



Recommendation 661 (1972)¹

Housing policy in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report presented by its Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities ([Doc. 3085](#)) ;
2. Recalling its [Resolution 318 \(1966\)](#) embodying its decision to study the various aspects of housing on the basis of an expert report ;
3. Considering the unsatisfactory housing situation of a high proportion of the European population,
4. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers communicate to the governments of member States and to the relevant international organisations, as a contribution to housing policy in Europe, the declaration of principles attached to this recommendation.

1. Assembly debate on 22 January 1972 (19th Sitting) (see [Doc. 3085](#), report of the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities). Text adopted by the Assembly on 22 January 1972 (19th Sitting).



Appendix

Declaration of principles relating to housing policy in Europe

(a) Any housing policy should be based on the assembly of detailed, descriptive data on the problem, allowing of a qualitative as well as a quantitative assessment. Such data should be assembled more frequently and standardised at European level in order to facilitate international co-operation (possibly within the Economic Commission for Europe).

(b) The assessment of housing needs should keep pace with social progress and rest on a thorough knowledge of the desire of the population, particularly as regards type of housing - individual house or flat - having regard at the same time to the demands of town and country planning.

(c) Housing policy over the next years should more than ever promote modernisation of old housing, especially where such schemes may contribute to the revival of urban centres and make housing available alongside urban facilities, while fulfilling standards of comfort ; the financial or fiscal assistance granted to owners wishing to carry out such modernisation should be made subject to conditions forbidding conversion of the building into commercial premises, while leaving the owner the possibility of receiving the benefits of appreciation in accordance with the real value of the housing.

(d) In order to promote additional housing construction, it is essential to draw on all sources of finance likely to further this end, and to attract funds from private sources thanks to incentives offered by the public authorities ; numerous fiscal, administrative and financial measures should be introduced to stimulate private investments, and especially to facilitate the financial effort of the prospective owner-occupier as well as protecting him against risk of spoliation.

(e) The organisation of sources of finance necessitates measures to stimulate private savings schemes for the building of housing and to protect such savings against monetary erosion ; at the same time, new means of purchasing housing should be arranged, such as hire-purchase systems governed by law, facilities provided wherever possible from the ordinary budgets of States in the form of longterm credits and other similar incentives.

(f) The best means of ensuring continuity in the construction of housing under a programme of political action, largely independent of short-term economic considerations, would be to create a housing fund receiving contributions from the State and compulsory contributions from employers, while retaining access to the private capital market.

(g) Legitimate claim for house ownership should not be recognised simply as a principle but should be encouraged through public funds and contributions from employers under a social progress policy ; the owner should receive aid adjusted to his personal needs and be allowed to spread the cost over a number of years corresponding to the life of the property he acquires.

(h) The authorities should take special care to solve the housing problems of specific categories - large families, old people, people living alone, the disabled, students, socially maladjusted families, low-income groups, all of which generally require direct action by the public authorities.

(i) Housing policy should take account of the objectives of regional and environmental planning, and should serve as an instrument of a more humanised form of town planning for decongestion and redevelopment programmes, in particular favouring the growth of rural centres and going hand in hand with the opening up of new industrial centres.

(j) Housing policy should particularly meet man's need for an improved environment ; this calls inter alia for :

perfect sound-proofing and insulation of housing, made compulsory by law, for the protection of privacy and as a contribution to the protection of the environment ;

housing space in accordance with the size of families ;

technical facilities in dwellings in line with technological progress ;

availability of collective facilities as soon as building is completed (roads of access, public transport, water supplies, power supplies, telephone and sewerage) ;

complete separation of living areas from main traffic communications, and partial separation of pedestrian zones from traffic, at least in new and redeveloped districts ;

appropriate inter-spacing of residential building with green areas, and breaking-up of housing areas by means of mixed structures, care being taken to avoid excessive concentrations of vertical structures which tend to create social and economic problems.

(k) The key role of local authorities in housing policy should be clearly defined, their powers extended and the resources they require to install collective facilities made up to the requisite total from State contributions.

(l) The public should have the fullest information and the right of representation in framing housing and other development plans and the right of information at the time of the actual execution of these plans.

(m) Specific legal and administrative measures should be introduced with the following aims :

to wage vigorous war on land speculation - a precondition of any financially viable housing policy - by adopting the proposals made by the Assembly in [Recommendation 556 \(1969\)](#) ;

to decentralise powers and financial resources in the housing sector, to the benefit of local and regional authorities ;

to simplify the procedure for change of ownership of housing and to lighten fiscal charges, so as to increase social mobility ;

to guarantee the social protection of tenants by appropriate measures particularly in regions where, owing to shortage of housing accommodation, rents are often unduly high, and to ensure in particular that tenants will not have to pay rents beyond their means, taking into account any public aid they receive ;

to establish periodically in accordance with technical and social progress minimum norms applicable to housing construction (surface area, facilities, materials, insulation, soundproofing etc.) ;

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