 12.1](#)
[CRE 11/06/2013 - 12.1](#)

Texts adopted :
[P7_TA\(2013\)0246](#)

Texts adopted

Tuesday, 11 June 2013 - Strasbourg

Provisional edition

Social housing in the European Union

[P7_TA-PROV\(2013\)0246](#)
[A7-0155/2013](#)

► European Parliament resolution of 11 June 2013 on social housing in the European Union (2012/2293(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Article 3(3) thereof, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Articles 9, 14, 148, 151, 153 and 160 thereof and Protocol 26 thereto, on services of general interest.
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Articles 34 and 36 thereof,
- having regard to Protocol 26 of the TFEU on services of general interest.
- having regard to the revised European Social Charter, in particular its Articles 30 (on the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion), 31 (on the right to housing) and 16 (on the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 3 March 2010 entitled 'Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1173/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 on the effective enforcement of budgetary surveillance in the euro area⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1175/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97 on the strengthening of the surveillance of budgetary positions and the surveillance and coordination of economic policies⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 1177/2011 of 8 November 2011 amending Regulation (EC) No 1467/97 on speeding up and clarifying the implementation of the excessive deficit procedure⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1174/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 on enforcement measures to correct excessive macroeconomic imbalances in the euro area⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Council Directive 2011/85/EU of 8 November 2011 on requirements for budgetary frameworks of the Member States⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 18 April 2012 entitled 'Towards a job-rich recovery' (COM(2012)0173),

- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion' (**COM(2010)0758**) and to the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, as well as its resolution of 15 November 2011⁽⁷⁾, on the subject,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (**COM(2011)0615**),
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions concerning the European Regional Development Fund and the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 (**COM(2011)0614**),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 26 November 2008 entitled 'A European Economic Recovery Plan' (**COM(2008)0800**),
- having regard to Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on energy efficiency, amending Directives 2009/125/EC and 2010/30/EU and repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC⁽¹¹⁾, and to its resolution of 15 December 2010 on revision of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan⁽¹²⁾,
- having regard to Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax⁽¹³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 23 March 2011 entitled 'Reform of the EU State Aid Rules on Services of General Economic Interest' (**COM(2011)0146**) and to its resolution of 15 November 2011 on the subject⁽¹⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Strategy for the effective implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the European Union' (**COM(2010)0573**),
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' (**COM(2011)0173**),
- having regard to the Commission Guidelines of 15 May 2012 on best practice to limit, mitigate or compensate soil sealing (SWD(2012)0101),
- having regard to the Commission's Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review 2012 of 8 January 2013⁽¹⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Social Investment Package of 20 February 2013,
- having regard to the European statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) survey and to Eurostat's news release of 8 February 2012⁽¹⁶⁾,
- having regard to the European statistics set out in the Third European Quality of Life Survey, in particular Chapter 6 thereof⁽¹⁷⁾,
- having regard to the Eurofound report on Household debts advisory services in the European Union⁽¹⁸⁾,
- having regard to the Eurofound report on Living conditions of the Roma: Substandard housing and health⁽¹⁹⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Decision of 20 December 2011 on the application of Article 106(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to State aid in the form of public service compensation granted to certain undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest⁽²⁰⁾,
- having regard to the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 14 March 2013 in Case C-415/11 (Mohamed Aziz) protecting mortgage consumers against banks in case of abusive contracts conditions⁽²¹⁾,

- having regard to Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)⁽²²⁾,
 - having regard to the Council Declaration of 6 December 2010 entitled 'The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: working together to fight poverty in 2010 and beyond'⁽²³⁾,
 - having regard to the Social Protection Committee (SPC) report of 18 February 2011 entitled 'Assessment of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy'⁽²⁴⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 5 February 2010 entitled 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion' (SEC(2010)0098),
 - having regard to the SPC report of 15 February 2010 entitled 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010'⁽²⁵⁾,
 - having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee opinion entitled 'Issues with defining social housing as a service of general economic interest'⁽²⁶⁾,
 - having regard to the Committee of the Regions opinion entitled 'Towards a European Agenda for Social Housing'⁽²⁷⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 November 2012 on the Social Investment Pact as a response to the crisis⁽²⁸⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 June 2010 on EU 2020⁽²⁹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the contribution of the cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon and the EU 2020 objectives⁽³⁰⁾,
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 8 September 2010 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States: Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines⁽³¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2010 on the financial, economic and social crisis: recommendations concerning the measures and initiatives to be taken⁽³²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2011 on the future of Social Services of General Interest⁽³³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2007 on housing and regional policy⁽³⁴⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2011 on an EU Homelessness Strategy⁽³⁵⁾,
 - having regard to its written declarations of 22 April 2008 on ending street homelessness⁽³⁶⁾ and of 16 December 2010 on an EU homelessness strategy⁽³⁷⁾,
 - having regard to the Eurofound Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis⁽³⁸⁾,
 - having regard to the final recommendations of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness of 9 and 10 December 2010,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0155/2013),
- A. whereas access to housing is a fundamental right that can be seen as a precondition to the exercise of, and to access to, other fundamental rights and to a life in conditions of human dignity; and whereas guaranteeing access to decent and adequate housing is an international obligation incumbent on the Member States, to which the Union must have regard, given that the right of access to housing and to housing assistance is recognised in Article 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Articles 30 and 31 of the revised European Social Charter adopted by the Council of Europe and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, as well as in many Member States constitutions;
- B. whereas national, regional and local authorities in the Member States have a right, as well as a duty, to define their own housing policy and to take the steps required to ensure that this fundamental right is upheld on their respective housing markets, in accordance with the needs of their inhabitants, with the aim of providing universal access to decent, affordable housing;
- C. whereas affordable, adequate and secure accommodation is a suitable tool for achieving social justice and cohesion, and investment in affordable housing is a precondition for enhanced labour mobility and increased

