



Resolution 1486 (2006)¹

A dynamic housing policy as an element of European social cohesion

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that there have been far-reaching changes regarding housing problems in Europe, through a combination of many factors that operate interactively. Those factors include the concentration of employment in urban centres and greater job flexibility, making for increased occupational mobility but also erosion of income security and lasting exclusion of population groups from the labour market.
2. Changes in family structure, and in particular the escalation in divorces and one-parent households, the lengthening of young people's period of cohabitation with their parents and the ageing of the population, are also factors which contribute to maintaining housing demand at a high level while the supply is often unsuitable and insufficiently regenerated.
3. The magnitude of migratory flows and the concentration of immigration in towns are also adding to the overall demand, putting further pressure on the availability of housing and more generally raising the issue of the existing housing stock being unsuited to the needs of immigrant populations.
4. All these factors are contributing to a significant evolution in the nature of housing demand. The resultant pressure on housing stock and availability of land has caused a rapid rise in the price of housing, and specifically in rent.
5. Poorly controlled urban expansion, the growth phenomena generated by urban encroachment on city outskirts, the downgrading of certain districts whose peripheral residential forms are unsuitable today, the reappearance of shanty towns and areas of insufficient or substandard housing in town centres are all symptomatic of the structural dimension of the housing crisis.
6. These phenomena also point to the inextricable link between housing and urban development, with questions of social mix, ethnic and racial discrimination and urban and land policies.
7. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its deep concern at the emergence of a new housing crisis Europe-wide, which poses – and will increasingly pose in the future – numerous problems for Council of Europe member countries in terms of both social exclusion and spatial segregation, resulting in an alarming erosion of their social cohesion.
8. The Assembly emphasises that the right to housing, as a fundamental social right recognised by the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163) of the Council of Europe (Article 31), is an element of social cohesion. As such, its effective realisation cannot be left to the sole discretion of market forces. This right to housing can only be universal and may not be vitiated by any exclusion in its application.
9. The Parliamentary Assembly wishes to point out that a housing policy vacuum costs the community far more than a dynamic housing policy geared to sustainability, continuity, involvement of all the players and adaptability to needs as they develop.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 17 March 2006 (see [Doc. 10833](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Jacquat).



10. It considers that the most appropriate housing policies are those which have succeeded in adapting to the territoriality of the problems by means of suitable measures aimed at enhancing the role of local authorities while upholding the need for national solidarity and the indispensable commitment of state authorities.
11. Backing should be given to a housing policy which integrates action aimed both at the prevention of social exclusion and discrimination and at urban development and renewal. Facilitating access to housing and home ownership, improving the human environment and promoting balanced development of territories are today key to the safeguarding of European social cohesion and peaceful labour relations against a weakening of social ties and an alteration in the feeling of belonging and sharing of common values.
12. The Assembly emphasises that there is no single, unequivocal and uniform formula for reforms to housing policies in view of differing national traditions and public intervention goals. While it is not possible to determine a single course of action for modernising housing policies, the member states must respect certain common principles.
13. Consequently, the Assembly invites the member states of the Council of Europe to:
 - 13.1. pursue the ratification of the revised European Social Charter so that all member countries recognise the right to housing as a fundamental social right and a factor in social cohesion (Article 31);
 - 13.2. strengthen the supervisory machinery relating to the right to housing by treating its effective enforcement as a priority, particularly in cases of discrimination, eviction and the continuing existence of substandard housing;
 - 13.3. develop knowledge of housing situations as reflected by statistical indicators in the member countries;
 - 13.4. promote the exchange of best practices and the development of integrated projects on the effective realisation of the right to housing and its enforceability;
 - 13.5. pool thoughts on the future of housing policies, based on an appraisal of the policies conducted during the last decade and the definition of principles common to their future development;
 - 13.6. cultivate knowledge of the territorial dimension of housing policies in conjunction with new forms of governance and methods of evaluating actions providing for the participation of all the parties involved.
14. The Assembly encourages Council of Europe Development Bank member countries to support the Development Bank's activities in the field of social housing and to submit investment projects for financing, especially in favour of the most vulnerable groups of the population.
15. Finally, the Assembly invites the states brought together within the Council of Europe to pursue closer co-operation with the European Union for the effective implementation of the right to housing and access to decent housing for all, given their shared aims of preserving European social cohesion and the special role of housing unanimously recognised by the Lisbon European Council and the European Parliament.