Report

This workshop was designed as an interactive session bringing together civil society actors and representatives of the European institutions to discuss better policy approaches and solutions for more democratic, affordable and sustainable housing in Europe. The invited speakers included EESC member Baiba Miltovica (TEN section), MEP Leila Chaibi (HOUS committee), Maite Arrondo from ALDA, Telma Abreu from the European Student Cooperative Housing Alliance (ESCHA), Emiliano Rocchetti from International Union of Tenants (IUT) and, finally, Chiara Amici from Generation Climate Europe (GCE).

The first part of this panel provided a **contextualised overview of the pressing need for affordable housing in Europe and analysed the recent trends** that have emerged in the housing sector over the last decade.

Ms Miltovica highlighted the increasing difficulty in finding affordable housing given the rise in housing prices coupled with stagnating wages. While housing is attracting a lot of attention, she called on all stakeholders and institutions to speak with one voice and coordinate efforts. MEP Leila Chaibi expressed support for this initiative and emphasised the European Parliament's role as an ally on this issue. She called on civil society to play a crucial role in lobbying decision-makers over the next couple of months, ahead of the highly anticipated European Affordable Housing Plan and HOUS committee report.

Maite Arrondo (ALDA) addressed the effects of housing financialisation including gentrification and the increase in foreign and private equity investors, slowly turning housing into a commodity and worsening the homelessness crisis in Europe. Emiliano Rocchetti (IUT), Chiara Amici (GCE) and Telma Abreu (ESCHA) stressed how the energy crisis had made living conditions worse for tenants, particularly affecting students and low-income groups. Among the solutions explored were ensuring cost

neutrality to avoid 'renovictions', empowering young people to be included in housing discussions and promoting community-based housing solutions.

The panellists underlined the need to **develop innovative and community-based housing solutions** such as cooperative housing or community land trusts, for instance.

Maite Arrondo (ALDA) highlighted that innovative housing solutions could prevent speculation and help address the current student housing crisis, while Chiara Amici (GCE) called for young people to be empowered in housing discussions. In that regard, Telma Abreu (ESCHA) outlined her experience of student-led cooperative housing, a model that has the dual benefit of removing properties from the speculative market and reducing rent prices, whilst also enabling young people to acquire new financial and management skills through democratic and collective governance.

The speakers called for greater access to financial support and for local technical assistance or guidance to facilitate the development of such initiatives. It was noted, however, that municipalities and cities also require external support in terms of funding and skill development to adequately support these innovative solutions.

Finally, the discussion highlighted the growing need for **adequate housing policies and coordinated action among local authorities, EU institutions and stakeholders.** While housing is not traditionally an EU competence, it overlaps with many fundamental EU policies and requires strong coordination at all levels. All panellists recognised the key role of cities in bringing together economic and human rights concerns on housing policy. They urged national and local authorities to adopt the following regulatory measures:

1. Establish stricter regulations in the rental sector and increase transparency on property ownership and real estate investors to limit speculation and protect tenants;

2. Promote tax policies incentivising investments in community-based and affordable housing;

3. Expand and diversify EU funding instruments for these essential services;

4. Look into successful models of community-based, cooperative and youth-led housing models to replicate them and scale them up across Europe.