employment opportunities, while the construction and renovation of social housing is crucial for achieving the targets of meeting the housing demand, providing for affordable housing for broad levels of the population, boosting economies, keep property bubbles in check, combat energy poverty and ensuring tax income of Member States;

D. whereas the Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, have an essential role to play, and a wide discretion, in providing, commissioning and organising the provision of social housing in parallel with, and in addition to, the unplanned, market-based housing supply; whereas the provision of social housing should fulfil a high level of quality, safety and affordability, and promote equal treatment and user rights;

E. whereas there is a shortage of social housing facilities, and an increasing need of affordable housing, in most EU Member States, whereas the social and family profiles of people using social housing has changed; whereas these new social factors should be identified so that the Member States, and their respective local and regional authorities, can define a range of housing strategies that more closely match actual circumstances;

F. whereas social housing policy is an integral part of services of general economic interest by helping to meet housing needs, facilitate access to property, promote the quality of living space, improve existing living space and adapt housing expenditure to the family situation and resources of the occupiers, while leaving scope for effort on their part;

G. whereas social housing should be characterised by a good relationship between quality and purchase price or rent, permit energy savings, be located in an environment which includes green spaces, and be suitable for different generations, with account taken of the specific needs of children and older persons;

H. whereas, in order to prevent both increases in the number of homeless and future housing crises, mortgage rules must be designed to protect consumers and to spread risks fairly;

I. whereas social housing plays a key part in the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy – in particular its poverty target, including the prevention of the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage – in that it contributes to ensuring high levels of employment, inclusion and social cohesion, to promoting job mobility and to combating both climate change and energy poverty by modernising the housing stock;

J. whereas the conjunction of the financial and economic crisis, austerity measures, rising housing prices and falling households' revenues have increased unemployment and social exclusion within the EU, especially among the most vulnerable groups of people, thereby increasing the burden on welfare services; takes note that, notwithstanding its significant stabilising effect, public funding for social housing has in some Member States fallen victim to recent financial austerity measures;

K. whereas the economic and social crisis is having a direct adverse impact on activity in, and financial support for, the house-building and refurbishment sector, with social housing being hit particularly hard, owing to the bursting of housing bubbles, the contraction of credit, late payments and a fall in new public-sector orders; whereas the construction sector can be a driving force in efforts to find a sustainable, inclusive way out of the crisis and to address climate- and energy-related challenges;

L. whereas austerity and fiscal consolidation measures must go hand-in-hand with an overall strategy of investment in sustainable, inclusive growth in pursuit of the Europe 2020 objectives, including as regards combating poverty and social exclusion;

M. whereas housing is a basic necessity in respect of which Member States lay down, in line with their own policy choices, minimum standards of habitability and comfort, specific urban planning and construction rules and maximum income percentages, with some regulating house price increases and even establishing mechanisms for providing social assistance or tax support to help out with what is a leading item of household expenditure;

N. whereas, in view of the severe economic, social and long-term impact of the crisis, not only on economic growth, employment rates and poverty and exclusion levels, but also on access to housing and on investment in social housing within the EU, urgent action on the part of Member States and the Union is required to guarantee access to decent and affordable housing, whereas, given that housing is the largest household expenditure item in Europe, the sharp rise in housing-related prices (land prices, purchase and rental prices and energy prices) is a cause of instability and anxiety, and must be seen as a major concern; whereas, given that unemployment has also shot up in the EU, as is illustrated by the fact that the average rate for the EU 27 rose to 10,9 % in January 2013, and given that, at the same time, Europe's population is ageing, there is a major risk of an increasing gap between rich and poor, social exclusion and homelessness, with 80 million Europeans already at risk of poverty;

O. whereas the Roma tend to live in highly segregated areas where access to social and health services is problematic;

P. whereas there are clear links between sub-standard housing and poor health: mortgage indebtedness is associated with worsening mental health; overcrowding is associated with psychological problems, tuberculosis, respiratory infections, increased chances of fire and domestic accidents; living in inadequate housing negatively affects health, safety and increases the chance of domestic accidents; living in a noisy area is associated with increased hypertension and higher blood pressure; whereas a lack of housing is a source of both stress and distress adversely affecting the quality of life, health and wellbeing;

Q. whereas women – 24,5 % of whom were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2010, in particular women with low incomes, single mothers, women in poorly paid jobs, migrant women, widows with dependent children and

women who are victims of domestic violence – as well as single-female-adult-headed families with children, young families, large families, students young people at the start of their careers, young unemployed couples, people with disabilities, people with physical or psychiatric illnesses, people from marginalised communities including Roma, and the elderly, are especially affected by the lack of affordable and adapted social housing options; whereas these categories are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and often move into sub-standard private market housing units, which substantially increases the risk of health problems; whereas these categories often seek alternative solutions by moving in with family, friends or acquaintances, thereby hindering proper analysis and transparent documentation of homeless people;

