



Conference on “affordable and decent housing in the EU”

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President

of the

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Speech

(English version)

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Dear Minister Indriksone,

Dear Ambassador Petre,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to today's conference on affordable and decent housing in the EU. I would like to thank the Latvian Government for the joint organisation and hosting us in Riga.

Given the current geopolitical situation, providing sustainable and affordable housing for people and businesses today and in the future is top priority for us. I am pleased that today we bring together local, national and European actors to discuss the challenges ahead and find coherent solutions.

We still fight the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Now, we also face the current energy supply crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine and the unprecedented increase in energy prices. In its Spring 2022 Economic Forecasts the European Commission had to revise the EU's growth outlook downwards, and the forecast for inflation upwards. ALL of that has intensified the severity of the housing crisis across Europe.

We have already several very promising initiatives at European and national level contributing to the overarching goal of building a greener and fairer Europe. For instance, the EESC fully endorses the renovation wave strategy and the "New European Bauhaus" initiative, built on the pillars of the Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Stepping up the energy performance of buildings is key. The aim is to at least double renovation rates in the EU by breaking down long-standing barriers to energy- and resource-efficient renovation as well as improving re-use and recycling. Introducing decarbonised heating and cooling systems also increases the energy performance of buildings.

Housing remains the competence of the Member States. But, many actors are involved at European, national and local level, from the public and private side. I strongly believe given the many persisting challenges we face on the housing crises that we must work together to find workable solutions that help the people and businesses in need.

Today, we will focus on 3 key issues to be addressed in this context

1. Who should benefit from affordable housing? How to define households in need?

2. Which financial instruments work best? We have to identify the best funding practices. And additional challenge remains then to broadly share the best funding practises across the local and national institutions in charge so that we can learn from each other.

3. How to boost investments in energy efficiency of buildings? How to better integrate the EU, national and local levels?

Today's conference will allow us to have an open exchange, to share our views and experiences and learn from each other.

To be successful, we must build a strong dialogue between stakeholders. Opportunities like today to bring together those involved in implementing and monitoring actions to support sustainable housing should be provided.

This is true in particular for civil society organizations. They play a decisive role in facilitating dialogue between citizens, businesses, workers, and decision-makers, thanks to their expertise and networks on the ground.

I look forward to hearing examples of best practices of the Latvian civil society today. As for the EESC, we stand ready to contribute even further to our common goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

access to good quality and sustainable housing is a basic need for all of us - now and for the future generations to come. It is key to achieving a number of economic, environmental and social policy objectives and to promoting equal opportunities, social inclusion and mobility.

Let's work together and put our commitment into concrete actions. United for the future of Europe!