Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 709
14 October 1957

Certain social and financial aspects of the housing problem in Europe

Report[1]
Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee
Rapporteur: Mr Pierre COURANT, France

1. 1957 - 9th Session - Second part

A. Draft Recommendations

I

Main features of housing schemes

The Assembly,

Considering that all houses should satisfy certain minimum standards of durability, hygiene and comfort;

Believing that the construction of houses lacking in durability, on the pretext of economy, is wasteful and is likely to create new slums in a few years' time;

Believing that popular dwellings should be built, not to correspond with the standard of living of the lowest-paid workers, but so as to make possible a decent way of life and to ensure the necessary minimum of comfort,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers that measures be taken to ensure that new dwelling-houses satisfy certain minimum requirements. The houses must :

a. be proof against damp and weather;

b. be well exposed and airy;

c. have shower-baths;

d. have a minimum number of rooms based on the number of occupants;

e. have rooms of minimum dimensions ;

f. be provided with an electricity supply, mains and road approaches.

II

Pre-fabrication of housing elements

The Assembly,

Having noted, first, that one of the best means of reducing the housing cost, is to adopt model plans or general standards on the basis of which light housing elements (doors, windows, sanitary installations, etc.) can be standardised and mass-produced;

Having noted, secondly, that préfabrication of heavy elements in factories is only to be recommended if a large number of dwellings are to be erected on the same site in a short time,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers request Member Governments to adopt model plans or general standards, thus making it possible to reduce building costs by standardising light housing elements.

III

Exchange of building workers between the countries of Western Europe

The Assembly,

Noting that European countries frequently need the services of skilled building workers who are nationals of other countries;

Recalling the provisions, in particular Article 10, of the European Convention on Establishment adopted by the Council of Europe on 13th December 1953;

Bearing in mind the measures already taken by 0. E. E. C. to liberalise the movement of manpower;

Recalling Resolution No. 5 (1946) and Resolution No. 17 (1949) of the Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee of I. L. 0. concerning recruitment and vocational training in the building trade,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers request I. L. 0. to draw up, in respect of each Western European country, a list of the various categories of building workers, classified according to the same qualifications, in order to facilitate the exchange of these workers between the various countries.

IV

Housing policy and workers ' leisure pursuits

The Assembly,

Drawing attention to the desirability of organising, through a housing policy, recreational and cultural activities for workers;

Expressing its satisfaction that much has been done in this matter in various countries, through cultural centres, youth clubs and sporting and artistic activities,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers that, when new housing estates are built, the authorities should ensure that facilities for schooling, religious life and intellectual, artistic and sporting pursuits (including playgrounds for children) are not only included in the plans, but provided as soon as possible by the various bodies concerned.

V

Housing of workers past the age of full activity and of the aged and lonely who no longer xvant, or arc no longer able, to look after a home of their own

The Assembly,

Believing that the question of housing aged persons will in future be of increasing importance as a result of progress in medicine and the increase in the average expectation of life;

Considering that the social effort hitherto accomplished is not commensurate with the latest European social conceptions and requirements ;

Convinced that the system of communal dormitories should be abandoned and replaced by a system by which the aged, and especially elderly couples, can be given individual accommodation and keep their cherished possessions;

Considering that the accommodation in collective houses or separate bungalows of old people occupying larger dwellings would make these dwellings available and thereby enable countries to economise in the construction of new dwellings,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers should encourage the construction of collective houses or separate bungalows which could be made available to the aged at low rents.

VI

Rent-fixing

The Assembly,

Having considered the experience of the last few years and the difficulties encountered by some Western European countries in solving the housing problem because rents have been kept at a very low level;

Believing that Governments should guard against the danger of such a policy, particularly when it lowers rents to a level that fails to cover the cost of upkeep;

Believing, further, that efforts should be made to reduce the burden on tenants without adequate means (housing allowances, etc.) ;

Emphasising that rent restrictions, when too rigorously applied, have discouraged private initiative,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

1. that rent restrictions should not be too stringent;
2. that rent restrictions should leave a sufficient margin to cover upkeep.

VII

Financing of housing

The Assembly,

Desiring to facilitate the provision of low-cost housing on the largest possible scale;

Believing that building should be undertaken directly by the State only in quite exceptional circumstances;

Considering that it behoves the State to give adequate assistance to local authorities, specialised organisations or building societies which offer to build houses under its supervision,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers that Member Governments :

1. Should assist local authorities and specialised enterprises in their building projects and, whenever possible, make provision for the participation of private capital;
2. Should facilitate building by helping builders to find sites at a fair price and, if necessary, by overcoming any opposition from speculative interests.

VIII

B. Collective dwellings or individual houses

The Assembly,

Considering, first, that there is a marked preference in some countries for individual houses;

Noting, on the other hand, that in certain other countries lack of space often makes it necessary or desirable to build collective dwellings,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers

1. that means should be sought of building collective or individual dwellings which meet family preferences and which ensure the most satisfactory development of family life. The choice must, in principle, take fully into account the wishes and needs of those concerned, for it is they who are best able to appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of buildings in the light of the economic and social conditions of the community;

2. that families with several children be offered the possibility of obtaining separate houses, although care must be taken, by sound planning, to avoid the disadvantages for very large towns of too great a territorial spread.