R. whereas the economic crisis and high housing market prices combine to reduce women's ability to get divorced or end co-habitation, limiting their freedom and making them more vulnerable to gender-based domestic violence;

S. whereas affordable rental housing is essential for young people in order to take up vocational training, university studies, internships or employment opportunities;

T. whereas Member States also establish and organise a parallel supply of social housing to complement the supply generated by the private market; whereas this social housing is made available under specific conditions by not-for-profit agencies set up specifically for this purpose; whereas 25 million European households are in social housing, in respect of which local and regional planning requirements, access rules and prices are laid down directly by the public authorities in the Member States; whereas, owing to its stability and to the fact that prices are regulated, this parallel housing supply helps in particular to keep property market cycles and housing bubbles in check;

Promoting the social and economic role of social housing

1. Notes that, as a result of the current economic and social crisis, on its own the market is increasingly incapable of meeting the need for affordable homes, in particular in densely populated urban areas, and that rising housing and energy costs are aggravating the risks of disease, poverty and social exclusion; notes the increase in several Member States in the number of evictions and properties seized by banks; urges that measures be taken in response to these challenges; is concerned about both the direct and the indirect impact of some austerity measures in the context of the current social and economic crisis – such as cuts in housing benefit and social services, the taxation of social housing providers, the cancellation of new housing projects and the selling off of parts of national social housing stocks – which could exacerbate a vicious circle of long-term social exclusion and segregation;

2. Recalls that, in combating child poverty, social housing policies play an important role through the eradication of family poverty and the prevention of the intergenerational transmission of socio-economical disadvantages; notes that, in the wake of the social and demographic changes in family structure and the increase in the number of unstable and precarious jobs, there is a greater need for affordable housing also for segments of the population that are socially integrated;

3. Urges compliance with Article 14 of and Protocol No 26 annexed to the TFEU, under which public authorities are free to determine how the social housing sector is organised and funded and what types of household are eligible, with a view to meeting the needs of the local population and to ensuring a high level of quality, safety, affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of user rights; sees the intervention of public authorities here as a response to the shortcomings of the market, with the aim of ensuring universal access to decent, affordable housing in accordance with Articles 16, 30 and 31 of the European Social Charter;

Towards a European Social Housing Policy

4. Reminds the Commission, the Member States and local and regional authorities that spending on social and affordable housing is in keeping with fundamental rights, enables urgent social needs to be met and, as strategic social investment, helps in a sustainable way to provide local jobs that cannot be 'off-shored', stabilise the economy by reducing the risk of property bubbles and household over-indebtedness, promote labour mobility, counter climate change, combat energy poverty and alleviate health problems stemming from overcrowding and poor living conditions; insists, therefore, that social housing should not be considered a cost to be cut but an investment that pays off in the long term through better health and social well-being, access to the labour market and the empowerment of people, especially the aged, to live independent lives;

5. Calls on the Commission to set out a European social housing action framework for housing policy in such a way as to ensure consistency between the various policy instruments the EU uses to address this issue (State aid, structural funding, energy policy, action to combat poverty and social exclusion, health policy);

6. Asks the Commission – on the basis of an exchange of best practices and experience between the Member States, and taking into account the fact that social housing is conceived and managed in different ways (often due to flexibility in establishing priorities) in the Member States, regions and local communities – to clarify the definition of social housing;

7. Points out that social housing investment forms part of broader policy efforts to organise and fund public social, health and education services with a view to ensuring that basic social rights may be enjoyed and that they respond to new social needs and cyclical economic changes;

8. Emphasises the need to monitor social investment as part of a 'social investment pact' modelled on the Euro Plus Pact and designed to strengthen the Union's economic and budgetary governance and including investment in

social housing; emphasises as well the need for social investment targets for the Member States to meet with a view to attaining the social, employment and education objectives laid down under the Europe 2020 strategy; welcomes the conclusions of the December 2012 European Council meeting which stress that 'the possibilities offered by the EU's existing fiscal framework to balance productive public investment needs with fiscal discipline objectives can be exploited in the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact', thus bearing out the validity of this proposal; calls on the Commission to monitor social investment more closely, using a scoreboard based on indicators of investment at Member-State and EU level, which, in connection with social housing investment, takes account of changes in housing costs and in the number of people waiting to be allocated housing in the Member States; further calls on all Member States to ratify the revised European Social Charter, with special regard to Article 31;

9. Takes the view that residents' and tenants' organisations should be involved in defining the housing strategies to be implemented by the Member States;

10. Emphasises the need for social innovation to be supported both by the European platform against poverty and social exclusion and by the research Framework Programme in order to analyse new policies aiming to improve access to housing and reduce homelessness;

11. Welcomes the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and the Council of 31 March 2011 (**COM (2011)0142**) seeking to impose restrictions on credit agreements relating to residential property and hence contain excessive household debt; calls for EU mortgage provisions to incorporate best practices which are as favourable as possible to consumers; urges the inclusion of procedures for the renegotiation and rescheduling of debt repayments for insolvent individuals and families; calls on the Member States to prevent evicted households being forced to keep up their mortgage repayments; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take action in response to the social hardship caused to those most affected by the economic crisis and by unemployment and who are being evicted and deprived of their homes; notes that this is occurring against a backdrop of major public assistance initiatives designed to put the financial system back on a sound footing; calls on the Member States to strive to offer alternatives solutions to evictions;

