

Conference of the Civil Society Organisations' Group
of the European Economic and Social Committee
in the framework of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
Copenhagen, 2 July 2025

'Building green and inclusive – Making our communities future-proof'

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Conference



**Building green and inclusive –
Making our communities
future-proof**

02/07/2025 | 09:15-15:30 CEST

Danish Society of Engineers | Copenhagen | Denmark



European Economic
and Social Committee
Civil Society Organisations' Group

Affordable and sustainable housing

The EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group:

- urges the European Commission to prioritise access to affordable, decent housing by promoting sustainable, energy-efficient construction and facilitating long-term financing for social housing organisations;
- advocates enabling social housing organisations to benefit from long-term European financing through the European Investment Bank and the European Commission;
- calls for housing to be placed at the forefront of the EU policy agenda in the new legislative term, in line with the Liège Declaration signed during the Belgian Council Presidency in March 2024;
- encourages the European Commission to propose EU-wide legislation to address housing affordability and sustainability. An EU Housing Directive could ensure a coordinated approach, drawing on best practices and providing a framework for Member States;
- recommends establishing EU-level guidelines on sustainable affordable housing, based on principles of affordability, sustainability, quality and community development, in order to enhance the effectiveness of EU interventions;
- supports active public sector involvement in fostering limited-profit housing models and cooperatives. This includes measures such as offering land on long-term leases and developing supportive legal and financial frameworks to enable their sustainable operation, ensuring long-term affordability and balancing rental and ownership options;
- calls for the creation of an EU platform to exchange best practices, enabling the dissemination of effective models and financing instruments that address local affordable housing challenges;
- stresses the importance of not only constructing new housing and renovating existing stock, but also repurposing unused buildings for residential use as part of the response to the housing crisis;
- highlights the need to centre sustainability in future housing strategies by prioritising renovations over new construction, promoting circular building methods and energy-efficient designs, and ensuring public procurement rewards sustainable solutions, not just the lowest cost;
- emphasises that co-creation and co-ownership are essential in housing and public space development. Community-driven planning fosters inclusive spaces, combats loneliness and builds trust and social capital within communities;
- recognises a market failure in the housing sector and calls for comprehensive action to address it. This includes the establishment of a fundamental right to housing and placing greater emphasis on the needs of young people and sustainability;

- urges the European Commission to recognise social housing as a key and effective instrument of active housing policy; in the medium term, advocates for enshrining the fundamental right to affordable, accessible and decent housing for all in EU primary law;
- calls on the European Commission to assist Member States by issuing targeted recommendations for curbing excessive rent increases. Such a toolbox could include measures like statutory rent caps, a tax on vacant residential properties, fiscal incentives for renovating and renting out vacant homes, expanding social housing and placing stricter limits on short-term rental permits;
- proposes the development of an action plan dedicated specifically to improving access to affordable housing for young people and people with disabilities;

Climate-friendly urban spaces

- encourages Member States to integrate green infrastructure such as parks, green roofs, urban forests and permeable surfaces into urban plans to mitigate heat islands, improve air quality and manage stormwater;
- supports compact, mixed-use urban development that reduces urban sprawl and promotes walking and cycling;
- urges that technical and financial assistance be provided at EU level for expanding sustainable transport networks, including accessible public transport, cycling lanes, pedestrian areas and low-emission zones;
- promotes barrier-free transport solutions to ensure that mobility systems are inclusive for persons with disabilities, the elderly and families with children;
- supports initiatives that guarantee all residents, regardless of income, age or ability, access to nearby, safe and well-maintained green and public spaces;
- encourages participatory design processes that involve local communities, ensuring that public spaces reflect diverse needs and foster social inclusion;
- calls on the European Commission to collect and provide guidelines and funding to strengthen urban infrastructure against the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, heatwaves and droughts, prioritising vulnerable areas and populations;
- urges that EU funds for urban development (e.g. Cohesion Policy, Recovery and Resilience Facility, Horizon Europe) explicitly require and reward projects that combine climate mitigation/adaptation with universal accessibility and inclusivity;

Innovative solutions for reducing emissions

- recommends encouraging and funding local and regional renewable energy projects where citizens, businesses and municipalities work together, inspired by the Samsø model;

- supports the development of local energy cooperatives and ownership models that empower communities, increase acceptance of the energy transition and keep economic benefits within the local economy;
- promotes EU-wide adoption of waste-to-energy solutions that prioritise recycling and reuse, while recovering energy from residual, non-recyclable waste, following the Amager Resource Centre example;
- supports research and investments in next-generation circular economy infrastructure and public engagement strategies to change behaviour around waste;
- welcomes the creation and expansion of high-quality cycling networks, including inter-city and regional cycle superhighways, to make cycling a viable, fast and safe alternative to commuting by car;
- requests the allocation of EU funds to support Member States and cities in developing accessible and connected cycling infrastructure that is integrated with public transport systems.

Brussels, 11 July 2025