

The future of housing in the EU must be greener and more inclusive

Reimagining the design of cities, communities and housing is essential to face the current challenges. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have a key role to play in steering this transformation. Sustainability and the right to housing must be at the heart of future strategies. The EU could contribute to this by increasing European funding for affordable housing and supporting the social economy.

Making housing, public spaces and communities in the EU future-proof was the focus of a [conference](#) organised by the [Civil Society Organisations' Group](#) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 2 July. The event was one of the first high-level conferences to be held under the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU, which began on 1 July. It took place at the Danish Society of Engineers (IDA) in Copenhagen.

Séamus Boland, President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group, said: 'In the face of climate change, increasing inequalities and the housing crisis, there is no choice but to embrace change in the way that we design, build and develop urban housing and public spaces. There is much that other countries could learn from Denmark, whose equitable housing policy, accessible to everyone irrespective of income, goes back over 100 years. Today, the Danish non-profit housing sector accounts for a fifth of the market and is characterised by high energy standards and mixed, inclusive communities'.

Mr Boland emphasised the need to create spaces that serve both environmental objectives and social cohesion. Sustainability and the right to housing should be at the centre of future housing strategies. Co-creation and co-ownership must go hand in hand to build greener and more inclusive housing and public spaces. The president of the group, representing civil society from the 27 EU Member States, added that the EU could help by 'increasing European affordable housing funds, strengthening EU renovation programmes and supporting the social economy, notably cooperative ownership models'.

Sophie Hæstorp Andersen, Danish Minister for Social Affairs and Housing, said: 'Affordable and sustainable housing is a top priority for me – also during our EU Presidency. By building greener and more inclusive communities today, we're not only addressing today's challenges, but laying the foundation for stronger, more resilient societies tomorrow. It's part of building a safer, more competitive, and greener Europe. I look forward to continuing this important conversation at the conference I'll be hosting in September on affordable and sustainable housing'.

Policymakers and CSO representatives, urban planners, architects and individuals discussed building more sustainable and inclusive communities. Participants used the opportunity to exchange experiences and showcase best practises. The debates addressed climate-friendly construction and urban spaces, innovative solutions for reducing emissions and how the EU can bring added value.

Participants believed that housing, public spaces and communities need to be reimaged and emphasised the need for measures to support poor and vulnerable individuals and families. They also called for:

- renovations to be prioritised over new constructions;
- circular and energy-efficient construction methods to be prioritised;

- public procurement also to reward energy-efficient designs;
- a gender dimension to housing strategies;
- community-driven planning.

A further conclusion of the conference was that substantial engagement by individuals and CSOs and inclusive, cross-sectoral dialogue are crucial if the just transition to greener and more inclusive housing in the EU is to succeed. Communities can only meet the challenges if all stakeholders – public, private, civil society and individuals – unite and act together.

The conference **conclusions and recommendations** will be available here shortly: <https://europa.eu/!X3hwDj>

The conference also saw the opening of the **exhibition *Giving form to the future*** at IDA. The exhibition focuses on sustainability in construction and presents works coordinated by Danish architecture firm BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group. It was organised by the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group, together with BIG and IDA. It complements and supports the group's work on promoting inclusive and equitable societies, decent, sustainable and affordable housing and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. **Juliane Marie Neiendam**, member of the Civil Society Organisations' Group, Chair of IDA Copenhagen and Chair of IDA's Self-Employed Members, and **Kai-Uwe Bergmann**, partner at BIG, took part in the opening event. The exhibition is free and runs from 2 July to 8 July at IDA.

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