12. Calls on the Commission to warn the Member States, in its country-specific recommendations, when reforms are likely to threaten investment in social or affordable housing, and not to issue recommendations regarding the size of the social housing sector in individual Member States; criticises the fact that, as part of fiscal consolidation programmes and in line with specific recommendations made by the Commission on housing market action, some Member States are squeezing capacity in the sector by taxing social housing providers; is concerned, furthermore, about the restrictive definition of social housing given by the Commission within the field of competition policy, which only targets disadvantaged groups;

13. Calls on the Council to convene a meeting of the housing ministers of the Member States at least once a year to discuss the impact of various EU policies on housing policy and ensure that the economic, social and environmental aspects of the housing sector are mainstreamed more efficiently at EU level, with the involvement of stakeholders such as social housing bodies, associations representing occupants and associations seeking to facilitate access to housing;

14. Notes that a definition of social housing and of the beneficiaries should be the result of a democratic discussion process in order that the different traditions of the Member States may be taken into account;

15. Calls on the Commission and Member States to give greater importance to housing and related services under the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategy, including through measures to alleviate homelessness and reduce housing exclusion on the basis of joint national indicators to and encourage exchanges of good practice in effectively implementing the right to housing;

16. Urges the Member States to redouble their efforts to include social housing investment in their medium- and long-term budgetary objectives, in their national reform programmes and in the strategic axes of the 2014-2020 Partnership Contract; calls on the European Council and the Commission to monitor more effectively the implementation and achievement of the social objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy;

17. Notes that housing policies and programmes need to be developed in consultation with women with low incomes and from different social backgrounds in order to see which policies best reflect women's needs;

Encouraging investment to boost local employment and the green economy

18. Emphasises how the housing sector and, in particular the social housing sector, plays a contracyclical economic role through the reduction of energy dependency, support for the construction and renovation industries and, thereby, for sustainable local employment that cannot be 'off-shored', thanks notably to the labour-intensive nature of the sector, the development of green-economy segments as part of the local economy, and the knock-on effects on the rest of the economy; believes, therefore, that investment in social housing should be considered not only as an expenditure but also as a productive investment; further encourages the Member States to start a dialogue with the construction industry in order to develop a better business environment for, and better regulation of, social housing, with special regard to the establishment of residential building targets, the arrangement of infrastructural costs and supply of development land;

19. Highlights the added value in terms of local employment and the considerable leverage effect on investment resulting from the direct impact of the Structural Funds in the social housing sector in the period 2007-2013;

20. Takes the view that the amounts to be allocated to the Cohesion Funds under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 should not be less than the amounts under the current MFF, so that adequate funding is guaranteed for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in particular the investment priority 'promoting social inclusion and combating poverty – support for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities';

21. Recognises that many Member States have already put in place effective social housing policies, and believes that the role of the EU in this context should be to facilitate the exchange of best practice across the Member States;

22. Takes note of the Commission's proposals for the legislative package of regulations on 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy; advocates making priority investment in energy efficiency and in the use of renewables in social and affordable housing, as well as integrated projects for sustainable urban and territorial development, equal access to housing for marginalised communities, and the promotion of social and solidarity stakeholders such as not-for-profit housing cooperatives, enterprises, eligible for Structural and Cohesion Funds support;

23. Encourages the Member States and all the relevant bodies to give both investment in social and affordable housing and the strengthening of non-profit making housing sectors a prominent place in national reform programmes and in the shaping of strategic priorities under partnership agreements for the period 2014-2020, as well as to ensure that their respective national Roma inclusion strategies are reflected in the planned housing measures;

24. Calls on the Member States to make greater use of private law instruments – such as long lease arrangements – to facilitate the provision of social housing, obviating the need to purchase land for building purposes, and of continued individual ownership of social housing, by encouraging lessor usufruct arrangements;

25. Stresses that residential and commercial buildings account for 40 % of final energy consumption and total CO₂ emissions in Europe, and that environmentally sustainable building leads to a reduction in building costs and time, and a drastic reduction of the environmental impact and energy consumption and, accordingly, of housing-related management costs;

26. Supports an adequate budget for the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework, identifying cohesion policy as a driver of recovery; supports the conclusions of the European Compact for Growth and Jobs regarding its call on the Member States to facilitate and speed up the reallocation of unused monies from the Structural Funds to energy efficiency and renewable energy projects during the 2007-2013 programming period; considers that the social housing sector should benefit from these reallocations;

27. Calls on the Member States, their managing authorities and the Commission to include housing stakeholders, residents' associations and associations for access to housing among their closest interlocutors for the drawing up, monitoring and assessment of partnership agreements and operational programmes; stresses the importance of new integrated development tools (Community-Led Local Development and Integrated Territorial Investment) for integrated housing strategies in which social housing organisations and occupants would figure prominently; believes that the Structural and Cohesion Funds must make effective use of both the partnership and the multi-level governance principles and that the Member States must be encouraged to cooperate with local and regional authorities to set priorities and determine how the funding should be used; considers that greater synergies between the Structural and Cohesion Funds could encourage the sustainable development of disadvantaged or rural areas, preventing their isolation and depopulation, thus avoiding the negative effects of social segregation and promoting heterogeneity, social cohesion and gender equality;

28. Calls on the Member States, in order to stimulate high-standard construction and renovation of social and affordable housing, to strengthen or develop specific financing mechanisms, as well as to encourage, in a coordinated manner, recourse to Horizon 2020 grants and the use of financial instruments and technical assistance programmes offered by the Structural Funds, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the European Energy Efficiency Fund (EEEF); calls on the Member States, furthermore, to seek ways to apply the modified ERDF regulation in order to provide housing for marginalised communities;

29. Calls on the EIB, in close consultation with local and regional authorities, to place greater emphasis on the social and affordable housing sector when setting its investment priorities, in particular in those Member States which do not have a public housing bank, whilst relaxing the terms under which it grants loans; calls as well on the EIB to determine the scope for using project bonds as an instrument to finance social infrastructure, such as housing, taking into account the assessment of its pilot phase before extending it;

30. Urges the Member States to support the activities of housing cooperatives, which are a valuable tool for the affordable purchase of a first home; points out that cooperatives are also an effective tool for promoting urban regeneration initiatives, creating synergies with local communities and curbing the flight from towns and cities;

31. Asks the Commission to make other potential sources of financing available to Member States for the development and renovation of social housing stock as forms of social investment, as well as to encourage Member States and regional and local authorities to make effective use of available European funding, and to retain the reduced rates of VAT that apply to such investment, given the labour-intensive nature of the sector and its very limited impact on cross-border trade within the EU; urges that consideration be given to applying the same rates of VAT to social housing as to basic necessities; encourages Member States to mobilise private savings in order to both facilitate access to land and encourage the construction and renovation of social housing;

32. Calls for the implementation of integrated cooperation models which bring together project managers, social housing providers and construction firms in order to promote the thermal renovation of social housing and the construction of low-energy social housing;

33. Welcomes the Commission communication of 31 July 2012 on a strategy for the sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector and its enterprises (COM(2012)0433); takes the view that, in addition to tax incentives and financial support to boost the competitiveness and innovation in this sector, measures to improve workforce skill levels are essential if we are to meet the challenges linked to the creation of a resource-efficient Europe and a low-carbon economy, and achieve the objectives set in the directives on energy efficiency (2012/27/EU)⁽³⁹⁾ and on the energy performance of buildings (2010/31/EU)⁽⁴⁰⁾;

34. Calls on the Commission to work more closely with the Member States and the relevant local authorities with a view to drawing up medium- and long-term forecasts of the skills needed by the labour market; calls on the relevant stakeholders to monitor employment trends with a view to making basic vocational training and lifelong learning more relevant; calls on the Member States and the relevant local authorities swiftly to adapt their education and vocational training systems, including vocational education and training, incorporating the concept of the sustainable economy, and to ensure access to skills development programmes so as to make it easier for young people to gain access to new 'green' jobs and 'green' industries; points out that the promotion of green jobs can create quality and sustainable employment opportunities, tackle poverty and social exclusion, as well as ensure supportive employment services;

35. Notes that the 'green' sector can provide a plurality of different employment opportunities, ranging from entry level and less skilled jobs to highly skilled knowledge sector employment; in this regard:

- notes the important role of SMEs in providing such employment in the green economy, and highlights the potential for SMEs in offering work training, apprenticeships and local outreach schemes, which can provide employment opportunities to socially disadvantaged individuals;
- calls on the Member States to assess the feasibility of transition funds to manage skills needs;
- calls on the Commission to incorporate into the framework for lifelong learning a ninth key competence relating to the environment, climate change and sustainable development;
- calls on the Member States and local and regional authorities to draw on the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to invest in skills, employment, training and vocational retraining, and in particular in 'green' professions, such as the thermal renovation of buildings;
- calls on the Member States to support the emergence of individuals and bodies which have the skills to address both the social and technical aspects of energy saving, such as the members of the professions which provide an interface between the social and the technical, and efforts to train members of technical professions to take a more social approach to the issue of energy efficiency and vice versa;

36. Welcomes the Social Investment Package with which the Commission offers Member States guidelines to pursue more efficient and effective social policies aimed at growth and cohesion;

37. Notes that these investments in social housing are part of broader-based policies to organise and finance the provision of public social and health services and education services, in an effort to enable people to exercise their fundamental social rights and to meet changing social needs;

Combating poverty and promoting inclusion and social cohesion

38. Points out that acknowledging and implementing the right to housing affect the implementation of other fundamental rights, including political and social rights; points out that it is the Member State or public authority concerned which is responsible for making this right to housing a reality by improving, through its policies and programmes, universal access to housing, in particular for disadvantaged persons, by providing sufficient adequate, decent, healthy and affordable housing;

39. Calls on the Agency for Fundamental Rights to conduct a study assessing how effectively and under what conditions the right to housing and housing assistance is implemented in the Member States, involving relevant stakeholders in the process; calls on the agency to promote the exchange of best practices in the effective implementation of the right to housing for particularly vulnerable groups, including the homeless; calls on the Commission to follow such activities within the Social Investment Package;

40. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to support and promote innovative exchanges of good practices in upholding the right to housing for particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups, with special regard to combating domestic violence; notes with regret that victims of domestic violence are often more likely to remain in an abusive environment if they are financially unable to find suitable housing; invites the Member States to provide integrated social services for families victims of domestic violence;

41. Expects the Commission to examine to what extent direct support by housing allowances, or indirect support by social housing itself, is a more effective measure to provide affordable housing for social groups who cannot cover their housing needs on the housing market;

42. Calls on the Commission and the Eurofound Agency to carry out a study in 2014, as part of the agency's 2014 programme of work, into the cost of failing to do anything about inadequate housing;

43. Notes with concern the fact that many Member States, faced with budgetary imbalances, are suspending operations, programmes and actions (rent and mortgage subsidies, for example) designed to facilitate home acquisition, while, at the same time, disproportionately increasing property taxes in the midst of an acute economic crisis, leaving many sections of society prey to poverty and deprivation;

44. Calls on the Member States to carry out social impact analyses, with an emphasis on gender-based and household-based analyses, as part of all social housing policies and programmes, with particular account taken of gender disparity in income and financial resources; stresses that all statistical data must be broken down by gender and household types, and that more research is needed in order to ascertain exactly how housing policies can support individuals and groups in a vulnerable situation, such as women (bearing in mind women's multifaceted role as single parents and as carers for family members and for disabled persons), families, young people, people with disabilities and the elderly;

45. Recommends that the Member States and their local and regional authorities draw up integrated policies for promoting social inclusion as well as for guaranteeing universal access to decent, healthy and affordable housing; suggests that these policies include the following measures:

- specific support for good-quality and healthy social and 'very social' housing, in particular by setting minimum quotas of social housing where it is relevant, such as areas with high population density where demand is highest, which would encourage diversity;
- the establishment of clear, minimum housing quality standards, particularly for social housing;
- linkages between social housing expansion programmes and policies for access to other essential public services and services of general interest, such as the construction of public social and healthcare, cultural and sport facilities (as part of a local integrated strategy), and for retaining urban sprawl in line with the Commission guidelines to achieve the objective of zero net land take by 2050;
- steps to address the difficulties commonly encountered by highly vulnerable sections of the population, such as migrants and young people, in seeking access to decent housing;
- schemes reinforcing security of tenure;
- the preparation of specific programmes for the homeless based on assessments of the local situation, taking into account the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) model to measure the extent of housing-related social exclusion, linked to social support measures as well as adapted to women's specific situation and needs, placing particular emphasis on housing and longer-term assistance for vulnerable persons and marginalised communities, rather than only on the provision of temporary accommodation;
- the promotion and funding of self-building programmes;

46. Calls on the Member States to ensure that all citizens can afford housing by basing rent increases on an objective system ensuring moderate increases in property prices and by adapting tax policy to limit speculation;

47. Calls on the Commission to implement without delay Parliament's resolution on an EU Homelessness Strategy;

48. Stresses that the different facets of homelessness among women must be addressed in a holistic way and should form an integral part of all EU policy frameworks; urges the Commission and the Member States to carry out systematic gender impact assessments, monitor the specific situation and needs of homeless women, promote assisted living environment projects and the construction of affordable, adapted and energy efficient housing, and include middle class families – who are often excluded from such schemes – in social housing programmes as they, like other households, can suffer from material deprivation due to the economic crisis;

49. Calls for the implementation of integrated cooperation models which bring together social and health services, support services for disadvantaged persons and social housing providers and relevant associations as part of their efforts to help vulnerable persons who are looking for or already have accommodation;

50. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the relevant authorities to earmark structural funding for housing and accommodation for marginalised communities, in particular in the social housing sector, by including this as a priority in their operational programmes; urges, therefore, the Commission and the Agency for Fundamental Rights to step up exchanges of good practice between local authorities on the basis of common and transparent criteria;

51. Recommends that the Member States and their relevant authorities invest in the construction and refurbishment of affordable social housing in order to address the issues of dilapidated housing and the attendant health risks, diverse family structures, the ageing population, dependent elderly people who choose to remain in their own homes, the specific needs of disabled persons and of young people, particularly in terms of housing and professional mobility; recommends that structural funding be used for these purposes under the next programming period (2014-2020); takes the view that social support measures as regards access to housing contribute to the creation of 'white jobs', which are essential if we are to meet current and future social challenges, such as the ageing population; stresses the positive role that the European Social Entrepreneurship Funds could play as regards social support and integration-through-housing projects;

52. Calls on the Member States and their local and regional authorities to implement effective incentive measures, on the basis of forecasts of housing needs, in order to combat the phenomenon of housing remaining unoccupied in

the long term, particularly in problem areas, with a view to tackling property speculation and to converting these properties into social housing;

53. Stresses the importance of a housing health and safety rating system which provides a health-based assessment of housing-related hazards;

54. Invites the Member States and the relevant authorities to simplify the process of applying for social housing and to make the allocation of homes more fair, transparent and impartial, according to the specific social, economic and cultural circumstances of each Member State, with a view to eliminating discrimination and to preventing any 'avoidance effect' for particularly vulnerable groups, a phenomenon which has the effect of aggravating residential spatial segregation and creating ghettos; draws attention, in this regard, to the pertinence of arrangements employed in some Member States, such as a list of legally defined, precise and transparent allocation criteria to encourage a social mix, anonymised applications for social housing, the advertising of vacant properties, the introduction of rating systems for housing applications, clear separation between the bodies which determine the criteria and those which allocate housing, and appropriate governance arrangements for the allocation of housing in order to promote broad based social mixing;

55. Highlights the challenges related to the ageing of the population and the need to provide access to adequate, decent and accessible housing for the growing number of older people in the EU; notes the growing impoverishment of the elderly in all the Member States, and, accordingly, seeks the inclusion in the new European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing, which coordinates research in this area, of affordable measures specifically designed to ensure that the elderly are allowed to stay in their homes as long as possible; notes, in this connection, that action to improve current housing accessibility is a relevant way of reducing social exclusion through measures to enhance their independence; calls, therefore, on the Member States to include in their national reforms a specific strand devoted to developing affordable solutions to enable older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, taking into account that improving conditions for access to the existing housing stock is desirable, helping people to remain in their places of residence and making it easier for them to regain a social life by boosting their personal independence;

56. Points out that social housing should be structured to avoid both gentrification and ghettoisation; calls for financial incentives, where it is relevant, that aim to develop common and mixed private and social housing space to avoid social segregation;

57. Attaches particular importance to the European Union's efforts to support disadvantaged social classes, particularly as regards the provision of housing, bearing in mind the existing social imbalances in Europe and notably in the countries which recently joined the EU;

58. Recommends that the Member States and the relevant authorities take steps to improve access to affordable housing by increasing the amount and quality of social and affordable housing stock and by developing its integration with community-based care and social services, utilising ESF and other structural funds to achieve this outcome;

59. Outlines that social housing should, when coordinated with effective community-based care and other social services, help to develop personal independent living capacity, assisting the socially vulnerable or disadvantaged to make the transition to a more independent lifestyle, with less reliance on welfare and greater personal autonomy;

60. Calls on the relevant public and private authorities systematically to include in the training systems for engineering, architecture, urban planning and construction modules on accessibility of the built environment and on 'Design for All';

61. Regrets the global trend to restrict the provision of social housing, and invites the Member States to include the often-excluded group of middle class families in social housing programmes as it may suffer as much from material deprivation as other households as a result of the economic crisis;

62. Regards the Union's commitment to integrated sustainable urban development, in particular to social housing, as an effective means of integrating problem areas into the surrounding urban environment and of tackling poverty and social exclusion; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the relevant authorities to make greater use of structural funds (ERDF, ESF), and of the EIB and other financial solutions, in an integrated way, and to facilitate coordination and synergies between them; takes the view that giving residents an appropriate role and greater decision-making power prior to and during the construction and renovation of social housing helps boost integration and social cohesion;

63. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study into the effectiveness of social impact investment models in the social housing sector, focusing on the potential benefits of the structural funds when used as financing instruments, and possibly when combined with other sources of funding, in order to boost social impact investments, such as through the creation of local jobs in the green economy, or jobs for young people, and through social inclusion through the provision of housing for marginalised groups;

64. Notes with regret that victims of domestic violence are often more likely to stay in an abusive environment if they are financially dependent on the abuser and thus unable to seek separate and suitable housing for themselves; calls, therefore, on the EU to promote gender-sensitive policies, programmes and funding aimed at increasing the availability of safe and affordable housing for victims of domestic violence, and calls on the Member States to find affordable solutions to alternative forms of emergency and temporary housing and to increase the number of

shelters and rehabilitation centres for victims, as well as other related social services such as integrated services for families (i.e. family justice centres);

65. Recalls that in 2009 there were seven times more single mothers than single fathers; takes the view, therefore, that single mothers – together with other vulnerable groups or individuals such as single parents, young families, large families, young people at the start of their professional careers, migrant women, people with disabilities and the elderly – should be given priority in the allocation of social housing; notes that when the economic crisis first began, it had a greater impact on men than on women, but that, as the crisis progressed, the unemployment rate of women has increased more than that of men;

Combating energy poverty

66. Is concerned at the growing incidence of energy poverty, which affects 50-125 million Europeans, and which is caused mainly by a combination of low household incomes, poor-quality heating and insulation and disproportionately high energy costs;

67. Calls on the Commission to adopt a Communication on Combating Energy Poverty that urges the Member States to introduce a definition of energy poverty based on common parameters but adjusted for each Member State to take into account specific national circumstances; reiterates that affordability of housing should be seen not only in terms of rent payments but also in terms of associated fuel bills; takes the view, however, that energy poverty cannot be considered simply in terms of expenditure on energy and energy prices as it also has a qualitative dimension related to people's behaviour and patterns of consumption;

68. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make sure that the deepening of the internal energy market goes hand in hand with measures to protect vulnerable consumers;

69. Believes that the right of access to energy is essential if people are to lead a life of dignity; calls on the Member States to refine their definition of 'decent housing' to include energy-efficiency standards; urges the Member States to combat energy poverty through, in particular, public sector energy regulators, and to adopt integrated measures, based on local energy audits, both in the private and public sector, including:

- the setting up of specific financial schemes regarding energy costs for the most vulnerable households (such as fair energy pricing, support on a one-off basis or as part of other social assistance, action to prevent non-payment of bills and protection against the cutting-off of supplies);
- the establishment of specific regional or national funds to reduce energy poverty, which could be funded by means of a financial contribution from energy providers which reflects their obligation to reduce consumption pursuant to Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency;
- support to incentives and instructive measures to help residents save energy consumption;
- the use of effective, long-term financial leverage to make residential buildings more energy efficient, in both urban and rural areas, while ensuring that this does not lead to a significant increase in housing costs for tenants once energy savings have been taken into account; calls on the Commission to coordinate these efforts and to examine the possibility of introducing incentive measures;

70. Points out that the housing sector is among those that offers the greatest potential for energy savings; stresses that, in the medium and long term, provided that the costs of making housing more energy efficient do not outweigh the energy savings made, energy efficiency measures should in the first instance serve to increase the purchasing power of households and improve their quality of life; emphasises that these measures will also lead to a reduction in carbon emissions, create jobs, support the local economy and reduce healthcare expenditure;

71. Highlights in particular the potential benefits of schemes to subsidise the installation of energy-efficient and renewable micro-energy generation solution in social housing units, permitting savings to be made in fuel bills and allowing for the profits of the energy generated to be distributed fairly between tenants and the housing association or owner, resulting in lower bills for tenants and providing owners with additional funds for further renovation and improvements in the overall housing stock;

72. Believes that energy efficiency measures to tackle energy poverty can also help prevent health problems (such as respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, allergies, asthma, food and carbon monoxide poisoning, and impacts on mental health);

73. Reiterates the importance of programmes aimed at improving energy performance in order to increase the affordability of social housing and housing in the private sector; emphasises the need for the Commission to clarify the State aid guidelines with regard to national and EU funds for such renovations and investments, and to allow flexibility, wherever possible, to ensure that such investments by housing associations and private owners can benefit from the most appropriate funding streams in order to achieve this dual social and environmental objective, without breaching EU competition rules;

74. Welcomes the fact that measures to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy use in housing will be eligible under ERDF and Cohesion Funds in the 2014-2020 period; encourages the Member States, their regional and local authorities and all relevant partners to make use of ERDF and Cohesion Funds to finance measures to improve energy performance, giving priority to households most affected by energy poverty;

75. Stresses that energy providers have a role to play in terms of dispute prevention and settlement, in particular by installing smart meters, establishing customer service departments and improving price transparency;

76. Calls on the Member States to use information campaigns to make sure that households are better informed about the importance of more responsible resource consumption and about the grants for which they are eligible under relevant social support measures, and to launch training campaigns to make social service professionals in particular more aware of energy poverty issues;

77. Asks the Member States to develop national energy poverty databases;

o
o o

78. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, and to the national parliaments and Governments of the Member States.

- (1) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 1.
- (2) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 12.
- (3) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 33.
- (4) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 8.
- (5) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 25.
- (6) OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 41.
- (7) Texts adopted, **P7_TA(2011)0495**.
- (8) OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 12.
- (9) OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.
- (10) OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 1.
- (11) OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 1.
- (12) OJ C 169 E, 15.6.2012, p. 66.
- (13) OJ L 347, 11.12.2006, p. 1.
- (14) Texts adopted, **P7_TA(2011)0494**.
- (15) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&largId=en&pubId=7315>.
- (16) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08022012-BP/EN/3-08022012-BP-EN.PDF.
- (17) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1264.htm>.
- (18) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/891/en/1/EF11891EN.pdf>.
- (19) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/02/en/1/EF1202EN.pdf>.
- (20) OJ L 7, 11.1.2012, p. 3.
- (21) <http://cuna.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docId=135024&pageIndex=0&docLang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=1202581>.
- (22) OJ L 298, 7.11.2008, p. 20.
- (23) Council of the EU, 3053rd Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 6 December 2010.
- (24) Report of the Social Protection Committee to the Council, Council of the EU, 6624/11 ADD 1 SOC 135 ECOFIN 76 SAN 30, 18 February 2011.
- (25) Report of the Social Protection Committee to the Council, Council of the EU, 6500/10 SOC 115 ECOFIN 101, FSTR 8 EDUC 31 SAN 31, 15 February 2010.
- (26) EESC, 597/2012-TEN/484, 13 December 2012.
- (27) CoR 71/2011 final, ECOS-V/014 <https://toad.cor.europa.eu/CORWorkInProgress.aspx>.
- (28) Texts adopted, **P7_TA(2012)0419**.
- (29) OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 57.
- (30) OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 120.
- (31) OJ C 308 E, 20.10.2011, p. 116.
- (32) OJ C 70 E, 8.3.2012, p. 19.
- (33) OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 65.
- (34) OJ C 76 E, 27.3.2008, p. 124.
- (35) OJ C 51 E, 22.2.2013, p. 101.
- (36) OJ C 259 E, 29.10.2009, p. 19.
- (37) OJ C 169 E, 15.6.2012, p. 139.
- (38) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlFiles/ef1264.htm>.
- (39) OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 1.
- (40) OJ L 153, 18.6.2010, p. 13.

Last updated: 20 June 2013

Legal notice